

**SELLING OUT IN THE SIXTIES:  
COMMERCIALIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION IN THREE MUSICAL  
GENRES**

by

Rebecca Cweibel

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Degree in Music History and Literature with Distinction.

Spring 2012

© 2012 Rebecca Cweibel  
All Rights Reserved

**SELLING OUT IN THE SIXTIES:  
COMMERCIALIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION IN THREE MUSICAL  
GENRES**

by

Rebecca Cweibel

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Philip Gentry, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Russell E. Murray, Jr., Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Department of Music

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
David Suisman, Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Donald Sparks, Ph.D.  
Chair of the University Committee on Student and Faculty Honors

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am incredibly grateful to many individuals for their help and support of this project. I began the bulk of this work as an Arts & Humanities Summer Scholar, supported by the Undergraduate Research Program; a hearty “thanks” goes out to Meg Meiman, Dr. Lynette Overby, my “Coding” group leader, Jennifer McCord, and group members Kristee Copley, Bill Humphrey, Matt Michael, and Audrey Rossi. Thanks to Ray White and Mark Horowitz in the Music Division at the Library of Congress for their archival assistance and orientation with the materials in the Leonard Bernstein Collection. I am particularly grateful to Jamie Bernstein for agreeing to speak with me on the telephone about her father and the *Young People’s Concerts*. Thanks also to Alicia Kopfstein-Penk for sharing her work on the *Young People’s Concerts*, Dr. Holley Replogle-Wong for sharing her dissertation, and Kathryn Ostrofsky for sharing her work-in-progress on *Sesame Street*. A portion of this work was shared at the American Musicological Capital Chapter Spring Meeting, and I thank all members present for their engaging discussion of “The Sound of Silence.”

The extent of support I have received from colleagues within the Department of Music is truly outstanding. I would like to thank Malcolm Cooper, Lauren Wells Ketter, Erica Santos, Michael Stiles, and Tyler Wiernusz for their attendance and feedback at the preview presentation of my AMS-CC paper, and also to Cera Babb, Michael, and Tyler, for attending the defense of this thesis. Thanks to Sadie Pincus for simultaneously grounding and encouraging me, and

thanks to Allie Arpajian for regular laughing and commiseration. For always talking me off a ledge, and initially convincing me that it's okay to abandon a first idea and decide not work on Beethoven, I thank Marion Jacob. Thanks to Dan Rocha for regular discussions—venting might be a better word—about the field-entry and long-term writing process for those of us in the lower ranks of musicology.

There is no way I can adequately thank the music faculty who have supported and encouraged me in completing my work, but I will certainly try. First, thanks to Dr. Larry Stomberg for taking me on as a cello student, and continuing to mentor me throughout my four years in college while I have tried to figure out what to do with the rest of my life. Thanks to Dr. Brian Stone and Dr. Jim Anderson for making orchestra a space to experience music from the inside out. For having fresh and insightful ears when I wanted to talk about my work or life, putting me through conference paper boot camp, and teaching me how to write intelligently about notes, I thank Dr. Maria Purciello. Thanks to Dr. Danny Stevens for training my ears to see and my eyes to hear, for guiding me through soul-searching early in my college career, and for being a present mentor through and beyond the defense of this thesis. Thanks also to Dr. Phil Duker for lots: particularly for volunteering to be an unofficial committee member, and for challenging me with tough questions at every campus-based public presentation of my work.

I extend my sincerest and heartiest thanks to my thesis committee. Thanks to Dr. David Suisman for being such an active third reader. For priceless book and article suggestions, for pushing and challenging me early on, and for helping

historicize my work. Thanks to my second reader, Dr. Russell Murray, for recognizing me in Honors 311 as perhaps a bit too interested in the course, and for suggesting I do research (and for not being too upset when that research ended up dealing with material after the Common Practice period). Thanks for the countless life chats, driving me to conferences, being a great second reader, and everything else—there truly is too much to list here. Finally, I thank Dr. Phil Gentry for being so much more than just a thesis director. Thanks for everything: reading suggestions last winter, driving with me to the Library of Congress for research, walking me through both a thesis and graduate school applications, always having an open door and attentive, open ears, and for everything in between.

I give thanks to all of my friends, family, and mentors for listening—or sometimes pretending to listen—to me talk about my work, and for helping me try to keep two feet on the ground. Writing this thesis has been a whirlwind, and I am incredibly thankful to all who have supported me.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	vii
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Cultural Logic .....	5
2 “I JUST LOVE GOOD MUSIC”: LEONARD BERNSTEIN’S <i>YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERTS</i> , MASS CULTURE, AND THE MEDIA .....	14
Middlebrow Culture.....	15
The Concerts.....	18
Walter Damrosch and the NBC Radio Hour .....	25
Media Impact and Influence.....	32
3 AUDIBLE PROCESSES, IN MUSIC AND POLITICS .....	41
Identity Crises Surrounding Politics in ‘60s Protest Music .....	41
Reich as a Student .....	46
The Works .....	48
<i>It’s Gonna Rain</i> .....	48
<i>Come Out</i> .....	52
<i>In C</i> —Terry Riley .....	56
<i>Piano Phase</i> .....	58
<i>Four Organs</i> .....	59
The Evolution of Politics in Reich’s Music .....	61
4 THE UBIQUITOUS, PLASTIC, SOUND OF SILENCE .....	69
Simon & Garfunkel’s History .....	69
Authorship .....	75
The Role of <i>The Graduate</i> .....	78
Faux Authenticity .....	80
“The Sound of Silence” as an Object .....	84
5 EPILOGUE .....	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	95

## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents three case studies of American musicians in the 1960s who worked against the discourse of authenticity within their respective genres. Using different strategies, the three studies show how music can be commercialized or commodified to the musician's—and audience's—benefit. All three cases involve consideration of audience reception in the nature of production, and all three creators benefitted from such consideration.

The three studies represent varied genres: the symphony orchestra, experimental minimalism, and pop/folk. During his tenure at the New York Philharmonic, conductor Leonard Bernstein incorporated popular music into the *Young People's Concerts*, an educational series. Experimental composer Steve Reich abandoned political composition for instrumental music while gaining popularity, only to later come back to pointed political composition. Paul Simon embraced a producer's overdubbing of "The Sound of Silence," a simple acoustic song, once the new version offered him a taste of fame and fortune.

*I just want to say one word to you. Just one word.*

*Yes, sir?*

*Are you listening?*

*Yes, sir, I am.*

*Plastics.*

*Exactly how do you mean?*

*There's a great future in plastics. Think about it. Will you think about it?*

*Yes, I will.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Conversation between Benjamin Braddock and Mr. McGuire. Dustin Hoffman, Anne Bancroft, Katharine Ross, William Daniels, and Murray Hamilton. *The Graduate*. Directed by Mike Nichols. New York: MGM Studios, 1967. DVD.



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Authenticity is impossible to perform. An object or concept can be authentic if it is material or if it is unique. A chair is an authentic chair, but its copy is no longer authentic; the copy could appear to be an exact copy, but it lacks the temporal associations tied to the first chair, or as Walter Benjamin put, the original chair's "aura."<sup>2</sup> Considering actions and identities, nothing can be an authentic representation of a larger group. There is no authentic woman, since there is no complete perception of gender upon which all people and societies can agree. There is no authentic urban culture, since it is fragmented and varied. There is no authentic rock and roll; fans point to an artist at a time in his life as more authentic than another, but authentic rock and roll as an absolute does not exist. Still, musicians pride themselves on being "authentic" while fans disparage perceived inauthenticity. In reality, authenticity is an asymptote—a concept that can be approached but never fully reached.

But what, exactly, is authenticity? If it is to exist, authenticity is an unadulterated expression of an emotion, a characteristic, or a group. An authentic rock musician would rightfully claim that rock is the only way he can express his art, and he would play "authentic" rock. He would exist in the prime era of rock,

---

<sup>2</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Hannah Arendt (London: Fontana, 1968), 217–252.

and he would play music unadulterated by other genres and styles. His music would be an expression of his inner being and it would be written and performed without concern for the audience's tastes and preferences. A person imitating this ideal is inauthentic in motivation. The concept of an authentic performer is so meticulous and unforgiving that no one can fully embody it.

Rather than adhering to the absolutes of authenticity and inauthenticity, we can consider the concept on a spectrum. A performance might not be essentially authentic, but it may be more authentic than another. Bob Dylan performing his song "The Times, They Are a-Changin'" is not an authentic folk music performance because it is authored, rehearsed, repeated, and revised. Still, Dylan's performance is more authentic than a live cover of the song by The Byrds or Bruce Springsteen. When Kurt Hummel sang John Mellencamp's "Pink Houses" in the first season of *Glee*, he gave a less authentic performance than Mellencamp himself.<sup>3</sup> Crucially, authenticity is something artists try to emulate to claim authority. While Kurt's performance was inauthentic, he tried to act the part of Mellencamp's character, a lower-middle class, post-white flight suburbanite. In seeking to appeal to his father, a Mellencamp fan, Kurt emulated what he saw as authenticity in Mellencamp. In doing so, he sought to claim authority by playing the part of a character representing a demographic. He tried to authentically represent Mellencamp, and the act of trying made his performance less authentic.

Preference toward authenticity privileges behavior that represents or expresses a pure concept. Fans who seek what they perceive as authentic

---

<sup>3</sup> Chris Colfer, "Laryngitis," *Glee*, season 1, episode 18, directed by Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, aired May 11, 2010 (Los Angeles, California: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2011), DVD.

performances do so because any measures not taken to intentionally appeal to the audience are made up for by perceived honesty. However, “[e]very performance,” write Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, “is to some degree “faked”—nobody goes out on stage and sings about exactly what they did and felt that day. Authenticity is an absolute, a goal that can never be fully attained, a quest.”<sup>4</sup> Even the least commercial musician is a performer, and performance implies rehearsal and revision. Whether the performance is a major orchestra playing a symphony by Beethoven, a singer alone onstage with a guitar, or a glam rock band singing to thousands of screaming fans, the performance can never be authentic.

The title of this thesis is somewhat misleading. Selling out implies altering artistic material or acting on genre non-conforming ideologies to move from a fringe culture to a popular culture. Musicians in subcultures existing outside of the tyranny of the culture industry who then get professional record deals sell out. Selling out, however, can be subtler than taking an action that directly results in monetary gain. It can involve taking smaller steps to appropriate inauthenticity and make a palatable product. Referring to the subtler approach as “selling out” is perhaps unfair, and even inaccurate. Selling out is instantly perceivable, while the alternative approach is gradual and generally undetectable as it happens. Instead, the subtle approach is better understood as commercialization. A slightly more euphemistic term, commercialization involves making material that will pique its audience, who will then pay for the product.

---

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), x.

This, like selling out, involves making a product keeping the audience in mind. It is intentionally inauthentic, and it allows for wider success.

Such intentional inauthenticity neither began in the 1960s nor is unique to the decade. Eighteenth-century composers like Josef Haydn wrote music to satisfy wealthy patrons, and the punk band Green Day recently produced a Tony award winning Broadway musical. However, in the 1960s, we see a dramatically increased propensity toward commercialism and audience-pleasing in disparate musical scenes. In the realm of classical music, Leonard Bernstein uses popular music to help teach classical music. Steve Reich, an experimental composer history has labeled a “minimalist,” changed his compositional style to be apolitical and more aesthetically palatable. “The Sound of Silence,” written by Paul Simon and performed by Simon & Garfunkel, was reengineered to be a pop hit. These three examples serve as the focus of my argument, though they are by no means the only representations of the increased drive toward selling out that gained significant momentum in 1960s America.

The conversation preceding this introduction is a now infamous exchange from Mike Nichols’ 1967 film *The Graduate*. Benjamin Braddock, a college graduate—from an unnamed presumably east coast institution—is given advice by a friend of his parents, Mr. McGuire. Their discussion works on two levels, the latter of which being significant here. On one level, Mr. McGuire gives Benjamin career advice; he suggests the graduate go into the plastics industry. The more salient advice lies in an alternate understanding of “plastic,” as something inorganic and contrived. Read in this understanding, the discussion validates—even celebrates—the phenomenon of inorganicism.

Following suit with Benjamin and Mr. McGuire, this thesis celebrates commercialization and inauthenticity. After all, culture producers that embrace their audience reign successful, both economically and socially. The types of cultural objects from this period—be they music, movies, art, literature, etc.—that were well-received by the public and stood the test of time were those that appealed to an audience for their own intrinsic elements. In a post-WWII economy, popular culture becomes popular because it gains an audience that perpetuates its success and fame. This type of cultural populist democracy allows the masses to determine the trajectory of their own culture.

### **Cultural Logic**

The phenomenon of commercialization is not unique to the 1960s and I could likely have chosen to focus on any decade since the mid-nineteenth century. Frederic Jameson, in his 1984 essay in the *New Left Review*, makes a case for the periodization of postmodernism, what he refers to as “the cultural logic of late capitalism,” beginning at this time. According to Jameson, “the case for [postmodernism’s] existence depends on the hypothesis of some radical break or *coupure*, generally traced back to the end of the 1950s or the early 1960s.”<sup>5</sup> This break, as diagnosed by Jameson, is the result of the economic circumstances, not simply a stylistic option. Jameson writes:

I cannot stress too greatly the radical distinction between a view for which the postmodern is one (optional) style among many others available, and one which seeks to grasp it as the cultural

---

<sup>5</sup> Frederic Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *New Left Review* (1/146) 55. Emphasis his.

dominant logic of late capitalism: the two approaches in fact generate two very different ways of conceptualizing the phenomenon as a whole, one the one hand moral judgements (about which it is indifferent whether they are positive or negative), and on the other a genuinely dialectical attempt to think of our present of time in History.<sup>6</sup>

While the 1960s did not house the genesis of the phenomenon, the culture of the decade reflects the result of the economic conditions that allowed for postmodernism. Furthermore, postmodernism embraces and encompasses conditions that celebrate rather than denigrate the notion of commercialism.

Commercialization implies a level of dumbing down culture in order to make it accessible to the masses. Jameson more eloquently refers to this phenomenon as aesthetic populism.<sup>7</sup> In creating their works, postmodernists are

[f]ascinated precisely by this whole 'degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch, of the TV series and Readers' Digest culture, of advertising and motels, of the late show and the grade-B Hollywood film, of so-called paraliterature with its airport paperback categories of the gothic and the romance, the popular biography, the murder mystery and science fiction or fantasy novel: materials they no longer simply 'quote' as a Joyce or a Mahler might have done, but incorporate into their very substance.<sup>8</sup>

Creators Jameson would diagnose as postmodernists embrace mass culture, either for its intrinsic beauty or for its mass appeal. James Joyce and Gustav Mahler, to which Jameson refers, incorporated lower forms of culture—schlock and kitsch—into their works, but did so as part of a conscious decision to use

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 54–55.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 55.

material unidiomatic to their respective media. While Jameson himself tends to rest on a pedestal of elitism, those he diagnoses as postmodernists are comfortable embracing lower cultural strata. They create material that appeals to, rather than alienates, the general populace. In doing so, the postmodernists create culture that draws in the cultural middlebrow. Aesthetic populism plays to the general populace, which is largely middlebrow.

