

Recording began as a reproduction of the live act. Yet, today, the recorded event has all but displaced the live event as primary. Glenn Gould's intervention within classical music was already well under way within rock and pop. As soon as rock performers discovered the magic of the recording studio, live performance became, at best, a simulation of the recorded instance. If the classical tradition resisted this move and rock and pop were ambivalent about it, new musics rooted in electronics positively embraced it. Disco, dub, HipHop, House, Techno—all of these musics begin with and are built from samples, slices of recorded sound.

With the rise of a musical culture built around recording and sampling, traditional conceptions of the author and the work began to come under strain. As Chris Cutler and others note, the origins of the modern notion of the "author" and the "work" are coincident with the origin of capitalism. An author is the producer of a unique, fixed, and bounded work that bears his or her signature; and copyright laws insure and protect that property. As soon as recording becomes primary, the recorded entity begins to live a public life of its own apart from its author and becomes available for appropriation and reinscription by others. It's no surprise, then, that HipHop, for example, has been plagued by litigation concerning copyright infringement. In Cutler's view (one shared by many HipHop producers and musicians such as John Oswald and Negativland), copyright laws are no longer appropriate to a new technological and musical setting that makes the entire archive of recorded sound available for use and reuse. Hence the culture of the remix, which appropriates and alters an "original recording," itself often a remix, producing a *mise en abîme* that endlessly defers any originary instance.³

Musical technologies are constantly reappropriated and redirected to ends and uses other than those originally intended. The "electric guitar" began as an amplified guitar and ended up as an entirely different instrument. The multi-track tape recorder was soon taken out of the hands of the engineer and placed into the hands of the composer. In the hands of the HipHop DJ, the turntable was transformed from a "record player" into a live sampler and percussion instrument. And the computer glitch, once an unwanted digital error, has become desirable sound material for many producers of contemporary electronica. Like the recorded sample, musical technology as a whole ceases to have any given or fundamental use value, but instead is laid open to endless transformation and redirection.

NOTES

1. See chap. 53.
2. See Simon Reynolds, "Post-Rock," chap. 52. Also see Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987) and Theodor Gracyk, *Rhythm & Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
3. See also Simon Reynolds, "Versus: The Science of Remixology," *Pulse!* (May 1996); "In the Mix: DJ Culture and Remixerology, 1993–97," in *Generation Ecstasy* (Boston: Little Brown, 1998); and Christoph Cox, "Versions, Dubs, and Remixes: Realism and Rightness in Aesthetic Interpretation," in *Interpretation and Its Objects: Studies in the Philosophy of Michael Krausz*, ed. Andreea Deciu Ritivoi (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003).

The Prospects of Recording

GLENN GOULD

Glenn Gould (1932–1982) was among the leading classical pianists of the 20th century. A child prodigy, he performed with the Toronto Symphony at the age of 16 and, at 22, signed a recording contract with Columbia Masterworks. Later that year (1955), he made a recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* that quickly became an international bestseller. Over the next decade, Gould toured Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States, performing with the world's greatest orchestras. Then, in 1964, he abruptly announced his retirement from public performance. Gould's withdrawal from the stage was prompted in part by his feeling that public performance was demeaning, and in part by his desire to dedicate more of his time to writing and producing radio documentaries. Yet it was also driven by his view that the live concert had been eclipsed by audio recording, which could produce perfect, ideal performances that highlighted the work itself rather than the performer and his or her virtuosity. In this 1966 essay, Gould explores the vast changes in musical ontology, phenomenology, production, and listening brought about by audio recording.

In an unguarded moment some months ago, I predicted that the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by electronic media. It had not occurred to me that this statement represented a particularly radical pronouncement. Indeed, I regarded it almost as self-evident truth and, in any case, as defining only one of the peripheral effects occasioned by developments in the electronic age. But never has a statement of mine been so widely quoted—or so hotly disputed [...].

