

Music in Everyday Life

Tia DeNora



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1 Formulating questions – the ‘music and society’ nexus

Music and society – the ‘grand’ tradition

When Howard Becker published *Art Worlds* in 1982, his ‘art as a form of work’ perspective publicized a trend that had been developing in American scholarship since the 1970s. Known as the ‘production of culture’ approach, and developed by scholars such as Richard Peterson (1976), Lewis Coser (1978), Janet Wolff (1981) and Vera Zolberg (1990), this new perspective provided an antidote to the brand of cultural sociology that Bennett Berger cheerfully referred to as ‘culturology’ (Berger 1995). By this, Berger meant a kind of sociology devoted to the ‘reading’ of works or styles so as to ‘uncover’ or decode their social content. In Berger’s eyes, the great virtue of the production approach was its ability to unhook the study of art works from the grand but often imprecise matter of associating styles of art with styles of social being and with patterns of perception and thought.

In relation to music, the most notable exponent of this ‘grand’ approach was T.W. Adorno. For Adorno, music was linked to cognitive habits, modes of consciousness and historical developments. While on the one hand, he refers to music that ‘trains the unconscious for conditioned reflexes’ (Adorno 1976:53), on the other hand, he speaks of music that ‘aid[ed] enlightenment’ (1973:15). For example, the music of Arnold Schoenberg:

demands from the very beginning active and concentrated participation, the most acute attention to simultaneous multiplicity, the renunciation of the customary crutches of a listening which always knows what to expect . . . it requires the listener to spontaneously compose its inner movement and demands of him not mere contemplation but praxis. (1967:149)

Music such as Schoenberg’s, Adorno believed, had the capacity to foster critical consciousness because its materials were organized in ways that countered convention and habit. By avoiding musical cliché, and by preserving dissonance instead of offering musical resolution and gratification, progressive music had the power to challenge cognitive,

perceptual and emotional habits associated with the rise of 'total socialisation', habits that reinforced, as a matter of reflex, relations of power and administration in ways that made those relations seem natural, inevitable and real.

For Adorno, modern music stood at the end of an historical trajectory, one that began with Beethoven. With its idiosyncratic late style and, in particular, the manner in which it organized musical material, Beethoven's music exemplified or held 'truth-value' for, as Witkin describes it:

the subject confronted with the monolithic administrative force of modernity, of bureaucracy. From this point on, a music that had truth-value could no longer be governed by the illusion of harmony, but would have to recognise the true nature of force in the condition of the subject dominated and even overwhelmed by it. From now on, for the serious modern artist, there could be no more pretence that individual and society were reconciled or that the sensuous life of the subject could find its fulfilment and expression in society; the authentic work of art would henceforth have to reproduce the rupture of subject and object, of individual and society, within itself. (Witkin 1998:67)

As one can glean from this brief description, Adorno's work is exciting and addressed to fundamentally critical issues in the human sciences. Dedicated to exploring the hypothesis that musical organization is a simulacrum for social organization, Adorno's work conceives of music as formative of social consciousness. In this regard, Adorno's work represents the most significant development in the twentieth century of the idea that music is a 'force' in social life, a building material of consciousness and social structure. But because it provides no machinery for viewing these matters as they actually take place, Adorno's work also has the power to frustrate; his work offers no conceptual scaffolding from which to view music in the act of training unconsciousness, no consideration of how music gets into action. The weakness of Adorno's approach thus lies in its failure to provide some means by which its tantalizing claims can be evaluated.

This criticism may be regarded as unfair, since Adorno never claimed to offer a grounded theory of music's effects. None the less, the absence of this grounding was certainly linked to the rejection of Adorno by musicologists of the late 1970s and 1980s (with the lone exception of Rose Subotnik 1976; 1978; 1983; 1990, who, as McClary notes (1991:175n), was 'severely chastised for having thus brought Continental criticism into the discipline'), a time when his work was otherwise enjoying a resurgence within the human sciences (Buck-Morss 1977; DeNora 1986a; Greisman 1976; 1986; Held 1984; Jay 1984; Middleton 1990; Witkin 1998). As one writer within musicology bemoaned, 'one cannot say a *Zeitgeist* reached a

composer or other artist unless one can show the means by which it did' (Lenneberg 1988:419).

Though today the terms are less hostile, less fraught with occupational politics, the debate about Adorno's project is very much alive. From the viewpoint of the empirical historian, the strategy of divining social significance from the work itself (Berger's 'culturology') is fraught with difficulty. This is because it does not account, in any extensive manner, for how the genie of *Zeitgeist* originally got into the bottle of music or, conversely, how music's organizing properties come to be decanted into society. Here, quoted at length, is Peter Martin (quoting in turn Simon Frith) on the problems associated with Adorno's 'grand' approach to the matter of music's presence in social life:

As Frith puts it, the sociology of music, 'has usually rested on more or less crude reflection theories: the music is taken to reflect, to be "homologous" to, the society or social group that makes it'.

