

Introduction

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Music and screens Mediations in the new digital landscape

Música y pantallas. Mediaciones en el nuevo escenario digital

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One of the basic ideas behind the prestigious journal «COMUNICAR» seems to us to be that in order properly understand education and communication it is not enough just to examine them separately within the framework of their own respective scientific traditions. On the contrary, to understand these and other cultural phenomena, it is convenient, even necessary, to look at the various facets of these phenomena. Consequently, today more than ever it is vital that sciences open up, communicate and enrich each other by crossing the thresholds that they have hitherto failed to breach due to the restraints of their respective scientific traditions. This is the case with communication and music, which is covered by issue 34 of «COMUNICAR».

No matter that music is one of the forms of sound used in human communication – in this case to express what words cannot say; in spite of the fact that music, especially some of its more popular manifestations, is fully endowed with features that characterize the phenomena that have long interested the majority of communication researchers and is often inseparable from them; the study of music and of communication have followed separate paths for years. There are many reasons for this, obviously related to a historical context which we can refer to here as Modernity.

We refer to the general meaning of the term when we speak of the establishment of a series of foundations, on the ideas' level, that supported the construction of the industrial society and which have also provided the base for various subjects to display their actions at its very heart. As we know, reason and culture occupied a preeminent place in these foundations. That ideal framework also welcomed the development – the overwhelming breakthrough – of a type of music known for more than two centuries as classical, which gave music an autonomous sphere, namely art, structured by taste and ruled by principles of authenticity and beauty.

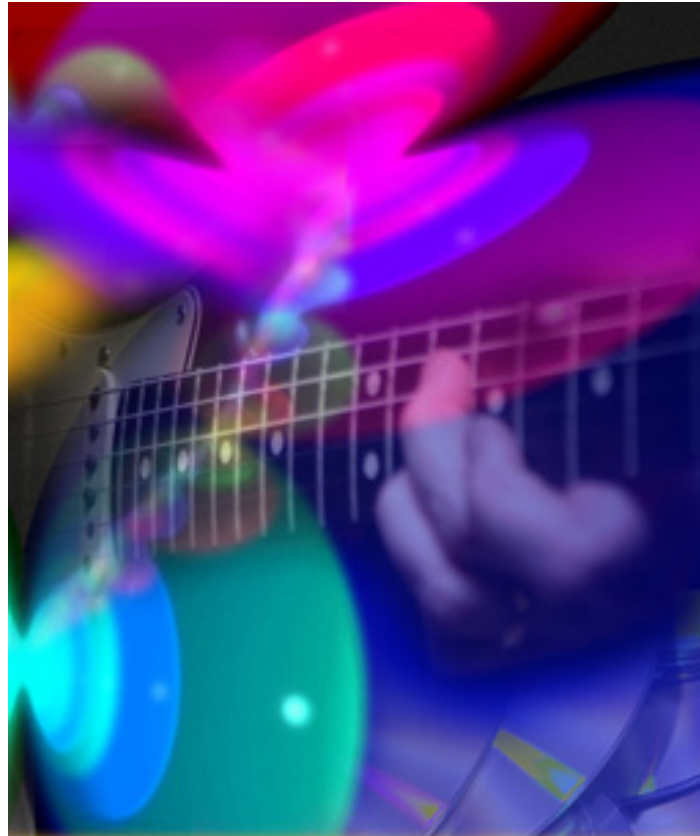
Classical music played a leading role in the establishment of this artistic sphere, along with other fine arts, institutionalizing certain modes of sound – seeing the accumulation of a canonical repertoire of creations, frequently sublime – participating in the development of musical activities (modalities of access and use, depending on the various social actors) and its study (academic scene, object, method, basic theories). Music, like any other cultural form, is related to the social order.

