

ORGANISED SOUND AND TONAL ART IN LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

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The essays in this volume were initially prepared for a colloquium hosted by the editor in December 1991 at Darwin College, Cambridge. The purpose of the meeting was to bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars interested in a comparative study of music in past societies, with a view to sharing ideas on specific questions and methods of approach. The task we set ourselves was to explore ways of developing the study of music in prehistoric and early historic societies from materials which rarely if ever include music notation, yet provide a rich array of evidence for the existence of music-making, in the form of sound tools, hieroglyphs, epigraphy, and in some cases literary references and iconographic representations, which together yield information on aspects of performance and on many issues relating to the socio-cultural study of music. The aim was thus to reach 'beyond the artefacts' by assembling them in coherent ways in order to establish common ground and prepare the way for further investigation.

The meeting was informed not so much by an 'area studies' approach nor by artificial division into chronological blocks or types of data; rather, in an attempt to traverse these often mutually exclusive boundaries, the following coordinating themes were addressed:

1. Rites of rulers: music as expression of material and spiritual power
2. Evidence for culture contact in music-archaeological sources
3. Music and gender
4. Music and its physical contexts: instruments, materials, architecture, theory, and sound science

Given the rarity of opportunities for open-ended encounters of this nature, engagement was inevitably exploratory, here and there quite tentative, yet all the time identifying and following through ideas which will hopefully be considered insightful, and useful for subsequent development and application.

WHAT IS MUSIC?

Organised sound has been part of human expression since the development of the species. Sounds for communication, signalling, and reinforcement of group identity became absorbed and developed into more organised rituals associated with the recognition of a spirit world—hence the use of sound in religious ceremonies and as an apotropaic device; and in social activities for leisure, pleasure and relaxation (cf. Buckley 1994, *passim*).

When we employ terms such as 'sound', 'music', 'noise', in our own societies, we do so on the presumption that the nature of their distinction is agreed. However, music is different things to different people. Not all of what musicologists study is classified as 'music' in the societies concerned. Not every society has a word for music; and some have individual terms for various kinds of music, determined usually according to social function. The study of music, like any other form of human behaviour, is a study of society. We cannot separate them. To focus on the sound product, or the sound tool, is a

starting point; but its existence depends on how and why it is used, what social purpose it serves. One of the greatest difficulties at times is to ensure whether an artefact with sound-producing potential may actually have been intended for that purpose.

Music is tonal art. It is performance art and spectator art: some play instruments, sing, or dance, while others constitute an 'audience'. Depending on the kind of occasion, an audience may be more or less actively participant, vocally (e.g., with cries of approval, or joining in by singing or beating time), in terms of gesture (e.g., intermittent or concluding applause, moving to the rhythm), or attending in silent concentration. But this silence is not inaction or non-participation. What takes place emotionally, psychologically, socially in every sense, is intrinsic to a performance and is essential to explaining the entire event which is comprised of the various communicative levels between performers and audience.

An audience may be present because the performer is liked, in other words, in order to satisfy leisure needs, and to experience emotional excitement in a controlled environment, what the sociologist Norbert Elias has termed the 'controlled decontrolling of emotional controls' (see Elias 1986). On the other hand, an audience may comprise members of an élite such as at a court, or members of the crowd who have to be impressed by imperial grandeur in an exercise of conspicuous consumption, legitimation of authority, and display of power, as in the so-called 'theatre states'. Or they may be more equal participants in a public or private ritual, such as a funeral, a wedding, a religious ceremony. In each case they are also taking part in a ritual of group-cohesion, their presence underlining their membership of a social group, and their status within it.