As Frith's remark implies, however, there are problematic aspects of the claim that there are close connections between sound structures and social structures. Durkheim's notion of the conscience collective, for example, was developed in the context of an analysis of simple, undifferentiated societies, and, as I have suggested, is not easy to reconcile with modern complex ones where a plurality of contrasting cultures may coexist. Indeed, serious doubts have been expressed about the usefulness of regarding *any* culture as a system, a relatively integrated totality; there is, too, the associated danger of reifying such concepts as 'culture' and 'society', treating them as if they were real entities. And the attempt to explain any social activities – such as the production of music – in terms of the general characteristics of society entails a further set of difficulties concerning the nature of human action. (Martin 1995:79–80)

Martin is certainly correct about the levels of difficulty entailed. For example, how are we to conceive of the temporal relationship between music and *Zeitgeist*? Is music merely a passive receptacle of social spirit? Or may it take the lead in the formation of social – that is, non-musical – constructions? Or are both music and 'the social' generated by some (mysterious and perhaps mythological) generative force? It is important to address these questions of *process*, to try to specify how the social comes to be inscribed in the musical, if one is to spell out an account of how structural affinities or homologies between music and social formations might arise and change over time. At best these issues are usually ignored; at worst, they are fudged through some version of what Donna Haraway (1991) calls 'the God trick', by which she means that the analyst poses as if in possession of an omniscient vantage point from which to know the social world (see also Hetherington 1998:11). And, as with early models within the social study of science, the music-is-parallel-to-society approach is best suited to static analytical frames – to the analysis of

particular composers or works – and to the description of shifts in musical styles (from polyphony to homophony, for example). It is less equipped to address the subtler matter of music stylistic change, moment-to-moment, year-to-year, and within specifically circumscribed social worlds. Yet without a descriptively informed theory of the music–society nexus, the sociology of music, however grand its ambitions, is in peril of being marooned, as the poet Ed Dorn once so eloquently expressed it, in 'that great Zero/Resting eternally between parallels' (1978:73). The French sociologist Antoine Hennion makes this point even more tersely: 'it must be strictly forbidden to create links when this is not done by an identifiable intermediary' (1995:248). Hennion's point is eminently reasonable: while music may be, seems to be, or is, interlinked to 'social' matters – patterns of cognition, styles of action, ideologies, institutional arrangements – these should not be presumed. Rather, their mechanisms of operation need to be demonstrated. If this demonstration cannot be achieved, then analysis may blend into academic fantasy and the music–society nexus rendered 'visionary' rather than 'visible'. Indeed, a grounded theory of the music–society nexus allows conventional distinctions between musical and social materials to be dissolved; in their place, musical and social matters are understood to be reflexively linked and co-produced. This matter is dealt with further in chapter 2.

Music and society – the 'little' tradition

In contrast to Adorno and the problems associated with his 'grand' approach, the production of culture or art worlds perspective established a secure empirical footing through its focus on artistic production within art worlds (Becker), realms (Peterson) or 'meso' structures (Gilmore 1987; Clarke 1990). Poised between large-scale notions such as social structure or ideology and individual art producers, the approach made a virtue of following 'links' as they were forged at the ground level of action. As Becker put it in his 1989 'Letter to Charles Seeger':

Sociologists working in this [the Art Worlds] mode aren't much interested in 'decoding' art works, in finding the work's secret meanings as reflections of society. They prefer to see those works as the result of what a lot of people have done jointly. (1989a:282; see also Becker 1989b)

In emphasizing local social contexts of arts production, the sociologists to whom Becker alludes were reacting against long-distance relationships with their research material. Their perspectives helped to specify many of the ways that art works were shaped by social organizations, interests, conventions and capacities available within their realms of production.

The art worlds approach thus showed its greatest potential when it addressed the question of how society got into art in much the same way that studies of the laboratory have illuminated scientific knowledge as a human product (Barnes and Shapin 1979; Latour and Woolgar 1986 [1979]; Knorr-Cetina 1981; Lynch 1982). Bringing the sociology of music closer to musicology's traditional interest in historical detail and to the then-burgeoning interest, within music scholarship, of 'context studies' was thus one of the production of culture perspective's greatest strengths.

But the perspective suited some questions better than others. Its weakness lay in its appellation, 'production of culture', where the realm of the aesthetic was implicitly treated as an object of explanation but not as an active and dynamic material in social life. Paradoxically, then, the journey into context was also a journey away from a concern with the social *presence* of aesthetic materials, a journey away from the original concerns of Adorno and others who focused on the ways in which music was active in – and not merely determined by – social life. More recently, the sociology of the arts has begun to return to this concern (cf. Bowler 1994; DeNora 1995a; Hennion and Grenier 1998; Witkin 1995; Born 1995; Frith 1990a; Tota 1997a). As Shepherd and Wicke have remarked, 'a viable understanding of culture requires an understanding of its articulation through music just as much as a viable understanding of music requires an understanding of its place in culture' (1997:34).

The challenge, in making this return, lay in how to articulate the concern with music as an active ingredient without reverting to the mythological realm of the 'great Zero', to show, symmetrically, how music articulates social life and social life articulates music. As Simon Frith has put it (1987:137), 'the question we should be asking is not what does popular music reveal about "the people" but how does it construct them'. It is here that the originally British tradition of cultural studies, ethnographically conceived, can be seen to provide excellent tools for the job.

