

Part 1

INTRODUCTION

Background – Theory – Method

*The Iran-Contra hearings are like a song.
The liberals listen to the words
while the man in the street
listens to the music.*

Richard A. Viguerie¹



Billy Goldenberg²

*We still complacently assume
that consciousness is sense and
the unconscious is nonsense.*

Carl Jung³

Chapter 1

The rise of musical absolutism

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1. 'Le udienze sull'affare Iran-Contras sono come una canzone. I *liberals* ascoltano le parole, ma l'uomo della strada ascolta la musica. La musica parla di uomini e donne pronti a morire per il loro paese' (*L'Unità*, Rome, 12 July 1987:2). The last sentence of the quote means 'The music speaks of men and women ready to die for their country'.
 2. Goldenberg (1972): the first full melodic statement of the main title for the first two TV series of *Kojak*, see Tagg (1979a:93; 2000a:140).
 3. Jung (1964:92)

Music, ‘music’ and democracy

This book is about something quite ordinary. It’s about the sort of music we hear through our TV speakers, about the relationship between what we hear and how we respond to it. The music may tell us SOMETHING BAD’S GOING TO HAPPEN, OR PERHAPS SHE LOVES HIM AFTER ALL, OR URGENT NEWS OR CHEERFUL CHILDREN: we have no problems in understanding that sort of musical message. What, then, is the point of this voluminous report on research into the semiotics of mass-media music? The answer lurks in the quotes at the top of the previous page.

In the first quote on the title page of this chapter, Viguerie (a Pentagon hawk of the Reagan era), toys with the same sort of contradiction in our tradition of knowledge as that which Jung criticises in the third quote. This contradiction presupposes antagonism between different types of cognition, a sort of conceptual polarity which conditions how we understand ourselves and our relationship to the world around us. In fact, Viguerie’s ridicule of ‘liberals’ (and most academics, including the authors of this book, fit that description) is well-founded, because our tradition of knowledge is logocentric and has tended to disqualify — as inspired art, specious entertainment, vaporous hype, or just nonsense in the sense ridiculed by Jung — all that ‘music’ that Viguerie’s man in the street saw and heard Oliver North performing during the Irangate hearings. It is worth considering this matter more closely because it goes straight to the heart of non-verbal semiotics, an issue essential to a musicology of the mass media.

Viguerie’s interpretation of North’s ‘music’ was that it spoke ‘of men and women ready to die for their country’. The ‘music’s’ means of communicating that message were North’s uniform, haircut, blue eyes, tone of voice, stance, facial expression, manner of speaking, family situation and predicament as defendant in a US court of law. All that ‘music’ connoted specific areas of experience with which most members of the TV audience would be highly familiar, thanks to the myths and ideologies propagated as images, sounds, music and narrative in thousands of US films and teleproducts. All this gestural, sonic and visual imagery alluded to familiar personalities and scenarios in the media subconscious of US-Americans. North could easily be seen as epitomising all those unjustly accused good-guys in the witness box of any *Perry Mason* or *LA Law* courtroom scene,⁴ while at the same time looking like Tom Cruise as the clean-cut pilot of *Top Gun* (1986). A Pentagon-friendly Hollywood version of the drama would have had to include underscore compatible with this imagery,⁵ probably something noble and reservedly heroic including tinges of injustice, misunderstanding and bitterness with a distant but perceptible hint of

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4. *Perry Mason Returns* (NBC/Viacom/Intermedia/Strathmore) started in 1985 and was still going strong during Irangate. *L.A. Law* began also in 1985. Courtroom dramas and litigation soaps have always been an essential part of the US TV audience’s staple diet: *Perry Mason*, *L A Law*, *Ally McBeal*, *The Defenders*, *Ellery Queen*, *Law and Order*, etc.
 5. From a personal political viewpoint, I [PT] would have chosen something ‘good-guy sentimental’, some tear-jerking strings in Hollywood forties style and mixed them up loud every time North spoke, thereby creating an over-the-top effect highlighting the hypocrisy of trying to turn international criminals into good guys. It might also have been effective to use exaggerated, old-hat bad-guy music for North’s opponents but would probably have been better to leave their part of the dialogue unscored to gain the maximum anti-North effect.

fighting spirit, perhaps something resembling a low-profile version of Goldsmith's main theme for *Rambo 2* (1985).⁶

One lesson to be learnt from the Irangate hearings is that it is naïve to disqualify non-verbal, connotative levels of communication as nonsense or hype. The ideological confusion that came out of the affair is due in no small part to the polarisation of two types of cognition and to their official status in our tradition of knowledge. One pole is occupied by us 'liberals', unable to take the 'music' seriously enough because our schools and universities taught us that although music (and 'music') may have aesthetic values in the sense of being beautiful, ugly, fun, boring and so on, it cannot impart any real knowledge or verifiable truths. By underestimating the power of ideological message in the 'music', 'liberals' were nonplussed. North might have been technically convicted but he still won the trial on TV: his guilt may have been proven verbally and rationally, but not 'musically', not 'emotionally'. The other pole is occupied by the 'man in the street' who, alienated by the way in which knowledge was presented at school, was as suspicious of the 'words', and of all those 'liberal intellectuals' wielding them, as we were ignorant of the 'music'. The 'man in the street' saw no reason to regard North as the criminal he in fact was. The burden of factual evidence against him may have been overwhelming but connotative cultural signals contradicted it in the minds of many US TV viewers. 'Music', as Viguerie said, spoke louder than 'words'.

'Music', as connotative images, scenarios etc., may well speak louder than 'words', but music, without the inverted commas, can sometimes speak louder than the images and scenarios implied by Viguerie's 'music'. The second introductory quotation — the first full melodic statement of the Kojak theme (Goldenberg 1972) — is cited as evidence supporting that claim. As explained elsewhere (Tagg 2000a:185-210), one of the Kojak theme's main functions was to bring affective clarity to an ambiguous and possibly threatening visual image. If, in the Irangate hearings, Oliver North on the witness stand was a criminal seeking moral acquittal, he needed 'music' (or music) contradicting that identity. Similarly, since a broad-shouldered, thick-necked baldie like Kojak is visually more likely to be identified as an executioner, Minotaur or Darth Vader than as a nice-guy hero, he will need music (or 'music') to counteract that archetypally negative image.⁷ So, Elmer Bernstein's proclamatory major-pentatonic tune and lively Western-movie harmonies in the theme from *The Magnificent Seven* (1966) dispersed doubts about Yul Brunner's visual potential as brutal wrestler or medieval executioner. In the same way, Billy Goldberg's horn whoops and broad unison triplets *a4* boosted Telly Savalas' good-guy credibility as NYPD Lieutenant Theocrates Kojak and adjusted the TV audience's identification of Savalas with the tonsured mobsters which the actor had previously played on screen.⁸ With popular TV series like *Kojak*, Viguerie's 'man in the street'

6. *Top Gun* (1986) and *Rambo 2* (1985), typical war film products of the Reagan area, were broadcast just before or during the Irangate hearings. If you had wanted to aim North's ideology at a younger target group, you might be better advised to use the *Top Gun Anthem* (Faltermeyer 1986).

7. Darth Vader of *Star Wars* (1977) receives full musical baddy treatment in John Williams' work derivative of 'Mars' from Holst's *The Planet Suite*, such music and picture (including 'Dark Helmet') being admirably spoofed by John Morris and Mel Brooks in *Spaceballs* (Morris 1987). For more about archetypes of tonsured terror, see Tagg (2000a:245-247).

8. Savalas had previously featured as gangster in such films as *Violent City* (*Morricone 1971a).

becomes the ‘person in front of the telly’ who forms an affective opinion of personalities, populations, words, actions, environments and scenarios on the basis of what the music says. Meanwhile, many academic ‘liberals’ write and talk at length about social, verbal, visual and commercial aspects of popular TV narrative, but very few seem to pay any close attention to the music and its messages.

As long as you find Kojak sympathetic and heroic without Goldenberg’s title theme and Cacavas’ underscore there is of course no problem. But if you think Kojak is more slob and bully than hero or good guy you will be hard pressed to resist the persuasive message of music urging you to respond differently. Similarly, as long as you applaud the criminal actions of Ollie North, then you will have no problem with the ‘music’ of his trial. However, if you agree with the World Court that the actions of North, the CIA and the US government against Nicaragua in the 1980s constituted international terrorism (Chomsky 2001 §7), then North’s ‘music’ will contradict your own opinions and values. The problem is obvious: you cannot argue convincingly with a statement you cannot falsify or deconstruct, and you cannot deconstruct it if you fail to recognise it *as* a statement, be it mediated as music, ‘music’ or in any other way. US rednecks and other Oliver North fans need only picture someone else on trial for the same crimes, for example a gay African-American intellectual or an effervescent, Chicano hip-hop fan called Oliverio, complete with baseball cap, baggy denims, and an endless rap sheet of petty crimes and paternity suits. Oliverio’s ‘music’ would probably, in the eyes and ears of redneck public opinion, contradict the ‘good deed’ of committing crime to support the CIA-backed Contras. This scenario would have caused as serious a setback for jingoistic US-Americans as the ‘music’ of the Irangate hearings did for us ‘liberals’.

Whatever your opinion about Ollie North or Kojak, it is impossible to ignore the conceptual contradictions expressed in the introductory quotes (p.3), polarities being set up between ‘words’ and ‘music’ (Viguerie), between picture and music (*Kojak*), and between ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’ (Jung). However, acknowledging the existence of those polarities does not mean agreeing with the epistemic status quo they represent. On the contrary, identifying a problem is a prerequisite for its solution. Indeed, Jung, by qualifying as ‘complacent’ the assumption that the conscious makes sense and that the unconscious is nonsense, rejects the assumption that some modes of cognition are intrinsically more systematic than others. Rejection of such false polarities is *essential* to any attempt at making sense of mass media messages because, although originally referring to dream symbols, Jung’s aphorism can be applied to any set or mode of symbols produced by humans at any level of consciousness, from abstract maths to background music, from novel writing to dancing, from computer games to stand-up comedy, from web design to your most recent nightmare, and so on. Understanding socially formed patterns of the unconscious and preconscious is all the more important in this age of mass-disseminated sound and moving images beyond the merely scribal, verbal, numerical and graphic representation of ideas. These sounds and images have brought other people’s dreams, fantasies, nightmares and other ‘nonsense’ — including Ollie North, Kojak and their respective musics or ‘musics’ — into almost every living room in the industrialised world. This mass mediation transports symbols into our hearts and homes in a much more tangible and direct form than any popular newspaper or

penny novel could ever have managed. It is in this context that studying mass culture can be seen as an ethical, democratic and educational necessity.

If we believe, in accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, that all people should be able to form their own opinion on any subject of individual or collective interest,⁹ then as many people as possible should be offered easy access to as much information as possible about *how* ideas are mediated, not only on the printed page but also in the audiovisual media. It is simply no longer possible to foster the critical spirit essential to independent thought by relying solely on numeracy and verbal literacy. Words and numbers may be the symbolic systems privileged in public education, but it is the audiovisual media rather than the written word that carry the most pervasive and persuasive messages influencing which political candidates are elected and which governments are toppled, not to mention which commodities are sold, lifestyles led, fashions followed, myths maintained, and ideologies embraced. For most of its programming time, television, still the most pervasive of audiovisual media, favours *non-verbal* aspects of sight and sound, the latter incorporating no mean amount of music.¹⁰ These circumstances underline the importance of further developing and popularising studies of non-verbal communication in the mass-media. Unfortunately, discussion of *music's* structures and meanings is so often absent from such studies, that it is necessary to propagate for the construction of a solid empirical and theoretical foundation on which a semiotic *musicology* of the mass media can be built. This book is intended as a contribution towards the establishment of such a musicology.