A Change of Acoustic

If we were to take an inventory of those musical predilections most characteristic of our generation, we would discover that almost every item on such a list could be attributed directly to the influence of the recording. First of all, today's listeners

have come to associate musical performance with sounds possessed of characteristics which two generations ago were neither available to the profession nor wanted by the public—characteristics such as analytic clarity, immediacy, and indeed almost tactile proximity. Within the last few decades the performance of music has ceased to be an occasion, requiring an excuse and a tuxedo, and accorded, when encountered, an almost religious devotion; music has become a pervasive influence in our lives, and as our dependence upon it has increased, our reverence for it has, in a certain sense, declined. Two generations ago, concert-goers preferred that their occasional experience of music be fitted with an acoustic splendor, cavernously reverberant if possible, and pioneer recording ventures attempted to simulate the cathedral-like sound which the architects of that day tried to capture for the concert hall—the cathedral of the symphony. The more intimate terms of our experience with recordings have since suggested to us an acoustic with a direct and impartial presence, one with which we can live in our homes on rather casual terms [. . .]

An Untapped Repertoire

From a musicological point of view, the effort of the recording industry on behalf of Renaissance and pre-Renaissance music is of even greater value. For the first time, the musicologist rather than the performer has become the key figure in the realization of this untapped repertoire; and in place of sporadic and, often as not, historically inaccurate concert performances of a Palestrina mass or a Josquin chanson, or whichever isolated items were heretofore considered approachable and not too offensively pretonal, the record archivists have documented a new perspective for the history of music.

The performer is inevitably challenged by the stimulus of this unexplored repertoire. He is also encouraged by the nature of studio techniques to appropriate characteristics that have tended for a century or two to be outside his private preserve. His contact with the repertoire he records is often the result of an intense analysis from which he prepares an interpretation of the composition. Conceivably, for the rest of his life he will never again take up or come in contact with that particular work. In the course of a lifetime spent in the recording studio he will necessarily encounter a wider range of repertoire than could possibly be his lot in the concert hall. The current archival approach of many recording companies demands a complete survey of the works of a given composer, and performers are expected to undertake productions of enormous scope which they would be inclined to avoid in the concert hall, and in many cases to investigate repertoire economically or acoustically unsuitable for public audition—the complete piano works of Mozart which Walter Gieseking undertook for Angel, for instance.

But most important, this archival responsibility enables the performer to establish a contact with a work which is very much like that of the composer's own relation to it. It permits him to encounter a particular piece of music and to analyze and dissect it in a most thorough way, to make it a vital part of his life for a relatively brief period, and then to pass on to some other challenge and to the satisfaction of some other curiosity. Such a work will no longer confront him with a daily challenge. His analysis of the composition will not become distorted by overexposure, and his performance top-heavy with interpretative "niceties" intended to woo the

upper balcony, as is almost inevitably the case with the overplayed piece of concert repertoire [. . .]

The Splendid Splice

Of all the techniques peculiar to the studio recording, none has been the subject of such controversy as the tape splice. With due regard to the not-so-unusual phenomenon of a recording consisting of single-take sonata or symphony movements, the great majority of present-day recordings consist of a collection of tape segments varying in duration upward from one twentieth of a second. Superficially, the purpose of the splice is to rectify performance mishaps. Through its use, the wayward phrase, the insecure quaver, can, except when prohibited by "overhang" or similar circumstances of acoustical imbalance, be remedied by minute retakes of the offending moment or of a splice segment of which it forms a part. The antirecord lobby proclaims splicing a dishonest and dehumanizing technique that purportedly eliminates those conditions of chance and accident upon which, it can safely be conceded, certain of the more unsavory traditions of Western music are founded. The lobbyists also claim that the common splice sabotages some unified architectural conception which they assume the performer possesses.

It seems to me that two facts challenge these objections. The first is that many of the supposed virtues of the performer's "unified conception" relate to nothing more inherently musical than the "running scared" and "go-for-broke" psychology built up through decades of exposure to the *loggione* of Parma and their like. Claudio Arrau was recently quoted by the English journal *Records and Recordings* to the effect that he would not authorize the release of records derived from a live performance since, in his opinion, public auditions provoke stratagems which, having been designed to fill acoustical and psychological requirements of the concert situation, are irritating and antiarchitectural when subjected to repeated playbacks. The second fact is that one cannot ever splice style—one can only splice segments which relate to a conviction about style. And whether one arrives at such a conviction pretaping or posttaping (another of the time-transcending luxuries of recording: the posttaping reconsideration of performance), its existence is what matters, not the means by which it is effected.

