LISTENING AND SOUNDMAKING: A STUDY OF MUSIC-AS-ENVIRONMENT

by

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ABSTRACT

The thesis argues that the existing delicate balance between listening and soundmaking in quiet environments is vulnerable to the influx of externally imposed "voices". It proposes that "music-as-environment" - that is, music designed not to be listened to (traditionally called background music or Muzak), but piped into a location to accompany other, normally commercial activities - is such a voice, and encourages "distracted" listening habits and silences our own voices. Proceeding from the soundscape and acoustic communication perspectives developed by R. Murray Schafer and Barry Truax, it argues that music-as-environment has a "schizophonic" effect on the human soundmaker/listener and thus dislocates him/her from the physical present and the self.

A personal case study at the centre of the thesis demonstrates how during my own childhood music constituted an imposed voice that prevented the development of confidence in my listening and soundmaking capacity and later influenced the way in which I experienced music-as-environment and myself as soundmaker/musician.

The thesis builds on the writings of Attali (political economy) and Adorno (critical theory), both of whom provide a perspective on music in its social context. It also builds on the work of Deleuze and Kristeva who discuss culture and creative process from philosophical, psychoanalytic and semiological perspectives. The thesis argues that a balance between listening and soundmaking (sound input and sound output) is essential to the health of the human acoustic psyche, and that the perceptive immediacy of childhood and the cultural work of artists offer strategies by which such a balance can be regained - even as contemporary urban soundscapes attempt increasingly to erode it. It is suggested that the creative process is a balancing agent against an overload of sound input, and that one's own sound output or creative expression not only lessens the authority of externally imposed voices, but also offers a new voice of vitality and energy.

The discussion focusses finally on the human body as the soundmaking/listening "instrument", and concludes that sound experienced (produced and received) as physical process can be an effective counterbalance to attempts by commerce and technology to transform it into product or commodity.

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Murray Schafer was the first person who taught me to trust my ears and inspired me to become deeply involved in the world of sound. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to work with him many years ago. My friend and colleague Barry Truax has never ceased to support me in continuing to work in the field of soundscape studies. His trust in my abilities has provided me with many opportunities at the university as well as in the cultural arena. As my supervisor for this thesis he has offered much valued support and encouragement. I would also like to thank Martin Laba for keeping me "on my toes" by continually challenging my perceptions of music and sound.

There have been a number of women friends who have had a healing, calming, and inspiring influence on me during this process. I would like to thank Susan Benson for showing me what it means to be present and to really listen. My voice instructor Dale Genge gave me a deep sense of the connection between voice, ear and body. Jane Ellison, Paula Fainstat, and Jeanie Squarebriggs literally straightened out my body, encouraged me to strengthen it and relieved me of pain after endless hours at the desk and computer. I would also like to thank Lynn Hissey for being "on call" in case of emergencies on the computer. My often too short but valuable conversations with Janice Peck gave me courage to continue writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Listening and soundmaking stand in a delicate relationship to each other. We can measure the quality of a sonic environment by examining whether this relationship is balanced. If, for example, what we hear (impression or sound input) is louder than our own sounds (expression or sound output), an imbalance has been created in this relationship. Or, if the atmosphere of an environment is such that we are only permitted to hear or to listen, but not to speak or express, then there also is an imbalance. A noisy environment and an authoritarian environment can both have this effect: a noisy soundscape drowns out our footsteps, our breathing, and our normal speaking voice; an authoritarian environment does not have to be loud for us to lower our voices or not to talk at all. As long as we accept noise or the voices/sounds of authority as the dominant sounds that set the "tone" of an environment other tones and voices (such as our own) have no place there and are indeed often silenced.

It is my claim that the music we encounter in the public sphere of the urban soundscape, and that I have called "music-as-environment", constitutes such a dominant voice - a voice of authority - for many people, and throws the relationship between listening and soundmaking off balance. Not only does this music have the power to silence us, but it can also change our relationship to listening, that is, it can make us passively accept what we hear. "Music-as-environment" has become an inescapable presence in the public sphere of our lives. Via the loudspeaker it is transmitted into an environment, such as a shop, a mall, a restaurant, onto sidewalks, over telephones, into lobbies, banks, and other public places, and in that form it has become an environmental sound in the urban soundscape. Not only is it acoustically interwoven with and perceived together with other sounds in the environment, but it is also heard in a similar fashion - in the background of people's perception. This music-as-environment is a widely accepted, often even desired sound and at the same time ignored.

Music can be defined as environmental when it accompanies activities of daily life. In other words, the activity is the focal point, not the music. This definition applies to any music that has been put into

the environment with or without our choosing, and with the specific purpose of forming an acoustic backdrop to another activity. There is an inherent contradiction in music-as-environment: the more of it there is, the less it is listened to; the more its presence suggests a musical status quo in the soundscape, the less we tend to use our own voices, make our own music. It has the power to reduce us to passive listeners and discourage us from soundmaking. It can, in fact, rob us of our desire to listen and make sounds.

It is my hunch that in its capacity to create an imbalance between listening and soundmaking and to rob us of our desire for listening and soundmaking, music-as-environment channels a basic cultural need in us for active participation in music and soundmaking into the activity of commodity exchange. Music-as-environment sets the tone for many people's favourite past-time: that of consuming. It puts us "in the mood" for it and may give us the illusion of partaking in a cultural event. Music-as-environment has been placed squarely into the realm of commerce. It is the voice of money in North American culture and as such is given authority and accepted as a dominant voice – one that has the power to replace our own voices. It has become a necessary presence for many people, and ironically perhaps the only one which provides some kind of atmosphere in our urban existence.

> Today, it is unavoidable, as if, in a world now devoid of meaning, a background noise were increasingly necessary to give people a sense of security. And today, wherever there is music there is money.[1]

In the following chapters I want to trace the above arguments: one, by examining how listening and soundmaking function under ideal acoustic circumstances and how their balance shifts in a lo-fi as well as in an electroacoustic environment; two, by looking into the characteristics of "music-as-environment", its connection to money, and how it has become a dominant voice in urban society; three, by demonstrating how, in my own experience as a child, music constituted an authority and a dominant voice, which later influenced the way I experienced music-as-environment and myself as a soundmaker; and four, by finding ways to regain a balanced relationship between listening and soundmaking.

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[1]Jacques Attali, Noise: The Political Economy of Music, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 3.

My writing is informed primarily by Soundscape Studies with the work of R. Murray Schafer and by the related field of Acoustic Communication with the work of Barry Truax. Through my involvement in both areas, listening to the soundscape has become a way of life and has, over the years, deepened my understanding of the meanings of environmental sounds and my relationship to them. The word soundscape always implies interaction between environment and individual, and between environment and community. Truax emphasizes this when he defines soundscape as

> an environment of sound (sonic environment) with emphasis on the way it is perceived and understood by the individual, or by a society. It thus depends on the relationship between the individual and any such environment.[2]

Consciousness of the close link between individual and soundscape caused me to pay more attention to my own reactions to and feelings about the sonic environment. It was through this process that I became aware of my reactions to music-as-environment. I had to acknowledge to myself that this music - which I considered to be absolutely banal and worthless - caused strong reactions in me under certain circumstances, and influenced my moods in specific ways. I used to be disturbed, angered, and puzzled by these reactions. But once I had made peace with the fact that they were happening I could begin to look into their origins.

In that process I was influenced by the work of R.D. Laing, psychologist Alice Miller and by my own exposure to psychotherapy through psychologist Susan Benson in Vancouver. Through them I found the courage for self-analysis, as well as for articulating and expressing my experiences, making the personal public. With this I joined ranks with many other women who had to learn to understand that our concerns - which have always seemed "too" personal and private, and therefore not fit for public exposure - are shared concerns and must therefore be voiced. It is this voicing of the personal (the "inner world") which constitutes a political act, the raising of a voice that traditionally has not been raised, has been shrouded in silence. R.D. Laing extends this issue to both sexes and points to the importance of the psychotherapeutic process for finding one's inner world:

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[2]Barry Truax (Ed.), Handbook for Acoustic Ecology (Vancouver, B.C.: A.R.C. Publications, 1978), p. 126.

> As a whole generation of men, we are so estranged from the inner world that there are many arguing that it does not exist; and that even if it does exist, it does not matter . . . The psychotherapeutic relationship is therefore a research. A search, constantly reasserted and reconstituted for what we have all lost, . . . and *this re- search is validated by the shared experience of experience regained in and through the therapeutic relationship in the here and now.*[3] (emphasis his)

It is for this reason that I decided to integrate my personal experience into my writing and use my own "case" as an important informant for the points to be made.

Adorno's and Attali's writings on music provided a large part of the theoretical background to this thesis, specifically because they provided a more daring perspective than many other writers who discuss music in its social context. In both cases the link between music and commodity, music and money, is recognized as an important agent that influences people's relationship to music. They and writers such as Deleuze and Julia Kristeva seek solutions to a more meaningful relationship, a creative relationship to the world, one that goes beyond money. They have been instrumental in my search for solutions in the existing imbalance.

Finally I examine listening and soundmaking as physical processes. Informed by the work of Tomatis, Oliveros, and Linklater, by exposure to varying kinds of indigenous musics of the world and by my own experiences in sound/musicmaking, it has become clear that the body and physical presence are crucial for a true balance between acoustic impression and expression and thereby for active participation in listening and soundmaking.

Throughout the thesis particular emphasis is put on children and childhood as the place where we can find cues for creative process, active participation in listening and soundmaking, and for physical existence in the world. Both creative process and listening and soundmaking as physical process are seen as an effective counterbalance to a passive, unbalanced relationship to music–as–environment.

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[3]R.D. Laing, The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1967), pp. 46–47.

CHAPTER II

LISTENING AND SOUNDMAKING: A SHIFT TOWARD IMBALANCE

In order to understand the ways in which music-as-environment can reduce our listening capacity and silence our voices I will examine how listening and soundmaking function in two soundscapes of contrasting quality. The first one is the hi-fi soundscape: an environment of acoustic clarity, a quiet place where few sounds overlap or mask each other, where the subtlest sounds are audible. The second one is the lo-fi soundscape: a noisy environment, where too many sounds compete with each other, and the subtlest sounds are masked. This discussion will then shed light on why listening and soundmaking function in specific ways in the third type of sonic environment: the schizophonic soundscape, where music and/or voice are electroacoustically imposed onto the acoustic environment.

In discussing the shift from hi-fi to schizophonic soundscape I will show how our aural perception and our use of voice shift, how there is in fact a direct relationship between the quality of the acoustic environment and the quality of our listening and soundmaking. Whereas the quiet soundscape encourages soundmaking and active listening, both the lo-fi and the schizophonic soundscape have the opposite effect: they both - in slightly different ways, that will be discussed - tend to make us into passive receptors of sound and discourage us from soundmaking and vocal expression. It is this changing relationship between soundscape and individual that will be examined in this chapter.

Most of us have experienced a balanced relationship between listening and soundmaking in early childhood. When we are babies we listen and we make sounds. Through listening we get an impression of the world into which we are born, and with soundmaking we express our needs and emotions. Listening at that time is an active process of learning, one way of receiving information about our surroundings and about the people who are closest to us. And what we hear or listen to becomes material for vocal imitation, for first attempts to articulate, express, and make sounds. Listening and soundmaking (input and output, impression and expression) are ongoing activities, happening simultaneously, always in relation to each other, as an ongoing feedback process. There is a balanced relationship between the

acoustic information babies receive and what they express vocally.

For the urban adult, for whom this balance no longer exists, it may be important to observe new-borns, whose whole energy is focussed on learning through actively perceiving and expressing, listening and soundmaking, who make an active attempt to know the world and to know the self within that world. Babies cannot block their senses, they cannot ignore any sound. All of us have experienced this. Depending on the social and cultural environment we grew up in, this open and energetic approach to life gets shaped, expanded or curtailed to a greater or lesser degree as we grow into our own surroundings. For example, children as they grow up and develop their own voice are told frequently to be quiet ("to be seen but not heard"), they are told to listen to what adults, their parents and teachers have to say. At the same time they are all too often discouraged from expressing what they feel or think. This is an example of an authority determining the tone. In such a situation they become reluctant listeners and rarely have a chance to express, to make sound, to use their own voice. R.D. Laing describes this same process for our general development from new-born to adult in a frightening way:

> From the moment of birth when the stone-age baby confronts the twentieth century mother, the baby is subjected to these forces of violence, called love . . . These forces are mainly concerned with destroying most of its potentialities. This enterprise is on the whole successful. By the time the new human being is fifteen or so, we are left with a being like ourselves. A half-crazed creature, more or less adjusted to a mad world. This is normality in our present age.[1]

This development in many ways resembles what happens to people's perception in the shift from hi-fi to schizophonic soundscapes.

Listening, Soundmaking and the Hi-Fi Environment

A hi-fi environment is one of acoustic clarity, with a favourable signal-to-noise ratio. Quiet sounds stand out clearly from the low level ambient sound that surrounds them: leaves rustling, wind in grass, one's own breathing, footsteps, heartbeat, one's inner voice, and so on. The quiet ensures that sounds do not mask one another and it is therefore easy to localize and identify all sounds. Because there is such

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[1]Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 50.

acoustic sparseness the ear tends to reach out to the sounds. As Schafer says:

> The quiet ambiance of the hi-fi soundscape allows the listener to hear farther into the distance just as the countryside exercises long-range viewing. The city abbreviates this facility for distant hearing (and vision) marking one of the more important changes in the history of perception.[2]

Truax adds another dimension to this definition of the hi-fi environment:

> Such an environment is, by definition, balanced and well "designed", whether the design is intentional or the result of natural causes. Within the "hi-fi" environment, the listening process is characterized by interaction. One does not have to "fight" the environment to make sense of it. Rather, it invites participation and reinforces a positive relationship between the individual and the environment.[3]

In the wilderness one has perhaps the most guarantee to experience a hi-fi soundscape for long stretches of time. Small communities in any country may also often be places of acoustic clarity. The further away such places are geographically and socially from urban mechanized society the more likely it is for the individual to encounter a hi-fi environment in them.

I will now discuss the hi-fi soundscape from the perspective of the urban person who rarely experiences consistent quiet, and may even be afraid of such an acoustic environment, possibly experiencing it as something negative. This perspective may assist us in understanding why both noise and music-as-environment have become such all-pervasive, even desired sounds.

When we arrive in a hi-fi environment after having travelled in a car or any other motorized vehicle, we initially suffer from a slight hearing loss, also called "temporary threshold shift". The haircells in the organ of Corti of the inner ear, that get activated into motion by sound, and whose motion sends electrical impulses to the brain via the auditory nerve, have been saturated by the noise of the motor. This results in a decrease of aural acuity and the haircells need time to get back to normal. The length of time required for recovery varies depending on how long we were exposed to the noise, how high the noise levels were, and under how much stress we were before arrival. It could last anywhere from 1 to 24 hours. As our haircells gradually recover, however, we experience a lowering of our

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[2]R. Murray Schafer, The Tuning of the World (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 43.

[3]Barry Truax, Acoustic Communication (Norwood, N.J.: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984), p. 20.

threshold of hearing: the quiet reveals to us a multitude of sounds that characterize a hi-fi soundscape. We not only hear a large variety of sounds, but we also become sensitized to their complexities and their richness - characteristics which are absent from the urban soundscape.

The threshold of hearing is "tne slightest intensity level that excites the auditory system."[4] It is a relative term, since our hearing sensitivity shifts according to the ambient noise levels to which we are exposed,

> . . . somewhat similar to how the eye adjusts itself by changing the size of the iris to accommodate variable light levels. In the auditory system, the changes are called threshold shifts, which refer to an increase or decrease in the lowest sound level (or threshold) which can be heard at any moment. In contrast the absolute threshold of hearing is a statistical measure of the best hearing level of younger people with undamaged hearing. The auditory system responds to the average noise level of any environment by shifting its sensitivity - even for normal environments of modest levels.[5]

A hi-fi soundscape therefore offers optimum listening conditions, where our threshold of hearing is at its lowest and we can hear all sounds and their location clearly and, as a result, we can locate and orient ourselves in the soundscape. In an extremely quiet environment one may encounter what Emily Carr describes:

> The silence of our Western forests was so profound that our ears could scarcely comprehend it. If you spoke your voice came back to you as your face is thrown back to you in a mirror. It seemed as if the forest were so full of silence that there was no room for sounds.[6]

Psychologically our whole being can relax in a hi-fi environment. We do not have to fight a soundscape that bombards us with noise, promotional messages, and music as is the case in the city. Schafer says,"an excess of environmental noise produces sloppy listeners."[7] Alternately, a sparseness of environmental sounds produces alert ears and activates the ears as they never get activated in the city. Because sounds do not present themselves aggressively in a quiet environment the ears can reach out to

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[4]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 13.

[5]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 13.

[6]Emily Carr, The Book of Small (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 119.

[7]R. Murray Schafer, "Radical Radio", Ear Magazine, March, 1987, pp. 18-20.

them. Aside from the fact that we experience a lowering of our threshold of hearing, we also become acute listeners because the sounds in the wilderness have something to "say" to us about the environment, about the season, the time of day, about the life that we encounter in this space. We realize that this information is vital for our orientation, our survival and feelings of connectedness. If we open our ears to this soundscape without fear, we realize that every single sound in the wilderness has a meaning which is worthwhile knowing about. As we understand the meanings we are placed more firmly within the context of this environment. We become part of it and stand in an interactive relationship with it. Emily Carr expresses this relationship between self and soundscape in an intriguing way:

> The woods are brim full of thoughts. You just sit and roll your eye and everywhere is a subject thought, something saying something. Trick is to adjust one's ear trumpet. Don't try to word it. Don't force it to come to you – your way – but try and adapt yourself its way. Let it lead you. Don't put a leash on it and drag it.[8]

The healing effect that a hi-fi environment can have on us provides us with an opportunity to get in touch with the purity and acuity of hearing that we were born with. Over the years, as we become socialized beings in urban environments the ear gets conditioned not to listen actively. Both our social and acoustic environments encourage us at an early age to limit our listening capacity. Because the city exposes us all too often to unpleasant, meaningless and stressful acoustic information, we have made it a habit to ignore most of the sounds that enter our ears. This process is so gradual that most people are unaware of their own regression in listening.

Listening Levels

The hi-fi environment can also teach us that there are subtle differences in how we listen to the soundscape. Our attention toward the soundscape is in constant flux. Sometimes we zero in on it for specific information and sometimes we simply hear it. I want to outline these different levels of listening attention here because they form the basis of our acoustic interaction with the sonic environment. As the quality of the soundscape changes these levels change as well, and our interaction with our environment takes on a very different character.

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[8]Emily Carr, Hundreds and Thousands: The Journals of Emily Carr (Toronto, Vancouver: Clark, Irwin and Company, 1966), p. 260.

We always hear our environment. Hearing does not require a conscious focussing from us. It is involuntary. We hear the sounds around us whether we want to or not, simply because of the physical properties of our ears. Hearing means that we receive sounds somewhat passively. We may detect some change in what we hear, but not as attentive listeners, more as "witnesses" to the soundscape. Listening, on the other hand, implies an active relationship to the soundscape:

> . . .'listening for,' not 'listening to.' The level of attention may be casual and distracted, or in a state of readiness, and its scope may be global (a general "scan" of the entire environment) or focussed on a particular source to the exclusion of other sounds. However, in each case, listening can be consciously controlled.[9]

Truax distinguishes between three different levels of listening based on the degree of conscious attention we devote to the soundscape. Listening on any of these levels allows us to detect differences, to extract information, to orient ourselves to a greater or lesser extent. For any of these levels of listening to come into play a first stage of cognitive processing is necessary.

> We may characterize the first stage of cognitive processing as the detection of change. Detail is important, but only when it presents new information. However, the amount of detail involved in even simple acoustic situations is very large, and the differences which the brain can detect are often very small. Therefore a certain amount of screening of the incoming information is required to reduce the amount of data to that which may be significant.[10]

This process of screening functions differently on the three listening levels Truax has established. He calls these levels "listening-in-search", "listening-in-readiness", and "background listening". All three levels function best and most clearly in a hi-fi environment and "require a favourable environmental situation . . . to be effective."[11] They are useful references with which to examine the subtle differences in which we activate our aural sense. I will therefore describe them briefly in the following pages.

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[9]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 16.

[10]Truax, Acoustic Communication, pp. 16-17.

[11]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 19.

Listening-in-search, according to Truax, is the most active form of listening. It is a focussed listening for one type of sound to the exclusion of other sounds, in order to attain very specific information. Echo-whistling is perhaps the clearest example of this type of listening. Truax quotes the following earwitness account in this context:

> [The boat captains] used to get their positions by echo whistling. They'd give a short whistle and estimate the distance from the shoreline by the returning echo. If the echo came back from both sides at the same time they'd know that they were in the middle of the channel. They could recognize different shorelines by the different echoes - a rocky cliff, for example, would give a clear distinctive echo, whereas a sandy beach would give a more prolonged echo. They could even pick up an echo from logs. Nowadays, if the radar breaks down, they have to put out an anchor. Their ears aren't trained to listen their way through fog.[12]

Blind people are perhaps the only ones nowadays whose ears are sufficiently in practice to "listen their way through" a soundscape. Just like in echo whistling it is the behaviour of sound over time - time often in milliseconds - that gives the listener information about the size, shape, and surfaces of a space. It is this type of searching listening that makes it possible for blind people to orient themselves in space.

> For the blind man's tapping also gives an often slight but nevertheless detectable voice to things in an *echo. With the experience of echo, auditory space is opened up.* With echo the sense of distance as well as surface is present. And again surface significations anticipate the hearing of interiors. Nor, in the phenomenon of echo, is the lurking temporality of sound far away. The space of sound is "in" its timefulness.[13]

Echo and reverberation are caused by sound reflections. The difference between the two is that with reverberation separate repetitions of the original sound are not audible. For a repetition to be distinguishible from the original "it must occur at least 50 ms afterwards without being masked by the original signal."[14] Thus when Ihde says that "the space of sound is in its timefulness" he is talking about how, by the mere fact that echo and reverberation occur in time, they tell us about the space which the sound occupies. Sound occurs simultaneously in time and space. The blind person and the boat captain are simultaneously soundmakers and listeners. The sound they make gives them vital information about

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[12]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 18.

[13]Don Ihde, Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1976), p. 68..

[14]Truax, Handbook, p. 40.

the physical characteristics of their environment. Soundmaking and listening are in a completely balanced relationship in these two cases, specifically because they occur in a hi-fi soundscape.

Language expression also needs quietness if it is to be perceived in all its subtleties. We may all have experienced the intensity of a nighttime campfire, the pleasure of listening to each other's words, each other's voices, the pleasure of listening to the silences, the pleasure of making sound, talking or singing. A campfire is a completely aural experience. The fact that everyones' eyes are focussed on the fire creates a particularly intense listening situation. It is an ideal situation for listening-in-search. The intimacy and the visual focus of the fire provide a secure framework for people to listen to each other's voices in more depth than is possible in most other environments.

Listening-in-readiness, according to Truax, is a less intense form of listening than listening-in-search. In this state of aural perception we are more open to the soundscape as a whole; that is, we screen out fewer sounds, but are prepared to focus in on a sound when it holds some significance for us. Listening-in-readiness implies that we are familiar with the sound, and that we will recognize it as soon as it is audible, even if conscious attention is focussed elsewhere. That is, pattern matching can occur at a background level of attention, assuming the pattern is clear enough to be perceived. In the hi-fi environment this level of listening happens as a matter of course, because the environment itself is quiet enough and the ears are healthy. But it is important to stress here that while the ear is ready to receive the sound, the listener is usually occupied with another activity. Listening is not, in this case, the main activity. Truax gives the following example of listening-in-readiness:

> Perhaps the most extreme case in which such listening operates is when one is sleeping. The classic example is that of the mother being wakened by her baby's cry, but not by trucks or other noises. Subtle differences in familiar sounds convey information that is more important in judging the sound than simple identification. Even when a sound is unfamiliar or unexpected, this type of listening is ready to treat it as new information and evaluate its potential significance.[15]

In this example, sleep is the main "activity" and listening-in-readiness is the underlying preparedness. Thus when the parent wakes up from the baby's cry, he or she will listen more searchingly

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[15]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 19.

in order to understand the meaning of the crying. A similar process can also occur during a conscious state when our foreground attention is engaged in another activity.

Background listening is the third level of listening that Truax identifies. This type of listening also functions best in a hi-fi environment. It is perhaps the least active mode of listening and therefore it can perhaps be defined as a "global overhearing" of the soundscape. There is no conscious focussing in on any one sound. Background listeners are aware of the soundscape, but their main attention is focussed on another activity. Truax also says that:

> Perhaps the most common reason for sounds to be heard in background listening is that they are a usual occurrence, and therefore expected and predictable. They may be singled out for attention if the need should arise, but normally they aren't specifically noticed.[16]

An important point to stress here is that background listening, even though it is not a conscious focussing in on the soundscape, implies a marking of distinctions and a remembering of those distinctions. In a hi-fi soundscape in particular, background listening functions so that one can hear all aspects of the sonic environment distinctly. Familiar ambiences are usually listened to in that way and interestingly enough, their particular qualities can be recalled a long time later. When asked about the soundscape of their childhood or youth old people, even though they often do not remember the specific details, will always remember the general atmosphere or the meanings that the sound or soundscape had for them.[17] It is interesting to note in this context that memory works best in a hi-fi environment, and functions less effectively when exposed to high sound levels and to sound overload. Asking old people about the sounds of their past therefore is best done in quiet environments. It gives them a chance to listen back to those times.

A sonic environment always has its own "tonality", made up of the sounds that accompany us through daily life. These sounds connect us to the ongoing cycles and rhythms of the natural and social environment. We do not have to focus in on them in order to know that they have occurred. We hear

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[16]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 21.

[17]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 18.

them as background, they form the acoustic backdrop to our existence. They place themselves into our memory in such a way that we can retrieve the information later. We do not receive the sounds consciously, yet we derive information from them about the goings-on in our environment. The sounds that give a place its "tonality" are called keynote sounds. Schafer explains that:

> Keynote is a musical term; it is the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition. It is the anchor or fundamental tone and although the material may modulate around it, often obscuring its importance, it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning. Keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously; they are overheard but cannot be overlooked; for keynote sounds become listening habits in spite of themselves . . . Even though keynote sounds may not always be heard consciously, the fact that they are ubiquitously there suggests the possibility of a deep and pervasive influence on our behaviour and moods. The keynote sounds of a given place are important because they help to outline the character of men [people] living among them.[18]

A keynote sound is not necessarily a specific type of sound. The term refers more to how it is perceived, that is, in the background of one's perception. Whereas the keynote sounds of places close to nature would be water, and wind, for example, the keynote sounds of the modern city consist of flatline, broadband and steady-state sounds. They are created by traffic, industry, electrical hums, and so on. Compared to the keynote sounds of a hi-fi environment which are information rich and put one in touch with the soundscape, the urban sounds are low in acoustic information and high in redundancy, and put one out of touch with the soundscape. Sounds that are low in information can be put into the background of one's perception more easily than the natural sounds and, can in fact be totally forgotten and ignored. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section. However, I must point out here that background listening, because of the listener's more global approach to the soundscape, and the lack of conscious focussing, can become problematical in the lo-fi as well as the schizophonic environment. Truax warns us that:

> When background noise levels increase too much, there is extra stress on the body and a greater information load on the brain. The introduction of low information background sounds suggests a trend toward homogeneous environments with poor acoustic definition. Such environments do not encourage more active types of listening, and their prevalence may prevent listeners from experiencing any alternative. Moreover once background listening becomes a habit, it is ready for exploitation by the media. The power of long-term subconscious association can be tapped for commercial ends through frequent keynote like

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[18]Schafer, Tuning, p. 9.

repetition.[19]

Listening, Soundmaking and Desire in the Hi- Fi Soundscape

As I mentioned earlier, hearing is involuntary and listening requires a focussing. In order to be able to focus, listening involves desire. The listener has to want to listen, has to want to hear the meaning in sound, in language, and in music. She/he has to have desire to receive sound input.

The sparseness of sound in a hi-fi environment makes the desire to listen a natural process. We reach out to the sounds because we want and need them for orientation and information, for locating ourselves within a place. In other words, the hi-fi environment creates a desire in us to use our ears in an active way. It is the desire to connect to the place we are in that motivates us to listen. We desire to "be of that place", to interact with it.

Along with the desire to listen, the hi-fi environment also puts us in touch with a desire to make sounds. Initially we become aware of the fact that we are soundmakers simply by moving through the soundscape. Many urban people are unaware of themselves as soundmakers on this basic a level. Yet our own sounds, such as walking, breathing, talking, and so on, tell us, via the feedback process, where and who we are in that place. We may even experience our own sounds as being too loud . We may have to stop walking to hear all that is going on in the soundscape, especially when we have never learned - as the indigenous hunter would have learned - to move through an environment so quietly that our footsteps do not mask any other sounds. In the hi-fi soundscape we can get in touch with ourselves as soundmakers. With our sounds we contribute to the overall acoustic "picture" of a place. If we can hear both our own sounds and those of the surrounding soundscape then we are in a balanced acoustic situation. It is our responsibility to keep that balance.

When we arrive in a hi-fi soundscape after long travel in a motorized vehicle we usually talk louder than necessary. Our reduced threshold of hearing and our loud voices that we acquired from shouting over the loud motor noise causes us initially to impose a sound level onto the hi-fi environment that is out

[19]Truax, Acoustic Communication, pp. 23-24.

of proportion with the ambient levels around us. We may be quite unaware of the imposing quality of our voices. As our threshold of hearing is lowered and as we get in touch with the quietness, our own voices will gradually quieten down to a more balanced relationship with the soundscape. Only then may we become aware of our irresponsible entry into the hi-fi soundscape. If we spend a long enough time in a wilderness and have adjusted to the quiet, a desire emerges to express, to voice, to put ourselves acoustically into the environment - but now in a more sensitive way than when we first arrived. The hi-fi soundscape encourages this. Its acoustic space allows us to explore and find our own voice, to find the voice that wants to interact with the voices of that place, to find the music for and of such a place.

One can assume that in societies where nature is recognized as the source for both physical and spiritual nourishment - such as is the case with native Indians - that the voices of nature and of self are listened to. But when the desire to listen to nature has stopped or has been masked by urban din, is the desire to use our own voices in danger of being forgotten? By the same token, if we have lost the desire to use our voices, then have we also lost the desire to listen to nature?

There are, in fact, many people in the world who have never heard the voices inside themselves that speak, respond to and echo from wilderness places. An urban person has to rediscover this desire to listen to nature, to go "out there" and find repose. It is, nowadays, a political act to find nature's voice as well as one's own. Because in that act, on this continent, one moves in opposition to the dominant political voices who no longer hear nature's voices, who no longer understand the meanings of nature's voices, but can only see nature as a place for resource extraction and profit. A judge's statement from a recent land claims trial in B.C. demonstrates this very clearly: when Gitskan Indian Mary Johnson, 77, wanted to sing a sacred song that is part of her tribe's history during the trial, B.C. Supreme Court Chief Justice Allan McEachern said "I have a tin ear, . . . so it's not going to do any good to sing it to me."[20] What the native Indians have known from "time immemorial", has to be rediscovered: that nature's voices must be listened to and that our voices and ears must be in tune with them.

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[20]Vancouver Sun, May 30, 1987.

The lo-fi environment is the opposite of the hi-fi environment: a place of poor signal-to-noise ratio, of overcrowding of sounds, of high noise levels and poor acoustic definition. The ear cannot reach out to sounds. Instead the sounds come to the listener, whether they are desired or not. The listener is enclosed by "soundwalls" and therefore cannot have a clear acoustic perspective. Individual sounds are masked in an overcrowded situation and lose their clear acoustic definition.

