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Science and Music: A Unifying Concept

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Music and Values in Western and Eastern Cultures

David Eaton
Artist Director
New York City Symphony Orchestra
New York

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The Influence of Music on Self and Society

Values in Music in Eastern and Western Cultures

by David Eaton

Throughout history the unspoken but highly evocative language of music has exerted powerful influences on individuals and societies alike. Felix Mendelssohn once remarked that music is more specific about what it expresses than words written about those expressions could ever be. That music has the power to express, convey and illicit powerful emotions is without question, however the issue of music's moral and ethical power, and how that power affects individuals and societies, is one that receives too little attention in our post-modern world. Ancient cultures held strong beliefs in the moral and ethical power of music and as such it was imperative for artists within those cultures to exercise a certain moral and ethical responsibility in their creative endeavors.

As a professional musician for over thirty years I concur with that premise and it is primarily from the axiological, rather than a theoretical or aesthetic viewpoint that I approach this discourse. The responsibility of artists to the social environment in which they live and work is something that I have always had strong sentiments. As we now find ourselves beginning a new millennium, questions with regards to music's origins, its spiritual, religious and mystical properties, its moral and ethical power, its transcendent qualities, the role of the arts and artists and the importance of art in general, and music in particular, are questions that I believe any thinking, caring, probing musician should seriously contemplate.

At the outset of the twenty-first century it is undeniable that the pervasiveness of popular culture and the values it engenders has had an adverse effect on our societies. In light of the current climate of Western popular culture, "art music" has become increasingly marginalized. In fact the word "art" has been greatly trivialized. The lines between trend and tradition, the profound and the superficial, art and cliché have become hopelessly indistinct as some of the most inane works, created by self-absorbed individuals of dubious talent, are now considered important works of "art." To this unfortunate situation it must be noted: All art may be self-expression, but not all self-expression is art.

We know that in Ages past music was not considered merely an entertainment but

rather was associated, in fact, interlocked with religious and philosophical beliefs, thus possessed axiological connotations. Examining the perceptions and understandings of the ancient's attitude about music can be most enlightening and hopefully beneficial for our spiritual and social development as we begin our quest for a culture of peace in the new millennium.

Attitudes About Music in Ancient Cultures

The Musical Philosophy of the Ancient Chinese

It is not far-fetched at all to suggest that today's attitudes about music might be surprising, even dismaying to Confucius, Aristotle, Ptolemy, St. Augustine and Boethius. To the ancients music and values were juxtaposed in ways that many today might find uncomfortable or politically incorrect. The axiological and spiritual aspects of music---as both indicator and measure of values---was a readily accepted notion in the cultures of China, Egypt, Greece and India, There existed a common belief in these cultures that music had a fundamental power that could either uplift or degrade and therefore enhance or corrupt entire civilizations.

Greek culture has had a profound influence on Western art and culture, however Chinese musical philosophy was also a highly developed system of theory and mysticism which was most prescient in its attitudes about music. The Chinese attached a great deal of importance to the transcendent and therapeutic power of sound and music. Individual pieces of music possessed an "energy formula" which had the power to exert various influences over those who listened to it. This metaphysical concept of music had religious connotations as well as moral and ethical implications. To the ancient Chinese, music's power and how that power was utilized was of great importance. Musicologist David Tame observes:

The particular mystical influences of a of a piece of music depended upon such factors as rhythm, its melodic patterns and the combination of instruments used. Like other forces of nature, music itself, as a phenomenon, was not biased towards

producing either beneficial or destructive effects. The Chinese understood the power within music to be a "free energy," which each man could use or misuse according to his own free will.

What is significant here is the issue of freedom and its correlation to responsibility. Chinese philosophers understood that music was not composed or performed in a social vacuum and consequently there were great social implications in the creation and presentation of music. Due to this heightened awareness of the influence of music on self and society, Chinese philosophers and educators directed a great deal of attention to the music of their culture and as such music as entertainment had little redeeming social value in their societies. Music that endeavored to express or convey universal truths, which in turn could benefit the development of a person's character thus making that person an asset to the society at large, was music that was considered good and proper. Conversely, music that was deemed sensual or exotic was seen as being immoral and was thought to have negative effects on one's spirituality and character. Consider Confucius' remarks about the music of certain composers of his time:

The music of Cheng is lewd and corrupting, the music of Sung is soft and makes one effeminate, the music of Wei is repetitious and annoying, the music of Ch'i is harsh and haughty.

It is intriguing to note Confucius' highly subjective views viz.-a-viz. the moral and possibly corrupting aspects of the music of his countrymen. He was equally concerned with the effects of good (moral) music on a person's character.

The noble-minded man's music is mild and delicate, keeps a uniform mood, enlivens and moves. Such a man does not harbor pain or mourn in his heart; violent and daring movements are foreign to him.

As mentioned earlier, a significant aspect of the ancient Chinese' concept of music was the effect of music on one's psyche and the issue of freedom and responsibility in all musical pursuits. When compared to the rationales and motivation of artists of our modern age the Chinese ideal of music-making seems highly enlightened as evident in the consideration given to the *effect* of music upon the character of the listener. If individuals were affected by music it stood to reason that the larger society could be influenced positively or negatively as well. Confucius' comment on this topic is most revealing:

If one should desire to know whether a kingdom is well governed
if its morals are good or bad, the quality of its music will furnish
the answer.