A recent personal experience will perhaps illustrate an interpretative conviction obtained posttaping. A year or so ago, while recording the concluding fugues from volume 1 of *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, I arrived at one of Bach's celebrated contrapuntal obstacle courses, the fugue in A minor. This is a structure even more difficult to realize on the piano than are most of Bach's fugues, because it consists of four intense voices that determinedly occupy a register in the center octaves of the keyboard—the area of the instrument in which truly independent voice leading is most difficult to establish. In the process of recording this fugue we attempted eight takes. Two of these at the time were regarded, according to the producer's notes, as satisfactory. Both of them, number 6 and number 8, were complete takes requiring no inserted splice—by no means a special achievement, since the fugue's duration is only a bit over two minutes. Some weeks later, however, when the results of this session were surveyed in an editing cubicle and when takes 6 and 8 were played several times in rapid alternation, it became apparent that both

had a defect of which we had been quite unaware in the studio: both were monotonous.

Each take had used a different style of phrase delineation in dealing with the thirty-one-note subject of this fugue—a license entirely consistent with the improvisatory liberties of baroque style. Take 6 had treated it in a solemn, legato, rather pompous fashion, while in take 8 the fugue subject was shaped in a prevailingly staccato manner which led to a general impression of skittishness. Now, the fugue in A minor is given to concentrations of strettos and other devices for imitation at close quarters, so that the treatment of the subject determines the atmosphere of the entire fugue. Upon most sober reflection, it was agreed that neither the Teutonic severity of take 6 nor the unwarranted jubilation of take 8 could be permitted to represent our best thoughts on this fugue. At this point someone noted that, despite the vast differences in character between the two takes, they were performed at an almost identical tempo (a rather unusual circumstance, to be sure, since the prevailing tempo is almost always the result of phrase delineation), and it was decided to turn this to advantage by creating one performance to consist alternately of takes 6 and 8.

Once this decision had been made, it was a simple matter to expedite it. It was obvious that the somewhat overbearing posture of take 6 was entirely suitable for the opening exposition as well as for the concluding statements of the fugue, while the more effervescent character of take 8 was a welcome relief in the episodic modulations with which the center portion of the fugue is concerned. And so two rudimentary splices were made, one which jumps from take 6 to take 8 in bar 14 and another which at the return to A minor (I forget in which measure, but you are invited to look for it) returns as well to take 6. What had been achieved was a performance of this particular fugue far superior to anything that we could at the time have done in the studio. There is, of course, no reason why such a diversity of bowing styles could not have been applied to this fugue subject as part of a regulated *a priori* conception. But the necessity of such diversity is unlikely to become apparent during the studio session, just as it is unlikely to occur to a performer operating under concert conditions. By taking advantage of the posttaping afterthought, however, one can very often transcend the limitations that performance imposes upon the imagination.

When the performer makes use of this postperformance editorial decision, his role is no longer compartmentalized. In a quest for perfection, he sets aside the hazards and compromises of his trade. As an interpreter, as a go-between serving both audience and composer, the performer has always been, after all, someone with a specialist's knowledge about the realization or actualization of notated sound symbols. It is, then, perfectly consistent with such experience that he should assume something of an editorial role. Inevitably, however, the functions of the performer and of the tape editor begin to overlap. Indeed, in regard to decisions such as that taken in the case of the abovementioned A-minor fugue, it would be impossible for the listener to establish at which point the authority of the performer gave way to that of the producer and the tape editor, just as even the most observant cinema goer cannot ever be sure whether a particular sequence of shots derives from circumstances occasioned by the actor's performance, the exigencies of the cutting room, or the director's *a priori* scheme. That the judgment of the performer no longer solely determines the musical result is inevitable. It is, how-

ever, more than compensated by the overwhelming sense of power which editorial control makes available to him [. . .]

The "Live" Performance on Records

Before examining the larger ramifications for the future of recording, I should like to consider here some hardy strains of argument that perennially decry the influence of recording upon standard items of the repertoire and upon the hierarchy of the musical profession.

