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Noise
The Political Economy of Music

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Chapter One
Listening

For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible.

Our science has always desired to monitor, measure, abstract, and castrate meaning, forgetting that life is full of noise and that death alone is silent: work noise, noise of man, and noise of beast. Noise bought, sold, or prohibited. Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise.

Today, our sight has dimmed; it no longer sees our future, having constructed a present made of abstraction, nonsense, and silence. Now we must learn to judge a society more by its sounds, by its art, and by its festivals, than by its statistics. By listening to noise, we can better understand where the folly of men and their calculations is leading us, and what hopes it is still possible to have.

In these opening pages, I would like to summarize the essential themes of this book. The supporting argument will follow.

Among sounds, music as an autonomous production is a recent invention. Even as late as the eighteenth century, it was effectively submerged within a larger totality. Ambiguous and fragile, ostensibly secondary and of minor importance, it has invaded our world and daily life. Today, it is unavoidable, as if, in a world now devoid of meaning, a background noise were increasingly necessary to give people a sense of security. And today, wherever there is music, there is money. Looking only at the numbers, in certain countries more money is spent on music than on reading, drinking, or keeping clean. Music,

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

It heralds, for it is *prophetic*. It has always been in its essence a herald of times to come. Thus, as we shall see, if it is true that *the political organization of the twentieth century is rooted in the political thought of the nineteenth, the latter is almost entirely present in embryonic form in the music of the eighteenth century*.

In the last twenty years, music has undergone yet another transformation. This mutation forecasts a change in social relations. Already, material production has been supplanted by the exchange of signs. Show business, the star system, and the hit parade signal a profound institutional and cultural colonization. Music makes mutations audible. It obliges us to invent categories and new dynamics to regenerate social theory, which today has become crystallized, entrapped, moribund.

Music, as a mirror of society, calls this truism to our attention: society is much more than economistic categories, Marxist or otherwise, would have us believe.

Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding. Today, no theorizing accomplished through language or mathematics can suffice any longer; it is incapable of accounting for what is essential in time—the qualitative and the fluid, threats and violence. In the face of the growing ambiguity of the signs being used and exchanged, the most well-established concepts are crumbling and every theory is wavering. The available representations of the economy, trapped within frameworks erected in the seventeenth century or, at latest, toward 1850, can neither predict, describe, nor even express what awaits us.

It is thus necessary to imagine radically new theoretical forms, in order to speak to new realities. Music, the organization of noise, is one such form. It reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society. *An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge*.

My intention here is thus not only to theorize *about* music, but to theorize *through* music. The result will be unusual and unacceptable conclusions about music and society, the past and the future. That is perhaps why music is so rarely listened to and why—as with every facet of social life for which the rules are breaking down (sexuality, the family, politics)—it is censored, people refuse to draw conclusions from it.

In the chapters that follow, music will be presented as originating in ritual murder, of which it is a simulacrum, a minor form of sacrifice heralding change. We will see that in that capacity it was an attribute of religious and political power, that it signified order, but also that it prefigured subversion. Then, after entering into commodity exchange, it participated in the growth and creation of

capital and the spectacle. Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualize a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialize its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalize its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning. Today, music heralds—regardless of what the property mode of capital will be—the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organization never yet theorized, of which self-management is but a distant echo.

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

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

Art bears the mark of its time. Does that mean that it is a clear image? A strategy for understanding? An instrument of struggle? In the codes that structure noise and its mutations we glimpse a new theoretical practice and reading: *establishing relations between the history of people and the dynamics of the economy on the one hand, and the history of the ordering of noise in codes on the other; predicting the evolution of one by the forms of the other; combining economics and aesthetics; demonstrating that music is prophetic and that social organization echoes it*.

This book is not an attempt at a multidisciplinary study, but rather *a call to theoretical indiscipline*, with an ear to sound matter as the herald of society. The risk of wandering off into poetics may appear great, since music has an essential metaphorical dimension: "For a genuine poet, metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept."[1]

Yet music is a credible metaphor of the real. It is neither an autonomous activity nor an automatic indicator of the economic infrastructure. It is a herald, for change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society. Undoubtedly, music is a play of mirrors in which every activity is reflected, defined, recorded, and distorted. If we look at one mirror, we see only an image of another. But at times a complex mirror game yields a vision that is rich, because unexpected and prophetic. At times it yields nothing but the swirl of the void.

Mozart and Bach reflect the bourgeoisie's dream of harmony better than and

prior to the whole of nineteenth-century political theory. There is in the operas of Cherubini a revolutionary zeal rarely attained in political debate. Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix say more about the liberatory dream of the 1960s than any theory of crisis. The standardized products of today's variety shows, hit parades, and show business are pathetic and prophetic caricatures of future forms of the repressive channeling of desire.