> In the ultimate lo-fi soundscape the signal-to-noise ratio is one-to-one and it is no longer possible to know what, if anything, is to be listened to.[21]

Such a sonic environment discourages listening, makes orientation difficult and cannot give us a sense of place. It is created by the mechanized sounds of urban society, whose acoustic qualities differ profoundly from those of natural sounds. As Truax points out:

> The influence of technological sounds strikes at the basis of acoustic complexity. These sounds are generally what we call "flatline" sounds which by their constancy of quality (as in a drone), or their broad band spectrum (as in white noise, rumbles and hisses) have little discernible pattern of interest. It is not only their often high intensity or piercing timbre that makes such sounds unpleasant to listen to, but also the redundancy of their information content . . . in conventional environmental perception, the sounds of technology generally produce a uniformity in the environment and dulling of listening, if not hearing abilities.[22]

Blind people who, as I have mentioned, orient themselves by listening to sound's subtle behaviour in time and space, cannot get vital cues for orientation in a lo-fi environment. Some city governments who have recognized this problem have tried to help blind people by installing clicking devices at major intersections that signal red and green lights with different rhythmic patterns. A clicking sound is a good signal for this purpose because its sharp attack and high frequency content cuts through the continuous, broadband sound of high density traffic. Without this, downtown streets are sonically the most confusing places for a blind person. (They are, in fact, confusing to seeing people as well. But we often do not notice the acoustic chaos around us because we tend to compensate with our eyes.) Parallel tall buildings

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[21]Schafer, Tuning, p. 71.

[22]R. Murray Schafer (Ed.), Five Village Soundscapes (Vancouver, B.C.: A.R.C. Publications, 1977), p. 78.

create what is called a "canyon effect", where the sounds of traffic or construction are caught and multiply reflected in this "canyon" of concrete and glass surfaces. Not only do these sounds mask the tapping of a cane, they also converge from all sides, so that localization of sounds and of oneself in relation to the sounds is impossible. Blind people therefore experience more acutely that they literally do not exist acoustically in such a place. And because the sounds do not provide the searching listener with vital information, their meaninglessness becomes more obvious. Thus while the hi-fi soundscape is a supportive environment which provides us with information that is meaningful to our existence and necessary for our survival and sanity, the lo-fi soundscape is a threat to our existence. It does not seem exaggerated when Attali says, "listening to noise is a little bit like being killed."[23]

Truax expresses the same idea when he talks about the lack of feedback that a lo-fi environment provides for the listener:

> . . . one receives little feedback from one's own sounds as well as others', either directly or indirectly. A simple measure of the situation is whether one can hear one's footsteps in such an environment. If not, one is acoustically "cut off" from the most basic connection one has to an environment, and the extent of one's personal "aural space" is reduced to less than that of human proportions.[24]

Such an environment is characterized by a particular kind of absence: the absence of human sounds and the human voice. I call this the "silence of our cities", an eerie silence that underlies the racket of the lo-fi soundscape. Human soundmaking here is reduced to the bare essentials, or needs to be shouted above the din. The most dramatic example of the interference of noise with human soundmaking is when a child wants to communicate to her parent on a busy street. Because the small child does not yet understand that her voice cannot carry far in such an environment, she usually does not raise her voice. As a result it becomes a strain for the parent to hear the child. Tension can potentially arise, especially if the parent is unaware of what causes this difficulty in communication in the first place. Thus, our inclination to use our voice in a lo-fi soundscape is highly reduced.

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[23]Attali, p. 28.

[24]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 20.

Aside from silencing our voices the lo-fi environment also damages our hearing. It is believed that the city is loud enough to cause a gradual hearing loss in all urban dwellers even if they are not exposed to loud work environments on a daily basis.[25] Simply walking along a busy road, driving a car, riding in a bus or subway, visiting a nightclub with loud music, and so on, causes a temporary threshold shift. If the ears do not get enough rest from such sound environments the threshold shift can develop into a permanent condition, a "permanent theshold shift".

Thus, the temporary threshold shift as a protective device is only useful when the exposure to loud sound is sporadic. Long term exposure to lo-fi environments creates a physical condition in the inner ear that decreases the ear's sensitivity and eventually leads to an uncritical stance towards the soundscape. People in such situations tend to say that they have "gotten used" to the noise. An extreme example of this dynamic occurs when one enters a noisy situation such as a nightclub with live music, or a factory. The first reaction is one of shock, but within a few seconds it doesn't seem "that bad" anymore. The reason for this is that the ears' protective devices have been activated immediately - the haircells have been saturated by high noise levels, which has the immediate effect of desensitizing our hearing. Sounds simply do not seem as loud anymore. Most people are quite unaware of this physical process and will simply believe that the sound environment itself is not as loud as they first thought. This gradual development of hearing loss is dangerous, because it creates a vicious circle: loud sounds cause a temporary threshold shift, the temporary threshold shift causes a desensitization to the soundscape, desensitized listeners will be unaware of high sound levels and may need them turned up higher for aural stimulation. Without comparison, without the occasional exposure to hi-fi soundscapes, the urban person will not be able to break this vicious circle. It in fact seems "natural" to many urban people to be exposed to lo-fi situations on a daily basis. It seems "natural" to live in an acoustically imbalanced environment where there is an overload of sound input that causes both a desensitization of the ear and a silencing of the voice. Truax rightly points out that this situation has direct implications for social behaviour and community life.

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[25]The term used for such hearing loss is "sociocusis", that is, hearing loss from non-occupational noise exposure. Truax, Handbook, p. 112.

> At one level it is slow hearing loss, at another, a lack of inclination to listen carefully. The less useful information there is in the immediate environment, and the less one is dependent on that information, the greater the decline in listening ability. The result, we claim, is an alienation that leads to reduced social interaction and community cohesion.[26]

Since the mechanical sounds that make up the lo-fi soundscape are usually continuous, flatline and broadband in character, they literally function as soundwalls that separate the individual from a clear acoustic perception of the soundscape and may therefore lead to social fragmentation and alienation.

> In communicational terms, "negative feedback" is what allows a course of action to be modified based on the information received about its results. It is, in fact, a positive process that allows behaviour to be guided and kept in control. Many occupations and common tasks involve hearing the results of our action. We need to hear how well the nail is hit, how a motor is responding, and what sounds denote malfunction. The lo-fi environment destroys the fundamental basis which permits effective acoustic communication.[27]

Soundwalls also separate us from other people, by masking the sound of our voices. By extension, they separate us from our inner voices, in that we simply cannot hear ourselves think. As a result people tend to be discouraged both from listening and soundmaking. Thus, when Ihde asks, "but if the world is devocalized, then what becomes of listening?"[28] he recognizes the intimate relationship between ear and voice. Even though he asks this question in a slightly different context, he points to the same relationship that is at the centre of this thesis: the relationship between listening and soundmaking. If we no longer use our voices in the urban lo-fi environment then what happens to our listening capacity? Or vice versa: if we no longer listen, how will we notice that we are no longer using our voices? Neither our own voice nor the sounds around us will have much meaning to us. The lo-fi soundscape effectively separates us from our own voice and our own self. At the same time, it invades us deeply in that the soundwaves of a lo-fi environment literally shake our body. Ihde says:

> Phenomenologically I do not merely hear with my *ears*, I *hear* with my whole body. My ears are at best the *focal* organs of hearing. This may be detected quite dramatically in listening to loud rock music. The bass notes reverberate in my stomach, and even my feet

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[26]Schafer, Five Village Soundscapes, pp. 78-79.

[27]Truax, Acoustic Communication, pp. 20-21.

[28]Ihde, p. 15.

"hear" the sound of the auditory orgy.[29]

Deaf people can attest to this bodily reception of soundwaves. "The city borders the skin", as Norbert Ruebsaat says in his poem "A Walk through the City",[30] expresses exactly this invasion of the urban soundscape into the core of our being.

Under such circumstances it is understandable that people are discouraged from listening to their environment. Truax looks at this situation in a slightly different way:

> When we hear too much, we actually listen to very little . . . The attention and concentration that is required to listen carefully and understand sonic relationships deeply is generally not encouraged by the lo-fi environments in which we too often live or work. Although steady sounds are less distracting to one's concentration, they also contribute to an environment with less acoustic definition, less meaningful information and less reason to promote interaction. Moreover, the information processing nature of the brain dictates that when too much information is presented to it in too disorganized a fashion, there is a tendency to "skim" the content, rather than analyze it carefully. In other words, more may be experienced, but less is absorbed.[31]

One of the most disturbing influences, then, that a lo-fi environment has on people is the lack of desire to listen. It is disturbing because it means a resignation and an acceptance of an unsatisfactory situation. Habituation to "put up" with the noise and a general unawareness of the soundscape and its meanings mark the urban person. People have lost touch with the experience of hi-fi soundscapes by accepting noisy environments.

The subtle distinctions that Truax makes between various listening levels seem out of place in this context. Not only does the lo-fi environment discourage detailed listening, it also reduces the willingness or the desire for such listening. Listening-in-search, where one focusses on one sound for information is almost impossible because of interference of other, perhaps louder sounds. Much energy has to be spent to screen out the rest of the soundscape. There are certain professions, however, where people do have to

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[29]Ihde, p. 45.

[30]Norbert Ruebsaat, "A Walk through the City", Musicworks, No. 26, Winter, 1984. This poem also forms the basis for one of my tape compositions.

[31]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 145.

listen in such a way. For example, anybody working with machinery, such as the car mechanic, has to listen to the machine or motor to diagnose a problem. In general, though, this type of listening is rarely exercised in a lo-fi situation.

Similarly, listening-in-readiness can be extremely frustrating in a lo-fi situation. Unpredictable sonic intrusions will discourage this "readiness". An example from my youth demonstrates this clearly. Every day around noon the milkman would stop in the neighbourhood and ring his bell, which had the sound of a small ship's bell, to announce his arrival. My mother used to ask me to " keep my ears open" for that bell. On one occasion there was construction on the street for several weeks. It was possible but difficult to hear the bell through the noise. What normally was a listening-in-readiness situation in a hi-fi soundscape became a listening-in-search situation in a lo-fi soundscape. After a few days I gave up and simply stood by the road watching for the arrival of the milkman. I noticed that our neighbours had done the same thing.

Background listening takes on a different function in a lo-fi environment. In the hi-fi soundscape background listening is a kind of "keeping track" of what goes on in one's acoustic surroundings while one is involved with another activity. In a lo-fi environment it is simply not interesting to keep track of the soundscape. It is easier to block it out altogether, to put it so much in the background of one's perception that it is no longer noticed. Background listening then becomes more of an unconscious intake of sounds, where detection of differences is removed from listening perception, where nothing is remembered, because nothing memorable is happening acoustically.

In a lo-fi environment not only the desire to listen but also the desire to make sounds is reduced. The human voice gets overpowered by higher noise levels and by an overload of sound. The result is an acoustic imbalance between the sound input that a person experiences and the sound output that comes from that person. Too much sound input discourages sound output. Thus, the lo-fi soundscape not only creates an imbalance between ourselves and the environment, it also creates an imbalance within ourselves. We have become receptacles for a lot of sound, but we have forgotten what it is like to be

soundmakers. In fact, when one listens carefully to human voices in the city it becomes quite clear that we do not use our voices to full capacity. It is both Schafer's and Truax's contention that the broadband and flatline sound of the lo-fi soundscape has flattened out the human voice. Since the lo-fi environment masks the subtleties of vocal expression, there is no reason to speak with all our vocal power.

Children perhaps work hardest in our society to keep a balance between sound input and sound output. They are extremely sensitive listeners and will hear what we have learned to ignore. We know that they hear these sounds because we can hear their imitations of them. This is their way of getting to know the soundscape, to interact with it and find a relationship to it. It is the same way in which they become familiar with language. Often they will imitate extremely noisy machinery, and shout at the top of their voice, trying to compete with the noise. Unfortunately this kind of soundmaking is either not heard or not appreciated, and by the time these children are teenagers many of them have lost confidence in their voices and in their expressive abilities.

A sense of self is established by the relationship and interaction between ourselves and our environment. If this interaction does not exist then the implication is that we cannot get a sense of self. Our self then is somehow lost in the noise of the environment and the noise of the environment has become part of our self. As Truax says:

> The long-term effects of noise, which have hitherto been understood only in terms of physiological stress, hearing loss, and interference with task performance, can be seen . . . as the *obscuring* of auditory images that define the listener's long-term relationships to the environment. Or rather, the *meaninglessness* of noise becomes the long-term auditory image that pervades the psyche of the individual, and ultimately the society. It is these images which have no outer voice but only their own private language that are most in need of rehabilitation and protection in the modern world.[32]

To say it in an extreme way, the noise has extinguished the autonomous soundmaking selves in us and our voices have become indistinguishable from the noise. This is perhaps what Attali means when he says that "listening to noise is a little bit like being killed.[33] He adds that:

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[32]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 56.

[33]Attali, p. 28.

> noise had always been experienced as destruction, disorder, dirt, pollution, an aggression against the code–structuring messages. In all cultures, it is associated with the idea of the weapon, blasphemy, plague.[34]

The difference nowadays, however, is that noise – in the literal sense of a lo–fi soundscape – has become an accepted presence in urban society, something one puts up with. It is no longer recognized as a "weapon". In fact, noisemaking is generally participated in, in an atmosphere of ***mitmachen*** as Adorno would call it. In many cases it is, in fact, the only "voice" people have and feel comfortable – even powerful – with: the noise of their machinery and gadgetry. But to participate in that voice means to silence human voices and to silence silence. Not to participate in it, ***nicht mitmachen***, but to listen actively <u>despite</u> the noise, to seek out silent soundscapes, and to use one's own voice for soundmaking, seem to have become oppositional activities.

<u>Listening, Soundmaking and the Schizophonic Environment</u>

It is my contention that noise paved the way for the widespread acceptance of music–as–environment. For, the most important prerequisite for such acceptance has been fulfilled: people have been conditioned <u>not</u> to listen by living and working in lo–fi environments. The scene has been set for the proliferation of schizophonic environments.

A schizophonic environment is one where sounds that are transmitted electroacoustically are imposed onto the existing acoustic environment. Schizophonia has been defined as "the split between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction."[35] The term schizophonia was first coined by R.M. Schafer,

> Use of the Greek "schizo", meaning split or separation, emphasizes the difference in context which characterizes electroacoustic manipulation. Schafer points to the word as being "nervous" and makes a comparison to the psychological aberration of schizophrenia.[36]

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[34]Attali, p. 27.

[35]Truax, <u>Acoustic Communication</u>, p. 120.

[36]Truax, <u>Acoustic Communication</u>, p. 120.

Schizophonia, besides being the split between an original sound and its electroacoustic transmission, also means a split in two other ways: 1) a split between the environment the listener is in and the world that is projected by the transmitted sound, 2) a split between what the ears hear and what the rest of the senses perceive.

Schizophonia occurs when a sound is removed from its source and played back in an environment other than the one in which it was created. Anybody who listens to records, radio, cassettes, experiences schizophonia. It has become a "natural" aural experience for most people in urban society to have an imposed electroacoustic sound in their work or living environments. As Truax says,

> The challenge of the schizophonic situation for the listener is to make sense out of the juxtaposition of two different contexts. In many cases, the "sense" becomes conventional acceptance. We come to expect that voices should appear from the walls and ceilings in public places such as airports and train stations to give us information. We think nothing of hearing music (even of a 100-piece orchestra) emanating from the smallest places.[37]

A schizophonic environment often consists exclusively of musical sounds. However, in many cases when the radio is turned on in a place, the listener will also hear voices and advertising. Much could be said about the schizophonic experience of voice, especially since, in the majority of cases, it is the experience of the male voice. Much could also be said about the schizophonic experience of advertising. However, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss these aspects of schizophonia. The emphasis here will be on music-as-environment, i.e. electroacoustically imposed music that we encounter in every sphere of our lives and that has become an environmental sound. Judging by the amount of music one hears everywhere in public and private places one can assume that music-as-environment has become widely accepted. It has been accepted in the same sense in which the lo-fi soundscape has been accepted: it is not listened to, it is received in a passive way. Judging by the limited capacity of vocal expression in the urban soundscape - I'm not talking about the amplified voice, but about the acoustic voice - one can perhaps speculate that music-as-environment has become a replacement of our own voices and our own music. As Attali says about the role of music today,

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[37]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 120.

> . . . it has replaced natural background noise, invaded and even anulled the noise of machinery. It slips into the growing spaces of activity void of meaning and relations, into the organization of everyday life: in all of the world's hotels, all of the elevators, all of the factories and offices, all of the airplanes, all of the cars, everywhere it signifies the presence of a power that needs no flag or symbol: musical repetition confirms the presence of repetitive consumption, of the flow of noises as ersatz sociality.[38]

Attali touches here on one of the most important characteristics of music-as-environment: its repetitive nature and how as that it gives voice to repetitive society. Even though one may not hear the same piece of music twice in a day - although one often does - the various pieces one encounters do not differ that much from each other. There is a uniformity about much of the music one hears in the public sphere which gives one the sense of endless repetition of the same piece. "The music conveyed with repetition . . . is in fact repetitive music in the literal sense."[39]

The electroacoustic medium makes the exact repetition of music possible, whereas no acoustically produced sound is ever the same. Once a sound has been "frozen" on tape or record it cannot be altered. Other than altering the sound of the playback system, the acoustic content of the music or the voice will stay the same, right down to the subtlest inflections of a musical sound or a spoken word.

Those who produce and utilize music-as-environment therefore have the power to impose a certain "tone", a mood onto the environment. The listener often has no choice and has to accept the atmosphere that the music sets up in a space. In fact, we do encounter many environments where the mood has been predetermined for us. Attali talks about the implications of such a situation:

> Possessing the means of recording allows one to monitor noises, to maintain them, and to control their repetition within a determined code. In the final analysis, it allows one to impose one's own noise and to silence others.[40]

Thus when somebody - this could be an individual or a leased music company - imposes a mood by putting music into a space, a power relationship is set up between those that put the sound there and those that receive it. If the tone is set without leaving space for different acoustic expression, other voices are

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[38]Attali, p. 111.

[39]Attali, p. 102.

[40]Attali, p. 87.

silenced. Thus the schizophonic environment completes the already existing imbalance between listening and soundmaking: not only is there more sound input than sound output, but the people who take the sound in are rarely the same as the ones that produce it or broadcast it into a space.

Music-as-environment masks both noise and silence. When Attali locates music "between noise and silence" he perhaps does not mean it in such a literal way. He says,

> Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age and at the same time produces them . . . time traverses music and music gives meaning to time. [41]

Thus, if noise is violence that needs to be channeled, then silence contains the potential for individuality and imagination that needs to be directed. Music has the power to fulfil both those needs. Attali says that:

> . . . music, prior to all commercial exchange, *creates political order because it is a minor form of sacrifice*. In the space of noise, *it symbolically signifies the channeling of violence and the imaginary, the ritualization of a murder substituted for the general violence, the affirmation that a society is possible if the imaginary of the individual is sublimated.*[42] (emphasis his)

Yet when we look at the function of music-as-environment nowadays the meanings of the role of music change. The music may create political order not because people are active participants in the musicmaking, and therefore in setting the "tone" of the order, but rather because they are passive receptors of an already set tone and therefore no longer hear the "violence", the noise. Attali is right in saying music is an "affirmation that a society is possible" when we consider that musicmaking and listening is a shared activity. But music-as-environment does not function as a shared activity, and therefore its widespread and passively accepted presence in today's society throws up the question whether under these circumstances a society is indeed still possible.

Music-as-environment is inscribed between noise and silence in a masking fashion, as what has sometimes been called "acoustic perfume." It masks the meanings of the noise and the meanings of the silence. Background music advertisers are proud of this function when they say, "see the difference in

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[41]Attali, p. 19.

[42]Attali, pp. 25-26.

people everywhere, when no-one is irritated by noise or embarrassed by silence."[43] Because the desire to listen has already vanished in the lo-fi soundscape, the music is, in fact, received gladly into the urban environment. The music makes it possible to escape from the unpleasant situations an urban lo-fi soundscape creates. Thus the music often has a positive, stimulating effect - stimulating in comparison to what was there before, or what would be there otherwise. The music masks the noises of authority (the factory, the store chain, etc.) and talks in a more subtle voice of authority. It hides them behind a "pleasant" soundwall of music.

The music also masks the silence. The passive listener, who has been conditioned to live with an acoustic backdrop, will experience silence as something negative, as a vacuum, a nothingness, an emptiness. This is a frightening experience for people unless they know how to activate their hearing sense again, or unless they understand that the ear simply needs to recover physically before it can hear the subtleties of a hi-fi soundscape. If people do not give themselves that time to adjust, they will feel lost in silence and will desire sound around them. Music-as-environment then becomes as desired a sound in such a situation as in a lo-fi soundscape. It comforts because it fills a gap, it gives the ear something to do. But it does not make it function actively. It creates a kind of passive comfort. It creates what Truax calls the "distracted listener".

> The distracted listener does not *want* to be disturbed by anything requiring thought, and the bored listener merely wants to be entertained.[44]

Thus the distracted listener is very much a product of the lo-fi environment, where a lot of groundwork of conditioning has already been done. The desire for music-as-environment, whether to mask the lo-fi soundscape or silence, is a direct result of long-term exposure to meaninglessness and redundancy in the urban soundscape. Music-as-environment is often experienced as something meaningful because of the previously experienced meaninglessness in the lo-fi soundscape.

> . . . the sound is used to fill a gap or deficiency in the environment, whether psychological or physical. If the environment is noisy or distracting, background music (or even white noise)

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[43]Q-Music advertising, Vancouver, B.C.

[44]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 170.

> will mask it. If an activity is boring or frustrating, pleasant music will make it seem easier to endure. Loneliness and lack of personal contact may be countered by use of radio. And for the young, popular music and commercial radio provide an instant form of peer group image to adopt.[45]

The mere fact that there is musical sound is a pleasant experience. It does not seem to matter what kind of music it is. In fact, people even choose to expose themselves to endlessly repeated musical sameness. Truax claims that:

> Through repetition, a psychological dependence builds up between the listener and the background sound. What begins in the natural soundscape as the brain's ability to focus attention on what is of immediate importance and screen out what is not, changes to a situation where the listener *needs* the background sound in order to function.[46]

However, the music does not change or improve the unsatisfactory conditions that the distracted listener is exposed to. It simply keeps the listener in a distracted and silenced mode – unless he or she chooses to sing along with it. It is impossible to find one's own musical voice in an environment that imposes an external source of music. Where people used to make their own music to speed up their work or to make it easier, their voices now are either covered up by noise or have been replaced by music. This external "voice" of music imposes rhythms and tone that are external to our own body rhythms and our own moods.

> The monologue of standardized, stereotyped music accompanies and hems in a daily life in which in reality no one has any right to speak any more. Except those among the exploited who can still use their music to shout their suffering, their dreams of the absolute freedom. What is called music today is all too often only a disguise for the monopoly of power.[47]

Those that "still use their music to shout their suffering" play a music that cannot be exploited for repetitive replay on radio, nor can it be used as background music. It has too much to say, it has a voice that demands listening. It has the original sound of music, of shared concerns, of shared musicmaking and listening. It is not until its voices have become acceptable to the ears of power that the music is in danger of being appropriated by the forces that create the "monologue of standardized, stereotyped

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[45]Truax, Acoustic Communication p. 152.

[46]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 152.

[47]Attali, pp. 8–9.

music."

If people hear music-as-environment in a distracted fashion, they will not be aware that this music has certain meanings and may possibly be, as Attali suggests, "a disguise for the monopoly of power." Truax acknowledges this when he says:

> The distracted listener does not consciously screen and evaluate what is being heard, and therefore is a prime target for what might be termed subliminal inculcation of values.[48]

Music-as-environment is closely associated with commercial environments, is in fact part of them. Music and commercialism can no longer be separated from each other, because, "today, wherever there is music there is money."[49] Music-as-environment is always heard in environments where commodities are exchanged, where profit is made. The music's function there is to promote and encourage the exchange of commodities, to speed up the process of commodity production, to increase the flow of money. It is this close connection between money and music that gives music powers that the distracted listener cannot be aware of. Attali points at this depth of the music's meanings in the following paragraph:

> In this respect music is not innocent: unquantifiable and unproductive, a pure sign that is now *for sale*, it provides a rough sketch of the society under construction, a society in which the informal is mass produced and consumed, in which difference is artificially recreated in the multiplication of semi-identical objects.[50]

Thus the distracted listener who does not consciously listen to the music will also not be conscious of the deep connection between music and money. That which splits the listeners off from reality, from the physical, acoustic environment, links them to the world of money and commodity exchange.

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[48]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 157.

[49]Attali, p. 3.

[50]Attali, p. 5.

The Ultimate Schizophonic Experience

An extreme case of schizophonia where these relationships are emphasized is created by the "walkman", the portable cassette recorder. The walkman allows one to take schizophonia wherever one goes. It allows one to "shut out the world" in whatever circumstances one might happen to find oneself. It allows one to consistently and continuously remove oneself from the actual soundscape and social environment that one is in. Headphone listeners are telling the world that they want to be left alone. It is no longer a matter of one sound environment imposing itself on another. It is, as Truax calls it, an "embedding" of one environment within another.

> The schizophonic split between electroacoustic and natural environments becomes nearly complete in this situation. The ***choice*** of audio environment has the attraction for the listener of being entirely one's own. The psychological "shutting out" of the environment that we described . . . as being typical of the lo-fi environment, now becomes the electroacoustic answer to noise pollution.[51]

A musical environment, chosen by the walkman wearer, is an idealized environment within the acoustic chaos of the city. The listener does not hear the chaos, but only his or her favourite music. In other words, the listener has a self selected soundtrack that accompanies the visual experience. Life becomes like a movie: the "soundtrack" gives specific meanings to the "picture", with the difference that the "picture" in this case is not on a screen but is, in fact, real life (observed from within the protective cocoon of the headphones).

Wearing a walkman, however, also has to be acknowledged as an active attempt to find distance from a meaningless and stressful urban soundscape, and an active re-direction towards what the ears want to hear. In fact, there is a surfacing of desire here, a desire for meaning, a desire to stimulate the ears, a desire to hear difference, a desire to listen.

> Buckminster Fuller used to say that garbage was an unpackaged product. Noise is garbage. Headphone listening put a protective seal between it and the customer. It is not a corrective against noise pollution but a prophylactic. It represents a determined effort by the public to escape sonic interruptions and regain the serenity of sustained, selective listening.[52]

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[51]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 121.

[52]Schafer, Radical Radio, p. 19.

This effort or desire for selective listening, however, remains directed away from the environment, away from community. The walkman creates an extreme social separation from community. Music-as-environment does the same thing in a less obvious fashion. But when we consider that most public indoor environments contain music and when we consider that most people put music into their private living space as an acoustic backdrop to their life, it becomes obvious that music-as-environment has the same function as walkman listening: that of social separation. Many indoor spaces - often with artificial lighting, no windows, and with artificial air, are entirely separate from the outdoors world. The indoor world is as separate, if not more separate from the community as the "walkman world".[53]

When we examine Truax's definition of the acoustic community we can see how far removed the individual is in a schizophonic environment from an experience of community.

> Our definition of the acoustic community means that acoustic cues and signals constantly keep the community in touch with what is going on from day to day within it. Such a system is "information rich" in terms of sound, and therefore sound plays a significant role in defining the community spatially, temporally in terms of daily and seasonal cycles, as well as socially and culturally in terms of shared activities, rituals and dominant institutions. The community is linked and defined by its sounds.[54]

A schizophonic environment separates one from the acoustic community and excludes shared experience. What is shared is not the complexity of community living but the homogeneous and repetitive sound of music-as-environment. With headphone listening, not even that is shared. Instead, listeners move through a private world that shuts out noise and social problems and in which it can be pretended that the world is "full of music". If the community with its noise and social problems does not exist for the listener, then concern for these have been eliminated from the listener's framework. It is a logical extension of what music-as-environment has been successful in creating: a sense of illusory comfort for the individual separate from community. However, where people were passive receptors of music-as-environment, with headphone listening they become active and willing participants in the

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[53]This is demonstrated clearly in a magazine advertisement from the early '80s for Technics home audio equipment: in the foreground a woman is relaxing in an easy chair in her living room, listening to music. The sound equipment is in the background. The text above the ad says, "and when the city closes in, the music sets me free."

[54]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 58.

creation of a separate, illusory reality.

> Orwell warned us that we will be overcome by an externally imposed oppression. But in Huxley's vision no Big Brother is required to deprive people of their autonomy, maturity and history. As he saw it people will come to love their oppression, to adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think.[55]

Headphone listening is a good example of this. It is a chosen tool to alienate ourselves from our social environment, as well as alienating ourselves from our own voices. The listener's acoustic space is tiny under headphones (even though reverberation of the music gives the illusion of a large space), and the voice is totally silenced. The imbalance between listening and soundmaking is complete. With a signal so close to one's ears one cannot hear one's own voice, aside from the fact that such strong sound input simply does not invite soundmaking. The silencing is complete, a chosen voluntary silencing.

With this continuous musical input the ears will experience aural fatigue and a temporary threshold shift. Thus, many people will feel inclined to turn up the headphone levels as their temporary threshold shift sets in. To understand how stimulated our ears become by headphone listening it is interesting to make the following comparison: listen to music under headphones for an hour and note how a temporary threshold shift sets in. Then wear earplugs for an hour to protect your hearing and note the lowering of the threshold of hearing. The increased aural acuity that results gives a heightened sense of the environment's acoustic quality. It is interesting to note as well that earplugs lead to a quieter voice, headphones to a louder one.

The widespread need for this schizophonic existence, this musical separateness, resembles the desire for womblike comfort. The difference is that this "womb" is artificially created and therefore disconnected from the real world, whereas the real womb is intricately connected with it. To seek out an artificially created "womb" is like suffering from aural addiction. It is a psychological addiction that puts a screen of illusion between us and the world as well as, and perhaps more seriously, between us and our imagination, between us and our emotions, between us and our thoughts. In this womb all knowledge of how to listen or how to make sound has left us. What we hear is a homogeneous music. Yet the

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[55]Neil Postman, Amusing Ourselves to Death (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. vii.

umbilical line from loudspeaker or headphone to ear creates the illusion that we are experiencing a uniqueness, a difference. Attali expresses the same thing from a different perspective:

> *No organized society can exist without structuring differences at its core. No market economy can develop without erasing those differences in mass production.* The self-destruction of capitalism lies in this contradiction, in the fact that music leads a deafening life: an instrument of differentiation, it has become a locus of repetition. It itself becomes undifferentiated, goes anonymous in the commodity, and hides behind the mask of stardom. It makes audible what is essential in the contradictions of the developed societies: *an anxiety-ridden quest for lost difference, following a logic from which difference is banished.*[56] (emphasis his)

The walkman as the ultimate schizophonic medium is a perfect example of this contradiction.

[56]Attali, p. 5.

CHAPTER III

MUSIC-AS-ENVIRONMENT: THE 'FALSE' WOMB

> Music, an immaterial pleasure turned commodity now heralds a society of the sign, of the immaterial up for sale, of the social relation unified in money.[1]

Music-as-environment, itself a commodity, determines the tone of commodity exchange. It is a fetishized object that conceals, through its very "tone", its relationship to money and power, its function as mediator of human relations and its function as "mood-setter." Without it - so its producers would like us to think - we may not be able to interact, may not feel safe. Music-as-environment engulfs us acoustically, shuts out the problems of the outside world and makes the consumer environment sound as if "that's where the action is." It has established itself as a cultural system, a "place" in the world, the "womb" of twentieth century urban living. But it is a false womb, because it does not provide basic physical and spiritual nourishment to us. It can only exist inside the world of money. Poor people will not find nourishment there.

> Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualize a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialize its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalize its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning. Today, music heralds - regardless of what the property mode of capital will be - the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore.[2]

In this chapter I want to elaborate on music-as-environment, its history, its philosophy and its sound. A more detailed look at these three aspects will outline in greater depth music's intimate connection to money on the one hand, and its intended function as a soothing, comforting presence in the hectic lifestyle of the urban person on the other. It seems to me that it is precisely its connection to money that makes music-as-environment simultaneously a dominating as well as a comforting, soothing voice in people's perception. Because urban life revolves around making and spending money, and because this focus on life sets up a particularly stressful lifestyle, it is the music that seems to offer a more bearable pace. It is not surprising that people accept or even choose the presence of music-as-environment, experience it as womblike comfort and choose a passive rather than an active

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[1]Attali, pp. 3-4.

[2]Attali, pp. 4-5.

relationship to their schizophonic soundscape. Since they are already overworked and overloaded it may seem absurd to them to take a critical stance towards a soundscape that offers some form of repose.

A Short Historical Sketch of Music-as-Environment

When we examine the historical development of music-as-environment it becomes obvious that its "voice" has become louder and more present in the urban soundscape, and has moved more closely to our ears. It started out as quiet background music, barely noticeable. However, the new style of leased music that has recently emerged is more aggressive, usually louder, and it is called "foreground music". This latter style is original music, not re-recorded or re-orchestrated as background music is, but performed by the original artists. While foreground music is brought closer to our ears by being played louder, walkman listening brings the sound right up to our ears, to the exclusion of all other sounds. Nowadays all three types of music-as-environment can exist simultaneously in the urban soundscape. In a mall, for example, we may encounter all of them at the same time: general mall areas are usually pervaded by background music, many of the individual stores have their own foreground music, and some of the people walking through the mall and the stores may listen to their own music on their personal systems headphone.