The argument so far implies that no musicology of the mass media exists at the turn of the third millennium, or rather that, if it does exist, it has yet to reach the point where it can adequately meet the ethical and educational demands that music's central role in the audiovisual media make upon it. This assumption seems rash, perhaps even arrogant, in the light of two factors: (i) the existence of scholarly writing about the role of music in the mass media — a matter we shall touch on later in chapter 2; (ii) the circumstantial evidence of history. That evidence can be summarised as follows.

Sound recording has been in wide circulation since the turn of the previous century, radio and talking pictures since the late 1920s, television since the 1950s, home taping since the 1960s, home video recording since the 1970s, digital recording, MIDI sequencing and computer games since the 1980s. Radical innovations have

9. We are referring here to articles 18 and 19 of the United Nations *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) | www.unhchr.ch/udhr/ | (020323).

10. At the seminar 'Music and the Media' (Göteborg September 1989), Professor Lennart Weibull, (Mass Communication Studies, University of Göteborg) calculated that 70% of programming time on all available TV channels included music. An undergraduate dissertation by Gemma Maull at the Institute of Popular Music (University of Liverpool, 1999) showed that 37% of programming time one evening between 18:00 and 24:00 on the UK's four terrestrial channels (BBC1, BBC2, ITV and Channel 4) included music, even though complete soccer matches were aired on two channels and several documentaries were broadcast. Therefore, bearing in mind that the average inhabitant of the industrialised world watches two hours of TV per day, about one hour of that broadcast time will, on average, include some form of music. It is also worth remembering that in 2001 the average US teenager played computer games for 49 minutes every day (Poole 2002:6) and that music is heard more or less continuously most of that time.

not only occurred in music technology: the academic study of music has also changed over the same sort of period in the recent history of Europe. Musicology was established in the mid nineteenth century, ethnomusicology and the anthropology of music at the turn of the last century, the sociology and semiotics of music in the 1960s, media and cultural studies in the 1970s, and popular music studies in the 1980s.¹¹ Given this seemingly simultaneous set of technological and intellectual change, not to mention concurrent social and political change of even greater importance,¹² it would be natural to expect developments in musicology to have kept pace with those in technology. If it were so, there would be no need to propagate for a musicology of the mass media because it would already exist.

The problem with the counter-argument just presented is that it assumes simultaneity and congruence of interest between the development of audiovisual technology and the development of academic disciplines relating to music mediated through that technology. Conventional musicology's long-standing disregard of most mass-mediated music suggests another scenario altogether, as do all the well-documented and repeated efforts, over the last few decades, to establish popular music studies as a viable area of scholarly inquiry.¹³ Obviously, none of those efforts would have been necessary if the study of music had kept pace with social, cultural and technological change.

So, if the aim of this book is to help establish a musicology of the mass media, and if the methods we propose are to have any viability, we will need to discuss some of conventional musicology's basic problems. In so doing, we will hopefully be able to avoid the worst pitfalls of the academic tradition in which we and, probably, many of our readers were raised. We also hope that the next part of our discussion will clear the the historical path for our presentation of theoretical background (Chapter 2) and method (Chapter 3).

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11. We shall discuss this matter in Chapter 2. Please note that dates in this paragraph give no more than *approximate* indications of when each phenomenon came into *widespread* use.
 12. For example: two world wars and the replacement of European colonialism by US imperialism, a huge increase in manufacturing productivity, the organisation of radical working-class movements, the rise and fall of the Soviet Union and other socialist states, the Cold War, the impoverishment and increasing oppression of developing nations, the radical demographic change within major capitalist nations, the ever-increasing gap between rich and poor inside technologically advanced nations, the hegemony of finance capitalism over the manufacturing sector, the increasing monopolisation and globalisation of corporate capitalism, and all the effects of these developments on culture and subjectivity. Relegating such momentous events to phrases in a footnote is absurd, but it is also necessary in order to preserve the focus of our narrative about the need for a musicology of the mass media.
 13. 'Conventional musicology' can be understood in terms of the approaches and subjects most frequently covered in musicological journals and conferences in the second half of the twentieth century (see Tagg 1979:36-42 or 2000a:51-62; 2000c), and whose historical view is represented in such set texts as Grout & Palisca (1981), i.e. what provoked alternatives like the UK's Critical Musicology Forum (see www.leeds.ac.uk/music/Info/CMJ/cmj.html). For the establishment of popular music studies, see original proposal to found a 'Society for Popular Music Research' in 1981 (IASPM) | www.tagg.org/articles/iaspprop81.html | and Tagg (1982a, 1982c, 1983). See also Tagg (2000a:21-82; 2000c, 2001b) and | www.tagg.org/teaching/classclassical.pdf |.

Classical, class and the Great Epistemological Divide

Knowledge in and about music

Before presenting the historical background to this book, we need to posit the central contradiction of institutionalised music studies: that between MUSIC AS KNOWLEDGE and KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MUSIC (see table 1). The way in which differences between these ‘knowledges’ are conceptualised and institutionalised in our culture reflect, as we shall see, the epistemological divide mentioned earlier.

By MUSIC AS KNOWLEDGE (1) we mean knowledge *in* rather than about music. This intrinsically musical and culturally specific type of knowledge is non-verbal and can be divided as follows: (1a) CONSTRUCTIONAL COMPETENCE, by which we mean the ability to compose, arrange, perform or otherwise *make* music; (1b) RECEPTIONAL COMPETENCE, meaning the ability to *respond* to music in a culturally competent manner. Receptional competence relies on the ability to recall and recognise different musical sounds, as well as their culturally specific connotations and social functions.¹⁴

Table 1 Types of musical knowledge

Type	Explanation	Seats of learning
1. Music as knowledge (knowledge <i>in</i> music)		
1a. Constructional competence	creating, originating, producing, composing, arranging, performing, etc.	conservatories, colleges of music
1b. Receptional competence	recalling, recognising, distinguishing between musical sounds, as well as between their culturally specific connotations and social functions	?
2. Metamusical knowledge (knowledge <i>about</i> music)		
2a. Metatextual discourse	‘music theory’, music analysis, identification and naming of elements and patterns of musical structure	departments of music(ology), academies of music
2b. Metacontextual discourse	explaining how musical practices relate to culture and society, including approaches from semiotics, acoustics, business studies, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies.	social science departments, literature and media studies, popular music studies

14. Since neither constructional nor receptional competence rely on any verbal denotation, they are both more commonly referred to as skills or competences rather than as knowledge. This does not mean that knowledge *has* to be verbally mediated, merely that our logocentric tradition of knowledge does not tend to think of *music* as knowledge. If mathematical knowledge does not need to be verbal to be knowledge, and if ‘carnal knowledge’ is knowledge rather than ‘carnal skill’, there is no reason to qualify constructional and receptional competence in music as skill rather than as knowledge. For further explanation of the ‘constructional’ and ‘receptional’, see Tagg (2001b:2,ff.). Please note that in the original book version (2003) the paragraph finishing with this footnote, including this footnote text, is repeated erroneously after Table 1.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MUSIC (2) is by definition metamusical and always entails verbal denotation.¹⁵ However, *like* MUSIC AS KNOWLEDGE, KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MUSIC is culturally specific and can be divided into two subcategories. Table 1's METATEXTUAL DISCOURSE (2a) houses conventional music analysis, 'music theory' and any other activity which entails the ability to identify and name elements and patterns of musical structure. METACONTEXTUAL DISCOURSE (2b), involves explaining how musical practices relate to the culture and society that produces them and which they affect. This second aspect of KNOWLEDGE ABOUT MUSIC, covers everything from biomusicology to acoustics, from business studies to psychology, sociology and cultural studies. With the exception of biomusicology and acoustics, metacontextual discourse has dominated institutionalised popular music studies.¹⁶ Most of this introduction would also qualify as metacontextual discourse.

The institutional underpinning of division between these four types of musical knowledge is strong. In UK tertiary education, for example, constructional competence is generally taught in special colleges, conservatories, performing art schools, etc., and metatextual (musical) discourse in departments of music or musicology as well as in conservatories or colleges. Metacontextual discourse, on the other hand, is generally associated with social science disciplines and is much less prominent in conventional musicology departments or performing arts colleges, even though the latter often include basic music history and business studies on the curriculum.

Alert readers will doubtless notice that one of the four musical 'knowledges' was missing in the previous paragraph. Receptional competence was omitted because that widespread form of mainly vernacular musical competence (involving the ability to distinguish instantaneously between, say, a Hollywood and an Italian Western, or between horror and mystery, or between when to wave your cigarette lighter and when to stage dive) is itself also neglected in almost all institutions of higher education. The virtual absence of receptional competence from school and university curricula has been an obstacle to the development of a mass-media musicology because, with no institutional status comparable to that of the three other types of musical knowledge, it has no officially sanctioned forms of training or conceptualisation. Consequently, there is no consensus of method or terminology which mass-media musicologists can draw on when attempting to name, explain and discuss important aspects of musical communication. Instead, we have either to rely on the observations of others about how music is used and understood, or, if the music under analysis has not previously been studied in terms of receptional competence, to

15. This footnote is included merely to preserve the numeration found in the 2003 book version of this text.

16. As songwriter, composer, guitarist, music journalist and IASPM founder member Franco Fabbri put it in 1995, referring to the general intellectual direction taken by the association internationally and by the journal *Popular Music*, 'music and musicians seem to have become some kind of troublesome appendage to popular music studies'. Another example of music's marginalisation in the world of cultural studies is the fact that the last assistant to be taken on by Birmingham University's legendary Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), and the first to be discarded, was a musicologist. Dick Bradley joined the CCCS in the late seventies but was forced to leave in the early eighties when the Thatcher government, through its education minister, Sir Keith Joseph, launched an attack on anything resembling sociology, and forced any institution studying society to make radical cuts. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see 'Music: a troublesome appendage to Cultural studies', p. 78, ff., esp. ftnt. 135, p.79.

conduct our own investigations into the matter. Even then, we still need to organise our findings into manageable categories, some of which may already be used in existing musical practices, while others will have to be constructed on paramusical grounds or be created from scratch. Our taxonomy of verbal-visual associations (Appendix 4) and the logistics of its construction (p.121 ff) illustrate the sort of work that needs to be done in order to overcome the obstacle posed by the vernacular, non-institutionalised character of receptional competence in our culture.

However, there is *no* lack of institutionalisation or established terminology when it comes to the other three types of musical knowledge. Instead, the problems are caused *by* institutionalisation or, to be more precise, by the phenomenon of historical inertia inherent in that type of institutionalisation. We will need to discuss this problem in order to explain the main aims of this book.

Why ‘absolute’?