It is also clear that the functions that music satisfied in industrial society – both society as a whole as well as specific groups and individuals – are not only limited to those which classical music most notably fulfils. Before, it coexisted with other forms of music – also subject to institutionalization – that were classified within the fields of popular and mass culture. Of these three ideal types established within the scene of Modernity to contain – socially channel and mark – the cultural practices of the popu-

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lation, it was the culture of the masses that was weighed down from the beginning with negative components. It was not to the liking of high culture as it did not conform to the required canons of beauty and authenticity, and it was based on mediations associated to its industrial condition: technological (in production and reproduction), commercial (economic ends that guided the elaboration of cultural works) and social (as a space for ideological and commercial manipulation); and as a consequence it was despised. And it was as if classical and popular music were not always supported on a specific technology, or as if they were completely removed from profiting from copyright or payment for access to enjoy a work, or if all types of music were, definitively, not cultural products specific to a historic medium – with possible meanings and uses for socially situated individuals and groups. In sum: that's Modernity! (although it is curious to think that, while the ideal bases of a society help its integrants to think and understand their surroundings and develop within them, they also place veils over us to hide the reality of what we are and the circumstances that occur within it).



In any case, the institutionalization of those three cultural spheres included the one related to their fields and modes of study (that is, the one concerning its theoretical direction and dominant methodologies). Such that if musicology was to classical music then anthropology was to popular music, while the music of the masses would have to be dealt with by the youngest of the sciences, communication. And we say would have to deal with for in spite of the obvious communicational condition of music, and that that type of music is organized around a powerful industry that allows it to be consistently present in the daily lives of the population, it would still not be taken into account by the science of communication.

This is all the more surprising for being well-known. The science of communication was, however, created mainly to concern itself with processes that affect public opinion and cultural industries that provide certain forms of entertainment – frequently based on the symbolic, vicarious satisfaction of specific emotions. Nevertheless in terms of scientific study, sound in general and music in particular have been historically passed over in favour of image.

There would be a long wait until the direction of the scientific study of communication changed, to stop focusing solely on certain media and communicative forms, and to understand communication within broader frameworks – especially the cultural – and thus comprehend cultural products (communicated or

communicable) as a series of elements within our reach that we can use to give meaning to our lives and what occurs within them, to channel the satisfaction of our emotions and apportion ourselves a certain well-being – via the symbolic technological supernatural, as defined by Ortega y Gasset. And with that opening-up of directions in communication, the phenomena that entered the orbit of this science would also widen, converging with the advances – focuses, objects of study – achieved in the field of music.

Generally, the sciences are now embarking on new journeys, broadening and diversifying focus, crossing over narrow disciplinary thresholds that used to separate one from the other for their own mutual enrichment. This is not only permitted by what we define as Postmodernity – that is, the gradual dismantling of several of the supposed ideals of Modernity – but it is also required by the profound movements that various fields and diverse forms are undergoing and through which culture develops today. Technologies change, cultural practices change, the established actors and scenes change. And music plays a leading role in this process.

The phenomena change and, in time, the sciences that attend to them as well. And out of this, we conceived this special edition of «COMUNICAR», with the idea of airing some of the approaches that broaden and enrich both the study of communication as well as music, or more generally, sound today. We have only been able to incorporate some of these ideas, since there are many focuses that come together around the themes, and the objects of study that they embrace are even more numerous. Therefore, we had to set criteria for organizing the selection of authors and subjects. Without going into detail, it is worth mentioning that all the works published combine the teaching experience of veteran writers who lay down foundations and lines that others can follow, with tendencies that point to another series of younger investigators – whose task it is to deepen the renewal of these studies.

The first article is by Klaus Bruhn Jensen who offers a panoramic vision of the investigation of sound as seen from the field of communication. Centred on word (written and spoken), music and sound surroundings, it makes a brief journey through the main traditions that have marked the study of each of these spheres. Although limited to the English-speaking scientific universe, the article establishes a quite accurate diagnosis: studies of sound have yet to find a specific home in the academic world, although its current emergence should help to start defining that position.