The 1960s advertising industry embraced the concept of aesthetic populism, even if only to make a profit. *Mad Men*, an AMC television series that began in 2007 as a fictionalized history of the golden age of advertising, embodies the spirit of the period. Its hero, advertising agent Don Draper, is a chauvinist executive whose primary interests are in making a profit and having both a carefree personal and work life. In the pilot episode, when Don asks a potential client why she isn't married, she tells him that she has never been in love before. Don responds, telling her that "the reason you haven't felt [love] is because it doesn't exist. What you call "love" was invented by guys like me to sell nylons."<sup>9</sup> Here, Don acknowledges that his business is designed to make a profit, selling the customer both the product she needs with a side dose of a romanticized version of what she should expect in her personal life. Don and his colleagues' mission to make a profit while selling the notion of the unattainable American Dream represents the profit-oriented falsity promoted by late capitalism and realized in postmodernism.

---

<sup>9</sup> John Hamm, Elisabeth Moss, Vincent Kartheiser, January Jones, and Christina Hendricks. "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," originally aired July 19, 2007. *Mad Men*, season 1, episode 1. New York: Lionsgate, 2008. DVD.

Mel Brooks' 1968 film *The Producers* serves as a period-contemporary representation of selling out.<sup>10</sup> The movie/musical tells the story of Max Bialystock, a Broadway producer, and his accountant, Leo Bloom, who set out to collect money from investors only to put on a show so terrible that it will only run for one night, and the men can thus slyly keep the money. They find that by doing everything wrong—picking the worst play and cast—they create a hit that runs so long that they will never be able to reimburse the investors. The macro-lesson of *The Producers* is somewhat of an exposé of the negative consequences of working with the solitary goal of making money. However, smaller parts of the story privilege superficiality. A memorable scene early in the movie depicts Bialystock yelling “if you got it, flaunt it!” out the window of his office to women on the street.

Surface-level culture reigned hegemonic during the era of postmodernism, but it is not to be belittled. Such culture becomes popular on its own merits, rather than as a result of a highbrow stamp of approval. Postmodernism, which should always be remembered as ‘the cultural logic of late capitalism,’ allows for culture that the majority of consumers choose. This type of social Darwinism privileges approachable and perceived successful acts of culture.

With the increasing hegemony of popular culture comes the challenge of reigning applied hierarchy. Purely from a mathematical standpoint, the more people identify with and consume popular culture, the fewer people there are to chastise it. Even though popular culture became more and more ubiquitous in the

---

<sup>10</sup> Zero Mostel, Gene Wilder, Christopher Hewett, William Hickey, and Anne Ives. *The Producers*. Directed by Mel Brooks. New York: MGM Studios, 1968. DVD.



1960s and beyond, some scholars and critics still kept it at arms length to shade their own affinity for it. Lawrence Levine, writing as late as 1988, prefaced his landmark monograph *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* by making excuses. According to Levine,

[O]ne of the central arguments of this book is that because the primary categories of culture have been the products of ideologies which were always subject to modifications and transformations, the perimeters of our cultural divisions have been permeable and shifting rather than fixed and immutable.<sup>11</sup>

Levine's argument is honorable, and one I aim to echo throughout this thesis, but even he feels the need to defend himself against pejorative criticism in line with that of the nineteenth century:

I do not want my audiences to shout me down when they disagree, or make me repeat sentences they find particularly stirring, or indulge in riots when they find the conditions in the auditorium not to their liking. These are not the conditions I yearn to work under, and I have not one shred of desire to see them return.<sup>12</sup>

Here, Levine preemptively responds to the self-proclaimed gatekeepers of culture—the tastemakers.

Throughout *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, Levine discusses the origins and the effect of cultural stratification, in which a cultural act becomes perceived as elite or low-class. His chapter “The Sacralization of Culture” gives examples of cultural

---

<sup>11</sup> Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), 8. Throughout his preface and the body of the book, Levine allows for cultural distinctions based on strata. Still, he challenges their origins and argues against their temporal rigidity.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

acts such as opera or poetry that, for different reasons, became associated with the elite classes. As he discusses the causes and results of these shifts, Levine breaks down the validity of cultural stratification.<sup>13</sup> His argument doesn't necessarily call for the abandonment of cultural stratification, but instead to acknowledge its contentious origins and existence.

Standing lightly on Jameson's and Levine's shoulders, this thesis examines changes in the 1960s within three genres that challenge cultural stratification and modernist elitism. The genres I present did not seek to reach the same audiences, though there likely was overlap; the figures I highlight did not work in tandem with one another, though they embraced a common discourse. All three figures broke the rules of authenticity within their respective genres, and subsequently gained a receptive audience while furthering their commercial and economic success. Such a situation made possible within the milieu of late capitalism and weakening of cultural stratification through classification.

This thesis presents three case studies dealing separately and differently with the themes of commercialization and commodification. Chapter 2 is titled "'I Just Love Good Music!'" Leonard Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts*, Mass Culture, and the Media." It tells the story of "selling out" by examining a conductor, his orchestra, and his educational mission. From 1958–1972, Bernstein led the New York Philharmonic's concert series aimed at teaching children and their families about classical music. During the contractual negotiations that allowed Bernstein control of the series, an arrangement was

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 85–168.

made to broadcast four programs each season on CBS television across the country, and later, internationally. With such a large and diverse audience, Bernstein aimed his teaching at the average person, embracing middlebrow culture. The series' goal had been to teach children about music—particularly of the classical stratum—but Bernstein took a more inclusive approach. He used popular music in his teaching, to the scorn of some of the public but to his pedagogical benefit. An enthusiastic fan of eclectic styles of music, Bernstein recognized that his audience would be more willing and receptive if he used music the mass public enjoys. In addition to using various styles and genres of music, Bernstein adjusted his platform across various media. The programs had to be inclusive enough to reach a live audience in New York and an anonymous audience across the country. Bernstein's sacrifice of exclusive highbrow material went against public expectations but worked to make a generation enthusiastic about music and music education.

Chapter 3 tells the story of an experimental music composer who altered his compositional style to reach a more expansive and receptive audience. Steve Reich, whose first successful compositions were phase pieces using recorded speech as source material, moved to writing absolute instrumental music. Reich's instrumental phase pieces were more accessible to listeners than his tape pieces. After his foray into writing absolute music, Reich changed his style to incorporate politics into his instrumental music. This type of writing began in the 1980s, long after Reich abandoned his political inclinations in the mid-1960s. The pinnacle of Reich's incorporation of politics into his minimalist style is his 2010 piece *WTC 9/11*, a simultaneous homage to the victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist

attacks on the World Trade Center and a provocation of the American public to renewed consciousness of the attacks' impact. Read alongside the commodification of the folk revival, Reich's compositional history loosely parallels Bob Dylan going electric at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. The musicians' motivations were certainly different, and Dylan's career didn't revisit his previous compositional styles. Still, the idea of changing one's compositional style and subsequently gaining a more expansive audience prevails.

Chapter 4 tells of Paul Simon's unintentional—but later embraced—move into the popular idiom through "The Sound of Silence." The song's original appearance on Simon & Garfunkel's 1964 debut album, *Wednesday Morning 3AM*, was—as promised by the album's subtitle—"in the folk style." Simon and Garfunkel's singing was accompanied by Simon playing acoustic guitar. Two years later, without the artists' permission, producer Tom Wilson overdubbed "The Sound of Silence" with electric guitar, electric bass, and drum set. The song subsequently became a hit single, and caused Simon & Garfunkel to continue their partnership by way of a second album in 1966, *Sounds of Silence*. This chapter is primarily concerned with authorship and the commodification of a popular song. Although Simon & Garfunkel did not give Wilson permission to overdub their song and initially disapproved of his changes, they reappropriated "The Sound of Silence" as a signature song associated with their brand. By the early 1990s, at a public concert in New York's Central Park, Simon took the song so far out of its original context that it sounded like a smooth version of psychedelic rock. "The Sound of Silence," initially an unobtrusive song in the folk style, became a pseudo-intellectual anthem of American popular music.

The three case studies presented in this thesis by no means paint an exhaustive picture of “selling out in the 1960s”, but these examples reveal three disparate figures working in the discourse of inauthenticity to their own advantage. Privileging the populist aesthetic and the spirit of Cold War liberalism, Leonard Bernstein, Steve Reich, and Paul Simon created musical environments in which they identified with a genre but challenged its discourse of authenticity and identity. These figures performed to a lower-brow demographic to their own advantage, as well as that of their audience.

## Chapter 2

### **“I JUST LOVE GOOD MUSIC”: LEONARD BERNSTEIN’S *YOUNG PEOPLE’S CONCERTS*, MASS CULTURE, AND THE MEDIA**

The 1960s are frequently remembered for radical cultural change. One of the changes during this decade involved the role of so-called “classical” music in mass culture. The symphony orchestra—an institution previously experienced as a cultural standard—found itself struggling to stay fresh and interesting. In the 1960s, with the increasing popularity of television, the average person spent more time in front of a screen than engaging in home music making or going to concerts. At the same time, television offered classical music a new medium for educational programming. Composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein was an early champion of this from his first foray into the medium with the CBS *Omnibus* programs, and became more renowned for his direction of the New York Philharmonic’s *Young People’s Concerts* series. These lecture recitals occurred live in New York City and were broadcast nationally on CBS television. The goal of the programs was to provide a high-quality musical experience while entertaining a national middlebrow audience of television-watching, culture-savvy individuals. The *Young People’s Concerts* serve as the prime example of how classical music entered into the television age, clinging to a chance for mass-cultural relevance.

## Middlebrow Culture

Cultural extremes are hard to miss. The extremes are relatively rare, but they serve as the material for media headlines and are force-fed to consumers—think of *foie gras* at one end and Spam at the other. Most people have difficulty relating to these extremes because the extremes don't make sense in their lives. The average person is more comfortable fitting into the cultural middlebrow, unique in that it blends culture from all hierarchical levels. A person associated with the middlebrow is a cultural omnivore; he might take occasional trips to the opera and listen to Top 40 radio while driving to the performance space.<sup>14</sup>

Ubiquitous as it may be, the middlebrow has long battled an elitist stigma. In April 1949, Russell Lyons wrote an article in LIFE magazine, categorizing culture as he experienced it according to its level in societal hierarchy. His article, "High-brow, Low-brow, Middle-brow," features a detailed chart displaying how culture fits into these categories. The graphic goes a step further, breaking the middlebrow into upper middlebrow and lower middlebrow. Lyons treats these two categories with an offensive tone nearly throughout the chart. In the "salads" category, people associated with the lower middlebrow are expected to eat "quartered iceberg lettuce and store dressing," while those partaking in highbrow culture eat "greens, olive oil, wine vinegar, ground salt, ground pepper, garlic, unwashed salad bowl." For reading material, the lower middlebrow chooses

---

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion of middlebrow culture, see: Holley Replogle, "Crossover and Spectacle in American operetta and the Megamusical," (PhD diss, UCLA, 2009), especially Chapter 1, "Defining the 'Betwixt and Between': Middlebrow Culture, Crossover Genres"; also Joan Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

“book club selections, mass circulation magazines,” while the highbrow reads “criticism of criticism, avant-garde literature.”<sup>15</sup> These two examples show how the lower middlebrow subscribes to mass culture that has been processed and pre-packaged; it implies that those in the lower middlebrow need someone to choose their culture for them, while those in the highbrow favor rare, more original forms of culture. While there is no outright prejudice against the middlebrow, it is treated like a patronized child who is always inadequate.

While some journalists try to define and classify it, middlebrow culture is inherently inorganic; it lacks an identity of its own. It is a term that can only truly be defined by what it isn't, rather than what it is. At its origins, middlebrow culture is a move to renounce extremes, while giving the appearance of accepting and embracing them. In practice, middlebrow culture mixes elements from highbrow culture and lowbrow culture, calling the sum of the parts its own. Embracing the middlebrow amounts to an appreciation of polarized cultural entities with the understanding that there's nothing wrong with being in the middle. Empathizing with the middlebrow involves waging an unobtrusive battle against the stigma associated with being average. Contemporary society passively embraces—somewhat striving for—middlebrow culture. A recent article in *GQ* considers the social networking website Facebook to be part of

---

<sup>15</sup> Russell Lyons, “High-brow, Low-Brow, Middle-brow,” *LIFE*, April 11, 1949, 99-102.



middlebrow culture, likely because it blends the highbrow ideal of being well connected with lowbrow accessibility and commercial appeal.<sup>16</sup>

Embracing and addressing the middlebrow is a form of commercialization, one that can destigmatize elite authority. Such a concept is not specific to music or the 1960s; individuals have long known that the most effective way of communicating with a group of people is to speak their language on their level. It is better for a speaker to relate to his audience and speak in terms it understands than try and impress the audience with an air of superiority. Lawrence Levine, in his classic study of cultural stratification, tells the story of Tammany Hall, the infamous New York City-based political machine of the early twentieth century. According to one of its leaders in New York City's fifteenth assembly district, "If you're makin' speeches in a campaign, talk the language the people talk. Don't try to show how the situation is by quoting Shakespeare. Shakespeare was all right in his way, but he didn't know anything about Fifteenth District politics...Go out and talk the language of the Fifteenth to the people. I know it's an awful temptation, the hankerin' to show off your learnin'. I've felt it myself, but I always resist it. I know the awful consequences."<sup>17</sup> In other words: know your audience. This mentality proved to be successful in corrupt Gilded Age politics, and its success is observable in educational media.

---

<sup>16</sup> Devin Friedman, "Middlebrow: The Taste That Dare Not Speak Its Name," *GQ*, June 2011, <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/mens-lives/201106/middlebrow-culture>.

<sup>17</sup> Plunkitt, quoted in William L. Riordon, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall: A Series of Very Plain Talks on Very Practical Politics*. Quoted in Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 32.