The cardinal importance of music in announcing a vision of the world is nothing new. For Marx, music is the "mirror of reality"; for Nietzsche, the "expression of truth";[2] for Freud, a "text to decipher." It is all of that, for it is one of the sites where mutations first arise and where science is secreted: "If you close your eyes, you lose the power of abstraction" (Michel Serres). It is all of that, even if it is only a detour on the way to addressing man about the works of man, to hearing and making audible his alienation, to sensing the unacceptable immensity of his future silence and the wide expanse of his fallowed creativity. Listening to music is listening to all noise, realizing that its appropriation and control is a reflection of power, that it is essentially political.

The Sounds of Power

Noise and Politics

More than colors and forms, it is sounds and their arrangements that fashion societies. With noise is born disorder and its opposite: the world. With music is born power and its opposite: subversion. In noise can be read the codes of life, the relations among men. Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it invades man's time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power, of the dream—Music. It is at the heart of the progressive rationalization of aesthetics, and it is a refuge for residual irrationality; it is a means of power and a form of entertainment.

Everywhere codes analyze, mark, restrain, train, repress, and channel the primitive sounds of language, of the body, of tools, of objects, of the relations to self and others.

All music, any organization of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality. It is what links a power center to its subjects, and thus, more generally, it is an attribute of power in all of its forms. Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localization of noise and its endowment with form. Among birds a tool for marking territorial boundaries, noise is inscribed from the start within the panoply of power. Equivalent to the articulation of a space, it indicates the limits of a territory and the way to make oneself heard within it, how to survive by drawing one's sustenance from it.[3] And since noise is the source of power, power has always listened to it with fascination. In an extraordinary and little known text, Leibnitz

describes in minute detail the ideal political organization, the "Palace of Marvels," a harmonious machine within which all of the sciences of time and every tool of power are deployed.

> These buildings will be constructed in such a way that the master of the house will be able to hear and see everything that is said and done without himself being perceived, by means of mirrors and pipes, which will be a most important thing for the State, and a kind of political confessional.[4]

Eavesdropping, censorship, recording, and surveillance are weapons of power. The technology of listening in on, ordering, transmitting, and recording noise is at the heart of this apparatus. The symbolism of the Frozen Words,[5] of the Tables of the Law, of recorded noise and eavesdropping—these are the dreams of political scientists and the fantasies of men in power: to listen, to memorize—this is the ability to interpret and control history, to manipulate the culture of a people, to channel its violence and hopes. Who among us is free of the feeling that this process, taken to an extreme, is turning the modern State into a gigantic, monopolizing noise emitter, and at the same time, a generalized eavesdropping device. Eavesdropping on what? In order to silence whom?

The answer, clear and implacable, is given by the theorists of totalitarianism. They have all explained, indistinctly, that it is necessary to ban subversive noise because it betokens demands for cultural autonomy, support for differences or marginality: a concern for maintaining tonalism, the primacy of melody, a distrust of new languages, codes, or instruments, a refusal of the abnormal—these characteristics are common to all regimes of that nature. They are direct translations of the political importance of cultural repression and noise control. For example, in the opinion of Zhdanov (according to a speech he gave in 1947 and never really disclaimed), music, an instrument of political pressure, must be tranquil, reassuring, and calm:

> And, indeed, we are faced with a very acute, although outwardly concealed struggle between two trends in Soviet music. One trend represents the healthy, progressive principle in Soviet music, based upon recognition of the tremendous role of the classical heritage, and, in particular, the traditions of the Russian musical school, upon the combination of lofty idea content in music, its truthfulness and realism, with profound, organic ties with the people and their music and songs—all this combined with a high degree of professional mastery. The other trend is that of a formalism alien to Soviet art; it is marked by rejection of the classical heritage under the cover of apparent novelty, by rejection of popular music, by rejection of service to the people, all for the sake of catering to the highly individualistic emotions of a small group of aesthetes. . . . Two extremely important tasks now face Soviet composers. The chief task is to *develop* and per-

> fect Soviet music. The second is to *protect* Soviet music from the infiltration of elements of bourgeois decadence. Let us not forget that the U.S.S.R. is now the guardian of universal musical culture, just as in all other respects it is the *mainstay of human civilization and culture against bourgeois decadence and decomposition of culture*. . . . Therefore, not only the musical, but also the political, ear of Soviet composers must be very keen. . . . Your task is to prove the superiority of Soviet music, *to create great Soviet music*.[6]

All of Zhdanov's remarks are strategic and military: music must be a bulwark against difference; for that, it must be powerful and protected.

