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Music Lovers. Taste as Performance

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'A Sociology of Attachment: Music Amateurs, Drug Users' (with E. Gomart) (1999) in J. Law and J. Hassard (eds.) *Actor Network Theory and after*.

'Authority as Performance. The Love for Bach in Nineteenth Century France' (with J.-M. Fauquet) *Poetics* (2004).

'Sociology of Art: New Stakes in a Post-Critical Time' (with L. Grenier) (2000) in S.R. Quah, A. Sales (eds.) *The international Handbook of Sociology*.

This paper presents the implications, objectives and initial results of an ethnographic research underway on music lovers today. It looks at problems of theory and method posed by such research if it is not conceived as the only explanation of external determinisms, relating taste to the social origins of the amateur or to the aesthetic properties of the works. Focusing mostly on the case of classical music, our aim is, on the contrary, to concentrate on gestures, objects, mediums, devices and relations engaged in a form of playing or listening, which amounts to more than the actualization of a taste 'already there', for they are redefined during the action, with a result that is partly uncertain. This is why amateurs' attachments and ways of doing things can both engage and form subjectivities, rather than merely recording social labels, and have a history, irreducible to that of the taste for works.

The importance, mentioned everywhere if not explained, of music in cultural practices and particularly among teenagers and young adults[1], requires sociologists to take a fresh look at a number of questions. The exponential development of the record market and use of the media in the sixties, seventies and eighties went hand in hand with the intensification of amateur practice, in particular the playing of instruments. At the same time, under the influence of a renewal of Baroque music, choirs freed themselves from their ties with religion or closed groups and entered into the world of music.

In our studies, this led us to adopt a broad definition of music lovers as 'users of music', that is active practitioners of a love for music, whether it involves playing, being part of a group, attending concerts or listening to records or the radio: as the surveys we refer to have shown, there are no grounds for claiming that some forms are merely passive consumption (attending a concert, listening to a record, etc.) and therefore not worthy of being included in amateur practice. Conversely, there is no reason either for instrument

playing or singing to benefit from preferential treatment and automatically to be placed on a higher level. There is undoubtedly very passive playing of music and surely very active listening to it, in the sense of connoisseur expertise and the impassioned development of a competence (in a no less traditional sense of the word amateur, more usual in the case of cigars, wine or coffee).

Forms of attachment to music which fit less snugly into the traditional mould of the connoisseur are no weaker or less indispensable or vital for those who value them, and warrant as much attention as the classic format of development of good taste in a cultured domain—even if this forces us to jettison the word taste with its strong connotations, focused on the consumption of a valued object. Love, passion, taste, practices, habits, mania: the plurality of the vocabulary indicates the variety of possible configurations of the link with music. It is important not to define it too much *a priori*, and especially not to measure it in relation only to taste for an object whose appreciation necessitates scholarly learning. It is not only a matter of the choice of an over-selective social format, but also of not making hasty assumptions on the meaning of these practices in which the role and status of music itself is far from determined. We 'play' music, we 'like it', we listen to it, this piece or that genre 'pleases' us: verbs are more appropriate because they tend less to force a collective practice with objects to enter into a substantial category, oriented towards an object.

A performative socio-history of listeners

Our investigation on music lovers has less to be understood as a sociology of 'music', in so far as this word tends to take too much for granted a reality whose formation has yet to be examined, but of 'listening'—if we include in the word playing and practizing music as well as listening to media. When we talk about music, we immediately think of the work, then possibly about the way in which it is disseminated and heard. Even what we might call the aesthetic experience, which should relate to the actual emotion aroused, is almost exclusively seen from the point of 'view' of the work and the skills needed to appreciate it (e.g. Hargreaves and North (eds.), 1997; Sloboda, 1985). Music cannot be reduced to the factors that might cause it and circumscribe it, and the effect it may have is just as impossible to infer, it should be seen as something transitory, not as a given but as a 'new arrival', a relatively irreducible present: it happens, it passes—despite people's efforts to pin it down and bring it into line with a more 'authentic' norm. Using the word 'listen' with regard to music primarily means just that: to effect a reversal of perspective in order to place ourselves on the side of the individual or group hearing something disciplined produced by others[2], or producing it for others. It entails seeing music not as a static product, on a score, on disc or in a concert program, but as an unpredictable event, a real-time performance, an actual phenomenon generated by instruments, machines, hands and actions.

This type of conception of music as a doing, a 'performative' use inextricably entangled with other non-music practices—as the case of teenagers so clearly illustrates (cf. Brake, 1980; Frith, 1981; Ross and Rose (eds.), 1994)—is in many other cases (the opera amateur, the member of a brass band, the singer who starts her career after the age of forty, etc.) a model that is as realistic as that of the regulated consumption of a cultural good. Keeping their example in mind helps us not to take music too readily as an object and to close off the sociology of music over a sociology of art taken as the analysis of modes of production, diffusion and reception of a given object—whether this 'gift' of the work is accepted but immediately put aside, and its analysis delegated to other disciplines (Moulin, 1995), or

rejected, with the art work itself reduced to be, through its arbitrary election (Bourdieu, 1984), a token in a game of identities and differences and a pretext for triggering the mechanisms of reception, or sometimes of resistance (Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Lamont and Fournier, 1992), a coordinated and conventional activity (Peterson (ed.), 1976; Becker, 1982) or a social construction (Peterson, 1997).