Within the classic studies of young people and their intimate involvement with music, in books such as Paul Willis's *Profane Culture* (1978), and Frith's early monographs, *Sound Effects* (1981) and *The Sociology of Rock* (1978), music's social presence was illuminated. Rereading these works, we can see music providing a resource in and through which agency and identity are produced. Indeed, these studies can be seen to be compatible with Adorno's focus on music's link to social being. But this time, the music-social structure nexus was specified in a manner amenable to observation. Music's structuring properties were understood as actualized in and through the practices of musical use, through the ways

music was used and referred to by actors during their ongoing attempts to produce their social situations and themselves *as selves*.

For example, in his report on the culture of the 'bikeboys', Willis noted that the boys' preferred songs were fast-paced and characterized by a strong beat, a pulsating rhythm. Willis resorted to the concept of homology or 'resonance' to explain the relation of this music to bikeboy culture, but his study effectively evaded the 'great Zero' of parallelism by showing the reader how not *he*, Willis, but the boys *themselves* established this connection between music and social life. In *Profane Culture*, structural similarities between music and social behaviour – in this case small group culture – were forged through the cultural practices and lay classifications of the group members – the boys – themselves. They were never analysts' constructs. As Willis put it, 'objects, artifacts and institutions do not, as it were, have a single valency. It is the act of social engagement with a cultural item which activates and brings out particular meanings' (1978:193). The boys, as Willis describes them, are active interpreters whose group values were, 'almost literally seen in the qualities of their preferred music' (1978:63). The focus is directed at the question of how particular actors make connections or, as Stuart Hall later put it, 'articulations' (1980; 1986) between music and social formations. Here, then, at least for working purposes, is an interactionist and grounded 'worlds' version of Adorno's original vision. The subsequent history of the development of this perspective is, arguably, one of sociology's greatest contributions to the understanding of culture, in so far as it has provided concepts and descriptions of how aesthetic materials come to have social 'valency' in and through their circumstances of use.

The observation that agents attach connotations to things and orient to things on the basis of perceived meanings is a basic tenet of interpretivist sociology. But its implications for theorizing the nexus between aesthetic materials and society were profound. It signalled a shift in focus from aesthetic objects and their content (static) to the cultural practices in and through which aesthetic materials were appropriated and used (dynamic) to produce social life.

In the two decades that have followed the publication of *Profane Culture*, the field of audience and reception studies has advanced considerably. But the early interactionist promise of these classic works is too-often muted in favour of a preoccupation with 'what' people think about particular cultural works. The great contribution of Willis, Frith and Hall was their focus not on what can be 'said' about cultural forms, but on what the appropriation of cultural materials achieves *in action*, what culture 'does' for its consumers within the contexts of their lives. Thus, one of the most striking (and usually underplayed) aspects of *Profane*

Culture is its conception of music as an active ingredient of social formation. The bikeboys' preferred music did not leave its recipients 'just sit[ting] there moping all night' (1978:69). It invited, perhaps incited, movement. As one of the boys put it, 'if you hear a fast record you've got to get up and do something, I think. If you can't dance any more, or if the dance is over, you've just got to go for a burn-up [motorcycle ride]' (1978:73). Willis's work was pioneering in its demonstration of how music does much more than 'depict' or embody values. It portrayed music as active and dynamic, as constitutive not merely of values but of trajectories and styles of conduct in real time. It reminded us of how we do things to music and we do things with music – dance and ride in the case of the bikeboys, but, beyond this, work, eat, fall asleep, dance, romance, daydream, exercise, celebrate, protest, worship, mediate and procreate with music playing. As one of Willis's informants put it, 'you can hear the beat in your head, don't you . . . you go with the beat, don't you?' (1978:72). As it is used, both as it plays in real time and as it is replayed in memory, music also serves to organize its users.

If we take them at their word, the bikeboys tell us that they enter *into* the music and 'go with it'. Music takes them from one state (sitting around) to another (dancing as the music plays) to another (riding as the music plays in memory). In this sense, music is a cultural vehicle, one that can be ridden like a bike or boarded like a train. This description is metaphorical (and the boys' metaphors of 'going' and physical transformation are themselves cultural resources for holding on to a mode of being and a set of procedural commitments – in this case, to movement) but it is worth noting that one of the most common metaphors for musical experience in post-nineteenth-century Western culture is the metaphor of 'transport', in the sense of being carried from one (emotional) place to another (and indeed, at times, being 'carried away'). Viewed in this way, music can be conceived of as a kind of aesthetic technology, an instrument of social ordering. As Sarah Cohen suggests, 'focus upon people and their musical practices and processes rather than upon structures, texts or products illuminates the ways in which music is used and the important role that it plays in everyday life and in society generally' (1993:127). And, as Georgina Born puts it in her ethnography of IRCAM, it is necessary to focus on 'the actual uses of technologies [she could just as well have said "musics"]', which are often depicted in idealized, unproblematic, and normative ways' (1995:15). In common with all instruments and technological devices, music needs to be understood in terms of its (non-verbal) capacities for enabling and constraining its user(s). How, then, can this idea be developed and how can music's structuring powers be illuminated at the level of social experience?