The ancient Chinese book "The Memorial of Music" states: "Under the effect of music, the five social duties are without admixture, the eyes and the ears are clear, the blood and the vital energies are balanced, habits are reformed, customs are improved, the empire is at complete peace." As we can see, the Chinese view that social order was juxtaposed to music plays heavily into its philosophical system and ideals. The connection of the tonal arts to the ordering principles of physical laws and metaphysical ideals was considered important due to the belief that the same laws and principles contained within music the were present in the celestial order that governed the entire universe.

In the Chinese philosophical tome, the *I Ching*, the Taoist axiom of harmonizing opposites of Yang and Yin is the central philosophical tenet. The fusion of Taoist principles and Confucian ethics gives rise to rationales that guided the Chinese in matters of art and social governance.

Confucianism, primarily concerned with ethical relations, sought to promote humane relationships among family, friends and associates. The Five Relations: sovereign to subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife and friend and friend, were to be based on the ethic of humaneness; not out a sense of duty or social responsibility, but rather out of love.

The cosmology of Yang and Yin is germane to both Confucian and Taoist doctrine and was considered central to humankind's pursuit of harmony and peace. Taoism promotes the concept of seeking a mystical identification with the patterns of the natural world, "the impersonal Tao," through meditation and trance. With its emphasis on the individual's harmonization with nature in a pliant fashion it stands as a complimentary philosophy to Confucianism's strenuous efforts to mold society according to social archetypes and ethical standards.

Since harmonization is a central goal of these two philosophies it is easy to understand the importance the Chinese placed on the role of music as a potential harmonizing agent and as such music must embody the attributes of truth, beauty and goodness in a sublime balance of content and form. The moral and ethical aspects of that equation were not to be minimized.

Beauty could be realized when the opposites of intellectual/emotional, masculine/feminine, metaphysical/physical were harmonized. If one is harmonized in mind and body such a person would be able to achieve inner peace and tranquillity and become one with the cosmos and thus attain a "perfected" state---a state of harmonized relatedness to the world in which one exists.

The Chinese text *The Spring and Autumn Annals* gives further insight into this concept:

The origin of music lies far back in time. It arises out of proportion and it is rooted in the Great One. The Great One gives rise to two poles: the two poles give rise to the powers of darkness and light. That from which all beings arise and in which they have their origin is the Great One; that whereby they form and perfect themselves is the duality of darkness and light. As soon as the seed-germs start to stir, they coagulate into a form. The bodily shape belongs to the world of space, and everything special has a sound. The sound arises out of harmony. Harmony arises out of relatedness. Harmony and relatedness are the root from which music, established by the ancient kings, arose.

This resonates with the views of musicologist, Julius Portnoy, who writes that "music is the releaser into the material world of a fundamental, super-physical energy from beyond the world of everyday experience" and that "the voice of the priest within the realm of time and space becomes a vehicle for the energizing Voice of the Creator to manifest its forces through."

The emphasis of harmony and relatedness and its genesis from "the Great One" is underscored countless times in numerous Chinese writings. David Tame alludes to the ancient text, *Li Chi*, and its view that "the harmony and sacred proportion of heaven is viewed as entering the earth through the mediation of music and ritual." The *Li Chi* states:

Music is the harmony of heaven and earth while rites are the measurement of heaven and earth. Through harmony all things are made known; through measure all things are properly classified.

Music comes from heaven; rites are shaped by earthly design.

Manifesting balance, harmony and relatedness was to be the motivation and purpose of a musicians' work. By bringing these attributes to a performance it was thought that the musician was interfacing spiritually with the cosmic forces of heaven and personifying celestial order. For Confucius the harmony/relatedness paradigm was important; for "ceremony established the correct manner of physical movement in man, while music perfected man's mind and emotions." The moral inculcation of a person's character and the development of an ethical society is continually linked to the Confucian view of music. His "music as a microcosm" concept would be echoed by Pythagoras centuries later and as author E. Michael Jones states: "Indeed, love, divine order, music and mathematics are simply four different ways of saying the same thing."

An interesting "side-effect" of the harmony/relatedness paradigm was the intolerance in classical Chinese music for anything that was a result of chance or improvisation since these characteristics were considered antipodal to the reverence for order and balance. The intimate relationship of music and universal, cosmic order was not to be left to chance, as discipline and proficiency were hallmarks of the classical Chinese

musical tradition. The dichotomy between traditional discipline and expressive freedom, it seems, has been around from the earliest times.

To a society that was based largely on the philosophy of balance and harmony the notion of expressive freedom almost certainly would be viewed as threatening, or worse---corrupting. Innovation has challenged the status quo of all cultures and in ancient China this was especially vexatious due to the belief in the transforming power music. As David Tame points out virtually every major civilization of antiquity held this view.

The wise among them were therefore very much aware of the pitfalls of either extreme in music---over-rigidity or over-innovation---and sought to achieve a balance between the two. An unwise degree of innovation or a condition of outright musical anarchy could prove deadly to the State. But, on the other hand, complete inflexibility could cause music to stagnate.