Many conservatories, music academies and departments of music or musicology were established in the mid nineteenth century to promote knowledge in and about the range of European musical practices which since that time have been called classical. The background to that institutionalisation process is complex, involving a whole host of momentous historical factors including, just to mention a few, industrialisation, mass production, the abandonment of the fourth estate by the bourgeoisie, the formation of an industrial proletariat, technological advances with spin-off effects for music, etc., as well as the political peculiarity of semi-feudal German mini-states and its effects on the public face of subjectivity in that part of the world.¹⁷ For the purposes of this book, however, we will focus on just one central aspect of European art music’s institutionalisation which still impedes, directly or indirectly, progress towards a musicology of the mass media: the notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC.¹⁸ We will focus on this notion for three main reasons.

1. It would be impossible to discuss all important aspects of the classical canon’s ideology without writing several entire books of this size.
2. Several other concepts of importance to the European art music canon have already been discussed at length in other publications, for example, Rosen (1976) on the classical style and Talbot (2000) on the ‘musical work’.

17. Some reasons for Germanic predominance in the field of music aesthetics are provided by Zoltai (1970:193-210). Ford (1991: 2-4, 31-37) gives more detail, arguing that this intellectual and artistic movement, with its *Empfindsamkeit*, its *Sturm und Drang* etc., differed considerably from the Enlightenment in France or England, not least because the socio-economic base of the German bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century under the rule of a multitude of quasi-absolute mini-potentates, was much weaker than that of the same class living in larger nation states, such relative disempowerment resulting in the need to concentrate much more on the expression of ostensibly private or subjective rather than public or objective aspects of individual liberty. It is from such a perspective that the importance of music by German-speaking composers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in germanophone Europe and, indeed, across the world, starts to make sense.

18. Other important aspects of the classical canon’s ideology will turn up in what follows here, but most of these warrant a much deeper discussion than we have room to present in this introduction. For some excellent insights about the ‘musical work’ and its key role in the development of the European classical canon, see Talbot (2000).

3. Since ABSOLUTE MUSIC has, as we shall see, a historical, institutional, sociological and ideological character, it can be seen as perhaps the most central and pervasive concept in the conventional study of European art music.
4. Since the main aim of this book is to help develop a musicology of the mass media, and since music used in the audiovisual media is by definition linked with phenomena other than music, the notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC is particularly problematic and in need of special attention.

Before continuing, we should also state that phrases like *notions of ABSOLUTE MUSIC* or *the concept of ABSOLUTE MUSIC* may occasionally be used, in the section that follows, as shorthand covering a wider range of aesthetic beliefs, such as the *Au-tonomästhetik* ('autonomy aesthetics') and *Wertästhetik* ('value aesthetics') associated with the European art music canon.

By briefly discussing the driving forces behind the idea of ABSOLUTE MUSIC, we hope to explain why a musicology of the mass media has been so slow to evolve and, in the process, lay bare some of the methodological issues we need to address in order to develop that musicology. We will start with a brief philological examination of the term ABSOLUTE MUSIC, after which we will sketch a short history of the notion's pervasiveness in the conventional European view of music. We will end this section with a summary of reasons for that pervasiveness and of the obstacles the notion presents to the development of a musicology of the mass media.

'Absolute music'

Absolute aberration?

To state that music is intrinsically alogogenic — not conducive to explanation, let alone expression, in verbal terms — is a truism; but it is also an essential supposition for any notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC. After all, only in exceptional circumstances does music refer directly to anything except other music, inside or outside the same work, nor can there ever be a one-to-one relation between music and any other symbolic system, otherwise music would be superfluous.¹⁹ It is, however, no less trite a truism to state that music must relate to phenomena outside itself: if it did not, we would neither make it, nor react to it, nor sing or dance to it, nor have any opinion about it, nor disagree about it. The next few paragraphs show how this second truism applies as much to 'absolute' as to music qualified in any other way.

There is no point in calling anything absolute if it is not contrasted with something 'non-absolute' in the sense of the latter being mixed up with, or dependent on, or

19. These general statements assume, perhaps unfairly, that readers share our idea of what such complex concepts as 'music', 'musical structure', 'musical work' all mean. There is sadly no room to discuss those issues here. For our notion of 'music', see www.tagg.org/teaching/musdef.pdf (02-03-29). Our notion of the 'musical work' is 'a musical continuum of determinate duration and of sufficient internal structural cohesion to be understood as sonically identifiable in itself from whatever precedes or follows it, as well as from other similarly integral sets of sequences of musical sound' (Tagg 2000c:157). Finally, when distinguishing music as sounding structure from other objects and phenomena, we have tried to use the expression 'musical structure(s)', fully aware that we are denoting a culturally relative, culturally determined set of physical objects and not the physical (acoustic) objects themselves. This is because we are dealing with questions of meaning in music and because a full theoretical account of relations between acoustic parameters and musically (culturally) meaningful parameters is beyond the scope of this book.

otherwise related to other things than itself. Therefore, calling music absolute ought logically to mean that the music thus qualified is neither mixed up with, nor dependent on, nor conditioned by, nor otherwise related to anything else. One obvious problem with this absolute definition of ABSOLUTE is that not even the most adamant musical absolutist would claim such ‘absolute’ music as, say, Beethoven’s C# minor quartet (Op. 131) to be totally independent of the musical tradition to which its composer belonged. Since the quartet cannot *de facto* have existed in isolation from the musical traditions of which its composer was an heir, any notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC must be dependent on at least the existence of other ABSOLUTE MUSIC for its own identity. ABSOLUTE would in this case be relative, allowing for the music in question to be absolute in the sense of unrelated to anything else *except* other (‘absolute’) music. Apart from the fact that the other ABSOLUTE MUSIC would relate to more ABSOLUTE MUSIC, either in a loop (circular argument) or, at some final point in an otherwise endless chain of ‘absolute’ references, to something other than ABSOLUTE MUSIC, the slight qualification we just proposed of ‘absolute’ as partly relative is problematic for two further, and more substantial, reasons.²⁰

The first is that the explicit negation of connection to, or interference from, anything else except music implies, on the part of those applying the adjective ABSOLUTE to the noun MUSIC, a *de facto* need to distinguish music thus qualified from music that is *not* seen as warranting the same adjective. ABSOLUTE MUSIC is therefore dependent on the existence of ‘non-absolute music’ for its distinction *as* ‘absolute’. Since ‘non-absolute’ music must, at least by inference, be related to both other music and to phenomena that are not intrinsically musical, ABSOLUTE MUSIC must also, even if only indirectly, be related to other phenomena than music, thanks to its *sine qua non* relation to NON-ABSOLUTE MUSIC, and to that music’s relation to things other than itself. Moreover, since those who distinguish one type of music from others by the qualifier ABSOLUTE in no way make up the entire population, they are just one of many sociocultural groups identifiable by specific musical tastes and opinions.²¹ Through such social connotation, a term like ABSOLUTE MUSIC is also linked willy-nilly to the sociocultural position, tastes, attitudes and behaviour of those that use it. It thereby identifies not only the music in relation to other music but also its devotees in relation to users of other music. Due to such inevitable sociocultural connotation, the concept ABSOLUTE MUSIC is a contradiction in terms.²²

The second reason for doubting the veracity of ABSOLUTE MUSIC is that the concept implies that the music thus qualified is seen to transcend not only social connota-

20. In the original version of this text we included a third reason whose gist can be summarised as follows. Composers, however recluse or deaf, are both social subjects *and* objects living in given historical contexts, i.e. the ‘times’: society, politics, religion, education, family, friends, technology, state of and attitude to nature, work, leisure etc. Even individuals who feel they live *outside* their times nevertheless live *in* the times that make them feel out of them. Their experience of alienation would not be possible if they were not living in the context that caused it. Their creative activity draws on a combination of affectivity and specific skills, neither of which can be severed from the context in which they exist.

21. Without this fact of sociology, the US format radio system, including classical stations, would fall apart. Music is renowned as a reliable indicator of other social and cultural patterns. See Denisoff & Peterson (ed) 1972:4-5 or any number of *The Broadcasting Yearbook of America* or Karshner (1972) for the lowdown on ‘demographics’.

22. See Silbermann (1963:179-199) on the social behaviour of classical concert-goers.

tions and uses but also neurological and cultural patterns of synaesthesia.²³ If this were true, demonstrable patterns of juxtaposition between music and pictures, between music and words, or between music and bodily movement — as in dance, film, opera, *Lieder*, pop songs, adverts, videos, computer games etc. — could never influence the composition or perception of ABSOLUTE MUSIC and vice versa. Moreover, if ABSOLUTE MUSIC were indeed absolute, it would need no elements of biologically or culturally acquired synaesthesia to exist, with the consequence that NON-ABSOLUTE MUSIC (for example opera overtures, film themes, ballet suites, dance tunes) would be meaningless in a MUSIC ONLY situation (at a concert, on the radio, on your home stereo system) where their visual, dramatic or choreographic concomitants would be physically absent. Conversely, ABSOLUTE MUSIC played in connection with anything but itself or other ABSOLUTE MUSIC would also be pointless because its ‘autonomy’ would logically preclude any synaesthetic possibilities of perception. This would imply that the Taviani brothers were deluded when they included snippets from the slow movement of Mozart’s *Clarinet Concerto in A* (K622) as underscore to key scenes in *Padre Padrone*; it would also mean that Kubrick misunderstood the true values of European art music in *2001, A Clockwork Orange* and *The Shining*, or that Widerberg, not to mention his cinema audience, were musically incompetent when responding to the *Elvira Madigan* effect.²⁴

To summarise: if music called absolute ever had any social connotations, if it has ever been written or performed in given historical contexts by certain musicians, if it has ever been heard in particular social contexts or used in particular ways by a particular audience, if it has ever been related to any drama, words or dance, then it cannot logically be absolute. ABSOLUTE MUSIC can therefore only exist as an illogical concept — an aberration —, as indeed it does, not only still haunting the corridors of conventional seats of musical learning but also affecting the attitude of many musicians and scholars in the field of popular music.²⁵ If a musicology of the mass media is to stand any intellectual chance, we will clearly need to identify the undeniable staying power behind notions of musical absolutism so that they can be deconstructed with a view to developing concepts better suited to understanding relationships between musical structure and perception, between music as sound and its effects, functions, uses and meanings. How, then, can such a muddled notion as ABSOLUTE MUSIC be so resilient?

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23. By synaesthesia we simply mean ‘the production of a mental sense-impression relating to one sense by the stimulation of another’ (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 1995). In our view, synaesthesia may be directly physical or caused by culturally specific audiovisual learning processes. Unless specifically stated to the contrary, we will *not* be using ‘synaesthesia’ in any pathological sense.
24. The first synaesthetic objection would disqualify E T A Hoffmann outright. He once wrote that ‘listening to Haydn was like taking a walk in the country’ (Rosen 1976:162). The second synaesthetic objection would make the use of Ligeti in 2001 (not the R or J Strauss pieces — they are tone poem and waltz respectively), or of Beethoven in *A Clockwork Orange*, or Mozart in *Elvira Madigan*, or Leonard Rosenman’s arrangements of Händel in *Barry Lyndon*, all totally meaningless. See also ‘Piano arpeggios, plant life and Madigan meadows’ in our analysis of *The Dream of Olwen*.
25. For notion ‘music as *music*’ in popular music studies, see Shepherd & Wicke (1997:108), critically reviewed by P Prato in *Musica/Realtà*, 59:143-147 and by P Tagg in *Popular Music*, 17/3:331-348.