## The Concerts

The New York Philharmonic's *Young People's Concerts* series began in the 1920s as an educational outreach program. The series has continued to the present day, undergoing changes to address changing social climates. Currently, the orchestra offers free podcasts on its website in addition to the live concert programs.<sup>18</sup> The *Young People's Concerts* turned heads nationwide when in 1958, the series was handed to Leonard Bernstein, along with successful negotiations allowing the programs to be broadcast on CBS.<sup>19</sup> The model for these programs was his *Omnibus* television programs, airing from 1954–1958 on CBS, which contained a lecture about a musical topic supplemented with live musical examples. The first *Omnibus* program discusses instrumentation, revisions, and the defining four-note motive of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The program famously featured orchestral musicians moving around on the stage, the floor of which was covered in a blown-up version of the first page of Beethoven's score, representing changes to the symphony found in Beethoven's notebooks.<sup>20</sup>

Bernstein's approach to the *Young People's Concerts* was similar to that of the *Omnibus* programs, but with some fundamental differences. The *Omnibus* programs were structured as lectures with musical accompaniment, while the *Young People's Concerts* were more of a synthesis of a lecture and a concert. This can be attributed to the luxury that the *Young People's Concerts* offered Bernstein

---

<sup>18</sup> "Young People's Concerts," The New York Philharmonic, [http://nyphil.org/concertsTicks/subs\\_youngPeopleConcerts.cfm](http://nyphil.org/concertsTicks/subs_youngPeopleConcerts.cfm)

<sup>19</sup> Humphrey Burton, *Leonard Bernstein* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 268.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 240, 250-4.

of a full-sized orchestra and a live audience. The presence of the orchestra allowed for the performance of symphonic repertoire, making performances feel more natural and expected. Bernstein, performer to the bone, thrived on the audience's feedback. With the *Young People's Concerts*, Bernstein was able to address a national audience while performing to a live New York audience. The negotiation of the deal allowing Bernstein reign of the series included the concerts being broadcast nationally on CBS television. Four times each year, Americans across the nation would tune in and learn about music.

Each of these programs had a specific topic of Bernstein's choosing, and sought to simultaneously entertain and educate the audience. A program typically began with Bernstein walking on stage and conducting the orchestra's performance of an excerpt from the symphonic repertoire. He would cut the orchestra off and begin his lecture by warmly welcoming the audience and telling them what piece they just heard. Next, he would go into depth explaining the topic for the program and its purpose. For the remainder of each program, Bernstein would move freely between lecturing, playing piano, and conducting the orchestra. The programs would end with the orchestra playing one of the pieces excerpted earlier on in the program.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Factual information about the *Young People's Concerts* is taken from several sources: viewings of the DVD footage (Leonard Bernstein, *Young People's Concerts*, directed by Roger Englander (West Long Branch, NJ: Kultur Video, 2004), DVD.); the Leonard Bernstein office's online collection of the program scripts (Leonard Bernstein, *Young People's Concerts*, Scripts, [http://www.leonardbernstein.com/ypc\\_scripts.htm](http://www.leonardbernstein.com/ypc_scripts.htm)); and the Library of Congress' collection of Bernstein's papers, including *Young People's Concerts* scripts (The Leonard Bernstein Collection, *Library of Congress*, papers).

Bernstein's direction of the *Young People's Concerts* series was one of his most high-profile career engagements. The educational outreach series began long before Bernstein's acquisition and has continued into the present, but has received as much attention and recognition as when Bernstein had control from 1958–72. Viewed by young and old in New York City and across the country, the concerts provided entertaining education and fostered an accessible means of music appreciation. With the luxury of the concerts being broadcast on national television, the concerts had the capacity to reach people across the country, and Bernstein approached the concerts with the intent of reaching as many people as possible.

Of all his obligations to the New York Philharmonic, Bernstein was most dedicated to the *Young People's Concerts*; as he once said, "the *Young People's Concerts* are among the favorite, most highly prized activities of my life."<sup>22</sup> This commitment is evident in Bernstein's thorough preparation of each program and by his ever-charismatic demeanor on stage. In the 1964–5 season, Bernstein was granted a sabbatical from the New York Philharmonic. According to Howard Klein, writing for the *New York Times*, "When he planned his sabbatical he canceled all appearances except these. And the series would be lost without him, for in this area of pedagogical showmanship he has no real competitor."<sup>23</sup> Klein's observation is evidence of both Bernstein's dedication to the programs and his excellence in presenting them. Bernstein's love for the series brought him

---

<sup>22</sup> Burton, 295.

<sup>23</sup> Howard Klein, "Bernstein Gives Children Lesson," *New York Times*, October 18, 1964.

temporarily out of sabbatical, an arguably unnecessary move. However, his popularity soared so high from the *Young People's Concerts* that not giving the programs might have jeopardized some of his prominence.

Bernstein's methods aimed to teach relevant and sophisticated musical lessons to which the public could relate. He felt it necessary for all people to have a diverse musical knowledge and understanding. By using varied methods and material, he taught to the middlebrow. Throughout the series, Bernstein seamlessly combined music of multiple periods, genres and styles in his lessons. More importantly, he combined music of various cultural preferences in order to relate to his audience. Bernstein embraced his audience's affinity for contemporary popular music and used that music to supplement the programs. His onstage demeanor demonstrated his own affinity to popular, lowbrow music, allowing him to use it as part of effective pedagogy.

From the beginning, Bernstein aimed to level with his audience in order to secure its attention. The first program Bernstein presented in the *Young People's Concerts* series, *What Does Music Mean?*, sets a precedent for appealing to the audience while attempting to answer complex musical questions. This program opens with the orchestra playing the end of Rossini's *William Tell* overture. When the piece is over, Bernstein immediately turns around and asks the audience "what that music is all about." Shouts of "the Lone Ranger!" echo throughout Carnegie Hall, as all the children in the audience immediately offer their enthusiastic responses. Bernstein takes it upon himself to break down the audience members' understanding of the music they so closely associated with cowboys in the Wild West: "Well, for one thing it can't mean the Wild West, for

the simple reason that it was written by a fellow who never heard of the Wild West—an Italian named Rossini....Rossini really wrote this piece as an overture to an opera called *William Tell*, which is about people in Switzerland, which is pretty far from the Wild West.” Taking this bait and switch move even further, Bernstein goes on to tell the audience that the music isn’t “about William Tell or cowboys or lampshades or rockets or anything.”

Throughout this first program, Bernstein argues that music doesn’t mean anything at all. “It’s about notes—E-flats and F-sharps.” The concept of “absolute” music, or music without intrinsic meaning, can be difficult for seasoned musicians to understand, let alone agree with. In this program, Bernstein argues that the individual notes have no meaning and suggests that therefore, the music itself has no inherent meaning. In reality, musical meaning is akin to the associations people make with music. The *William Tell* overture doesn’t explicitly mean ‘the Lone Ranger.’ That audience and contemporary audiences alike associate that music with the Lone Ranger; to them, the *William Tell* overture does mean the Lone Ranger. Bernstein goes to great lengths to convince the musically civilian audience members that they are wrong in this association. Still, it is interesting that Bernstein chose such a controversial topic for his very first program. Successive programs in the series had more benign topics; the other programs were more about musical fact than opinion. But in this first program, the audience received an in-depth lecture on the absence of meaning in music. To illustrate his point, Bernstein tells a story about a prisoner playing a kazoo who gets rescued by his friend, Superman, on a motorcycle. He then leads the orchestra in an excerpt from Richard Strauss’ *Don Quixote*, while re-telling the

prisoner story. He argues that even programmatic music composed thinking of a specific story has no obligation to be associated with its story. *Don Quixote* enhances the prisoner story, even though the ridiculous prisoner story has nothing to do with Strauss' intentions.

In addition to referencing popular television shows, Bernstein played to his audience's taste in popular music. During the time at which Bernstein led the *Young People's Concerts*, rock and roll had invaded American society. Bernstein incorporated this popular music into the concerts to his benefit. In the 1966 program, *What Is A Mode?*, Bernstein credits his fourteen-year-old daughter, Jamie, for inspiring him to address modal music. Jamie tried to figure out the chords to a Beatles song on the guitar, but she had trouble with the "funny harmony." Her father explained that the song was modal and required different chords than those to which she was accustomed, and Jamie was excited to learn about the impact of modes on the music she enjoyed. Jamie encouraged her father to give a program on modes because she, a young person, enjoyed learning about them. Bernstein used this anecdote as a plot hook for the program, appealing to his middlebrow audience in two distinct ways: popular music and family values.

Highbrow culture at the time looked down upon popular music in the concert hall. As one fan of the *Young People's Concerts* wrote to Bernstein in 1958, she "won't mind—and others won't mind—if you don't refer to Elvis Presley, rock 'n roll, and the like."<sup>24</sup> Defying this cultural expectation, Bernstein used popular music as a means to connect with a receptive audience. He understood

---

<sup>24</sup> The Leonard Bernstein Collection, *Library of Congress*, Box 393, folder 12.

that people are more willing to learn when the subject matter is applicable to their lives. Since the average person at the time of this program listened to the Beatles, the audience would have been able to relate to the lesson comfortably. The audience, in this case, did not need to pretend to understand or appreciate so-called higher forms of culture to understand the basis for the lesson on modes.

In the *What is a Mode?* program, Bernstein treated popular music with stealth and care. After the brief anecdote about Jamie's experience with a Beatles song, Bernstein quickly moved to a discussion about Debussy and other "serious" music. Accessible music is used as a misleading hook for a lesson grounded in late Romantic Impressionism. Once the idea of a lesson about popular music is planted, the audience is hooked, hanging onto the speaker in hopes that he will return to the more entertaining, instead of strictly educational, subject. Bernstein balances such cultural levels throughout this program, alternating between Debussy's *Fêtes* and the contemporary pop hit "Along Comes Mary" by The Association without drawing attention to the unconventional comparison.

Adding to the weight of the bait, Bernstein frames himself as a family man with a teenage daughter. Often, an orchestra conductor can seem like a distant, impersonal figure up on a podium. By telling the story of his pop culture-oriented teenage daughter, Bernstein counters this stigma. The persona of a middle-class family man is an appealing image to a conventional audience. Bernstein chose this persona carefully, treating it somewhat like a character. History, after all, remembers him for his more scandalous affairs than for his relationship with his family. It was important, though, for average person in the 1960s to see him as a "normal" husband and father. He used both popular music and the family man



imagery in the beginning of this program to prime the audience for a technical fact-filled lesson about a musical topic it might have otherwise ignored.

### **Walter Damrosch and the NBC Radio Hour**

Leonard Bernstein's tenure over the *Young People's Concerts* was the second iteration of large-scale music appreciation in America. From 1928-42, conductor Walter Damrosch led *The NBC Music Appreciation Hour*, a regularly occurring program on NBC radio. The programs sought to provide musical education beyond that already taught in the classroom, presented by a respected music professional. Educational concerts for children existed before Damrosch's series, but on a much smaller scale. Conductor Theodore Thomas gave a series of *Young People's Matinees* during the 1885-6 season, and Damrosch's father Frank gave a similar series beginning in 1898 for music students and teachers.<sup>25</sup> Walter Damrosch's programs were the first large-scale music appreciation effort in America.

Damrosch treated the NBC programs as if they were school music classes and he was the instructor. The programs were divided into four series, each for a different age group: Series A for grades 3-4, Series B for grades 5-6, Series C for grades 7-9, and Series D for high schools, colleges, and community groups. Each series, essentially a level, had a different developmental musical goal. Series A

---

<sup>25</sup> Sondra Wieland Howe, "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch," *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring, 2003), 66. Howe provides a strong foundation for understanding Damrosch's *The NBC Music Appreciation Hour* programs as well as a wealth of additional resources for their examination. Further factual information about the programs is taken from this article unless otherwise specified.

explored the various instruments and the human voice, Series B examined music as an expressive medium, Series C analyzed musical forms, and Series D discussed the lives of various composers. Individual programs lasted thirty minutes each, and listeners could hear programs for their particular level every other week. One Friday during the school day, a program from Series A and Series B would be broadcast back-to-back, and the following week, a program from Series C and Series D would also be broadcast back-to-back. This way, the programs received airtime each week, and students didn't wait too long to hear programs for their grade level. As students listened, they worked in notebooks prepared by Damrosch and his associates and purchased by schools nationwide. Separate teacher's manuals were also available for purchase, providing scaffolding for using the programs within the already established music pedagogy and allowing the programs to generate more revenue. The student notebooks served as workbooks, providing musical examples and asking students questions based on what they heard, leaving blank pages for students to take additional notes. Essentially, the programs were an opportunity for students to have a substitute music teacher addressing them from the radio rather than a live person in the classroom.

Innovative and far-reaching as they were, Damrosch's efforts were met with sociological criticism. Theodor Adorno famously criticized the programs in his article, "Analytical Study of the NBC *Music Appreciation Hour*,"<sup>26</sup> unpublished until after Adorno's death. The article was written between 1938-40, while the

---

<sup>26</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, "Analytical Study of the NBC *Music Appreciation Hour*," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (Summer 1994): 325-77.

programs still ran regularly. Making no apologies, Adorno wastes no time revealing his feelings about the series. From his first sentence, Adorno attacks the nature of the programs:

The purpose of the present study is to point out that radio, at its “benevolent” best, in a nation-wide, sustaining program of purely educational character, fails to achieve its aim—namely, to bring people into an actual life relation with music.<sup>27</sup>

The rest of the piece goes on to criticize Damrosch, the program material, and the programs themselves. Adorno admittedly analyzed the programs through the printed material, claiming that this material was enough for him to discern “a definite and authoritative statement of the viewpoint and method of the Hour, and a judgment of the Hour may be based upon them as representative of the broadcasts.”<sup>28</sup>

In his introduction section, Adorno talks in circles, perhaps to mitigate his harsh written tone. He begins with the noted opening statement, priming the reader to expect a harsh criticism of Damrosch and his intentions. In the same breath as he uses to call the “musical part of this program insufficient musically and pedagogically,” Adorno applauds Damrosch for clearly putting in “much energy and thinking in its preparation.”<sup>29</sup> He explicitly states later that he does “not blame the particular individuals for the failure of an undertaking such as the Music Appreciation Hour, but rather the system within which it works; a system,

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 326.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

which, in this particular case, exercises a devastating influence by using its own putative unselfishness and altruism as an advertising medium for selfish purposes and unvested interests.”<sup>30</sup> Here, Adorno reveals his hand in expressing his resentment of the game rather than its players. Despite this claim, the rest of the piece dissects Damrosch’s programs, criticizing their pedagogy, musical analysis, and the programs’ cultural implications. If Adorno were to stick to his claim about not blaming the people involved in the programs, he should have argued more explicitly about the negative impacts of the commercialization of music the programs perpetuated.

