# Sounding Bodies:

It is clear that it is individual physical actions of sound production that constitute the starting point of musical ideas, whose only prerogative is to give them a syntax (of indifferent coherency) and organisation. The objects of this organisation however, we should remember, are not abstract ideas of vibration or pitch, but concrete physical experiences with physical consequences that result in a certain sound being produced. The fact that it is so means that in sound there is no meaning of a linguistic or rational kind (a fact that seems to a certain degree in contrast with the way music is conceptualised and taught today), but that sound is itself — physically and conceptually — shaped after the body and the instrument that has produced it. This “*body in the singing voice, in the writing hand, in the performing limb”*, as Barthes would call it (Barthes,276)*,*I argue, ought to be one of the focal points of our conception of music, as music itself is constituted by it just as much as it is by reason and psyche.

Regardless of the function one ascribes to music (if any is to be ascribed to it at all), and regardless of the presupposed contents of music (meaning, the specific beliefs one may hold on the essence of music underlying its form), it must be recognised that any function or content music might have is necessarily the product of an embodied act, and it is only through recognising the act in the phonic event produced by it that one can get to the core of the phenomenon of music. It is, however, clear that this recognition cannot avail itself of inquiry into the causal link between the two – or, rather, it *could*, but it *shouldn’t*. It’s clear that any mechanical analysis of the sound-producing body, in conjunction with an acoustic analysis of the produced sound, would be able to yield a possibly perfect account of the causal relationship between movement and sound, however the result of such a line of questioning would be completely inconsequential to the realm of music itself, and while it would, perhaps, bring all the answers we are seeking into light, those answers would still be far off from saying anything about the musical phenomenon itself, much less about the ways in which such a phenomenon is experienced and constructed. In other words, we are not interested in merely giving an account of how sound comes to be from movement, or of the relationship between variations in movement and sound, but are instead seeking a mode of musical analysis including (though not necessarily limited to) some form of the sequence of physical acts that constitutes a musical performance.

Having eliminated the purely causal route, we are somewhat forced to reckon with the “*body in the singing voice*” of Barthes. We are forced, in other words, to forego all rational theoretical knowledge we have of music and focus exactly on the one tassel missing from our musical mosaic: the body, specifically with regards to its capacity for sound production.

# Bibliography:

Barthes, R. (), *Image, Music, Text*