By invoking the balance/relatedness paradigm in the deliberations over the issue of innovation and progress in music, the Chinese possessed a viable philosophy to reconcile the over-rigidity/over-innovation dilemma. Tolerance without discretion could potentially lead to artistic license and inevitable moral anarchy. Conversely, a zero-tolerance stance would likely impinge on certain freedoms. Allowing artistic freedom within the confines of a highly developed tradition and discipline would be a crucial and daunting challenge.

The Chinese, like other civilizations, would adopt a system that would allow for expressive freedom within a set of well-defined "rules" (not unlike the rules of Western tonality). New compositions were to conform to certain "rules" that were deemed to be in alignment with the higher order of the universe. Allowing new works with new compositional schemes that adhered to traditional ideals, would in turn reduce the likelihood of a static compositional landscape thus increase the likelihood for greater variances and degrees of emotional expressiveness.

This wonderfully Confucian compromise is in accord with the Oriental concept of *Ih*

Bup (reason-law) which is the correlation of reason and lawfulness centered on purpose (Logos) which originates in God. This concept allows for freedom or choice based on sensibility and reason (rationale) to work in accordance with natural law and mathematical principles (necessity). One is subject, the other object and their harmonious union results in the formation of the Logos. Reason in Logos works freely as it influences the direction of the development of the universe, while preserving the efficacy of laws. Reason allows for adaptability and selectivity while law dictates the circumstance of principle and necessity.

Indeed, the ancient Chinese philosophies regarding music and values continue to be highly instructive.

Music and Values in Greek Culture

The Greeks, like the Chinese, held the view that music possessed influential properties. Greek theories and philosophies were similar to that of the ancient Chinese in that the Greeks believed that the nature of music, its relevance to the cosmic order and its power to effect individuals and society, was as important as the basic materials, structures and patterns of musical composition. From Pythagoras' scientific principles to the moral and ethical postulates of Aristotle and Plato, Greek insights of the tonal arts remain as illuminating today as they must have seemed ages ago.

Plato's poetic myth of "the music of the spheres" with its implications of a universal, interconnected, cosmic geometry has fascinated scientists and musicians throughout the ages. The Pythagorean concept of "music as a microcosm" was not unlike the philosophical tenets of Confucius whereby music was governed by the same scientific and mathematical laws that governed the cosmos.

One cannot understand the depth of Greek thought with regards to music without contemplating their understanding of the relation of melody and poetry. To the Greeks these two languages were one in the same. Music historian Donald Jay Grout writes:

Actually it is incorrect to speak of a "union," for to the Greeks the two (melody and poetry) were practically synonymous. When we now speak of the music of poetry, we

are conscious of using a figure of speech; but to the Greeks such music was actual melody whose intervals and rhythms could be precisely described.

Grout points out that the marriage of spoken word and music, as exemplified by the Greeks, reappeared in other ways throughout the history of music; most notably in Wagner's theories about musical drama in the nineteenth century.

For some composers the "union" of words and music may lay primarily in the search for a "correct rhythmic declamation of the text." Yet there is another, perhaps more far reaching implication of the Greek predilection for the word/music paradigm. The concept of music as a language which, like the spoken word, can exert influence over human thought and actions, gave rise to one of the most profound and significant doctrines of Greek musical thought--the doctrine of *ethos*. With this understanding the Greeks believed that once an artist became aware of music's moral power there was an obligation to exercise that power with a certain moral responsibility.

Ethos was based on the dual convictions that music has an effect on moral and ethical behavior and that certain types of music affects people in different ways. The Greeks ascribed certain mythological characteristics to the basic character of music: Apollonian--music that was considered *classic*, characterized by its calm, tranquil and uplifting qualities, and Dionysian--music that was considered *romantic*, characterized by its excitement and enthusiasm.

Aristotle, like Pythagoras, considered music one of many forces that could affect the well-being of the individual and society at large. His theory of imitation states that the soul can be influenced by the listening to music:

Emotions of any kind are produced by melody and rhythm; therefore by music a man becomes accustomed to feeling the right emotions; music has thus power to form character, and the various kinds of music based on various modes, may be distinguished by their effects on character---one, for

example, working in the direction of melancholy, another of effeminacy; one encouraging abandonment, another self-control, another enthusiasm, and so on through the series.

Greek ideals of music (and life) reflected the Chinese concepts of relatedness, balance and harmony as well. Consider Plato's example of the relationship of mind and body viz.-a-viz. music and athletics as articulated in the *Republic* (380 B.C.) For Plato, musicians needed to have regular give and take with athletics since music represented the feminine and athletics represented the masculine. "He who mingles music with gymnastics in the fairest proportions, and best attempers them to the soul, may be rightly called the true musician and harmonist."

As with the Chinese, the Greeks had to wrestle with the issue of freedom of expression for they believed that the laws of music needed to be strictly adhered. For Plato, change was equated with lawlessness and license and therefore could possibly lead to moral anarchy. Plato's statement, "Let me make the songs of a nation and I care not who makes the laws," reveals his reverence for the moral and ethical power of the tonal arts and its effects on society. Furthermore, Greece, like other ancient civilizations, exercised certain censorship by prohibiting certain types of music when it was deemed by the authorities that the music was in some way harmful or corrupting to the ethical climate of the society. As Grout states:

Music was regulated in the early constitutions of Athens and Sparta. The writings of the Church Fathers contain many warnings against specific kinds of music. Nor is the issue dead in the twentieth century. Dictatorships, both fascist and communist, have attempted to control the musical activity of their people; churches usually establish norms for the music that may be used in their services; all enlightened educators are concerned with the kinds of music, as well as the kinds of pictures and writings, to which young people are habitually exposed.