Some of these issues are being addressed in the development of multidisciplinary approaches to the study of music. One of these is what has come to be termed 'Music Archaeology', 'Archaeomusicology', 'Archaeology of Music', or 'Palaeomusicology'; occasionally 'Historical Ethnomusicology', though this usually has more limited chronological, and regional, implications. In some ways it is distinct from ethnomusicology as currently practiced by many, in that the latter form of investigation commonly depends on the presence of contemporary, living musicians, on making recordings of performances, and on participant observation within a given culture (often one which is foreign to the investigator). However, in other ways ethnomusicology promises closer engagement with the concerns of music archaeologists in that scholars in both fields share an interest in the wider implications of musical activity: the social significance or meanings of what they study, and its cultural symbolism. But the hodiecentric thrust of much ethnomusicology (indicated not least by the use of the term 'historical ethnomusicology' to denote exceptions to the rule), and the positivism of much that is conducted in the field of music archaeology—which is often little more than (palaeo-)organology, the identification and classification of sound tools—indicate the extent of the breach which still hinders development of common ground. Increasingly too, many historical musicologists are engaged in the development of more context-sensitive approaches to the study of music. However, although the compartmentalisation of all of these branches of the discipline is becoming increasingly less rigid, the broadening of the base can only be achieved by focusing on common conceptual frameworks (such as questions of social and mental processes) rather than on particular time periods or regions (see Blacking 1991, Buckley 1991, Chadd 1991).

It is beyond dispute that extensive close-focus work will always remain essential. Identification, classification, and analysis of primary source materials are fundamental to any further study. But to draw a parallel with medical science, for example, identification and mapping of chromosomes or viral activity can be ends in themselves, but they serve no purpose beyond basic data-gathering unless approached from a perspective of how they affect the individual human body, and groups of bodies in interaction, i.e.,

people's behavioural responses to one another. Similarly, compartmentalisation of the human body according to medical specialisation (eyes, ears, brain, heart, nervous system) has been shown to lead only to certain kinds of understanding. To exclude consideration of the whole person, lifestyle, (interpersonal) behaviour, attitudes, may be to overlook vital information in explaining patterns of illness, disease, and wellbeing. How much more does an overspecialised, isolationist approach exclude vital elements in our efforts to understand wider and more complex social activity, activity which cannot so readily be broken down into tangible, separately functioning components?

There are many ways of studying music, and many aspects to be considered. The most common is to investigate how it sounds or may have sounded, the details of its technical structures, and how to reproduce it or bring it to life as performance. But there are few repertoires accessible to us in notated form from the long history of human music-making. And even where there are, we know so little about the past, for sounds have not been preserved until very recently, and in any case, reproduction is largely dependent on, and determined by, what is acceptable to us, what we know, and of what we are capable.

My purpose here is not so much to engage in a critique of modern reconstruction (which is dealt with at some length in the paper by Catherine Homo-Lechner) as to point out its severe limitation as a main criterion in the historical study of music. Apart from the fortuitous survival of manuscripts which are now preserved in research libraries, very little of the world's musics are or ever were committed to notation or to any form of written description. It is therefore unfortunate that alternative emphases such as organology, archaeology, literary references, tend commonly to be viewed merely as resources *faute de mieux*—remnants of lost civilizations whose faint tracks we study because of lack of any other kind of evidence. This is a fundamental error. Hierarchies of evidence are misplaced, as Moses Finley reminds us in his critique of artefact-centred enquiry with respect to the false separation of archaeology and history in the study of Ancient Greece: 'There can ... be no question of the priority in general or of the superiority of one type of evidence over the other; it all depends in each case on the evidence available and on the particular questions to be answered' (Finley 1985, 20). In other words, history is everything we have at our disposal: all evidence tells us something and is part of a greater whole. Furthermore, whatever our enquiry, if we are not comparative we are not going beyond the first step.

It is of course self-evident that we cannot study what is not there; if we had notations relating to performances at a Greek *symposion* or a Carolingian court, we would of course be all the richer. But we would not thereby necessarily be richer in circumstantial information sufficient to reconstruct or understand the dynamics of a performance event. And this is where the absence of notation has sometimes incorrectly been viewed as an absence of useful evidence for music of the past. To return again to Finley: 'I see no reason for distinguishing the "evidence" ... and the "background of what we know" from other kinds of sources. What ties them all together in the end is the conceptual framework' (Finley 1985, 26).