We find the same concern, the same strategy and vocabulary, in National Socialist theorists. Stege, for example:

> If Negro jazz is banned, if enemies of the people compose intellectual music that is soulless and heartless, and find no audience in Germany, these decisions are not arbitrary. . . . What would have happened if the aesthetic evolution of German music had followed the course it was taking in the postwar period? The people would have lost all contact with art. It would have been spiritually uprooted, all the more so since it would find little satisfaction in degenerate and intellectual music that is better suited to being read than heard. The gulf between the people and art would have become an unbridgeable abyss, the theater and concert halls would have gone empty, the composers working counter to the soul of the people would have been left with only themselves for an audience, assuming they were still able to understand their own wild fancies.[7]

The economic and political dynamics of the industrialized societies living under parliamentary democracy also lead power to invest art, and to invest in art, without necessarily theorizing its control, as is done under dictatorship. Everywhere we look, the monopolization of the broadcast of messages, the control of noise, and the institutionalization of the silence of others assure the durability of power. Here, this channelization takes on a new, less violent, and more subtle form: laws of the political economy take the place of censorship laws. Music and the musician essentially become either objects of consumption like everything else, recuperators of subversion, or meaningless noise.

Musical distribution techniques are today contributing to the establishment of a system of eavesdropping and social surveillance. Muzak, the American corporation that sells standardized music, presents itself as the "security system of the 1970s" because it permits use of musical distribution channels for the circulation of orders. The monologue of standardized, stereotyped music accompanies and hems in a daily life in which in reality no one has the right to speak any more. Except those among the exploited who can still use their music to shout their suffering, their dreams of the absolute and freedom. What is called

music today is all too often only a disguise for the monologue of power. However, and this is the supreme irony of it all, never before have musicians tried so hard to communicate with their audience, and never before has that communication been so deceiving. Music now seems hardly more than a somewhat clumsy excuse for the self-glorification of musicians and the growth of a new industrial sector. Still, it is an activity that is essential for knowledge and social relations.

Science, Message and Time

"This remarkable absence of texts on music"[8] is tied to the impossibility of a general definition, to a fundamental ambiguity. "The science of the rational use of sounds, that is, those sounds organized as a scale"—that is how the *Littré*, at the end of the nineteenth century, defined music in order to reduce it to its harmonic dimension, to confuse it with a pure syntax. Michel Serres, on the contrary, points to the "extreme simplicity of the signals," "the message at its extreme, a ciphered mode of communicating universals" as a way of reminding us that beyond syntax there is meaning. But which meaning? Music is a "dialectical confrontation with the course of time."[9]

Science, message, and time—music is all of that simultaneously. It is, by its very presence, a mode of communication between man and his environment, a mode of social expression, and duration itself. It is therapeutic, purifying, enveloping, liberating; it is rooted in a comprehensive conception of knowledge about the body, in a pursuit of exorcism through noise and dance. But it is also past time to be produced, heard, and exchanged.

Thus it exhibits the three dimensions of all human works: joy for the creator, use-value for the listener, and exchange-value for the seller. In this seesaw between the various possible forms of human activity, music was, and still is, ubiquitous: "Art is everywhere, for artifice is at the heart of reality."[10]

Mirror

But even more than that, it is "the Dionysian mirror of the world" (Nietzsche).[11] "Person-to-person described in the language of things" (Pierre Schaeffer).

It is a mirror, because as a mode of immaterial production it relates to the structuring of theoretical paradigms, far ahead of concrete production. It is thus an immaterial recording surface for human works, the mark of something missing, a shred of utopia to decipher, information in negative, a collective *memory* allowing those who hear it to record their own personalized, specified, modeled meanings, affirmed in time with the beat—a collective memory of order and genealogies, the repository of the word and the social score.[12]

But it reflects a fluid reality. The only thing that primitive polyphony, classical counterpoint, tonal harmony, twelve-tone serial music, and electronic

music have in common is the principle of giving form to noise in accordance with changing syntactic structures. The history of music is the "Odyssey of a wandering, the adventure of its absences."[13]

However, the historical and musicological tradition would still, even today, like to retain an evolutionary vision of music, according to which it is in turn "primitive," "classical," and "modern." This schema is obsolete in all of the human sciences, in which the search for an evolution structured in a linear fashion is illusory. Of course, one can perceive strong beats, and we will even see later on that every major social rupture has been preceded by an essential mutation in the codes of music, in its mode of audition, and in its economy. For example, in Europe, during three different periods with three different styles (the liturgical music of the tenth century, the polyphonic music of the sixteenth century, and the harmony of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries), music found expression within a single, stable code and had stable modes of economic organization; correlatively, these societies were very clearly dominated by a single ideology. In the intervening periods, times of disorder and disarray prepared the way for what was to follow. Similarly, it seems as though a fourth (and shorter) period was ushered in during the 1950s, with a coherent style forged in the furnace of black American music; it is characterized by stable production based on the tremendous demand generated by the youth of the nations with rapidly expanding economies, and on a new economic organization of distribution made possible by recording.