The correlation to the decline of classic civilizations in China, India and Greece, with the "corruption" of their music is too pronounced to be merely coincidental. As Greek music began to deviate from its classic attributes of discipline and lawfulness towards a greater emphasis on the purely decorative and innovation, the denigration of society was soon to follow. Plato lamented the "unmusical anarchy," the "foolishness" and the "thinking that there was no right or wrong in music" which was anathema to traditional Greek thought and possibly a threat to an ethical society. He writes in his work *Laws*, "As it was, the criterion was not music, but a reputation for promiscuous cleverness and a spirit of law-breaking."

David Tame points out that all civilizations have been confronted with the element of choice; a choice between music that denigrates and/or music that "encourages the contemplation of the eternal verities." The history of those choices are in some ways a microcosm of the histories of civilization itself. Tame observes that when corrupting or degrading music appears within a culture it happens very suddenly and with almost cataclysmic results. Destructive music "attains to a position of power and of widespread popularity with the masses within just a few years or decades; and its influence upon society in general is often similarly sudden, bringing swift and negative change in philosophies, politics, morals and lifestyles."

We need only to look at our own contemporary age to see evidence of this.

The Genesis of Western Music

With the decline of Rome and the ascendance of Christianity in Europe in the third and fourth centuries, the seeds that would blossom into the great art of the Western world were planted deeply into the fertile soil of religious faith and practice. Arnold Toynbee's assessment, that the Church was "the chrysalis out of which our Western society emerged" attests to the role that Christianity played in the development of Western musical theory, aesthetics and axiology.

Unfortunately we know little about what music was actually integrated into the traditions of the early Christian church from other cultures and regions. We have a better idea about what concepts and ideals the early Christian cultures embraced or rejected and

how these features reflect the values that the early church fathers considered important to the development and spreading of their faith. The idea of music, especially instrumental music, as entertainment or for enjoyment, or as a vehicle for common education, or associated with purely "external" events such as festivals and athletic competitions, was rejected in order to shield new converts to their new faith from their "immoral" pagan past.

The early church was a small, thus vulnerable group with the "mission" of converting all of Europe and thus endeavored to resist any association and influence of the surrounding pagan cultures. The early Christians felt this to be absolutely crucial to their "mission" and deemed it necessary to subordinate all earthy things, including music, to the ultimate goal of protecting "the eternal welfare of the soul."

The Greek philosophy (which came to the early Christian Church via Rome) that music was a medium that had connections to the forces of nature and possessed the power to affect human thought and conduct, was assimilated into early church culture and reiterated in the writings of several Christian philosophers, most notably Boethius (ca. A.D. 480-524) and St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430). Boethius' treatise *De Institutione musica* stood as an authoritative source of understanding for writers of medieval times with regards to harmonization the physical world (*musica mundana*), the mind and body (*musica humana*) and tones/music (*musica instrumentalis*).

The evolution of music and its integration into liturgical practice throughout the Middle-Ages gave rise to new attitudes about music and its purpose and function; most notably the idea that music was to be the "servant" of religion. For the Church elders of the Middle-Ages music was deemed good only when it "opens the mind to Christian teachings and disposes the soul to holy thoughts." The church in the Middle-Ages was highly concerned with the "corrupting" elements of music and as a result certain factions within Church hierarchy that felt art in general, and music in particular, was inimical to religion.

Yet the aesthetic beauty of music could not be denied. The medieval Christian concept that spiritual fulfillment and redemption was somehow hindered or obstructed by pleasurable things like music is one that troubled even the most enlightened practitioners of the faith. Consider St. Augustine's observations on this dilemma:

When I call to mind the tears I shed at the songs of my church....I then acknowledge the great utility of this custom. Thus vacillate I between dangerous pleasure and tried soundness; being inclined rather to approve of the use of singing in the church, that so by delights the ear the weaker minds may be stimulated to a devotional frame. Yet when it happens to me to be more moved by the singing than by what is sung, I confess myself to have sinned criminally, and then would rather not have heard the singing.

As Grout points out, there is music in every Age that is not suitable for religious or devotional purposes and we should not be too quick to condemn the Church for its seemingly narrow and "timorous distrust of the sensual and emotional qualities of music." The Christian church, like the ancient cultures of Ages past, was merely making a distinction between sacred and secular art which it thought necessary to the process of inculcating its early converts with an ascetic principle that could endure, in fact survive any possible corrupting influences.

As mentioned previously, it was thought that instrumental music could not illicit the spirit of divinity as well as vocal music, therefore instrumental music was for the most part excluded in liturgical services in the early church. This preference for vocal music was in large part the reason that Gregorian Chant and plainsong became the predominant mediums for liturgical practice for hundreds of years.

Like the ancients, many church composers believed that the act of creating music had innate divinity and that the assembling (ordering) of pitches, rhythms and structures could manifest heavenly properties. For Bach, the greatest church composer, "The sole and end aim of figured bass should be nothing else than God's glory and the recreation of the mind. Where this object is not kept in view, there can be no true music but only infernal scraping and bawling."

