

Although the hegemony of language over music, not to mention music's mysterious uselessness, are hardly original ideas, Pinker's remarks suggest an elision between music's adaptive status and its aesthetic and moral value, which in turn points to a more widespread cultural anxiety over the inessential, yet essential, role of music in contemporary Western society. Whereas "auditory cheesecake" attests to Pinker's positive, if fluffy, attitude, "useless" is not so benign, leaving us to wonder if our deepest musical experiences are perhaps insignificant. In spite of the fact that Pinker claims that adaptive status is not correlated with aesthetic value, he nevertheless asserts that "biologically frivolous" music is highly valued precisely because it is useless, a position mirrored in much Western philosophical discourse on 'art for art's sake.'

—Tolbert, p. 82

- **Is Tolbert right that under Pinker's model there can be no inherently 'bad' music?**
- **What would bad 'auditory cheesecake' look (or rather sound) like?**

It is...clear that a musician's musical guilty pleasures are measured against an autobiographical narrative of musical self-making. They are framed in terms of the voice/vocality rupture, and in ways that are similar both to Kristeva's psychoanalytical voice and the metaphysical voice of evolutionary accounts. The general story line begins with the mythical unity of voice/vocality prior to the emergence of the musical self, proceeds to the rupture of voice/vocality and a musical becoming human, and concludes with an awareness of the lifelong and impossible quest to become an authentic musical self through the reunification of musical persona, i.e., voice, and the music itself, i.e., vocality.

—Tolbert, p.88

- **What do you think of the idea of rupture between the naive 'pre-musical' self, and the more developed 'musical' self as a source of embarrassment/desire?**
- **Do you think this can be extrapolated to judging the music of others?**