Leonard Bernstein stands in opposition to Adorno’s proselytizing. Adorno unabashedly criticizes the system of mass media, believing that it devalues high forms of art and culture, while Bernstein uses mass media to perpetuate his relatable music-embracing agenda. Where Adorno aimed to keep music as a protected high art, Bernstein broke down boundaries and objected to the cultural stratification of music. Adorno believed that “if, for pedagogical reasons, the whole truth cannot be told, at least nothing but the truth should be told...partial explanations, and inadequate or forced examples are, under no circumstances, justifiable.”<sup>31</sup> The *Young People’s Concerts* began after Adorno’s death, but we can only speculate as to how he would have reacted to Bernstein’s use of The Beatles “And I Love Her,” a popular song in verse-chorus form, to teach sonata form. Bernstein was fully aware that “And I Love Her” couldn’t serve as a complete

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 329.

manifestation of sonata form, but he chose the popular song to serve his purpose. He could have used a Classical period sonatina to walk his audience through the formal mechanics, but he instead chose his music with the goal of baiting the audience. Exclusively choosing classical music would have alienated the audience, even if it would have more accurately and fully supported the nature of the lesson.

In Adorno's critique of Damrosch's programs, he argued against the use of standard music appreciation and music education techniques:

It may suffice to mention that a person who is in a real life relation with music does not like music because as a child he liked to see a flute, then later because music imitated a thunder storm, and finally because he learned to listen to music as music, but that the deciding childhood experiences of music are much more like a shock.<sup>32</sup>

This statement is an attack on the sequential nature of Damrosch's programs and the simplification of musical ideas to relate to children and others with limited musical understanding. Adorno goes on to critique music education in general, claiming that it should be a step-by-step, highly planned and never diverging process. If Adorno were to see Bernstein's collection of *Young People's Concerts*, he would oppose their eclecticism and lack of clear trajectory.

Valuable as his work may be, it is important not to take Adorno's writings and opinions as doctrine. Bernstein had the right idea on the subject of educational programming in music. Reflecting upon the breadth of her father's impact on children of the sixties, Jamie Bernstein shared stories of musicians

---

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 328.

expressing gratitude towards her father's programming. When Ms. Bernstein performs narrations with orchestras, many musicians approach her to tell her how they are professional musicians because they saw broadcasts of the *Young People's Concerts* when they were children.<sup>33</sup> Audiences of the *Young People's Concerts* didn't receive a comprehensive musical education from the programs, but Bernstein's methods and charisma were enough to set off a spark creating a thirst for more musical knowledge and training in today's professional musicians.

Bernstein is well-remembered for teaching complicated lessons in his *Young People's Concerts*, without talking down to his audience. As Sharon Gelleny points out, "A great irony surrounding the *Young People's Concerts* is that, despite the program's name and its original conception as a children's show...by 1964...most of the viewers were adults, with children and teenagers comprising only 11% and 6% of the television audience, respectively."<sup>34</sup> However, the programs were still conceived in order to educate children and teenagers and Bernstein made it his mission to speak to his audience as adults. Gelleny refers to a statement Bernstein made in *TV Guide* in 1958: "It's impossible for me to say, "Dear children, this is your Uncle Lennie speaking" and tell them about Brother Violin, Sister Viola, Cousin Bassoon, Uncle Contrabassoon, and all that. This approach to the instruments bores me to pieces."<sup>35</sup> Kathryn Ostrofsky, in her

---

<sup>33</sup> Telephone interview with Ms. Bernstein, September 20, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Sharon Gelleny, "Leonard Bernstein on Television: Bridging the Gap Between Classical Music and Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (March 1999): 56.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Bob Stahl, "Musician With a Cause," *TV Guide* (January 18, 1958): 18.

work on the educational value of pop music in *Sesame Street*, references Joe Raposo, one of the show's songwriters, on his opinions about the show's use of pop music instead of traditional children's music. According to Raposo, critics of the pop music "don't realize or don't want to realize that the lamb left the nursery the day they brought the TV set in."<sup>36</sup> Popular music on television is logical and expected, since it is the type of music children are accustomed to hearing. On the other hand, Damrosch purposely used the condescending tone Bernstein satirized in his radio broadcasts. Howe argues that his condescending tone and discussion of the instruments as "My Musical Family" was to Damrosch's advantage in the consumer culture of the 1930s.<sup>37</sup> Bernstein's higher expectations and more adult-like language could be construed as alienating the audience, but it instead engaged the young audience even further. According to Jamie Bernstein, the young audience members wouldn't understand every word or concept, but they were willing to hold on and wait for something more on their level.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime, they could listen to high quality music being guided by the passionate and knowledgeable Leonard Bernstein.

---

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Hadad, "Joe Raposo." (1971), 8–9. Children's Television Workshop Archives, National Public Broadcasting Archives, University of Maryland. Box 31, folder 23. Referenced in: Kathryn Ostrofsky, "Taking *Sesame* to the Streets: Young Children's Interactions with Pop Music in the Urban Classrooms of 1970s New York" (talk, New York University, New York, March 23, 2012).

<sup>37</sup> Howe, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Telephone interview with Ms. Bernstein, September 20, 2011.

## Media Impact and Influence

The success of the *Young People's Concerts*, however, was not only due to Bernstein's rhetoric. Equally important was the very fact that it was televised. Scholarship contemporary with Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts* understood the impact of media on reception. In his 1964 book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshall McLuhan famously proclaimed "the medium is the message."<sup>39</sup> This book was published at the midpoint of Bernstein's tenure as musical director of the *Young People's Concerts*. His theories are immersed in the same zeitgeist within which Bernstein operated. McLuhan argues that the medium, or the way information is delivered, impacts the information itself.

McLuhan's theories are often boiled down to the simple statement of "the medium is the message," but the details of McLuhan's argument are important as well. "In terms of the ways in which the machine altered our relations to one another and to ourselves, it mattered not in the least whether it turned out cornflakes or Cadillacs."<sup>40</sup> In this case, McLuhan argues the product is irrelevant because it was made by a machine, a non-human source. He also argues that cubism is a clear manifestation of the medium as the message. Prior to movements like cubism, "the message, it seemed, was the 'content,' as people used to ask what a painting was *about*."<sup>41</sup> With cubism, the medium and the

---

<sup>39</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), 1964: 7-21.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 13.



message are one in the same, because the style and techniques overwhelm the meaning of the work itself.

Another salient essay by McLuhan theorizes the differences between hot and cold media. His terms aren't always relevant or comparable to a contemporary audience, but his theories help frame the cultural context in which Bernstein operated for the *Young People's Concerts*. "A hot medium," explains McLuhan, "is one that extends one single sense in 'high definition.'"<sup>42</sup> In other words, the more completely a medium penetrates the senses, the hotter it is. McLuhan considers the telephone a cooler medium than the radio. When listening to the radio, one gets a complete aural experience, complete with a speaker and extraneous sound effects. When talking on the telephone, especially in the days before speakerphones, one is only able to hear the voice of the person on the other end of the line. An extension of McLuhan's theory would dictate that a concert hall experience is hotter than a television experience. The senses are more thoroughly stimulated in a concert hall than while watching television—this is especially true of the seemingly miniature televisions of the 1960s. A television viewer must fill in sensory gaps that a concert hall audience member does not.

The issue of the *Young People's Concerts* having multiple identities surfaced frequently through their run. Howard Klein's New York Times review of the 1966 *What Is A Mode?* program opens proclaiming "Philharmonic Hall was turned into a huge television studio yesterday...as Leonard Bernstein and the

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 28.

New York Philharmonic began the 10th season of *Young People's Concerts*.”<sup>43</sup>

Roger Englander argued that the live and television audiences experienced the same concert, but the two audiences had vastly different experiences.<sup>44</sup> The live audience experienced a live concert but one obscured by television equipment. On the other hand, the television audience missed out on the hot media experience only possible during a live performance.

In the tenth season of Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts*, a *New York Times* reviewer became skeptical. Ronald Eyer questioned whether the concerts were concerts or television programs in an appropriately titled article, “Are These Concerts Still Concerts?”<sup>45</sup> He argues for both sides, first in a discussion of how the concerts “have subtly metamorphosed into live telecasts with a studio audience, especially since the introduction of color this season. That has brought into the hall larger cameras and more powerful lighting equipment to glare into the eyes of the youthful spectators.”<sup>46</sup> Roger Englander, the television series' producer, claimed, on the other hand, that the series “is probably the least produced show on television.” Englander argued that the television audience received an authentic concert experience and that the programs were unedited before being broadcast. The television viewer experiences the same unedited

---

<sup>43</sup> Howard Klein, “Bernstein Gives Old Mode A New Twist,” *New York Times*, October 23, 1966.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald Eyer, “Are These Concerts Still Concerts?”, *New York Times*, January 22, 1967.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

program as the New York audience. Conversely, the New York audience saw any visuals viewed by television audience superimposed on the picture on in-house monitors.

Audiences of the *Young People's Concerts* undoubtedly experienced the programs differently dependent on their medium of exposure. However, the two prominent media, live concert hall performances and television, sought to function like each other. The archival video footage clearly shows technological equipment throughout the hall, especially on stage. Whenever supplemental text to clarify Bernstein's lessons appeared on television screens, it was replicated on monitors in the concert hall. While all audiences experienced the programs differently, the production staff aimed to blur the line between the media as much as possible. Englander argued that the television audience received a concert hall experience due to the lack of editing the programs received, but one might also say that the live concert hall audience received a television-like experience.

In his Master's thesis on the collaboration between Leonard Bernstein and Roger Englander, John MacInnis argues that throughout the *Young People's Concerts'* run, Bernstein played most to the live New York audience while Englander focused on the television audience. Bernstein, forever a performer, was most concerned with the audience from whom he could receive immediate feedback. MacInnis cites the 1958 program, *What Makes Music Symphonic?*, as an example of Bernstein leading a musical round with his live audience.<sup>47</sup> While

---

<sup>47</sup> John Christian MacInnis, "Leonard Bernstein's and Roger Englander's Educational Mission: Music Appreciation and the 1961-62 Season of *Young People's Concerts*" (master's thesis, Florida State University, 2009), 44.

television audience viewers could certainly join in singing as they watched the program, those people missed out on the spontaneous performance aspect of seeing the programs live in New York. The *Concerts* frequently called for such audience participation; sometimes the audience was expected to sing, and sometimes they would be asked to clap at a certain point in the music. This was Bernstein's way of assessing whether he was teaching effectively. Since the television audience couldn't be assessed, Bernstein had to rely on the live feedback he received in New York. Still, MacInnis argues that the television audience was "privileged above the [New York] viewers." Home viewers benefitted from the intellectualized camera angles, cuts, and close up shots. They were able to see instruments carefully being played and they benefitted from clearly seeing Bernstein's facial expressions.<sup>48</sup> While the television viewers may have been able to see what was happening more closely, they were lacking in the McLuhan-theorized hot media experience that the live audience received. What MacInnis processes as a privileged experience for the television audience is really Englander's attempts to compensate for the incomplete experience the television audience received for not being in the hall as the concerts occurred.

In his article questioning the validity of the programs as concerts, Ronald Eyer questions the effectiveness of the concerts as educational tools. Each season

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 45. Since MacInnis' thesis is concerned with the 1961-62 season of the programs, he refers to the television audience specifically being privileged over the Carnegie Hall audience. Unless he would argue that there was a dramatic change in production of the *Young People's Concerts* in successive seasons, his argument would apply to the television audience being privileged over the audience at Philharmonic Hall of Lincoln Center (now known as Avery Fischer Hall) after the orchestra's move.

had only four *Young People's Concerts*, which is hardly enough repetition to be effective. Then-chairman of the Columbia Teachers College music department, Frank D'Andrea, proclaimed that four concerts a year was "woefully inadequate." He would prefer to see a program in which the orchestra would go to the children and have a greater sense of cooperation with the schools. D'Andrea also mentioned that orchestras in other cities offer educational programs that schools could attend free of charge, or for a much lower price. Tickets for the *Young People's Concerts* cost up to \$4 in 1967<sup>49</sup> (\$27.03, adjusted for inflation to 2011 dollars<sup>50</sup>). While paying \$27 to see Leonard Bernstein conduct the New York Philharmonic might seem like a steal in twenty-first century terms, that kind of money would have been difficult for a middle class family in the mid-'60s to justify spending per ticket on an hour-long music lesson, especially knowing that the concerts would later be broadcast on television. Regardless of the concert's affordability, both Frank D'Andrea and Benjamin Chancey, then-New York Board of Education music director, agreed that Bernstein's teaching was highly effective and entertaining. Chancey went on to discuss how Bernstein's teaching methods filtered into music education in schools. Schools were able to purchase tapes of the programs, allowing for command repeat performances. "But perhaps more important," reports Eyer, "many teachers are emulating the Bernstein approach to musical instruction with the use of visual aids, conversational and non-

---

<sup>49</sup> Eyer, "Are These Concerts Still Concerts?"

<sup>50</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessed July 27, 2011, [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm).

technical explanations of music and the injection of a “fun” element which softens a hard lesson in musical analysis.”<sup>51</sup>

In addition to critical discussion, Bernstein received an enormous amount of popular media recognition for the *Young People's Concerts*. The television series won three Emmy Awards: Outstanding Program Achievement in Children's Programming in 1962 and 1964, and Outstanding Program Achievement in Entertainment in 1965. The series also won the Thomas Alva Edison Mass Media Award in 1958, 1959, and 1961.<sup>52</sup> Winning the 1965 Emmy for Outstanding Program Achievement in Entertainment tells an important message about the programs' overall reception. This Emmy was awarded for the *What Is Sonata Form?* program.

Compared to many of the other programs, the *What Is Sonata Form?* program is rather dry. Most of the program is spent with Bernstein lecturing, explaining technical terms and their musical application. Bernstein, not surprisingly, more than adequately explains the necessary terminology to the audience. The program closes with the orchestra playing the first movement of Mozart's “Jupiter” symphony while students from Mannes hold up large signs with the proper terminology at the proper time; when the development section occurs, a sign marked “development” is turned over. This type of activity clearly shows the audience the mechanics of sonata form unfolding in real time, a valuable lesson for any musician or music-lover. However, the *What Is Sonata*

---

<sup>51</sup> Eyer, “Are These Concerts Still Concerts?”

<sup>52</sup> “Honors: A Selected List,” Leonard Bernstein, accessed July 27, 2011, <http://www.leonardbernstein.com/honors.htm>.

*Form?* program received its Emmy award for its entertainment value. Cultural conditions in the 1960s favored the propagation of knowledge and ideas, giving educational programs awards in categories that could just as easily go to mindlessly entertaining programs.

The *New York Times* reviewed the concerts as they were performed live, typically reporting positive reactions. In his review of the first program, *What Does Music Mean?*, *Times* writer H.C.S. makes special note about Bernstein's use of music by Anton Webern. He tells of how "the children listened to the wispy ultra-modernist with much more complacency than do their parents. As a matter of fact, they liked it."<sup>53</sup> The children's parents were immersed in a cultural stigma against ultra-modernist music like that of Webern; their parents' preconceived notions about the music prohibited them from enjoying it. The children, on the other hand, were more receptive to the music because they were able to enjoy it at face value.