"Music by Muzak" was the first company that played a major part in introducing background music into the environment, and as Attali says, was "one of the most characteristic firms dealing in the music of silencing".[3] In my opinion its appearance as an antidote to lo-fi soundscapes and stressful work situations laid the basis for the widespread acceptance of music-as-environment. Its very specific philosophy and the specific intent behind its "psychological design" have largely been responsible for its success. Music-as-environment has become a voice of power, a voice that dominates and silences other voices. It laid the foundations for the domination of one sense of time over all other senses of time. In the following pages I will show how "Music by Muzak" has achieved this.

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[3]Attali, p. 111.

The Muzak Corporation is a relatively old corporation. It got its start in 1934, supplying music to industry at a time when a fair amount of informal experimentation with music in factories had already taken place.[4] It grew and came into its own during the 1940s when it had been shown that music could be a definite aid to production efficiency in industry, specifically in the war industry. An estimated 2,000 to 4,000 factories were using music in the United States in 1942/3. By 1945 that number had risen to approximately 6,000 factories.[5] At that time Muzak was the largest supplier of background music, also called functional music, and continued to be the largest supplier for many years after.

Today Muzak pipes its functional music not only into industrial environments but also into offices, hotels, restaurants and other commercial, industrial and retail establishments. It provides this 4ervice to all major cities in the United States and Canada as well as to many other countries.

Information on Muzak contained in Moody's 1981 Industrial Manual leads one to believe that the corporation's sole product is functional music. However, according to Muzak's own promotional material in the late 1970s,[6] functional music is only one product among many others: voice paging systems, functional music systems, pre-recorded announcement systems, electronic tone communications, music on telephone hold lines, public address systems, emergency warning systems, sound masking systems, hearing protection systems, intercom systems, supervisory systems for monitoring, security systems for sophisticated surveillance and safety. (emphasis mine)

Looking through Muzak's history I cannot help but notice recurring words such as security systems, wartime production, military products, and so on. Its initial growth was spawned by wartime production in the 1940s. Then, from David Yale's article we find out some of the affiliations and background of William Woukon, Muzak's Director of "Human Engineering" between 1963 and 1971:

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[4]R.L. Cardinell, "Music in Industry", Music and Medicine, eds. Dorothy M. Schullian and Max Schoen (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), p. 353.

[5]R.L. Cardinell, Music in Industry, p. 356.

[6]Undated publication, but distributed at that time.

> . . . a trained psychologist . . . His first post-doctoral job was with the US Army Engineering Laboratories in Maryland, as a research psychologist and, later, the developer of a course on human engineering for the army engineers. He has also been a guest lecturer on motivation at the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland . . . a 1968 study on the effect of programmed music on vigilance, which was conducted at the Human Engineering Laboratories . . . by the Army, not only used selections from the Muzak library, but was, in effect, a government-underwritten experiment to prove that the Muzak approach does, indeed, work.[7]

From 1971 to 1981 Muzak was a wholly-owned subsidiary of TelePrompter Corporation who also had as its subsidiary National Security Systems Inc. In 1981 TelePrompter merged with its subsidiaries into a unit of Westinghouse Broadcasting Co., a subsidiary of Westinghouse Electric Corporation. (The name of TelePrompter was changed to Group W Cable (N.Y.) in 1982). Westinghouse Electric Corp. is one of the major developers, designers, and suppliers of nuclear power plant equipment and is an important manufacturer of military products for the US government. In fact, the US government is its single largest customer. In Canada, Associated Broadcasting Ltd., which is a wholly owned subsidiary of CHUM Ltd., owns and operates the franchise for "Music by Muzak" in Toronto and Montreal. Associated Broadcasting Ltd. also owns all outstanding shares of National Security Systems Ltd. and of National Security Systems Ltd., Toronto.

It is clear that "Music by Muzak" has always been closely connected with the powers that "call the tune", that make war, that control what does or does not get played over loudspeakers. Schafer says that it is always the "godhead of society" that is allowed to make the loudest noises.

> The association of Noise and power has never really been broken in the human imagination. It descends from God, to the priest, to the industrialist, and more recently to the broadcaster and the aviator. The important thing to realize is this: to have the Sacred Noise is not merely to make the biggest noise; rather it is a matter of having the authority to make it without censure.[8]

What he forgot to add is that the "godhead" of society also has the power to create silences, to determine not only when there is sound but when there isn't, who speaks and who doesn't. Thus, whoever has control over noise and silence also has the power to listen in on the rest of society. Music by

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[7]David Yale, "The Politics of Muzak: Big Brother Calls the Tune", Student Musicologists at Minnesota, 1970-71, pp. 80-106.

[8]Schafer, Tuning , p. 76.

Muzak – at least until 1986, at which point it was bought by the Field Corporation, a Holding Company[9] – has been helping to call a certain tune of power and at the same time has been listening in on certain parts of our society. In Attali's words:

> Eavesdropping, censorship, recording, and surveillance are weapons of power. The technology of listening in on, ordering, transmitting, and recording noise is at the heart of the apparatus. The symbolism . . . of recorded noise and eavesdropping – these are the dreams of political scientists and the fantasies of men in power: to listen, to memorize – this is the ability to interpret and control history, to manipulate the culture of people, to channel its violence and hopes. Who among us is free of the feeling that this process, taken to the extreme, is turning the modern state into a gigantic, monopolizing noise emitter, and at the same time, a generalized eavesdropping device. Eavesdropping on what? In order to silence whom?
>
> The answer, clear and implacable, is given by the theorists of totalitarianism. They have all explained, indistinctly, that it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support for differences or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal – these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. They are direct translations of the political importance of cultural repression and noise control.[10]

If the control of what can be listened to and what sounds/noises can be made comes from an authority, the individual has two choices: either to submit to it or to rebel against it. In both cases, what is said and what is listened to is determined by an external authority and does not come from inside the individual.

> This music is not innocent. It is not just a way of drowning out the tedious noises of the workplace. It may be the herald of the general silence of men before the spectacles of commodities, men who will no longer speak except to conduct standardized commentary on them.[11]

Muzak originates in the United States, which calls itself a democracy. Yet Muzak and its manner of transmission have all the qualities attributed to totalitarian regimes: "tonalism, primacy of melody, distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal." A detailed examination of these qualities may be in order here, since the quality of the musical sound itself can expose to the candid listener the ideological belief system that is at the roots of its design.

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[9]Directory of Corporate Affiliates, 1986.

[10]Attali, p. 7.

[11]Attali, p. 112.

The Sound of Muzak and its Ideology

How does Muzak's quiet sound manage to be a dominating voice? The traditional Muzak sound is "engineered" music. Familiar tunes, varying styles of music, musics from other cultures are absorbed, melted and blended into a uniform sound of background music. This sound is mostly instrumental, very rarely contains solo voice or lyrics; its is a string orchestra sound, quietly undulating in and out of song, in and out of silence. It never provokes listeners' ears. Here are some ways in which Music by Muzak describes how the music should sound and how it should affect the listener:

> . . . must not be obtrusive and above all must not overpower conversation. Its main function is to affect attitudes of the workers.[12]
>
> Functional work music acts as a subliminal stimulus. It influences people who hear it, even though they are not consciously aware of it.[13]
>
> In an office, or in a work area of any kind, people are encouraged to work harder and to be more relaxed at jobs which by nature may not be exciting or motivating.[14]
>
> . . . the music should be barely noticeable and non-distracting - a soft fog, or music you 'breathe'. It is not the music itself that increases production but, rather, the relief from the monotony of the work that music provides.[15]

The music is usually transmitted at low volume through loudspeakers that, in many environments, are installed at regular intervals in the ceiling of a mall, a lobby, an office, etc. Thus, while working in or walking through such a space, one hears the melodic tune undulating in and out of the soundscape with changing instrumental textures. The dominant sound colour of much of the music is produced by the string orchestra. Different sections of the orchestra will take turns carrying the tune. Sometimes an instrument like the accordion or the guitar, which are traditionally not part of the orchestra will take over the main tune as a solo instrument. All pieces of music are resting in a "bed" of orchestral sound.

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[12]Music by Muzak advertising.

[13]Susan Ross, "Background Music Systems - Do They Pay?", Administration Management, Aug. 1966, pp. 34-37.

[14]William C. Rogers Jr. regional manager for Muzak Corp., quoted in Hardlines Wholesaling, April 1978 p. 39.

[15]Steven Konz, Dept. of Mechanical & Industrial Engineering, Univ. of Ill., Urbana, quoted in Hardlines Wholesaling, April 1976, p. 39.

Underlying this blanket of sound one can nowadays also often hear an unobtrusive but pace-setting accompaniment of drums and bass guitar.

All pieces have a similar musical structure: either they start with an instrumental solo, followed by a slow build-up in density of orchestration, or they start in a slow tempo, building up into a faster-paced piece. The end of the piece then tapers off in the reverse manner. In this way each piece makes a gradual entry into the soundscape and never alerts the listener, and it vanishes in the same way. Each piece also tends to follow this pattern of undulation internally: broad orchestral sounds alternate with small ensemble or instrumental sections.

This pattern of undulation is also maintained on a larger time scale. When Muzak first was played in factories it was not played continuously. One source tells us that it was played for fifteen minutes followed by a fifteen-minute silence.[16] Another source says that it was played for twenty to thirty minutes at a time and in an eight-hour work period no more than two and a half to three hours of music were played. Cardinell says that:

> The effects of the music increase in proportion to the amount of music used until this point [of two and a half to three hours] is reached. After that, the effects diminish as more music is added until, with continual music during the work spell, the effects return to the no-music starting point. The employees become conditioned to rejecting the music to the same extent that the machinery noise is rejected . . . A period of twenty to thirty minutes at a time appears to be sufficient for obtaining the desired reaction. Therefore, playing periods of this length can be distributed throughout the day at the times where they will be most effective.[17]

The Muzak Corporation seems to have forgotten about the fatiguing effect of continuous music that Cardinal points out in 1948. Nowadays it broadcasts its musical sound into the environment without interruption. Within this continuous flow it designs subtle changes that are not meant to be noticed, but that are supposed to have the same function as the former silences: to counter dips in the worker's or consumer's energy, to counter boredom, fatigue and feelings of monotony. It does this by creating the so-called "stimulus progression" in its music. It means that every fifteen-minute segment is arranged and

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[16]Hardlines Wholesaling, April, 1976, p. 39.

[17]Cardinell, Music in Industry, pp. 361-362.

designed in such a fashion that there is a sense of increasing stimulus in the music. This is done in a variety of ways: change of orchestration, change of tempo, change of melodic treatment, and so on.

It does not matter which pieces of music are part of this stimulus progression, they will always be submerged into the larger structural shape that Muzak has designed. The original music not only gets framed into the orchestral sound but also into Muzak's time structure that is segmented into fifteen-minute sections. Muzak itself, in other words, ignores the original music's sound, its instrumentation and sound colour in particular, and imposes a structure that is external to the music's initial sound and mood. It takes music's connection to a specific culture out of its core and makes it a "universal" sound. Content is designed to fit the form.

The pieces are usually highly repetitive in their melodic and harmonic content, but the instrumental arrangements, the timbre of those melodies goes through a variety of changes. In other words, the changes are purely structural, they do not lie in the content. Thus, the structural changes may give the distracted listener the illusion of musical variety on the one hand, and the repetitive melodic/harmonic content may give the illusion of stability and consistency on the other.

Much music in the Muzak genre is reminiscent of film music, which is used to influence the emotions of the audience. And this music, in turn, has its roots in nineteenth century romantic music which it has managed to banalize in the majority of cases. Muzak banalized it even further. What remains is a skeleton of tunes and harmonies that carry within them vague memories of romanticism. Glenn Gould claims that Muzak's musical cliches are not limited to the romantic period and exhibits considerable enthusiasm in the following statement about this melting pot of musical styles:

> Cunningly disguised within the bland formulas from which background sounds are seemingly concocted is an encyclopedia of experience, an exhaustive compilation of the cliches of post-Renaissance music. Moreover, this catalogue provides a cross-referenced index which permits connections between stylistic manifestations with fine disregard for chronological distinctions. Within ten minutes of restaurant Muzak one can encounter a residue of Rachmaninoff or a blast of Berlioz proceeding without embarrassment from the dregs of Debussy. Indeed, all the music that has ever been can now become a background against which the impulse to make listener-supplied connections is the new foreground.[18]

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[18]Glenn Gould, "The Prospects of Recording", High Fidelity, Vol. 16, No. 46, April, 1966, p.

Glenn Gould writes this as an informed listener who can place this "compilation of cliches" into the historical context of Western classical music. He is not, like the majority of people, receiving this musical input passively. At the same time he seems to be glad about the fact that residues of this music reach many people that would otherwise not hear it.

> As background material, some significant scores find their way into the listening experience of an audience that would almost certainly avoid them as concert music. These scores achieve this, of course, under the cover of neutrality. It is axiomatic in the composition of background material that its success relates in inverse proportion to the listener's awareness of it. It attempts to harmonize with as many environmental situations as possible and to minimize our awareness of its own intrusion and character. Indeed, it can succeed only through a suspension of conventional, aesthetic values.[19]

The dominant sound colour of this music is created by the orchestra, which is the stronghold of Western musical high culture. Its sound is the acoustic expression of the dominant culture in the Western world. Orchestral sound is central to classical music. By treating a large variety of tunes from light classical, popular, ethnic and jazz contexts with the instruments of "serious" music – by arranging them in the majority of cases for orchestral instruments – Muzak can give the superficial listener the impression of partaking in the sounds of dominant Western culture.

> Because it can infiltrate our lives from so many different angles, the cliche residue of all the idioms employed in background becomes an intuitive part of our musical vocabulary . . . the listener achieves a direct associative experience of the post–Renaissance vocabulary . . . [20]

Adorno is less positive about the infiltration of this type of music into our lives. He criticizes and laments the fact that this musical "vocabulary" is a watered–down version of the music of high culture. Even though he speaks of the entertainment music of the 1940s in the following quote, the issue is really the same: the sound of "serious" music is used to "refine" the sound of generally more popular or folksy music.

> The practice of arrangement comes from salon music. It is the practice of refined entertainment which borrows its pretensions from the "niveau" of cultural goods, but

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[18](cont'd) 61.

[19]Gould, pp. 61–62.

[20]Gould, p. 62.

transforms these into entertainment material of the type of hit songs.[21]

Muzak is, in fact, the 20th century version of salon music.

If, in its overall sound, Muzak is a melting pot of varying styles of music, it is, within each individual song, a melting pot of two opposite sounds: the sound of the dominant culture (the orchestra) and the sound of popular culture (the tune/melody and sometimes the beat). The orchestra gives timbral, textural and structural shape to the melodic line of the popular tune. On the micro level this is an example of the containment of popular culture within dominant culture. The orchestra is the dominant voice, the sound that sets the tone of the selected pieces that are to be re–orchestrated under this system.

Another kind of containment is achieved in the way the Muzak is presented in most environments: the loudspeakers are positioned evenly over the whole space of a mall, restaurant, supermarket, etc. to ensure that the customer never gets away from the influence of the Muzak. This is as much a part of the intentional design as the music itself. In addition, the music comes literally from above, because the speakers are usually installed in the ceiling. As a result Muzak tends to have a celestial, angelic sound ("as of a thousand strings"). It is not just the instrumentation that causes this but the acoustic properties of the loudspeakers themselves. The frequency range that they transmit, in many cases, is fairly narrow, with emphasis on the middle and high frequency range and poor response in the low frequency range. This brings out the high string sounds in particular.

Every so often one hears a familiar tune. When this happens the listener's perception tends to shift to a more foreground mode of listening, yet never quite into the foreground, because even this tune does not jump out at the listener. It is safely embedded in the same format of orchestration: it is not the original setting of the tune. It is like seeing a friend from a distance, feeling a bit of joy about this distant vision but never actually meeting. It will liven one's perception – "stimulate" – for a short time, possibly give a glimpse of pleasant emotions, and then it will pass. In other words, the music not only undulates in

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[21]Theodor W. Adorno, "On the Fetish–Character in Music and the Regression of Listening", The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, eds. Andreas Arrato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1982), p. 285.

and out of the ambience, it also creates undulations of emotions in us that we are only vaguely aware of and that we can hardly prevent from happening: familiar tunes remind us of certain times in our lives and of the emotions associated with that time. Even if the tunes are not directly known to us, they often resemble a mood, an atmosphere that is familiar. They conjure up a mood and they impose that mood onto the environment. And Muzak itself is well aware of this effect:

> Functional music is designed to have a definite effect on people in a store, plant or warehouse . . . It affects their moods and attitudes and makes them feel better.[22]

To speak of Muzak is not just speaking of a specific musical sound but also of an ideology that is deeply rooted in North American culture:

> Muzak is the logical product of the melting pot ideology which seems to find its highest cultural expression in Disneyland, the Lassie show and Lawrence Welk. True, it brings together music from several countries (primarily Western European or heavily influenced by Western European culture)...but this music is, to use Muzak's own words, absorbed, melted and blended into a bland, characterless, colorless concoction... No matter what country the music comes from, it ends up, when Muzak is finished with it, sounding Americanized.[23]

Muzak is trying to penetrate everyone of us a little bit, no matter what socio-cultural background we come from. It does this by absorbing, melting and blending various styles of music, musics from different cultures into the uniform sound of background music. By doing this, it in fact "melts" the musical, cultural vitality out of them. It establishes itself – with the help of tools from so-called "high" culture – as the dominant musical sound that can contain all other musical sounds, even if they were once oppositional. The essence of the melting pot ideology lies in the dissolving of cultural vitality – the silencing of vital voices – of which Muzak is the most sinister expression.

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[22]Hardlines Wholesaling.

[23]Yale, p. 86.

Muzak's Success

The Muzak Corporation's own research has shown that its functional music is successful, that it makes people feel better, that it relieves tension, that it increases productivity and profit. It is for this reason that Q–Music in Vancouver (which bought all accounts of the local Muzak franchise in 1981) can advertise with such assurance:

> Hear the difference! The difference in music, chosen to match the moods of the day and seasons of the year . . . Q–Music is always fresh and contemporary, never dated. It changes continually, just as music changes. Q–Music is decoration with sound and the decoration is always in style.
>
> See the difference! See the difference in customers, who enjoy shopping more in a musical environment. See the difference in clients, when the privacy of conversation is protected by music. See the difference in diners, lingering over liqueurs. See the difference in patients, as they become more patient in waiting rooms and more tranquil in examining rooms. See the difference in people everywhere, when noone is irritated by noise or embarrassed by silence. You'll see a difference in employees, too. Work moves more smoothly . . .[24]

This pamphlet was designed for potential customers of Q–Music, who have to be made aware of the "subtle difference" that music makes to the success of their business. Only the purchaser of the music need be aware of this, not the consumers who are not supposed to notice the subtle influence of the music on their behaviour. But the employer/owner will be able to observe the financial effects of that "subtle difference." This pamphlet, like all other pamphlets on Muzak, makes it sound as if the music is put into the soundscape for humanitarian reasons, as if its sole purpose is to make the worker or consumer feel better. What is not mentioned is the real reason why people must be made to feel good: the economic benefits for employers and businesses are the hidden agenda behind the humanitarian language.

Muzak's success lies in the fact that it has been in existence for years with little protest. People have accepted it as an acoustic backdrop to their lives, their work, their leisure activities. They want and need it. It has masked noise, and it has managed to mask problems that underlie a stressful work situation. It has created environments of human silence, where people neither listen nor make sound.

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[24]Q–Music advertising.

Foreground Music

Moody's 1981 Industrial Manual states that "Muzak announced plans to enter the foreground music market". Until that point Muzak was a background music producer and as such was successful in creating the distracted listener. The new style of leased music, called foreground music, is more aggressive in its presentation. It consists of original hits by the original artists and the musical license is purchased from ASCAP, BMI, CAPAC, PROCAN, etc. When one hears foreground music in a public place it is usually played quite a bit louder than Muzak. It has an uninterrupted, more driving flow. It is a sound that wants to be heard, listened to, wants to be more present and participating in listeners' lives. Often this music is heard in smaller contexts such as trendy dentist offices, stylish clothing stores or restaurants, in places that have popular appeal and speak to a younger clientele. The music is not only designed to suit the "moods of the day", but also to suit the various styles and tastes of the '80s: "musical selections are based on demographic appeal to specific age groups and eras, and by tempo."[25] The fact that foreground music is so successful probably means that the background music service of Muzak may have lost its competitive edge since the recent appearance of foreground music on the market. Perhaps also, Muzak – in the traditional sense – is simply not heard anymore. It is interesting to note that, with the emergence of foreground music Muzak has given its traditional background music a new name: Environmental Music by Muzak. With this naming, the Muzak Corporation is officially stating that its background music is, indeed, an ambient, environmental sound which is ignored like all other urban environmental sounds. By contrast, here is some advertising for "foreground music" from EMS in Seattle:

> Foreground Music. The Competitive Edge.
> It's not just background music anymore.[26]

AEI (Audio Environments Inc.) advertises in a similar vein:

> You know about background music. Lots of strings. Forgettable melodies. Music that just lies there. Foreground music isn't like that at all. It's meant to be heard. Meant to make your customers excited to be in your establishment. With just enough presence to be an

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[25]Chart of Stimulus Progression Model for Foreground Music One, Nov. 1987.

[26]Pamphlet for EMS foreground music in Seattle.

active, enjoyable part of their dining, service or shopping experience.[27]

Where background music wants to create a more hidden relationship to money, foreground music is explicit about its overt connection to money-making. The cover of the AEI foreground music pamphlet, for example, says, "We can teach you how to make money playing music".[28] And on the back cover it says,

> Teach your cash register
> to sing with foreground music from AEI.
> It's the most beautiful music of all.
> The ringing of increased sales.
> And it's part of the music you'll be hearing when you install
> an AEI foreground music system.
> So call our sales representative today.
> And learn how to make money by getting into music.[29]

The list of original music they offer is long and varied. It includes bands, musicians and composers such as The Police, The Beach Boys, Gordon Lightfoot, Diana Ross, Led Zeppelin, Johann Strauss, The Rolling Stones, Johann Sebastian Bach, Benny Goodman, Friedrich Handel, and many others of equal diversity. And the heading for this list reads: "AEI gives you America's largest music selection."[30] (emphasis mine) Is this a melting pot with a difference?

Even though there is a difference in the market place between background music and foreground music, there is not much difference in the way the two types of music are perceived by the listener. Both styles are aimed at the distracted listener, the person who is doing something else while hearing the music, the person who is using the music as a backdrop to other activities. Both styles function to counteract an otherwise unsatisfactory situation. Traditional background music does this subliminally ("not to be listened to"), the foreground music does it openly, blatantly, but nevertheless as an accompaniment ("with just enough presence"). The words "just enough" imply that it does not want to be listened to too

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[27]Pamphlet for AEI foreground music in Seattle.

[28]AEI pamphlet.

[29]AEI pamphlet.

[30]AEI pamphlet.

consciously. In other words, the word foreground really has nothing to do with foreground perception. Listeners are not supposed to focus all their attention on the music, but merely let it be a friendly presence.

The word foreground relates entirely to the style or music: original music that has been retained and not tampered with. The music's characteristic style and the original artists are still present. The music "keeps pace with what's happening in music today."[31] Background music provides an unobtrusive backdrop for an older audience, foreground music forms an upbeat accompaniment for a younger, style–conscious audience.

Foreground music tends to consist of an uninterrupted flow of sound – silence is avoided. The intention behind this is similar to that of the background music context: not to startle the listener into a more alert listening stance. In the foreground music context, silence would be a mistake because it would interrupt the established flow and thereby the established perceptual stance. Whereas in the background music context, the listener is kept in a passive listening stance because the music moves quietly in and out of silence, the foregound music listener is kept in a continuous state of stimulation, because the fast pace never changes. The end result is not much different: because there is no change and no surprise in the overall flow of sound, the ears lose their alertness and become passive receptors of an even louder, more aggressive musical sound.

The presence of the original artists and their original versions of the music gives the listener the feeling of participation in the "real thing." After all, these are the songs that people put on their record players at home, that people choose to listen to, or that they used to listen to in their youth and teenage years. Now that this music makes up a large part of the urban soundscape, it provides a thrill for many people. It gives a feeling of belonging to hear "our" music in a mall, a store, or a restaurant.

> Repetition becomes pleasurable in the same way music becomes repetitive: by hypnotic effect. Today's youth is perhaps in the process of experiencing this fabulous and ultimate channelization of desires: *in a society in which power is so abstract that it can no longer be seized, in which the worst threat people feel is solitude and not alienation, conformity to the*

[31]EMS advertising.

norm becomes the pleasure of belonging, and the acceptance of powerlessness takes root in the comfort of repetition.[32] (emphasis his)

Traditional background music avoided vocals because of the tendency of voices and words to attract attention. However, foreground music often contains vocals. Many songs also contain back-up vocals, creating the sound of many voices singing. This gives a sense of community and invites the listener to sing along. It gives the sense of being part of a larger context. Some pieces also contain applause by large crowds. Thus, foreground music can give the listener the impression of participating in a real event, of being part of a community. The listener by knowing the songs and the artists is a more knowledgeable listener. The music speaks to the listener on a more overt level and the listener may speak to it by responding, by singing along or simply by having vivid, more conscious associations with the music.

However, even though we are hearing original music, the overall musical sound of foreground music has a certain uniformity. The fact of the matter is that a lot of "original" music is created to fit into this uniform sound.

> It is not that song has become more debased; rather the presence of debased songs in our environment has increased.[33]

Even though foreground music producers supply a variety of musical styles, the overall acoustic impression one gets from hearing music-as-environment is one of sameness. Also, the fact that the music functions merely as an accompaniment and that its listeners are distracted gives the impression of uniformity.

I want to clarify the difference between foreground music and popular music here. Foreground music in most cases is popular music: "fresh sounds from Top 40, Adult Contemporary, Country and Jazz along with Classical, Oldies and Instrumentals."[34] Like background music, it also wants to speak to all tastes. The Rolling Stones are received with nostalgia by those who were teenagers or young adults in the

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[32]Attali, p. 125.

[33]Attali, p. 109.

[34]EMS advertising.

sixties, for example. The Police speaks to a younger crowd, and so on. The music's style tells us whether a restaurant or clothing store caters to us. Foreground music is music that was popular at one time, i.e. its value has been proven through its past popularity and this guarantees a receptive clientele today. Music that was once popular is associated with a particular time, a precious or emotionally intense time. The music was the acoustic expression, the voice for many people at that time. It expressed what many felt and was a mouthpiece for many shared concerns. Foreground music plays on those feelings and is often successful in getting us in touch with the emotions of a meaningful time in our lives. It often conjures up a desire for community, love and togetherness.

Foreground music, however, differs from popular music in that it excludes certain types of popular music. More specifically, it excludes music that has an oppositional voice, a voice that comes out of subcultural groups, such as Blues, Reggae, New Wave, etc., , that still "shouts its suffering," that still has something very specific to say. Such music has its own unique voice which takes a critical stance to society and questions or disturbs the status quo. Foreground music companies exclude this kind of music, because it would startle or alert both those that would be alienated by the music and those that this music speaks to. Popular music in its original sense implies that the music comes out of a community with oppositional social relations to the dominant parts of society. If such music is eventually integrated into the foreground music market, it is because its oppositional quality has lost its dangerous edge. However, it does retain memories of an oppositional time, which was meaningful for those who participated in that oppositional voice. Hearing traces of those memories can give us a sense of connection and the feeling that we share something significant with the business or consumer context which plays the music. The music sets the tone and – just as with Muzak – the emotions and desires that it evokes get channeled into commodity exchange. This whole dynamic is much more in the foreground here than it was in the case of Muzak. The connection between music and money is an accepted one. It is indeed abnormal nowadays for a store not to have a musical voice, since the music is meant to reassure us that this is where we belong, this is "our place" for consuming.

However, the various styles of foreground music have the same effect as Muzak used to have or still has: it takes us away from who we are at present. It takes us into an artificially created space, enclosed, isolated from the outside world, a space that speaks of another time. It is not our own voice we hear, it is a voice that has replaced our own voice with higher decibel levels and more driving rhythms than background music.

Music and Time

When we enter a consumer environment our senses are met with a flurry of impressions, all of which are there to convince us to spend money. Whatever of "our own" we bring into the situation is easily lost in the presence of this onslaught. How many of us have had the experience of forgetting what we wanted to buy the moment we entered this environment, and had to dig deeply in our memory in order to recall our original needs? How many of us clasp onto our list in order not to be seduced into buying more than we originally intended? As consumers we, in fact, enter an artificial framework that is designed to stimulate new needs. The music provides an acoustic rhythm and space in this environment that "helps" us to forget earlier needs and to forget the outside. Ironically Susanne Langer's definition of music fits this situation all too well. She says that music "makes time audible, and its form and continuity sensible."[35] She quotes Basil Selincourt in saying that:

> music . . . demands the absorption of the whole of our time consciousness; our own continuity must be lost in that of the sound to which we listen.[36]

Selincourt says this with a certain amount of romanticism at a time (1920) when music was not as pervasive an environmental sound as it is now. Under such circumstances I could imagine that it was a positive and refreshing experience to lose one's own continuity to that of the music. It would be the experience of a different time sense, a different pace. But today's customer is in a different position,

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[35]Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), p. 110.

[36]Langer, p. 110.

because the occasions without music are much less frequent than those with music. Our "continuity" is lost in that of the music most of the time. This externally imposed continuity blocks our own voices, the voices in our imagination, our own sense of time, and thereby reduces our personal definition of music and culture. It "helps" to melt our ideas about music and culture – that are based in our own socio-cultural background and personal experience – into a uniform vision, imposed by the anonymous power of the loudspeaker.

If we apply this process to the individual, who enters the consumer environment initially as a carrier of culture, it is clear that his or her own cultural visions become subsumed or emasculated into a consumer version of music and culture. The act of consumption masquerades as the real cultural event.

If children grow up in this way, always experiencing music in consumer environments, they will not be aware of its exploitative aspects. They will believe that the consumer environment is the place where they can hear "their" music, and they will therefore always associate the experience of music with the process of consumption. Alice Miller says, "one is not normally aware of something that is a continuation of one's own childhood."[37] Just as musical repetition can flatten out one's listening perception, so repeated consumer activity with its accompanying music can become part of what E.T. Hall calls "unconscious culture". He states that we

> must first recognize and accept the multiple hidden dimensions of unconscious culture, because every culture has its own hidden, unique form of unconscious culture.[38]

He goes on to say that

> it is frequently the most obvious and taken-for-granted and therefore the least studied aspects of culture that influence behaviour in the deepest and most subtle ways.[39]

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[37]Alice Miller, For Your Own Good, trans. Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), p. 75.

[38]Edward T. Hall, Beyond Culture (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1977), p. 2.

[39]Hall, p. 16.

Potentially, stored music and the tape medium could "break the time constraint"[40] in a more positive way than it does in the case of music-as-environment. It could be used as a reminder of another kind of experience of time that has been forgotten and ignored by Western societies: the experience of cyclical time. It could turn away from the invented, rather artificial concept of linear time in Western society or what E.T. Hall calls "monochronic time":

> Monochronic time is arbitrary and imposed; it is *learned.* Because it is so thoroughly learned and so thoroughly integrated into our culture, it is treated as though it were the only natural and "logical" way of organizing life. Yet it is not inherent in man's own rhythms and creative drives, nor is it existential in nature. Furthermore, organizations, particularly business and government bureaucracies, subordinate man to the organization, and they accomplish this mainly by the way they handle time-space systems.[41]

In the case of music-as-environment this concept of monochronic time is reinforced even further, but at the same time it creates an illusion of the experience of cyclical time. Muzak's psychologically designed 15-minute "stimulus progressions" are at once linear and monotonously cyclical - with the single-minded goal of subordinating all actions of the consumer into purchasing.

Because the consumer gets so easily involved in the artificial framework of the consumer environment with its music, there seems to be no room left for the fulfillment of non-material needs. Leiss refers to Swedish economist Staffan Linder who discusses "the problem of time in relation to consumption."