It is necessary, above all, to extract the social analysis of taste from the falsely objective perspective which makes it no more than the measure of differential consumption, according to predefined criteria. This type of objectivity has only the appearance of objectivity; measurement is possible only because music lovers have been reduced beforehand to nothing more than the vehicle of their socio-professional category, without that posing the slightest problem, and music to being nothing but a passive consumer good, whose only feature worthy of interest is the differential degree of education it requires. Music acts and moves, in relation to other mediations; it transforms those who take possession of it and do something else with it. Conversely, it does not denote the same thing, depending on the situation and the time. This co-production, the co-formation of a music and of those who make it and listen to it (with other activities) can be the subject of a more balanced sociology of music, where sociology has as much to learn from music as *vice versa* (Hennion, 1993). Under conditions that need to be established (the idea is not to transfer to music 'itself' what exogenous social interpretation no longer supplies), it is the more general capacities of music to produce individual and collective states—or, in other words, the hypothesis of conditioned performativity of music—which can allows us to formulate the implications of research on musical taste, as understood in a variety of ways, by widely diverse music lovers, as a rich and inventive practice that simultaneously recomposes music and its practitioners *in situ*, according to the needs and with the various mediums, resources, devices and ceremonials available[3].

We assume that, far from getting lost in the infinite subjective variety of each one's ways of doing things, these intimate or collective modalities of playing, practising or listening to music can be grouped together, and that they lead to the possible description of fairly stable and identifiable common forms (not necessarily physically shared, but recurring among diverse amateurs) of love of music today.

From a history of music to a sociology of listening

The question of taste thus reformulated can be put back into the continuity of history (Morrow, 1989; Weber, 1986; 1992; Johnson, 1995): what is at stake is the invention of the listener—that specialist endowed with an ability which no-one possessed before the twentieth century, represented by the technical availability of a historicized musical repertoire dating from the Middle Ages to the present day, with different interpretations, explanatory booklets and clear-cut relations (Hennion, 1997a; Maisonneuve, 2001). If modern spaces of listening are very different from what was known in earlier times[4], the difference is to be found less in an internal modification of the deep psychology or in that of the main social contexts of musical signification, than in the series of new means and occasions for listening. It is the radical transformation of all its material intermediaries that has truly created the musical space of current listening—what I have called the production of the amateur.

The ability to listen is not so much a personal quality as the end result of having reflexively made the necessary time and space, after a long historical and collective apprenticeship which itself produced a world of coordinated objects[5]. It is not the same thing, participating in an African ritual as a teenager on the brink of adulthood, and being

one of the congregation in a Protestant church in Leipzig, listening to the word of God embellished by a cantata which was intended, according to the rhetoric of the time, to ensure that worshippers understood the religious text, were swayed by its imagery and could memorize it more easily. This took place within a denominational context and no-one had any idea that the music might have occasion to be performed at another time. Staging the act of listening in this way, already so far removed from African ritual, is in itself diametrically opposed to our position as modern music lovers who choose, compare, and collect works and performances, partly because the field of musicology and the record industry have made it possible for us to buy the complete cantatas of Bach on CD at the local Virgin Megastore: the most important, and least obvious, difference being simply that we are listening to music, whereas the teenagers were undergoing a rite of passage and the worshippers were hearing the word of God (Hennion, 1997b; Fauquet and Hennion, 2000).

We have learnt to enjoy listening to music.

A 'discomorphosis' of music

The case is especially clear if we compare the fashionable concert in the nineteenth century (Weber, 1975; Fauquet, 1986) and in the twentieth, dominated by the record industry. Physical performance and participation in a collective event were central to a social occasion where novelty was the crucial factor and in which the majority of the musical works would have been performed two or three times at the most, while the presence of an audience placed the emphasis firmly on the importance of belonging to a social group. This continues to be a popular image of concert-going, but it no longer bears any relation to reality: people listen now through the many other versions in their head, they have come to hear a particular performer whom they have heard on disc, playing a 'repertoire' which has increasingly come to resemble a record company's 'catalogue'. The boundaries of our musical space are now marked off by the technical media, by recordings, radio broadcasts and, naturally, first and foremost, by the disc. Most of the music we now listen to is on disc. Instead of providing the material to be recorded on disc, concerts now represent a standard of comparison: we assess and appreciate a concert after familiarizing ourselves with the music on disc.

Never before has the history of music been so much at our command, in the sense of a chronology of works (it can be seen on the shelves of record stores, and often in the CD and record collections of the music lovers themselves), and yet the availability of fifteen centuries of music—as a product—in the form of a consistent repertoire of discs, is actually a negation of music as history—as a production. The appearance of the listener turned customer is, at least as much as that of the music itself, the musical creation of the twentieth century.

Interviews in reflexive situations of listening

Another idea guiding the inquiry was that it was possible and necessary to 'free' discourse—not only with the sociologist but also and above all with the interviewee—on the music lover's practices, pleasures and love, from the weight under which the sociology of taste has crushed them by denouncing these emotions as cloaking a social game of which the actors are not aware. We need to assess the destructive effects of the popularization of this form of sociology, which determines the way sociologists are received. Music lovers immediately feel guilty, suspected; they are ashamed of their pleasure, they decode and anticipate the meaning of what they say, accuse themselves of a

practice that is too elitist, and over-admit the ritual nature of their rock outings or love for opera. Worse still, they no longer talk of objects, gestures, their feelings, the uncertainties that make the difficult career of the *aficionado* so charming. Instead, they put themselves in the categories they suppose are being held out for them and have only one concern: not to appear unaware of the fact that their taste is a sociological question. People are now so 'sociologized' that when you ask them what their musical tastes are, they will begin by apologizing: 'my family was very middle-class, I was taught by a private tutor, my sister played the violin…' Quite apart from the important, but not exclusive, question of the social determiners that influence taste, in the shallow receptacle created by this negative sociology of taste, it is vital to understand what it means to 'like something' nowadays, how it is experienced, what medium is used and with whom it takes place (DiMaggio, 1987; Donnat, 1996).