Like the cattle herd of the Nuer discussed by Girard,[14] a herd that is the mirror and double of the people, music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does. It does not evolve in a linear fashion, but is caught up in the complexity and circularity of the movements of history.

This simultaneity of economic and musical evolution is everywhere present. We can, for example, toy with the idea that it is not by chance that the half-tone found acceptance during the Renaissance, at precisely the same time the merchant class was expanding; that it is not by coincidence that Russolo wrote his *Arte Dei Rumori* ("The Art of Noise") in 1913; that noise entered music and industry entered painting just before the outbursts and wars of the twentieth century, before the rise of social noise. Or again, that it is not by coincidence that the unrestricted use of large orchestras came at a time of enormous industrial growth; that with the disappearance of taboos there arose a music industry that takes the channelization of desire into commodities to such an extreme as to become a caricature; that rock and soul music emerged with the youth rebellion, only to dissolve in the cooptation of the young by light music programming; or finally, that the cautious and repressive form of musical production condoned today in countries with State-owned property designates "socialism" (if that is truly what it is) as simply the successor to capitalism, slightly more efficient and systematic in its normalization of men and its frantic quest for sterilized and monotonous perfection.

At a time when values are collapsing and commodities converse in place of people in an impoverished language (which in advertising is becoming increasingly musical), there is glaring evidence that the end of aesthetic codes is at hand. "The musical odyssey has come to a close, the graph is complete."[15]

Can we make the connections? Can we hear the crisis of society in the crisis of music? Can we understand music through its relations with money? Notwithstanding, the political economy of music is unique; only lately commodified, it soars in the immaterial. It is an economy without quantity. An aesthetics of repetition. That is why the political economy of music is not marginal, but premonitory. The noises of a society are in advance of its images and material conflicts.

Our music foretells our future. Let us lend it an ear.

Prophecy

Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things; it is not only the image of things, but the transcending of the everyday, the herald of the future. For this reason musicians, even when officially recognized, are dangerous, disturbing, and subversive; for this reason it is impossible to separate their history from that of repression and surveillance.

Musician, priest, and officiant were in fact a single function among ancient peoples. Poet laureate of power, herald of freedom—the musician is at the same time within society, which protects, purchases, and finances him, and outside it, when he threatens it with his visions. Courtier and revolutionary: for those who care to hear the irony beneath the praise, his stage presence conceals a break. When he is reassuring, he alienates; when he is disturbing, he destroys; when he speaks too loudly, power silences him. Unless in doing so he is announcing the new clamor and glory of powers in the making.

A creator, he changes the world's reality. This is sometimes done consciously, as with Wagner, writing in 1848, the same year the *Communist Manifesto* was published:

> I will destroy the existing order of things, which parts this one mankind into hostile nations, into powerful and weak, privileged and outcast, rich and poor; for it makes unhappy men of all. I will destroy the order of things that turns millions into slaves of a few, and these

> few into slaves of their own might, own riches. I will destroy this order of things, that cuts enjoyment off from labor.[16]

A superb modern rallying cry by a man who, after the barricades of Dresden, would adopt "the attitude of the rebel who betrayed the rebellion" (Adorno). Another example is Berlioz's call to insurrection:

> Music, today in the flush of youth, is emancipated, free: it does as it pleases. Many of the old rules are no longer binding: they were made by inattentive observers or ordinary spirits for other ordinary spirits. New needs of the spirit, the heart, and the sense of hearing are imposing new endeavors and, in some cases, even infractions of the old laws.

Rumblings of revolution. Sounds of competing powers. Clashing noises, of which the musician is the mysterious, strange, and ambiguous forerunner—after having been long emprisoned, a captive of power.

The Musician before Capital

The musician, like music, is ambiguous. He plays a double game. He is simultaneously *musicus* and *cantor*, reproducer and prophet. If an outcast, he sees society in a political light. If accepted, he is its historian, the reflection of its deepest values. He speaks of society and he speaks against it. This duality was already present before capital arrived to impose its own rules and prohibitions. The distinction between musician and nonmusician—which separates the group from the speech of the sorcerer—undoubtedly represents one of the very first divisions of labor, one of the very first social differentiations in the history of humanity, even predating the social hierarchy. Shaman, doctor, musician. He is one of society's first gazes upon itself; he is one of the first catalyzers of violence and myth. I will show later that the musician is an integral part of the sacrifice process, a channeler of violence, and that the primal identity *magic-music-sacrifice-rite* expresses the musician's position in the majority of civilizations: simultaneously *excluded* (relegated to a place near the bottom of the social hierarchy) and *superhuman* (the genius, the adored and deified star). Simultaneously a separator and an integrator.