> He explored the implications of the elementary facts - both obvious and generally ignored - that consuming goods takes time and that an individual's time is limited. The major implication is that there is an increasing scarcity of time in a high-consumption economy, which contradicts the familiar notion that, as industrialism and worker productivity grows, the amount of free time available to individuals enlarges correspondingly . . . there will be increasing pressure on an individual's time, for it requires time to use the objects purchased . . . Therefore in the search for enjoyment the tendency will be for activities requiring the use of material objects to crowd out those not involving them . . . wants for ever greater numbers of commodities tend to depreciate all types of desires that are not dependent upon the consumption of things.[42]

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[40]Truax, Acoustic Communication, p. 117.

[41]Hall, p. 20.

[42]William Leiss, The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities (Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 19-20.

The "monochronic" time–space system that Hall talks about is so all–encompassing in the consumer environment that there is no mental and emotional energy left to inspire the creation of one's own time–space system, i.e. one's own music and soundmaking. It is easier to submit to the existing system.

In the following chapter I will illustrate how music as a voice of authority and as a controlling agent of time influenced my own relationship to listening and soundmaking.

CHAPTER IV

MUSIC-AS-ENVIRONMENT: THE 'FALSE' BIRTH RITUAL

(A PERSONAL CASE STUDY OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC)

Introduction

Christmas is the yearly celebration of the birth of Jesus. It is a Christian sacred festival. This is its original meaning. The majority of people in North America no longer celebrate Christmas in that sense, and indeed, have lost contact with its sacred meaning. For most, Christmas is a yearly opportunity to purchase gifts for family and friends. It is a time to be generous with money and to partake in the consumer version of an atmosphere of giving.

The sacred and the secular/consumer celebration of Christmas have one thing in common: the giving of gifts. In both cases the giving is focussed on the child. In the sacred context gifts are an expression of worshipping the "saviour's" birth as symbolized by the story of the Three Kings. In the secular, commercial context gifts are meant to be an expression of love towards children, as can best be observed in the excessive number of TV commercials for children's toys. If it were not for children, I believe Christmas would no longer exist as a yearly celebration - not even in its secular, commercial form. For children, gifts come from a magical place (from Santa Claus, or from the Christ Child, as in the German culture of my childhood). Children therefore receive presents with a strong sense of magic and transfer this magic onto the Christmas celebration as a whole. Often it is only when adults become parents that Christmas finds a revival in the life of these adults.

The focus on the child in both the sacred and the secular celebration is a reminder that Christmas is a festival of birth, of new life. It is therefore a community and family-oriented festival. Even though many people no longer have a direct relationship to these meanings, Christmastime is still understood as a time of hope, love and peace by many. It conjures up emotions of joy and generosity - emotions, needs and desires that are very basic to our sense of a fulfilled and meaningful life. Christmas is one of the few occasions - perhaps the only remaining one - that gives many people in Western society an opportunity to

share, exchange and express these emotions. However, for those who cannot participate in this form of expression (the poor, the lonely – without family) Christmas can be a time of pain. For those who choose not to participate for religious, cultural or political reasons Christmas can be a time of struggle. By not participating in the Christmas preparations and celebrations one is not participating in the dominant culture. This can be a struggle, particularly for children and young people who most strongly want to identify with the community of the surrounding, dominant culture.

For at least one month before Christmas everything in North American society points towards the upcoming event. The acoustic expression of this is the continuous presence of Christmas music in the consumer environment. Its presence, I believe, plays a large part in influencing our emotions, attitudes and thoughts about Christmas, as well as influencing our behaviour in the purchasing process. It is this influence that I want to explore in this section of the thesis. How and why does the music influence us, both in our reactions and behaviour in the actual consumer context, and in our general attitudes toward Christmas? Since many of these reactions occur on a subconscious level, a special approach needs to be taken towards understanding the depth of influence this music has on us. In his discussion on the issue of subconscious and conscious perception, Edward Hall paraphrases William Powers in stating that:

> . . . man's nervous system is structured in such a way that the patterns that govern behavior and perception come into consciousness only when there is a deviation from plans. That is why the most important paradigms or rules governing behaviour, the ones that control our lives, function below the level of conscious awareness and are not generally available for analysis . . . The cultural unconscious, like Freud's unconscious, not only control man's actions but can be understood only by painstaking process of detailed analysis. Hence, man automatically treats what is most characteristically his own (the culture of his youth) as though it were innate.[1]

Christmas music in the consumer environment is "innate" in Hall's sense for the majority of people. Its presence is very rarely questioned. I believe, though, that many people are strongly affected by this music, even though their reactions are hardly visible. I myself have always been affected by it, and have been puzzled by the strength of my emotional reactions.

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[1]Hall, p. 43.

Whenever I hear Christmas songs I am reminded of past Christmas celebrations. But whenever I hear them in consumer environments my reactions can be particularly complex. My hypothesis is that there are connections between the complexity of my present-day reactions to Christmas-music-as-environment and my experiences with Christmas music in my childhood. It is my hunch that these connections can be found with many other people, no matter what their socio-cultural backgrounds are. But I want to test this hunch on my own "case" first.

I will do this by examining my own childhood experiences within the context of my class background, my position in the family, and in particular, the cultural aesthetics and religious beliefs I grew up with. This study shares Merriam's belief that:

> . . . music serves a symbolic function in human cultures on the level of affective or cultural meaning. Men everywhere assign certain symbolic roles to music which connect it with other elements in their cultures. It should be emphasized that on this level we do not expect to find universal symbolism ascribed to music; rather, this symbolic level operates within the framework of individual cultures.[2]

By examining Christmas-music-as-environment through my own personal case I am trying to understand my reactions within the framework of my socio-cultural and religious background. The results will hopefully point towards ways of regaining a balanced relationship to listening and soundmaking as well as ways of inquiring about other people's reactions to Christmas-music-as-environment and how such reactions may be connected to their socio-cultural background. From this analysis I hope to find a new understanding of the emotions and reactions that the music elicits. I agree with Merriam when he states,

> . . . the approach which sees music essentially as symbolic of other things and processes is a fruitful one; and stressed again here is the kind of study which seeks to understand music not simply as a constellation of sounds but rather as human behaviour.[3]

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[2]Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1964), p. 246.

[3]Merriam, p. 246.

Christmas-Music-As-Environment: The Case Study

Definition

The ways in which Christmas music is presented in the consumer context cover the spectrum from mild background music to live musical presentations. To illustrate this range I will discuss three examples of Christmas music, each one of which shows a different kind of presentation.

No matter how Christmas-music-as-environment is presented, though, it is meant to function in a similar way as the music that we encounter in consumer environments during the rest of the year. It accompanies consumers during their shopping expeditions and is meant to set the mood or create an atmosphere that encourages people to consume goods. In this function it is very much like music-as-environment in general. However, unlike all other music-as-environment, Christmas music relates to and speaks of a specific seasonal event and is associated with this event by the majority of consumers/listeners in North America.

Thus, even though Christmas music in the consumer environment is always an accompaniment to the activity of shopping, it must be examined separately from other music-as-environment because of its specific connection and reference to Christmas. No matter how much it is presented as background, the music of a festival that for many people has strong memories, associations and meanings has little chance of staying unnoticed in the background of people's perception. Often the music is even presented in such a way that the consumer cannot help perceiving it consciously. In other words, Christmas music moves further into the foreground of people's perception not only by virtue of listeners' associative powers, but also because department store, mall or shop owners intentionally present the music at a foreground level.

Presentation of and Reactions to three examples of Christmas- Music- As- Environment

My reactions to Christmas music in the consumer context are not always the same. They vary depending on the type of song or music and depending on the way the music is presented. I have noted, though, over the years, that I have specific reactions to certain types of Christmas music. It does not seem to

matter that I have become a critical listener or that I have informed myself about music–as–environment. These reactions recur and take me by surprise.

I have therefore selected three specific recordings of Christmas music in the consumer context that will not only serve as examples of the type of music that one encounters, but that will also give an idea of the various ways in which Christmas music is presented in the consumer environment. Most importantly they will serve as illustrations of my reactions to them and how these may be rooted in my past. The examples are as follows:[4] 1) "Jingle Bells" at Eaton's: background music piped into the whole department store. 2) "The Little Drummer Boy" and "Ave Maria": foreground music in the men's clothing department at Eaton's. 3) "Silent Night" and "We Wish you a Merry Christmas": live presentation by a Senior Citizens' choir at Brentwood Mall.

The first two examples are played over loudspeakers and the last one is presented live in the mall context. Of these, the first example is background music in the strictest, most typical sense: it is re–recorded, re–orchestrated music, with an engineered sound, slick in its musical presentation, piped into the department store at very low levels. The last example is on the other end of the spectrum: it is sung by an amateur senior citizen's choir, and even though it is not loud its live character has a strong foreground presence. Example number two is located between these two extremes. Two of the three examples are sacred – or at least sacred sounding – songs (examples 2 and 3) and one is a secular song (example 1). In the following pages I will describe each example and reflect on my reactions to these pieces and on where they may be based in my past.

Example One

This is an example of the conventional type of Muzak, the sound piped into the department store from a central background music outlet. It is unobtrusive, quiet and slick in its presentation. However, despite the hustle and bustle of shoppers in the foreground, the song "Jingle Bells" is easily recognizable.

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[4]All examples were recorded by myself in 1978 for my radio series "Soundwalking," broadcast on Vancouver Co–operative Radio.

It is an orchestral version of the song, the lyrics are not included.

As I listen to this example, however, the words are very much present in my mind. I am recalling the words automatically as I hear the tune. Because I know the song, hearing the tune makes "information available for recall" as Schwartz says:

> The total amount of information imprinted or coded within our brains is huge, and the associations that can be generated by evoked recall are very deep. Information available for recall includes everything we have experienced, whether we consciously remember it or not. This total body of stored material is always with us, and it surrounds and absorbs each new learning experience. Furthermore, it is instantly recallable when cued by the appropriate stimulus.[5]

"Jingle Bells" is endlessly repeated wherever one goes before Christmas. One cannot help getting to know it, whether one wants to or not. Children generally love this song, not just because it is fun and speaks of fun, but also precisely because they hear it everywhere. For a child to be able to sing a song that everyone else knows is like sharing a folksong and thereby being part of a larger community. Children want to belong, and will do anything to achieve this feeling, including singing jingles of TV commercials.

When I hear "Jingle Bells" in the consumer context I get caught in a bind. On the one hand I recall the fun that I have while singing it with children and feel quite animated by it. On the other hand I perceive it as a musical cliche that I would rather ignore. However, like all cliches, this one also penetrates and the tune sticks in one's mind like glue. Knowing a cliche means knowing what everybody else knows, sharing something with the mass community. That is why children love songs like "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph," "Frosty, the Snowman," and so on. I can see this reaction in my own daughter.

My contradictory reactions to these popular, secular Christmas songs can be traced back to my childhood. I grew up in Germany and did not know these particular songs. But there were similar songs which were often sung in schools or by community choirs and which had a popular sound and slightly sentimental language. These songs were judged by my family as "cheap songs," as musical cliches, and

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[5]Tony Schwartz, The Responsive Chord (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1972), p. 69.

were often laughed about. I also was given the sense as a child that the people who were singing them were probably rather uneducated, possessed a lesser taste than us and were from a lower class. In other words, we did not sing this type of song, we were too good for that. Yet, I distinctly remember quite liking some of these songs as a child, especially because I was sharing them with my classmates in school. I was puzzled by the attitudes among my family members, but did not know how to react to them. Since I was by far the youngest I had learned to imitate and adapt to the status quo in my family from very early on. Thus I did not speak about my secret liking of these songs, and eventually joined my family in projecting a snobbish, condescending attitude towards them, as well as towards anybody who sang and liked them.

By never having been able to openly enjoy singing these songs as a child I have never learnt to honestly appreciate them for what they were: they were simple musical songs, but they were fun and, most importantly, they could serve as a balance to the extreme seriousness of some of the sacred Christmas music that we sang at home.

The dilemma of my childhood is still apparent in my reactions to "Jingle Bells": a judgmental cynicism about its "common," cliched quality, coupled with annoyance that, nevertheless, it still has an animating effect. In my childhood I did not dare to openly accept these songs as fun, for that might have meant being seen as less sophisticated than the people I was closest to: my family. As the youngest, I did not want to be different, for fear of not being accepted and loved in this family community. I wanted to be just like my brothers, sisters and parents and share likes and dislikes with them. After all, this was my support system that I needed for my survival in the outside world. In other words, before I learned to trust my own reactions to these songs I suppressed them and adopted other people's attitudes to them. I believe this prevented me for a long time from acquiring critical listening skills and because of that lack, may have made me more vulnerable to the influence of musical cliches.

Example Two

What initially drew me to this music, as I was recording the pre–Christmas soundscape of the department store, was the low pitched beat that pervaded the space and that seemed like an addition to the piped–in background music. Once I had located the source of the sound I moved close to it and recognized the tune of "The Little Drummer Boy," which was then followed by "Ave Maria."[6] The music came from two speakers placed directly above the cash register in the men's clothing department and was played back quite loudly. The rendition of both pieces is a clever blend of religious musical sound with popular appeal. In the first piece in particular the popular appeal lies in the repetitive beat from a string bass or electric bass that underlies the whole piece and stands out quite disproportionately in relation to the sound of the enormous choir and the orchestra.

These pieces are by no means subtly designed musical background to a shopping environment. This music is foreground music.[7] It cannot be ignored, even though it still functions as an accompaniment to consumer activities. When I made the recording, I was mesmerized by the music and by what I perceived as an absolutely grotesque situation: churchmusic by the cash register and, in the case of "Ave Maria," a musical adulation of the virgin birth in the men's clothing department!

This music invokes the image and atmosphere of a cathedral, and thereby the memory of religious celebration. By being played in the department store, it celebrates consumerism. It creates a holy atmosphere around the cash register, makes it an altar. It is as if the consumer is involved in a holy act while paying for the goods. The music sanctifies the act of purchase.

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[6]Even though this is not a piece of Christmas music, its "acoustic appearance" is very much that of sacred Christmas music.

[7]In 1978, when this recording was made, foreground music was not yet available as a piped–in music product on as large a scale as it is now. However, many stores in malls and certain areas in department stores used louder, usually popular music to attract a certain clientele and to acoustically distinguish themselves from the general background music which pervaded the rest of the space. They would choose their own music selections appropriate for the type and style of product sold. The men's clothing department at Eaton's had made itself an acoustic focus in the same way. Foreground music as a piped–in music product grew out of this phenomenon.

When hearing these pieces I was reminded of the sounds of music in the large gothic and romanesque churches of my home town in Germany. These churches are highly reverberant spaces and give the music an all-encompassing, all-powerful yet elusive quality. My family and I went to church only at Christmas or to hear the yearly performance of J.S. Bach's Passions and the Christmas Oratorio. In other words, my experience of churches is closely connected with music. Thus, when I first heard these pieces of music at Eaton's I think I first "heard" the space around the music - the cathedral-like reverberation.

My parents used to take me to the Christmas church service and the performances of Bach's music from early on. To me, it felt as if these occasions dragged on for many hours and yet, without anybody having to tell me, I knew I'd better respect the music and the event and sit through it. I was listening to the sacred sound of the Protestant, dominant culture of North Germany. By listening to J.S. Bach in a church environment, or by listening to a Christmas sermon and singing Christmas hymns, I was engaged in both an aesthetic as well as a religious experience.

Each occasion used to feel magical initially, but as time went on it became oppressive. In fact, I remember almost fainting one time when towards the end of a Christmas Eve service the song "Silent Night" was sung. The sound of the powerful organ and of hundreds of people in the congregation singing the song was so oppressively powerful that it literally took my breath away and made my head spin. I had to leave the church.

It was not so much the music itself that caused the feelings of oppression. It was the overbearing nature of the situation, the feeling of being trapped in it with no visible way out. It produced a state of inner paralysis. Even today this music can sometimes transform me into a paralyzed, immobilized person, who feels trapped within the powerful sound of music.

At the same time, I learned to love the music of J.S. Bach, because I got to know it in all its details during those long agonizing sessions in the church. As a result, I developed an almost masochistic attitude to it: I long to hear it at times, but as soon as I do it feels like a trap.

It is possibly no coincidence then that the music by the cash register "mesmerized" me, and still fascinates me now when I hear the recording of it. However, it does not "trap" me. In fact, the grotesqueness of hearing this music in a shopping environment almost attracts me. It seems like a wonderfully sacrilegious experience!

Example Three

Upon reflecting on my reactions to this music I realize that they were very much determined by the microphone. The fact that I was recording everything shaped my response to the music. I was searching for interesting acoustic material and welcomed this choir as a soundmark in the general mall ambience. Had I been there without the microphone, I suspect that I would have tried to ignore the choir, and would have rushed past it, hiding a feeling of discomfort. It is this dichotomy in reactions that I would like to examine.

The microphone seemed to "allow" me to stop and really listen to this choir, inquire about it, look at the people involved, and speak to them. It paved the way to being receptive towards a human context within this rather alienating mall environment.[8] The result was that I received valuable information about this situation and can now examine openly the many contradictions it brings out. Had I passed the choir without stopping to look at it I would have been left with a vague feeling of discomfort and cynicism, only sensing the contradictions, without understanding them.

The most blatant contradiction, of course, is hearing "Silent Night" sung live in the shopping mall. Words of purity and love, heavenly glory and peace, holiness and stillness are sung in an environment of noise and clutter, rush and impatience, hustle and bustle. Hearing this with my Protestant ears I am appalled. Hearing it through my microphone I have to laugh about the absurdity.

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[8]Being accompanied by children often has a similar effect: it creates an openness towards everything that is alive and human, no matter where one is. It creates a sharpness of perception that often manages to cut through sterile anonymity. Children, for example, are often much less subdued than adults are by the pseudo-silence of air-conditioning and muzak that one encounters in so many public buildings.

Another hidden contradiction lies in the fact that this choir of senior citizens seems to be very sincere in its intentions to speak to the people in this environment, to transmit meanings into Christmas shopping beyond its commercial meanings. The fact is, however, that the choir, even though it is live, is still a mere accompaniment to people's consuming activities, creating a convivial atmosphere for the benefit of the shop owners. The choir is, in fact serving the interests of the marketplace. Even though the choir wants to create a more human context in the shopping mall, it is precisely because it is so foreground that it serves mostly commercial interests. The presence of such a choir confirms in fact that the consumer environment is the place where Christmas occurs.

My reactions to this choir are intimately connected with a childhood experience that I had every Christmas: the local factory had a choir that would sing at the factory's yearly Christmas celebrations. factory. A choir of workers sang for the other workers and the factory management. Their performance was part of a large celebration that had become a major yearly cultural event in our village. The presentation of this choir had a similar sound to the choir in the mall: a collection of amateur voices accompanied by a piano.

The atmosphere of these celebrations was wonderful for me as a child; it had a joyful, folk-festival-like character. My relatives, however - who were the owners of the factory - and the adults in my immediate family, always had a slightly condescending attitude towards these performances. During the actual celebrations this of course was never apparent. It was afterwards in conversations at home when these attitudes came forward. As the owners of the factory they had to keep up the appearance of enjoying these presentations - a stance that is often taken towards children as well. At home this appearance could be dropped, and it could once again be established that they were the cultured people, the people in power, the people with privileged ears.

While hearing the worker's choir, their inner ears heard, simultaneously, the more cultured concert presentations (e.g. Bach's Christmas Oratorio) and would thus, almost automatically, place the worker's choir into a cultural/aesthetic hierarchy.

As a member of the owners' class, I very quickly adopted these ears. I believe that this is not unlike the situation in the mall, where people's ears have continually been exposed to professional, engineered renditions of Christmas songs. This incessant input, I believe, gives the consumer a subconscious acoustic perspective towards the "folksy" more crude sound of the choir and makes it therefore possible to place this choir into a hierarchy – this time not so much a cultural/aesthetic hierarchy but a hierarchy created by the commercial audio industry: that of sound power. Both choirs would be at the bottom of the scale.

Live music takes on a different meaning in the presence of electro-acoustically transmitted music, just as the factory choir takes on a different meaning in the presence of the owner's "cultured" ears. Both the music over the loudspeakers as well as high art concert presentations tend to put sophistication into people's ears that reaches beyond their own soundmaking capacities.

Both choirs mentioned here illustrate this gap and may therefore create patronizing feelings in their listeners. Thus the loudspeaker seems to have a similar impact as the high cultured concert: it not only creates an imbalance between sound input/impression (listening) and sound output/expression (soundmaking), but it also creates expectations for technical or musical quality in the listener that are out of balance with the listener's ability to make sound. I mentioned earlier that as a member of the owners' class, I adopted its ears. But as a child I retained very receptive ears towards the songs of the workers' choir and had a great love for these yearly celebrations. At home and in church, I used to cry when Christmas songs were sung, and I was particularly vulnerable to "Silent Night." I think there was a reason that I hardly ever cried during these factory celebrations: the celebration included children in all aspects; they were participatory events. We did not have to sit still all the time, but had opportunities to sing along, to be performers ourselves. I was among children, and the folk atmosphere of this occasion did not place as severe demands of internalization on me as a Protestant Christmas service or our family Christmas did. Here, "Silent Night" was just another folksong that found its balance in the "Jingle Bells" type of song.

The Child at Christmas

The insight that seems to emerge most strongly from the previous section is that the cultural and religious aspects of my upbringing as well as my class background and my position as the youngest in the family seem to have limited my experiences of Christmas music. The inability to talk about my feelings of the secular songs and the tears about the sacred songs raise questions about my role as a child that I want to examine further here, especially since traces of this behaviour are still apparent in my reactions to Christmas-music-as-environment.

I grew up as the youngest in a household with clearly established boundaries of morality and behaviour, of cultural tastes and aesthetics, of religious beliefs, and of class hierarchies. Without realizing it, I fit myself into these boundaries and adapted to them just like my much older brothers and sisters had. I was never forced to do this, I simply imitated what I saw around me. In that sense I was an "easy" child; my parents did not have to place overt demands onto me, did not have to force me to be compliant and obedient. The demands in my family were rather hidden and I met them from early on with great skill and sensitivity. I was loved for this. Yet, I often surprised my family with my tears and my "overly sensitive" reactions to music.

When psycho-therapist Alice Miller speaks of "the gifted child" she means the kind of child that is sensitive to her parents' wishes and demands and adapts her behaviour to them. Most children are extremely sensitive towards that which will give them love, and they will adapt to it, no matter how contradictory to their own feelings, or how absurd the demands on them may be.

> The gifted child who adapts to parents' demands always tries to understand this absurdity and will accept it as a matter of course. But he has to pay for this pseudo-understanding with his feelings and his sensitivity to his own needs, i.e. with his authentic self.[9]

In the following pages I will try to look at my childhood Christmas and my experience of music from the perspective of such a child.

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[9]Miller, p. 251.

Magical Christmas

The time before Christmas was a time of magic in my childhood. It was filled with mysteries and expectations, as well as with exciting activities. Mysterious, magical figures such as the Christchild, the angels, and Santa Claus kindled my imagination. They were dream figures that enriched the world of fantasy on the one hand, but were so elusive on the other hand that they could disappear as soon as one attempted to see or grasp them. In fact, the mystery around these figures created both feelings of excitement and expectation as well as intense fears of losing them.

Christmas preparations were the best tool to divert this fear and to gear the world of fantasy and imagination into exciting action: the making of presents. In the act of making presents I could identify with the busy Christchild or the busy angels, could help them, be "just like them," contributing whole-heartedly to the upcoming event. These activities made the upcoming event more tangible, it helped channel my impatience, my excitement and anxieties. And in turn, the mysteries surrounding Christmas created inspiration for the making of presents.

The time before Christmas was carried by the expectation and hope that the unknown would become known, the mystery would become knowledge. Christmas Eve, when gifts were given, would be, so I hoped each year, the culmination and fulfillment of these expectations. This evening's magic was symbolized in the acts of giving and receiving, since all presents – no matter who made them – were created with love and imagination. I knew this from my own experience and therefore believed that all presents were a combination of those ingredients. They were not just objects, they were objects coming from a magical place in somebody's imagination.

This interaction between imagination and action made up the magic around Christmas, combined with a feeling of community. By making the presents, one was, in fact, sharing an inspired state of mind with the Christchild, the angels, with family and friends. The making was a path towards discovering depths of joy and love. One shared this process of living and feeling; the presents were simply a visible result or product of this process.

However, along with this there was always the threat of the magic disappearing if I tried to investigate the sources of the magic. At least that was the threat posed by the adults, who themselves seemed to have secret knowledge about this magic. The threat was that, for example, the Christchild would simply disappear if I would attempt to see it, and that it would not return. The magical figure was at the same time a figure of authority.

It was my desire as a child to keep a magical atmosphere in our house, so I resisted my very strong desire to uncover the mysterious Christchild (I did not peak through the keyhole). I instinctively felt that I had, in fact, the power to ruin the loving, magical atmosphere in our house by finding out too much. As a result, I did not inquire, refrained from asking questions, but applied extra energy into imagining the angels and the Christchild. A strong inner eye and ear were developed in the desire to preserve magic. I believe now, that I exerted myself considerably – as the "last carrier of magic," the youngest child – to keep a sense of magic alive for the whole family.

The Music

Like the making of presents, music–making at Christmas can enhance feelings of magic as well as of sharing and togetherness, feelings of belonging to a community. I certainly remember this from singing with schoolfriends and in choirs, that is, among my peers or in a more "folksy" atmosphere. At home, however, or in the church context, I usually ended up crying while singing Christmas songs. For years this used to disturb and puzzle me.

The singing of Christmas songs on Christmas Eve was an extension of the church service: both happened before entering the "realm of magic" – the Christmas room with its candlelit tree and its presents. It had the atmosphere of a sacred and holy occasion. It was a serious event. The faces of all family members were serious and there was an unspoken demand for what I experienced as a holy stillness, a religious paralysis.

Protestant ethics and forms of good behaviour demanded that we sat still and internalized all emotions of expectation, joy and fear.

> Obedience appears to be the undisputed supreme principle of religious education as well. The word appears again and again in the Psalms and always in connection with the danger of loss of love if the sin of disobedience should be committed. Whoever finds this surprising fails to recognize the nature of the child and his need to submit to someone stronger than himself.[10]

I simply imitated the adults, complied and sat still, while inside me tensions of expectation were raging. As the moment of entering the "realm of magic" came closer and closer, feelings of hope for fulfillment and fear of disappointment were battling inside me. This inner battle became intolerable precisely because there was no possibility to express these emotions. For, under these circumstances, even the songs were no longer appropriate tools for expression. They were merely agents for melting all inner tensions and releasing a flood of tears. The result was feelings of weakness and loss of inner vitality. The older I got the more I dreaded the singing of Christmas songs in the family context.

Along with the Protestant religious ethic a particular kind of cultural bourgeois aesthetic was underlying the singing and perception of Christmas songs that shaped my experience of the celebration in another way. My family was entirely caught up in what Merriam describes as follows:

> . . . the core of assumptions in Western aesthetics concerns the ***attribution of emotion- producing qualities to music conceived strictly as sound.*** By this is meant that we in Western culture, being able to abstract music and regard it as an objective entity, credit sound itself with the ability to move the emotions. A song in a minor key is sad and makes the listener sad; certain kinds of music can be gay or pathetic or produce any one of a number of other emotions . . . What is germane is that we consider that music, by itself, creates emotions, or something like emotions, and that emotion is closely bound up with the aesthetic. The aesthetic person is also considered to be an emotional person, moved by the art he surveys; it must be stressed that he is moved not by the context in which the art is perceived, but directly by the art itself.[11]

In other words, the Western aesthetic separates the experience of music from its social context. When one is moved by the music in that sense, one is moved internally, privately, as an individual. For the child, however, the experience of music is a means of connecting himself or herself to a social context,

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[10]Miller, p. 40.

[11]Merriam, p. 265.

contributing to it and sharing a common way of expressiveness. This sharing fulfills the child's intense need for belonging to a community.

I was surrounded by "aesthetic persons" as a child, in the sense Merriam describes them; by people who were internally "moved" by the music and who were – because of the powerful framework of their cultural aesthetics and moral beliefs – not able to express these emotions openly, not even in the relatively intimate social context of the family. In other words, there was no sense of sharing, no sense of emotional solidarity. Just as each family member probably felt quite alone, I felt I had to battle out my inner tensions by myself as well. I can only speculate from this that my tears – released by the singing – were perhaps a rather desperate attempt on my part to make contact and find support in my family community. Because, as soon as I started to cry the overly serious atmosphere was broken: suddenly everyone smiled benevolently. Some members tried to convince me that there was no reason for crying and some were simply making fun of me ("there she goes again").

The crying itself would not have been upsetting if it had been accepted as a natural expression of the moment's intensity. I myself could not understand it as that, would feel bad about it and would desperately attempt to stop crying. Usually I was unsuccessful, and would despair even more. My vulnerability at that moment was ridiculed by my older brothers and sisters and smiled at uncomprehendingly by my parents. Even though they did not act out of maliciousness, this reaction still meant lack of emotional support. As Alice Miller says, "mockery from a beloved and admired person is always painful."[12]

It is more and more obvious that the strong framework of Western cultural aesthetics and of Protestant ethics demanded frequent denials of my feelings. Strong reactions to intense moments were simply not called for, let alone accepted. Alice Miller describes in the following paragraph what results a continuous suppression of one's feelings during childhood can have. Even though she speaks of anger specifically, everything she says can be applied equally to expressions of other kinds of emotions (e.g.

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[12]Miller, p. 250.

sadness, intense joy, inner conflict, and so on).

> Those who were permitted to react appropriately throughout their childhood – i.e. with anger – to the pain, wrongs and denial inflicted upon them either consciously or unconsciously will retain this ability to react appropriately in later life too. When someone wounds them as adults, they will be able to recognize and express this verbally. But they will not feel the need to lash out in response. This need arises only for people who must always be on their guard to keep the dam that restrains their feelings from breaking. For if this dam breaks, everything becomes unpredictable. Thus it is understandable that some of these people, fearing unpredictable consequences, will shrink from any spontaneous reaction; the others will experience occasional outbursts of inexplicable rage directed against substitute objects or will resort repeatedly to violent behaviour such as murder or acts of terrorism. A person who can understand and integrate his anger as part of himself will not become violent. He has the need to strike out at others only if he is thoroughly unable to understand his rage, if he was not permitted to become familiar with this feeling as a small child, was never able to experience it as a part of himself because such a thing was totally unthinkable in his surroundings.[13] (my emphasis)

Christmas as Ritual

The essence of ritual is its special place within a seasonal cycle, a life cycle, or perhaps a daily cycle. A ritual event can arise spontaneously out of the moment, as often happens in children's play, or it can be an established event that is repeated at fixed intervals, like Christmas, for example. The repetition has the function of reminding us of the magic that was part of the original ritualistic event.

Rituals – such as birth and death rites, puberty rites, communions, etc. – are a dramatic enactment of the transition from one stage in one's life to another stage. They are a symbolic enactment of a kind of rebirth or – to put it another way – a reenactment of the birth process. The end result of a ritual would be, ideally, the discovery of new strength, new insights, new emotions and imagination. Christmas can be seen as such a ritual event.

> Such rituals . . . not only mark time (and hence serve to construct and confirm a sense of individual and collective identity, of cultural and historical location and transition) they also often operate to ensure success, security or a defined state of well-being for the individual or social group concerned.[14]

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[13]Miller, p. 65.

[14]Tim O'Sullivan, John Hartley, Danny Saunders and John Fiske, Key Concepts in Communication (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 202.

The Christmas story is about the birth of a special child. Jesus is the symbolic figure of this special new being. In actual fact, every new baby is a special new being. Christmas, therefore, can be seen as a festival symbolizing all births as special events. Celebrating Christmas means celebrating the magic of birth, the magic of the creation of new life. And with that one celebrates the magic of new imagination in the young child. In other words, not just the magic of a new physical presence – which, indeed, is magical in itself – is celebrated, but also the magic of a new source of emotions and feelings that is tapped in us, the adults and parents, is celebrated. It is the magic of new fields of imagination that once were part of us, when we were babies and children ourselves – and that is offered back to us through our children. Whole areas of memory are opened up at the moment of birth and throughout the growth of our children. If we, as adults, are open to this, we are reminded of a world of fantasy and imagination that we had forgotten about.