Thus, an initial difference compared to the interview as an automatic, non problematic method of the sociologist, paradoxically consisted of de-sociologizing the interviewees by asking them to talk not of their determinisms but of their ways of doing things; not of what they liked (and even less their excuses and acknowledgements that their choices were determined), but of their ways of listening, playing and choosing, and of what was happening. This is an unlikely fertile empirical approach for a sociologist: the same people who were at a loss for words and who made excuses when they were asked about their tastes, become remarkably inventive when describing what they do when someone asks them not what they like but how they form attachments, with whom, what they do, how they go about it—even if this poses countless new problems, of vocabulary for example, because they are describing intimate practices and situations which are rarely verbalized[6]. The idea is less to fill a catalogue than to describe variations in states. Speaking is not describing from outside but reflexively reproducing feelings. Hence, the necessity to conduct interviews on site and to rely on real listening situations, so that habitual gestures and dispositions naturally occur, with the presence of the objects and the familiarity of the setting.

In fact, accounts and observations amply show how much music is nothing without everything on which it can rely. Better still, it is everything on which it relies. I shall give elements in this respect drawn from the survey underway on the various mediums of musical consumption today: concerts, radio, records, amateur performances, chamber music, choirs, etc.[7]

Strategies for personal listening

By looking at the different means of access to music, we can see that people employ many strategies to create opportunities for personal listening. They describe how they buy discs, listen to music in concert, in the street, in other places, how they are affected by music in supermarkets, movie music and, in some cases, how they play an instrument, on their own or in a group. This brings us to the very crux of being a music lover today, an activity which largely revolves around the practice of listening to discs.

We are dealing with an instrumentalized, somewhat solitary mode of listening which is not usually discussed in depth. This is a highly representative mode of listening even if, being intimate, it is experienced in a very personal way. Representative practices and types emerge. Typically, at the same time as people emphasize the unconventional and personal way in which they listen to music, saying: 'This is how I do it', their actions and idiosyncrasies mirror those of thousands of other music lovers. And with good reason. Intimacy has nothing to do with a unique single garden; on the contrary, it is the most

characteristic product of the modern discomorphosis of listening, of the reflexive work common to record sellers and amateurs to shape and format love for music. Far from highlighting a hidden reality of taste behind the appearances of the record market, interviews reveal the extent to which this sociologization of amateurs has progressed, and how much they share the categories and formats gradually developed by the music industry.

What is actually being expressed, therefore, is the meticulous care with which music lovers construct an area devoted to personal listening, and the importance of a space like this which puts them in the right frame of mind and enables them to find what they are looking for. For some people—executives, employees, doctors, teachers—the almost clandestine nature of this passion, the sensation of leading a 'double life', emphasized by the ritualistic aspect of listening to music which involves setting aside space and time in their daily routine, is very marked.

My wife can't stand it, she doesn't share my passion at all, she thinks I'm wasting all my money, 'I treat myself', as she says—of course she means it critically. On the one hand it's a pity, we often fight about that, especially the money I spend on records, and the evenings when I leave her alone… But on the other hand I also think that it saves me in a way… (BH, M, 54 years-old, choir and harmony, rural area)

Some people rewrite their lives around listening to music or after its discovery.

I think that sorted out a serious emotional problem, in that atmosphere of a provincial middle-class high school, completely lousy, abject. I was self-conscious, the awkward teenager type, so ill-at-ease I could die. Oh, it's simpler than that, I was gay. I still am, of course, but I mean that was my problem, it wasn't ok at all, I felt guilty, I got the feeling nobody liked me, I was obsessed with the idea that if they spoke to me it was to mock me …

And then there was this tall guy whose parents led a choir where he sang and was the star, and of course I thought he was beautiful, that bloody idiot… I found myself singing two evenings a week, on Sunday mornings, and in concerts and tours. I never stopped doing so. The conductor was useless, today I'd find the repertoire vile, but I was… I was… I'll stop because I was thinking 'transfigured': you see, I'm not mincing my words, but it's true, it still touches me just to think about it.

I'd never done any music whatsoever before… And it was Haendel, very soon, Renaissance pieces, lousy things for choirs, pieces that were in fashion at the time, silly stuff, I couldn't give a damn now, but I was happy, and very soon I was one of the leaders. I can't tell you how much enjoyment I got out of those sessions. Even now it's a very special moment in my life. Of course there were good looking guys (and ugly ones) but that wasn't it, I felt good that's all, I used my voice as a means to be with them. (HLS, M, 47 years old, choir)

Body, sexuality, subjectivity look like unexpected by-products of his musical activity. He does not talk about music, but about his own emerging self, and the pleasure of it, through the details of an organized practice, full of people, of objects and of gestures.

Others ensure that they have a continuous musical accompaniment, with the clock radio, the Walkman in the subway, the radio as they fall asleep, even, in some jobs, the possibility of playing CDs at the office; a great fan of rock music who worked on a magazine told me how they had perfected a system which enabled them to take turns choosing which CDs to

play, thereby solving one of the age-old problems experienced by music lovers: achieving the right mix between old favorites and new discoveries.

For others, music is the natural environment, the binder of relations with those around them; they can hardly imagine its absence because it is part of community life: they are the 'sociologist' music lovers, music for them is but a milieu.