The rise of 'absolute music'

An exhaustive answer to the last question would have to start in the mists of our biomusicological prehistory by examining how homo erectus managed to evolve language as a system of sonic communication distinct from music. Failing that, we should at least consider differences in 'musical' practices between societies whose language includes a word equivalent to our MUSIC and those whose language conceptualises the relevant phenomena in other ways. However, there is no room here for such discussions and we will have to start this part of our account much closer to home, more precisely in eighteenth-century Europe and the process by which certain types of instrumental music became 'classical'.²⁶

In 1762, Diderot put the following words into the mouth of Rameau's rebellious but fictitious muso nephew.

'Passions must be powerful; the musician's feelings must be full-blown — no mind control, no witty remarks, no clever little ideas!'²⁷

In 1792, Wackenroder, cited by Dahlhaus (1988:95), was thinking along similar lines when stating that there is only one right way to listen to music at a concert.

'[I]t consists in alert observations of the notes and their progression, in fully surrendering my spirit to the welling torrent of sensations and disregarding every disturbing thought and all irrelevant impressions of my senses.'

Wackenroder's 'wrong way', Dahlhaus adds, was associative listening. A few years later, Tieck (1799) expands on the same theme as follows.

'Once music is freed from having to depict "finite", distinct emotions, it becomes the expression of "infinite yearning", and this indefinite quality is superior to the exactness of vocal music, rather than inferior, as was believed during the Enlightenment.'²⁸

These three quotes posit a right and a wrong way of relating to music. In simple terms, appreciating music's internal construction and being absorbed by its emotions and feelings — just digging it, so to speak — was good; connecting it with words or images was bad. Hegel, in his *Aesthetics* (c.1810), was even more explicit about the superiority of 'the music itself'.

'What the layman (*Laie*) likes in music is the comprehensible expression of emotions and ideas, something substantial, its contents, for which reason he prefers accompanimental music (*Begleitmusik*); the connoisseur (*Kenner*), on the other hand, who has access to the inner musical relation of tones and instruments, likes instrumental music for its artistic use of harmonies and of melodic intricacy as well as for its changing forms; he can be quite fulfilled by the music on its own'.²⁹

Adolf Bernhard Marx, in a similar spirit of German romanticism, went one step further by qualifying the same sort of instrumental music as a 'Sanctuary of the High-

26. See Ling (1984; 1989), both *passim*. See also Stockfelt (1988:61-91).

27. Free translation of 'Il faut que les passions soient fortes; la tendresse du musicien doit être extrême — point d'esprit, point d'épigrammes, point de ces jolies pensées!' From 'La querelle des bouffons' in *Le neveu de Rameau* (1762:119, lines 298-299, 304-305); see also 'La querelle' lines 98-104, 109-110, 135-141 for similar statements.

28. Ludwig Tieck *Phantasien über die Kunst* (1799), cited by Dahlhaus (1988:18). According to Rosen (1990:83), Constable was delighted when the French 'enlightened' art critics found forms in his landscapes 'which mean nothing': a case for 'absolute painting'? This event is reminiscent of Fontenelle's question 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?' Fervour for the 'absolute', be it instrumental music or more instant types of gratification, is also reminiscent of left-wing radicalism (Lenin 1920).

er Arts',³⁰ an epithet suggesting that listening to such music in the 'right way' could lead to experiences of the sublime. In 1830, less than seventy years after the outburst of Rameau's mad muso nephew, the same A B Marx was, on Mendelssohn's recommendation, appointed Director of Music at the University of Berlin. His appointment can be interpreted as an early example of the institutionalisation of an aesthetic which was to rule the roost in musical academe for over 150 years. European and North American musicology, a predominantly Germanic affair for much of its history, developed dialectically with the conservatories, partly providing theoretical alibis for their musical and educational practices, partly influencing those practices actively. If the conservatories conserved THE MUSIC ITSELF in practice, musicology went about conserving it as metamusical ideology. How, you may well ask, did the institutionalised pursuit of knowledge both in and about music pull off this feat? To answer that question we need to backtrack one last time.

Zoltai (1970:193 ff.) argues that the rise of instrumental music in eighteenth-century Europe should be understood in the context of the Enlightenment, rationalism and the bourgeois revolution. The emancipatory values of these developments and the subjective experience of that emancipation found collective expression not only in emotive slogans like *liberté, égalité, fraternité* but also in a music that was itself thought of as liberated: instead of having to make music under the constraints of feudal patronage and of the Baroque theories of *affect* associated with the *ancien régime*, music could now, it was thought, be purely instrumental, free to express emotions without the encumbrance of words or on-stage action, free to be heard on the open market by anyone who could afford a concert ticket.³¹ If Rameau's nephew had survived, he would have been delighted. However, this conceptual collocation of instrumental music with the liberation of the ego (individual, personality, subject) is only part of the story, because the Enlightenment did not only attempt to explain everything from God to gravity on the basis of material evidence: some thinkers also tried to explain music in relation to the natural world.³²

Mattheson (1739:17), for example, believed that music, from its total form right down to its tiniest detail, referred unambiguously to various aspects of human feelings, states of mind or *affects*.³³ In the spirit of the *encyclopédistes* he constructed a sort of dictionary of musical affects. By rejecting the approach of musical physics

29. Hegel (1955), cited in Zoltai (1970:260): 'Der *Laie* liebt in der Musik vornehmlich den verständlichen Ausdruck von Empfindungen und Vorstellungen, das Stoffartige, der Inhalt, und wendet sich daher vorzugsweise der begleitenden Musik zu; der *Kenner* dagegen, dem die inneren musikalischen Verhältnisse der Töne und Instrumente zugänglich sind, liebt die Instrumentalmusik in ihrem kunstgemäßen Gebrauch der Harmonien und melodischen Verschlingungen und wechsellenden Formen; er wird durch die Musik selbst ganz ausgefüllt.' Note that Hegel included vocal music under *Begleitmusik* (translated here as 'accompanimental music').

30. *Asyle der höheren Künste*: *Asyle* = asylum, sanctuary, refuge, retreat (Stockfelt 1988:citing A B Marx 1901). Stockfelt (1988:92) also cites Schumann's belief that the bourgeois parlour music was really 'der echten Heimat der Kunst' (R Schumann *Gesammelte schrifte über Musik und Musiker*, 5 Auflage, Leipzig 1914, I:180, cited from Fellinger: 'Die Begriffe Salon und Salonmusik in der Musikanschauung des 19 Jahrhunderts'). See also Dahlhaus (1967:135-140).

31. Mozart's ultimate freelancing and masonic involvement are the most familiar examples of this quest for social and artistic liberty; see Dent (1962:58-69, 132-166).

32. 'Natural world': here in the eighteenth-century sense of an objective reality independent of human action or thought. For more on Baroque affect theories, see Bartel (1997), Buelow (1980), Eppstein (1975a, 1975b), Schmitz (1955), Kircher (1650) and Mattheson (1739).

and mathematics, Mattheson's arguments align with those of other aestheticians of the age of Enlightenment in their separation of the conscious — *Bewußtsein*, science, the 'objective' world — from the self-conscious — *Selbstbewußtsein*, Art, the 'subjective' sphere. Hence, the NATURE to which Mattheson, as a man of the Enlightenment, argues that music is related, is not the external nature of the material world studied by natural science, but the internal HUMAN NATURE of the individual.³⁴ This view is not totally incompatible with the ALL FEELINGS AND NO INTELLECT attitude of Rameau's fictitious nephew in the sense that Mattheson is at least clear that music is a matter of human emotions, but his thoroughly reasonable ideas played no active part in the process by which the new instrumental music was canonised and institutionalised in nineteenth-century central Europe. Obviously, it cannot have been the emancipatory quality of natural science and rationalism in itself that worried the German Romantic theorists of music. After all, the newly-won feeling of freedom, fuelled by political and individual emancipation — potential or real — from feudal forms of thought and government, and expressed in the new instrumental music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was hardly threatened by the rationalism that helped make that feeling possible in the first place. But there does seem to have been reluctance to accept any aspect of rationalism that had the potential to determine the *musical* expression of that same feeling through rational analysis, explanation and categorisation. In other words, this latter aspect of rationalism seems to have been interpreted as diametrically opposed to what the former aspect had appeared to liberate.

Of importance to this historical background is the fact that Romantic views of music were conflated with notions of 'personality' and 'free will' central to bourgeois subjectivity, both of which were treated as conceptual opposites to the external world of material objectivity. Individuality, emotionality, feelings and subjectivity came to be imagined as opposite poles to the social, rational, factual and objective,

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33. Mattheson (1739:17) states that 'The movement of the heart is ... founded, i.e. has its cause and origin, not in the mere sounds ... that can as such be measured, classified and put down on paper, but in the many and various concepts that the spirit (*Gemüth*), according to numerous different circumstances, associates with those sounds. And who will say that such spiritual concepts are mathematical? Because the soul, as a spirit, is moved emotionally. By what? Surely not by the sounds themselves, nor by their size, form and shape alone; but rather their skilful, ever-inventive and inexhaustible combination, variation and utilisation: they can be mixed together or left alone, they can enter or exit, ascend or descend, leap and bound, tarry or hurry on, turn around, be loud, soft or intense, with ordinary or extraordinary movement, they can appease or delay, be calm and a thousand other things that no circle, no ruler and no yardstick, save the more noble, more inward part of Man, can understand and bear witness to, if he has been taught and tutored by *Nature and Experience*' (Mattheson's italics, our translation).
34. The widespread use of the *Affektenlehre* during the time of J S Bach and his sons cannot be underestimated, as the following two examples, both taken from Klingfors (1991:27), clearly indicate. [1] In *Das forschende Orchestre* (Hamburg 1721), Mattheson disqualifies music devoid of decent affect as utterly useless: 'Alles, was ohne löbliche Affekte geschiet, heißt nichts, gilt nichts'. [2] In 1739, Johann Abraham Birnbaum (1702-1748), teacher of Rhetoric at Leipzig's Thomasschule from 1721, stated that it is thorough knowledge of rhetoric and excellent insights into the art of poetry that make J S Bach such a good composer: 'Die Theile und Vortheile, welche die Ausarbeitung eines musikalischen Stücks mit den Rednerkunst gemeint hat, kennet er so vollkommen, daß man ihn nicht nur mit einem ersättigenden Vergnügen höret, wenn er sein gründlichen Unterredungen auf die Aehnlichkeit und Uebereinstimmung beyder lenket; sondern man bewundert auch die geschikte Anwendung derselben, in seine Arbeiten. Seine Einsicht in die Dichtkunst ist so gut, als man sie nur von einem großen Componisten verlangen kann' (*Bach-Dokumente* II, ed. Neumann & Schulze, Leipzig/Kassel 1969:441).

so to speak. Music played a central role in this history of ideas in accordance with which the subject's alienation from objective social processes was not so much reflected as reinforced, even celebrated. Since the humanist liberation of the ego from feudalist metaphysical dogma went hand in hand with the bourgeois revolution against the absolutism of the ecclesiastical and monarchist hierarchy, it is hardly surprising to find contemporary notions of music unwilling to tie down musical expression by means of verbal denotation or any other type of reference to anything outside itself. After all, as long as the musical ideals were emancipatory in relation to an outmoded system of thought they could lend support to the development of revolutionary forms of music and society. But what happened when those musical ideals became the rule and their advocates the rulers?