None of the more traditional areas is broad enough to embrace what is the unique contribution of an Archaeology of Sound: the investigation of intentional sound produced by human beings for others in all kinds of contexts; and not unrelatedly, the wider issue of the 'natural' and 'artificial' soundscapes in which people live and by which they are affected at multiple psycho-emotional levels. While much of the work to date among music archaeologists does indeed focus on ancient cultures, and on the evidence for music-making among oral-tradition societies, or societies whose notated heritage was partial or may have disappeared in the course of time, the field does nonetheless serve to draw attention anew to questions which may be applied to all music cultures, regardless of time

or place, by highlighting types of data which can yield important, context-sensitive information for comparative study of the history of not alone music and performance, but of patterns of behaviour fundamental in the long-term history of humankind.

A persistent problem which limits more open engagement with the study of the history of music, and the fine arts more generally, is the predominance of a legacy of engagement with aesthetic and moralising evaluation, to which many seem to feel obliged to contribute. So deeply ingrained is the western inheritance of concern for moral and civic order that the struggle for more scientific detachment is still singularly underdeveloped when compared with achievements in the natural sciences. This problem is indeed worthy of study as part of western intellectual history in general, but it is also one with which each of us needs to reckon, if we are to engage dispassionately in the research enterprise.

Because it is more difficult to draw distinctions within music-as-sound-structure such as exist, say, between prose and poetry, or between the contents of account books, political speeches, or mythological tales, there is commonly a tendency to view the study of music (as also dance, painting, sculpture) as primarily motivated by aesthetic concerns—shape and style, moral tone-setting, art object, rather than serving as ‘functional craft’, used to meet social needs of many different kinds. The medium as perceived today tends to distract attention away from its multiple historical (and contemporary) messages. We would not really be concerned with the beauty or finesse of language in civil service documents, or wage bills, for example. Though there may be appreciation and evaluation of levels of scriptorial competence, their content and purpose will be of more interest as historical evidence. But music, painting, sculpture are usually discussed, at least in part, in terms of whether they may be regarded as ‘beautiful’, in other words, as invariably having a high cognitive value (for us moderns, by implication), rather than in more appropriate terms of whether we may establish whether they were fitted for their intended purpose according to those whose cultures they represent.

Coupled with that is the difficulty of consciously distancing ourselves from a medium, the form of expression that is music, which is so powerful in its psycho-emotional and physiological effect. Whether we wish it or not, sound—perhaps in some ways even more than vision—arrests our attention, making a direct impact upon our associative memory before we have had time to choose whether or not we wish to respond to its source or give it our undivided concentration. Sounds are immediately pleasing, soothing, alarming, summoning—whether signals, as in the case of a fire alarm, an ambulance siren, a church bell, a military bugle, or in the more developed, mimetic medium of a brass band, a symphony orchestra, an Indian sitar, Buddhist chant, or an Indonesian gamelan orchestra. And so, when we wish to make a study of any of these, our subjective responses as audience are also involved. Even if our responses may be different from those for whom the sounds and structures were first intended, this quality of ‘relative autonomy’, the capacity for the arts to be transferred in time, place, and indeed meaning, makes it even more difficult to undertake cooler investigation unless we take cognizance of our emotional responses. Archaeology brings us down to earth, literally as well as conceptually, and investigation of the nature and uses of rather mundane artefacts can indeed help give a balance to the overall picture.

THE SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

The contributions which follow are grouped under three main headings, beginning with a critique of research methods in music archaeology and in performance of what is usually nowadays called 'early music' (most of which is exceedingly 'late' when compared to the perspectives under discussion here!).

Cajsa Lund reflects on the problem of why mainstream archaeologists continue to ignore the work of music archaeologists. Her comments are addressed mainly to Scandinavian research which tends in this regard to be more global or wholistic than applies in the English-speaking world. Lund's criticism of music archaeologists is that they do not engage in an exploration of the wider implications and potential of their research, usually limiting themselves to organology rather than raising questions about the people behind the artefacts. In her view, the scope of music would be better understood and seen as more relevant to archaeology if those who study the subject were more context-sensitive: 'we should view the [sound tools] as mirrors and on no account as an end in themselves'.