The Oriental concept of *Ih-bup* (reason-law) is evident in the development of

Western compositional rationale, specifically the modification of acoustically pure intervals---the practice of temperament. As early as 1496 there were reports of church organists in Northern Italy engaging in the practice of pitch modification. As musicians sought greater means of expression the practice of temperament became a practical compromise, which in turn allowed for such compositional devices as modulation or intervallic variation to occur within changing melodic and harmonic contexts. The implementation of temperament as it pertains to the evolution of tonality is a classic example of the earlier definition of Logos whereby the efficacy of acoustic principles (law) are preserved while allowing for greater expression (reason). The importance of this acoustic adaptation (choice) was to allow for music to express a wider range of emotions (heart). As tonality emerged as the prevalent syntax of Western composers, this "key-centered" music exhibited new and highly evocative expressive qualities.

Musicologist Richard Norton notes that a prevalent theory has emerged among modern musicologists and theorists which suggests that the "era of classic tonality" in the West was something "that had to happen." He points out that this concept, with its very definite ideological underpinnings, is a form of historical determinism and as such ignores the fact "that tonality appeared as and how it did through economic, social, political, philosophical, cognitive and aesthetic, as well as 'natural' means." It was neither accidentalism or "natural law" that spawned tonality and its wider usage, but rather the aforementioned ideal of a God centered Logos---the union of law (acoustic principles) and reason (the desire to find greater means of expression).

The Enlightenment, with its predilection for "natural law" and "practical morality" over supernatural religion and metaphysics, constituted a major shift in attitudes about music and the arts. Music was no longer considered a product of divine origin but rather an unnecessary luxury. The spirit of the Enlightenment was clearly secular with an eye for the egalitarian in all things. Public concerts, as opposed to private concert events sponsored by wealthy benefactors, were becoming more prevalent and as a result music itself began to change. Music was to aspire to simplicity and avoid the complexity of contrapuntal devices and the excessive elaboration and ornamentation that was characteristic of the music in the Baroque period.

The social upheaval of the French Revolution in 1789 and the attitudes it engendered, specifically the primacy of individual rights, signified another important cultural change for music and musicians. Beethoven, who was a child of the French Revolution, asserted that as a creator he had certain rights and was therefore the equal of, or superior to kings, clergy and nobles. This quasi-megalomania, coupled with anti-social behavior and self-absorption would become a defining trait among many great artists of the Romantic era.

This attitude also give the listener of music a greater significance. Author Charles Williams states: "The word Romanticism...defines an attitude, a manner of receiving experience." Nietzsche echoes this: "In order for an event to have greatness two things must come together: The immense understanding of those who cause it to happen, and the immense understanding of those who experience it." As Grout suggests:

In a very general sense, all art may be said to be Romantic; for, though it may take its materials from everyday life, it transforms them and thus creates a new world which is necessarily, to a greater or lesser degree, remote from the every day world.

Beethoven personified the attitude that music was "a direct outpouring" of a composer's personality, his individual triumphs and tragedies. This became a prevalent Romantic notion and the irony here is that as the egalitarian attitudes of Romanticism (its *Zeitgeist*) led to the aforementioned anti-social attitudes among artists; a condition diametrically opposed to the philosophical tenets of antiquity.

That said, certain aspects of Romanticism are akin to the ancient concept of "microcosmic relatedness," for Romantic art "aspires to immediate times or occasions, to seize eternity, to reach back into the past or forward into the future, to range over the expanse of the world and outward through the cosmos." Romanticism celebrates metaphor, ambiguity, suggestion, allusion and symbol and as a result, instrumental music, which was shunned by the early Church, is favored over music with words due to its "incomparable power of suggestion" and mystery. The invisible, vibratory world of instrumental music

corresponds to the unseen incorporeal world.

Schopenhauer believed that music was "the very image and incarnation of the innermost reality of the world, the immediate expression of the universal feelings and impulses of life in concrete, definite form." Goethe's observation that "...the head is only able to grasp a work of art in the company of the heart" could stand as defining axiom for the cultural attitudes of the nineteenth century.

The Twentieth Century

It has become evident that in the twentieth century the condition of "art music" in Western culture has undergone a transformation that few could have envisaged one hundred years ago. The reasons for this transformation are many and varied including the influence of technology, the media and the resultant exposure to new cultures and ethnic traditions, commercialism, the increased emphasis on visual media and various cultural, ideological and social changes. Religion, for so long the "moral compass" of society, is no longer the potent force in guiding society in the matters of morality and ethics, resulting in what Allan Bloom referred to as a state of "moral and cultural relativism."

For the tonal arts these realities have led to what musicologist Leonard B. Meyer refers to as a "fluctuating stasis" in which a plethora of musical styles would coexist in an increasingly diverse world.

Our culture---cosmopolitan world culture---is, and will continue to be, diverse and pluralistic. A multiplicity of styles, techniques and movements, ranging from the cautiously conservative to the rampantly experimental, will exist side by side: tonality and serialism, improvised and aleatoric music, as well as jazz with its many idioms, and popular music...Through paraphrase borrowing, style simulation, and modeling, past and present will, modifying one another, come together not only within culture, but within the oeuvre of a single artist and within a single work of art.