I started piano lessons before I was seven; I played music with my mother and my big brother. My brother did violin with my piano teacher's husband. I still take lessons with her, but not regularly anymore. I played in her end-of-year auditions years after finishing high school. I still play, although I work less. I play the pieces I used to like. Sometimes I try to work on a new one. What I like is Fauré, Chopin, Schumann, in short, big composers. I also did a lot of Ravel, and chamber music, with friends, especially with my teachers, with brothers and sisters of piano students… (QM, F, 28 years-old; classical music, piano; expensive flat, average record collection but lots of sheet music)

But this is only a way of having it. It can be contrasted for instance with this interview, just in the opposite register:

We do it for a laugh. It's possible to do lots of things, if you choose well, but if you've got to practice for hours and hours there's no point. I do transcriptions but nobody comes every time. … People, they keep changing… I say that but not really, in fact, it's friends, we've known each other for a long time, there's one leaving, or a guy's chick who arrives (I say that but there aren't many girls, and even fewer without a guy!), things move like that. There aren't so many of us now, also, there were as many as fifteen of us four or five years ago.

We do Schubert, slow movements (not quite, we also do allegros!), a thing by Poulenc, it's funny, what else? everything the guys bring along, the Art of the Fugue, I mean some extracts, a Brazilian thing, lots of sardañas and pasos, and so on. But we also do things, Brahms choruses, an Enesco, once, things that nobody knows. We did more jazz, I remember, Ellington or Monk, once, but rather classical jazz. We're a bit limited for improvization, that limits us for jazz. Once we transcribed hits, just for a laugh: 'Michelle', and a slow bit by the Stones, but a brass band's not made for that. I say brass band as a joke, it's a little wind band, in fact.

Of course we go for a drink afterwards, often, but it's mostly outings, concerts in bandstands in the spring, playing for festivals where we get the feeling we're playing together, where we mess around together afterwards… It's important, it's our third half-play. (KRC, M, 39 years old, clarinet, leads a wind band; collection of wind instruments, many records, all types and styles)

Here, to be 'social' is to have an active and joyful social life with close friends. Each on their way, these small groups build up their own sociology of taste, in the same way as they develop their listening techniques and create their traditions (depending on the genre of music, other places are very typical, like specialist stores or music clubs).

'Music itself' is not apart from this reflexive and collective work of co-formation. The amateur instrumentalists also rechisel their repertoire, suited to themselves:

What counts is that with musicians it works. It doesn't depend so much on the composers; some pieces nobody likes playing, they don't fit, we can't 'hold' them even if they're very beautiful. There's also the level; it has to be clear, so that we know where we are. If as soon as you lose a note you can't find your place again that wouldn't do. We do it,

but it doesn't work. Otherwise, whether it's Bach or a habañera, it works. But with a bossa-nova we'll make a mess. (ZT, M, 49 years old, leader of a brass band and a municipal orchestra in a small provincial town; working class)

The intimacy of shared emotion

The act of listening is still centered around the inventive use of personal space: it is necessary to develop a strategy of listening in order to 'feel comfortable' with music. There are a whole range of possibilities, from teenagers with their Walkmans, or 'ghetto blasters' in their bedroom with the volume turned up high, to, at the other (?) end of the spectrum, armchair Wagnerians who, having laid down certain strict rules to keep their wives and children at bay, have lost no time in developing a 'hi-fi' appreciation of music by creating an acoustic environment for themselves with extremely expensive stereo systems and speakers, within living-rooms that have themselves been transformed into speakers, in which they can immerse themselves in moments of Bayreuth exaltation. Music itself is not the end result of a passion for music, but a means, like the orchestra, voice, instrumental technique and the stage, of reaching certain states.

Less concerned with the written music than the lover of quartets, the opera lover (because of the singing, the body, the divas, the tendency to eroticize the voice) is more prone to thinking about music in terms of attaining intense states of emotion, and approaches the music partly with this emotional factor in mind[8].

I'm a pretty typical lover of lyrics, unbearable and dogmatic, I know everything and I'm proud of it. I couldn't give a hoot about notes and all that, I like voices, arias and divas, the atmosphere of an opera, I read, collect articles, I give marks to performances, recitals … really crazy, no half measures. Not so much the directors, I've got friends like that, what I really like is the singing, voices and phrasing. Is it divine or not? Easy to say like that, but not so easy to merit, if we take it seriously. But otherwise, for me that's the real socialite, it's not me it's the person who goes to the opera without finding that, excuse the term, essential, er … vital, do I have the right to say that, I don't know! (HC, M, 34 years old, many records, goes to the opera all the time, in France and elsewhere)

The comparison with the vocabulary of drug addicts, or with sexuality, is continually brought into play, as much by observers as by participants; however, although this is a convenient analogy, it goes far deeper than simple metaphor.

For me it's a need, a drug, I'm very nervous, I stop everything and listen to a record, or I play, or sing, I lie down and close my eyes, it helps me to live, music is so beautiful. I go to concerts a lot, also, sometimes with my husband, but often alone or with friends who sight-read with me, it's a small circle. (DM, F, 49 years old, plays the piano and sings, intellectual milieu, many records)

An interesting point is that the most highly valued thing of all, the ability to be carried away by the sublime, is expressed in the same terms as being under the influence of drugs: we are 'taken out of ourselves', 'nothing else counts'... But there is no real reason either to favor the word 'climax', a typically operatic term, to talk about the love of music: using a register of language that deals with 'true emotion' is just one way of referring to an access to passion which cannot be described in words, because it completely transcends the overly

narrow, accepted view of the feeling of pleasure. Some develop spontaneously quite technical analyses of their emotion.

I went to see both castings of *la Somnambule*, I preferred Liliana Faraon. It was less virtuoso than the Korean but more moving. The tone was richer. Something happened. The other one, it was an image of a more stereotyped character. Of course, her vocalization was fabulous, in her last aria in particular. But there was less to it. (MG, 38 years old, senior executive, loves opera)

Conversely, this is probably what is expressed in the reserve of the lover of quartets when listening to comments that over-psychologize musical pleasure: what is happening 'in' the music, outside us, *also* counts.