Getting into the music

I begin with a simple, highly mundane and apparently trivial case. A few years ago, when it was still a novelty to use a modem to access email from home, I was writing a book review of Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* (see chapter 2, below). Normally, I would dial up the mainframe computer at the end of a work session, and there would be a short delay before the connection to the terminal server was established. Though the delay is only a few seconds, I tended to experience the wait as taking a long time, probably because of my eagerness to read my mail and my up-until-then rapid typing (and the expectation that when you press a key you get a response). When initially instructed on how to log on, I had been told to press the 'enter' key once or twice as a kind of prompt, and so, for a number of months when logging on, I pressed the key, somewhat impatiently, as fast as I could. Then one day, after I had been reading McClary's essay about Georges Bizet's opera, *Carmen*, I found myself pressing the enter key to the Habanera's opening rhythm, while simultaneously replaying the music in my head (see figure 1); and even before *Carmen* had begun to sing the words, 'L'amour est un oiseau rebelle', I was on the mainframe, impressed by the way time had flown. Somehow, this particular use of the Habanera became a habit. For some months after, as I logged on to the computer, I thought of the music and tapped the enter key to the opening rhythm, each time feeling, as I reached my email, slight regret that I had to 'interrupt' the aria to read my mail.

This simple example helps to introduce just a few of the ways in which music can 'get into action', so as to organize subjects in real time. The first way music does this concerns the body. My body, in this example (my index finger anyway), visibly slowed. Not only was the number of times I tapped the 'enter' key reduced, the action of my finger was realigned, or musically entrained with the Habanera's rhythm. In direct contrast to the case of the bikeboys, whose music speeded them up ('you've got to get up and do something'), here, music slowed down embodied action by enlisting the body into rhythm. But the Habanera's effects extended beyond bodily movement. The introduction of music changed the way I experienced a five-second interval. It redefined that temporal situation, translated it from 'long time' into 'short time'. The music did not simply fill in the time of waiting; it reconstructed the ongoing aim of my action such that the very thing I had been awaiting so eagerly (access to my email) was redefined in the real-time situation, as something that was interrupting the pleasure of the music. Defined in relation to the interrupted musical phrase, the email was then re-experienced as arriving 'too soon'. Here

Allegretto, quasi andantino (♩ = 72) ***p***

Carmen

L'a - mour
Love is

Piano

pp

est un oi - seau re - bel - le Que nul ne peut ap - pri - voi - ser, Et c'est
free as the way - ward breeze, _ It can be shy, _ it _ can be bold.

bien en vain qu'on l'ap - pel - le, S'il lui con - vient de re - fu - ser. Rien n'y
fas - ci - nate, love can tease, _ Its whims and moods are _ thou - sand - fold. All at

portamento

Figure 1. Georges Bizet, *Carmen*, 'Habanera'

then, is the first in a series of examples of music's power to 'compose' situations. Consider now a second and distinctly less trivial one.

The 'art' of feeling secure – aesthetics of risk assessment

A transatlantic flight epitomizes a peculiarly modern requirement, namely the need to place one's trust in technological systems. The prospect of putting a few hundred strangers together in a hermetically sealed, crowded and, for at least some, potentially frightening, space is, of necessity, a prospect that confronts the problem of social order. Aware of this, airlines attempt to mould their consumers, to form them into 'ideal' users, into individuals who exhibit 'preferred' forms of passenger behaviour. Understandably, the airlines want no terrorists; they want

passengers to remain mostly seated; they want passengers to obey requests from crew and to appear calm. Accordingly, carriers deploy a range of socio-technical devices to discipline passengers – security checks, passports, metal detectors, x-ray machines, overhead lighted signs and instructions from the flight crew, for example. Some of these devices are quite primitive – physical barriers, for example, of varying strength. No one is allowed through security without a passport and ticket, or with a weapon if it is detected in carry-on luggage. More subtly, passengers may be less likely to try to get up from their seats when a meal cart is blocking the aisle or the remains of a meal occupy a tray-table. Other disciplining devices appeal to passengers as 'rational actors', willing and able to participate in a rule-governed basis for social order and placing their trust in the superior knowledge claims of system professionals. When the captain announces the possibility of forthcoming turbulence, for example, and asks passengers to return to their seats, it is expected that everyone – even those who had wished to go to the lavatory – will obey, on the assumption that the airline and the flight crew know what is best.

Trust in the face of contingency is a key component of any expert system, and, as Anthony Giddens has observed, such trust 'is inevitably in part an article of "faith"' (1990:29). The literature on risk and risk cultures has documented how faith, as the foundation of trust in expert systems, is constituted from a 'pragmatic element' – for example, 'the experience that such systems generally work as they are supposed to do' (1990:29), and from the manner in which expert systems are embedded within external regulatory systems, and statistical representations of 'safety'.

These literatures excel when they address the construction of faith in expert systems from the point of view of *general* risk perception – the safety of air travel as a general concept, for example – as spoken about in the subjunctive (for instance, 'would you say that air travel is safe?'). But they are on weaker ground when they are called upon to account for the construction of trust in particular experiences of travel ('how do you feel about *this* flight?'). To ask about how individuals – atomized as passengers in seats – come to apply their generally held precepts about safety and security to the here-and-now of being on an aircraft is to ask about how social order and its attendant beliefs, habits and authority structures get instantiated in real-time circumstances. At the same time, this is a question about how modes of agency are constructed in and through a temporal dimension, across time and space.