A speaker has the best chance of reaching his audience if he can level with its members. When Bernstein directed the *Young People's Concerts*, he showed his audience that he loved music—all music, not just classical music. He projected his enthusiasm in the concert halls of New York, emoting and acting like a real person instead of an anonymous figure waving his arms. The middle-class, middlebrow audience responded to Bernstein's relatable persona and his blend of entertaining and educationally important music. Audience members enjoyed being entertained by music of the Beatles, and they also enjoyed learning more

---

<sup>53</sup> H.C.S., "Bernstein Offers A Lesson In Music," *New York Times*, January 19, 1958.

about music by historically famous composers. The added element of television allowed the whole country to engage in entertaining musical education.

Television audiences undoubtedly had a different experience than live New York audiences, but both audiences benefitted from this accessible, fun musical experience. These experiences, however, would have been impossible without the sum total of cultural transformations during the 1960s.



## **Chapter 3**

### **AUDIBLE PROCESSES, IN MUSIC AND POLITICS**

Those telling the story of musical minimalism spend a significant amount of energy on the music and career of Steve Reich. A native New Yorker, Reich has long been associated with the so-called “downtown” school of music and composition, as opposed to the uptown academic composers typically associated with Columbia and Princeton. Downtown composers tend to be seen as true Artists—with a capital “A”—because they push boundaries and thrive in countercultural environments. Reich’s career took him from New York to San Francisco and back to New York, where he has been living and composing since 1966. His compositional style has changed and evolved through the years, adapting to the artistic and political context in which he worked. In the mid-1960s, Reich’s compositions became more approachable entered into the public sphere. By 1971, he began to gain a commercial public audience. Beginning in the late 1980s, Reich has returned to writing music that renders itself less publically approachable and relatable. Much as Bob Dylan “sold out” by going electric in 1965, none of his later success would have been possible if Reich didn’t “sell out” by abandoning political tape music composition in 1967 and write his first mature instrumental piece, *Piano Phase*.

#### **Identity Crises Surrounding Politics in ‘60s Protest Music**

Reich was not alone in selling out by altering musical material and compositional style in the 1960s. Similar discourse occurred in the realm of

popular music, though the public reception of selling out was more vocal and oppositional in popular music than in experimental composition. The connection between music and politics is evident in protest songs of the 1960s folk revival in New York's Greenwich Village. Born about six months apart, Bob Dylan and Phil Ochs hold the place of poster children for mid-sixties protest singers in New York. The two men have vastly different politics, careers, and legacies. Ochs took his own life in 1976, at age thirty-five, while Dylan is still writing, recording, and performing in his seventies. Ochs' untimely death may account for some of the difference in the singers' legacies; it would be impossible to know with certainty whether the differences in their life spans impacted their respective popularity and legacy. The political content of the two men's songs is more likely responsible for their differing legacies. In the case of Dylan and Ochs, the singer with the more "authentic," driving political message was forgotten in relation to the singer with gentler politics and an electric guitar.

In the early 1970s, Paul Wolfe's essay, "Dylan's Sellout of the Left," criticized Dylan and praised Ochs in relation to the 1964 Newport Folk Festival, juxtaposing Ochs' authenticity against Dylan's sellout.<sup>54</sup> Wolfe criticizes Dylan's gradual move to writing songs that are more self-involved than those with mass political and cultural significance. By Wolfe's prediction, Ochs might have fallen victim to the same fate as Dylan, and he questioned if Ochs would become

---

<sup>54</sup> Paul Wolfe, "Dylan's Sellout of the Left," in *The Sounds of Social Change*, ed. R. Serge Denisoff and Richard A Peterson (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1972), 147–150. NB: Wolfe's essay is in response to Dylan's performance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1964, a year earlier than the performance at which Dylan played electric guitar.

“disillusioned, or in some other way discontented with his political messages of protest, and abandon them.” However, Wolfe goes on, explaining that such a change would have been unlikely. “Ochs is much more deeply committed to the broadside tradition; to news and politically oriented songs, most of which are focused on specific events and do not range into the wide scope of human events...that characterized so many of Dylan’s more famous works.”<sup>55</sup> Essentially, because Ochs is more concerned with specific political events as opposed to Dylan’s discontentment with society as a whole, Ochs would be less likely to break away from writing political protest songs.

Steve Reich’s political pieces are easily likened to Ochs’ protest songs, but the public received the two figures quite differently. Reich’s *It’s Gonna Rain* and *Come Out* are about isolated pointed political events, the former about the political scene in a post-Cuban Missile Crisis world, and the latter about an incident of police brutality as a result of a false accusation of gang violence. Ochs’ “I Ain’t Marching Anymore” and “Love Me, I’m a Liberal” take on political issues both sarcastically and with a hint of journalism. In fact, Ochs was often considered a singing journalist in addition to a protest singer. These few works of the two figures were relatively contemporaneous and work to express mutually sympathetic politics, but the comparison between the two ends there.

Significant difficulties arise in the juxtaposition of Reich’s and Ochs’ careers. The two worked in vastly different styles, commanding different audiences. While Ochs’ audience thrived on his topical politics, Reich did not have

---

<sup>55</sup> Wolfe, 149.

such an audience in the mid-sixties. Ochs spent his entire career, albeit a short one, writing political music. Wolfe's passive prediction of Ochs abandoning political music may have been realized had Ochs lived a longer life. As we see with Reich, who returned to writing music with strong political implications after over a decade of political insignificance, change is both possible and likely.

The first few decades of Reich's career more closely parallel the first few decades of Bob Dylan's career. Both figures began writing powerful political music, then moved to writing more music they wanted to write, but was uncharacteristic of their earlier careers. As Irwin Silber wrote in an open letter to Bob Dylan about his less political songs, "your new songs seem to be all inner-directed, inner-probing and self-conscious."<sup>56</sup> The songs to which Silber responded were connected with Dylan's poetry and his move to writing something more akin to the typical love song than a protest song inspiring change. When Reich first abandoned writing political music, he turned to writing tonal instrumental music, reflecting his own personal desires.

Dylan famously "went electric" at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, a year after the festival to which Wolfe responded.<sup>57</sup> He performed "Like A Rolling Stone," and reportedly started a riot. Dylan's fan base saw this performance as the artist selling out and abandoning his folk, protest-singing roots. While some fans at the festival were upset with the change, American culture as a whole has

---

<sup>56</sup> Wolfe, 147.

<sup>57</sup> For a satirical take on Dylan's performance at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, see Karl Hagstrom Miller, "How to Write About Bob Dylan: A Step-by-Step Guide," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* (Volume 3, Issue 3, September 2011), 365.

both forgiven and accepted Dylan's electric guitar. Each year, Q104.3, New York's Classic Rock radio station, releases a list of the top 1,043 classic rock songs of all time. In 2011, thirteen of Dylan's songs made the list; "Like A Rolling Stone" is ranked highest of all Dylan's songs, listed as the twenty-eighth best classic rock song of all time.<sup>58</sup> Even though he angered his audience in 1965, Dylan's fans have grown to love his electric music in the interim. "Like A Rolling Stone" and the rest of the electric set at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival work as transition material for the rest of his career. Since then, Dylan has both continued to play electric music and gone back to acoustic, folk-like songs. Going electric was neither good nor bad; it simply offered him new territory.

Steve Reich's abandonment of tape music after 1966 followed in the footsteps of Dylan going electric. The circumstances for these changes were different, yet they were means to a similar end. Reich and Dylan both made their changes in order to fulfill personal compositional ideas; they both wanted to write different types of music than what they had been writing previously. Still, the two were in significantly different stages of their careers when they made their changes. Dylan already had a loyal fan base, keen on protest music and blue-collar folk. Reich, on the other hand, succeeded only in the counter-culture. He was well known and respected in his own new music circles, but he had not yet reached any kind of public success. For Reich, writing instrumental music was a bold move that inevitably helped dramatically grow his fan base. He didn't reach observable popularity until 1971, but that popularity would not have been

---

<sup>58</sup> Q104.3, "Top 1,043 Songs (2011 Edition)," [http://www.q1043.com/common/top\\_songs/2011.html](http://www.q1043.com/common/top_songs/2011.html)

possible without *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase* leading to *Drumming*, which helped him arrive at *Four Organs*, the first piece to get any noticeable public performance. Dylan had a lot to lose by going electric, but Reich had only fame to gain. Luckily, going electric and going instrumental helped advance, respectively, the careers of both musicians.

### **Reich as a Student**

After completing an undergraduate degree at Cornell University, Reich studied with Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard, a school at which he felt compositionally stifled; it was “the end of the Aaron Copland tradition.”<sup>59</sup> Through the end of his Juilliard years in 1961, Reich characterized his own compositions as making extensive use of stacked fifths, and always having a tonal center. Interestingly, however, Reich traces his use of stacked fifths to the music of Béla Bartók rather than that of Copland. This type of less-obvious connection is common for Reich; he often cites academic or esoteric composers as musical influences.<sup>60</sup> The composers by whom Reich felt stifled at Juilliard, Copland and Bartók, were strongly associated with the older perceptions of New York composers, and Reich felt the need to physically distance himself from their hegemony. He did so by moving across the country to San Francisco. Later, Reich

---

<sup>59</sup> Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 155-6.

<sup>60</sup> See Steve Reich, *Writings on Music: 1965-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) for references to such composers. For example, Reich cites the Medieval Notre Dame school composers Leonin and Perotin’s compositional practices of organum and augmentation as informing his 1970 piece, *Four Organs*, p. 50.

recalled his cross-country move as “the classic reason that Americans go to California: I was running away from home.”<sup>61</sup> The move was away from the city Reich called home to a new musical and social scene. Like the unnamed masses who made the move before him, Reich experienced defining moments on the west coast.

Some of the most salient events in Reich’s compositional education occurred while he was enrolled at Mills College in Oakland. During this time, in the early 1960s, Reich was expected to write serial music, which he did not wish to write. Keith Potter points out one of Reich’s favorite anecdotes about his studies at Mills: “I would just repeat the row over and over. By doing this you can create a kind of static harmony not entirely dissimilar to the Webern orchestral Variations, which are static and intervallically constant and which suggest this kind of world.”<sup>62</sup> Reich’s adolescent-like resentment of serial music was evident even in his studies at Juilliard. At that time, he “never wrote a piece where [he] didn’t feel a harmonic centre.”<sup>63</sup> While studying at Mills, Reich was still faced with the expectation of writing serial music. He generally found his experiences studying at Mills stifling, even more so than in New York. Finally, his teacher, Luciano Berio famously told him “if you want to write tonal music, then write tonal music.”<sup>64</sup> Berio’s statement, made after Reich showed him his 1961 work

---

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Potter, 156

<sup>62</sup> Potter, 157.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in Potter, 156.

<sup>64</sup> Potter, 157.

*Music for String Orchestra*, a piece composed vaguely with 12-tone serial methods but favoring static tonality, gave Reich explicit permission to write the type of music with which he had always felt a connection. While this piece uses more extended harmonic language than typical tonal music, it serves as a nod back to more familiar music.

Berio allowed Reich to compose tonal music as early as 1962, as evidenced in his statement. However, Reich explored tape music composition, finding success with that medium through the mid-1960s. He spent a great deal of time at the San Francisco Tape Music Center, working with the idea of manipulating pre-existing sounds, or *musique concrète*. Although Reich took a few years working with tape music, he would soon return to writing instrumental tonal music, as proposed by Berio.

## **The Works**

### *It's Gonna Rain*

*It's Gonna Rain*, a tape piece in two parts, is often considered Reich's first professional composition. The pieces he wrote as a student were significant in his compositional development but are typically dismissed as exercises. Written early in 1965 in San Francisco, *It's Gonna Rain* is the first piece of Reich's that entered into public consciousness. It seems to be the first piece Reich himself cares to catalog, using it as the first piece discussed in his *Writings on Music*.

In addition to being the first piece in Reich's self-selected catalog, *It's Gonna Rain* serves as Reich's first political piece of music. The piece's source material is a recording of Brother Walter, a black Pentecostal preacher Reich



recorded in San Francisco's Union Square in 1964, shortly after the Cuban Missile Crisis.<sup>65</sup> In his speech, Brother Walter preaches about Noah and the great Flood, using the Flood as a metaphor for the destruction he presumed inevitable in the heated mid-sixties Cold War. The first part of *It's Gonna Rain* opens with a few lines of Brother Walter's speech: "It's gonna rain for a while, for forty days and forty nights. And the people didn't believe him, and they began to laugh at him. And they began to mock him. And they began to say 'it ain't gonna rain!'" After this statement, Reich uses the fragment "it's gonna rain" for the remainder of the first part of the piece. The second part of the piece, set apart in a new track and composed using different compositional processes, uses more substantial and poignant text:

They didn't believe that it was gonna rain, but glory to God, Hallelujah! Bless God's wonderful name. ... They didn't believe that it was gonna rain, but sho' 'nuff it began to rain, Hallelujah! They began to knock up on the door, but it was too late, woo! The Bible tell me they knocked up on the door until the skin came off their hands. Woo, my Lord, my Lord. I said until the skin came off their hands. They cried; I can just hear their cry now. I can hear them say 'oh Noah! Would you just open the door?' but Noah couldn't open the door. It had been sealed by the hand of God.<sup>66</sup>

Unlike the first part of the piece that focuses solely on three words, Reich uses multiple fragments of speech in composition of part two.

*It's Gonna Rain* is significant in being Reich's first phase piece. In his *Writings on Music*, Reich admits to discovering the phasing process by accident.

---

<sup>65</sup> Reich, 19–21.

<sup>66</sup> My own transcription.

His original conception of the work involved using two loops of Brother Walter's speech in different audio channels and manipulating the tape to make the text line up in an unusual way. Instead, thanks to the inexpensive recording equipment with which he worked, Reich stumbled upon the phasing process that would characterize his work through 1970. He "had intended to make a specific relationship: 'It's gonna' on one loop against 'rain' on the other. Instead, the two machines happened to be lined up in unison and one of them gradually started to get ahead of the other."<sup>67</sup> The two machines were playing back at slightly different speeds, causing a gradual phasing relationship. Reich found the process powerful and used it to compose his first successful piece.

The two distinct parts of *It's Gonna Rain* use different compositional techniques, drawing attention to different parts of Reich and Brother Walter's political messages. Part 1 is the simpler of the two parts. Its source material, "it's gonna rain," is presented and subsequently phased for approximately eight minutes. The rudimentary treatment of the text and the process can be understood as the composer using a brand new tool, trying to figure out what it can do; the brief source used in conjunction with a fairly simple compositional process makes for simple results. In the first part, the two loops go out of phase with each other then come back into metric unison. Along the way, the loops fall into various rhythmic grooves, temporarily implying different meters. Aside from the grooves, however, little of musical or political significance occurs in the first part of the piece. Regardless, Part 1 is important in establishing Reich's phasing

---

<sup>67</sup> Reich, 21.

technique and serving almost as an exercise allowing him to work with the technique.