These arguments sometimes overlap each other, and it can become rather difficult to detect the area of protest with which each is concerned. However, under a general heading of "humanitarian idealism" one might list three distinguishable subspecies, which can be summarized as follows: (1) An argument for aesthetic morality: Elisabeth Schwarzkopf appends a missing high C to a tape of *Tristan* otherwise featuring Kirsten Flagstad, and indignant purists, for whom music is the last blood sport, howl her down, furious at being deprived a kill. (2) Eye versus ear orientation: a doctrine that celebrates the existence of a mystical communication between concert performer and public audience (the composer being seldom mentioned). There is a vaguely scientific pretension to this argument, and its proponents are given to pronouncements on "natural" acoustics and related phenomena. (3) Automation: a crusade which musicians' union leaders currently share with typesetters and which they affirm with the fine disdain of featherbedding firemen for the diesel locomotive. In the midst of a proliferation of recorded sound which virtually erases earlier listening patterns, the American Federation of Musicians promotes that challenging motto "Live Music Is Best"—a judgment with the validity of a "Win with Willkie" sticker on the windshield of a well-preserved '39 LaSalle.

As noted, these arguments tend to overlap and are often joined together in celebration of occasions that afford opportunity for a rearguard holding action. Among such occasions, none has proved more useful than the recent spate of recorded "live" performances—events which straddle two worlds and are at home in neither. These events affirm the humanistic ideal of performance; they eschew (so we are told!) splices and other mechanical adventures, and hence are decidedly "moral"; they usually manage to suppress a sufficient number of pianissimo chords by an outbreak of bronchitis from the floor to advertise their "live"-ness and confirm the faith of the heroically unautomated.

They have yet another function, which is, in fact, the essence of their appeal for the short-sellers: they provide documentation pertaining to a specific date. They are forever represented as occasions indisputably of and for their time. They spurn that elusive time-transcending objective which is always within the realization of recorded music. For all time, they can be examined, criticized, or praised as documents securely located in time, and about which, because of that assurance, a great deal of information and, in a certain sense, an emotional relation, is immediately available. With regard to the late Dutch craftsman who, having hankered to take upon himself the mantle of Vermeer, was martyred for a reluctance to live by the hypocrisy of this argument, I think of this fourth circumstance—this question of historical date—as the van Meegeren syndrome.

Hans van Meegeren was a forger and an artisan who for a long time has been high on my list of private heroes. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the magnificent morality play which was his trial perfectly epitomizes the confrontation between those values of identity and of personal-responsibility-for-authorship which post-Renaissance art has until recently accepted and those pluralistic values which electronic forms assert. In the 1930s van Meegeren decided to apply himself to a study of Vermeer's techniques and—for reasons undoubtedly having more to do with an enhancement of his ego than with greed for guilders—distributed the works thus achieved as genuine, if long lost, masterpieces. His pre-war success was so encouraging that during the German occupation he continued apace with sales destined for private collectors in the Third Reich. With the coming of VE Day, he was charged with collaboration as well as with responsibility for the liquidation of national treasures. In his defense van Meegeren confessed that these treasures were but his own invention and, by the values this world applies, quite worthless—an admission which so enraged the critics and historians who had authenticated his collection in the first place that he was rearraigned on charges of forgery and some while later passed away in prison.

The determination of the value of a work of art according to the information available about it is a most delinquent form of aesthetic appraisal. Indeed, it strives to avoid appraisal on any ground other than that which has been prepared by previous appraisals. The moment this tyranny of appraisalism is confronted by confused chronological evidence, the moment it is denied a predetermined historical niche in which to lock the object of its analysis, it becomes unserviceable and its proponents hysterical. The furor that greeted van Meegeren's conflicting testimony, his alternate roles of hero and villain, scholar and fraud, decisively demonstrated the degree to which an aesthetic response was genuinely involved.