What, then, does it take to inculcate trust in a local sense, to instantiate faith? What are the materials passengers use to make an interpretive connection between the typically 'safe' features of 'most flights' and 'this'

flight? For it is in and through the nature of this interpretative activity that faith is renewed and trust established. And how are reminders of this propositional knowledge – flying is, in general, safe – woven into the texture of intra-aircraft culture so that the ontological security of the preferred passenger and his or her faith is sustained throughout the course of the flight? In relation to these questions, research on risk cultures needs to address non-cognitive aspects of risk assessment. Within that area, a key topic would revolve around the non-cognitive, aesthetic dimensions of risk perception hitherto absent from the risk literatures (see Lash and Urry 1994:5, 31–44 on this point). With regard to Giddens's notion of 'faith' in expert systems, throughout history and across culture, aesthetic materials have been used to instil and inspire faith, as a part of the ceremonial occasions and settings in which faith is renewed. In this sense, the concern with the aesthetic dimension of risk perception is a species of a far more general matter within sociology – the cultural foundations of belief, co-ordination, conformity and subjectivity; and so, with respect to air travel, the social sciences have missed what the airlines have known for some time, that the here-and-now of travel depends as well on subtler ordering devices. Among these, music is key.

Music 'in flight'

In March 1997 I flew from London to California. I made note of the musical accompaniment of my in-flight experience. The hassle of boarding was musically underpinned with an 'ambient music video' – something called, 'True North', in which images of lakes and glaciers – cool and muted greys, greens and blues – were accompanied by slow, low pitched melodies and whale song. Just before take-off the mood changed. Trumpets heralded the safety video (see figure 2). This decisive, upward-sweeping and definite-sounding brass then faded to the background as the firm but friendly (male) voice described what we should do in the event of a water landing, etc. The brass returned full volume at the close of the presentation and the plane taxied out to the runway for take-off.

There are many things that could be said about the use of brass, the use of a piece by an American composer (by an American airline), the fanfare genre, of instruments associated with heraldry and the military (precision, technology, expertise) and (thinking about gender and class (I flew economy)) about a piece by Copland entitled 'Fanfare for the common man'. Music is active in defining situations because, like all devices or technologies, it is often linked, through convention, to social scenarios, often according to the social uses for which it was initially produced – waltz music for dancing, march music for marching and so on. Genre and conventional

Very deliberately (♩ = ca. 52) *rit.* *a tempo*

Horns in F
1 3
2 4

B♭ Trumpets
1
2 3

Trombones
1 2

Tuba
3

Very deliberately (♩ = ca. 52) *rit.* *a tempo*

Timpani
ff *mf* *mf* *let vibrate*

Bass Drum
ff *f* *mf* *let vibrate*

Tam-tam
ff *f* *mf*

7

Hns in F
1 3
2 4

B♭ Tpts
1
2 (a2)
3

Tbns
1 2

Tuba
3

Temp.
with hard sticks

Bass Dr.
deadened sound

Figure 2. Aaron Copland, 'Fanfare for the common man'

formulations as they accrue over time in musical practice can in turn be used to impart conventional understandings to the settings in which they occur. They are part of the materials with which scenic specificity is constructed and perceived. Music can be used, in other words, as a resource for making sense of situations, as something of which people may become aware when they are trying to determine or tune into an ongoing situation.

Nearly all music exists in intertextual relation to compositional conventions and works (for example, genres such as a mass, a symphony or dance music, material procedures of harmony, melody, rhythm and so on, and gestures of various kinds). It also exists in relation to sound structures in the social natural worlds outside of music (sudden falling movement, tense climbing, gently stroked keys, volume and energy levels) and in relation to its past association with social situations, from its social patterns of employment. Music comes to have recognizable social 'content' in and through its perceived participation in these (and other) realms. The idea that music makes use of figures, gestures, styles, sonorities, rhythms and genre, and that these are to varying degrees part of a public stock of musical 'understanding', was a common part of music theory in Bach's day and in Mozart's (Allanbrook 1983). In Mozart's Vienna, composers employed conventional music *topoi* of rhythmic gesture, melodic and tonal material. Indeed, Bach's project of instigating and reinstigating religious faith through the aesthetic means of music (and drawing upon a shared conventional vocabulary of musical gesture in order to do so) is, in operational terms, not so different from what an airline does when it enlists music to instil faith in its expert systems. Bach's contemporary, Mattheson, produced a catalogue of musical affect (1981 [1739]). In our own day, despite the range of compositional and reception practices, music is still used to signal plot and mood within the film and television industries and, there, catalogues of musical materials are still employed. If anything, these industries have only multiplied the kinaesthetic music-image associations to which we are exposed, and which the advertising industry draws upon to sell us everything from cars to bars of chocolate.