It may sound stupid, but what interests me is the music, when I play with others. I'm quite shy by nature, I don't like the well-known stuff, the 'I love that, I hate that' kind of stuff, discussions on rendering, I can't see the point. Nor do I like the gang of friends aspect, especially the two girls, I like them but we only see each other when we play. No, if I play a quartet with them it's because we all want the same thing, and what we do there I can only do there, the pleasure of a movement that's a bit hard, to hear oneself, to listen to one another, to get onto the pianissimos that we've all done well because we felt them together. Nothing can beat that, for me. (CS, M, 42 years old, violin, member of an amateur quartet that has been playing together for ten years, except for one more recent member)

I carried out an in-depth interview with an amateur saxophonist who plays with a small group of friends, and who continues to practice two evenings per week until two or three in the morning, although he works an eight-hour day, in a bid to attain the occasional state of emotion when 'it comes together', when 'a man shows what he is made of' (these were his words: and they describe so much more than the simple pursuit of an emotional pleasure): and he felt that way simply because four felicitous notes appeared out of the blue…

Listening has its moments and its wavering. Loss of attention may be easy to spot in the example of listening to records, but it is equally present in the playing of an instrument or the internal state of a musician in a group (choir, orchestra, wind band, etc.). The attachment of value to moments of intense concentration (difficulty, tricky passage, spectacular moment, preferred passage) soon leads to a description of musical practice exclusively in the regime of inspired transport and continuous enthusiasm. It is at least as important, and probably more realistic, to describe the cruising speed, speckled with moments of loss of attention, of routine executed without any memory of it (which in no way excludes the pleasure), of distractions and absence—which gives more force to moments of presence at work or forgetfulness of time. This temporal aspect of practice has nothing anecdotal about it. It allows us to see the music lover as the co-producer of the work, instead of always assuming that she is an unquestioning admirer, in mind and body.

The same applies to the self-organization of a space through a music lover's experiences and available means, a construction determined by them but which also reorganizes them profoundly. These musical spaces are not to be interpreted as external spaces (even if we have to start with the materialized elements of music: amateur organizations, schools, published catalogues, concert halls, shops, radio programmes, etc.), but as internal spaces in which amateurs move mentally when they feel like playing a piece, choose a performance, buy a ticket, switch on or off their radio.

Listening formats: a secularization of the sublime

Within such a context, the development of music as an independent art form refers not to the institutionalization and the exclusivity of a group of works, but to the secularization of the sublime: to the gradual formation of a specific, highly sophisticated ability, developed collectively to attain through music, in an orderly, non self-indulgent, risky fashion, states of emotion and moments that are 'sublime' (or 'out of this world', or 'cool': the words change, or are lacking, depending on the genre of music, but not their target). This crossover point is not easy to put into words; the 'objective' vocabulary of music is not equipped to deal with it, and the vocabulary of passion is stereotyped because it is more performative than constative: it draws attention to the desire to see passion suddenly appear (or it marks the intensity of a memory) rather than endeavoring to describe it, and in particular to analyze its specific nature, as distinct from other passions.

A good way, however, to articulate passion, is to look once more at the means we use to listen to music, because although, as a 'range' of products, the musical repertoire is continually growing, these means are on the contrary finite and describable, and they form a system. There is no need to set the disc against the radio or the concert, they are very closely connected, and each medium exists only because of the others. Music is not an abstract art which simply takes different forms. If, instead of assuming music is a given, we start with its media, we can see much more clearly how music and the act of listening are transformed both by these, and by each other. A comparison of these media—radio, discs and concerts—and these types of practice—band rehearsals, playing an instrument regularly at home—is necessary if we are to understand the technical and commercial context which has been shaped by all these factors and within which we listen to music.

Far from being trivial, the process of creating the right mood for passion, through all the practices and rituals surrounding the act of listening, must be taken seriously. This introduces again the paradoxical theme of listening as an activity, a strange mixture of active and passive. Listening is a precise and highly organized activity, but its aim is not to control something or to achieve a specific goal: on the contrary, its objective is to bring about a loss of control, an act of surrender. It is not a matter of doing something, but of making something happen (Gomart and Hennion, 1998). What should happen is not planned or intentional: we must allow ourselves to be carried away, moved, so that something can take place. I have done everything necessary to make something happen but it is imperative that I do not try to control what does happen. My little actions, my idiosyncrasies, my rituals, even if they are very active, are 'meta-actions', they affect my environment, my mood, but they cannot help me control what music can make me feel, which would be the very negation of my passion. 'It is essential not to overtake the music'. When listening to music, we have to put ourselves in the right physical, spatial and psychological state, the right 'frame of mind' to facilitate the gradual onset of passion, without allowing ourselves to give in to it. From time to time, if we have put up an effective resistance, if we have not allowed ourselves to be self-indulgent, something may happen. This vocabulary of the music lover refers to other types of passion; it brings to mind the *aficionado* talking about that sublime instant which makes forty mediocre and bloody corridas worthwhile. It is a theory of mediation in action: all means are important, it is necessary to use them, to implement them faithfully, but they do not contain their end, they offer no guarantees, and, conversely, they are completely engulfed by the sublime moments they may cause to happen.

The result is this constant, characteristic, balancing act between on the one hand the terms relating to the routine side of the passion for music, isolating and restrictive terms that conjure up diligent activity, the work of the performer or the lists and classifications of

the collector, idiosyncratic pleasures, methodical procedures and meticulously organized arrangements, and, on the other, the terms that conjure up the sudden feelings of surrender, the state of being completely receptive to whatever might happen, when 'nothing else counts'.