Part 2 is both more musically and politically complex than Part 1. In Part 2, Reich works with a larger section of text that packs a stronger political punch. In this section, Brother Walter is preaching about the people who missed the boat in the story of Noah and the Flood. The people were clawing at the doors of the ark, but Noah was unable to let them in because the door was “sealed by the hand of God.” This part of the speech is intended to scare common people into a life of religion so that they don’t find themselves in a similar situation if God were to send a similar disaster to the Flood. Unlike Part 1 of the piece, Part 2 uses all of the initial text statement in the phasing and looping processes. In the first part, the repeated message was simply that “it’s gonna rain,” while the second part repeats the entire doomsday story of the Flood. Brother Walter’s apocalyptic words are endlessly and countlessly repeated, engraining the message in the listener’s ears. Since Reich uses a larger section of text in this part, he allows himself more musical variety. After all, Reich was drawn to Brother Walter’s preaching because of its chant-like quality.

Black Pentecostal preaching hovers between speaking and singing. The phasing process intensifies this—taking one little phrase, the vowel pitches, and the consonantal noises that go with them....As you listen to the result, you seem to hear all kinds of words and sounds that you’ve never heard before, and a lot of psychoacoustic fragments that your brain organizes in different ways, and this will vary from person to person.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

Brother Walter's dramatic speech melody used in conjunction with the warning tale of destruction allowed Reich complex musical material to heighten emotion in his political piece.

### *Come Out*

Shortly after moving back to New York, Reich wrote *Come Out*, another tape piece. Released in 1966, *Come Out* serves as homage to the Harlem Six, a group of African American boys arrested for murder of a Jewish shopkeeper in 1964. The piece's source material is a single line of text spoken by Daniel Hamm, one of the boys involved in the case: "I had to like open the bruise up and let some of the bruise blood come out to show them."<sup>69</sup> The text is stated in its entirety, then the phrase "come out to show them" serves as the material for the rest of the piece, which lasts about thirteen minutes.

---

<sup>69</sup> This quote comes from Steve Reich's *Writings on Music*, 22. In his chapter, "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's *Come Out*," in *Sound Commitments: Avant-garde Music and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 121-144, "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's *Come Out*," Sumanth Gopinath addresses issues with the text source for the piece. He points out two aspects of text that exist more naturally in spoken vernacular than in written text. First, Gopinath notes that Hamm stumbles over "bruise blood," which comes out sounding a bit like "blues blood." The result sounds nebulous, between these two options, which Gopinath considers a malapropism. Second, and given far less attention by Gopinath, is the last word in the source material, "them." In performance, Hamm sounds like he says "dem," which allows for a more clean, percussive attack in phasing processes. Many of Gopinath's transcriptions use "them" as the last word in Hamm's line, but the last option in Example 6.2 (p. 130), uses "dem" as the final syllable. This syllabic option best reflects the material presented in the piece, even though Reich and Gopinath both quote consider "them" the last syllable of Hamm's line.

The Harlem Six case was highly political, serving as an example of racial profiling in the mid-1960s. Interestingly, Reich spends little energy discussing the piece and the case in his *Writings on Music*. He glosses over the political messages, without much interpretation, providing minimal context for the piece. According to Reich's account, "the police were about to take the boys out to be 'cleaned up' and were only taking those that were visibly bleeding. Since Hamm had no actual bleeding, he proceeded to open a bruise on his leg so that he would be taken to the hospital."<sup>70</sup> Sumanth Gopinath, on the other hand, pays more attention to the political significance of the Harlem Six, and *Come Out*, by extension. He explains that the Harlem Six were wrongfully accused of murdering the Jewish shopkeeper, and sentenced to life imprisonment. Given the political and racial milieu of Harlem in the mid-sixties, the media and the public instantly turned against the boys, assuming them guilty.

With *Come Out*, Reich sought to amplify the politics of the case, giving the Harlem Six a voice. The piece's source material refers to bruises Hamm developed after being beaten by police officers. In this line, Hamm tells of how he had to cut open a bruise on his leg to show he was bleeding in order to get taken to the hospital to get cleaned up.<sup>71</sup> Reich used this particular line for its

---

<sup>70</sup> Reich, 22. His entire discussion of *Come Out* fits on half of a printed page, whereas discussion of *It's Gonna Rain* fills two and a half printed pages. Some of the length discrepancy may be attributed to the lengthy discussion of the phrasing process in the discussion of *It's Gonna Rain*, although Reich uses about triple space to contextualize *It's Gonna Rain* as he does for *Come Out*. The reasons for the different treatment of the two pieces are unclear.

<sup>71</sup> Context for the source material from Steve Reich's *Writings* (p. 22) and Sumanth Gopinath's "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's *Come Out*."

poignancy; he was given approximately ten hours of recorded interviews with the boys of the Harlem Six, and selected this single line to use for his piece.<sup>72</sup> In selecting this line, Reich depicts a graphic image of police brutality from the voice of an otherwise silenced victim. “Come out to show them” is repeated countless times through the piece, acting like an echo in the listener’s ears, serving as a relentless reminder of the violence. As the piece continues, the line fades almost completely to white noise, suggesting Hamm wasting away. Rather than simply giving an account of the events, Reich shapes the source material in such a way that it evokes a great sense of sympathy from the listener.

The source material for this piece also suggests Reich’s developing compositional maturity. In addition to the political weight the phrase carries, it is more musically complex than the source material used in *It’s Gonna Rain*. The five words “come out to show them” suggest the minor mode.<sup>73</sup> “Come out,” a falling minor third, is followed by “to show them,” an ascending and returning major second with “show” as the upper note in the interval. When “come out to show them” cycles through repeats, the result is a sort of rocking motion between the upper end of the minor third, “come,” and the tonic, “to,” similar to emphasizing beats one and three in a measure of common-time music. As Gopinath argues, “come out to show them” does not fit perfectly into written notation. The more

---

<sup>72</sup> Potter, 176-177.

<sup>73</sup> Sumanth Gopinath’s transcription is in B minor (p. 128, Example 6.1), while Keith Potter’s transcription is in C minor (p. 177, Example 3.7a). Gopinath’s transcription is most convincing, but pinpointing the exact key of the spoken material is not necessary for analyzing the piece.

convincing transcriptions notate the phrase in 7/8 meter, although others opt for 6/8 or 4/4.<sup>74</sup> Although “come out” and “to show them” do not exactly metrically divide the phrase, the two groups come close enough to dividing the phrase to trick the ears of the casual listener. Beginning at the three-minute mark, we hear “come out [pause] to show show” repeated in slow phasing for about sixty seconds. In this minute, there is melodic tension pulling toward “come,” or the upper end of the melodic minor third. The passage is perceived in the relative major key of the opening statement, with the pitch of “show” serving as a leading tone. While *Come Out* was not conceived in terms of written notation, Reich’s treatment of the source material exemplifies his tendency toward diatonic tonality. Reich’s treatment of the source material for *Come Out* can almost be seen as a precursor to his instrumental phase pieces, in which a single chord persists for an extended period of time using rhythmic motion to create musical direction.

Popular historiography tends to view Reich’s early instrumental works radically different from his previous work. Since his tape pieces—*It’s Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*—were immediately followed by *Piano Phase* and *Violin Phase*, a drastic change is visible. However, the two tape pieces are less representative of Reich’s compositional style. Reich’s student pieces and his collaboration with Terry Riley on *In C* serve to foreshadow the mid-to-late sixties instrumental phase pieces.

---

<sup>74</sup> Gopinath, Example 6.2, p. 130.

### *In C*—Terry Riley

Before Reich composed the two tape pieces discussed above, he worked with Terry Riley on *In C*, in 1964. The techniques he used and learned in his involvement with *In C* were set to the wayside during Reich's tape composing, but were revisited shortly after the tape pieces. Riley's score for *In C* consists of fifty-three cells which performers play in a looping manner; they repeat each cell an indeterminate amount of times, moving onto the next cell when they feel moved to do so. Performers are expected to stay within a few cells of one another, so that the ensemble can stay cohesive. The number of performers and types of instruments are left unspecified, giving the piece indeterminate elements. Reich was one of the performers involved with the premiere of *In C*, and it was he who suggested Riley use octave Cs played on the piano as a constant eighth-note pulse throughout the piece in order to help with its performability. According to Richard Taruskin,

The most characteristic and style-defining aspect of *In C* is the constant audible eighth-note pulse that underlies and coordinates all of the looping, and that seems, because it provides a constant pedal of Cs, to be fundamentally bound up with the work's concept.... It may be surprising...to learn that [it] was an afterthought...and that it was not even Riley's idea. It was Reich's.<sup>75</sup>

*In C* is undoubtedly the work of Riley, but Reich's suggestion of the underlying pulse is a crucial contributing factor the piece's success.

The extent to which Reich's involvement and input into Riley's *In C* influenced Reich's own career cannot be overstated. In an interview with William

---

<sup>75</sup> Richard Taruskin, *Oxford History of Western Music: Music in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2009), 368.



Duckworth, Riley essentially credits the perpetuation of the minimalist movement to Reich's performing in *In C*. "After *In C*, [Reich] changed his style, and started using repetition and developing his style of phases and pulses. Then after that, Phil Glass played with Steve, and of course Steve was his teacher."<sup>76</sup>

Between the concept of music comprised of cells and his idea of adding the steady pulse, *In C*'s influence can be seen throughout Reich's career. The idea of loops used in the early tape pieces, *It's Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*, can loosely be traced to *In C*'s cells. Various loops were manipulated to sound at the same time as each other or with other loops. However, this technique is also easily traced to *musique concrète*, a style of tape composition popular amongst interwar and postwar composers in Europe. While technical inspiration for Reich's tape pieces

---

<sup>76</sup> William Duckworth, *Talking Music: Conversations With John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995). It should be noted that Glass and Reich aim to distance themselves from one another. Glass often claims that his techniques descend simultaneously from sitarist Ravi Shankar, with whom he worked on Western transcriptions of Indian music, and Nadia Boulanger, his teacher at the *Conservatoire de Paris*. Despite his ardent claims to the contrary, it is evident that Glass's music was at least somewhat inspired by Reich's pulse techniques. In this same interview, Riley goes on to acknowledge this feud: "Now, I don't know why they have this problem with each other, but that's my honest impression of what happened, as far as the history of things...you have to give credit where credit's due." In another of Duckworth's interviews for this book, Reich points out Glass' stubbornness in acknowledging the two composers' sharing of ideas: "Basically, what happened between Phil [Glass] and me was very much the kind of thing that had happened to me with Riley, which is that a lot of things are floating around in your mind and somebody comes along who really sets things straight. The difference is that, for whatever reasons, he has been unwilling to admit that. And that has been the source of some grief between us, for sure. I don't quite understand, with all the success that he's had, why that remains something he's very uptight about." (p. 301)

can be traced to *In C*, the piece's influence is most strongly felt in Reich's early instrumental phase pieces.

### *Piano Phase*

*Piano Phase*, Reich's first instrumental work since his student compositions,<sup>77</sup> is written entirely in numbered cells. These cells are different from those of *In C*, in that the performers are always expected to be playing within the same cell or between two adjacent cells. The first fifteen cells, for example are written without meter, although they all contain twelve sixteenth notes. The first player repeats the same pattern with a consistent tempo throughout these first fifteen cells, while the second player plays that same pattern, gradually speeds up in between cells, aiming to land one sixteenth note ahead of the first player. Each cell represents a stable musical figure, showing the original pattern in the first player's part, and the resultant pattern in that of the second player. In between cells, dotted lines and written instructions dictate how to move between cells. Reich exerts more control in *Piano Phase* than Riley did in *In C*, requiring the players to always be within the same cell or between the same two cells, and always within one sixteenth note of each other. Even with the underlying phasing process, the perpetual motion of sixteenth notes creates a sense of pulse. Individual performances of *Piano Phase* might emphasize different

---

<sup>77</sup> In *Four Musical Minimalists*, p. 181, Keith Potter points out *Reed Phase*, an instrumental phase work for soprano saxophone that preceded *Piano Phase* but was only performed by Jon Gibson, the instrumentalist for whom the piece was written. Reich's omission of *Reed Phase* from his *Writings* as well as the piece's general lack of attention in the literature suggests that the piece is relatively insignificant.

larger beat and metric structures, but the listener undeniably experiences the piece with an ongoing, perpetual pulse.

When asked how he came to writing *Piano Phase*, Reich often talks about his constant desire to write instrumental music. In a 1971 interview with Michael Nyman, Reich talks about his work in 1966, feeling

like a mad scientist trapped in a lab: I had discovered the phasing process...yet I didn't know how to do it live, and I was aching to do some instrumental music. The way out of the impasse came just by running a tape loop of a piano figure and playing the piano against it to see if in fact I could do it.<sup>78</sup>

After working out on paper what would be *Piano Phase* between 1966–7, Reich performed the piece with another pianist. He found the experience freeing; as he later told William Duckworth, it was a feeling of “look Ma, no tape.”<sup>79</sup>

### *Four Organs*

*Four Organs* is the first of Reich's substantial works not to use phasing since he discovered the technique in *It's Gonna Rain*. Reich had “been working with short notes and I started working with long notes.” The “short notes” refer to the material for his previous phase pieces, through *Drumming*. After writing several pieces with similar compositional techniques, Reich was ready for a change. “It didn't seem like it would be very interesting to have a phase piece in slow motion.”<sup>80</sup> Instead of writing another phase piece, *Four Organs* is conceived

---

<sup>78</sup> Michael Nyman, “An Interview With Steve Reich,” *The Musical Times*, Vol. 112, No. 1537 (March 1971), 230.

<sup>79</sup> Duckworth, 298.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 302.

as a perpetual development and augmentation of a dominant eleventh chord built on E<sup>2</sup>. The piece gets at the essence of minimalism; it continues for a long time with very little change throughout. Keith Potter notes that the piece is “overwhelmed by the relentless reductiveness. *Four Organs* is in some respects Reich’s most ‘difficult’ score.”<sup>81</sup>

Reich first performed *Four Organs* with a few members of his ensemble at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1970, with little critical review. A year later, in 1971, conductor Michael Tilson Thomas invited Reich to perform the work along with *Piano Phase* and *Phase Patterns* on a Boston Symphony Orchestra program. According to Reich, the performance “received polite applause and polite boos—and that was that.” As Reich continues, Thomas “decided that he would bring [the piece] to Carnegie Hall on the BSO subscription series in 1973. And that concert proved to be quite an event.” Thomas programmed *Four Organs* alongside Franz Liszt’s *Hexameron*, “a very odd piece for six pianos....Now the kind of listener who’s going to get off on that, and who’s coming to the BSO subscription series...the last thing in the world that person is going to want to hear is my *Four Organs*...but there it was.” The piece was met with so much audible scorn from the audience that “Thomas had to yell out bar numbers so that we knew where the hell we were....When it was over and I went

---

<sup>81</sup> Potter, 202.

backstage and said, “Did we get together at the end?” “Forget about that,” he said, “this has been a historical event.”<sup>82</sup>

These two performances of *Four Organs*, in Boston and in New York, are important milestones in the course of Reich’s career. When it was performed in Boston, the audience was ambivalent. Despite the audience’s lack of enthusiasm about the piece, its performance by a major symphony orchestra is indicative of success, be it for the composer or the piece itself. The very fact that Thomas—a career-long proponent of new music—chose to feature it in Boston and have a repeat performance in New York speaks to Reich’s success in the earlier stages of his career.