> . . . each time a new baby is born there is a possibility of reprieve. Each child is a new being, a potential prophet, a new spiritual prince, a new spark of light, precipitated into the outer darkness.[15]

Christmas can be understood as a celebration of that rediscovery: the child as a gift. It is a yearly reminder of the importance of including the world of magic and imagination into our adult existence. The giving of gifts is one aspect of celebrating this magic. It is probably no coincidence that the giving of gifts centres around children. It is like a gesture to thank them for what they are giving us. And our children (or me as a child) continue this circle of giving by making presents for their parents. This circle of giving is in keeping with what Lewis Hyde says is the essence of the gift: ***the gift must always move.***[16] He states that

> a gift that cannot be given away ceases to be a gift. The spirit of a gift is kept alive by its constant donation. If this is the case, then the gifts of the inner world must be accepted as gifts in the outer world if they are to retain their vitality.[17]

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[15]Laing, Politics of Experience, p. 26.

[16]Lewis Hyde, The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p. 4.

[17]Hyde, p. xiv.

To celebrate Christmas as a festival of birth makes Christmas a ritual event, a time of magic. A ritual event changes the ordinary flow of time. Christmas seemed to exist on an entirely different timeplane for me as a child. As Berger suggests:

> The notion of a uniform time, within which all events can be temporally related, depends upon the synthesizing capacity of a mind. Galaxies and particles in themselves propose nothing. There is a phenomenological problem at the start. One is obliged to begin with conscious experience. Despite clocks and the regular turning of the earth time is experienced as passing at different rates. This impression is generally dismissed as subjective because time, according to the nineteenth century view, is objective, incontestable, and indifferent; to its indifference there are no limits.[18]

Again and again in my Christmas experience, feelings of timelessness were interrupted by fears that this would end (in a similar way in which magic threatened to disappear) and ordinary time would re-enter. In its ideal experience though, time seemed to be non-existent at Christmas. The ritual itself, its content and progression is what mattered. Ritual is a piece of special time carved out of the daily flow of time.

When music is part of a ritual it is musical time and rhythm that determines to a great extent the time flow of the ritual itself. Music has its own time and rhythm and therefore has the power to change the pace and the experience of time. Susanne Langer expresses this in the following way:

> Musical duration is an image of what might be termed 'lived' or 'experienced' time . . .[19]

Basil Selincourt, as quoted by Langer, says,

> Music . . . suspends ordinary time, and offers itself as an ideal substitute and equivalent . . . The time of music is similarly an ideal time . . . Our very life is measured by rhythm: by our own breathing, by our heartbeats. These are all irrelevant, their meaning is in abeyance, so long as time is music.[20]

Music is both movement in time and movement in space. As much as it determines time, it also contains the soundmaker/listener within its acoustic space. As that, it can be one of the most expressive,

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[18]John Berger, And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 35.

[19]Langer, pp. 109-110.

[20]Langer, p. 110.

liberating forces of a ritual event. If, however, the music is an expression of authority and leaves no room for individual, emotional expression of the soundmaker/listener, its all-encompassing presence can be oppressive.

In the following pages I want to examine my reactions to Christmas music in the context of ritual and the child's role within this ritual. My relatively negative reactions to Christmas music give me the feeling that I, in fact, never experienced a kind of renewal. I will begin by describing what I mean by a "complete" ritual.

Description of a 'Complete' Ritual

My six year old daughter Sonja and I were planting a garden at the beginning of May. Sonja designed her garden patch in the following fashion: the patch itself was square; in its centre she planted flowers, around which she made a circular path; between the path and the periphery of the patch she planted vegetables. I advised her mostly in technical things: how to plant, how to water, distances between the various plants, etc. The overall design was hers. The circular path was her own idea – an idea that had its origin in the year before. It was as if the circular path surfaced from her memory as the most important part of garden planting.

When her garden patch was planted and I worked on the adjacent patch I suddenly realized that she was dancing around and around on the circular path singing approximately the following words:

I don't know who I am.
Am I a plant or a rabbit or a dog?
Am I the grass or the sky?
Am I a flower or a guinea pig?
Am I a mailman?
I don't know who I am.
Who am I?

While she was singing this she was skipping around the circular path, happily and totally absorbed. She repeated these words in a different order several times, her rhythms of singing and her manner of expression totally coordinated and in sync with her physical movements. All "characters" in the song

were taken from her immediate environment and her daily life at home.

She then stopped – made a pause in the song and movement – turned to the centre of the patch and pronounced – half singing, half speaking – "No, I am a person."

As if to make sure it is true, she repeated the dance twice after that – as if to confirm her relationship to her larger environment, as well as to her garden patch; as if to reassure that, in the process of planting, she had still retained her identity as a person. She was questioning whether, perhaps, she was one of the "characters," examining her relationship to them by playing with the idea of changing skins momentarily. At the same time, by dancing and singing in the centre of the garden patch, she performed a kind of initiation rite, giving the plants the energy to grow, as well as introducing them to the other "characters" in the larger context of the backyard's life. (The mailman is a bit of an outsider here! He also is the only other "person" mentioned.)

This was a ritual as we seldom experience it in the urban context. Not necessarily because it is not there but because its only performers are children, and children have a hard time being heard and seen in this environment. I myself was so absorbed in my own activities and thoughts that it took me a while to realize what, in fact, I was witnessing. Once I began listening, though, it imprinted itself so strongly on my mind that it took on more and more depth as I was thinking about it.

Here was a ritual that seemed to come out of nowhere, deeply connecting the life and growth in the backyard with her own psyche through song and movement. Here was the beginning of a cultural ritual, a spring festival celebrating growth and new life.

Sonja was the full participant from the activity of planting through to the activity of dancing and singing. Everything emerged out of herself alone, with seemingly no super-imposition of other ideas. There was a sense of magic created.

> A sacred song based on infantile babbling is considered a song as ancient as any other. The implied idea that all possible songs exist and have only to be found is in complete harmony

with Aboriginal attitudes in general toward time and innovation.[21]

Even though Sonja was the only participant in this ritual, she confirmed a statement that Alan Lomax makes in his article "Song Structure and Social Structure:"

> In our society only the children know how to organize and dramatize their feelings in the ancient, collective fashion.[22] (my emphasis)

She had "found" a song that – in a ritualistic fashion – "organized and dramatized" her feelings about and experience of the planting of her garden patch. And the whole process found its natural end in "No, I am a person."

I called this ritual a "complete" ritual because it felt totally rounded from beginning to end. The fact that it was a simple form of a circle dance may possibly have significance in itself.

> . . . the circle dance really symbolizes a most important reality in the life of primitive men – the sacred realm, the magic circle. . . it fulfills a holy office, perhaps the first holy office of the dance – it divides the sphere of holiness from that of profane existence. In this way it creates the stage of the dance, which centers naturally in the altar or its equivalent – the totem, the priest, the fire – or perhaps the slain bear, or the dead chieftain to be consecrated. [or the garden just planted?]
>
> In the magic circle all daemonic powers are loosed. The mundane realm is excluded, and with it, very often, the restrictions and proprieties that belong to it. Dr. Sachs (Curt Sachs, World History of the Dances) has said quite truly that all dance is ecstatic – the holy group dance, the vertiginous individual whirldance, the erotic couple dance. (In the ecstasy of the dance man bridges the chasm between this and the other world, to the realm of demons, spirits and God . . .) All vital and crucial activities have been sanctified by dance, as in birth, puberty, marriage, death – planting and harvest, hunting, battle, victory – seasons' gatherings, housewarmings.[23]

However, the completeness of the ritual also lies in its overall structure and its content. I would like to present this in the following manner:

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[21]Merriam, p. 80.

[22]Alan Lomax, "Song Structure and Social Structure", Ethnology, Vol. 1, 1962, pp. 425–451.

[23]Langer, p. 191.

STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO	STAGE THREE
ACTION: Planting.	EXPRESSION: Dancing/singing, strong self expression, invention.	EQUILIBRIUM: 1."I am a person" (feelings of confidence and inner vitality). 2.Physical, spiritual and emotional consolidation within her environment. 3.Energy to "give."

The above table presents a model for what I have called a "complete" ritual. It proceeds in three stages. Stage one consists of the physical action of planting. Stage two emerges out of this action and is called "expression." It consolidates this past action by giving it emotional, spiritual meaning. In this case the expression consists of strong self expression – all dancing and singing are Sonja's invention. In other words, her imagination is in full action during this stage. Stage three as a result is a stage of complete equilibrium, where not only a state of inner focus and balance has been achieved but also new "energy to give" has been created: her equilibrium gave joy and inspiration to me, the listener, observer, and her dancing and singing gave the plants energy to grow. Thus a second circle of giving has been created: I gave her the garden patch, the act of planting gave her the dancing and singing, her dancing and singing gave energy back to me and the plants. A relationship has thus been created between Sonja, myself and the garden. The circle of gift exchange is an old one, and exists in varying forms among many tribal societies. I was inspired in my thinking here by Lewis Hyde's book "The Gift". Hyde says,

> When we see that we are actors in natural cycles, we understand that what nature gives to us is influenced by what we give to nature. So the circle is a sign of an ecological insight as much as of gift exchange. We come to feel ourselves as one part of a self-regulating system.[24]

It is clear that Sonja's ritual is a spontaneous one, and therefore it does not have any explicit ties to a socio-cultural tradition. However, her spontaneous ritual happened within the larger context of other events in her life. Certain feelings of security on that day and within that context gave her a chance to perform such a complete ritual.

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[24]Hyde, p. 19.

Children create rituals all the time. Sonja's little planting ritual is nothing unusual. What is unusual is that it was noticed. This does not happen very often. Adults (myself included) simply often do not recognize the ritualistic character of child's play and, in fact, have a tendency to interrupt children all the time. Urban, adult time is mostly out of sync with children's time.

A child playing – i.e. while carving a small part of special time out of ordinary time – always strives to completion of the process. Talk, song, and movement are an integral part of this process, whether a child plays alone or with other children. The child lives inside the play/ritual, is always a participant. There is no separation between listening and soundmaking. Listening, dancing, singing, speaking are simple tools for whatever feelings need to be expressed.

Ideally, children would have a place within the context of the family, the clan, the tribe, society at large, that would allow them the same "freedom of expression" that children allow each other in the playing ritual; they would have a place that gives them a chance to develop a contributing voice, a chance to "find" songs – in other words a place from which to contribute to the cultural growth of a community, and a place that allows children to have an influence on the adult world. Alice Miller expresses this same ideal in the following way:

> We need to hear what the child has to say in order to give our understanding, support, and love. The child, on the other hand, needs free space if he or she is to find adequate self-expression. There is no discrepancy here between means and ends, but rather a dialectical process involving dialogue. Learning is a result of listening, which in turn leads to even better listening and attentiveness to the other person. In other words, to learn from the child, we must have empathy and empathy grows as we learn.[25]

I believe that the majority of people – in Western society at least – are still growing up without being listened to. The process of growing up then becomes a loss of skills in self-expression and worse, a loss of confidence in these skills.

I certainly know that I grew up in a context where there was little room for a child's voice that could influence the adults. It was simply unthinkable that a child could be an equal contributor to a

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[25]Miller, p. 101.

situation. My parents were by no means consciously trying to silence me. They simply – in a very benevolent way – put me into my place: a child's place, from which I could have no influence on the adults.

By way of contrast to the above "complete" ritual, our Christmas ritual was an incomplete ritual for me. Not only was I a child in the presence of parents' – in my case benevolent – authority, but the ritual's structure and content itself was determined by the authority of Western cultural aesthetics and Protestant moral ethics. All individuals in my family bowed to this authority, which expressed itself in their subdued, uncreative behaviour, in particular during the musicmaking. There was absolutely no room to refresh the ritual from within by "finding" our own songs, inventing new ingredients to the yearly celebration. It was a situation of spiritual atrophy.

The lack of understanding for my tears – which burst out from under this stasis – set up a vicious circle for every Christmas ritual: because my emotions/tears were not accepted and thereby my emotional state found no resolution or completion, I was afraid of crying again; this fear increased my inner tensions, which then made it impossible to hold the tears back. This situation created a double–loss for me: 1) The loss of the love for Christmas music, 2) the loss of trust in my emotions, because they burst out unpredictably.

It was the music's all–encompassing presence in time and space, within the family context that changed my relationship to it and therefore its meaning.

> Every music system is predicated upon a series of concepts which integrate music into the activities of the society at large and define and place it as a phenomenon of life among other phenomena. These are the concepts which underlie the practice and performance of music, the production of music sound.[26]

Rather than being an expression of one's joy, expectation and worship, the music seemed to emphasize even more the already overpowering status quo. The adults did not, in fact, sing with their own voice but with an adopted voice of cultural and religious authority. The child's voice, which is

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[26]Merriam, p. 63.

always an expression of the child's feelings, can find no room in this powerful acoustic space. It is automatically excluded. This is not necessarily an intentional exclusion. In my case it was simply "the way it was, and the way it had always been." Children had to accept their position. As Hall points out, "every culture has its own hidden, unique form of unconscious culture."[27]

At this point I would like to re-introduce my model for a "complete" ritual and apply it to my experience of Christmas as a child. Even though Sonja's ritual was a spontaneous ritual that involved only herself, I believe that the three-stage model for a "complete" ritual can be applied to traditional rituals that occur within an established socio-cultural setting. Within the framework of this model I will try to show how the Christmas of my childhood became an incomplete ritual.

STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO	STAGE THREE
ACTION: making of presents	EXPRESSION: singing as expression of traditionally established music; no possibilities for new forms of expression; result: BREAKDOWN OF EXPRESSION: crying, "reduced to tears".	EQUILIBRIUM SHAKEN: 1.Loss of vitality, feelings of inner weakness. 2.Lack of spiritual, emotional consolidation within family context. 3.Regaining of equilibrium only through gift-giving; ("coming from a magical place") new energy to "give."

From this one can see that an imbalance begins to show in stage two: even though there is expression in the singing of Christmas songs, the particularly tight framework of my family's celebration did not allow for any input of new expression. As a child I could not test my skills of invention and spontaneous creativity in this context. This barrier caused crying in me (other children might have reacted in other ways) and gave me tremendous feelings of inner weakness. I did regain my equilibrium to a certain extent, however, once the singing was over and we entered the Christmas room with its candlelit Christmas tree and the presents.

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[27]Hall, p. 2.

As I became older I tried to suppress my emotions towards the music for fear of crying. The result was that I simply rejected the music, avoided singing it as much as possible and tried not to hear it. The loss of intense emotions and expression through music also meant, of course, a loss of the sense of magic and of magical times. Without that sense a ritual remains incomplete.

I believe that many children experience this loss simply because their powers of expression – whatever form they take – do not get the support they need in order to create self-confidence. This can result in great feelings of emptiness, especially when the magical characters of Christmas have been revealed as non-existent. In my case, as in many cases, this loss was not replaced with a symbolic understanding of these figures and all that was left were the duties and "chores" of Christmas. When I was a teenager, for example, my parents would be exhausted on Christmas Eve, from the preparations, the buying of presents for many people. In other words, the authority that used to "design" the magic and determine what expression it should take during my childhood, no longer had the strength to enforce the forms of expression and had never taught me to trust my own forms of expression, my own imagination. Christmas became an empty event and I felt bad about not having the tools to make it more meaningful. Its main purpose now was to give gifts to each other. In fact, giving gifts was the only way of salvaging a part of a "complete" ritual.

The singing of songs had been ruined for me. It was replaced by playing excerpts from Bach's Christmas Oratorio before entering the Christmas room, and while opening the presents. We were playing the music on the record player to create a holy atmosphere. The Christmas Oratorio was an accompaniment to the giving of gifts.

I am no longer surprised that I was mesmerized by the Christmas music by the cash register (example 2). I had already experienced something similar in my teenage years: Bach's music on the record player covered up the lack of magic, the lack of music making, the lack of vibrancy and vitality in the Christmas ritual, the lack of time, energy and imagination for ritual expression. What was left was a skeleton of the Christmas ritual, the duty and moral obligation of gift giving, with Bach's music as

background accompaniment and authority.

The Christmas celebration in my teenage years, as a result, took the following shape:

STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO	STAGE THREE
ACTION: Making presents, shopping.	LOSS OF EXPRESSION: Listening to Bach's music within strong status quo; no singing, i.e. sound input only, no sound output. Suppression of emotions.	LOSS OF EQUILIBRIUM: 1.Spiritual/emotional emptiness. 2.Lack of contact within family context. 3.Gift giving now largely a duty, moral obligation; (some energy retained for giving of presents that were made by myself).

As can be seen here, the action itself takes on a new form. Some of the active making of presents is still retained, but now the buying of presents becomes part of the action. Singing is no longer part of stage two. It has been replaced by listening, which was a fairly active listening before we entered the Christmas room, but became then an accompaniment – a background sound – to the activity of gift giving. The music still conjures up emotions, but I manage to suppress them. This suppression and the lack of active singing go together and cause a total loss of inner equilibrium, in stage three. Even the gift giving has become a duty and moral obligation.

> Morality and performance of duty are artificial measures that become necessary when something essential is lacking. The more successfully a person was denied access to his or her feelings of childhood, the larger the arsenal of intellectual weapons and the supply of moral prostheses has to be, because morality and a sense of duty are not sources of strength or fruitful soil for genuine affection. Blood does not flow in artificial limbs; they are for sale and can serve many masters.[28]

The Christmas ritual in my house was incomplete because it was an artificial framework for repetitive expression of highly established, unchanging cultural and religious duties and routines. When I was a child, imagination and a sense of magic could surface only to a limited extent within this status quo and was lost completely during my teenage years. The music was the acoustic expression of this strong status quo and by association became indelibly linked to it.

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[28]Miller, p. 85.

Christmas as Pseudo-Ritual

Making music, giving gifts, baking cookies, decorating the Christmas tree, are all actions that symbolize the deeper meanings of the Christmas ritual, and are ideally an expression of our spiritual and emotional connection to this "Festival of Birth." To make Christmas a "complete" ritual event, an equilibrium has to be struck between the fulfillment of our physical/ concrete needs - "Action" - and our spiritual/emotional needs - "Expression."

As we have seen in the previous chapter this equilibrium did not exist in my childhood. As I got older the emphasis shifted more and more towards an overload of action/activity, and opportunities to fulfill one's spiritual/emotional needs became progressively more sparse. This shift in emphasis meant the eventual loss of music as a reliable outlet for one's spiritual/emotional needs.

I would like to apply the three stage model for a "complete" ritual to my experience of Christmas-music-as-environment in today's consumer context. It will become obvious that the emphasis has shifted even more towards "action" and that an equilibrium in this situation seems, in fact, unattainable.

STAGE ONE	STAGE TWO	STAGE THREE
ACTION:	LOSS OF CHANCE FOR EXPRESSION:	EQUILIBRIUM SEEMS UNATTAINABLE:
Shopping.	Subconscious to conscious intake of music; emotions of melancholy and sadness surface; attempts to suppress these emotions.	1.Spiritual/emotional exhaustion. 2.Lack of community. 3.Gift giving of consumer goods: loss of energy and imagination to give.

As can be seen, the nature of the action has now changed completely. The making of presents at home has now become mostly the buying of presents in the consumer environment.

Perhaps because of my professional background in music and soundscape studies I have always perceived music–as–environment more consciously than most other people. However, I have, like most people, often tried to block out the music in order for it not to penetrate too deeply. In the case of Christmas music, I have been less successful, since it evokes too many associations and memories. As can be seen in stage two, emotions of melancholy and sadness often surface when hearing Christmas–music–as–environment. In my continual attempt to suppress these emotions – I want to suppress them because they surface unpredictably and seem "silly" in the face of this rather unsophisticated music – I end up being spiritually and emotionally very exhausted at the end of the experience. This occurs most frequently when I go shopping by myself. A feeling of exhaustion and loneliness drains me and takes all energy and imagination out of the process of obtaining presents. I am no longer "one part in a self–regulating system."[29] Instead Hyde says,

> The consumer of commodities is invited to a meal without passion, a consumption that leads to neither satiation nor fire. He is a stranger seduced into feeding on the drippings of someone else's capital without benefit of its inner nourishment, and he is hungry at the end of the meal, depressed and weary as we all feel when lust has dragged us from the house and led us to nothing.[30]

Even though this process may colloquially be called a "shopping ritual," it certainly is not a "complete" ritual in the sense of the three stage model. Instead I would like to call it a "pseudo–ritual." When looking at all the examples I have presented – from Sonja's ritual to this pseudo–ritual – it becomes very obvious that there is a progressive loss of opportunity for self–expression: in Sonja's ritual the singing was still intimately connected with physical expression (dancing); in my childhood this element was no longer present, singing was connected with sitting still; during my teenage years the singing was replaced with listening and, finally, as an adult consumer I make every effort not to hear the music, not to let it penetrate.

> Music trapped in the commodity is no longer ritualistic. Its code and original usage have been destroyed; with money another code emerges, a simulacrum of the first and a

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[29]Hyde, p. 19.

[30]Hyde, p. 10.

foundation of new powers.[31]

Already in my childhood my inner equilibrium was shaken by the incompleteness of the ritual. In the context of the consumer pseudo-ritual this inner equilibrium seems quite unattainable.

The emotional effect of Christmas-music-as-environment finds its origin in the incomplete nature of the Christmas celebrations during my childhood. Melancholy and sadness are the remainder of my childhood tears: a mourning for the loss of imaginative self-expression, and therefore a loss of contact to a community, feelings of lack.

> . . . unlike the sale of a commodity, the giving of a gift tends to establish a relationship between the parties involved.[32]

The circle between the people, the music and the gifts has been broken: birth as a gift has been forgotten, gifts to the child have become commodities, the child has lost its ability to give. With this loss I, as the consumer, am a weakened person and could become a prime target for the interests of the marketplace. Attali, however, presents an interesting vision of hope that makes our loss, our lack, the basis for new creative energy:

> Today, the future is in our lacks, our suffering, and our troubles: repetition expresses the negative image of this absence of meaning, in which the crisis now in process will crystallize through a multiplication of simultaneous moments, the independent and exacerbated presence of the past, present, and future. To rewrite history and fashion political economy is then to describe this cascade, to describe its instability and movement, more profound than the logic of each code, where a meaning beyond nonsense may be reborn, a sound beyond noise.[33]

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[31]Attali, p. 24.

[32]Hyde, p. xiv.

[33]Attali, p. 44.

Christmas-music-as-environment is accepted by a majority of people. One rarely hears open protest against it. This is not simply because people have been desensitized by noise and sound overload - although this is certainly a factor. Another reason is that many of us in the Western world have been psychologically conditioned through our own and our parents' upbringing not to respond with strong emotions; not to get angry ("temper tantrum"), not to cry ("crybaby"), not to be downcast ("droopy face"), not to be happy and lively ("hyperactive"), not to express strong opinions or emotions, particularly in the presence of authority ("troublemaker").

> . . . such a child can never gain insight into this kind of situation because his or her ability to perceive has been blocked by the early enforcement of obedience and the suppression of feelings.[34]

The result is that many of us are never really sure about the nature of our emotions. Music, however, always touches our emotions in one way or another and Christmas music in particular touches many people. The music itself confronts us with our inability to deal with our emotional life. Because of this inability - which scares us - we make every effort not to let these emotions surface.

Not understanding one's emotions means not understanding the nature of our needs. Leiss deals with the problem of human needs extensively in his essay "The Limits to Satisfaction," and I feel it is highly relevant to this discussion:

> To understand the problem of satisfaction in the high-intensity market setting we require only one hypothesis about the structure of human needs. The hypothesis is quite a simple one, namely that every expression or state of needing has simultaneously a material and a symbolic or cultural correlate . . . the two aspects of needing . . . never function separately in the actual process of needing; in other words, the experience of needing is inherently a multidimensional activity.[35]

The Muzak Corporation, with its psychologically designed stream of background music, has for years consciously exploited these "two aspects of needing" in the consumer, and has been rather successful

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[34]Miller, p. 73.

[35]Leiss, p. 42.

in its exploits. By creating subconscious emotions in the consumer within the context of the store or mall, the consumer's need for channeling the emotions often results in the action of buying. The material and symbolic levels are brought together as Leiss explains:

> The general tendency of the present-day market economy, impelled by industrialized mass production and much wider community exchange, is to embed the network of symbolic mediations that shape the character of human needing exclusively in material objects (or more precisely, to orient needs entirely toward commodities). This process is what Marx called the fetishism of commodities.[36]

Thus, the act of buying Christmas presents with the accompaniment of Christmas music becomes an "act of love." Edward Hall's statement that "the natural act of thinking is greatly modified by culture,"[37] makes particularly clear sense in this context of covert culture. The music is the unquestioned cultural status quo. Its presence restricts and confuses the consumers' perception of emotions and needs and consciously manipulates their behaviour.

This restriction is based not only on the presence of music itself, but also on the way it is accepted as an authority. Just as in the Protestant ritual where the music was all-encompassing and paralyzed me as a child into sitting still and internalizing all emotions, so the Christmas-music-as-environment can paralyze customers into internalizing all emotions and can "motivate" them to comply to its seductive powers and hidden demands. In both situations there is no escape from the music. because it comes from an unquestioned and accepted place of power. What Ihde and Slaughter express in the following paragraphs in more abstract terms can easily be related to these situations.

> [sound's] peculiar form of spatiality is enigmatic precisely because the spatiality of sound is a *surrounding* spatiality. We are immersed in the world of sound – it is around us. Thus no matter how we turn our heads it still presents itself to us . . . the sound itself "surrounds" us coming in both our ears and "invading" our being. Add to this the relative difficulty with which we may control sound intrusions as compared to sights. We must either exert great mental strength to shut out noise or must physically isolate ourselves from sound . . . the parallel with God may be seen. Not only is God invisible or visually non-representable, but the biblical tradition speaks of the inability to escape from the surrounding presence of God . . . there is no place from which to escape the surrounding presence of God.[38]

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[36]Leiss, p. 67.

[37]Hall, p. 9.

[38]Don Ihde and Thomas Slaughter, "Studies in the Phenomenology of Sound: 1. Listening",

In my experience of Christmas music during my childhood, as well as in my experience of Christmas-music-as-environment, I sense the all-encompassing, paralyzing presence of power and authority from which I want to escape.

The Taboo of Silence

Just as it would have been a taboo to shout during my childhood Christmas ritual, for example, it is one of the biggest taboos to ask for silence in the consumer environment. In fact, if one tries, it is often met with a great deal of hostility. In both cases the taboo lies in the request for change - change of atmosphere, change of pace, change of acoustic character. It would be asking for a change in status quo, it would be a questioning of the established authority.

Silence would disrupt the acoustic status quo in the consumer environment and therefore is totally contrary to the interests of the market place.

When Bruneau states that "silence lends clarity to speech by destroying continuity" one could replace the word "speech" with "soundscape": silence lends clarity to the soundscape by destroying continuity.

> We must destroy continuity (which is insured by psychological memory) by going to the end of each emotion or thought . . . Destruction of continuity by imposing mental silence may not just be a simple matter of insuring psychological memory; it may allow the very existence and functioning of memory, as well as suggest its character.[39]

It is precisely this fanatic aim of the market environment to keep the continuity of Christmas music that ensures that customers do not go to the end of each emotion and thought. This, in turn, ensures a successful cover-up of consumers' non-material needs. As Leiss states,

> . . . it is precisely the suppression of the qualitative dimensions of needs which represents the

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[38](cont'd) International Philosophical Journal, Vol. 10, 1970, pp. 233-251.

[39]Thomas J. Bruneau, "Communicative Silences: Forms and Function", The Journal of Communication, Vol. 23, March, 1973, pp. 17-46.

most problematical aspect of the high-intensity market.[40]

"Qualitative dimensions of needs" in the consumer society are, for example, the creation of open time and space, the finding of stillness, calmness, silence and peace. Most of the Christmas songs speak of these attributes and remind us that Christmas originally was an opportunity to find fulfillment for these needs - through the celebration of new life, of birth. Just as birth and ritual are processes for experiencing new life and new energies, so is silence. Both mean change from the ordinary pace of time and as such have revitalizing possibilities. Three authors have expressed this in different ways:

> Silence is nothingness but nothingness is sheer possibility.[41]

Consumers simply cannot be allowed to discover such possibilities. Therefore silence is a taboo.

> Silence is the only phenomenon today that is "useless." It does not fit into the world of profit and utility; it simply is. It seems to have no other purpose: it cannot be exploited.[42]

> Artistically, aesthetically, and metaphorically, silence has often been associated with "slow-time." . . . As Picard states: "If silence is so preponderant in time that time is completely absorbed by it, then time stands still. There is then nothing but silence: the silence of eternity." It appears, then, that in *this* world at least, man's concept of time may very well be related concomitantly to man's concept of silence. Picard relates the two nicely: "Time is accompanied by silence, determined by silence . . . Time is expanded by silence," . . . Sensation, perception, and metaphor are also highly related to silence and slow-time. These processes, like mind-time, may not correspond to mechanistic, artificial time.[43]

Silence here is symbolic for change in the flow of time, and therefore positive and energizing. For me as a child, in the Protestant context, silence was oppressive. It meant lack of change, lack of life and liveliness. This is a difficult experience for a child.

From the negative attitudes towards silence that one encounters in general in Western society, I must deduce that many people have had similarly oppressive experiences with silence in their childhood.

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[40]Leiss, p. 63.

[41]Ihde & Slaughter, p. 238-239.

[42]Max Picard, The World of Silence, trans. Stanley Godman (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. .

[43]Bruneau, p. 21.

Silence in that sense often means being obedient in the face of authority.

It is not surprising, therefore, that music is regarded as a welcome distraction by so many people, as a welcome change of pace, in fact, a welcome tool to cover up those oppressive silences of their childhood and to forget about them. Perhaps this is why it was possible for Christmas-music-as-environment to become accepted as another flow of unchanging time. It simply reminds us - through our ability to recall words of the songs - of silence and stillness. It makes it possible for us to have a romanticized image of silence, without having to go through the experience of silence.

Both the silence of my past and the Christmas-music-as-environment function to reinforce linear time, "monochronic time" in Hall's words, or as Berger expresses it:

> Time according to the nineteenth century view, is objective, incontestable, and indifferent; to its indifference there are no limits.[44]

In view of what has been written so far, this indifference is the indifference of the Protestant and cultural authorities of my childhood that enforce the silence, as well as the capitalist authorities that enforce the continuous music. Both will do everything to prevent change.

Just as Bruneau talks about how "we must destroy continuity," Berger reminds us of cyclic views of time:

> In those days time passed, time went on, and it did so by turning on itself like a wheel. Yet for a wheel to turn there needs to be a surface like the ground which resists, which offers friction. It was against this resistance that the wheel turned. Cyclic views of time are based on a model whereby two forces are in play: a force (time) moving in one direction, and a force resisting that movement.[45]

Events like births and rituals are forces "resisting that movement." Christmas as a festival of birth has potentially the same function of being a resisting force to ordinary time and the musicmaking for this festival can potentially make this resisting force wonderfully audible and thereby bring the magic back into the ritual process.

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[44]Berger, p. 35.

[45]Berger, p. 36.

My tears during the music of my childhood Christmas and my complex reactions to Christmas-music-as-environment can be seen as mourning the loss of this potential.

CHAPTER V

IN SEARCH OF BALANCE: THE CREATIVE PROCESS

My experiences of Christmas music during my childhood and youth created a threefold loss in me: 1) a progressive loss of opportunities for self-expression, both physical and vocal (having to sit still during singing and eventually a giving up of singing altogether), 2) a loss of capacity to listen (becoming a distracted listener, not wanting to be emotionally affected by the music), and 3) a loss of imagination and energy to give (the making of presents, a creative act of giving, having been replaced by the buying of presents). This threefold loss resulted for me in a lack of inner nourishment and in feelings of melancholy. It made me vulnerable to musical/acoustic input and gave me no tools to deal with sound overload. I could not develop my voice as an expressive tool, could not find confidence in it or strength through using it. With such an imbalance between listening and soundmaking it is not surprising that my present-day reactions to Christmas-music-as-environment manifest themselves in similar ways: with feelings of melancholy and exhaustion.

In this and the following chapter I want to discuss ways in which this imbalance could perhaps be corrected. I want to discuss this, remembering my own losses as described in the case study, but also knowing that I am not the only one who has lost her confidence in and connection to her ear and voice in the process of growing up in Western society.