A critical sociology focusing on the condemnation of cultural inequality has accustomed us to dismiss the appropriate description of taste as an active process, producing something specific, by means of certain collective techniques, certain types of expertise that can be studied and listed. Music makes it possible to tackle this paradoxical activity, this active process of putting ourselves in the right mood so that something can happen, this meticulous activity whose aim is to achieve complete passivity: a state in which we can be carried away, be taken up by something. In that sense, focusing on the case of music, provided that its specific procedures are closely analyzed and that the technical means, types of group activity and expertise brought into play by the participants are examined in detail, can make it possible to draw comparisons with other types of involvement. Music enables us to formulate a theory of passion.

Concerts, the element of myth

Concerts, disc, radio. One medium, the concert, has a more pronounced social status, varying depending on the genre, but represents a definite focus, a benchmark, whether it is a rock or a classical concert. The other two, on the contrary, play a more continuous and economic role in our everyday life and possess less of a cultural cachet. These are the silent companions of a passion which one tends to describe exclusively in connection with the concert which is a 'live' event—but, predictably, this is changing: the fruitless comparison between 'live' and 'canned' music is no longer an issue for CD fans.

Attendance at a concert is no more immediate than listening to a disc. When I ask 'how do you go to a concert, how do you decide, under what circumstances do you enjoy yourself?', the interview quickly progresses, on the basis of the music lover's subtle strategies, to a spontaneous theory about her progressive stages of preparation. The concert is an extremely mediate event: a series of different stages, none of which can be ignored, have to be accomplished. One does not attend a concert 'just like that', it presupposes the need to put oneself in the right frame of mind—music lovers may 'make an effort to see something different', or on the contrary treat themselves to the luxury of giving up reserved seats, through lack of desire… Sometimes one is looking for old favorites, sometimes new discoveries, and it is a combination of the two that makes it possible to develop one's own tastes.

What does one listen to in a concert? A high level of idealization, opposing it to a recording, has shielded it from a sufficiently critical examination. Once started, the concert is in no way merely a case of listening to 'that work', that just needs to be listened to as it stands. Concerts do not dispense music, they are performances, in the sense that they make something happen. At the start, there is no music, just skeptical, weary, or indulgent spectators hesitating over their desire, watching for organizational slip-ups, keeping one eye on the auditorium and another on their watch. There is a feeling of resistance. This feeling is fundamental in determining whether one allows oneself (or not) to be carried away by the music. At times one is opposed to one's neighbours' enthusiasm; at others one is deliciously transported by accepted enthusiasm; a moment of challenge, where what counts is that the unexpected can happen, that one likes what one thought one did not like; the *aficionado* side of the concert music lover is not snobbery but the truth of this trial: a mixture of being demanding and blasé, of maintaining deception, of tirelessly hoping for

that moment of feeling overwhelmed; moments too of happiness derived from details where, by contrast, it is familiarity heard thousands of times over, of a passage, a position, a typical moment of what happens in a concert in general, which guarantees pleasure.

One is not here to consume a commodity or have one's membership card checked, but to bring about an altered state: one cannot achieve a feeling of passion unless one resists it, unless one refuses to give into temptation from the start. At the beginning, all kinds of critics are ready to pounce on the unfortunate performer. One studies the pianist's posture, scrutinizes his technique, almost hoping that he will play a wrong note… At a moment, the music passes through the soloist's body instead of tripping over it, and we are now concentrating on the way he is playing the work. Occasionally, we forget the technique, hearing something new in a work that, as the expression goes, we thought we knew inside-out. But this is still nothing like the 'music itself': this is an interplay of references between the versions in one's head, even an ideal notion of the work or of playing the piano, and ideas we have about the performer. We are a long way from immediate surrender; gradually, a performance may surpass the spontaneous critical assessments that were trying to control it. Sometimes we attain a sublime state of emotional intensity with this work: we no longer compare one interpretation with another, we forget the performer and just hear Schumann, Beethoven or Chopin…

At other times, or perhaps never, even the work is no longer important, what counts is the fleeting moment itself; the 'good gig', as the rockers say, those indescribable 'sublime' moments which words can only trivialize… In classical music as in other genres, with the various different methods of creating the right mood (for jazz players, this will involve other means, such as smoke, tiredness, the raucous sound of a sax, the contact with others, drugs, the late hour, etc.), these rare moments when we are taken out of ourselves only happen after the hesitant, laborious and exacting effort of getting ourselves into the right frame of mind. This principle, which applies equally to the fifteen-year-old rocker or the fifty-year-old classical music lover, exploits a well-orchestrated technique that is both personal and collective, and involves the sophisticated use of space and time, a voluntary receptivity to certain states.

Immediacy is the paradoxical result of a lengthy sequence of mediations.

Discs and radios: good companions

Almost mythical in character, the concert provides an arena for the sublime. Even though this may only happen from time to time and may be more to do with its image than actually being there, the concert format is entirely built around the possibility that these extraordinary moments might happen.

The opposite holds true with the disc and radio: even though, as mediators, they are capable of arousing their passions, if on a lesser scale at home, they place the emphasis on the profane, familiar aspect of loving music. These are the humble tools which music lovers use on a daily basis to develop their ability and cultivate their musical taste, continually improving their knowledge of the repertoire they like and their own tastes. Between the laborious little actions of daily listening and the intense moments of passion, each medium plays its own role and develops a distinctive ability, irreducible to the ones developed by the other musical media and practices.