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the institutionalisation of 'classical' music was well under way across Europe. One symptom of that process was the adoption of recurrent buzzwords to signal aesthetic excellence: Art, Masterpiece, Genius, free, natural, complete, utter, inspired, infinite, eternal, sublime, etc.³⁵ By 1854, when Hanslick wrote 'music's complete content and total subject matter is nothing other than tonal forms in movement',³⁶ the radical new instrumental music had become 'classical'.³⁷ Raised to the status of classics, the once emancipatory qualities of the music — its lack of readily perceptible connection to other forms of expression and the increased freedom of emotional expression imagined as the outcome of such independence — were canonised and its Great Composers mummified into those little white alabaster busts of composers that classical buffs used to keep on top of well-polished pianos.³⁸ Although the dynamic independence that the canonised in-

35. Apart from the Wackenroder, Tieck and Hegel citations (page 15), please note [1] A B Marx's view of the sonata as 'form of free development' (Rosen 1990: 83); [2] Hegel's notion of music as 'complete withdrawal into subjectivity', cited in Zoltai (1970: 243) from Hegel (1955: 806); [3] the idea that music 'lifts man above earthly things and imports him to a perpetual upward motion. ... Music's goal is infinite beauty. Consequently it tends to represent the ideal model, the eternal essence of things, rather than things as they are. For, as Rousseau so correctly observed, "Outside the individual being existing through himself, there is nothing beautiful apart from that which is not"', cited by Le Huray & Day (1988: 351-355), quoting Hugues Félicité Robert de Lamennais' 1840 *Esquisse d'une philosophie* (part II, book 8, chapters 1, 2 and book 9, chapter 1). The editors understandably decline to translate Rousseau's obscure aphorism: 'Hors le seul être existant par lui même, il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas'.

'Genius' is an interesting concept. It shifts from its feudal meaning of a model of good work, character etc., someone you should emulate, to signifying, in the Romantic era, an artistic or scientific demigod you cannot emulate. However, in one way the meaning is basically the same, because any model in a metaphysical system of thought (feudal times) is automatically invested with some sort of demi-deity and because such demi-deity in the context of a basically rationalist system of thought (post-Enlightenment Romantic era) will be conceived of as such rather than as a mere model to emulate. Thanks to Ola Stockfelt (90-01-15) for this observation.

36. Our translation of 'Tönend bewegte Formen sind einzig und allein Inhalt und Gegenstand der Musik', from Hanslick's *Vom musikalisch Schönen. Ein Beitrag zur Revision der Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, Leipzig (1854).

37. Please note that 'classical' was not Tieck's, Wackenroder's or ETA Hoffmann's name for it. For Hoffmann (1776-1822), who died before the classics became 'classical', Haydn and Mozart were the first *Romantic* composers (Rosen 1976: 19). For more details about how classical became 'classical', see Ling (1984, 1989: both *passim*); see also Stockfelt (1988: 61-91).

38. To illustrate this point, Dahlhaus (1988: 79) includes a photo of a Beethoven statue, the composer clad in a bourgeois coat folded like a Roman toga. Some alabaster busts were mass produced in tasteful off-white moulded rubber. I [PT] am the proud owner of a hollow rubber Mendelssohn bust which became one of my daughter's favourite bath-time toys, due to its flotation properties and to its propensity, when squeezed, to emit large bubbles under water.

strumental music once possessed had been dynamic and independent *in relation to* other, older, forms of music that were considered fettered by certain types of extra-musical bonding, it was, as ‘classical’ music, stripped of that historicity and, in its new state of sanctity, conserved in conservatories that by 1900 had successfully eradicated anything that might upset the canon, including the improvisation techniques that had once been part of the tradition whose champions the same conservatories professed to be.³⁹ This institutionalisation process left the seemingly suprasocial MUSIC ITSELF deep frozen as sacrosanct notation: a century-and-a-half of *étude-broiler* performers were then recruited to perpetuate it. The perpetuity factor was further enhanced by a tendency for concerts to include less and less new music: for example, the proportion of living to dead composers’ music on the concert repertoire in France fell from 3:1 in the 1780s to 1:3 in the 1870s.⁴⁰

Freedom of expression without verbal or theatrical constraint had been the revolutionary drive of the new instrumental music that was later canonised as ‘classical’. Once canonised, it needed theories that would identify and codify those special qualities. And if the new music’s emancipatory driving power had been its unfettered emotional expression then that would be an obvious trait to conserve in conservatories and to expound upon in centres of musicological excellence.⁴¹ One problem was that the new instrumental music had derived its perceived freedom of expression, its own internal musical rhetoric and drama, *not from being devoid of words or dramatic action but from the fact that similar music had been repeatedly associated with particular words or stage action*. In simple terms, when music went instrumental and crossed the street from the opera house or theatre into the concert hall, it carried with it those links to words and dramatic situations. Rosen’s historical account (1976: 155) of the classical Viennese symphony stresses this point.

39. Much about classical ornamentation practice has had to be rediscovered in recent years and improvising has only really been carried on in the classical tradition by church organists. It is worth remembering that improvisation was one of the most important skills of the European art music tradition: Sweelinck, Buxtehude, Bach, Händel, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Franck and many others were renowned not only as composers but also as *improvisers*. One of Beethoven’s deepest complaints about deafness was that it impaired his ability to improvise.

40. Ling (1989: 173) citing Weber (1977). We are also indebted to Jan Ling for the expression ‘piano broiler’, denoting the conservatory student who, neither improvising nor composing, practises scales, Czerny études and the canonic repertoire in the hopes of emerging as an acclaimed virtuoso in a saturated classical music performance labour market. This may seem like a harsh caricature, but it is less severe than what Hindemith (1952: 218 ff.) had to say of the conservatory mentality: ‘If imagination is the agent that, over and above the acquirement of a reliable technique, ought to direct a future composer’s instruction, we must accuse the majority of our teachers of a lack of this quality’ ... ‘Unacceptable to them is the irregular though sometimes successful way of the nonfitting teacher, but equally repulsive to them is the composer who ... just lives an exemplary musical life which is more instructive to the students than all scholastic rules. It is the average teachers’ unshakable belief in the stiff corset of schedules that is supposed to keep their pedagogic posture in shape, and they do not want to see that corsets are neither salutary nor fashionable. A superregulated bureaucracy, in our everyday life a mere ridiculous nuisance, grows into a disease with frequent fatal issue when applied to the arts and their instruction’ ... [It is absurd to believe] ‘that rigid scholastic regulation by marks, credits, and all other frozen procedures of an outdated system can produce composers and theorists of a quality that our ... society has a right to demand.’

41. ‘Centre of excellence’ is a nebulous buzz-phrase currently in vogue and used indiscriminately by neo-managerialist bureaucrats in the UK as hype to make the institutions that overpay them sound better than they really are. Of course, what exactly constitutes the ‘excellence’ is left unsaid. At this point in our account, however, we are using the phrase as shorthand for academic university departments of music or musicology.

... '[T]he application of dramatic technique and structure to "absolute music" ... was the natural outcome of an age which saw the development of the symphonic concert as a public event. The symphony was forced to become a dramatic performance, and it accordingly developed not only something like a plot, with a climax and a dénouement, but also a unity of tone, character and action it had only partially reached before.'

This dramatic influence is very clear in crossovers between theatre and concert hall, as in Mozart's works where means of expression applied in recitatives and arias turn up regularly in quartets and symphonies. It is also clear in this rondo.

Ex. 1 C P E Bach (1785): Rondo in C minor *fürs Fortepiano*, bars 1-18.

This piece would lose its humour and expressive power if its audience had no idea of what each dramatic cell 'meant' — the rising minor arpeggio, the *piano* diminished sevenths, the virtuoso fantasia/tocatta interruptions, the sudden D \flat Neapolitan chord etc. How anyone can make any sense out of this 'purely instrumental' piece of 'absolute' *Sturm und Drang* music without access to an active vocabulary of affects is hard to understand.⁴² Indeed, in the Performance section of his 1762 *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, C P E Bach (1974:152-3) himself states:

'A musician cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all the affects he hopes to arouse in his audience'... 'It is especially in fantasias... that the keyboardist... can practise the declamatory style, and move audaciously from one affect to another.'⁴³

42. I [PT] first heard the piece at a concert in La Chaux du Fonds (Switzerland) in 1990. It had me in such fits of laughter that I had to be physically restrained by my neighbour (Leo Sanama, Professor of Music at the University of Utrecht). After the concert I told the soloist how much I had enjoyed his spirited performance and how much he had made me laugh. 'Good', he said, and added, referring to bars 15-16, 'I just love that D \flat chord – diddley diddley diddley, sh—, BANG! – it's mad! Makes you wonder what Pappa Bach would have thought if he'd still been around!'

Moreover, when Mozart composed his C major piano concerto (no. 21, K467) in 1785,⁴⁴ C P E Bach's father, Johann Sebastian, had only been dead for thirty-five years, the same sort of time span separating Chuck Berry's *Roll Over Beethoven* (1956) from Nirvana's *Smells Like Teen Spirit* (1991), or The Beatles' *Love Me Do* (1962) from Radiohead's *Paranoid Android* (1997). Of course, Mozart could not hear J S Bach perform on recordings as we could hear the Beatles or Chuck Berry in 2000, but today's ease of access to sound recordings of the recent past is counterbalanced by access to the much wider range of musical influences that reach us via radio and sound recordings. The point is that no-one in their right mind would claim the musical idiom of Chuck Berry in 1956 to be of no relevance in 1991, or that of the early Beatles to be incomprehensible in 1997, let alone that of Holst's *Planets* (1917) to be misunderstood by John Williams when composing his score for *Star Wars* (1977). Nevertheless, even though the C P E Bach example makes no sense if you can't grasp the mood and connotation of each cell, and even though the classical symphony could never have acquired its sense of dramatic narrative without a legacy of affects from the Baroque era, many experts still regard the European instrumental classics as ABSOLUTE MUSIC. As Dahlhaus (1988: 56) explains:

'Early German romanticism dates back to the 1790s with Wackenroder's and Tieck's metaphysic of instrumental music — a metaphysic that laid the foundations of nineteenth-century music aesthetics and, as passed down by Schopenhauer from Tieck and by Wagner from Schopenhauer, reigned virtually unchallenged even in the decades of fin-de-siècle modernism.'