This loss may take different forms and may happen to a greater or lesser degree depending on each individual's socio-cultural background, and it can be observed all too often in children as they grow up into teenagers and young adults. It is perhaps more of an issue for women, most of whom have been taught from early on to adapt themselves to a given situation, to listen, to accept, and who have not been encouraged to speak up, to feel confident with their voice, especially if it differs from that of the status quo. Linda Anderson confirms this:

> Every woman has known the torment of getting up to speak. Her heart racing, at times entirely lost for words, ground and language slipping away – that's how daring a feat, how

great a transgression it is for a woman to speak, even just open her mouth in public.[1]

Women undergo a lifelong training - in repression/listening. Listening becomes her special aptitude, her gift, 'a good listener.'[2]

Some men experience the same thing, some women may have no relationship to these statements. However, they do mirror my own experience in a very precise way. It was assumed that the girls in my family listened and paid attention to what adults wanted. In fact, we were often expected to second-guess adults' wishes. But to voice our own desires, to speak up, was not part of our training. Thus I learned to become a somewhat keen listener to external voices, but a poor listener to my own inner voices. The result was that, if a sound, music, or somebody's voice affected me very strongly, it would have more power over me than what my own voice had to say to this. External sounds, therefore, including adults' voices, often had authority over me and silenced my own voice rather profoundly. Thus the scene was set for music-as-environment to invade me.

But despite all this, an inner voice has persisted (Attali would call it a "subversive strain"), an inner vitality has surfaced again and again, wanting to express itself, wanting to be heard, not entirely able to submit to or accept the status quo set by external voices of authority, by music or noise. As a young child and teenager I spent much time in natural hi-fi soundscapes. I believe that this was a healing experience for me and that it played a role in creating a deep connection in me to this inner voice and allowed its existence and free expression. I believe that the experience of that environment laid some of the groundwork for this vitality.

There are times and spaces in everyone's childhood that are nourishing and life-giving. They exist because children themselves are extremely versatile in finding those niches in life that give them nourishment and energy. This versatility or desire for life, for survival, is what makes people often say that children are resilient, that they can survive all sorts of pressures, that they can "take it." Children's

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[1]Linda Anderson, "Hearing You in My Own Voice: Woman as Listener and Reader", The Art of Listening, eds. Graham McGregor and R.S. White (New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 73.

[2]Anderson, Hearing You, pp. 73-74.

seemingly unceasing energy is a sign of how hard they work at life, how much they want to be part of it, want to be a central presence in it. This way of living means that they are claiming a place for themselves in society or within the family. Another and better word for this hard work is play. Bruno Bettelheim reminds us that "play is the child's true reality", and he points out that unfortunately "a common mistake adults make in reacting to a child's play is taking it as 'not real'."[3] If, however, children's play is taken seriously, is acknowledged as their true reality and their hardworking contribution to life, they will find nourishment and new energy in moments of their lives. It is my contention that this intense way of being that children engage in is a creative process. They are, in fact, creating their life, their place in life. They do this by always challenging the boundaries of the reality that surrounds them.

One of my "niches" as a child and teenager was the natural hi-fi soundscape in which I spent much time, often alone, sometimes with friends. In that context I was in touch with my environment through all my senses, and I could explore, invent, fantasize and create without disturbance. At a distance from my daily social and cultural environment, I remember that I found a balance between my perception of my surroundings (input) and my own expressiveness (output). Or, if I could not be outdoors, I would think of the stars and the universe, and I would contemplate the smallness of the earth and the relative unimportance of my everyday problems in comparison to the unimaginable dimensions of the universe and the complex relationships between the stars in the sky. Listening to these inner conversations would put the social and cultural conditions around me into a manageable perspective and would strip them of the power they tended to have over me. Subsequently I would be able to face daily life again.

Bettelheim states that "developing an inner life, including fantasies and daydreams, is one of the most constructive things a growing child can do."[4] We only have to observe children or remember our own childhoods to realize that children quite naturally pursue these "qualitative dimensions of need,"[5] by

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[3]Bruno Bettelheim, "The Importance of Play", The Atlantic Monthly, March 1987, p. 43.

[4]Bettelheim, "Importance of Play", p. 37.

[5]This is how Leiss defines all non-material needs. As I have already mentioned in the previous chapter, he suggests that there are "two aspects of needing," the material one and the symbolic, cultural (qualitative) one. Leiss, p. 63.

creating open time and space for developing their inner life whenever they can. Propelled by a desire to explore, invent, dream, express, and give of themselves they are resisting the forces of "ordinary time." Children's way of learning about and understanding the meanings of their social and cultural environments manifests itself in their continuous request for change, for "destroying continuity", in their busy search for balance between impression and expression. Each day, indeed each moment, is a totally new situation and is tackled with fresh energy. This characterizes children's creativity, their creative contribution to life, and it can be witnessed in their play.

I contend that the elements of children's play are also the essential elements of creativity: to pursue the "qualitative dimensions of need", to resist the forces of ordinary time, to request change, to destroy continuity, to search for a balance between impression and expression, to see each situation as a new moment in life in which to give of oneself and in which to receive from the world with renewed energy. And with that creativity it is no longer possible to accept being silenced by the noises of power or voices of authority. Instead, the only silences that are acceptable are active ones, full of potential, energy and vitality. The only "noises" or voices that are acceptable are those that express such potential, energy and vitality. It is the creative process, in the above sense, that has the potential to counteract, undermine, influence, change or take the power out of a dominant voice.

Thus, creative work is a necessary form of expression, especially in our urban society of sensory overload, because it carries within itself the possibility for regaining a balance – a balance between impression/input and expression/output. But Bettelheim warns us that even children's creative forces, strong as they are, are in danger of being destroyed in the face of sensory overload in urban environments. He says that a child who is locked into too many scheduled activities – as is the case with many middle-class children – simply does not have "sufficient leisure to develop a rich inner life" and therefore "will pressure his parents to entertain him or will turn on the television set."[6] Bettelheim continues,

> It is not that the bad of such mass-produced entertainment drives out the good of inner richness. It is that, in a vicious circle, the lack of a chance to spend much of his energies on his inner life causes the child to turn to readily available stimuli for filling an inner void, and

[6]Bettelheim, "The Importance of Play", p. 37.

these stimuli then constitute another obstacle to the child's development of his inner life.[7]

In view of these words it seems even more important to make room for creative work and inner processes. Thus, when considering the city's acoustic overload and the incessant broadcasting of music-as-environment, the creative process has to involve a search for difference in aural perception and sound/musicmaking, resisting the time-flow of music-as-environment, creating change through different soundmaking practices, destroying acoustic continuity and habituation by allowing silence to be a positive experience, by listening to and expressing inner voice.

My thinking on the above issues was inspired by four authors in particular, all of whom offer a vision of creativity that has had an influence on my search for regaining a balance between listening and soundmaking. Adorno and Attali offer visions of creativity that challenge external authority, the status quo of consumer society, mass society, repetitive society, and thereby they attempt to give power to the individual. They address the issue of creativity through their discussion of music and society. Adorno establishes the concept of "non-participation", ***nicht mitmachen***, and Attali speaks of "composing" as a way of eliminating passive acceptance of sounds and music and the silencing of vital voices. The other two authors, Deleuze and Kristeva, do not speak about music specifically, but offer a perspective that added greatly to my understanding of the creative process, and its importance in regaining a balance between ear and voice. Deleuze addresses the issue of creativity through Proust's writing and his creative process, which Deleuze calls "The Search". Kristeva speaks from the perspective of contemporary French Feminism and psychoanalysis, and makes us familiar with the "moments of laughter" in early infanthood as moments full of nourishment that delineate first recognitions of the "other" as distinct from the "self".

All four concepts suggested to me ways to think about the creative process as a vital balancing force against an overload of acoustic impressions and a resulting lack of expression. Except for Julia Kristeva none of these writers refers to children's vitality and energy as a possible source for creativity. I am discussing their writings here nevertheless because it is precisely the creative vitality of the child in them

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[7]Bettelheim, "The Importance of Play", p. 37.

that speaks through their words, especially in the case of Adorno and Attali.

Adorno's Non-Participation

Adorno's concept of "non-participation" or *nicht mitmachen* must be viewed in the context of the critical theory and aesthetics of the Frankfurt School. According to this critical theory of aesthetics, art is 1) an expression and reflection of existing social tendencies and 2) a "last preserve of human yearnings for the 'other' society beyond the present one."[8] (emphasis mine) Martin Jay elaborates, saying that for the Critical Theorist, " . . . true art was an expression of man's legitimate interest in his future happiness.[9]

A successful work of art, according to critical theory, "expresses the idea of harmony negatively, by embodying the contradictions of society in its innermost structure."[10] Thus, as long as social contradictions are not resolved in reality, art must always maintain an element of protest. From this theory arose the notion of "negative dialectics", that is, a critical, social stance towards anything that is part of a system or status quo. Negative dialectics is a form of intellectual and/or artistic non-conformity.[11] In the view of the critical theorist, this element of protest, this vision of the "other", the "promesse de bonheur", is completely eliminated in mass culture.[12]

Thus when Adorno speaks of "non-participation," he not only means social and cultural non-conformity, but he also suggests that we view society from a distance, that we look at it, as its critical observers. Participation or *mitmachen* on the other hand, for Adorno, is equal to "being consumed,

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[8]Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research 1923-1950 (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), p. 179.

[9]Jay, Dialectical Imagination, p. 179.

[10]Jay, Dialectical Imagination, p. 179.

[11]Susan Buck-Morss, The Origin of Negative Dialectics (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 84.

[12]Jay, Dialectical Imagination, p. 180.

swallowed up."[13] He is critical of those who passively accept what he calls "entertainment music," and he is equally critical of the docile audiences of classical music concerts. Accepting a musically inferior context without protest is, in his words, "regressive listening." He is critical of what he perceives as passive acceptance by a mass audience of much of the music heard over the radio in the U.S. during the 30s and 40s.

Adorno lamented people's regression of listening and felt that entertainment music, as it was played over the radio at that time, silenced people. This music, in his opinion, had a devastating effect on how people listened and used their voices.

> . . . it can be asked whom music for entertainment still entertains. Rather, it seems to complement the reduction of people to silence, the dying out of speech as expression, the inability to communicate at all. It inhabits the pockets of silence that develop between people molded by anxiety, work and undemanding docility . . . it is perceived purely as background. If nobody can any longer speak, then certainly nobody can any longer listen.[14] (emphasis mine)

Clearly, Adorno was acutely aware of the fact that regressive listening and the silencing of voices go hand-in-hand. When he talks about entertainment music he speaks about music not dissimilar to background music. He means music that is perceived in the background of one's perception. Perhaps it is important here to remember that at that time (he came to North America in the 30s) he must have experienced a general upsurge of music (of rather bland quality) in the urban soundscape of North America. The Muzak Corporation had already started, and much "entertainment music" was broadcast over the radio. He also came from Nazi Germany, where music and radio had become a tool of the totalitarian government to influence the masses. Even though the music and the context were different, Adorno must have become particularly critical of any situation where a large segment of society would accept the music of the status quo without protest.

There is, in my opinion, another reason why he was alarmed by people's uncritical and passive acceptance of what he considered worthless music. Adorno was from early on exposed to classical music,

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[13]Buck-Morss, p. 189.

[14]Adorno, Fetish-Character in Music, p. 271.

and later studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg. Early exposure to classical music and a grappling with contemporary classical music creates, in my experience, a set of ears that learns to deal with crass musical differences. For those ears, tonal music means predictability and atonal music means a challenge to decipher. Adorno had those kinds of ears. They were on the one hand tuned to subtle differences in classical music, for example, listening to differences in performers' renditions of familiar pieces, and on the other hand to the unfamiliar, atonal, experimental sounds of contemporary music. These were the ears that Adorno brought to North America. And with those ears he heard the popular music of this continent, mostly on the radio, which broadcast primarily "white-washed" music, big band, Tin Pan Alley. What he heard was tonality. Since for him the tonality of classical music stood for bourgeois ideology,[15] he must have perceived the tonality of popular music as a cheap version of the former. People that listened to this cheap version had, in his eyes, been seduced by bourgeois ideology and were buying a kind of "false" happiness, a "false" harmony.

As an immigrant, a cultural outsider, perhaps he was unable to develop ears beyond the more generalized popular music. He probably never heard authentic black music. For, at the time when this music began to become generally more accessible, that is, in the early fifties, he returned to Germany. His ears were used to musical sounds that stood in stark contrast to any tonal music (the atonal music of Schoenberg, Webern and other contemporary composers). In order for those ears to hear the "revolution" or opposition in the music of black subculture, for example, and to acknowledge it as protesting the status quo, he would have had to live closer than he did to that culture. To be fair, though, Adorno did hear one thing in what he called "jazz" music:

> . . . to go back to the specific problems of jazz, we shall have to consider its kinship to sport. . . The chief requirement is that the player must be momentarily ready to overcome very definite difficulties. Jazz players and certain jazz amateurs are required to possess an astonishing presence of mind, must remain undisturbed by pitfalls. . . All this probably has very positive aspects for the development of listening and musical activity. . . The skill and presence of mind required by jazz must be emphasized as one of the progressive tendencies in its sportive character. This arises from the necessity of dealing with unforeseen and difficult situations without being disturbed by them. If jazz is not an actual exhibition of musical presence of mind, it is at any rate a school which may serve to develop that presence

[15]Buck-Morss, p. 34.

of mind.[16]

This statement – humorous as it may sound to us now – reflects that he intuitively appreciated the musical challenge in jazz. He also – seemingly unconsciously, or with reluctance – attributed a quality to jazz that speaks of a balance between soundmaking and listening ("All this probably has very positive aspects for the development of listening and musical skills"). But it is obvious from the following statement that he never talked about jazz played by black people, but most likely about big band, white–washed jazz. He says that ". . . the relation of jazz to salon music as well as march music must be considered."[17]

He speaks about jazz as entertainment music, that is, music robbed of its elements of protest; music tending in the direction of background music, music that he perceives as imposing a mood in the same way music–as–environment does now. If we replace the word jazz in the following sentence with words such as entertainment music, background music, muzak, it is a statement that anybody who is critical of the all–pervasive music–as–environment in urban North American society could make now. Adorno says:

> If jazz were only really listened to, it would lose its power. Then people would no longer identify with it, but identify it itself.[18]

Adorno uses some of the terms in the above statement in very specific ways: to "really listen" means to listen as an outsider, critically, as a "non–participant," that is, as somebody who is not in danger of getting swallowed up by the status quo; to "identify it" means to recognize and understand its social reality and function, and to articulate that recognition, speak critically about it, voice an opinion, question it; to "identify with it" means to be consumed by it, swallowed up, "participating."

In other words, if people would "really listen" or listen critically they would not only not get consumed by it, but they would know how to "identify it", i.e. how to articulate and express thoughts

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[16]Theodor W. Adorno, "Music in Radio", Princeton Radio Research Project, Unpublished Memorandum, June 26, 1938, pp. 86–87.

[17]Adorno, Music in Radio, p. 88.

[18]Buck–Morss, pp. 109–110.

about it, talk about it, set their own voice against it. They would not be able to silently accept the sound but they would have to say something about it, express their opinion, make their own sound. "Really listening," then means a first step towards achieving a balance between sound input and sound output. By really listening one can "identify" music for what it is and what it really has to say to us. Then, according to Adorno, we really know it, and it ceases to have power over us, it ceases to be a voice of authority. Recalling Truax's listening levels here, a parallel can be drawn between his "listening-in-search" and Adorno's "really listening", as well as between his "distracted listening" and Adorno's "participation" or "identifying with it".

I want to elaborate on this and give several examples of how really listening/listening-in-search as described above rewards us with new knowledge and tools for soundmaking. First of all, it suggests that we understand a word or a concept best once we have used it in spoken language. When learning a new language it is not until we speak the words ourselves that we really begin to control the language, to know it. But the speaking is only possible after we have listened carefully first. We can observe this process with children when they learn to use words and understand new concepts. By actually beginning to integrate words and concepts into their daily vocabulary they begin to know the language in a very new way. Children will suddenly use a word repeatedly that they have never spoken before but that they suddenly have become aware of and listened to more consciously. First they will try it out in many different contexts, sometimes correctly, sometimes incorrectly. Gradually, as the word's meaning is understood, the word will find its correct place in the child's daily vocabulary.

The same applies to music. One knows a musical style most intimately when one can play it or compose in it. This presupposes careful listening, just as with language. Adorno perhaps was closest to knowing Schoenberg's music in that sense, since he had studied it and had composed in its style. He did not know authentic black music in that way. Thus, from Adorno's perspective, only the contemporary classical composer, such as Schoenberg, could be a "non-participating" cultural force in society. Through his compositional praxis of atonality, the composer in Adorno's ears, constituted a kind of subcultural force, challenging the status quo of tonal, classical music. When he speaks of the "extraordinarily violent

protest which such music confronts in the present society,"[19] he really speaks of how this music challenges the listening habits of classical music audiences. Let me describe shortly here what these habits are and how they are being challenged.

Active critical listening in the traditional art-music context means to find out whether a familiar piece is played well, that is, with musicality, without mistakes and in the current "fashion" of stylistic execution. One listens for whether a piece of music is played skillfully and according to the tastes of the dominant culture. One is a sophisticated listener when one can articulate the flaws or the excellence in the performer's rendition of a piece of music. It means that one knows the piece and has a"vision" of its ideal performance. Without a knowledge of the piece or – at least – of the era it came out of, one cannot be a participant in this discourse.

The contemporary composer challenges this type of listening. By merely listening to the quality of the performance of a modern piece one does not gain insight into this sound, and thereby does not get any satisfaction from it. Contemporary classical music demands ideally an active "listening-in-search" for content and cultural, musical context. The classical music audience rejects this music, I believe, precisely because of the demand for change in listening habits.

Thus, for Adorno the contemporary composer provides, within the art music context, oppositional moments that are musically extremely radical. In Schoenberg's case, this was indeed true, and for Adorno Schoenberg's music was exactly that: artistic non-conformity, "revolutionary music," music that protests the status quo of tonality. Schoenberg's twelve-tone music was a new musical system, invented by himself, that took the hierarchy out of the diatonic system. In the purest form of twelve-tone music all twelve tones in the diatonic system have equal importance. There was no conscious political intent behind this,[20] it was simply a new way of organizing the twelve available tones. Adorno interpreted Schoenberg's compositional procedure as authentically dialectical. However, it must be pointed out here that Adorno

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[19]Buck-Morss, p. 38.

[20]Buck-Morss, p. 34.

mostly talks about "compositional praxis" of Schoenberg, not ever about the sound of the music. In fact, Susan Buck-Morss claims that Schoenberg's compositional praxis became a model for Adorno's philosophical praxis.[21]

According to her, Adorno liked the idea of the dialectical negation of tonality and used Schoenberg's music as a model for his ideas. This is in tune with his statement, as quoted by M. Jay, that "we interpret art as a kind of code language for processes taking place within society, which must be deciphered by means of critical analysis."[22] Therefore Adorno allowed the "innovative composer" a certain kind of political autonomy.

> Music fulfills its social function more accurately when, within its own material and according to its own rules of form, it brings to articulation the social problems which it contains all the way to the innermost cells of its technique. In this sense, the job of music as art bears a specific analogy to that of social 7heory.[23]

If Schoenberg indeed brings social problems to articulation through his music, where is the audience that recognizes and hears this articulation?

Schoenberg's music never had any appeal for the majority of people, neither for the concert-going middle-class nor for the working class. Even Brecht compared Schoenberg's music with the "neighing of a horse about to be butchered and processed for bockwurst."[24] The element of protest that Schoenberg's music contained was inside its musical materials, "protesting tonality". Unless the listener is familiar with the history and theory of Western classical music, the protest that is occurring inside the musical structures themselves would remain hidden. This protest is not spoken in a "language" accessible to the majority of people. Adorno himself conceded later that Schoenberg's music only led to a new musical dogma, "a revolutionary failure."[25] At the time, however, he wanted to believe in the revolutionary nature of this

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[21]Buck-Morss, pp. 35-36.

[22]Jay, p. 177.

[23]Buck-Morss, p. 35.

[24]Buck-Morss, p. 34.

[25]Buck-Morss, p. 188.

music.

For me, coming from a classical music background and a similar class background as Adorno, his writings were initially inspiring. They suggested a place for the contemporary composer in society that seemed attractive: the artist as non-participant and the artist's creative expression as a protest against the cultural status quo. Coming from a background where creativity was only allowed to happen within the constraints of the status quo, this vision of the artist was important because it encouraged the exploration of different musical "languages" and forms. Its limitation is that it concerns itself with the artist as an individual, outside of community. Adorno did not realize that real non-conformity that opposes the status quo actively cannot exist effectively without a community.

Attali's Composing

Attali's concept of composing is in some ways similar to Adorno's *nicht- mitmachen*, in that it is a rejection of the status quo, of the familiar, the repetitive, a refusal to be a distracted listener. More importantly, though, it is an activity without a goal: composing for composing's sake, making sound for the sake of soundmaking. It is a search for new meanings outside of commodity exchange through the act of making sound collectively:

> . . . in the act itself – composition: in which there is no longer any usage, any relation to others, except in the collective production and exchange of transcendence.[26]

Attali is not suggesting a new style of music or a new technique of composing as Adorno was doing with Schoenberg. He is talking of a "*new way of making music.*"[27] Repetitive society, he claims, has condemned us all to silence. But he is not, like Adorno, condemning the silenced masses as being docile. He is implicating everyone, himself included, into the silencing. He sees it as a general social phenomenon that has to be resisted by all of us together. The only way to break that silence is, he says,

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[26]Attali, p. 45.

[27]Attali, p. 134.

to become involved in a new process of inventing our own music, finding new ways of making music. He says that:

> We are all condemned to silence – unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is. Doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes in order to reinsert communication into them. Inventing new codes, inventing the message at the same time as the language. Playing for one's own pleasure, which alone can create the conditions for new communication . . . the emergence of the free act, self-transcendence, pleasure in being instead of having.[28]

Composing, then, is no longer an exclusive activity of the politically autonomous artist that Adorno envisioned, but it becomes an activity that everyone can be involved in. Composing is making audible what goes on inside oneself. "Pleasure in being instead of having." (emphasis mine)

Attali's concept of composing initially gives the impression of yet another individualist approach to creativity without community, just like the vision of the "revolutionary" composer that Adorno had of Schoenberg. However, there is a difference. Composing in Attali's sense might be regarded as a first step: before we can find a unique voice as a community, or a voice that has something to give, we have to find our own voice. The analogy to the child in the context of the family is not far-fetched here. Before a child can truly be a contributing person to a family community she/he has to have been given the opportunity to find her/his own voice, to "compose." Just as I was given that chance only to a limited extent as a child in the family context, repetitive society does not give the individual that chance either. One has to fight for that opportunity. If we were given that opportunity in the family context during our childhood, then perhaps we would have the tools later – as adults – to help break the cycle of repetitiveness in the larger context of society.

Countless groups and individual people are experimenting with sound, "composing" in Attali's sense all over the world. The phenomenon has grown over the last ten years. These groups are neither part of the popular nor of the contemporary classical scenes. One such group is the Macinus Ensemble in Holland. It has been in existence since 1968. This is how it describes itself:

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[28]Attali, p. 134.

> [It] has held weekly gatherings to investigate the possibilities of musical development. A stipulation is that the distinction between composer, performer and consumer be given up. The group starts making music without any decisions being made in advance and without considering technical proficiency. The musical developments are provided with content, form and structure only through playing, listening and discussing afterwards. . . The tape recorder offers a means of developing the music of the Macinus Ensemble, as the music that is made is always recorded, listened to and discussed critically.[29]

Composing then means to develop a creative voice, creative musicmaking, to take on the responsibility of finding a way of making music, using the voice that gets us out of repetition, out of unconscious intake of our soundscape. Attali puts great importance into creating "our own relation with the world", but he also says that in that attempt we should "try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create."[30] Interpreted in a positive way, this statement could mean that we should try to form a community of creativity. Thus composing may not merely be an isolated act of an individual, but may perhaps contain within itself the trust that "playing for one's own pleasure" will eventually produce a voice, a music that we share with others.

Barthes gives the act of composing an additional dimension: "to compose, at least by propensity, is *to give to do*, not to give to hear but to give to write."[31] In other words, composition would ideally inspire others not only to listen actively but also to compose. It would encourage others to speak in their own voice. Thus composition would not just be a form of self-expression but most importantly a gift to give, a gift from one's inner world, a passing on of creativity, keeping the gift of creativity in motion. Hyde expresses it this way:

> Once an inner gift has been realized, it may be passed along, communicated to the audience. And sometimes this embodied gift – the work – can reproduce the gifted state in the audience that receives it.[32]

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[29]Notes on the record jacket of Music for Everyman, 861 Macinus Ensemble, Apollorecords, AR028605, 1986.

[30]Attali, p. 134.

[31]Roland Barthes, "Musica Practica", Image, Music, Text, ed. and trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), p. 153.

[32]Hyde, p. 151.

The experience of music would then become a mutual one between composer/musician and listener, "a moment of grace, a communion, a period during which we too know the hidden coherence of our being and feel the fullness of our lives."[33] The composer/musician creates music that has the potential to open the doors to the listener's creativity, the unconscious, the "soul", and the listener assists in unlocking that door, keeping it open. Ideally the boundaries between composer, musician and listener, the boundaries between listening and soundmaking, would dissolve at such a moment. It is at that point that a piece of music is truly being born and begins its "life" in society. "Any such art," says Hyde, "is itself a gift, a cordial to the soul."[34]

Hyde's vision of art as a gift to give is inspiring and worth keeping in mind when reading about Attali's vision of "a new practice of music among people":

> Music becomes the superfluous, the unfinished, the relational. It even ceases to be a product separable from its author. It is inscribed within a new practice of value. The labour of music is then potentially an "idleness", irreducible to representation (exchange) or to repetition (to stockpiling) . . . By subverting objects it heralds a new form of the collective imaginary, a reconciliation between work and play . . . participation in collective play, in an ongoing quest for new, immediate communication, without ritual and always unstable. It becomes unreproducible, irreversible.[35]

Reading this paragraph leaves me hopeful and inspired but at the same time worried. Hopeful, because he recognizes the intimate connection between work and play, that I discussed previously in the context of children's play. The worry comes from the fact that he connects collective play and an ongoing quest for new, immediate communication with instability and a lack of ritual. Yet it is exactly those two processes – participation in collective play and ongoing quest for new, immediate communication – that make up the stability and the ritualistic nature of children's activities. And it is exactly in these processes that children's creativity is located. When the world is open to that creativity it is passed on to us as a gift, as an inspiration or simply as a refreshing experience.

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[33]Hyde, p. 151.

[34]Hyde, p. 151.

[35]Attali, p. 141.

Attali himself seems to express concern about the radical nature of his concept of composing. What he does not mention or recognize is that the roots of creativity are located exactly in that which he calls unstable and without ritual: participation in collective play and ongoing quest for new, immediate communication. These are activities children seek out as a natural extension of their creative drive and which resist the forces of ordinary time and destroy continuity. Continuous requests for change are an inherent characteristic of those activities. In other words, what Attali calls unstable, without ritual, or even a risk,[36] is precisely where creativity, vitality and energy are located. If composing comes from that "place", it might be more like a creative gift in Hyde's sense. Hyde's concept of gift in motion can perhaps put stability and ritual back into Attali's vision of composing: the passing on, the communicating of the inner gift, the inner voice would become the stability and ritual.

> The true commerce of art is gift exchange, and where that commerce can proceed on its own terms we shall be heirs to the fruits of gift exchange: . . . to a creative spirit whose fertility is not exhausted in use, . . . and to a sense of an inhabitable world – an awareness, that is, of our solidarity with whatever we take to be the source of our gifts, be it the community, or the race, nature, or the gods. But none of these fruits will come to us where we have converted our arts to pure commercial enterprises.[37]

Deleuze's Search

Adorno's non-participation and Attali's composing suggest visions of the social role and responsibility of the artist/composer and how it offers solutions to mass or repetitive society. I want to discuss Deleuze here because he speaks about the creative process itself (without much concern for the social responsibilities of the artist). His thoughts, because they concentrate so exclusively on the inner and private process of creativity, gave me a chance to look at ways of working creatively/artistically in isolation from social conditions. I found this to be an important stage to go through because it is a little like finding a niche that can nourish these thought processes, in the sense that children find their niche to be creative and to be nourished. In conjunction with Attali's and Adorno's discussions of the external social role of the artist, this exploration of inner/internal work creates a possibility of balance between the

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[36]Attali, p. 142.

[37]Hyde, pp. 158-159.

inner and outer world of the artist, of creative existence.

Deleuze's concept of The Search is not specifically about music. He talks about The Search in the context of Proust's novel "Remembrance of Things Past," and relates it to the creative process of Proust's writing. But his concept of The Search is universal enough that it can be applied to any creative process, including musicmaking and composing. Deleuze calls The Search the "production of the sought-for-truth."[38] It is a production, a process of creativity. The emphasis is not on the sought-for-truth but on The Search itself, on the production, the creative process, on discovery. Here is how Deleuze describes Proust's Search:

> This is precisely the originality of Proustian reminiscence: it proceeds from a mood, from a state of soul and from its associative chains, to a creative viewpoint – and no longer, in Plato's fashion, from a state of the world to see objectivities. . . It's no longer a matter of saying: to create is to remember – but rather to remember is to create . . . no longer a matter of saying: to create is to think, but rather, to think is to create, and primarily to create the act of thinking without thought. To think, then, is to create food for thought.[39]

A mood or a "state of soul" is the base from which The Search begins. It is the place where we give ourselves the time and space to listen, to pay attention to our state of soul or – as Deleuze also puts it – to our impressions. The production can then proceed. And it is the production itself, The Search itself (to remember, to think) that provides the energy for continued production/search, ("to think, then, is to create food for thought") and which, in turn, may open the producer/artist's way to the creative viewpoint (the sought-for-truth) and/or an actual product (the work of art). One important characteristic of The Search is the lack of assurance that one will arrive at a successful end-product. This recalls Attali's concept of "composition" where music may remain "unfinished", an "unstable" communicator. Instead, trust is placed into the experience of The Search/production itself, into the act, the"doing", the creative process. The artist/producer, in other words, is not concerned with achieving end-results or coming up with a final product, but rather with concentrating his or her whole being onto the process of creative production itself: being there, being present. Attali expresses exactly the same thing when he says that:

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[38]Gilles Deleuze, Proust and Signs, trans. Richard Howard (New York: G. Brazillier, 1972), p. 131.

[39]Deleuze, pp. 98–99.

> production is not foreseeable before its conclusion. It becomes a starting point, rather than being an end product; and time is lived time, not only in exchange and usage, but also in production itself.[40] (emphasis mine)

Listening and soundmaking are creative processes over time. When we are listening actively, we are assisting in giving birth to somebody else's piece of music, giving this piece of music its life in society. When we are making sound, we are structuring the flow of time and are creating a voice that can live in society. Ideally, we listen and make sound without an end-product in mind, living the time-flow of the process itself, instead. Out of this process may grow a "creative viewpoint", a "sought-for-truth", but we will not know what it will be ahead of time. This process is like pregnancy and birth; striving for an end-product on the other hand, implies an end, a kind of death. The work leading up to an end-product is organized around the desire to come up with a final, conclusive product. In its most extreme form, it would not include concern about the "after." A baby/birth, on the other hand, implies new life that has evolved from a process, a search (that is, a life-integrated process), and because it marks a new state of soul, it is the beginning of a new search. Birth then implies an arrival at the "sought-for-truth," and at the same time becomes a new "being of truth." A "birth", in listening and soundmaking, is perhaps a moment of recognition in the search, a stage of completion which then leads to a new process, a new search. Thus, The Search is that process which we are engaged in during the longest time span (of our life). It is a process in constant flux; Attali calls it unstable, without ritual. This process can be described as creativity and imagination. The place of the "sought-for-truth," of the baby, the moment of birth, on the other hand, is a resting point that occupies a relative time span of a split second only. For, inherent in the "sought-for-truth" are new impressions, that mark the beginning of a new search, a new production. Deleuze says,

> All production starts from the impression, because only the impression unites in itself the accident of the encounter and the necessity of the effect, a violence which it obliges us to undergo. Thus all production starts from a sign, and supposes a depth and darkness of the involuntary. "Imagination and thought can be splendid machines in themselves, but they can be inert; it is suffering which then sets them in motion."[41]

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[40]Attali, pp. 144-145.

[41]Deleuze, p. 130, last sentence quoted from Proust, V. III, p. 909.