Catherine Homo-Lechner focuses on ways of 'reading the past' in the reconstruction of performance. Beginning with an historical overview of French activities in this field since the eighteenth century, she discusses the gradual transformation of attitudes, and addresses a number of questions, including limitations arising from subjective aesthetics, and problems relating to choice of material in instrument manufacture, playing styles, performance contexts and mentalities. She challenges many of the usually unspoken assumptions embedded in the use of the term 'authenticity'. In pointing out that every experiment is also an act in the present time, and hardly a leap into the past, she argues for the value of empirical testing, but preferably in an atmosphere of openness, admission of the details of decision-making processes, and their attendant doubts and uncertainties.

In the next section, three essays are devoted to materials from different parts of Asia from a long-term historical perspective. Inge Skog tests the historical soundness of myths of origin, and of recent scholarship, in an enquiry into the use of gongs and gong repertoires among the Lotud peoples, rice-farmers of northern Borneo. Exploring the hypothesis that the gongs were introduced from Java, where they were believed by several scholars to have existed for some 2000 years, Skog rejects this theory which, in his view, was based on an incorrect assumption about the dating of certain Javanese court documents. Skog's conclusion is that a myth grew up about the great antiquity of Gamelan Munggang because of its sacred symbolism and association with the power of political rulers. Thus it represents a not unfamiliar procedure in exercises of power legitimisation: in stressing its role as a symbol of long-term continuity, the presumed antiquity of the object became a 'cultural necessity'.

With regard to the supposed Javanese origins of Borneo gongs, Skog suggests that the former are not likely to be much older than the latter, and that while suspended gongs may date back some 500 years in both regions, gong chimes and ensembles are unlikely to predate the seventeenth century in either case. Pursuing an examination of linguistic terminology, archaeological finds, anthropological data, and recent as well as current performance practices, he demonstrates the value of medium- and long-term study, not only in pursuit of the particular questions at issue, but also as an index of the nature of changing patterns of use, in this case, from the signalling and military function of gongs to their more elaborate transformation into 'musical instruments' in sacred royal ceremonial, and court and village orchestras. In a sense, this paper constitutes a micro-survey of what is a universal long-term process of human-musical behaviour. But it is important to bear in mind, however, that later developments do not necessarily or

invariably replace older practices: for example, military signalling continues to exist alongside more complex music structures in the world at large. This point is often overlooked in historical surveys.

Using examples of groups of artefacts from two sites from the Chinese Neolithic, Jiahu (5000 BC) and Dawenkou (2500 BC), Kenneth DeWoskin explores different interpretative strategies available to music archaeologists. Implicit, and eventually explicit, in his criticism of the limitations and shortcomings of contextless organology and 'mere description', DeWoskin illustrates how materials, artefacts, and find contexts can be explored to shed light, variously, on patronage, political power structures, shamanism, numerology, and other aspects of mentality. Drawing also on the evidence of inscriptions on the giant bell set from Hubei, the tomb of the Marquis Yi of Zeng (c.433 BC), he shows the value of comparative work in reconstructing the past, not least because of long-term continuities in so many aspects of Chinese culture. In the process of setting out the arguments, DeWoskin demonstrates how musical instruments may be read, like any other 'thing', as products of particular social configurations and as indicators, 'texts', from which we can 'read' about interdependent relations between people.

Materials from the Indus, or Harappa, civilization (c.2400–1700 BC) are rich and appear to include all organological categories, as well as providing some information on dance and social contexts of performance (religious cults in particular). The evidence for culture contact between the two peoples is consistent with other sources which attest to their active trading links. In addition to what may be termed 'indigenous' instruments associated with the Indus peoples, Reis Flora's paper demonstrates the scope of iconographic sources which include Sumerian types (from southern Mesopotamia); he also investigates music instrument terminology in surviving Indus script. However, the question remains open whether these sources reflect transmission of actual sound tools or only of cultural symbols from Sumer.

The concluding section is focused on European Antiquity. The value of the iconographic medium as music archaeological data is highlighted in two papers on Ancient Greece. In a survey of Attic vase paintings (6th and 5th centuries BC), Jane Snyder demonstrates their usefulness as a source of information on amateur domestic music-making among high-born women of the Classical world, which fills serious gaps in the literary record. Since women were not permitted to practice reason (*logos*), their musical literacy and communication through song represented an important means of expressing their own ideas and passing on their cultural values. Analysing representations of Sappho, amateur women musicians at home, female professional players, and mythological figures (Muses and maenads), Snyder suggests that, while allowing for a certain 'gender bias' on the part of the male painters responsible for those images, all such scenes may be regarded as images of 'real' women in contemporary settings.