In the civilizations of antiquity, the musician was often a slave, sometimes an untouchable. Even as late as the twentieth century, Islam prohibited believers from eating at the same table as a musician. In Persia, music was for a long time an activity restricted to prostitutes or, at least, considered shameful. But at the same time, the ancient religions produced a caste of musician-priests attached to the service of the temple, and mythology endowed musicians with supernatural and civilizing powers. Orpheus domesticated animals and transplanted trees; Amphion attracted fish; Arion built the walls of Thebes. The medicinal powers of music made musicians into therapists: Pythagoras and Empedocles cured the possessed, and Ismenias cured sciatica. David cured Saul's madness by playing the harp.

Despite the absence of an economic hierarchy in these societies, music was inscribed with precision into their systems of power. It is a reflection of the political hierarchy. So much so that many musicologists reduce the history of music to the history of the music of the princes.

Of course, in wealthy monarchies an orchestra has always been a display of power. In China, the musical code comprised five words: Palace, Deliberation, Horn, Manifestation, Wings.[17] Words of power. Words of subversion. What is more, in China the number and arrangement of the musicians indicated the position in the nobility of the lord who owned the orchestra: a square for the emperor, three rows for high dignitaries. The emperor authorized the forms of music that would assure good order within society, and prohibited those that might trouble the people. In Greece, even though there was no state supervision of music (with the exception of Sparta), and in Rome, where the emperors ensured their popularity by financing popular entertainment, music was essential to the workings of power. Throughout antiquity, then, we find the same concern for controlling music—the implicit or explicit channeler of violence, the regulator of society. Montesquieu understood this; he stated that for the Greeks music was a necessary pleasure—necessary for social pacification—and a mode of exchange—the only one compatible with good morals. He explicitly contrasted music to homosexuality and proclaimed their interchangeability:

> Why should music be pitched upon as preferable to any other entertainment? It is, because of all sensible pleasures, there is none that less corrupts the soul. We blush to read in Plutarch that the Thebans, in order to soften the manners of their youth, authorized by law a passion that ought to be proscribed by all nations.[18]

But a subversive strain of music has always managed to survive, subterranean and pursued, the inverse image of this political channelization: popular music, an instrument of the ecstatic cult, an outburst of uncensored violence. I am referring to the Dionysian rites in Greece and Rome, and to other cults originating in Asia Minor. Here, music is a locus of subversion, a transcendence of the body. At odds with the official religions and centers of power, these rites gathered marginals together in forest clearings and caves: women, slaves, expatriates. At times society tolerated them, or attempted to integrate them into the official religion; but at other times it brutally repressed them. There was a well-known incident in Rome that ended with hundreds receiving the death sentence.

Music, the quintessential mass activity, like the crowd, is simultaneously a threat and a necessary source of legitimacy; trying to channel it is a risk that every system of power must run.

Later, Charlemagne would forge the cultural and political unity of his kingdom by imposing the universal practice of the Gregorian chant, resorting to armed force to accomplish that end. In Milan, which remained faithful to the Ambrosian liturgy, hymnals were burned in the public square. A vagabond until the end of the thirteenth century, the musician subsequently became a domestic.

Vagabond

It took centuries for music to enter commodity exchange. Throughout the Middle Ages, the jongleur remained outside society; the Church condemned him, accusing him of paganism and magical practices. His itinerant life-style made him a highly unrespectable figure, akin to the vagabond or the highwayman.

The term *jongleur*, derived from the Latin *joculare* ("to entertain"), designated both musicians (instrumentalists and vocalists) and other entertainers (mimes, acrobats, buffoons, etc.). At the time, these functions were inseparable. The jongleur had no fixed employment; he moved from place to place, offering his services in private residences. He *was* music and the spectacle of the body. He alone created it, carried it with him, and completely organized its circulation within society.

The consumers of music belonged to every social class: peasants during the cyclic festivals and at weddings; artisans and journeymen at patron-saint celebrations; and at annual banquets, the bourgeoisie, nobles. A jongleur could very well play at a country wedding one night, and the next evening in the chateau, where he would eat and sleep with the servants. The same musical message made the rounds, and at each of these occasions the repertory was identical. Popular airs were performed at court; melodies composed in the palaces made it out to the villages and, in more or less modified form, became peasant songs. In the same way, the troubadours often wrote their poems to country airs.

Except for religious music, written music had not yet appeared. The jongleurs played from memory, an unvaried selection of melodies of their own composition, either very old peasant dances drawn from all over Europe and the Near East, or songs by noblemen or men of letters. If a melody was popular, numerous texts were based on it. All these styles functioned essentially within the same structures and were used interchangeably by the jongleurs, who effected a permanent circulation between popular music and court music.

In this precapitalist world in which music was an essential form of the social circulation of information, the jongleurs could be utilized for purposes of political propaganda. As an example, Richard the Lionhearted hired jongleurs to compose songs to his glory and to sing them in the public squares on market days. In wartime, jongleurs were often hired to compose songs against the enemy. Conversely, independent jongleurs composed songs about current events and satirical songs, and kings would forbid them to sing about certain delicate subjects, under threat of imprisonment.