The result of diversity and pluralism is that there remains no "triumphant" style in the realm of "classical" or "serious" art music; a condition that should not be considered either negative or undesirable.

Author and music critic Harold C. Schonberg observed that the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed "a series of convulsive changes in human thought." Changes that were "so radical and unprecedented that their impact and influence on the human condition was not fully comprehended for years." The revelations and works of Freud, Plank, Einstein, Kandinsky and Schoenberg were revolutionary in their effects on their respective disciplines, effects which still reverberate in our current post-modern age. To many, the reverberations in music caused by the early modernists, especially Arnold Schoenberg and the Second Viennese School, have had adverse effects on the state of serious art music in the late twentieth century.

As democracy and its progeny, individualism, spread throughout industrialized Europe and North America, the penchant for greater freedom and expressiveness in music led to a significant transformation in compositional rationales and techniques. Tonality, the chosen syntax of composers for roughly three-hundred years, would begin to evolve into chromaticism and extended tonal and poly-tonal methods as composers pushed the tonal envelope to its limits in an attempt to achieve greater individuality and expressiveness. New philosophies and rationales demanded new methods.

The move away from the conventions of tonality and the cultural values it represented, to the conventions of serialism and the experimental avant-garde, has resulted in a cultural trauma that continues to have adverse effects and causes one to wonder if these effects on the public's aversion to modern music is irreparable. The so-called "cultural gap" between the realm of contemporary composition and public is a palpable reality, and how to bridge that "gap," continues to be the source of intense debate among, musicians, administrators, critics, educators and philosophers alike.

This assessment shouldn't be taken as an adverse across-the-board criticism of all new music, but serious questions remain. Did the complete embrace of atonality in the early decades of the twentieth century, coupled with an almost complete rejection of tonality, lead to a kind of ethical abdication on the part contemporary composers? Was Schoenberg's

"emancipation of dissonance" and his advocacy of the dodecaphonic method, with its "democratization" of tones, a historical imperative—something that had to happen in an increasingly democratic society? Is the view of many modern composers that tonality is an anachronism without any viability as a musical language in our current cultural milieu a result of a misguided, ideological myopia?

The prevailing view of many composers in the twentieth century, that writing accessible music was "pandering" to the tastes of the public, has been perceived as arrogance, even contempt, by the general public. Consider Paul Hindemith's view of the state of modern music in the first half of the century as he alludes to composers:

...who flatly deny the ethic power of music, nor do they admit any moral obligation on the part of those writing. For them, music is essentially a play with tones, and although they spend a considerable amount of intelligence and craftsmanship to make it look important, their composition can be of no greater value, as a sociological factor, than bowling or skating.

For Hindemith, the composer who has become aware of the beacons that lead to truth and perfection:

will then know about musical inspiration and how to touch validly the intellectual and moral depths of our soul. All the ethic power of music will be at his command and he will use it with a *sense of severest moral responsibility*. (Emphasis is mine). His further guides will be an inspiring creative ideal and the search of its realization; an unshakable conviction in the loftiness of our art; a power to evoke convincing and exalting forms and to address us with the language of purity. A life following such rules is bound to exemplary persuade others to become associated.

The moral and ethical connotations of Hindemith's statement are deeply profound and insightful. His repudiation of Nazi tyranny in his native Germany speaks volumes about his convictions with regards to the view of music having a "moral and ethical power" and the artists "responsibility" to their society.

Modern music's preoccupation with formula, structure and technique---rationales born out of an unbridled intellect---as opposed to the spiritual, mystical, emotional and expressive---rationales born out of heart, is perhaps the most significant reason for the aforementioned "cultural gap." As a result, there exists the perception that New Music composed according to formulaic methods fails to speak to the innate humanity of our being. In effect, it speaks to our mind and not our heart as thus doesn't speak to the totality of who we are. Music journalist, Richard Taruskin, states that formulaic music of this type "was not to be valued by the pleasure it gave but rather the truth is contained. Truth, in music as in math, lay in the accountability to basic principles of relatedness." This rationale is a direct outgrowth the aesthetic ideals of the Second Viennese School.

Composer/author George Rochberg, whose music evolved from an early infatuation with atonality to a relatively tonal idiom makes the following query:

Who would care to remember the quartets of Beethoven or Bartok if they were merely demonstrations of empty formalisms? The insistence by all on ignoring the dramatic and gestural character of music, while harping on the mystique of the minutiae of abstract design for its own sake, says worlds about the failure of much new music. There has sprung up a profusion of false, half-baked theories of perception, of intellection, of composition itself. The mind grows sterile and the heart small and pathetic.

The preoccupation with the truth/technique paradigm has acted as an incubator for the "profusion of false, half-baked theories of perception, of intellection, of composition" that Rochberg refers to. An interesting phenomenon is the fact that whether music is formulaic or aleatoric, indeterminacy is the result. The lack of patterning or redundancy in

much new music leads to a condition approaching a kind of "white noise" which makes perceptibility and communication almost impossible. The late American composer/educator William Schuman once made the analogy that a contemporary composer who espouses atonal formulaic syntax is like a great orator who may have very important message to convey, but utilizes a language so complex and arcane as to be imperceptible, thus rendering his message incomprehensible.