The musical materials of the airline's safety video, for example, have been used for centuries to imply – with a quick, relatively loud, tonally centred and upward-sweeping gesture – a message along the lines of, 'sit up and pay attention, something important is about to happen'. They may thus be understood as an attention-seeking gesture. At the same time, the Copland fanfare moves at a stately *moderato* pace. There is nothing agitated in its manner; to the contrary, it may be read as commensurate with a graceful 'lift-off'; it embodies the very activity it is used to signify.

Of course, other music may be equally able to command *attention*. And no music is guaranteed to invoke 'preferred' or appropriate action frames

(music can be received with irony, naively, alternatively). What does seem clear, however, is that there are some musical materials that would undermine preferred or appropriate action frames. Would an airline consider using the ravaged atonality of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* or Strauss's *Tales from the Vienna Woods* to underpin its safety video? Would the former inculcate further passenger anxiety and the latter trivialize or possibly perplex? Neither would convey the combination of organizational control, formality, ceremonial gravitas, attention seeking and (musical-tonal) security associated with the genre to which their chosen composition by Copland is oriented, the generic musical materials of which it partakes. But if the Copland were to be performed imprecisely, with unusual phrasing or dynamics, might it too be counterproductive? There is, however, probably no music that would engender trust in the face of an aircraft filling with smoke! Trust is kindled through gesture, both through the choice of this – musical – gesture *and* through the way it is instantiated. In addition, as Antoine Hennion has shown in relation to controversies over baroque authenticity, works into which values are invested and which become articles of faith (Bach's St Matthew Passion, for example) can be undermined according to how they are performed since 'authenticity' is constructed in and through the mobilization of human and material 'mediators' – anything from who performs a work, to how a double-dotted rhythm is executed, to instrument choice (Hennion 1997).

In fact, there are a good many known examples of music that have failed in relation to air travel. According to Joseph Lanza, when Pittsburgh Airport decided to play Brian Eno's eerily ambiguous opus, 'Music for airports', over its public address system, performances were quickly cancelled when travellers complained that the 'background music' made them feel nervous. Similarly, certain numbers were deleted from in-flight radio programmes because they were associated with, *reminders* of, the very matters that both passengers and crew typically attempt to forget. 'Stormy weather', 'I have a terrible feeling I'm falling [in love with you]' and 'I don't stand a ghost of a chance' all had to go. As Lanza observes, 'Music tinged with the slightest disagreeable song content, altered tempo, stray key, or change in order can cause "the Comfort Zone" to slip into "the Twilight Zone"' (Lanza 1994:195).

Music as a medium of social relation

Consider a third example of how music can get into social life. Gary is in his early twenties. He is unable to see or speak in words. He exhibits distress in the form of shrieks and screams when taken to (no doubt frightening) public places such as shops, and sometimes he bites or scratches

other people if they come too close. He was referred by a local health authority for music therapy, often used as a 'last resort' for clients when previous, more conventional, therapeutic strategies have been tried and are deemed to have failed.

Gary is sitting in the music room with his carer, waiting for the music therapy session to begin. He is very still. His child's body is knotted up, his head bent over, his legs are crossed. As the music therapist begins to play, Gary shouts, and rocks backwards and forwards in his chair. The therapist responds to whatever noises he makes, imitating them but also modulating them into softer, more 'musical' forms. The therapist then picks up a drum and bangs out a steady beat in sync with Gary's cries. She begins to sing, 'Gary is rocking', after which Gary's rocking becomes so intense that his carer has to hold on to Gary's chair (he has toppled himself over before). The therapist then holds the drum closer to Gary and he takes her hand (the first time he had ever done so). He then uses her hand as a beater, and bangs the drum with it. Later, the therapist returns to the piano and plays a low-pitched, 'eastern'-sounding (pentatonic) melody. Gary is still rocking, but gently now. His noises are gentler too. At the end of the session he is smiling, making sounds that his carer identifies as 'happy'.

After the session, Gary's therapist describes the progress he has made over months of attending music therapy sessions. At first, he would not allow the therapist to come near him; if she did, he would bite and lash out. Now he is calmer during sessions, more interactive, even allowing himself to touch or be touched. (Belcher n.d.)

The therapy begins with the premise that, unlike most people, Gary is cut off from most media of interaction. He has few tools for world-making, for imprinting 'himself' on the environment and for stabilizing that environment (which most of us do through our everyday words and other cultural practices such as decoration or gesture). Accordingly, the session provides Gary with an environment in which he can interact, and it provides him with media to which can relate and which he can influence. It is possible that, for Gary, there is no other realm nor media in or with which he can interact to this degree, no other environment that he is able to structure as much as this one. It provides an environment that Gary can query and control through musical acts, a ground against which his own musical acts are reflected back to him, and a medium with which he can be and do things with another. For Gary, music is a vehicle that brings him into closer co-ordinated activity with another person. It is a device that enables him to act in (social) concert, one with which Gary may develop his sense of self, his presence to self and other(s). The therapist, through her musical-interactive skills – her considerable improvisational abilities – is providing what Gary cannot provide for himself: an aesthetic environment and forms of aesthetic interaction capable of producing pleasure, security and, perhaps most fundamentally, that allow for

the demonstration and self-perception of one's self in an aesthetic medium. Is it any wonder, then, that Gary appears to be more contented at the end of the session?