Some months ago, in an article in the *Saturday Review*, I ventured that the delinquency manifest by this sort of evaluation might be demonstrated if one were to imagine the critical response to an improvisation which, through its style and texture, suggested that it might have been composed by Joseph Haydn. (Let's assume it to be brilliantly done and most admirably Haydn-esque.) I suggested that if one were to concoct such a piece, its value would remain at par—that is to say, at Haydn's value—only so long as some chicanery were involved in its presentation, enough at least to convince the listener that it was indeed by Haydn. If, however, one were to suggest that although it much resembled Haydn it was, rather, a youthful work of Mendelssohn, its value would decline; and if one chose to attribute it to a succession of authors, each of them closer to the present day, then—regardless of their talents or historical significance—the merits of this same little piece would diminish with each new identification. If, on the other hand, one were to suggest that this work of chance, of accident, of the here and now, was not by Haydn but by a master living some generation or two before his time (Vivaldi, perhaps), then this work would become—on the strength of that daring, that foresight, that futuristic anticipation—a landmark in musical composition.

And all of this would come to pass for no other reason than that we have never really become equipped to adjudicate music per se. Our sense of history is captive of an analytical method which seeks out isolated moments of stylistic upheaval—pivot points of idiomatic evolution—and our value judgments are largely based upon the degree to which we can assure ourselves that a particular artist partici-

pated in or, better yet, anticipated the nearest upheaval. Confusing evolution with accomplishment, we become blind to those values not explicit in an analogy with stylistic metamorphosis.

The van Meegeren syndrome is entirely apropos of our subject, because the arguments contra the prospects of recording are constructed upon identical criteria. They rely, most of all, upon a similar confirmation of historical data. Deprived of this confirmation, their system of evaluation is unable to function; it is at sea, derelict amidst an unsalvageable debris of evidence, and it casts about in search of a point by which to take a bearing. When recordings are at issue, such a point cannot readily be found. The inclination of electronic media is to extract their content from historic date. The moment we can force a work of art to conform to our notion of what was appropriate to its chronology, we can attribute to it, arbitrarily if necessary, background against which in our analysis it can be portrayed. Most aesthetic analysis confines itself to background description and avoids the foreground manipulation of the object being analyzed. And this fact alone, discarding the idle propaganda of the public relations machines, accounts for the endorsement of the recorded public event. Indirectly, the real object of this endorsement is a hopelessly outmoded system of aesthetic analysis—a system incapable of a contribution in the electronic age but the only system for which most spokesmen of the arts are trained.

Recordings produced in a studio resist a confirmation of such criteria. Here date is an elusive factor. Though a few companies solemnly inscribe the date of the studio sessions with each recorded package, and though the material released by most large companies can, except perhaps in the case of reissues, be related to a release number that will suggest an approximate date to the aficionado, it is possible that the music heard on that recording will have been obtained from sessions held weeks, months, or indeed years apart. Those sessions may easily have been held in different cities, different countries, taped with different equipment and different technical personnel, and they may feature performers whose attitudes to the repertoire under consideration have metamorphosed dramatically between the taping of the first note and the last. Such a recording might currently pose insuperable contractual problems, but its complicated gestation would be entirely consistent with the nature of the recording process.

It would also be consistent with that evolution of the performing musician which recording necessitates. As the performer's once-sacrosanct privileges are merged with the responsibilities of the tape editor and the composer, the van Meegeren syndrome can no longer be cited as an indictment but becomes rather an entirely appropriate description of the aesthetic condition in our time. The role of the forger, of the unknown maker of unauthenticated goods, is emblematic of electronic culture. And when the forger is done honor for his craft and no longer reviled for his acquisitiveness, the arts will have become a truly integral part of our civilization [. . .].

The Participant Listener

At the center of the technological debate, then, is a new kind of listener—a listener more participant in the musical experience. The emergence of this mid-twentieth-century phenomenon is the greatest achievement of the record industry. For this

listener is no longer passively analytical; he is an associate whose tastes, preferences, and inclinations even now alter peripherally the experiences to which he gives his attention, and upon whose fuller participation the future of the art of music waits.

He is also, of course, a threat, a potential usurper of power, an uninvited guest at the banquet of the arts, one whose presence threatens the familiar hierarchical setting of the musical establishment. Is it not, then, inopportune to venture that this participant public could emerge untutored from that servile posture with which it paid homage to the status structure of the concert world and, overnight, assume decision-making capacities which were specialists' concerns heretofore?