Does this mean that, for Deleuze and Proust, suffering is a necessary ingredient of all production, of all creative processes? For the socially isolated Western artist such as Proust,[42] it may, indeed, be suffering which sets imagination and thought into motion. In a society where imagination and creativity are not naturally integrated, but are feared or resisted, perhaps it is often not possible to set them in motion in any other way but by suffering. Thus, if the mood or "state of soul" in the artist is one of suffering, does that not mean that a work of art or a piece of music could transmit some of this mood, this "impression" (on which production is based) to the audience and could leave it with what Proust calls melancholy? I certainly was often left with this melancholy in musical situations – as a child and as an adult. And this melancholy was perpetuated, both in the classical music concert context and the schizophonic context by the extreme separation between composer, musician and listener, which puts especially the listener at odds with the flow of time.

Barthes offers an interesting perspective on the relationship between music and listener, and can give us perhaps additional clues to why, after some musical occasions, listeners may be left unfulfilled and melancholical and after others may feel inspired and encouraged to make music. He bemoans the fact that in the classical music context we no longer encounter the "perfect amateur" who touches off in us "not satisfaction but desire, the desire to *make* that music."[43] Instead, the audience is presented with the "technician, who relieves the listener of all activity . . . and abolishes in the sphere of music the very notion of *doing*."[44] Barthes describes a situation here where the listener cannot assist in "giving birth" to the performed work. The "technician's" rendering of the music excludes any possibility of active involvement by the audience, because the intent behind the presentation is to perform a technically perfect, flawless musical product. This is not so dissimilar from the schizophonic context, where the listener is always presented with a pre-taped, engineered product. In both cases it matters little whether

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[42]During the last fifteen years of his life he spent most of his time inside his apartment, writing by night, sleeping by day, neither participating in the social life of the city nor able to enjoy the outdoors because of a heavy case of asthma.

[43]Barthes, p. 150.

[44]Barthes, p. 150.

or not the audience is listening actively: the "technician" is too involved in the presentation of a perfect end-product to be sensitive to the audience, and the nature of the schizophonic context excludes the possibility for interaction between musician and listeners altogether.[45] Listeners' receptivity or lack of it would not have the power to change the execution and flow of the music. The "perfect amateur," on the other hand, can create a situation in which his or her soundmaking and the audience's listening combine to make up the creative process, The Search, that gives a piece of music its life – not just in the concert hall but also outside it. That is, the listener comes away with an impression that starts a new production: musicmaking. I remember a few concerts in my youth that left me with such an impression. They usually would be concerts in which the "perfect amateur" played the same instrument that I played, as well as some of the same music. I could then be a very active, informed listener and in that listening would be given new insights into musicmaking. This would inspire me and fill me with the desire to make the music myself. I would go home and play the piano with renewed excitement. On those occasions I experienced what it means to be an active listener and how an audience's involvement can contribute to the success of a musical event. Those were rare cultural occasions that provided a balance between impression and expression, listening and soundmaking, and came close to being complete rituals.

The majority of concerts, however, were less balanced experiences, because they were performed by "technicians" in Barthes' sense, or they were too distant from my own musicmaking abilities. On those occasions there was a clear separation between listener and musician. I, as listener became the "observer" and admirer of the musician's performance skills and would in that listening exclude myself as a potential soundmaker. In fact, one could say that the technician in Barthes' sense can create a distracted listener: the technical spectacle of the performance distracts from a deeper perception of the music. Whereas the "perfect amateur" would lead the listener inside the musical organism of a composition – and would thereby provide the opportunity for a collaborative Search into the piece's "soul" – the "technician" would lead away from it and thereby away from the desire to make music. Those latter occasions were

[45]Perhaps we have more "technicians" than "perfect amateurs" today because the concert musician must compete with the masses of musical end-products on the market (records, audio cassettes, and compact discs).

unbalanced situations, where "listening-in-search" and "really listening" were discouraged and soundmaking was excluded as a possibility. Such a concert is similar to an incomplete ritual, which leaves the listener unfulfilled and melancholical.

Since the listener never participates in determining the time flow of a piece of music nor its spatial existence, neither in the incomplete concert ritual nor in the schizophonic contexts, the music always contains an element of imposition and can never be known to the listener in its entirety nor in all its depth. Proust's narrator, Marcel, recounts a similar experience during the recital of a certain piece of music, the sonata, which plays a major part in "Remembrance of Things Past":

> even when I had heard the sonata from beginning to end, it remained almost wholly invisible to me, like a monument of which distance or a haze allows us to catch but a faint and fragmentary glimpse. Hence the melancholy inseparable from one's knowledge of such works, as of everything that takes place in time.[46]

This is, in fact, a brilliant expression of most of my own experiences of classical music as a child and young person: the experience of a monument in a haze, the experience of a musical work that is simultaneously glorious and inaccessible. It is inaccessible because the time of listening is not lived time. Only if one would play the music oneself could one perhaps overcome the melancholy. Repeated listening in my experience, could not overcome the melancholy. Marcel confirms this when he talks about how he got to know the sonata better and better:

> Since I was able to enjoy everything that this sonata had to give me only in a succession of hearings, I never possessed it in its entirety: it was like life itself.[47]

When reading Marcel's statement above I can only wonder whether his experience of music was as distant from a complete ritual as mine was on so many occasions. The melancholy that he talks about and that I experienced express emotions of loss: loss of unity between musician and listener, soundmaking and listening, expression and impression, loss of unity between time, space and social existence; loss of a unity between nature, culture and human body.

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[46]Marcel Proust, Remembrance of Things Past, Vol. 1, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 571.

[47]Proust, p. 571.

Music–as–environment makes the separation between soundmaker and listener even more extreme. Its schizophonic nature makes it a ready–made product, where our listening has no impact on its presentation. It is an end–product. In addition, its prime purpose is to distract us from intense listening and thus can never achieve in the listener a kind of "birth," a creative "state of soul." Rather, the producers and users of music–as–environment have a goal in mind for those who are exposed to the music: to turn every person into a consumer of their products. People–as–consumers is, in fact, their desired end–product. What happens to people after that is unimportant, as long as the production of consumers through the music does not cease. The following words by Attali then take on a double meaning:

> . . . the moment labour has a goal, an aim, a program set out in advance in a code – even if this is by the producer's choice – the producer becomes a stranger to what he produces.[48]

The producer of foreground and background music intentionally becomes a stranger to both the music as well as the consumer who is exposed to the music. Because music–as–environment was produced with a goal in mind (manipulating people into becoming consumers), the experience of this music excludes a creative process of listening, a search for the sought for truth. The producers of this music are "technicians" in a more sinister sense than Barthes had in mind for the concert musician: technical perfection both in the execution of the music as well as in the engineering of the schizophonic, musical product are used purposely to alienate people from their own aural perception and to direct their attention towards consumer products. The unconscious "impression" of the music does not start a "production". Instead the creative process of listening is eliminated and the sought–for–truth is turned into a desire for acquiring material products. Products promise future happiness, paradise, and music–as–environment creates the atmosphere to support this promise. "Really listening", searching listening to that music (and to the ads, for that matter) exposes that promise as an artificial construct. Neither the perception of the music nor the acquisition of a product can give us the vitality that a creative process, a "birth", can give us. Instead both constitute an arrival at unfulfilled desire. The process of consuming cannot, like the creative process, give us, even when accompanied by music, the experience of

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[48]Attali, p. 134–135.

The Search in Deleuze's sense: a sense of being, a sense of lived time. It merely puts us where we were in the first place: full of desire to have. Thus, as Attali says, "the destruction of the old codes in the commodity is perhaps the necessary condition for real creativity."[49]

It is perhaps not surprising then that the places of "real creativity" can be found in those strata of society that are rarely acknowledged as having vital voices in Western urban society: among children, in subcultural contexts, in black African as well as other third and fourth world cultures. It is there where we can find what Attali calls "the only possible challenge to repetitive power", which "takes the route of a breach in social repetition and the control of noisemaking."[50]

Other cultures can certainly serve as models. But for the white Western person, such as myself, it is perhaps most important to look back into one's own childhood – or at least to make an attempt to understand childhood in general – in order to find the vitality and creativity that can produce a balance between impression and expression, between listening and soundmaking. Psychotherapy can open that area of experience to many, myself included, and can open up fields of memory that get us in touch at least with a desire to re-experience both childhood's sufferings and its lifegiving energies. Kristeva offered – in conjunction with my experiences in psychotherapy – an inspiring image for those moments in childhood that propel us forward into life by being energizing, creative moments. I will discuss this image here, because it adds, in my opinion, a necessary ingredient to the idea of creativity as a producer of vital voices and perceptive, active ears.

Kristeva's Moments of Laughter

Kristeva takes us as far back as the moment of separation from the womb. All human beings share this first loss, these first feelings of lack: life as a separation from the "oceanic state" in the womb. All creative process is based on the desire to recreate this state of wholeness. Music-as-environment tries to

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[49]Attali, p. 122.

[50]Attali, p. 132.

recreate this state artificially, purposely excluding creative process. The young baby is still close to this state of wholeness, is still in a relatively balanced situation. Impression and expression, listening and soundmaking happen simultaneously and play a large part in maintaining a sense of wholeness. Desire for such wholeness emerges once the baby recognizes an "other" as distinct from its "self," that is, once the wholeness becomes harder to attain. It is this original experience of desire that is a desire for nourishment and thus carries within itself a vitality for life, a gift to recreate wholeness, to "compose one's own life."

The mother is most likely the first "other" for the infant, the first recognizable "place," apart from the infant's "self." Julia Kristeva describes these primordial moments of recognition of place (mother as the place from which the child emerges) as "moments of laughter." These moments occur, according to Kristeva, at approximately three months of age. Before that, the newborn baby – remembering bodily contact, warmth, and nourishment from the womb – uses its voice by crying for support and care. Kristeva calls this *anaclisis*. She says that anaclisis is "neither request nor desire, it is an invocation,"[51] an appeal for warmth, nourishment, and support "directed at a frustrated memory"[52] of the nourishing womb. It expresses itself repeatedly in the "cry of distress"[53] throughout the first three months of an infant's life, without the infant reaching a "stable condition."[54] The impression of lack causes an instinctual expression, the cry for care.

After approximately three months the infant begins to perceive the mother as a separate being. In other words, the mother, who has nourished the infant so far and was perceived as being part of the infant, is now perceived as a separate "place," apart from the infant's "self." Now that there is a recognition of an "other," and the mother has attained another meaning than she had before, a space (a

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[51]Julia Kristeva, "Desire in Language", A Semiotic Approach to Art and Literature, ed. Leon S. Roudiez, trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 281.

[52]Kristeva, p. 282.

[53]Kristeva, p. 282.

[54]Kristeva, p. 282.

distance) is created between mother and infant. It is created by the recognition that the "other" is the place of nourishment, or rather that, through the recognized existence of the "other," nourishment is guaranteed. Thus, the infant has reached a "primitive stability,"[55] has made a space between self and other and as a result experiences a relief from the unstable condition of *anaclisis*. This relief, this stability or space – Kristeva calls it "chora" – produces laughter. Thus, Kristeva says that "space causes laughter."[56] She describes those "moments of laughter" in an inspiring way:

> Voice, hearing, and sight are the archaic dispositions where the earliest forms of discreteness emerge. The breast given and withdrawn; lamplight capturing the gaze; intermittent sounds of voice or music – all these meet with anaclisis, [appeal for nourishment] . . . hold it, and thus inhibit and absorb it in such a way that it is discharged and abated through them . . . At that point, breast, light, and sound become a *there*: a place, a spot, a marker. The effect, which is dramatic, is no longer quiet but laughter. The imprint of an archaic moment, the threshold of space, the "chora" as primitive stability absorbing anaclitic facilitation, produces laughter.[57]

Kristeva talks about the infant's first impressions of separateness here – "the imprint of an archaic moment" – that produce an expression, the sound of laughter. Deleuze says, "impression unites in itself the accident of the encounter and the necessity of the effect, a violence which it obliges to undergo."[58] What Deleuze calls violence in the context of his article, Kristeva calls laughter. Deleuze's way of expressing it implies a more passive reception of and reaction to an impression, whereas Kristeva 's way of saying it implies active creation of a new sound: laughter. The impression in her case creates an action, an expression. If, as Deleuze states, "all production starts from the impression" then being "impressed" by something is in itself an involuntary "encounter" which has a "dramatic effect." Thus one could say that these first "moments of laughter" are also first "productions," first expressions of the infant, in search of a "transcendent viewpoint," i.e. in search of the "other."

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[55]Kristeva, p. 283.

[56]Kristeva, p. 280.

[57]Kristeva, p. 283.

[58]Deleuze, p. 130.

Laughter is an expression that follows a strong impression - strong, because an impression that causes laughter usually contains new meanings and therefore opens spaces of new recognition and understanding. Therefore laughter is a life-giving moment that endows us with energy. (Whoever has heard the laughter of a young baby or child can feel this strong gift of energy that the laugh transmits.) In the moment of laughter the "impressed" baby is now becoming the "expressive" producer. To repeat Kristeva again:

> The imprint of an archaic moment, the threshold of space, the "chora" as primitive stability absorbing anaclitic facilitation, produces laughter.[59] (emphasis mine)

This "archaic moment," or "archaic laughter-space,"[60] is a first experience of balance between "im"pression ("imprint") and "ex"pression ("laughter"), an ecological moment in a child's existence. Thus it is a nourishing moment to the "producer", i.e. the child.

Once the child is a little older, nourishment does not depend on the mother as the only "other", but can now be received through other impressions, other substitute objects. The "other" then can potentially always be a source for nourishment (even though it is a substitute object of the original one, the mother), and therefore a desirable object. Its distance from the self keeps the self's desire in motion. The space that is created by the distance is also what causes the "other" to make an "impression." Desire therefore is set in motion because the self wants to reduce the space/distance between itself and the object of nourishment. It is in this desire in motion where creativity is located.

The producers and users of music-as-environment want the music to enter us without our recognition that it is an "other". They want it to become an indistinguishable part of our "self", want our "self" to identify with, be consumed by the music. It is in this way that they are trying to recreate a womblike experience, i.e. by artificially returning us to a state of perception that does not and cannot distinguish between self and other, between self and environment, self and music. However, there is no life-giving nourishment in this artificial womb, and cries for nourishment (the "cry of distress") will not

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[59]Kristeva, p. 283.

[60]Kristeva, p. 285.

be heard by the producers.

In the natural womb nourishment is a given. With separation from the womb it is no longer a given, but the "cry of distress" will bring the infant nourishment. More stable moments of nourishment, however, emerge only when the infant recognizes the "other" as a separate being or "object." Initially this may be the mother's breast, but eventually and ideally it would be the world itself that becomes a nourishing "other", a place of nourishment or of "riant spaciousness," as Kristeva also calls it.[61] The experience of a complete ritual such as Sonja's garden ritual, children' play, or the occasional balanced concert event mentioned above are examples of the world providing a nourishing place, where the "self's" imagination is "in tune" with the social, cultural surroundings. Children, as they grow older, work hard to make the world a place of nourishment, often against tremendous odds. All too often this creative search is discouraged, and children's voices are silenced. Bettelheim, Laing and Miller all make us aware of this unfortunate process, but at the same time they teach us ways of how to become more sensitized to the world of children, their play and creativity, their "true reality". If we are open to the ways in which young children perceive the world and express themselves about it, then we are reminded of the fact that life carries nourishment within itself, the living person carries nourishment within him or herself. And this nourishment, in turn, gives the possibility for creativity to us. In other words, a balance between impression and expression produces a creative gift in the world. These balanced times, these "moments of laughter" create a balanced relationship to the world. They are moments of birth, of creativity.

Because of their balance these times carry a vitality that transmits itself to others in the world and keeps the creative gift in motion. The adult wants to remember this initial vitality that was created through the physical activity of laughter. The creative process must begin with that remembering, with that "mood" or "state of soul". All four authors discussed in this chapter, agree that, in order to find such balanced times, such creativity, people must grant themselves the necessary time and space to experience their own impressions of the external as well as their own internal world. If we listen to Deleuze, it is clear that, without such space and time, production or creativity cannot proceed. When we were three

[61]Kristeva, p. 283.

months old, we all experienced that space – in the natural course of our maturation and growth – which, according to Kristeva, allowed us our first impression of our "selves" in relation to the external world (the "other"). Perhaps Adorno "remembers" this experience of space when he suggests for the individual to view society from a distance and not to participate in the status quo. He argues that such a distance creates a space in which the individual can get clear impressions of society, and take a critical stance towards it. He claims that true creative expression can only come out of such a distanced impression. Attali, with his concept of "composing," is also offering us ways of creating space for ourselves, of leaving room for impressions, when he suggests that "we create our own relation with the world."[62] He challenges us to break through the present codes of repetitive society by taking "pleasure in being instead of having."[63] "Being" in this context would mean, to allow oneself the space to exist however one wants to exist, and to use that space to express, to compose, to make music. It means that one needs to listen to one's inner world. This recalls Bettelheim: creating such a space for oneself is not dissimilar to giving children the time and space to develop their "inner life," by allowing them to daydream and fantasize. All authors have this in common, that they highlight the need for space and that, once the space has been taken and the impressions of the inner and outer world have been experienced, creative expression will follow naturally. Given time and space for "being", for impressions, any human being will feel the need to express the inner richness that develops under such conditions. This "dance" between impression and expression is an essential ingredient of any creative activity.

It is the social responsibility of the artist in Western urban society to remember the spaces in our lives that help to create inner vitality. In order to remember musical vitality and musical expressiveness we have to involve our body, because listening and vocal expression/soundmaking are physical activities. In other words, we want to allow our ears the time and space to be used in their full capacity and we want to strengthen our bodies and voices so that we can express, make sound with vitality. Attali comes to a similar conclusion when he says that composing has to involve the body:

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[62]Attali, p. 134.

[63]Attali, p. 134.

> In composition, to produce is first of all to take pleasure in the production of differences . . . To improvise, to compose, is thus related to the idea of the assumption of differences, of the rediscovery and blossoming of the body . . . Composition ties music to gesture, whose natural support it is; it plugs music into the noises of life and the body, whose movement it fuels. It is thus laden with risk, disquieting, an unstable challenging, an anarchic, ominous festival, like a Carnival with an unpredictable outcome.[64]

I agree with Attali that there is a close connection between body and music. But I disagree that it is a risk to "compose" with that connection in mind. It is only a risk if the "carnival of childhood" is a threat to us. For, it is exactly the unpredictability of the outcome that is the essence of the creative process, that, in fact, gives it its strength. What is not unpredictable is the process itself if we take "pleasure in being," the way children take pleasure in their "true reality" of play. If the process indeed involves a unity between physical and spiritual expression, between listener and soundmaker then there need not be any concern about its outcome. The process itself – the play's reality – is the outcome.

But it is exactly this unity that is a rare experience for the Western urban person, such as myself and others and that needs to be reintroduced again into our lives. It is my contention that the body and a specific kind of physical and psychic presence play a major role in creating that unity, in bringing vitality into musical expression, creating a balance between listening and soundmaking, voice and ear, and thereby between body and spirit. I will discuss this further in the following chapter.

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[64]Attali, p. 142.

CHAPTER VI

LISTENING AND SOUNDMAKING: A BALANCED PROCESS

Presence, Body and Complete Ritual

When I talked, in the previous chapter, about a specific physical and psychic presence I meant a state of mind and body where there is a balance between listening and soundmaking, impression and expression, body and mind, self and environment, inner and outer world. There are two prerequisites for achieving such a state or presence: a hi-fi or at least a relatively quiet soundscape, and the physical presence of 4oth listener and soundmaker/musician in the same space. Neither a noisy nor a schizophonic soundscape allows this state of mind and body to happen. Noise creates a separation between ourselves and our environment, as well as between ourselves and our thoughts. A schizophonic soundscape does the same thing in a more subtle way, and in addition creates a split on three other levels: 1) between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction, 2) between the environment the listener is in and the world that is projected by the transmitted sound and 3) between what the ears hear and what the rest of the senses perceive. Thus, the split occurs in our perception of the environment, in our perception of the music and in our perception of ourselves. In a schizophonic situation, neither the musician nor the listener is present as a whole physical and psychic being. One part is always split off and diverted somewhere else. The music exists without the physical presence of the musicians, and the listener is a distracted or passive receptor of sound. In this situation, no-one is physically and psychically completely present. It is my contention that a balance or unity between listening and soundmaking, impression and expression can only be achieved in a quiet soundscape and if one becomes an active soundmaker. Since soundmaking involves physical work, one will automatically become attuned to one's body and breath. Soundmaking and physical activity are the key to avoiding a split between self and environment, between input and output, and/or a split inside onself. As we become active soundmakers we will also become more active listeners.

The urban environment generally tends to alienate us from our bodies and from our ear and voice. The physical environment of the city restricts the body's potential for movement as much as it restricts us from listening and soundmaking. Most people's work and activity consist of sitting and standing in badly lit, badly ventilated, acoustically dull or noisy environments. The body is often forgotten and neglected, while the mind is either over or understimulated. Thus, the urban environment encourages a split between body and mind. It is an energy-draining rather than a life-giving environment. Children with their intense physicality, their untiring receptivity towards their environment and their physical and vocal expressiveness, work hard at making any environment a liveable place. It is in this vitality for life which children possess, that the creative process can be found. The search for such vitality has to involve the body, its physical movement and expressiveness. The question then becomes, how we can find our body, our physical energy, in a physically energy-draining environment like the city?

How, we may ask further, is it possible to find inner vitality, that is, a desire to listen and make sound – a desire to create – in a society whose noisy and schizophonic soundscapes tend to rob us of this very vitality, this very desire to use our ears and our voice actively and creatively? Throughout this thesis I have made reference to babies and young children as human beings in whom that vitality still exists, in whom a balance between impression and expression is still in place. My contention here is that babies' and children's natural drive to live in the present, that is, to be concerned neither with the past nor with the future, but only with the here and now, is at the root of their vitality and creative energy. To be present in that way means to be in touch both with the "self" and the "other" – that is, with the social, cultural, and natural environment – in spirit, body and mind. Ideally presence means two things: 1) to be present physically, exuding physical energy and vitality; 2) to be present with a focussed inner self, who perceives the environment and responds to it in an alert state, who is both receptive and creative at any given moment. Presence means to make space for the here and now in body and mind. Previously I mentioned Adorno talking about the presence of the jazz musician, and I described Sonja's presence in her garden ritual. In both cases to be present meant to be in the here and now physically and psychically both as listener and musician/soundmaker.

Playing music or singing always involves the body as much as emotions, mind and spirit. If this total presence is not established by the musician/soundmaker, the listener will have a harder time participating actively in the musical event. And vice versa, if the listener is not present in body, mind and spirit, the musician will have a harder time creating an exciting event. The "presence" of both listener and musician/soundmaker is required to create a fulfilling, musical event. In a way one could say that if both listener and soundmaker are physically sharing space and time and are giving of their inner richness, then they are present and an event can occur. Music then functions as a shared activity, as a social interaction. When we experience music in such a way we receive "*the affirmation that a society is possible.*"[1] Such musical/social interaction could be called a complete ritual. It would be a place and time of nourishment. In a complete ritual not only is one's inner world nourishing, but one's external world is as well. Indeed, it is the "dance" or interaction between internal and external world that creates nourishment. The body forms the physical link between this inner and outer world. The music is made by the physical presence as well as the physical activity of musicians and listeners. As Attali says, "in composition, therefore, music emerges as a relation to the body and as transcendence."[2] A musical event of such a nature is possible because of the psychic and physical presence of listeners and musicians. Presence makes "composition" in Attali's sense possible.

> To compose is. . . to locate liberation not in the faraway future, either sacred or material, but in the present, in production and in one's own enjoyment.[3]

4nder such balanced circumstances the outer world is like a womb for both musicians and listeners or like the nourishing "other" that Kristeva talks about.[4] During Sonja's garden ritual the environment of the garden became such a social womb for herself as well as for me.

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[1]Attali, p. 26.

[2]Attali, p. 143.

[3]Attali, p. 143.

[4]Neil Evernden quotes Portman and Greene as calling the society we are born into the "second uterus", or the "*social uterus*". They emphasize that, if society is perceived in that way it points at "how much the success or failure of the individual life depends on this decisive early epoch," that is, infancy and early childhood. This passage is quoted in Neil Evernden, The Natural Alien, Humankind and Environment (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 121.

The complete ritual as I defined it in the context of Sonja's garden ritual is a piece of special time carved out of ordinary time. Soundmaking and listening are not separate activities in this ritual and they are connected to each other by her physical activity of dancing around the garden path. Her playing ritual involves her whole being in the time and space of music and dance. It is "lived time."[5] She is inside the play/ritual. She is present in body, spirit and mind. This is her "true reality" as Bettelheim calls it. It is a search that concludes with a moment of nourishment for her ("I am a person"), for me as listener/observer, and for the plants. The garden ritual expressed her inner vitality during this process of creativity and imagination. It is a making of time and space for herself in society. Attali agrees with this when he says "to express oneself is to create a code."[6] Children strive to live in the present, expressing themselves and creating new codes all the time in their process of playing, creating, and "composing their lives." The present is "lived time" and the place in which that time occurs is the "social womb", the world as a nourishing place.

Sonja's resolution of "I am a person" is similar to a baby's "moment of laughter" where a balance between impression and expression is achieved. Seen literally, it is a physical activity of the body, the body expressing, the voice expressing. It is a moment of nourishment to both the body and the psyche, and therefore has the power to create its own time and space. The ability to express, speak, or laugh is the ability to resist ordinary time and establish a space for oneself. It is in a way the shortest complete ritual, a moment of vitality for both soundmaker and listener. To be able to express and laugh means to have inner energy, confidence, and an ability to imagine, create. Thus, music and soundmaking can be seen like the spaces that produce laughter. Laughter–energy is turned into music and sound. Musical events then are perhaps society's "moments of laughter", special times carved out of ordinary time, places of nourishment. When I asked the I Ching what it means to be present it responded with the hexagram of PEACE. It consisted of the lower trigram, The Creative (Heaven) and the upper trigram, The

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[5]Both Attali and Langer use this expression for being actively in the here and now. Langer also calls it "experienced" time.

[6]Attali, p. 143.

Receptive (Earth), "strength is within and devotion is without".[7] In other words, to be present according to the I Ching, means to be at peace. To be at peace means to have achieved a balance between the creative and the receptive, a balance between expression and impression, a balance between spirit and body.

There are many examples in the world where a musical event is exactly that: an active communication between musicians and audience and vice versa, and where everyone – listeners and musicians/soundmakers – are involved in making the musical event a complete, fulfilling social event. The participants themselves create the complete ritual, the social womb, by the way in which they are involved in the event. We find such an event mostly and in its purest form among indigenous cultures. I want to cite here one example in particular that expresses this function of music very clearly and clarifies how music's vitality and creative force is located precisely in the unity between listener and soundmaker. Interestingly enough it is not "new" or "experimental" music but the traditional music in indigenous African society.

> People can hear the music for years and always find it fresh and lively because of the extent to which an African musical performance is integrated into its special social situation. In traditional African, musicmaking situations, the music is basically familiar, and people can follow with informed interest the efforts of the musicians to add an additional dimension of excitement or depth to a performance. Relatively minor variations stand out clearly and assume increased importance in making the occasion successful. Thus while artistic activity reaffirms and revitalizes tradition, people expect their traditional arts to be continuously vital forms. A "traditional" piece of music can therefore still be open to innovation, and Africans who love to celebrate and recollect the great events and personages of their past remain curiously indifferent to what is an important concern of Western culture, the issue of artistic origins, because for them each new situation is the fundamental setting of artistic creativity.[8]

Here the creative process within a social context is more important than the final product or "work of art." It is "participation in collective play" and a "continuous quest in new, immediate communication." Creativity is an ongoing process because of the physical and psychic presence of

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[7]Richard Wilhelm and Cary F. Barnes (Trans.), The I Ching or Book of Changes (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 441.

[8]John Miller Chernoff, African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 61.

listeners and musicians. The basic agreement here is to create a successful social event. And all this happens within the ancient framework of familiar, musical traditions, older than the Western classical music tradition. It is also a tradition of musicmaking that usually involves a lot of physical movement. I have encountered similar situations among some of the native Indians on the westcoast of British Columbia, where music (singing, drumming and often dancing) plays a powerful role. In particularly trying times, such as hearings and trials about land-use or landclaims, the Indians always include their songs in the process as a way to find power within themselves in the face of challenges to their way of life from Western urban culture. In many cases the Indians have to testify in culturally and socially alien contexts such as courtrooms. The songs bring the presence of their own culture into the courtroom and give each individual's testimonial voice a powerful and dignified tone.

The African music communicates more physically than Westcoast Native Indian music. Perhaps it is this physicality that has made the music so attractive to many people in the Western white world and has had so much influence on much of the popular music of Europe and North America. The music creates an urge to move and sing along and can therefore create a state of ecstasy in both listeners and musicians. African music wants physical and musical interaction. John Miller Chernoff describes at length how vital the interaction between musicians and listeners is for the successful completion of the musical event. It took me – as an immigrant from Europe – many years to hear the meanings in both Native Indian and African music. In the course of my upbringing I had learnt to remove myself from the musical/social situation by doing what everybody else did: by internalizing all musical impression, by judging and criticising the execution of a piece, and by being physically inactive. In fact, the emphasis was on spiritual, emotional experience and the body was ignored and put into its seat in the concert hall. This experience I recognize now as a total split between body and mind, physical and psychic reality. It took me a long time to appreciate the lively, more informal nature of musical events of indigenous cultures, and to understand that the music is so alive because listeners participate actively by responding musically and physically and by being very expressive. Even the North American folkmusic context was unusual for me where people, although sitting in their seats, moved to the music and sang along. The

following account has helped me tremendously to understand how music can have a very different and more integrated social function. Miller Chernoff writes:

> [The drummer] understands that the music is important only in respect to the overall success of a social occasion, and he does not focus on the music but rather on the way the situation is picked up by the music. In the West, when someone is making music, people will listen, but in Africa something else is always going on when the music is being made. People pay attention in a special way, and a master musician uses his music to comment upon and influence the situation in much the same way that he comments on the rhythms of a supporting ensemble. Beyond the obvious comparison of a concert hall and a dance floor, we can compare a folksinger in a coffee house and a jazz combo in a bar. In the latter, even a great artist will not stop the action and the conversation; rather the artist will help the scene move.[9]
>
> The intimacy of this communication means that a musician's creative contribution will stem from this continuing reflection on the progress of the situation as both a musical and a social event, and just as the music will tell a participant what to do, so will the situation provide a musician with an index of how well he may be doing. In an African musical event, everyone present plays a part, and from a musician's standpoint, making music is never simply a matter of creating fresh improvisations but a matter of expressing the sense of an occasion, the appropriateness at that moment of the part the music is contributing to the rest. Just as anyone present must behave properly, so does the music become something that *behaves* and the master drummer fulfills a complex social role. In effect, the drummer must integrate the social situation *into* the music, and the situation itself can make the music different.[10]

I quote these passages so extensively because I want to present a balance to the very one-sided experience of music that I had as a young person and that many people in Western society are still often exposed to both in the concert hall and the schizophonic situation. In the situation described above, one gets the sense that music can, in fact, create a unified space in time and a coherent time in a social space, precisely because the music is made by both listeners and musicians/composers. The music finds its life and unity in the social occasion or context itself. The social context completes the music. One can get traces of such interaction even in concerts of African drumming whose settings are the Western concert hall. In such concerts there clearly is a different, less formal relationship between musicians and audience than there is in most classical music concert settings. There is a definite sense that African/black musicians expect active participation from the audience. They always project out to the audience and

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[9]This active interaction between musician and audience is what distinguishes this "ambient" role of music from that of music-as-environment.

[10]Miller Chernoff, pp. 67-68.

invite participation in the form of soundmaking (clapping rhythms, cheering, singing) and physical movement. In a classical music concert this is unheard of. In fact, it is not possible because the musician usually presents a ready-made piece that does not invite audience participation. Even Barthes' "perfect amateur" cannot invite such active participation. The participation that does take place in such a context happens on an internal, emotional level, in that the musician's rendering of a piece of music "moves" the listener. This recalls a statement by Merriam, already quoted in chapter IV, but which I would like to repeat here.