The influence of technology and emphasis on being progressive and "forward thinking" has also had significant effects on music in the post World War II era. In 1986 the tour of composers from The Institute for Research for the Coordination Acoustic Music (IRCAM) under the artistic direction of Pierre Boulez, presented a telling philosophical manifesto of IRCAM's mission and Boulez's vision. For Boulez and IRCAM the "essential trial" facing society and artists is to forsake "all memory to forge a perception without precedent, of renouncing the legacies of the past to discover as yet undreamed-of territories." Boulez continues: "Despite the skillful ruses we have cultivated in our desperate effort to make the past serve our present day needs, we can no longer elude the essential trial, that of becoming an absolute part of the present."

Boulez's position as a leading exponent of modern music is troubling precisely for its failure to acknowledge any *possibility* that the past *may* be a source of guidance, inspiration and insight. The music composed under the IRCAM umbrella, despite its advances in the use of computer generated sound, reflected mannerisms of the post-Webern aesthetic, and consequently is rife with indeterminacy; highly complex and perceptually opaque.

Music of the IRCAM school could not have existed in former times because the prevailing attitude of those times demanded that the composers have a sense of "moral and ethical responsibility." Musicians of past times placed themselves in a kind of subservience to the moral and ethical principles which governed their societies and the laws of aesthetics. In that sense, much modern "art music" is in a very real way, anti-social.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the cosmic "principles" that traversed the expanse of history were no longer considered eternal or immutable and subsequently the idea of transient artistic standards lacking ethical underpinnings became, in part, the basis

of Schoenberg's "emancipation." For the advocates of atonal serialism and their aesthetic brethren, the Platonic concept of value in art being the result of the union of beauty, truth and goodness was viewed as a quaint vestige of a bygone era.

If the new music born out of intellect and formulaic principle is so perceptually and cognitively difficult, why has it held sway in the later half of the twentieth century? The answer lies in the ideological and sociological beliefs of modernity. The appearance of atonal music was thought to be part of the natural progression evolving out of Wagnerian chromaticism and thus held a position of privilege and inevitability.

If we accept the fact that music is a form of communication---a language---the ideology of historical determinism must be considered fallacious. Natural languages grow out of the subconscious need/desire to communicate and their "rules" of grammar evolve out of usage. In atonal serialism the "rules" are first stated and thereafter used.

Psychologist Walter J. Ong's comparison of artificial computer language and natural language is very instructive. Computer languages, Ong writes, "do not grow out of the unconscious but directly out of the consciousness...the rules of grammar in natural languages are used first and can be abstracted from usage and stated explicitly in words only with difficulty and never completely."

This view is shared by Leonard Bernstein in his music/language analogy in the *Harvard Lectures*. Alluding to Schoenberg's serial methods Bernstein states:

The trouble is that the new musical 'rules' of Schoenberg are not apparently based on innate awareness, on the intuition of tonal relationships. They are like rules of an artificial language, and therefore must be learned. This would seem to lead to what used to be called 'form without content,' or form at the expense of content---structuralism for its own sake.

Richard Taruskin echoes this when he writes, "Serial music conveys little, because for all its vaunted complexity it is shallow, all surface, with no underlying, unconscious and innate deep structure." The trendy ideological claim of historical "inevitability" doesn't hold

up in this context. The disconnect between the "content of the utterance" and the "manner of its delivery" becomes a constant irritant to those seeking to find meaning and pleasure in their encounter with music. Hence, the "cultural gap."

The New Millennium

One might ask: Is the "cultural gap" widening, or is it being filled in by the pluralism and diversity of an ever expanding world culture? The ease with which we can now experience the music of African, Asian, South American or Indonesian cultures via the latest audio/video technologies or world travel, for instance, has had a profound impact on the attitudes of composers and listeners alike. The synthesis of various culture influences into new modes of creative expression, as in the music of Tan Dun, Arvo Part, or Roberto Sierra, reflects the influence of cross-cultural diversity.

Still, I believe a larger question remains. No, not whither music? But whither our collective future? At this point of my essay I turn once again to the thoughts of musicologist Leonard B. Meyer, for in many respects his thoughts echo my own and his insights are illuminating.

The changes in our moral, ethical, philosophical outlook have had a far-reaching impact on the art of our present world culture. Meyer states:

The valuing of change is evident in our culture's drive for innovation, its prizing originality and its idolization of youth. The connections among these are clear. Geniuses are, almost by definition, original--the producers of innovations; and youth is the time for originality and innovation, before we are corrupted by custom and misled by convention.

The "idolization of youth" and the perception that "custom" and "convention" are considered potentially "corrupting" is something I find most unsettling. After all, I work in a profession (conducting) where age, experience and maturity are revered and considered

necessary to the task of interpreting the great music of the European tradition with insight and profundity. I believe that our modern society's preoccupation with "being youthful" contributes to the dumbing-down, or as columnist William Safire recently referred to, as the "growing-down" of our culture.

Oriental cultures are based on the Confucian concept of respect for elders and the valuing of the wisdom that age begets. Children in Oriental cultures are inculcated with the concept of respect for elders from the earliest ages. Teaching children the values of loyalty, honor, obedience and filial piety has been a cultural norm in Oriental cultures throughout their histories.