We should, however, note two distinctive characteristics of the court musicians: first, certain highly learned and abstract texts of the troubadours were not sung in the villages. Second, only the courts had the means to hire, for major occasions, orchestras of jongleurs, composed of five or six musicians.

But with these two exceptions, music remained the same in the village, the marketplace, and the courts of the lords throughout the Middle Ages. The circulation of music was neither elitist nor monopolistic of creativity. The feudal world, with its polyphony, remained a world of circulation in which music in daily life was inseparable from lived time, in which it was active and not something to be watched.

In the fourteenth century, everything changed. On the one hand, church music became secularized and autonomous from the chant; it started to use an increasing number of instruments, incorporated melodies of popular and profane origin, and stopped relying exclusively on its Gregorian sources. On the other hand, the techniques of written and polyphonic music spread from court to court and distanced the courts from the people: nobles would buy musicians trained in church choirs and order them to play solemn songs to celebrate their victories, light songs for entertainment, orchestrated dances, etc. Musicians became professionals bound to a single master, *domestics*, producers of spectacles exclusively reserved for a minority.

Domestic

Within three centuries, from the fourteenth century to the sixteenth, the courts had banished the jongleurs, the voice of the people, and no longer listened to anything but scored music performed by salaried musicians. Power had taken hold, becoming hierarchical and distant. A shift in vocabulary confirms this mutation: the term *jongleur* was no longer used to designate a musician, but rather *ménestrel* ["minstrel"] or *ménestrier* [also "minstrel"], from the Latin *ministerialis*, "functionary." The musician was no longer a nomad. He had settled down, attached to a court, or was the resident of a town. When they were not domestics in the service of a lord, the minstrels organized themselves into guilds modeled after those of craftsmen or merchants, with a patron saint (St. Julian of the Minstrels), annual banquets, a retirement and disability fund, and dues set by municipal legislation. In exchange, they demanded and won a monopoly over marriages and ceremonies, shutting out the jongleurs, who were independent and often nonprofessional musicians. Since the courts had the

means to finance resident musicians whom they held under exclusive control, the musicians acquired a new social position in Western society.

Until that time, the musician had been a free craftsman at one with the people and worked indifferently at popular festivals or at the court of the lord. Afterward, he would have to sell himself entirely and exclusively to a single social class.

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697-1773), who became flute-master to the Prussian king Frederick II after performing at town fairs, changing from jongleur to minstrel, gives a marvelous description of his experience of this mutation—from a time when music was a job like any other to a time when it was the occupation of specialists. From a time of the vagabond to a time of the domestic:

> My father was a blacksmith in the village. . . . In my ninth year, he began my training in the smithy's trade; even on his deathbed he declared that I had to continue in the trade. But . . . as soon as my father died, two brothers, one of whom was a tailor and the other a musician in the court of the town of Merseburg, offered to take me in and teach me their professions; I was free to choose which I preferred to adopt. From the age of eight, when I knew not a note of music, I insisted on accompanying my brother, who served as village musician in the peasant festivals, on a German bass viol, and this music, bad as it was, dominated my preference to such a degree that all I wanted was to be a musician. So I left for my apprenticeship in August of the year 1708, in Merseburg, under the above-mentioned Justus Quantz. . . . The first instrument I had to learn was the violin; I appear to have taken great pleasure in it and to have shown great skill. Then came the oboe and the trumpet. I worked especially hard on these three instruments during my three years of apprenticeship. As for the other instruments, like the cornet, the trombone, the hunting horn, the recorder, the bassoon, the German bass viol, the viola da gamba, and who knows how many others that a good musician must be able to play, I did not neglect them. It is true that, because of the number of different instruments one has in hand, one remains something of a bungler. However, with time one acquires that knowledge of their properties which is nearly indispensable for composers, especially those who write church music. The ducal chapel of Merseburg was not exactly rich at the time. We had to perform in church and at meals as well as at the court. When I finally finished my apprenticeship in December of the year 1713, I played several solos by Corelli and Telemann for the examination. My master excused me from three-quarters of a year of apprenticeship, but on the condition that I serve him a year longer in return for only half a journeyman's allowance. In March of 1718, the "Polish Chapel" was founded, which was to have twelve members. Since eleven members had already been chosen and

> they needed an oboe player, I applied and, after an examination before the chapel master, Baron von Seyferitz, I was engaged into service. The annual salary was 150 taler, with free lodging in Poland. . . . I set about seriously studying the transverse flute, which I had also worked on: for I had no fear it would bring me animosity in the circle I was in. As a result of this new occupation, I began to think more seriously about composing. At that time there were not many pieces written specifically for the flute. . . . I left Dresden in December 1741, at which time I entered the king of Prussia's service. . . . [19]

Behind a mutation in the status of the musician, a rupture between two types of music.