> The aesthetic person is also considered to be an emotional person, moved by the art he surveys; it must be stressed that he is moved not by the context in which the art is perceived, but directly by the art itself.[11]

This musical experience is diametrically opposed to that cited above in the African context. In fact, I remember that it was considered inferior or inappropriate in the classical music concert context to let the social context influence one's perception of the music. The ideal was for the listener to make a direct link to the musician(s) on stage, to achieve a mesmerized state, where one is left speechless and motionless. To talk or communicate with other people in the concert hall while the music is played was and still is a taboo. The "appropriate" thing to do is to listen quietly, to sit quietly, internalize the emotions that are stirred by the music, and to express very little, preferably nothing during the musical event itself.

This is not unlike a schizophonic situation, where on the one hand a direct link is established between loudspeakers and recipients of the music and, on the other hand, the music itself serves to create a "soundwall" between people, as well as between people and their social context. But whereas the link between musician and concert hall listener is a consciously chosen link, in the schizophonic situation the link between loudspeaker and listener is in most cases an unconscious, distracted one. The music penetrates nevertheless and is internalized. Thus, a person like myself whose cultural context during childhood and youth encouraged an aesthetic, emotional relationship to music – that is, where the experience of music is a private, inner experience – would be particularly vulnerable towards such a link in a schizophonic context and would have little inner resistance towards its impact. This very private

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[11]Merriam, p. 265.

relationship to music which excludes or screens out the music's social context over time destroyed my psychic "immune system" towards music-as-environment. Through my family upbringing and my musical experiences I was accustomed to internalizing emotions and to struggling with them by myself, rather than in the social arena. I would, in fact, be quite shy about expressing any of my inner struggles, especially when music-as-environment - which I used to perceive as inferior music - caused tears and melancholy in me, that is, when it weakened me internally. Except for situations where I could dance, music has almost always had the opposite function in my cultural upbringing, than it has in indigenous and perhaps subcultural contexts. Its function was to alienate or distract from the social context, to separate one's inner experiences from social experience, to "privatize" inner experience and make it a precious possession that one does not share with anybody, not even with one's own physical self. By sitting still during a concert we transmit the musical input exclusively to our mind and deny it access to our bodies. Perhaps it is exactly because it was an experience separate from body, community and socially shared expression that I, like Marcel, "never possessed [the music] in its entirety: it was like life itself."[12] In other words, "life itself" was for Marcel, myself and presently is, I suspect, for others in Western society an incomprehensible experience when it lacks "lived time" - that is, physical and psychic presence, active listening and soundmaking. For children to comprehend life is not an issue because they do not attempt to comprehend it mentally, but instead live it with their total being, body, mind and spirit. Whoever has observed children in any activity, even if it is a mental activity such as talking or writing, notices their bodies are never still. Laing says and my experience agrees with this that as adults in Western society we have been trained to separate mind and body from each other, to experience ourselves in terms of what he calls a "self-body dualism".[13] In fact, he claims that:

> our 'normal' 'adjusted' state is too often the abdication of ecstasy, the betrayal of our true potentialities, that many of us are only too successful in acquiring a false self to adapt to false realities.[14]

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[12]Proust, p. 571.

[13]R.D. Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), p. 65ff.

[14]Laing, Divided Self, p. 12.

In extreme cases – such as the schizoid person – the body, he claims

> is felt as the core of a *false self* which a detached, disembodied 'inner', 'true' self looks on at with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be. Such a divorce of self from body deprives the unembodied self from direct participation in any aspect of the life of the world, which is mediated exclusively through the body's perception, feelings, movements (expressions, gestures, words, actions, etc.).[15]

Thus, when the "unembodied" person encounters a piece of music it is as elusive and difficult to grasp as "life itself". It is received by the mind to the exclusion of the body, as well as to the exclusion of the surrounding community and/or social context. The experience of a piece of music can only be fulfilling if it is shared and circulated in society, if, in fact, the whole concept of possession is non-existent. John Cage stresses that "to imagine you own any piece of music is to miss the whole point."[16] To share and to give in the musical context means to live the music, not just internally but also externally, physically and together with one's community. In fact, being physically in touch with oneself forms a link to community. When music or life is not lived, it means that one is physically and psychically not present in the music nor in the social context itself.

Schizophonia as a Tool to Find Balance

It is no coincidence that my own creative compositional work has, up to this point, occurred almost exclusively in sound studios. On the positive side, the studio environment has provided me with a little "niche" where I could find my creative inner voice without interference from the surrounding social, cultural context. It allowed me to imagine, invent and use my fantasy freely. Since it has always been hard for me not to give external voices more power than my own inner voice, this was an important stage for me – and, given my socio-cultural background, this separateness may to some extent always remain an important part of my creative process. The sound studio has taught me to be in touch with that inner voice and to believe in it. In my electroacoustic compositions my inner voices speak and in that form I

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[15]Laing, Divided Self, p. 69.

[16]John Cage, "The Lecture on Nothing", Silence (Middleton, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973), p. 125.

have been able to make them public. As a child I could never let my inner voices speak "publically", that is, in my family and school contexts. They could only speak in my private, creative play, in my "true reality", away from the social and cultural context of family and school, in the outdoors environment. I had no voice or language to make my true reality an integrated part of my family's reality. The studio then, in later years, has allowed me to find a "legitimate" avenue in society for the expression and creation of my inner voice, my inner world of sound. Seeing how many people enjoy working in isolated environments, such as sound studios, labs, offices, and so on, tells me I am not the only one who needs such a place to get in touch with the inner world. In fact, I would go as far as saying that these isolated places are perhaps the urban person's replacements for wilderness experience, places where one can play/work undisturbed and uninterrupted – at a distance from daily life. It is perhaps the only place in the city nowadays where one can create time and space, separate from ordinary time and space. Such a situation can potentially get us in touch with an inner vitality and creative spirit.

On a less positive note, the studio environment reinforced and perpetuated the process of "privatizing" musical experience for me. I would spend hours by myself in the studio, sharing nothing of what I was doing until I had a final product to show to the world. I was always keen on sharing the compositional process with people afterwards , because it had been – in each case – an exciting process of discovery for me. It was that excitement that I wanted to share. However, I could only do this after the process was over, when I had a finished product to show, that is, when my audience's listening could no longer influence or change the piece itself. During the compositional process itself, during moments of insecurity, instability and risk, I could not share the reality and the hardships of the creative process. Just as in the classical concert or the schizophonic context, the struggle, the emotional turmoil occurs privately, indeed inside an unembodied self. A studio, unlike the wilderness environment, separates us from body and natural cycles. The studio environment is an artificially maintained place that is physically unhealthy and splits us off from our own body. In order to function in such a space for stretches of time one has to ignore one's body, disregard one's body's needs. One has to ignore the fact that the body does not get much of a chance to move and is exposed to recycled air, artificial lighting and is cut off from the outside

world.

It is ironic that my creative expression, my voice could only occur in the schizophonic medium of taped music. There my voice was "safe" and could not falter, could also not be influenced or changed by any external voices. This again seems like a necessary stage. The tape medium allowed me to "test" my voice in the cultural context of society without too much threat. By presenting a finished product, I made myself less vulnerable to the external voices that potentially could have power and authority over me. I could express my inner voice, and at the same time protect it. I could meet the schizophonic external voices of the city with my own schizophonic voice. I myself did not have to physically be there, nor to physically use my voice. I was not ready for such interaction.

The more I worked in the tape medium the more I became aware of the contradiction between my public, schizophonic voice/musicmaking and the silence of my own physical voice and my own musicmaking. In fact, as my technical skills on tape increased, my vocal and musicmaking skills, as well as my desire for using my voice, decreased. Active listening confronted me with the enormous amount of sound input that we receive from the soundscape and pointed clearly at the imbalance in my own life between sound input (impression) and sound output (expression). Living with a young child, my daughter Sonja, who has always been a strong vocal and soundmaking presence in the house also made me aware of this imbalance. Her presence, in fact, encouraged me to grapple with this issue on a daily basis.

It became quite clear to me that electroacoustic compositional processes as well as eletroacoustic performance contexts exclude – just like the classical music concert context, as well as the music–as–environment context exclude – physical expression, physical presence as well as social interaction between listener and composer/musician. It is not surprising that children are a rare presence in electroacoustic concerts. Ironically several experiences with the schizophonic medium brought these issues home to me. I want to discuss them here shortly, because they point at ways in which the schizophonic medium can, in fact, be used creatively and encourage listening and soundmaking activities.

If used discriminately, the tape recorder and microphone can offer a progressive means of mechanical reproduction, or can be a tool to express an oppositional voice, a tool for "composing", "non-participation". If used in a non-manipulative way, that is, where profit is not the intent behind the music, but where composing is done for composing's sake - in Attali's sense - then it can form a meaningful link between loudspeaker and listener. I want to give two examples, both part of my personal experience, where the tape recorder and microphone had an energizing, inspiring function and where a balance between soundmaking and listening was achieved. In both cases the soundmaker was also the listener and the process of making a tape recording was the creative process. Listening and soundmaking were happening at the same time - it was like musicmaking, except that a microphone and cassette recorder recorded this process.

The first example is a tape that my daughter Sonja made when she was about six years old. She called it "Me by Myself in My Room." Norbert, Sonja's father, and I had decided that she should go to her grandmother's during the first days of her summer holidays. Sonja had tried to tell us in a variety of ways that she did not want to go. We did not hear her. When the day came, we packed her things and started to drive her. But on the way she brought out all her powers of expression and managed to get us to listen. Finally, she convinced us to let her stay at home. She likes her grandmother, but at the beginning of the summer holidays she really wanted to be at home and play with her friends. We could understand that and took her back home. The depth of her struggle to get us to hear her became clear to me only when I listened to the tape "Me by Myself in My Room" that she made a few days later after the incident.

Sonja expresses something in her piece that she could not express to us directly. She already had a sense that her thoughts were in opposition to our dominant thoughts, and when she expressed them to us directly we simply did not hear her. The tape recorder then became the medium that allowed this expression and perhaps helped her eventually to articulate her real thoughts and desires in the face of strong opposition or plain deafness from us, her two parents. She expresses herself by using as "materials" everything from her daily life, not only in terms of her language, but also in terms of musical

phrases. She uses musical "language" from popular music (Michael Jackson was her favourite at the time) to express certain feelings of frustration and anger, sadness and melancholy. Her piece contains a similar kind of expression as we can hear in the music of subcultural and minority groups: a music that contains a voice and expresses a reality not normally heard by authorities, by the status quo, by parents, teachers, and so on. It is "revolutionary music" in the sense in which Attali defines it: "truly revolutionary music is not music which expresses the revolution in words, but which speaks of it as a lack."[17] Sonja has continued to make tape recordings at certain points in her life. Each recording is a reflection of her experiences and inner emotional life at the time. It is clear from these recordings that the tape recorder gives her a very real opportunity to express and articulate what impresses and moves her. It also gives us, as parents, a chance to "really listen", that is, to listen more intensely than normally. The effect of this schizophonic process is that her soundmaking not only keeps her in an active relationship to the acoustic input of her daily life, but also encourages her to develop confidence in her speaking and singing voice.

The second example comes from my own experiences of recording environmental sounds and had a strong impact on my thoughts about listening, soundmaking and the schizophonic medium. A few years ago I spent several weeks in the "Zone of Silence", a Mexican desert region, with a group of artists. I had come to record the sounds of the desert and realized very quickly that, aside from the wind, crickets, some birds, the group's voices, there was very little sound to record. It was so quiet there that, in order to get any sound onto tape I had to make the sounds myself. Thus, as I walked through the desert I 4tarted to touch the plants. I recorded the sounds of a variety of cacti and other desert plants by plucking either their spikes or knocking on their exterior surfaces. With the microphone very close to the plant, sounds of very unusual quality emerged: sounds that "spoke" of the desert, for they contained the desert's dryness in their crisp sound quality and the desert's sparseness of water in their internal liquid sound quality. A liquid crispness, a crisp liquidity. I was hearing the interiors of desert plants. And I could only hear this because of the extreme quietness surrounding the plants. In fact, I found these sounds

[17]Attali, p. 147.

mostly because of the silence. If it had not been that silent I may never have thought of "playing" on the plants. However, if I had not had a microphone I would have never heard these sounds either. The technique of "close-miking" amplified these tiny sounds for the ear. This recording process not only revealed an essence of desert, it also was like finding the beginnings of culture, like tracing the sound of musical instruments back to their original context and meaning in a landscape. It made me conscious of the fact that musical instruments were originally made of the materials that surrounding nature offered. In that sense they are environmental sounds. Through this recording process which involved active soundmaking and listening, I was brought in touch with the process of making culture, of making music from and of a specific place, with a form of composing as Attali would say. By hearing the interior sounds of the plants I had found perhaps the beginnings of desert music, the music of that place. Only a hi-fi environment can give the listener such depth of information, such a rich experience of interaction with a place. In this context, I also experienced the emergence of the desire to make sounds, to find the music of that place. This was a rare experience for me as an urban person. In this case the combination of the desert silence and the tape recorder created the time and space to let this experience emerge. The desert provided the space, both 4hysically and spiritually, and the tape recorder made it possible for me to be totally present in the listening and soundmaking process. Recalling Kristeva here, "space causes laughter."

Hearing the interiors of a place struck a resonance within me the listener and made it possible to hear my own interiors, my own internal voices. My own thoughts and feelings could make themselves heard in this place and encouraged me to respond to and interact with the environment. It is in such a soundscape where the beginnings of soundmaking, song, voice, have the best chance to be born, and with that emerge musical expression and musical culture. John Cage expresses this same thing in a rather humorous way:

> A lady from Texas said: I live in Texas. We have no music in Texas. The reason they've no music in Texas is because they have recordings in Texas. Remove the records from Texas and someone will learn to sing. Everybody has a song which is no song at all: it is a process of singing, and when you sing, you are where you are. [18] (my emphasis)

[18]Cage, p. 126.

Even though my own experience was still mediated by the tape recorder it served to make me aware of the issue of soundmaking and physical participation in musicmaking. The tape recorder simply served as a tool for discovery that helped me to focus in on the issue rather than distract me away from it. Music-as-environment, however, excludes that kind of discovery process because its very function is to distract from any perceptual depth.

Listening and Soundmaking as Physical Activity

Listening and soundmaking are physical activities. The more we train our ears and our voice the more we are involved in a physical process. Or to view it from a different perspective: the more we strengthen our body, improve our physical flexibility and our posture, the more we improve our hearing sense and our vocal apparatus. In my attempt to integrate active soundmaking back into my own life I realized that listening and soundmaking are as much physical activities as they are inner emotional, spiritual experiences. Even though this may seem obvious to many people, it was quite a revelation to me to realize how physical musical activities can be. Since my relationship to music had mainly been a private and internalized one, this discovery changed my relationship to listening and soundmaking quite profoundly. Including the body consciously in musical experiences, made the music more present, more accessible both for me as a listener as well as a soundmaker. In that process I came across the work of Dr. Alfred Tomatis, a French physician and specialist in otolaryngology. He developed a method of auditory stimulation which improves listening skills, language use and communication in people:

> The underlying rationale of the technique is that the extent of one's ability to listen will affect the ease with which one can communicate, especially when the medium of communication is language or singing.[19]

Dr. Tomatis discovered that there is an intricate connection between voice and ear and that if we neglect either one of them we experience a loss of energy. Our exposure to the urban environment with noise and music-as-environment - as we have seen - disrupts this connection between ear and voice, creates a

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[19]Timothy M. Gilmor, Overview of the Tomatis Method, Based on a presentation to the Ontario Psychological Association Annual Meeting, Feb. 1982, revised and updated Jan. 1985, p. 1.

split between them. Both voice and ear are neglected physical entities in the city and stress is a common state of being for the urban person. Tomatis says:

> The more tired you are, the less sound you make, the less you tolerate sound. You're in a kind of sensory deprivation, your consciousness dims, and you're in real difficulty.[20]

On the other hand we have seen that our listening capacity is highly improved in an acoustically clear environment, such as a hi-fi soundscape. We experience a desire to listen as well as a desire to make sounds. Under those conditions we experience our listening sense and our voice in much fuller capacity. It is then that we can find a balance between listening and soundmaking and this balance gives us an inner vitality. Tomatis has found that proper listening can lead to an improved use of the voice and this improved voice charges our brain with energy. He claims, in fact, that there is a physical and psychic gain in a balanced use of the voice and the ear.

> The more the listener knows how to listen, the more he is stimulated . . . It's the whole body which reaches out to listen . . . You become an antenna, which leads to verticality. And immediately the voice becomes more beautiful. The more you speak, the greater the ability to formulate your thoughts, and the feedback loop between the voice and ear is closed. The better you feel the more you sing, the more you sing the better you feel. And your consciousness rises at the same time.[21]

Tomatis claims that the voice produces/contains only what the ear hears. Thus if the ear does not hear certain frequencies then the voice will not produce them. His work has been to increase people's awareness of high frequencies, because he has found that those people who have problems articulating speech or singers who have problems in certain higher ranges have lost their ability to hear high frequencies. And, so he claims, high frequencies are sounds that charge our brain and give us energy. He found that as he was training people to hear and identify those frequencies (by playing Mozart's music or the mother's voice with those frequencies only and imposing onto these additional bursts of high frequencies) they began to be able to articulate better and also discovered a higher level of energy.

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[20]Marie-Andree Michaud, "One Who Listens Speaks": An Interview with Dr. Alfred Tomatis, Listen: The Newsletter of the Listening Centre, No. 1, 1987, pp. 4-9.

[21]Michaud, One Who Listens Speaks, p. 4.

Listening to and learning to produce high frequencies according to him awaken the cortex.[22]

In order to produce one's voice to its full capacity the body has to be in good physical shape. The connection between chanting and good body posture can be found in many religious contexts. Tomatis tells us for example:

> The ancients . . . realized that certain sounds released certain postural phenomena. In India there is a whole yoga of sound, Mantra yoga. In Mantra yoga, the posture has to be perfect for the mantra to work . . . In order to do a mantra well one should know well all the practice and the theory, and especially the way to listen.[23]

The healthier the body, the more upright its posture, the fuller the voice will be. Voice requires the proper production of breath. In our literally breathless society, the importance of breathing has been forgotten and neglected. Only people in those professions that still have to use their voice, such as actors, musicians, speakers, singers, and so on, understand the integral connection between voice, breath and body. Physical flexibility will provide better breathing and flexible voice. Good breathing and flexible, expressive voice in turn results in a clearer relationship to emotions, thoughts, inner world.

Composer Pauline Oliveros was the first person who introduced me to vocal soundmaking in an unthreatening way: through her "Sonic Meditations".[24] All meditations are vocal exercises based on breath rhythm and sound, and provide an opportunity for a group of people to explore voice, breath and soundmaking together. After attending one of Oliveros' workshops I realized that these meditations are useful for any group of people (professional or amateur) and that they transmit to everyone involved a new sense of voice and breath, body and spirit. The simple act of doing them is an act of making space and time for listening to and exploring our own and other people's voice. Students experience this expansion of space and time in an intense way, especially when they do the meditations during the busiest time of the semester. Pressured by a lot of work, they welcome these meditations as an opportunity to

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[22]Michaud, One Who Listens Speaks, p. 5.

[23]Tim Wilson, "A L'Ecoute de L'Univers, an Interview with Dr. Alfred Tomatis", Musicworks, No. 35, Summer 1986, p. 4.

[24]Pauline Oliveros, Sonic Meditations (Baltimore, M.D.: Smith Publications, 1971).

literally catch their breath and find their voice again. Doing sonic meditations is like "composing" in Attali's sense, "in which music effects a reappropriation of time and space."[25]

My interest in voice exploration was further enhanced by the work of Kristin Linklater. In her book "Freeing the Natural Voice" she is suggesting ways of discovering what our natural voice is. This may be different for each person and she therefore stresses the importance of being open to a kind of discovery that is not conditioned by any preconceptions of what a good voice is, a discovery that presupposes nothing, a discovery that is without cultural, social expectations. While reading through her book, it became very clear to me that the freeing of one's natural voice is a physical process on the one hand and a soundmaking process - for soundmaking's sake - on the other. This process gives access to a richer and clearer emotional and intellectual world. She says,

> The objective is a voice in direct contact with emotional impulse, shaped by the intellect but not inhibited by it. Such a voice is a built-in attribute of the body with an innate potential for a wide pitch range, intricate harmonics and kaleidoscopic textural qualities, which can be articulated into clear speech in response to clear thinking and the desire to communicate. The natural voice is transparent - revealing, not describing, inner impulses of emotion and thought, directly and spontaneously. The *person* is heard, not the person's voice.[26]

In young children we can often hear this natural voice, a voice that is rich in inflection. Children's voices often best reveal what Linklater calls the "instinctual connection between emotion and breath."[27] The voice is the direct link to the child's emotions. If we are open to listening to all that a child's voice expresses, we will receive a lot of information not just through the words but mostly through the sound of words, the melody of speaking, the inflections, rhythms, loudness and the pauses and silences. Unfortunately children are often and at a very early age reduced to silence, even though - or perhaps because - they are such acute listeners. Little three year olds can express truths about the world and the people in it simply by having listened and then expressing how they have digested that information. All too often we experience situations where the child is told to be quiet or where, if it was not possible to

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[25]Attali, p. 147.

[26]Kristin Linklater, Freeing the Natural Voice (New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1976), pp. 1-2.

[27]Linklater, p. 12.

silence the child, the adult is terribly embarrassed and may punish the child. It is a vicious circle: because children are such good listeners they may express truths that are uncomfortable to the adult (teacher, parent, other persons of authority), the adult will try to suppress this expression, silence the child or even "not hear", not "really listen". And because the adult does not listen eventually the child is reduced to silence, is not heard, has no room to express what has impressed him or her. Thus the child also is turned into a bad listener. If there is no room to express, there is no room to develop the skills required to express what has been heard and has been at work inside. Thus, many of us, who have undergone such a silencing process feel the need as adults to find that natural voice again. Linklater describes the finding of one's natural voice as an attractive process. She says:

> To free the voice is to free the person, and each person is indivisibly mind and body. Since the sound of the voice is generated by physical processes, the inner muscles of the body must be free to receive the sensitive impulses from the brain that create speech. The natural voice is most perceptibly blocked and distorted by physical tension, but it also suffers from emotional blocks, intellectual blocks, aural blocks, spiritual blocks. All such obstacles are psycho–physical in nature, and once they are removed the voice is able to communicate the full range of human emotion and all the nuances of thought.[28]

The exploration of our voice is paying attention to ourselves in a way that we may not be used to, that may seem self–indulgent, self–centred. What it, in fact, is, is to be present in body and mind towards oneself, to be nourishing, to make time and space for such exploration. Western society has mostly taught us to forget who we are, to separate ourselves, our intellect, from our body, to forget our body as a vital and important presence. Finding our natural voice, however, brings us back in touch with our body. It is, in fact, a form of "composing" in that it is a process and the final outcome – the freed natural voice – is unknown to us. Its main goal is not to protest against the voices of authority, against the imposed voices of noise and music–as–environment but rather to make sound for the sake of making sound, to find pleasure in our voice, to find power, energy and strength in it by getting to know it.

Thus, if we dare to concentrate on the development of our voice, the outcome would ideally be a voice full of vitality and energy, a voice that projects a knowledge of the person's place in society. A voice that <u>is</u> a place, more powerful and more comforting than the place that music–as–environment or

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[28]Linklater, p. 2.

other external voices of authority have occupied. In the following quote, Laing outlines in a rather inspiring way what happens when we dare to develop our creative selves and our bodies:

> Words in a poem, sounds in movement, rhythm in space, attempt to recapture personal meaning in personal time and space from out of the sights and sounds of a depersonalized, dehumanized world. They are bridge heads into alien territory. They are acts of insurrection. Their source is from the silence at the centre of each of us. Wherever and whenever such a whorl of patterned sound or space is established in the external world, the power that it contains generates new lines of forces whose effects are felt for centuries.[29]

Finding authority and power inside oneself then, means to carve out space and time for oneself. Taking that space means to be present in body, mind and spirit.

> Physical awareness and relaxation are the first step in the work to be done, with a constant emphasis on mind-body unity. Breath and sound must always be connected to thought and feeling so that the two processes work simultaneously to activate and release inner impulses and to dissolve physical blocks.[30]

To pay attention to breath and sound in a breathless and noisy society means to create a space for oneself that allows difference to occur, to find a place where we can feel our own presence. This place is our own body and voice. Linklater stresses that part of getting to know our voice is to feel it in our body rather than listen to it. In fact she claims that:

> As long as work on the voice includes listening to sounds to check their quality, there will be a conditioned split between head and the heart, and emotion will be censored by intellect rather than shaped by it. By the "touch" of sound, I mean the feeling of vibration in the body, and initially that sound will be explored as another inhabitant of that central part of the body already housing breath, feelings and impulses.[31]

Thus, the experience of vocal soundmaking becomes a sensitizing to the body. Feeling the voice in different parts of the body gives it different qualities. Finding and feeling the places of our natural voice in our body will help us to experience our body as presence, as place. If we fine-tune our perception of the touch of our voice in our body then we will establish a base from which to be creative, a place from which to search. Thus, work with the body, breath and voice creates a unity between listening and

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[29]Laing, The Politics of Experience, p. 37.

[30]Linklater, p. 2.

[31]Linklater, p. 35.

soundmaking, between body and mind, between self and environment, inner and outer world. It gives us the strength to meet the external voices and sounds of authority, such as noise and music–as–environment with confidence and effectiveness.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

An imbalance between listening and soundmaking (sound input/impression and soundoutput/expression) leads to a passive stance towards one's social and cultural surroundings. I have argued that an overload of sound input, of external "voices", numbs us to our acoustic environment, turns us into "distracted" listeners and discourages us from using our own voices as expressive tools. I have done this by examining how listening and soundmaking function under ideal circumstances and how their balance shifts in noisy as well as in electroacoustic environments. I have claimed that, in setting the "tone" of a situation, music–as–environment becomes a voice of authority and creates an imbalance between what we hear and what we express with our own voices and sounds. Careful scrutiny of the characteristics of music–as–environment and the contexts in which the music is heard, made its connection to money obvious. The music's all–pervasive presence in commercial environments has made it a dominant voice in urban society of North America.

I have suggested that the "serious", classical music and Christmas music of my childhood also came from an external place of authority and power that left little room for the kind of voice and sound exploration in which children like to engage. In fact, my family had quite inflexible preconceived notions of what "real" music was. It was classical music of the baroque, classic and parts of the romantic era. They also had preconceived notions about how music was supposed to be experienced: privately, internally, quietly, in a still physical position. Finally they had notions about how the ear and voice of a girl/woman should fit into this: accepting with a receptive ear and a gracious, friendly voice that makes no waves. Other kinds of music were either denigrated or were excluded from my experience. I have suggested that the early acquired practice of quietly internalizing music, conditioned me to become accustomed to a private, inner experience of music, separate from its human, social context. The music I heard most frequently and which often caused me to cry was that of the adult world. Children's songs and soundmaking were a comparatively less common experience. Thus, before I could develop a

musical/soundmaking voice and confident ears, other much stronger musical voices surrounded me.

Because music-as-environment has also had a strong impact on me since I emigrated to this continent, I decided to examine my relationship to it in depth and compare my present-day experience with it to my experience with music in my childhood. In the process of this exploration, it became clear to me that both the experience of quiet soundscapes and of the "niches" of childhood contain the possibility for balance between listening and soundmaking, because both constitute a rich source through which we can retrieve inner vitality and creative energy. I have argued that active listening and soundmaking spring from a creative source in our psyche and from our bodies and that a connection to both body and psyche are essential to finding our own ways of listening and soundmaking and thereby resisting the power of the externally imposed musical voices of Western urban society.

I have seen creativity as a way of restoring confidence in our listening and soundmaking capacity and argued that the immediacy of childhood existence (where it can still be witnessed) can give us cues for an actively creative existence as well as a physical relationship to the world. By becoming conscious of music/soundmaking as a physical process and of oneself as a creative being one contributes to a balanced relationship between listening and soundmaking. Laing says,

> although it by no means follows that the individual genuinely based in his body is an otherwise unified and whole person, it does mean that he has a starting-point in this respect at least. Such a starting-point will be the precondition for a different hierarchy of possibilities from those open to the person who experiences himself in terms of self-body dualism.[1]

Once listening and soundmaking are acknowledged as being physical processes, music is no longer experienced passively ("distractedly") and/or as a potential voice of authority. Then listening becomes an active perception of differences and soundmaking an active expression of differences. With such a balance we are daring to take our own stance in society, we are testing our ears and voice in the world, finding authority and power inside ourselves, and creating a place for ourselves. Tomatis has found that people will become more communicative and responsible social beings and will be more able to cope with

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[1]Laing, Divided Self, p. 68.

and respond to the demands of daily life if the connection between voice and ear is intact and healthy.

I consider this thesis to be an exploratory piece of writing. Including my own "case" in this thesis gave the writing process a certain stability for me, a sense that my own experience could substantiate a lot of my hunches as much as theoretical writings could. My method of research for the case study is a form of "participant observation", where the participant observer becomes herself the observed. The self's interaction with the acoustic environment becomes the focus of study. Since it is my intention to find out about other people's relationships to music–as–environment in a future case study, it seemed rather crucial to use myself as a case first.

Music–as–environment does not always have to be a voice of authority. Active listening and soundmaking reduce its power and uncover it for what it is. However, if one has learned to always internalize and "privatize" musical experience, and place it outside social contexts, then one is a ripe "victim" for its commercial intentions. If, on the other hand, one experiences music as part of a human social context, one brings an inner resisting voice that is immune to the powers of music–as–environment. Further case–studies would be needed to substantiate this claim.

My writing process in this thesis has been a delicate balancing act between an internal voice which wanted to find a public form of expression and external voices which I wanted to understand and integrate. The thesis itself can be understood as a kind of "listening–in–search" to find a balance between these voices and between listening and soundmaking.

The writing process has been successful in one important aspect. It has helped me to make peace with music's influence on me and to lessen the power that certain music can have over me. My reactions are no longer as unpredictable as they used to be, and I know better now how to think about and articulate my feelings about music. The attempt to articulate and to find a language and a voice (inner and outer, personal and public) has been instrumental in taking the power out of music's impact. In better understanding my reactions to music–as–environment I also better understand my memories of reactions to music in my childhood. For, my unpredictable reactions to music–as–environment, stemmed

from unconscious memories of my past experiences with music. By articulating my experiences I have reduced, what Silverman calls, "the sensory and affective intensity of memories . . . by", as she puts it "submitting them to a linguistic organization."[2]

What kind of language has the power to organize memory in that way? It must be a language that allows within it the process of discovery. It must be a language which talks in a specific "voice" or "tone of voice" and which includes the potential for change. Any discovery or search begins from "where we are" (from a "state of soul", as Deleuze would say). Thus, any language that would be capable of reducing the affective intensity of a memory would initially be the language a person masters at the point of speaking and/or writing. The language that dared to include personal experience and connect it with other theories has had this effect on me throughout the writing process of this thesis. I am hoping that this language may have a similar effect on the reader by making his/her personal memories of experiences with music conscious, and then encouraging him/her to articulate them in his/her own language and thereby reducing their affective intensity.

Throughout my work on the thesis I was surprised by the extent to which the theme of children and childhood kept re-emerging. I began to realize that listening and soundmaking are most balanced in childhood. In future studies I would explore this idea further by looking at the works of Piaget, Bettelheim, Alice Miller, Postman, and others. Another area of possible future research would involve a further investigation of the music and soundmaking of aurally based third and fourth world cultures.

As a woman writing this thesis, I tried to give a name to my own experiences and to find a public voice for it. I became acutely aware in the process of writing that the majority of my sources have been male writers. They have formed the "external" voices I have tried to integrate, listen to and argue with. Yet, I also realized that a large part of my concerns about listening and soundmaking is based in the fact that I am a woman who, like many other women, has experienced a powerlessness of voice and a lack of confidence in her ears - both as a youngest child and as a female in the face of a strongly patriarchal

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[2]Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 75.

context. This contradiction is not resolved in my thesis and I feel a strong need now to explore feminist writings on women, music and voice in more depth than I have been able to do up to now. I want to point out here, however, that a lot of my knowledge about listening, soundmaking and physical presence is based in practical experiences that have been available to me through a number of women in Vancouver over the last five years. I have mentioned these women in my acknowledgements since this kind of learning experience cannot be acknowledged in a bibliography. They have taught me that, paying attention to and developing body, ear and voice are forms of taking control of one's acoustic and physical existence in time and space; that it is a form of "naming", "composing", and "designing our lives"; and finally that it is a way of being receptive and creative at the same time and thereby acquiring a state of peace.

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