Using music as a resource for creating and sustaining ontological security, and for entraining and modulating mood and levels of distress, is by no means unique to the purview of the professional music therapeutic encounter. In the course of daily life, many of us resort to music, often in highly reflexive ways. Building and deploying musical montages is part of a repertory of strategies for coping and for generating pleasure, creating occasion, and affirming self- and group identity. Consider, for example, Lucy, who is in her fifties and works as an administrator for an international academic organization. In the following excerpt, she is describing her use of music in the face of the stresses and strains of daily life. On the morning of the interview, she used music to foster a sense of inner 'calm'. She turned to some of the Schubert *Impromptus*.

Q. Can you describe the situation of listening in the front room, like maybe the last time you listened to music in the front room?

A. This morning in fact [laughs].

Q. Oh. Excellent [laughs]. Can you just tell me it in fairly detailed, just what made you go in there to listen, like was it a choice or . . . ?

A. It was a choice because I was feeling very stressed this morning because we're in the throes of moving house and it's, you know, we're not, we haven't sold our house yet, and it's moving, you know, and so I actively decided to put on Schubert's *Impromptus* because they were my father's favourite – you might want to come along to that again, because Schubert's *Impromptus* have a long history with my life – and I thought, my husband had just gone off to work and I thought well, about half an hour before I come up here [to her place of paid work], I'll just listen to them. So, the speakers are [she gestures] there and there on either side of what used to be the fireplace and I sit in a rocking chair facing them, so I get the sound in between the speakers, and I just sat there and listened [sighs, gentle laugh]. But I needed it. It was only ten minutes or so, you know, I didn't listen to them all. I just listened to the bits I wanted to listen to.

Lucy goes on to describe how she entered the front room of her house feeling 'very stressed'. Ten minutes or so later she left feeling different, calmer. Here, self-administered music was a catalyst, a device that enabled Lucy to move from one set of feelings to another over a relatively short time span. Through reference to music, Lucy reconfigured herself as a social-emotional agent. This matter is taken up in depth in chapter 3.

Conceptualizing music as a force

Music is not merely a 'meaningful' or 'communicative' medium. It does much more than convey signification through non-verbal means. At the

level of daily life, music has power. It is implicated in every dimension of social agency, as shown through the previous examples. Music may influence how people compose their bodies, how they conduct themselves, how they experience the passage of time, how they feel – in terms of energy and emotion – about themselves, about others, and about situations. In this respect, music may imply and, in some cases, elicit associated modes of conduct. To be in control, then, of the soundtrack of social action is to provide a framework for the organization of social agency, a framework for how people perceive (consciously or subconsciously) potential avenues of conduct. This perception is often converted into conduct *per se*.

The ability to exploit music's social powers is fundamental to any disc jockey's craft. Indeed, one of the best natural laboratories for observing soundtracks as they are converted into social and social psychological tracks, into action–feeling trajectories, modes of agency, is the humble karaoke evening. Within such an event, the style and tempo of musical numbers changes quickly; each number is chosen by performers individually. At a karaoke event, there is no preordained schedule of musical numbers, no attempt to create a 'grammar' or sets of musical numbers over the course of an evening, such as a disc jockey might seek to do. However, at least in Britain, karaoke is often hosted by a 'master of ceremonies', who may interject one or more of his own performances to tide things over, get things going, and so on. In the course of our study of music and everyday life we met up with one of the United Kingdom's most active karaoke hosts, 'Karaoke Bob', who was based in Exeter. Bob – who currently holds the *Guinness Book of Records* title for the longest karaoke impersonation of Elvis Presley – explained, as he saw them, the ins and outs of karaoke as a social occupation. Here is part of what he had to say about how quickly – from song to song (the order is usually random, the result of who signs up for what, though Bob may interject one or two of his own numbers at any time) – his audience adapts to and begins to adopt musical stylistic trajectories, adjusting conduct style and energy levels, such as when the music of Oasis encourages young men to adopt a 'cool' stance and reach for a cigarette:

Like when they bring out Oasis everybody is standing there with cigarette smoke in the eyes [one of the most popular Oasis numbers for Bob's karaoke evenings is entitled, 'Cigarettes and alcohol'], they tend to love that sort of thing as much as the Beatles. In the Beatles' day they used to sort of stand there doing this, standing at the bar . . . whatever music we play they tend to react as different individuals [i.e., through the adoption of different personae].

[They] put on a lot of love songs and then it gets a bit boring so then I slip a couple of rock 'n' roll songs in or line dancing – stuff like that, basically stuff in the

charts – then it starts to come back up again and at the end of the night if there's too many drunks shouting around and that then I say, 'right, I'm going to put some ballads on now to quiet it down again.' So we look at the audience.