A similar concept is present within earlier Puritan and European cultures as well. Manhattan Institute Fellow, Kay Hymowitz, offers a startling picture of the extremes that children in Europe, even children preparing for royalty, were subjected to in order to curb their desires and thoughts in her book, *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Futures---and Ours*. Hymowitz refers to the diaries of Heroard, the doctor of Louis Dauphin, who in 1610 became King Louis XIII of France.

If the dauphin showed pleasure in a certain food he would be denied it. If he disliked a food, it was served to him repeatedly. In order to impress upon him his powerlessness, he, the future king, was taught to serve his father meals. At age two, he began to be subjected to a regime of whippings, first by his nurse and then, as he grew older, by the soldiers of the guard. He was whipped even after he became king at age nine. Children, whether they were kings or servants, were to obey parents with the same unquestioning fear with which parents were to obey God.

As severe as this may seem by current cultural norms, it reflects what I believe to be a cataclysmic shift in our society's view about youth which in turn impacts the our attitudes about music.

The abdication of serious "art music" to the very ideas that made it such an important aspect of cultures past has been a significant contributing factor to the emergence of pop and rock music and its prominent position as a global phenomenon. The "rebellious" aspect of its rationale is innocuous enough, however what remains troubling is that adults never seem to be willing to grow out of their adolescent infatuation with pop music and the attitudes it engenders. Many adults seem unwilling to move on to music that is more mature and profound. As a result the "growing down" of our cultural psyche continues unabated and leads to a condition of arrested development---morally, ethically, socially and culturally.

The lack of awareness and understanding of the great musical traditions of the past leads to a kind of *faux* egalitarianism in which there exists a rather obtuse basis to evaluate music. As Leonard B. Meyer states, "Making explicit value judgments about individual works of art is considered invidious and elitist...because privileging *any* work or style is non-egalitarian." In this reality the music of Beethoven or Takemitsu is considered no different than Bruce Springsteen. Nietzsche's aforementioned dictum that greatness is a result of immense understanding on the part of both the creator and listener is anathema to this condition.

Worse, the distinction between trend and tradition, art and cliché have become hopelessly blurred in popular culture. Artists work with a context of tradition. "Traditions," according to Edward Rothstein, "challenge and nestle, even oppress artists". He writes:

Trends nestle nobody. Tradition can be cautious to a fault; trends can be reckless to a fault. Tradition demands an active creator who tries to mold it for new purposes; trends create passive participants. Tradition requires dedication; "If you want it," wrote T.S. Eliot. "you must obtain it by great labor." A trend is almost always a cliché, always something that is widely accepted, requiring no proof; it attracts followers rather than leaders, crowds rather than individuals.

Could pop culture's "verisimilar" view of tradition be a symptom of a disintegrating civilization? Rothstein believes that the historical balance between trend and tradition, a balance that was guided by what T.S. Eliot called "the presence of the past," has undergone a massive shift. The pervasiveness of popular culture and the values it engenders has resulted in a cultural skepticism about the past and tradition. Rothstein states, "The very word 'tradition' has taken on the suggestion of something rigid, stultifying, restrictive, mindless. The prophecy that tradition will kill art has become self-fulfilling."

The commercial use of rock music, combined with the prominence of visual media -- television, cinema and video---contributes to what Meyer refers to as a condition of "presentism-cum-consumerism," where living for the moment without regard for the future (clearly an adolescent mind-set) is the prevailing attitude in contemporary society. This "presentism" is manifested in a myriad of ways, from individuals living on credit cards to corporations seeking quick profits over long term investments (one need only to look at the conglomerates that run the classical record industry) to governments that are more willing to spend surpluses rather than pay down debt or invest in ways that can sustain growth.

The adolescent desire for instant gratification in this "live-for-the moment" culture has led to a condition where there is little tolerance for music that cannot be digested with a minimum of effort or involvement. Serious "art music" is marginalized in this environment as our attitudes and listening habits grow more passive.

Advances in recording technology have been beneficial in bringing a wide variety of musical tradition to wider audiences, yet there exists a downside to the increased accessibility of recordings. The "mundane ubiquity and prevalence" of recorded music has fostered a passivity in the listening experience as well as a kind of "sensory privation." This passivity encourages an increasingly detached involvement with music and a more casual and "intermittent" listening experience. Casual listening can precede to indifference and a lowering of expectation of the music itself.

(Consider the situation in Vienna in Mahler's time. Mahler only heard his monumental Fifth Symphony on the occasions that he conducted it and by all accounts that was no more than nine times *in his entire life*. No casual listening there.)

Contemporary society's emphasis on the visual as opposed to the aural, the present as opposed to either the past or the future, instant gratification as opposed to delayed gratification, materialism as opposed to spiritualism, is a condition that should give all who cherish the artistic legacies of the past reason to reflect on our collective reality.

Should we "renounce the legacies of the past" as Pierre Boulez suggests, or can past legacies be instructive in creating a condition conducive for peace and harmony for our global family? I believe that our sense of altruism would lead us to the conclusion that we should seriously ponder the issue of moral and ethical accountability as it pertains to that which we create and how it affects others.

In conclusion, Paul Hindemith's insightful words seem appropriate for contemplation.

This life in and with music, being essentially a victory of external forces and a final allegiance to spiritual sovereignty, can only be a life of humility, of giving of one's best to one's fellow man. This gift will not be like alms passed on to the beggar; it will be the sharing of a man's every possession with his friend.

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