The key factor responsible for transforming the passion for music in this century is the physical equipment that introduces the listener to a program of music; as well as the disc, the radio—although it occasionally functions as a foil—plays a decisive role: it has formed an appropriate quality of listening. A medium of the run-of-the-mill, that merely needs to

be switched on, radio is regularly run down in comparison with the concert or even the record (the work is heard once only, surrounded by talk that is often considered tiresome). But radio listening also provides, according to the amateurs, irreplaceable elements in the game of construction that the love of music is: no control over what is listened to, a limited receptivity towards unknown pieces or genres by which one allows oneself to be surprised, the possibility of suddenly hearing a work whose sound, use of harmony or melody makes an unexpected impact (Barbelin and Hennion, 1986). The importance of radio stems from this easy access to the known and less known, and to a continuous familiar background: known voices and programmes, marked hours, grain of the sound, even the banality of a regular repertoire (Harnoncourt's—and no longer Bach's—cantata on Sunday mornings, nasal voices of the forties late in the evening for a 'references'-type programme…). Radio is also the possibility of unscrupulously zapping from Schumann to the news, before turning back to the sonata in the middle of a subject; listening that is by no means deferent, but tightly adjusted to oneself.

Radio has led to the characteristic advent of the 'listener'; suffering from 'hypergnosis', a typical disease of collectors who accumulate dates and names of their favorite performers (movie fans or jazz lovers are good examples of this), the listener has become, after a lengthy apprenticeship in a particular type of listening, hypersensitive to the infinitesimal differences between interpretations, far in excess of what can be heard by a good instrumentalist. The latter has a completely different relationship to the repertoire, a relationship which is a particular blend of respect and instrumental expertise: 'anything is fine as long as that you can practice scales with it…' Only as a tendency, some amateurs being very polyvalent, it can be said that, as opposed to the hypertrophic taste of the 'radiophiles', the instrumentalists do not develop such an acute sensitivity to differences of aesthetic interpretation, in favor of a converse hyperesthesia relating to the music as technique, in the etymological sense of the word: a mechanical or manual skill, enabling them in a symmetrical fashion to scorn the amateurism of the 'ordinary' music lover.

It remains the disc, the medium which plays the central role in the life of the modern music lover. Hi-fi material opens the way to practices which distinguish it sharply from concerts. The 'discomorphosis' of classical music is analyzed in detail by S. Maisonneuve[9]: cost absorbed by multiple listening, time savings, flexible availability and use; listening in a private space, at chosen times, according to one's own 'programme' (tracks, volume, repeats…), non-exclusive (work, housework, reading, bathing…). By contrast, the absence of gestures and images facilitates hearing. The symphony intended for a large concert hall is heard in a room of $60m^3$. This changes the sound effect, the dynamics, the spatial dimension, not to mention the disappearance of the orchestra and musicians 'in' the sound they emit (Blaukopf, 1992)[10]. The stereotyped phrase giving disc as a 'concert at home' masks the original reality of intimate listening, to suit one's desires.

Records tend to replace concerts. Considering the time devoted to listening to music at home, they serve as a reference for taste in music. To that 'discomorphosis' of the repertoire corresponds an equally important discomorphosis of taste, in its content but also in its forms and formats. The record is the ideal medium for distinguishing, on a continuum, the subtle differences of the music lover's state of mind: from faithful orthodoxy to one's own tastes to moments of entertainment, tranquil mania for filling up one's little world. All that by dosing comfort and surprise, the smooth and the rough, ordinary pleasure and rare moments. Music itself is sorted by the specificity of the record. There are works that one loves infinitely but seldom listens to and *vice versa*. There is also a big difference between a choice of the moment and a 'serious' hierarchy of tastes that is argued and accepted.

'I'm always amazed by the difference between composers that I love and records that I like listening to. I often talk about it with friends, other great inveterate music lovers, it's the same. For me, typically, it's Schubert, Bach, compared to Schumann or Debussy—although they're just as venerated, God I'm mad about them, but I'll put them on far less often' (PA, M, 45 years old, collector of classical records)

This record lover distinguishes certain musicians as being familiar, as if it were not a question of aesthetic quality, as if the record had its own smoothness that only certain genres respected and, posthumously, certain authors[11]. Publishers and amateurs are aware of this new mediation which 'renders' more or less well, depending on the genre, the work and the instruments. Records follow specific listening curves, once acquired (discovery, learning, tiring, return, allergy, or definitive memorization and stability…). Some re-emerge, some are forgotten, some remain there without crying out to be heard again. What has to be listened to frequently? This is an essential criterion for a record (not for music), distinct from quality.

There are two symmetrical experiences involved in the choice of discs, which stem from the ambivalent nature of the passion, that of hunting for the right disc and that of enjoying it in private: short obsessive lists, marked up journals and reviews, ritual *modus operandi* and methods of perusing the shelves, allow to be able to listen to it at some other time and somewhere else, if one wants. Slowly and carefully shaping a personal record library does not preclude impulse longings, uncontrollable urges to listen to a certain disc, when 'no other will do': it actually generates them. Discs have become the touchstones of a completely unprecedented aesthetic experience, the personalized enjoyment of a continually expanding 'program', fifteen centuries of music from all over the world that music lovers have now directly at their fingertips.

To the advantage of such a discographic use, the repertoire has moved away from the musicological or aesthetic approach to works—even, and particularly if, record sleeves, CD liners and critical booklets make abundant reference to it: these use history as a labeling exercise in the same way that hi-fi uses technical specifications as a selling point; 'period' instruments echoe the similar commercial use of 'high fidelity'. Over and above the musicological aspect of the baroque revival, the technical side of this movement must be taken into consideration: discs have provided new access to a repertoire which would not have been heard in the large space of the romantic concert hall, where audiences never had occasion to hear harpsichords, lutes, viols, or countertenors. The 'historicization' of the repertoire is based on a completely opposite phenomenon: its new independence from its historical origins, which means that it has become freely accessible to absolutely anyone, making it possible for them to form an elective passionate relationship with certain composers or certain works, without any need for scholarly or historical justification. The very appearance of early music in our musical environment marks its demise as early music.