That metaphysic lived on through much of the twentieth century. Even Adorno's hit list of listening types⁴⁵ is clearly Hegelian and music is still sometimes taught as if it were at its best when divorced from words and the representational arts.⁴⁶ Polarising the issue for purposes of clarity, it could be said that followers of the *Autonom-ästhetik* either condemned music, if deemed bad, to an aesthetic purgatory called 'entertainment' (*Trivialmusik*, *U-Musik*) or, if deemed good, raised it to the lofty realms of Art (*Kunstmusik*, *E-Musik*).⁴⁷ It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of musicological texts written since A B Marx have been devoted to constructing and propagating an arsenal of terms and methods describing and extolling the complexities of European instrumental music in the classical tradition at the expense of other musics.⁴⁸ Among those 'inferior others' we find not only the music of peoples colonised or enslaved by the European capitalist classes, but also the 'light music' (*Trivialmusik*) of the nineteenth-century European proletariat oppressed by the

43. The quotation is taken from paragraphs 13 and 15. Of relevance to example 1 are also C P E Bach's comments in paragraph 11 under 'Improvisation': 'As a means of reaching the most distant keys more quickly and with agreeable suddenness no chord is more convenient and fruitful than the seventh chord with a diminished seventh and fifth, for by inverting it and changing it enharmonically, a great many chordal transformations can be attained' (C P E Bach 1974: 438). For more on the central role of *affect* in J S Bach's work, see Klingfors (1991: 26-34) and Bartel (1997).

44. Parts of the slow movement from this concerto occurred so frequently in the Bo Widerberg film *Elvira Madigan* (Sweden 1967) that the concerto has often been subsequently referred to as 'The Elvira Madigan' (see *Mozart 1785).

45. See Adorno (1941: 32-48; 1976: 1-20), Middleton (1990: 57-60), Sharma (2000: 127 ff.).

46. This process is described in detail by Zoltai (1970: 177-261).

47. German musicologists will nevertheless swear there are no negative values in the term *U-Musik*, despite the existence of clear parallels like *U-Bahn* and *U-Mensch*. *Kunstmusik* = art music; *E-Musik* is short for *Ernste Musik*, meaning serious music.

same ruling classes. That deprecation of low-brow by high-brow seems callous, to say the least, because the French Revolution of 1789 and the *Code Napoléon* of 1804, so admired by leading musical figures in early nineteenth-century Germany,⁴⁹ would never have materialised without the support and personal sacrifice of the popular majority. Despite that support, the bourgeois revolution reneged on the promise of liberty and equality for all as it betrayed the fourth estate (workers, peasants, etc.) to such an extent that even reactionary writers like Balzac felt obliged to comment on the deprivation and oppression that the new order imposed upon the working class. You do not have to be a professor of political history to work out that deprivation directly affects people's relationship to music, as the following simple points demonstrate.

- The less money you have, the less you can afford concert tickets, instruments, rehearsal and performance space, etc.
- The less money you have, the less you can afford musical tuition of any kind.
- The less money you have, the more crowded your living conditions will be and the less room you will have to house musical instruments.
- The more cramped your living conditions, the more you will disturb your neighbours when you make music and vice versa.
- The less leisure time you have, the less likely you are able to try out other musics than those readily accessible to you.
- The less money and leisure time you have, the less likely you are to opt for music requiring patient listening or years of training to perform yourself.
- The noisier your work and leisure environments, the less use you have for music inaudible in those environments, or for music demanding that you listen or perform in a concentrated fashion without disturbance or interruption.

Bearing these points in mind, it is clear that Wackenroder's 'right way' of relating to music (see p.15) would be out of the question under the Dickensian conditions that most people would have had to endure in industrial towns and cities across nineteenth-century Europe. Expecting alert attention to the narrative of themes and harmonic progressions in a sonata movement would be unreasonable in such adverse social, economic and acoustic conditions. Nor were the old musical ways of the countryside much of an alternative. Apart from the fact that music connected

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48. For example, it became necessary for musicologists finding important values in non-European musics and needing to describe aesthetic, expressive and social practices quite different to those of European classical music to create their own subdiscipline of ethnomusicology. To this day ethnomusicologists either join the ICTM (International Council for Traditional Music) and subscribe to the *Yearbook for Traditional Music* or the Ethnomusicological Seminar and subscribe to *Ethnomusicology*, while colleagues in the classical field join the IMS (International Musicological Society) and read a plethora of musicology journals like *The Musical Quarterly* or *Music and Letters*. Those of us who also wanted to study other musics had to start our own organisation: IASPM (International Association for the Study of Popular Music).
49. Beethoven, for example, whose Symphony no. 3 in E♭ major (1804: the *Eroica*, Op.55) was originally dedicated to Napoleon Bonaparte, but who, learning of Napoleon's self-proclamation as emperor, erased the words 'intitulata Bonaparte' from the title page. Beethoven objected angrily and prophetically: 'Ist der auch nicht anders wie ein gewöhnlicher Mensch! Nun wird er auch alle Menschenrechte mit Füßen treten, nur seinem Ehrgeize fröhnen; er wird sich nun höher wie alle andern stellen, ein Tyrann werden!' (Arnold Schilder's *Biographie Beethovens* from 1840, cited in Foreword to the Eulenburg pocket score).

with the cycle of the seasons was not suited to life in an industrial town, most members of the new working-class were first or second-generation refugees from semi-feudal repression in the countryside who, unlike bourgeois nationalist folk fans of the late nineteenth century, had little reason to idealise their rural past in musical or any other terms.⁵⁰ Instead, the old folk music was replaced by street ballads, low church hymns, music hall tunes, popular airs from opera and operetta, dance tunes, marches and their equivalents — *Gassenhauer*, *Schlager*, *skillingtryck*, *gam-maldans*, *café-conc'* etc.⁵¹ It was this musical fare that nineteenth-century music authorities branded as light, trivial, trite, crude, shallow, low-brow, commercial, ephemeral entertainment in contrast to the deep, serious, classical, high-brow Art of lasting value which they prized. True, some charitable burghers registered that something was wrong and sought to provide opportunities for the masses to raise their musical standards, but that realisation of high and low in itself indicates that class differences were very much a musical as well as a political and economic matter. So the first probable reason for the longevity of European art music's absolutist aesthetics is that it worked well for a long time as a reliable marker of class membership and identity.

We have already touched on the second reason for the staying power of ABSOLUTE MUSIC: it simply had such a lot going for it. Kick-started by the mighty emotive power of the bourgeois revolution and by the affective expression of the individual subject emancipated from feudal absolutism, it could hardly go wrong. Any old school of thought would get substantial historical mileage from such powerful momentum. In fact, since we still live under capitalism, the ruling socio-economic system in our part of the world since those times, it would be surprising if the initial power behind absolutist notions of music were to have dissipated. After all, even if ABSOLUTE MUSIC is a seriously confused concept, it is certainly no more perverse than the political system with which it has lived in long-standing symbiosis.

The third reason for the resilience of metaphysical music aesthetics to common sense has to do with bourgeois subjectivity and patterns of socialisation. We are referring here to the role which ABSOLUTE MUSIC has played in creating a psycho-social survival kit for the bourgeoisie and, by extension, in maintaining the basic class structure of capitalism. We will try and keep our discussion of this complex issue as short and as clear as possible.⁵²

50. For accounts of varying aspects of these complex issues, see, for example, Alekseev (1986), Dahlhaus (1988), Gammon (1982), Haralambos (1974), Harker (1985), Lee (1970), Ling (1985, 1997), Lloyd (1969), Seeger (1958), Palmer (1974a/b, 1979), Pearsall (1973).

51. Some interesting questions for future research: To what extent does the subject's position in the exchange of commodities influence that subject's attitude to music? A starting point might be Karl Marx's observations on the metamorphosis of commodities (1976: 198-209). Marx's famous C-M-C model describes the economic position in which most of us find ourselves as wage-earners. We have a commodity to sell (our labour) in return for which we receive money with which we can (if we are lucky) buy enough commodities (food, drink, clothing, shelter, entertainment, education) to renew our commodity of labour, for which we are paid etc. Capitalists are, however, as Olofsson (1987: 255) points out, in the opposite corner of the same conceptual boxing ring, because their starting point in the transaction process is the money they own and with which they can buy our labour in order to produce commodities which they can then sell at a profit (to us and others), thereby increasing their capital with which they can then buy our labour etc. This contradiction between the positions of capitalists and wage-earners in the basic transaction of commodities may have had subjective consequences of relevance to music.

'Absolute' subjectivity

An easy way of grasping the idea of mid nineteenth-century bourgeois subjectivity is to let a generic, middle-class urban merchant represent the new bourgeois class and to ask how it might have felt to be that merchant whose parents or grandparents had fled rural poverty of third-world proportions. You would surely be advised to think in terms of 'upward social mobility', because 'free market' competition with all those other ex-peasants — who, just like you, feared nothing worse than mobility back down into the misery from which they had recently risen — demanded that you sell more, better and quicker, and therefore buy or produce more, better, cheaper and quicker than they could. This position of competitive entrepreneurship posed some serious moral dilemmas.

First, those selling or producing the goods or services you (re)sold had to work as hard as possible to produce as much as possible for as little reward as possible. Their loss was automatically your gain, not because you were intrinsically evil but because 'free' competition obliged you to amass capital at the expense of others. It can have been no easy feat of ethical acrobatics to succeed in deriving an income, let alone in accumulating capital, from a constant stream of situations in which you first had to buy labour or goods as cheaply as possible by harping exclusively on the commodity's disadvantages, and then try to sell the same commodity, or the results of the same labour, as expensively as possible to someone else, while solely extolling the commodity's advantages. Such financially motivated manipulation of the truth could never have been a straightforward matter for your conscience, especially if you regularly attended church or synagogue, and were familiar with the last three of the Ten Commandments.⁵³

Second, if you didn't want to lose your grip on the market, you would have to calculate and quantify all values connected with your profession — both your own and other people's time, labour, effort and dedication — in numerical, monetary terms, thereby reducing human subjects, including yourself, to objects and numbers in company ledgers. You would have to cut costs, increase sales, save and invest, plan and postpone. You would have to keep appointments in your diary, meet deadlines for production or sales and generally live by a clock in contradiction with your biological one.⁵⁴

Third, if you made enough profit, you could amass wealth and lead a much more comfortable life than those whose labour or goods you bought on the cheap. Although they would almost certainly be working harder than you, and under much harsher conditions, they would not be rewarded accordingly. On the contrary, they would be more prone to disease, die younger and be less able to provide for their

52. This section of our account originally included a discussion of bourgeois subjectivity using the Nietzschean concept of Primal Fantasy as presented and elaborated by Olofsson (1987) whose approach helps underpin important anthropological and philosophical aspects of our argument. To avoid theoretical overkill, however, we have had to omit that whole section.

53. Those three commandments are: (8) 'Thou shalt not steal'; (9) 'Thou shalt not bear false witness';... (10) 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house ... nor anything that is his' (Exodus, 20: 15-17).

54. These processes would be examples of 'reification' according to the Marxian use of the term. For more on musical coding of subjective time sense, see Tagg (1984). For comparisons between biological and social time, see Young (1988).

families. If you were a Christian in possession of anything resembling compassion or a conscience but chose not to heed Christ's exhortation to 'sell all that thou hast and give unto the poor',⁵⁵ you would need either to convince yourself that less radical forms of philanthropy would have to do, or find ways of justifying the dissociation of your business practices from your religion or conscience.