Jon Solomon's paper deals with pre-Classical Hellenic pottery. He explores materials from the Middle and Late Geometric periods (c.800–700 BC) for their potential as an information resource on attitudes, ideas, and perceptions of music, as well as on the existence of certain instruments, such as lyres, in the pre- and early literate periods. In raising the question of realistic representation versus the demands of Geometric serial design, he concludes that while groups of dancers are likely to be related specifically to occasions of ritual celebration for which some of the vases were intended, we cannot be certain that series of musicians unequivocally represent realistic ensemble playing.

In an analysis of the *De musica* by Philodemus of Gadara (b. c.110 BC, d. 35–25 BC), Daniel Delattre discusses his recent research on the surviving papyrus fragments from Herculaneum and their importance as insight on what we might nowadays call 'cultural

capital'. (And to return to a point made above—one also acknowledged by Delattre—they involve issues which are still relevant on the eve of the third millennium). Delattre's analysis deals with an examination of the differences between the Classical Greek and Republican (and Imperial, after 27 BC) Roman views of music; the Greeks believed that musical harmony affected the body (by virtue of its healing and curative properties) and the soul (through its effect on mood and moral behaviour), hence they were unquestioningly accepting of direct correspondences between melodic modes and psychological states, as is attested from the sixth to the second centuries BC from Plato and Aristotle to Heraclides Ponticus: 'He who learnt to play a stringed instrument simultaneously learnt a sense of measure (in all senses of the word)'. Hence, when addressing the topic, Greek writers always had a clear idea of the *kind* of music they were discussing, being intensely concerned with its implications for good and bad model-setting, and with its high cognitive value in the education of the young. The Romans, however, had a different attitude, commenting on empirical, even subjective, experience, and this may be related in turn to their correspondingly low level of interest in the uses of music in education: the question of ethics was not crucial, and so some Roman writers expressed interest in their subjective responses to music without fear or threat to the social order. Delattre points out that while the strictness of the Greek attitude predominated for several centuries, there were other voices expressing scientific curiosity and an interest in individual feelings and sensations. There is evidence of tension between championing the preeminence of the *logos* on the part of the Stoics, and the Epicureans who believed in inherent truth of sensation and the variability of individual responses; yet ethics remained a central issue for both. Delattre concludes that Philodemus' commentary represents an attempt to reconcile the dominant ideas of the Greeks with the demands of an increasingly Hellenized Roman high society by elevating the (Greek) Epicurean viewpoint above that of the Stoics.

These essays represent one set of investigations into the role of music and humanly-organised sound in long-term history.¹ They demonstrate the positive benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration, of cross-cultural surveys which are also cross-temporal, and of the value of such approaches in elucidating any number of questions relating to social processes and mentalities, based on a wide range of evidential types. They are offered as a collection of ideas and observations which will hopefully be tested and further developed in the future, not just with respect to prehistory and the Ancient world, but in any processual investigation of music and human behaviour.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank the Master and Fellows of Darwin College for assisting with the administrative costs of the colloquium, and to Marcel Otte, Université de Liège, for his generosity in accepting to publish the resulting materials. I also thank Jane Snyder for suggesting the appropriate quotation from Lucretius (see p.5), and Paul Nixon who as ever provided boundless support and encouragement at all stages of this project. Above all I wish to express my appreciation to those colleagues who participated in the meeting, and who were so willing to undertake a considerable amount of extra work and co-responsibility: in submitting their papers for advance circulation, in accepting the not inconsequential task of reading and preparing formal responses, and in subsequent revision of their papers for publication. Their unanimous spirit of cooperation, good humour, and generosity have, for me at least, enriched this project with both enjoyment and stimulation in equal measure.

1. Other contributors to the colloquium (not included in this publication) were Andrew Barker, Maurice Byrne, Edward Ho, Ernest McClain, Magdalena von Dewall.

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