### **The Evolution of Politics in Reich’s Music**

Reich paints himself as a solitary composer, unable to sympathize with his contemporaries. Regardless, he continued to write the music of his choosing and perform it with his own ensemble. He initially got along well with Terry Riley, and the composers’ collaboration was mutually beneficial. However, Riley became more involved with improvisation, a concept with which Reich was less than thrilled. When Reich moved back to New York, he was immersed in a lively new music scene, but he was unable to connect with it. “There were people up at Columbia-Princeton who I felt totally out of touch with and unsympathetic towards, and on the other hand there was the John Cage group who I felt totally

---

<sup>82</sup> Duckworth, 303-4. In his *Writings* (p. 50), Reich reprints a program note he wrote for *Four Organs*, exaggerating the reception of the piece’s Carnegie Hall performance, claiming the performance “provoked a riot.”

out of sympathy with. So there was really no place for me.”<sup>83</sup> The so-called Columbia-Princeton group were the academic serialists. Reich’s aversion toward serialism started as early as his Juilliard and Mills days, when his adolescent stubbornness shone through his pieces written as part of serialist assignments. On the other hand, the so-called John Cage group was writing far more experimental music, when Reich had a taste for a different style of new music.

Had Reich continued to write tape music, he could have maintained his association with Terry Riley. For most of the mid-sixties, Riley returned to writing music for tape. However, Reich’s propensity toward political tape music would have thematically separated his and Riley’s music. Riley’s mid-sixties tape compositions were mostly reminiscent of *In C*, except that the pieces were recorded instead of being live performances. Some of these pieces used instrumental loops, while others focused on vocal loops. None reached any sort of mainstream popularity, and Riley soon turned to more improvisatory music.<sup>84</sup>

Reich could have also maintained solidarity with a group of musicians by continuing to write political music after 1966. After *Come Out*, his next piece with even vague political implications did not come until *Tehillim*, a setting of Hebrew psalms written in 1981. *Tehillim* is barely political; Reich wrote the piece to provide an alternative venue for singing the psalms, a tradition he felt was lost in Western Judaism.<sup>85</sup> As the 1980s progressed, Reich returned to writing more

---

<sup>83</sup> Duckworth, 299.

<sup>84</sup> For in-depth discussion of Riley’s mid-sixties tape pieces, see Potter, 116-120.

<sup>85</sup> Reich, 101.

political music. Reich's own Judaism and his desire to get in touch with his heritage inspired most of his political music in the eighties. *Different Trains*, written in 1988, serves as Reich's pivotal work of this period in which he explores his Judaism.<sup>86</sup>

The success and notoriety Reich achieved with *Different Trains* would not have been possible without his fifteen-year foray into instrumental music. Absolute music is a contentious concept; most believe that music since the eighteenth century has been written to express an emotion or tell a story. However, Reich's pieces written after *Come Out* and before *Tehillim* exemplify the concept of absolute music. Reich himself describes many of his early instrumental works as etudes, both for the composer and the performer. In retrospect, he claims in his interview with William Duckworth, that the pieces offer performers a venue for working out techniques necessary for his later pieces. "Anybody who can play *Piano Phase* on two marimbas can breeze through *Drumming*. It's duck soup after that."<sup>87</sup> These pieces also allowed Reich opportunities to test his compositional ideas, working toward greater compositional maturity in later years.

In addition to the musical necessity of the pieces in terms of his education and exploration of composition, Reich's late 1960s works allowed him to build an audience willing to follow his compositional journey. While none of his works in the sixties gained significant popularity until long after their composition, they

---

<sup>86</sup> See Reich, *Writings*, sections 23, 24, 27, 38.

<sup>87</sup> Duckworth, 302.

helped Reich move toward more substantial works. Finished in 1970, *Four Organs* was the first of Reich's pieces to receive significant commercial awareness in its own time.

In recent years, Reich's political compositions have become particularly pointed. *WTC 9/11*, written in 2010 and released by Nonesuch Records in 2011, combines many of the techniques he established and developed throughout his career. In addition, the piece is arguably his most political work to date. NPR Classical's Deceptive Cadence blog released a post in September 2011 featuring Reich discussing his work on the piece.<sup>88</sup> *WTC 9/11* is a work in three distinct parts, and each part has a unique material source and political agenda. The first part, 9/11, uses recordings of the emergency responders from September 11, 2001. For the second part, 2010, Reich interviewed his friends and neighbors about the event. The third part, WTC, which Reich sees as dramatically different from the first two, uses the voices of Jewish women sitting *shmirah* for the bodies and body parts in the rubble. Reich explains the belief in the Jewish faith that from the time a person dies until he is buried, his body must not be left alone. The women he recorded accompanied the bodies and body parts scattered in the rubble, saying prayers, until the bodies were finally properly buried. The original conception of the album cover showed a picture of the Twin Towers after the first plane had hit and as the second approached. So much controversy erupted

---

<sup>88</sup> Anastasia Tsioulcas, "Addressing 'Unfinished Business': Steve Reich on Sept. 11", NPR Classical, Deceptive Cadence, September 5, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2011/09/05/140156217/addressing-unfinished-business-steve-reich-on-9-11>



surrounding the planned cover that Reich and Nonesuch were forced to change the cover to a less graphic picture of a gray cloud of smoke.<sup>89</sup>

Musically, *WTC 9/11* is reminiscent of Reich's 1988 piece *Different Trains*. It is written for string quartet and pre-recorded tape and relies heavily on the string instruments mimicking speech melodies from the tape. The first movement has an underlying pulse that is shared between the strings and tape. Present throughout the entire movement, the tape-source pulse is a recording of a beeping telephone that has been left off the hook. The strings build upon the beeping pulse with dissonant harmonies as the muffled voices of emergency responders anxiously communicate. The second movement is sparser; it relies more heavily than the first on echoing speech melody in the strings. Energy builds throughout the movement, as a pulse enters, and as the interviewees tell more and more poignant stories. Midway through the movement, a man's voice repeats the phrase "run for your lives" several times. Shortly before the end of the movement, the pulse drops out and the music becomes filled with pregnant energy until a woman's voice asks "what's gonna happen next?" The final movement opens with a man then a woman talking about the bodies, before transitioning to recorded prayer accompanied by relatively static music in the strings. A man enters saying "'The world to come;' I don't really know what that means." The musical stasis is interrupted by dissonant, accented chords before

---

<sup>89</sup> Nina Rastogi's article, "Steve Reich and Nonesuch Pull Controversial 9/11 Album Cover," *Slate Magazine*, Browbeat, August 11, 2001 [http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2011/08/11/wtc\\_9\\_11\\_steve\\_reich\\_and\\_nonesuch\\_pull\\_the\\_album\\_s\\_controversial.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2011/08/11/wtc_9_11_steve_reich_and_nonesuch_pull_the_album_s_controversial.html) discusses the pull of the original cover.

the telephone pulse from the first movement returns, then the piece abruptly ends.

There is no doubt that Reich wrote this piece in order to raise an uncomfortable consciousness in his audience. His choice of musical and thematic material brings back memories of the sounds and feelings on 9/11. The first movement, with its persistent telephone pulse and intermittent white noise, aims to recreate the sense of chaos present throughout the day. Reich uses the first movement to make his listeners remember exactly how they felt on 9/11 by recreating the sounds and chaos of the day. Reich's friends' reflective accounts of the day featured in second movement, "but we all thought it was an accident;" "I knew it wasn't an accident right away;" "everyone was running and screaming;" "people jumping from the building;" further invoke feelings of unrest and nervous memory. The third movement begins to provide a sense of security that Reich rips away at the end with the reprise of the telephone beeping pulse. *WTC 9/11* unabashedly aims to scare its audience into painful remembrance. The piece was premiered the day before Osama bin Laden's death was announced. Critic Alex Ross attended the premiere, wondering the following day if Reich "would have written a different coda if he had known of bin Laden's fate. I suspect the music would have been the same."<sup>90</sup> Reich didn't write the piece about bin Laden; he wrote the piece to make America remember how we felt about being attacked in attempt to mobilize us to action.

---

<sup>90</sup> Alex Ross, "The Sounds of 9/11," *The New Yorker*, News Desk, May 5, 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/05/the-sounds-of-911.html>

*WTC 9/11* received significant attention in the music community for several reasons. Just about every active music critic wrote about the piece more than once. It was written for the Kronos Quartet, a successful and active group in the new music world. Regardless, the piece received so much acclaim, even before its premiere and release, because its composer had already been successful. Reich paid his dues writing less provoking music in the middle stages of his career, seemingly in anticipation of taking this opportunity to write driven, highly controversial music. Even so, he waited almost ten years after the attacks to write the piece. Had he written it earlier, it would have almost certainly been met with public scorn and resistance. Reich tactfully waited until the proper stage in his career and until the dust had settled from the attack to write this emotionally difficult piece.

Samuel Lipman is frequently quoted dismissing minimalism as “pop music for intellectuals.”<sup>91</sup> Lipman uses this phrase against minimalist music, with an insecure highbrow agenda: “Reich and Glass have lately written what is no more than a pop music for intellectuals, an easy-to-listen-to music free of the rage so marked in black-oriented music and the pop culture of the 1960s.”<sup>92</sup> He assumes both that popular music is bad, and that classical composers should not write music empathetic with that in the popular tradition. The scholars who quote

---

<sup>91</sup> This five-word phrase is often quoted by scholars of minimalist music. For examples, see: Potter, 10, and Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>92</sup> Samuel Lipman, *The House of Music* (Boston, Massachusetts: David R. Godine Publishers, 1984), 48.

Lipman treat the “pop music for intellectuals” phrase as either a threat or an argument to dispute. Instead of accepting Lipman’s statement as criticism, it should be seen as complimentary. Minimalist music is successful in that it has a more wide-reaching audience than other experimental genres. What is a contemporary composer’s goal, if not to write music that will be popular? All composers should be so fortunate to write music that will be well received.

Reich’s professional career began with difficult, political music. When he wrote *Piano Phase* in 1966, he went against the grain and applied his phasing technique to tonal instrumental music. After developing the technique and an audience, he returned to writing political music. Because Reich turned to writing absolute music in the mid-1960s, he was able to increase his fan base so he could later return to political composing. Now that he is a ubiquitous composer, he is free to write whatever he wants without concern over his audience’s impression of his music. Reich’s loyal audience is now curious enough to invest in anything he composes.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE UBIQUITOUS, PLASTIC, SOUND OF SILENCE**

“The Sound of Silence” is everywhere. Since the song’s debut in 1964, it has become one of the more highly fetishized songs in American popular culture, cherished among the likes of Don McLean’s “American Pie,” and Michael Jackson’s “Thriller.” “The Sound of Silence” launched Simon & Garfunkel’s<sup>93</sup> career into the celebrity pop-star realm, but the song’s success was mostly an accident. While Simon and Garfunkel were on separate continents, hardly communicating, “The Sound of Silence” became a sensation. In addition to being a strong catalyst for the duo’s immense success in the 1960s and early 1970s, the song’s success speaks to the nature of American consumer culture in the second half of the twentieth century.

#### **Simon & Garfunkel’s History**

A tension exists in Simon and Garfunkel’s musical motivations, seen throughout their careers and lives. On one hand, they wrote and performed music for its own intrinsic value, while on the other, they were always serious about

---

<sup>93</sup> A subtle difference in labeling will be used throughout this chapter in order to distinguish between Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel being discussed in the same breath and the collective musical ensemble, Simon & Garfunkel. “Simon and Garfunkel” refers to the two men as people, while “Simon & Garfunkel” refers to the musical collective. While this method requires a closer read, I greatly prefer it to referring to the two men as “Garfunkel and Simon,” a more grating alternative.

their business. In late 1955, when the two were in the tenth grade, they showed the first signs of meaning serious business. Louis Simon, Paul's father, had bought him a guitar for his fourteenth birthday. Soon—as put poignantly by biographer Victoria Kingston—Simon and Garfunkel “started writing their own songs, snappy rock ‘n’ roll numbers in the style of the Everly Brothers.” This kind of musical activity is typical of countless teenage friendships, but Simon and Garfunkel took their songwriting to another level. They decided to apply for copyright of their song “The Girl for Me,” by sending \$4 and an official form to the Library of Congress.<sup>94</sup> The two ambitious high school students were quick to get their feet wet learning the process of music publishing and protecting intellectual property. While they certainly enjoyed writing music for its own sake, Simon and Garfunkel were also careful to protect their financial assets from a young age.

Even as naïve teenagers, the pair was determined to achieve material success. After copyrighting “The Girl for Me,” they tried to obtain a recording contract. They marketed themselves under the name Tom & Jerry, a simultaneous homage to the cartoon cat and mouse and combination of two sources outside of pop culture influential to the pair. According to Kingston, “Paul was Jerry Landis, after a girl he liked name Sue Landis; Art was Tom Graph, a name chosen in honour of his favourite and most absorbing hobby—charting the progress of hit records on huge sheets of graph paper.”<sup>95</sup> By 1957, Tom & Jerry made a record and produced their first hit, “Hey Schoolgirl.” The song landed them a spot on

---

<sup>94</sup> Victoria Kingston, *Simon & Garfunkel: The Biography* (New York: Fromm International, 1998) 9-10.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11

Dick Clark's popular music and dance television program, *American Bandstand*, and made its way to *Billboard's* Top 100 list for nine weeks. The "Hey Schoolgirl" record sold approximately 100,000 copies, a remarkable feat for the duo of sixteen-year-olds.<sup>96</sup> Such success was only attainable thanks to their fame-and-fortune-oriented goals.

Tom & Jerry received significant recognition for their record as high school students, but Simon and Garfunkel planned to go to college and abandon their collective songwriting brand. At this point, they saw songwriting as a hobby, albeit a lucrative one. After finishing high school, Simon attended Queens College while Garfunkel attended Columbia University, and the two individually pursued their musical interests. Neither had much to show for his music during his college years.<sup>97</sup> Garfunkel planned to go into architecture, while Simon still hoped to be a professional singer and songwriter.