If you needed to counterbalance the alienating chore of striving for business success with something more human, more dignified, more uplifting, more liberating, perhaps also more fun, you could turn to any combination of love, sport, religion and the arts. Classical music, with its officially proclaimed emotionality and freedom from bonding to the material world, was often used for solace in the home of any good bourgeois who could afford to put a piano in the parlour. As Schubert & Schober's popular parlour classic, *To Music*, put the matter:

'Thou gracious Art, in my darkest hours, when the savage circle of life ensnares me, thou hast kindled my heart with a deeper love and transported me into a better world.'⁵⁶

Musical solace like that must have been balm to the alienated and morally compromised business psyche. If success for your cutting-edge concern in a competitive, 'free market' economy was at all important, it must have been difficult to bring more than nominal amounts of dignity, honesty and humanity into the workplace, but it would be helpful if you could make clear distinctions in your life between business and pleasure, work and leisure, public and private, personal and social, morals and money, natural science and human nature, etc. Any ideas that could rubber-stamp such conceptual polarities would offer welcome relief if you wanted to escape the moral dilemmas we have mentioned. Seen in this light, even the most *outré* statements of Romantic music metaphysics⁵⁷ have to be taken seriously because the institutionalised concept of ABSOLUTE MUSIC provided a kind of get-out clause: if listening to music in the 'right way' was a matter of the emotions, the MUSIC ITSELF and nothing else, then good business ought to be a matter of making money, BUSINESS ITSELF and nothing else. Or, to put it another way, feeling compassion or any other irrelevant emotion while making money would be as inappropriate as thinking about money when listening to instrumental music in the 'right way' (see p. 15). To put it in a nutshell, MUSIC IS MUSIC (ABSOLUTE MUSIC) can only exist in the same way as BUSINESS IS BUSINESS or ORDERS ARE ORDERS. All three statements are of course

55. This was Christ's answer to the rich young man who asked 'what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?' After Christ's exhortation to sell all his belongings and to give the proceeds to the poor, we are told that the young man 'went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said unto his disciples "Verily, I say unto you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven"' (Matthew 19:21-24; the narrative is virtually identical in Luke 18:18-25). Please note that 'hardly' is a translation of *δυσκόλως*, meaning 'with difficulty'. Jesus immediately clarifies how difficult that *δυσκόλως* is: 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle' (*διὰ τρήματος ῥαφιδος*), i.e. impossible.

56. 'Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden, | Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt, | Has du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden, | Hast mich in eine beßre Welt entrückt!' (second verse of *An die Musik*: Schubert 1818, Op.88 N°4). See the discussion of sighing sixths and sevenths in our analysis of *The Dream of Olwen* (tune 1) for one of the music's solace effects.

57. i.e. Wackenroder's 'utter submersion', Tieck's (and Schopenhauer's and Wagner's) 'infinite yearning', Lamennais' 'above earthly things', 'infinite beauty', 'ideal model', 'eternal essence rather than things as they are', Rousseau's 'il n'y a rien de beau que ce qui n'est pas', Hegel's 'retreat into inner freedom... from content' (matter), 'submission to self' and 'renunciation of narrow-mindedness'.

utter rubbish, otherwise we would have no music industry, no War Crimes Tribunal and no anti-capitalist movement; but that is not the point because the effects of the practices characterised by such conceptual absolutism and by the ideological purposes it serves are painfully real. The conceptual dissociation of money from morality, military orders from ethics, and the world outside music from music, all illustrate the way in which capitalist ideology can isolate and alienate our subjectivity from involvement in social, economic and political processes.

Refocusing on MUSIC IS MUSIC, we need to mention one final reason for the staying power of musical absolutism. We are referring here to the way in which members of the haute-bourgeoisie, already at on top of society's monetary pyramid, could easily, by claiming the artistic high ground of musical taste transcending mundane material reality, convince themselves that they were superior to the masses in more than merely monetary terms: they cultivated what established experts agreed was good taste in music, they adopted the 'right way' of listening to the 'right' music; lesser mortals did not. By locating their musical experience outside the material world, the privileged classes were not only able to feel superior: they could also divert attention from the fact that it was they who exerted the real power, they who enjoyed the real material privileges, actually *in* the material world.⁵⁸

In this historical context, the Romantic metaphysics of music and its notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC, both of which became cornerstones in the capitalist state's musical establishment, can be seen as essential supplies in the conceptual survival kit of bourgeois subjectivity. It is for such reasons hardly surprising that conservative academic institutions in a society still governed by the same basic mechanisms of capital accumulation (anarchic competition and financial greed)⁵⁹ have continued to propagate conceptual systems validating dissociation of the subjective, individual, intuitive, emotional and corporeal from the objective, collective, material, rational and intellectual. It is also historically logical that this same dissociation should affect our understanding of music and dance, the most inherently affective of symbolic systems, with particular severity.

58. This paragraph is inspired by Baudrillard's critique (1970:60-61) of consumer society. 'La «Révolution du Bien-Être» est l'héritière, l'exécutrice testamentaire', he writes, 'de la Révolution Bourgeoise ou simplement de toute révolution qui érige en principe l'égalité des hommes, sans pouvoir (ou sans vouloir) la réaliser *au fond*. Le principe démocratique est transféré alors d'une égalité réelle, des capacités, des responsabilités, des chances sociales, du bonheur (au sens plein du terme) à une égalité devant l'Objet et autres signes *évidents* de la réussite sociale du bonheur. C'est la *démocratie du standing*' ... [Ces idées] 'se conjuguent en une idéologie démocratique globale, qui masque la démocratie *absente* et l'égalité introuvable'.

59. The reader may find the following description of money's deification quite useful. 'Since it is an individuated, tangible object, money may be randomly searched for, found, stolen, discovered; and thus general wealth may be tangibly brought into the possession of a particular individual. From its servile role, in which it appears as mere medium of circulation, it suddenly changes into the lord and god of commodities. It represents the divine existence of commodities, while they represent its earthly form'... 'Money is therefore not only *an* object, but is *the* object of greed' ... 'Monetary greed, or mania for wealth, necessarily brings with it the decline and fall of the ancient communities. Hence it is the antithesis to them. It is itself the community, and can tolerate none other standing above it.' (Marx: *Grundrisse* 1973: 221-223)

The Great Epistemological Divide

In the course of our historical account of ABSOLUTE MUSIC, of its imagined self-sufficiency, its institutionalisation, and of its serviceability in patterning bourgeois subjectivity, we mentioned several other ‘absolutes’: BUSINESS IS BUSINESS and ORDERS ARE ORDERS, for example. On several occasions we suggested that these absolutes, including MUSIC IS MUSIC, can be understood in terms of the Enlightenment’s differentiation between the conscious and the self-conscious, between natural science and human nature, between public and private, work and leisure, rational and emotional, etc. These and many other polarities together form the general dualism OBJECTIVISM V. SUBJECTIVISM which, though traceable back to differences in opinion between Plato and Aristotle,⁶⁰ takes ideological centre-stage during the European Enlightenment. This dualism, the Great Epistemological Divide of the subheading to this section,⁶¹ was intrinsic to the establishment of political, economic and cultural institutions of the bourgeois revolution. It has so permeated patterns of thought in capitalist society ever since that attempts to deconstruct it are bound to meet resistance from anyone whose world view — of love, music, art, sport, family, society, politics, the environment, etc., and of how he/she fits into all of that — is shaped in accordance with the precepts of that same epistemological split.

In their examination of how metaphors help us understand and relate to the world we live in, Lakoff and Johnson (1979: 189) describe the Great Divide in the following terms.

‘Objectivism and subjectivism need each other in order to exist. Each defines itself in opposition to the other as the enemy. Objectivism takes as its allies scientific truth, rationality, precision, fairness, and impartiality. Subjectivism takes as its allies the emotions, intuitive insight, imagination, humaneness, art and the “higher” truth. Each is master in its own realm and views its realm as the better of the two. They coexist, but in separate domains.’

Obviously, it is impossible to make sense of metaphor or music without considering the *interdependence* of subjective and objective factors. However, in trying to reach an understanding of that interdependence, essential to a musicology of the mass media, we should not underestimate the crushing predominance of the Great Divide in the system we live under. To quote Lakoff and Johnson again (1979: 192):

‘The Romantic tradition, by embracing subjectivism, reinforced the dichotomy between truth and reason, on the one hand, and art and imagination, on the other. By giving up on rationality, the Romantics played into the hands of the myth of objectivism, whose power has continued to increase ever since. The Romantics did, however, create a domain for themselves, where subjectivism continues to hold sway. It is an impoverished domain compared to that of objectivism. In terms of real power in our society — in science, law, government, business, and the media — the myth of objectivism reigns supreme. Subjectivism has carved out a domain for itself in art and perhaps in religion. Most people in this culture see it as an appendage to the realm of objectivism and a retreat for the emotions and the imagination.’

60. Lakoff and Johnson (1979: 190) draw attention to the difference between Plato’s opinion that truth is absolute and art a mere illusion, and, on the other hand, Aristotle’s view that poetry has much more value than that: ‘ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh’ (*Rhetoric* 1410b).

61. The dualism we are referring to relates to, but is not the same as the Cartesian split between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

In short, the idea of art or entertainment as ‘a retreat for the emotions’ is not far from A B Marx’s notion of music as a ‘Sanctuary of the Higher Arts’ from the 1830s, but, like ABSOLUTE MUSIC, it is still in general circulation. It is clear that we will need to come up with some pretty convincing evidence if we are to have any chance of explaining how music communicates meaning in the modern media.

‘Absolute’ obstacles: a summary

It is possible, from our account so far, to summarise the main obstacles to developing a musicology of the mass media in the following seven points.

1. Notions of ABSOLUTE MUSIC, MUSIC AS MUSIC, THE MUSIC ITSELF, etc. are deeply entrenched in our culture.
2. The same ideas developed under revolutionary circumstances as part of an emancipatory process.
3. The same ideas are a small but important ingredient in bourgeois patterns of socialisation which facilitate the conceptual dissociation, not only of music from anything else, but also of public from private, objective from subjective, rational from intuitive, body from mind, human nature from natural science, emotions from body and/or mind, etc. — the Great Epistemological Divide.
4. The same ideas have been central in institutions devoted to the dissemination of knowledge both in and about music.
5. Through their canonisation and official institutionalisation the same ideas have enabled European art music to be exploited as a marker of class membership and identity.
6. Due to the long-standing hegemony of ABSOLUTE MUSIC in education and research institutions, accepted terminology denoting musical structure is almost exclusively constructional rather than receptional, i.e. it denotes how music’s structural elements are constructed technically rather than how they are perceived or used (see p. 7 ff.).
7. The idea of ABSOLUTE MUSIC and the concomitant conceptual dissociation of music from other forms of human expression has been institutionalised in such a way that the practice of making music (knowledge *in* music / constructional competence) and the understanding of music’s relation to the rest of reality (the metacontextual discourse aspect of knowledge *about* music) are housed in different university departments and faculties. This institutional separation obstructs interdisciplinary approaches essential to the development of a musicology of the mass media.

To complete the picture it is necessary to add three more obstacles to the list. These have been examined in other publications and will not be discussed here.

8. The classical canon’s historically specific reliance on notation as its primary mode of storage and distribution has contributed to the unwillingness and inability of conventional music studies to address musical traditions whose modes of storage and distribution are different. This notational centrality created the impression that nothing of value existed outside the canon.⁶²
9. There has been a neglect and underestimation of the cultural importance of the European bourgeois private sphere and, consequently, of the women pre-

62. See, for example, Tagg (1979: 28-35 or 2000a:38-50; 1982c; 2000c).

sumed to populate it. This neglect has created the impression that almost all music of the classical era was made by men only.⁶³

10. The institutionalised study of European art music has tended to disregard, almost systematically, historical facts that might upset the aesthetic and ideological values it upholds.