The work by Antoine Hennion is based on the tastes of amateur musicians and music fans. Hennion's approach to musical taste is theoretically complex, as it is not restricted to mere traditional contemplation as an instrument for defining identity and establishing differences. On the contrary, with a pragmatic focus he observes musical taste in situ as a staging that involves the subject and the object, among others; taste is a collective, orchestrated, reflective activity. Reflective, like this work which starts off from musical taste and moves on to a more profound methodological reflection on the sociology of culture.

The article by Aguilera, Adell and Borges also includes theoretical reflections: those needed for presenting some of the reasons that go towards explaining certain increasingly common cultural practices, although still new, among the population of our societies. These practices include various uses of music in the social networks, particularly in Facebook: uses supported in music – sharing it, the communication that arises from this act of sharing – among other ends to introduce and explain oneself to the rest and to construct an act of communication with them. There are also other uses that represent modes of consented or non-consented music appropriation.

Although also centred on social networks, Cecilia Suhr deals with a different line of investigation: the recommendations of experts to musicians – some of whom are already known, others who are working to be known – for taking advantage of the possibilities offered by MySpace to promote their work among users of that social network. Basing her work on a few precise notions, Suhr transcends the mere description of these recommendations to perceive certain social protocols in them.

Michael Bull's work develops a line of study and reflection that has already brought him recognition: he centres on mobile music – on its easy portability thanks to innovations like the MP3 player, supports like the iPod and the mobile phone – and on the experiences that user has with it. Taking your music with you symbolically transforms all the contexts we enter with music, to gain a certain well-being through the right here, right now – in the sense of Ortega y Gasset. Thus, we filter the external stimuli that suit us, we privatise the spaces we move through and we give them a new – although thanks mainly

to products from the cultural industries – aesthetic dimension of its own. Through this desire for total mediation we paradoxically enter the dream of non-mediated experience: direct access to the world of our emotions.

Héctor Fouce is concerned with a theme that is becoming classic in current studies on music: the changes, with a certain technological base, that the music industry and user practices are going through. Based on results from a recent investigation, Fouce offers data and reflections with the aim of providing keys to explain these facts.

Mark Grimshaw tackles sound in relation to a social and communicational phenomenon so highly characteristic of today: videogames. Based on pre-validated concepts for the study of film soundtracks (diagetic and non-diagetic), Grimshaw examines and explains the sensation of immersion that the gamer feels through the sound environments and his/her interaction with them.

Kazadi wa Mukuma's article deals with globalization and makes a case for it. But he doesn't examine it by referring to the usual points of view on cultural globalization but focuses on the instruments that help achieve a kind of homogeneity in tastes and create musical communities. Based on concepts like zones of cultural interaction and the examination of three traditional African instruments – their incorporation into other cultures where they are used differently – Mukuma offers a new vision of certain requirements of globalization in music.

The article by Jaime Hormigos takes a pronounced sociological direction to describe in general terms some of the functions of music in our societies in relation to the construction of cultural identities. The changes that music is going through today in its diverse orders – technological, symbolic, structural – constitute the reference framework of this article.

Manuel and Felipe Gértrudix end this special edition with a different perspective, unusual in this edition of «COMUNICAR» dedicated to music and communication, but perhaps this is not so unexpected in this journal! The Gértrudix brothers write about these phenomena from the educational point of view. More precisely, supporting their arguments on the suppositions of skills training, they examine the educational potential of these new products of popular culture. And they not only examine this potential but give it their support, applauding the educational community for considering the didactic use of these new cultural realities.

It is only fair to end this introduction with acknowledgments and thanks to various people and institutions that have made publication of this edition of «COMUNICAR» possible. We would like to thank Ana Sedeño and Eddy Borges for setting up an effective Technical Committee to steer this special edition and the work they put into it. Apart from the journal itself, special mention must also go to the Ministry of Culture and the University of Málaga for subsidizing this and previous publications of the journal.