The keyword here is "public." Those experiences through which the listener encounters music electronically transmitted are not within the public domain. One serviceable axiom applicable to every experience in which electronic transmission is involved can be expressed in that paradox wherein the ability to obtain in theory an audience of unprecedented numbers obtains in fact a limitless number of private auditions. Because of the circumstances this paradox defines, the listener is able to indulge preferences and, through the electronic modifications with which he endows the listening experience, impose his own personality upon the work. As he does so, he transforms that work, and his relation to it, from an artistic to an environmental experience.

Dial twiddling is in its limited way an interpretative act. Forty years ago the listener had the option of flicking a switch inscribed "on" and "off" and, with an up-to-date machine, perhaps modulating the volume just a bit. Today, the variety of controls made available to him requires analytical judgment. And these controls are but primitive, regulatory devices compared to those participational possibilities which the listener will enjoy once current laboratory techniques have been appropriated by home playback devices.

It would be a relatively simple matter, for instance, to grant the listener tape-edit options which he could exercise at his discretion. Indeed, a significant step in this direction might well result from that process by which it is now possible to disassociate the ratio of speed to pitch and in so doing (albeit with some deterioration in the quality of sound as a current liability) truncate splice-segments of interpretations of the same work performed by different artists and recorded at different tempos. Let us say, for example, that you enjoy Bruno Walter's performance of the exposition and recapitulation from the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony but incline toward Klemperer's handling of the development section, which employs a notably divergent tempo. (I happen to like both performances all the way through, but there's no accounting for taste.) With the pitch-speed correlation held in abeyance, you could snip out these measures from the Klemperer edition and splice them into the Walter performance without having the splice produce either an alteration of tempo or a fluctuation of pitch. This process could, in theory, be applied without restriction to the reconstruction of musical performance. There is, in fact, nothing to prevent a dedicated connoisseur from acting as his own tape editor and, with these devices, exercising such interpretative predilections as will permit him to create his own ideal performance [. . .]

En Route to a Stylistic Mix

The listener's splice prerogative is but one aspect of that editorial mix which recorded music encourages. In terms of its unselfconscious juxtaposition of a mis-

cellany of idioms, it will have an effect similar to that which André Malraux—in his *Voices of Silence*—attributes to art reproductions. One result of this stylistic permissiveness will be a more tolerant regard for the artistic by-products of those cultures which are, from our Western point of view, chronologically "out of sync." The transmission of events and sounds around our planet has forced us to concede that there is not just one musical tradition but, rather, many musics, not all of which are concerned—by our definition of the word—with tradition [. . .]

Through simultaneous transmissions, through radio and television particularly, the art of such a [culture] becomes for those of us on the outside rather too easily accessible. Such media encourage us to invoke comparisons between the by-products of such a culture and those to which our own very different orientation gives rise. When we find that the expression of that culture represents what seem to us archaic ideologies, we condemn it as old-fashioned or sterile, or puritanical, or as possessed of any other limitation from which we consider ourselves emancipated. With simultaneous transmission we set aside our touristlike fascination with distant and exotic places and give vent to impatience at the chronological tardiness the natives display. To this extent, Professor McLuhan's concept of the "global village"—the simultaneity of response from McMurdo Sound to Murmansk, from Taiwan to Tacoma—is alarming. There just could be some fellow at McMurdo, "out of sync" and out of touch, revivifying C major as Mozart never dreamed of!

But these intrusions pertain only to those media developments that reproduce images or sounds instantaneously. Recordings arouse very different psychological reactions and should always be considered with this proviso in mind. Whereas simultaneous reception reveals differences on a current, comparative, indeed competitive basis, the preservation of sound and image makes possible the archival view, the unimpassioned reflection upon the condition of a society, the acceptance of a multifaceted chronological concept. Indeed, the two utilizations of electronic transmission—for clarification of present circumstances occasioned by radio and television and for indefinite future re-examination of the past permitted by recording—are antithetical. The recording process, with its encouragement of a sympathetic "after-the-fact" historical view, is the indispensable replenishment of that deteriorating tolerance occasioned by simultaneous transmission. Just as simultaneous reception tends to provoke unproductive comparisons and encourages conformity, preservation and archival replay encourage detachment and non-conformist historical premises.