Given such a deeply entrenched set of concepts about music, given their long-standing central role in education and research, and, most importantly, *given the ideological significance of the classical canon in the formation of bourgeois subjectivity and class identity*, we are under no illusion that our attempts to deconstruct the concept of ABSOLUTE MUSIC and to provide an alternative will have much impact. Not even several hundred books of this size would make more than the tiniest dent in the armour plating of the ideological war machine we are up against. Mercifully, however, we are not on our own, nor are we the first to enter the fray, as, we hope, the next chapter will show. However, before starting that overview of twentieth-century developments relevant to the main part of this book, and by way of a coda to this chapter, we should mention one final anomaly which conventional music studies and the notion of ABSOLUTE MUSIC have spawned. That anomaly is of direct relevance to the main substance of this research report.

Film music: the final 'absolute' anomaly

The 'historical disregard' listed under point 10 (above) can be illustrated by the exclusion of film music from standard accounts of music history in the Euro-North-American sphere. This exclusion may not be the most important lapse in conventional musicology's collective memory but it is, as we shall see, particularly striking because of film music's historical antecedents *inside* the European art music canon.

Conventional musicology⁶⁴ sees Schönberg and Webern, rather than Steiner or Tiomkin, as heirs of the late nineteenth-century 'masters'. This feat of historical contortion is remarkable for at least three reasons.

1. It either implies that pieces like *Wellington's Sieg*, the *Symphonie fantastique*, or *The Ride of the Valkyries* never existed or, at least, that they are of far less interest than Beethoven's late quartets.
2. It implies that Webern's *Fünf Sätze für Streichquartett* descend directly from the overture to *Die Meistersinger*, whereas Steiner's title music for *Gone with the Wind* has nothing to do with it.
3. It ignores simple facts of historical biography, for example that:
 - before moving to Hollywood, Korngold had received praise for his compositions from Mahler and Puccini, and had works conducted by Mengelberg, Nikisch and Walter.
 - before writing operetta and moving to Hollywood, Max Steiner studied under Fuchs and Mahler;
 - before his debut as concert pianist in the USA and before his subsequent move to Hollywood, Dimitri Tiomkin studied under Glazunov in St. Petersburg;

63. See, for example, Hixon & Hennessee (1993); Neuls-Bates (1996); Öhrström (1987).

64. See footnote 13, p.8 for explanation of 'conventional musicology'.

- after conservatory studies in Budapest and before going into films, Miklos Rózsa studied composition with Honegger.⁶⁵

It would be silly to claim preferential treatment for film music just because of its connections with European art music.⁶⁶ No, by listing the facts above we merely wish to illustrate one way (of particular relevance to this book) in which conventional music history has filtered out events which might upset the canon. Music for early Hollywood talkies by the composers just mentioned provides an example of such filtering, not least because writing film scores at that time constituted a set of musical practices quite similar in function, sometimes even in structure, to the work of composers like Berlioz, Wagner, Liszt or Verdi. In other words, the musical language and practices of classical, Romantic or any other kind of European art music continue their development *not only* into twentieth-century concert music⁶⁷ *but also* into North American and European film music traditions, not to mention other forms of twentieth-century popular music. This means that neither film music nor serialism, neither impressionism nor the electronic avant-garde, neither *musique concrète* nor jazz, nor any other single type of twentieth-century music can claim exclusive birthright from the European classical tradition. Nevertheless, this is just the sort of claim still made in many institutions of musical learning: Beethoven, Brahms, Wagner and Mahler are seen spawning no other progeny than the twentieth-century concert music tradition. Consequently, such descendents of the European classical tradition as Korngold, Steiner, Tiomkin, Rózsa or Waxman — all highly influential in the development of music for moving pictures — are absent from most music history books and courses. Standard accounts of the post-Mahler era (e.g. Grout & Palisca 1981) will either stop somewhere around Debussy and Ravel or end with Bartók, Stravinsky, Schönberg, Berg and Webern, maybe with the odd afterthought on Boulez or Stockhausen.

A few music history books and courses may include a little jazz, now that it has lost the dynamic of its original social base (see next page), but they will hardly ever mention film music. And even if they do include a few words on the likes of Saint-Saëns, Milhaud, Honegger, Hindemith, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Britten, Walton, Thompson or Copland, film work by these composers will probably be absent from the account. Moreover, standard versions of music history seem also unaware of the sort of music listed in cue sheets and early film trade press music columns,⁶⁸ oblivious of the countless times the *Ride of the Valkyrie* or *Also sprach Zarathustra* have accompanied moving pictures,⁶⁹ ignorant about the six Bizet, nineteen Grieg,

65. This list of influential composers, arrangers and musicians in the early days of the talkie could be made much longer; see, for example, the short biographies offered by Lacombe and Rocle (1979). For silent film and figures like Hugo Riesenfeld, see Anderson (1988: xv-xxiv).

66. Of course, other popular music styles cross over with the European art music avant-garde, for example the industrial (see Collins 2002), even the Beatles through George Martin and through Ono's connection with the Fluxus movement (including Cage, etc.).

67. 'Concert music' seems less value-loaded and more accurate than 'art music', 'classical music' etc. when referring to instrumental music of the European art music tradition. If you can talk about 'dance music' and 'film music', it seems quite logical to talk about 'concert music'.

68. A classical/romantic repertoire, of course; see Anderson (1988: xxiv-xxxii), C M Berg (1976: 101-170), Miceli (1982: 40-73), Pauli (1980: 104-112), Schmidt (1982: 14-35), Thiel (1981: 121-137) etc.

69. For discussion of numerous film occurrences of extracts from those two pieces, see Leech (1999).

twelve Mendelssohn and thirty-odd other pieces by composers like Beethoven, Chopin, Delibes, Dvořák, Massenet, Schubert, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and Wagner in Rapée's highly popular *Motion Picture Moods for Pianists & Organists* (1924). Nor is any mention made of the 650 pieces by the same sort of composers (plus Auber, Bellini, Puccini, Rossini, Smetana, Verdi and Weber) recommended for film use by Becce and Erdmann (1927).⁷⁰

Last but not least, standard twentieth-century music history also turns a deaf ear to the complex process whereby the wagnerisms and debussyisms⁷¹ of early Hollywood later combined with the art-music avant-garde, serialism, jazz, rock, popular, electronic and non-Euro-American musics⁷² to provide contemporary film composers with an eclectic store of musical influences. That is why your standard music history will have little or nothing to say about the work of such influential figures as Goldsmith, Herrmann, or Morricone.

The virtual exclusion of film music from the classical canon raises one final issue about ABSOLUTE MUSIC. That issue is important to our discussion, in the next chapter, of alternative approaches to the study of music in the twentieth century. It also underlines what we said earlier about the continued pervasiveness of MUSIC IS MUSIC because it reveals the criteria by which musical practices are included in or excluded from the canon. This matter requires a short explanation.

Any conventional education institution dependent on official approval⁷³ must have visible 'standards'. Given that 'standards' can be met only if they are known in advance, institutions responsible for disseminating knowledge both in and about music must have a well-established idea of what should be taught, and of what is good and bad. Canons come in handy here because their very purpose is to sort the good from the bad. They also give a clear idea of what should be taught, and they are established and known in advance. A musical canon offers such institutions further advantages: [1] it usually consists of quite a narrow, and internally coherent, range of musical styles, techniques and ideas; [2] it is relatively constant and can be kept 'as it is' to be repeated year after year because it is historically severed from the social base of its genesis and growth, such severance protecting it from the need to change in response to any ongoing social, political or technological processes. Consequently: [3] teaching is easily packaged and more manageable; [4] course content, once established, can be recycled year after year with the minimum of hassle; [5] teaching staff require little or no reschooling; [6] the institution can be easily compared with all the others doing the same sort of thing; [7] expense and insecurity

70. Pauli (1980:148), counting data in Erdmann & Becce (1927).

71. Maurice Jaubert, referring in 1937 to the early days of music for the talkies, states: 'on a vu naître une sorte de langage musico-cinématographique alliant les moins recommandables des recettes wagnériennes (n'oublions pas la formidable prédominance de l'élément germanique, même et surtout en Amérique, dans la corporation des compositeurs de films) aux suavités pseudo-débussyistes' (cited in Porcile, 1969: 43-44).

72. Using the expression 'ethnic music' would mean that the music of our own culture must be 'ethnic' to someone who does not belong to our εθνος. This would be perfectly fair, but to avoid problems of ethnocentric terminology it would be more correct to use the clumsy phrase 'non-Euro-(North)-American music'.

73. In the UK these days, official approval entails mindlessly neo-managerialist auditing terror. For details, see 'Audititis: the Contagion' | www.tagg.org/rants/audititis/audititis.html |.

associated with innovation and reform is minimised; [8] research orientation does not need to change or face the insecurity of paradigm shifts; [9] students and teachers know exactly what they're doing even if they don't know why; [10] the institution is, in management theory at least, easier to run.

We have already seen how the revolutionary potential of instrumental music in late eighteenth-century Europe was falsified in the institutionalised 'classical' canon, how it was cut off from the socio-political conditions and processes in which was born and from which it grew. Once severed from that dynamic social and stylistic flux, it could be frozen, embalmed, packaged, taken to the 'museum' (or conservatory), and treated in isolation as music and nothing else, its qualification as 'absolute' further motivated by its original aesthetic of freedom from what were seen as restrictive bindings to words, to stage action and to affects. Unlike concert music in a classical or even a jazz vein, film music is still in a dynamic state of social and stylistic flux. Even if much more of it sounds much more like European classical music than most jazz ever did, film music is still less likely than jazz, or even rock and pop music, to be the topic of books or articles in learned music books and journals. If structural resemblance to instrumental music in a European art-music style were a criterion for inclusion, Herrmann and Morricone would be in the canon; Parker and Coltrane would not, however revolutionary their musical innovations and the social movement of which their innovations were once a part. Parker and Coltrane, certainly through no fault of their own, fit the canon better because their music, with no paramusical concomitants readily perceptible from today's perspective, is more palatable to institutions steeped in the legacy of ABSOLUTE MUSIC. Jazz is more acceptable also because it draws on a much narrower range of styles than film music does: it is more stylistically self-contained and coherent. Since film music is so hugely eclectic, since its very name specifies connection with the paramusical, and since it is forever changing, it is less canonisable, harder to package, and virtually impossible to recycle as identical course content year after year.

This final anomaly of conventional music studies underlines the self-evident fact that you cannot rely to any significant extent on any standard literature, even less on the aesthetic or conceptual standards of established institutions, if your aim is to improve on, or to present an alternative to, those very standards. Since the classical canon and its idea of MUSIC IS MUSIC have until recently been so pervasive in our institutions of musical learning, we are obliged to look elsewhere to find the ideas and information that can help us meet the challenge presented on page 7: *to reach the point where musicology can adequately meet the ethical and educational demands that music's central role in the audiovisual media make upon it.*

Thankfully, a number of alternatives to the standard fare of musical academe have been in circulation for some time. The next chapter will therefore discuss those alternatives in order to provide a fuller background to the more specific aims and methods of the work presented in this book.