The relations of reversibility between popular music and court music did not, however, end suddenly. Inspiration continued to circulate, to move between the classes. Since the capitalist system did not immediately replace the feudal system, the rupture between the two musical organizations was neither sudden nor total.

On the one hand, court musicians continued to draw from the popular repertory: they composed motets or masses based on songs from the streets, but they were unrecognizable in their polyphonic complexity. In the sixteenth century, collections of printed scores destined for customers in the courts—music's debut in the commercial world—offered orchestrations of popular dances and songs: "collections of songs both rustic and musical."

On the other hand, the jongleur did not disappear, and has not even to this day. Relegated to the villages, he suffered a decline in social status: he became the village minstrel, an ambulant musician who was often a beggar, or simply an amateur who knew how to sing or play the violin. But popular music no longer received much from music of the court, whose composers wrote works exclusively on demand, in particular for important events such as royal weddings, victory celebrations, coronations, funerals, or simply the visit of a foreign prince. One or two decades after its invention by the Florentine Camerata, opera became the most prominent sign of princely prestige. Every prince's marriage had its own original opera, the prologue of which would include an aria in praise of the sponsoring prince, a dedicatory epistle.

The musician, then, was from that day forward economically bound to a machine of power, political or commercial, which paid him a salary for creating what it needed to affirm its legitimacy. Like the notes of tonal music on the staff, he was cramped, chaneled. A domestic, his livelihood depended on the goodwill of the prince. The constraints on his work became imperative, immodest, similar to those a valet or cook was subjected to at the time. For example, the consistory of Arnstadt, on February 21, 1706, reproached the organist of its new church, Johann Sebastian Bach, for his private behavior:

Actum: The Organist of the New Church, Bach, is interrogated as to where he has lately been for so long and from whom he obtained leave to go.

Ille: He has been to Lübeck in order to comprehend one thing and another about his art, but had asked leave beforehand from the Superintendent.

Dominus Superintendens: He had asked only for four weeks, but had stayed about four times as long . . .

Nos: Reprove him for having hitherto made many curious variations in the chorale, and mingled many strange tones in it, and for the fact that the Congregation had been confused by it. In the future, if he wished to introduce a *tonus peregrinus*, he was told to hold it out, and not to turn too quickly to something else, or, as had hitherto been his habit, even play a *tonus contrarius*.[20]

A petty and impossible control to which the musician would be unceasingly subjected, even if in the bourgeois world of representation that control would be more subtle, more abstract than that which plagued Bach his entire life.

For all of that, however, the musician is not a mirror of the productive relations of his time. Gesualdo and Bach do not reflect a single ideological system any more than John Cage or the Tangerine Dream. They are, and remain, witnesses of the impossible imprisonment of the visionary by power, totalitarian or otherwise.

Understanding through Music

If we wish to elaborate a theory of the relations between music and money, we must first look at the existing theories of music. Disappointment. They are a succession of innumerable typologies and are never innocent. From Aristotle's three kinds of music—"ethical" (useful for education), "of action" (which influences even those who do not know how to perform it), and "cathartic" (the aim of which is to perturb and then appease)[21]—to Spengler's distinction between "Apollonian" music (modal, monodic, with an oral tradition) and "Faustian" music (tonal, polyphonic, with a written tradition), all we find are nonfunctional categories. Today, the frenzy with which musical theories, general surveys, encyclopedias, and typologies are elaborated and torn down crystallizes the spectacle of the past. They are nothing more than signs of the anxiety of an age confronted with the disappearance of a world, the dissolution of an aesthetic, and the slipping away of knowledge. They are no more than collections of classifications with no real significance, a final effort to preserve linear order for a material in which time takes on a new dimension, inaccessible to measurement. Roland Barthes is correct when he writes that "if we examine the

current practice of music criticism, it is evident that the work (or its performance) is always translated with the poorest of linguistic categories: the adjective."[22]

So which path will lead us through the immense forest of noise with which history presents us? How should we try to understand what the economy has made of music and what economy music foreshadows?

Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them. If it is deceptive to conceptualize a succession of musical codes corresponding to a succession of economic and political relations, it is because time traverses music and music gives meaning to time.

In this book, I would like to trace the political economy of music as a succession of *orders* (in other words, differences) done violence by *noises* (in other words, the calling into question of differences) that are *prophetic* because they create new orders, unstable and changing. The simultaneity of multiple codes, the variable overlappings between periods, styles, and forms, prohibits any attempt at a genealogy of music, a hierarchical archeology, or a precise ideological pinpointing of particular musicians. But it is possible to discern who among them are innovators and heralds of worlds in the making. For example, Bach alone explored almost the entire range of possibilities inherent in the tonal system, and more. In so doing, he heralded two centuries of industrial adventure. What must be constructed, then, is more like a map, a structure of interferences and dependencies between society and its music.

