

## **Music:City**

Manos Tsangaris

The nature of the correlation between the musical arts and distinct urban situations (urbanism, metabolism, transport, “cultural life,” etc.) is a useful indicator of the degree to which urbanity has detached itself from the stones of our cities; urbanity has moved into the real-world praxis of almost all people and sociotopes, ploughing through it and rewriting it, and endlessly rewriting it again.

Where can sound, including the sound of art music, be found?

There was a time when sound and its rituals built concert halls for absolute (as in fully *detached*) musical happenings.

Today, its detachment is omnipresent and universal.

It is above us all, literally in—... *the cloud*.

Why should urban praxis be any different to the normal praxis of a city’s culture?

Culture:City

Usually these days sound and music are not confined to stone enclosures, but are found in ubiquitous loudspeakers and in-your-ear-headphones.

(I hear with my mind's ear something... that *you* can't hear.)

We wander on.

We are permanent outpatients in a city, between cities, in all cities; we connect them, we carry them with us, they follow us...

And sound follows us too.

On average we listen to something like 240 minutes of “music” every day: it fuels feeling in films, on TV, in adverts, et cetera; it saturates, dissipates, animates, infiltrates...

And we wander with it. We wander on with plugs in our ears but we have lost the ability to wonder.

This expands distance and anonymity in the city, which we enjoy; we can be ourselves among others. (This reminds me a little of the anonymity of a concert audience, when the music starts and I lose myself in it or not, if I prefer not to.)

The man with ear plugs moves on, turning the soundtrack into live film.

So we're all heroes. This is everyday and on-the-move heroism, plugged in, turned on: dreaming of the celestial city.

“The celestial city ... has flown off into space” (said John Cage in conversation with Daniel Charles). But what about the worldly city? It is flying apart. We take it everywhere with us. We don't need to look for it. It follows us. Its spaces are convex. Its public sphere is always within it (a permanent state of deprivation, of privacy = this is the active public sphere converted into the

atomistic, which confronts me for example in my own kitchen in the form of a lady politician in a pink-colored jacket, representing the public opinion that she herself has created).

In the end we ensnare it.

We exhibit it, but in motion.

And sometimes it moves around inside itself, say, for example, during concerts.

Music, in itself, has always been the most mobile of all the arts.

It has always had the facility to fly, and to disappear into infinite space.

And where it goes, the other (public spheres) have followed.

These are indeed the ghosts that it called upon.

Now it will never be rid of them.

And yet, *uninhibited*, we still enjoy the musical art in the traditional European sense of concert halls, and in places transformed into concert halls: lofts, former ballrooms, rear buildings.

Only the celestial cities of absolute music (*absolvere* literally means “to release”) have long flown apart, moved on, have finally, one might say, sought new contexts for their own creation, bodies for their own creation, for musical development, perfection, moving *between the two ears of one head*.

Music in the emphatic sense seems to take cover in the boundaries of the conceptual, concealed in the invisible, in the homeopathic, in the negativistic, in the margins, in criticism and resistance, in the detailistic, in privatistic privacy, in rhapsodies, in the everyday, in waste, in escapades (*escapade* literally means a “leap aside”), in escapism, even in its outer membranes, but also in the positive sense of its own appearance, that is to say, it has hidden itself within itself, and has concealed rather than revealed itself in related concepts, just like art itself, absolute music music, absolutely denied, negated, disowned.

And: look inside: make a sociological theatrical, scenic anthropological examination of the conditions of possibility for a rendition or performance, or of rendering it at all—here rendition, in the broader sense, is simultaneously the presence of that which appears, and a perforation (a performance). Looking at it this way, when would it be possible for a glance at a smartphone to become—a performance?

So what does music mean?

It was originally a word referring to a word’s resonant body.

Coupled with the appearance and expression of musically formed thought, with a gesture towards space and dance.

Today we would say that music is, in itself, interdisciplinary or transmedial. And we would not be wrong. It’s been the same for a thousand years.

People began to note music down, forcing it into a visual medium, so as to be able to compose, modify, form it: *poiesis*—the thing that's formed, bound into numbers, meters, epic narrative forms. At all events the great stories were told through music.

Hence the emphasis, the pathos, that is inherent in *any* music that touches us. Even in these days.

We are deeply moved by some favorite piece of music. And that's what it's for, what we crave.

Markets, ratings, sales: all function in obedience to our desires.

We are lulled to sleep; we live in constant sound, drama, and sentimentality.

Sound is always on hand; complete periods, styles, genres are there at the click of a mouse.

So what is the point of giving an art that's on the verge of abolishing itself, further fodder? Do we really need more of this?

Or do we need it in a different way, from another point of view, asking different questions?

For example, the question as to what music may actually still mean today, in the *emphatic* sense?

How, and through what means, could sound put itself into context, sensibly and adequately? When does music reflect back on itself, as for example when it makes us feel that we are hearing, when we listen?

It brings awareness.

It seems after all to give us investigative space—for artistic investigation—not a *turn* (*performative turn, auditive turn, linguistic turn, digital turn, ethic turn... turn... turn...*—like a genetically engineered mouse that can only move in circles...)—not that at all, but praxis and discussion all the same, description too, loud localization, where switching back is allowed, so as to pause for thought, demanding or claiming or proving nothing absolute (only *absolute* music at most), but dedicated to the possibility of subjecting us to the practice of differentiation and exploration, playfully, as if in a dream, coupled with pleasure, nothing that you can hold onto, but retaining all the same its discretion.