At the level of practice, music's social effects – of the kind that Bob describes – are familiar to marketeers and social planners. In chapter 5, music's burgeoning role in relation to 'social control' and the structuring of conduct in public is discussed. For example, clearly audible classical music in the New York Port Authority Bus Terminal and Tyneside railway station has been associated with major reductions in hooligan activities (MAIL 1998; TEL 1998; NYT 1996; see also Lanza 1994:226). In-store experiments suggest that background music can be used to structure a range of consumer behaviour and choices – the time it takes to eat and drink (Milliman 1986; Roballey et al. 1985), the average length of stay in a shop (Milliman 1982), the choice of one brand or style over another (North and Hargreaves 1997b) and the amount of money spent (Areni and Kim 1993). In the commercial sector, where results are assessed in the cool light of profit margins, considerable investment has been devoted to finding out just what music can 'make' people do. Consider these excerpts from brochures from background music companies:

Creating a happy and relaxed environment through the imaginative use of music is a vital element in securing maximum turnover and ensuring that your business has optimum appeal. Used correctly, music can influence customer buying behaviour by creating or enhancing the image, mood and style you wish to achieve. (Candy Rock n.d.)

Music is a powerful factor in creating your image . . . and one of the most cost-effective ways to change it. (AEI Music n.d.)

There is little doubt that music is experienced by its recipients as a dynamic material. In interviews with music users, the psychologist of music John Sloboda has shown that users highlight repeatedly the ways in which they view music as having power over them ('music relaxes me', 'disturbs me', 'motivates and inspires me' (Sloboda 1992)). Similarly, in the United States, in the 'Music in Daily Life Project', conducted by Susan Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi and Charles Keil (1993), respondents offered a range of narratives about what music 'did' for them, albeit with little description of their mundane musical practices and the contexts of these practices.

The challenge is to unpack those narratives, and to resituate them as musical practices occurring within ethnographic contexts. Just how does music work to achieve its diverse ends? Does music make people do things? Is it like a physical force or a drug? Will it affect all its recipients in

similar ways? Is it possible, not only to document music's effects, but to begin to explain how music comes to achieve these effects? And, finally, what part does a focus on music's mechanisms of operation form within sociology's core and critical concerns with order, power, and domination or control? It is time to reclaim the matter of music's powers for sociology.

Relations of music production, distribution and use

One of the first issues this project needs to face is the matter of how music is produced and distributed within environments – the who, where, when, what and how of sonic production and reproduction. This matter is critical in modern times where mechanically reproduced, mass-distributed music is as ubiquitous as temperature control and lighting. As Lash and Urry have observed (1994:54), the concept of 'expert systems' is applicable beyond the realms of social science, techniques of self-therapy and the environment. It applies as well to the aesthetic realm, where 'the use of film, quality television, poetry, travel and painting as mediators in the reflexive regulation of everyday life' is also pertinent. The salience of such systems can be seen perhaps most acutely in relation to particular social groups. During an ethnography of high street retail shops I was intrigued to learn that the larger of the national and global outlets not only play the same music at precisely the same times of day, but they do so in order to structure the energy levels of staff and clientele. In principle, one should be able to enter any one of these stores at any moment in any branch in the United Kingdom and the music playing should be (or at least is intended to be) identical. At a time when public spaces are increasingly being privatized, and when 'people management' principles from McDonald's and Disneyland are increasingly applied to shopping precincts, sociologists need to focus much more closely on music's social role. Here, the concern with music as a social 'force' – and with the relation of music's production and deployment in specific circumstances – merges with a fundamental concern within sociology with the interface between the topography of material cultural environments, social action, power and subjectivity. This literature and the contribution it can make to socio-musical studies is discussed in chapter 2 and again in chapters 5 and 6.

Consider again the examples discussed so far. In one, an individual (myself) replayed in memory a popular aria in a way that reconfigured the experience of a temporal interval. In another, a group of individuals on an aircraft are exposed to music chosen expressly for its perceived ability to promote a particular image and to structure social mood. In a third, a therapeutic client makes whatever 'music' he can while a music therapist

weaves that music into a larger musical tapestry and mode of interaction. In a fourth example, an individual engages in a kind of do-it-yourself music therapy, locating and listening to a desired recording as part of her everyday regulation and care of herself. In a fifth example, a karaoke host alters the energy levels and social inclinations in a pub by interjecting strategically chosen numbers of his own. In the final examples, transport stations and shops draw upon 'expert'-designed music systems to encourage organizationally preferred forms of conduct. In all of these examples, music is in dynamic relation with social life, helping to invoke, stabilize and change the parameters of agency, collective and individual. By the term 'agency' here, I mean feeling, perception, cognition and consciousness, identity, energy, perceived situation and scene, embodied conduct and comportment.

If music can affect the shape of social agency, then control over music in social settings is a source of social power; it is an opportunity to structure the parameters of action. To be sure, there are occasions when music is perceived as something to be resisted. The degree of participation in the production of a 'soundtrack' for ongoing (and future) action, the relations of music production, distribution and consumption, is thus a key topic for the study of music's link to human agency. This hitherto-ignored topic is focused on the social distribution of access to and control over the sonic dimension of social settings.

The second topic for a sociology of musical power is less straightforward, despite the attention it has received within cultural theory. It concerns the matter of how to specify music's semiotic force. In what way should we specify music's link to social and embodied meanings and to forms of feeling? How much of music's power to affect the shape of human agency can be attributed to music alone? And to what extent are these questions about music affiliated with more general social science concerns with the power of artefacts and their ability to interest, enrol and transform their users?