In this book, I will attempt to trace the history of their relations with the world of production, exchange, and desire; the slow degradation of use into exchange, of representation into repetition; and the prophecy, announced by today's music, of the potential for a new political and cultural order.

Briefly, we will see that it is possible to distinguish on our map three zones, three stages, three strategic usages of music by power.

In one of these zones, it seems that music is used and produced in the ritual in an attempt to make people *forget* the general violence; in another, it is employed to make people *believe* in the harmony of the world, that there is order in exchange and legitimacy in commercial power; and finally, there is one in which it serves to *silence*, by mass-producing a deafening, syncretic kind of music, and censoring all other human noises.

Make people Forget, make them Believe, Silence them. In all three cases, music is a tool of power: of ritual power when it is a question of making people forget the fear of violence; of representative power when it is a question of making them believe in order and harmony; and of bureaucratic power when it is a question of silencing those who oppose it. Thus music localizes and specifies power, because it marks and regiments the rare noises that cultures, in their

normalization of behavior, see fit to authorize. Music accounts for them. It makes them audible.

When power wants to make people *forget*, music is ritual *sacrifice*, the scapegoat; when it wants them to *believe*, music is enactment, *representation*; when it wants to *silence* them, it is reproduced, normalized, *repetition*. Thus it heralds the subversion of both the existing code and the power in the making, well before the latter is in place.

Today, in embryonic form, beyond repetition, lies freedom: more than a new music, a fourth kind of musical practice. It heralds the arrival of new social relations. Music is becoming *composition*.

Representation against fear, repetition against harmony, composition against normality. It is this interplay of concepts that music invites us to enter, in its capacity as the herald of organizations and their overall political strategies—noise that destroys orders to structure a new order. A highly illuminating foundation for social analysis and a resurgence of inquiry about man.

For Fear, Clarity, Power, and Freedom correspond in their succession to the four stages Carlos Castaneda distinguishes in his mysterious description of the initiatory teachings of his master, the sorcerer Don Juan Mateus. This convergence is perhaps more than coincidental, if music is a means of understanding, like the unbalanced relation to ecstasy created by drugs. Is the sorcerer speaking of drugs when he explains that:

> When a man starts to learn, he is never clear about his objectives. His purpose is faulty; his intent is vague. He hopes for rewards that will never materialize, for he knows nothing of the hardships of learning. He slowly begins to learn—bit by bit at first, then in big chunks. And his thoughts soon clash. What he learns is never what he pictured or imagined, and so he begins to be afraid. Learning is never what one expects. Every step of learning is a new task, and the fear the man is experiencing begins to mount mercilessly, unyieldingly. . . . This is the time when a man has no more fears, no more impatient clarity of mind—a time when all his power is in check. . . . If a man . . . lives his fate through, he can then be called a man of knowledge, if only for the brief moment when he succeeds in fighting off his last, invincible enemy. That moment of clarity, power, and knowledge is enough.[23]

Don Juan's knowledge by peyote is reminiscent of the prophetic knowledge of the shaman, of the ritual function of the pharmakon. And of the interference between stages in the deployment of systems of music.

Music, like drugs, is intuition, a path to knowledge. A path? No—a battlefield.

Chapter Two
Sacrificing

Festival and Penitence, Violence and Harmony.[24] In an intense instability of powers, two processions, two camps, two lives, two relations to the World rumble and vie around a center of light and a well of darkness. Around them, the day-to-day labors of men, a strange round dance, boisterous child's play by the door to the church, and a cortege of penitents mark the significant figures of a secret dynamic—that of music and power.

For concealed behind the enactment of the conflict between religious order and its transgression in Festival lies every conceivable order. The poor wear masks and revel near a paltry tabernacle, while the rich observe Lent and flaunt their money by giving alms to the beggars arrayed outside the door to the church. In the Carnival parade, a musician, tragic and disquieting in the mask that disfigures him, stands beside men playing dice. Harmony and Dissonance. Order and Disorder. In this symbolic confrontation between joyous misery and austere power, between misfortune diverted into festival and wealth costumed in penitence, Brueghel not only gives us a vision of the world, he also makes it audible—perhaps for the first time in Western art. He makes audible a meditation on noise in human conflict, on the danger that festival will be crushed by a triumph of silence.

A meditation? A prophecy. Ambiguous and manifold. Open to all interpretations—and I would like to read it as a forecast of the path that music, trapped in the political economy, was to follow up to the present day.

Carnival's Quarrel with Lent is a battle between two fundamental political strategies, two antagonistic cultural and ideological organizations: Festival,