Such a taste can be very profound: it is important to note how different it is from the musical taste of the past centuries, which modern music lovers hold captive on disc (Hennion, 1997c).

Ceremonies of pleasure

Without predetermining interpretations to open, the amateur figures that the survey helped to reveal show that alongside two traditional 'orthodox' ways of interpreting taste in music (as a work of art to admire, as a collective practice constituting an identity) there is

another dominant modality that is both local and personal, and more closely linked to the concrete use that one makes of the various means of music: it is music as a ceremony of pleasure, a series of little habits and ways of doing things in a situation, depending on each one's preferences, sets of routines and of arrangements and surprises. Rather of the chef or gourmet type, the party-goer or socialite, the lover of enjoyment or rigour, convivial or solitary, it is the amateur who, each time, to a certain extent, composes her music, like others do their menu, with all available means, paying little attention to academic divisions and orthodoxies of taste[12].

I have emphasized the richness of the taste practices: all sorts of unexpected and highly fruitful combinations, the lack of discipline of amateurs, that strange mix of precision and invention that makes them define, little by little, their paths to pleasure. Music itself is a boundary that is too impervious. Depending on the case, it either effectively outlines the precise borders of a practice isolated from others or, on the contrary, has to be 'reconfigured' within a larger set, from outings with friends, parties and shared listening to the same music, to a set of strongly integrated cultural elements. Typically, for the 'young ones' (a category evidently not related to age), this continuum goes from clothing and shoes to comics, food, basketball and Black American idols, through language and a 'look', including ways of eating and the intense consumption of videos and electronic games (Yonnet, 1985): it would be very difficult to produce a system of symbols relating to the projects without this musical type of continuous, 'accommodating', and fluid mediation. But the same applies, unequally, to certain more classical or mature genres, such as contemporary music, jazz or lyrics, not only in the sense in which external sociology might identify the common features of members of a differentiated group, but in the sense in which members create their own identity and taste through a series of common practices (Frith, 1996).

But we must not call these practices rites, for it 'socializes' them too quickly. Nor are they the only objects used, which 'materializes' them too fast, nor works, which 'aesthetizes' them. They are the performative and reflexive continuum which goes from bodies and taste in the most physical sense, to the repertoires and material devices, through linguistic forms, modes of appreciation and forms in which the practice takes place: places and times are essential.

Seeing the history of music from the standpoint of listeners and their media as the development of a specialist arena, even if largely focusing here on the example of classical music, makes it possible partly to demolish the hierarchy of the genres, since one of the paradoxes of this technical and 'user-oriented' history of music, is that it is common to jazz, rock or classical music. An examination of the procedures and methods employed by the different genres when listening to music inclines to relativize the idea of the growing autonomization of music; the tendency appears to be much more complex: although, on the one hand, music has become markedly autonomized as a genre and as a specialist technical practice, on the other, on the contrary, as a factor in an emotional experience, it has become increasingly closely linked with many other extremely varied practices. Festivals, dances, clothing, stimulants, social and sexual intercourse, etc., are the modes of collective and personal pleasure which define the conditions of musical taste today. They cannot be disassociated from 'music itself'. Far from autonomizing an art which is divorced from its former functional qualities, these emotional procedures destroy the clear boundary between what falls within the scope of music and what does not, in favor of a heterogeneous body of practices for attaining a state of emotional intensity.

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[1] 22% in the 35-44 age-group and 40% in the 15-19 age-group, according to a survey in France (Donnat, 1996). More generally, one out of ten French people has played an instrument or sung in a choir, for leisure, during the past year.

[2] Based to some extent on the model suggested by Chartier (1987) who released the history of printing from the 'orality/literacy' binary trap, recalling that most books were publicly read in a loud voice, or, in a less historical approach, on the 'reception' analyses by Jauss (1982) and mostly Iser (1978); regarding music, unfortunately this path is unencombered: let's mention DeNora's work (1995; 1997).

[3] The social history of music, too often reduced to a history of the musical profession, did show the way in some excellent but regrettably isolated books (Beaufils, 1983; Fulcher, 1987; Gumplowicz, 1987; White (ed.), 1987; Darré (ed.), 1996).

[4] Weber (1997) opportunely questions whether we can say that music was *listened to* at all before our conception of classical music!

[5] Such an approach led Baxandall (1972) to say, in a very radical way, that in fact we don't *see* anymore paintings from the Renaissance. In the case of the record and its specific musical emotions, see Maisonneuve (2001).

[6] We have in mind Elias's precursory work, e.g. (1939).

[7] See Hennion and Maisonneuve (2000) for a first report on this ongoing work.

[8] In part for these reasons, opera has been much more studied that music itself, by sociologists as well as psychologists or social historians (Martorella, 1982; Constant, 1983; Poizat, 1986; Fulcher, 1987; La Rochelle, 1987; Patureau, 1991).

[9] The following elements come from her analyses, in Hennion and Maisonneuve (2000); also see Maisonneuve (2000; 2001).

[10] An effect that television still cannot appreciate, when it insists on reverting to 'close-ups' on the oboe or the conductor's facial expressions, unaware of the new incongruity of this 'over-visibility' of music.

[11] The same amateur told me after the interview, in a more personal confession typical of those moments, that he did not much like Fauré but delighted now in the charm and refined technique of a musician who embodied reaction at a time when our amateur, as a former leftist, was fighting for the vanguard.

[12] Partly in contrast with the new reserved and respectful attitude towards the 'summits of music', that in the same gesture amateurs also invented, it is this prosaic diversity, these tics and odd habits, these realistic pleasures of the amateur, that J.-M. Fauquet's analysis of the services of quartets in nineteenth century Paris showed (1986).