In my opinion, the most important of the missing links in the evolution of the listener-consumer-participant, as well as the most persuasive argument for the stylistic mix, is to be found in that most abused of electronic manifestations—background sound. This much-criticized and often misunderstood phenomenon is the most productive method through which contemporary music can confide its objectives to a listening, consuming, Muzak-absorbing society. Cunningly disguised within the bland formulae from which background sounds are seemingly concocted is an encyclopedia of experience, an exhaustive compilation of the clichés of post-Renaissance music. Moreover, this catalogue provides a cross-referenced index which permits connections between stylistic manifestations with fine disregard for chronological distinction. Within ten minutes of restaurant Muzak one can encounter a residue of Rachmaninoff or a blast of Berlioz proceeding without embarrassment from the dregs of Debussy. Indeed, all the music that has ever

been can now become a background against which the impulse to make listener-supplied connections is the new foreground [...].

There is an interesting correlation between the neutrality of this background vocabulary—the unobtrusiveness of its contribution—and the fact that most background music is conveyed through recordings. These are in fact two complementary facets of the same phenomenon. For since the recording does not depend, as does the concert, upon the mood of a special occasion, and relies instead upon relating to a general set of circumstances, it exploits in background music those abilities through which that phenomenon is able to draw, without embarrassment, upon an incredible range of stylistic reference—summoning to the contemporary world idiomatic references from earlier times, placing them in a context in which, by being accorded a subdivided participation, they achieve a new validity.

Background music has been attacked from many quarters—by Europeans as a symptom of the decadence of North American society, by North Americans as a product of megalopolitan conformity. Indeed, it is perhaps accepted at face value only in those societies where no continuing tradition of Occidental music is to be found.

Background music, of course, confirms all the argumentative criteria by which the opponents of musical technology determine their judgments. It has no sense of historic date—the fact that it is studio produced and the stylistic compote of its musical substance prevent this; the personnel involved are almost always anonymous; a great deal of overtracking and other electronic wizardry is involved in its making—hence such arguments as those of automation, aesthetic morality, and the van Meegeren syndrome find in background music a tempting target. This target, however, protected at present by commercial rather than aesthetic considerations, is immune to attack.

Those who see in background music a sinister fulfillment of the Orwellian environment control assume that it is capable of enlisting all who are exposed to it as proponents of its own vast cliché. But this is precisely the point! Because it can infiltrate our lives from so many different angles, the cliché residue of all the idioms employed in background becomes an intuitive part of our musical vocabulary. Consequently, in order to gain our attention any *musical* experience must be of a quite exceptional nature. And meanwhile, through this ingenious glossary, the listener achieves a direct associative experience of the post-Renaissance vocabulary, something that not even the most inventive music appreciation course would be able to afford him.

Music's Role in an Electronic Age

As this medium evolves, as it becomes available for situations in which the quite properly self-indulgent participation of the listener will be encouraged, those venerable distinctions about the class structure within the musical hierarchy—distinctions that separated composer and performer and listener—will become outmoded. Does this, then, contradict the fact that since the Renaissance the separation of function (specialization) has been the professional lot and that the medieval status of the musician, one who created and performed for the sake of his own enjoyment, has long since been supplanted by our post-Renaissance orgy

of musical sophistication? I should say that these two concepts are not necessarily contradictory.

This overlapping of professional and lay responsibility in the creative process does tend to produce a set of circumstances that superficially suggests the largely unilateral participation of the pre-Renaissance world. In fact, it is deceptively easy to draw such parallels, to assume that the entire adventure of the Renaissance and of the world which it created was a gigantic historical error. But we are not returning to a medieval culture. It is a dangerous oversimplification to suggest that under the influence of electronic media we could retrograde to some condition reminiscent of the pre-Renaissance cultural monolith. The technology of electronic forms makes it highly improbable that we will move in any direction but one of even greater intensity and complexity; and the fact that a participational overlapping becomes unashamedly involved with the creative process should not suggest a waning of the necessity for specialized techniques.

What will happen, rather, is that new participation areas will proliferate and that many more hands will be required to achieve the execution of a particular environmental experience. Because of this complexity, because so many different levels of participation will, in fact, be merged in the final result, the individualized information concepts which define the nature of identity and authorship will become very much less imposing. Not that this identity reduction will be achieved without some harassment from those who resent its implications. After all, what are the batteries of public relations men, advertising executives, and press agents doing if not attempting to provide an identification for artist and producer in a society where duplication is everywhere and where identity in the sense of information about the authors means less and less?

The most hopeful thing about this process—about the inevitable disregard for the identity factor in the creative situation—is that it will permit a climate in which biographical data and chronological assumption can no longer be the cornerstone for judgments about art as it relates to environment. In fact, this whole question of individuality in the creative situation—the process through which the creative act results from, absorbs, and re-forms individual opinion—will be subjected to a radical reconsideration.

I believe the fact that music plays so extensive a part in the regulation of our environment suggests its eventual assumption of a role as immediate, as utilitarian, as colloquial as that which language now plays in the conduct of our daily lives. For music to achieve a comparable familiarity, the implications of its styles, its habits, its mannerisms, its tricks, its customary devices, its statistically most frequent occurrences—in other words, its clichés—must be familiar and recognized by everyone. A mass recognition of the cliché quotient of a vocabulary need not suggest our becoming saturated with the mundanities of those clichés. We do not value great works of literature less because we, as men in the street, speak the language in which they happen to be written. The fact that so much of our daily conversation is concerned with the tedious familiarities of common courtesy, the mandatory conversation openers about the weather and so on, does not for a moment dull our appreciation of the potential glories of the language we use. To the contrary, it sharpens it. It gives us background against which the foreground that is the habitat of the imaginative artist may stand in greater relief. It is my view that in the electronic age the art of music will become much more viably a part of

our lives, much less an ornament to them, and that it will consequently change them much more profoundly.

If these changes are profound enough, we may eventually be compelled to redefine the terminology with which we express our thoughts about art. Indeed, it may become increasingly inappropriate to apply to a description of environmental situations the word "art" itself—a word that, however venerable and honored, is necessarily replete with imprecise, if not in fact obsolete, connotations.

In the best of all possible worlds, art would be unnecessary. Its offer of restorative, placative therapy would go begging a patient. The professional specialization involved in its making would be presumption. The generalities of its applicability would be an affront. The audience would be the artist and their life would be art.

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The Studio as Compositional Tool

BRIAN ENO

Brian Eno (1948–; see also chaps. 17 and 34) is a key figure in the shift from "composer" and "musician" to "producer" in contemporary electronic culture. Drawing lessons from a genealogy of visionary producers—Phil Spector, Joe Meek, George Martin, Teo Macero, Brian Wilson, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and others—Eno was struck early on by the extraordinary creative potential of the recording studio, its ability to construct new sonic worlds. Here, he offers a brief history of the "studio as instrument" and meditates on the ways in which this instrument has shaped modern music and sonic cognition.

The first thing about recording is that it makes repeatable what was otherwise transient and ephemeral. Music, until about 1900, was an event that was perceived in a particular situation, and that disappeared when it was finished. There was no way of actually hearing that piece again, identically, and there was no way of knowing whether your perception was telling you it was different or whether it was different the second time you heard it. The piece disappeared when it was finished, so it was something that only existed in time.

The effect of recording is that it takes music out of the time dimension and puts it in the space dimension. As soon as you do that, you're in a position of being able to listen again and again to a performance, to become familiar with details you most certainly had missed the first time through, and to become very fond of details that weren't intended by the composer or the musicians.

The effect of this on the composer is that he can think in terms of supplying material that would actually be too subtle for a first listening. Around about the 1920s—or maybe that's too early, perhaps around the '30s—composers started thinking that their work was recordable, and they started making use of the special liberty of being recorded.

I think the first place this had a real effect was in jazz. Jazz is an improvised form, primarily, and the interesting thing about improvisations is that they become more interesting as you listen to them more times. What seemed like an almost