In the early 1960s, during and shortly after his time at Queens College, Simon got involved with the now-iconic Greenwich Village folk music scene. He was never to become a staple of this scene, as he never quite fit in. Although the scene was attractive, Simon wasn't able to break into its performing culture. Simon was drawn to the scene because he perceived its participants as average, everyday people, rather than pop stars. "The people dressed in jeans, let their hair grow a little, wore vests or plaid shirts, used glasses if they needed to, and

---

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>97</sup> Although it never amounted to much, Simon did occasionally play and record demos for other artists with Carole King (then Klein, before adopting King as a stage name).

always kept their focus on the song and the guitar work rather than on appearances.”<sup>98</sup> Simon’s relation to this scene separated him from the more common public image of an iconic pop star; he felt more comfortable dressing casually and caring about his music than he did about being rich and famous. The tension between being a pop icon and a down-to-earth singer/songwriter would follow him throughout his career. In the early ‘60s, however, Simon leaned toward a simpler life.

After Simon graduated college, he became restless and traveled to Europe. He began in France, and then relocated to London, and his time there became instrumental in the solidification of his and Garfunkel’s career together. Simon spent much of his time in London performing in the city’s folk music circuit, a seemingly more inclusive scene than that in New York. Though he was in London without Garfunkel, the songs he wrote while there would later appear on Simon & Garfunkel’s debut record, *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*, upon Simon’s return to New York. These songs would help to launch their adult careers in the states. When Simon returned to New York, he reconnected with Garfunkel and the two

---

<sup>98</sup> Marc Eliot, *Paul Simon: A Life* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010), 36. According to several reviews, Eliot gets much of his history wrong. Many of his dates are inaccurate, as well as on which records he assigns certain songs. For specific examples, see the customer reviews on the Amazon page for the book: <http://www.amazon.com/Paul-Simon-Life-Marc-Eliot/dp/0470433639>. Regardless of his factual inaccuracies, Eliot makes many interesting observations and criticisms regarding Simon’s life and career. The reader should note that any factual information taken from Eliot’s biography is referenced with other sources, and that Eliot’s ahistorical criticism is quite useful, despite inaccuracies present throughout the biography.



worked out arrangements of some of Simon's songs to be performed in the New York circuit.

The pair's first mature album, *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*, is simple and of a somewhat amateur-quality, despite its commercial marketing. Recorded in 1964, *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* is the first album Simon and Garfunkel released together since their teenage Tom and Jerry days, and it represented their musical and intellectual development. By this point, each man had performed under several pseudonyms, a fairly common practice at the time. Rather than concealing their obviously Jewish names like Bob Dylan concealed his birth name, Robert Zimmerman, Simon and Garfunkel decided to perform using their given names, joined by an ampersand.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to "Simon & Garfunkel," the frank naming of the group, the album is musically simple. Some of the songs on the album are Paul Simon originals, while others are folk standards. The songs themselves are minimal; Simon and Garfunkel sing while Simon plays guitar. Additional instruments and production are used sparingly with subtle affect. "Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream," a song by Ed McCurdy, uses a banjo and several songs are supplemented by a subtle string bass. Long before its ubiquity, "The Sound of Silence" first appeared on this record, at the closing of Side A. It is simply sung by Simon and

---

<sup>99</sup> In her biography of Simon and Garfunkel, Victoria Kingston notes that Jewish performers had to Americanize their Jewish-sounding names since WWII: "Simon & Garfunkel were one of the earliest groups to 'come out' with a heritage of which they had every reason to be proud," p. 25. Some of their pride in their Judaism is mitigated by the presence of definitively Christian songs on the record, such as "Benedictus" and "Go Tell It On the Mountain."

Garfunkel accompanied by Simon on guitar. Like many other songs on the record, “The Sound of Silence” is introspective with strong a literary bent. However, it shows no signs of becoming a chart-topping hit. *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* was relatively unsuccessful, and “The Sound of Silence” is hardly remembered in the general public for its initial placement on the folk-style record.

*Wednesday Morning, 3AM*’s perceived failure prompted Simon to return to England to his girlfriend, Kathy, and the folk scene there. In England, Simon recorded a solo record, simply titled *The Paul Simon Collection*. “The Sound of Silence,” as well as several other songs now associated with the Simon & Garfunkel brand appeared on the record. The record has a generally dark, introspective tone. Shortly after its release, while Simon was in England and Garfunkel was still in New York, the pair’s commercial future changed. Tom Wilson, a producer in New York, “overdubbed the original acoustic guitar with electric instruments, twelve-string guitar, drums and bass.”<sup>100</sup>

Wilson’s decision to overdub “The Sound of Silence” is arguably the most important moment responsible for launching the song into the public consciousness. According to the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, Wilson’s action was “presumptuous but prescient.”<sup>101</sup> Upon release, the newly overdubbed “The Sound of Silence” became a pop hit.<sup>102</sup> Shortly after the song was rereleased as a

---

<sup>100</sup> Kingston, 52.

<sup>101</sup> “Simon and Garfunkel,” *Encyclopedia of Popular Music* (1989-2008).

<sup>102</sup> The exact title of the song remains contested. Some writers refer to it as “The Sound of Silence” while others pluralize “sound,” causing the song title to conform to the later album title, *Sounds of Silence*. All recent recordings list the

radio single, Simon & Garfunkel recorded a few new songs and released their second mature album, *Sounds of Silence*. The record includes a hodge-podge of songs, ranging from the group's older repertoire, re-releases of songs from *The Paul Simon Songbook*, and some new songs. With the release of *Sounds of Silence*, Simon & Garfunkel benefitted from increased popularity and a second record that defied the fate of the sophomore slump.

### Authorship

Tom Wilson's overdubbing of "The Sound of Silence" provokes the question of authorship. "The Sound of Silence" was written by Paul Simon, performed by Simon & Garfunkel, and overdubbed by Tom Wilson. Even better, neither Simon nor Garfunkel was aware of Wilson's overdubbing until the song was already rereleased. Roland Barthes, writing in France shortly after this rerelease, questions whether the notion of authorship matters when examining cultural reception. In his famous essay "Death of the Author," Barthes argues that exploration of the circumstances of the author serves only to highlight the interpretive authority of the critic. According to Barthes, "the *explanation* of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it."<sup>103</sup> Traditional criticism along these lines seeks meaning extraneous meaning by examining the life of the author in search of the author's intent, keeping the authority of the

---

track as "The Sound of Silence." The song's lyrics don't conform to the singular "sound" or plural "sounds," thus rendering the nuances of the title unimportant.

<sup>103</sup> Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana, 1977) 143. Emphasis his. The essay was originally published in 1967, within a year of the overdubbed rerelease of "The Sound of Silence."

interpretation out of the hands of the consumer. The notion that Wilson's version of "The Sound of Silence" is the strong, surviving version of the song brings the importance of authorship into question.

Barthes goes on to argue that "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text."<sup>104</sup> Wilson's overdubbing of "The Sound of Silence" calls Simon into question as the song's author, weakening the limit Barthes warns against. Barthes is concerned with consideration of the author of literary text limiting the scope of criticism to follow the text. A popular song has a different cross to bear, as it is not often intended as a work to be interpreted in a literary manner. Instead, its two-fold purpose is to entertain the masses and to make money for its creator(s). Simon proved early in life that he is interested in music for its intrinsic values but he is just as interested, if not more so, in making money. The first tangible piece of evidence to this end exists in his and Garfunkel's copyright of "The Girl for Me" when they were still in high school. Even with his perpetual eye on a salary, Simon's career-long propensity toward music for music's sake opens up "The Sound of Silence" as well as his other songs to treatment as pieces of art. Read through Barthes, however, "The Sound of Silence" should have less connection to Simon, the song's original author. If Simon is treated as the song's author, the song is limited to the scope that Simon deems acceptable. Before Wilson's overdubbing, "The Sound of Silence" was limited to Simon and to placement on an unsuccessful first record by Simon & Garfunkel. When Wilson presumptuously overdubbed the track, he removed some of the limits it originally experienced and "The Sound of Silence" began its climb toward commodity status.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 147.

"The Sound of Silence" is still unanimously attributed to Simon, while Wilson's editing of the track is minimally acknowledged. Perhaps Wilson deserves more credit than he gets, possibly even more credit than Simon. In "Death of the Author," Barthes argues against the idea of the placing the author on a pedestal, but he neglects to address authorship in relation to the market and to royalties. In the case of "The Sound of Silence," we need to perceive Simon as the song's author in order to attribute credit and pay royalties to the proper person. While Wilson's actions are instrumental in the popularization of "The Sound of Silence," the public must still regard Simon as the song's author. Still, tension exists between author and editor. The intellectual removal of Paul Simon as an author allows the song to be understood as a cultural commodity rather than a work by an artist.

Writing in 1970 in response to Barthes, Michel Foucault offers more insight into the role and concept of the author. In his 1970 piece, "What is an Author?," Foucault reacts against the fetishization of authorship. According to Foucault, "In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is, rather a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears."<sup>105</sup> Following Foucault's logic, "The Sound of Silence" is not a work by Simon; instead, it is a cultural object that just happens to be created by Simon. He, as the writing subject, becomes unimportant as soon as the work is complete and launched into cultural consciousness. By this understanding, the question of authorship is both futile

---

<sup>105</sup> Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rainbow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 101-120.

and unnecessary. “The Sound of Silence” gained so much of its popularity due to Wilson’s edits, when it would have likely remained unrecognized had Wilson not overdubbed the track. Still, the typical listener is unaware of Wilson’s existence, let alone his salient edits to the track. That same listener associates the Simon & Garfunkel brand with “The Sound of Silence,” while still the brand does not fully represent Simon, the song’s author.

“The Sound of Silence” has no true author, since its popularity exploded as a result of Simon’s diminishing authorial claim over it. According to Foucault, “[t]he work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author’s murderer.”<sup>106</sup> Authoring a work used to make it so that the author lived on beyond his own life; after death, the work still exists to be associated with its author. During the mid-twentieth century, reacting to the social and technological milieu, Foucault claims that a work now kills the author; the work gets taken out of its context and overcomes its author. Even though Simon maintains ownership of “The Sound of Silence,” the song is in the hands of the public as a piece of popular culture.

### **The Role of *The Graduate***

Mike Nichols’ 1967 film *The Graduate* is certainly to thank—or blame—for “The Sound of Silence’s” ubiquity. The movie, with a relatively unknown cast, became a microcosm of Baby Boomer anxiety. Members of the Baby Boomer generation—born in the years following World War II—famously aimed to not

---

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

become their parents. *The Graduate* challenged cultural taboos while remaining faithful, throughout, to the sound world of the late 1960s.

“The Sound of Silence” is heard three times throughout *The Graduate*: once in the opening titles, later while Benjamin, the protagonist, floats aimlessly in his parents’ outdoor pool, and finally at the close of the film after he “rescues” Elaine from her probable loveless marriage and the two ride away on a bus. In his review of *The Graduate*, Stanley Kauffmann argues that the lyrical themes Simon used in the movie “are typical of the musical environment in which this boy and girl live.”<sup>107</sup> “The Sound of Silence” is ambiguous, yet it bookends the film; the characters in the film experience a complicated but vague existence like the song that ties the movie together. When it plays again in the middle, Benjamin floats in the pool without a tangible care, but with a high level of internalized anxiety. The nature of the song’s music and lyrics allow the audience to feel how Benjamin feels. Throughout *The Graduate*, “The Sound of Silence” sticks in the audience’s consciousness, highlighting the ambiguity of the song, characters, and movie.

Like “The Sound of Silence” itself, *The Graduate* experienced unexpected success. As diagnosed by J. W. Whitehead, *The Graduate* is “an unlikely film starring an unknown lead actor and based on an obscure first novel about a kid who dates both a mother and her daughter in the same summer.”<sup>108</sup> The film was

---

<sup>107</sup> Stanley Kauffmann, “Cum Laude,” *The New Republic*, (Vol. 157, Issue 26, December 12, 1967), 38. Emphasis his.

<sup>108</sup> J. W. Whitehead, *Appraising The Graduate: The Mike Nichols Classic and Its Impact in Hollywood* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), 15. While we currently know Dustin Hoffman as a celebrity actor, he was essentially unknown before his role in *The Graduate*. Whitehead

generally not expected to succeed. It opened in December 1967, in only two Manhattan movie theaters. *The Graduate* gained so much word-of-mouth popularity that in the first weekend moviegoers lined up circling around the block waiting to get in to see the movie. Upon its national release, *The Graduate* continued to attract enormous audiences, breaking audience records in nearly all movie theaters in which the movie was shown. The presumed underdog movie became a sensation almost instantly.

Paul Simon's soundtrack added an inkling of mainstream popularity to the sum of *The Graduate*. By the time Simon got involved, "The Sound of Silence" had already begun its transformation into a pop commodity. Its inclusion throughout the movie instigated two-fold results: "The Sound of Silence" enhanced the story of *The Graduate* and offered the film some established popularity. Since "The Sound of Silence" was already something of a hit by the time *The Graduate* was made, the song and soundtrack served as a means of linking the otherwise preemptively presumed failure of a movie to the mainstream.

### **Faux Authenticity**

The commodification of authenticity seems oxymoronic. The two concepts, commodification and authenticity, are better understood as opposites. Commodification is about packaging and altering a phenomenon's identity for marketing purposes. Authenticity is about tenaciously sticking to an identity and valuing that identity's inherent integrity. Still, the popularization of "The Sound of

---

notes that Nichols originally wanted Robert Redford to play Benjamin Braddock, the protagonist, but plans fell through.



Silence” is comfortably understood as an object attempting to commodify authenticity.

Some critics argue fervently against the value of mass culture. In the mid-1940s, Frankfurt School philosophers Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno claimed, “all mass culture under monopoly is identical, and only the contours of its skeleton are beginning to stand out.... Films and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce.”<sup>109</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno’s polemics nullify the value of mass culture, arguing that mass culture is created so that the wealthy class can control and further distance itself from the working class. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, the wealthy class sells society its preferred mass culture for the sole purpose of earning a profit.

In an extension of Horkheimer and Adorno’s theory of mass culture, the post-Tom Wilson version of “The Sound of Silence” is intended as a vehicle for earning more wealth for the ruling class. While the song can be seen as a cultural commodity, it cannot be exclusively seen as such. On one hand, Paul Simon wrote “The Sound of Silence” before he had attained any tangible fame or fortune as part of his folk style-aligned debut album with his childhood friend, Art Garfunkel. The pair had already achieved some artistic and financial success by the time Simon wrote “The Sound of Silence,” but they could hardly have been

---

<sup>109</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 95.

considered dominant or wealthy. However, Wilson's reinterpretation of "The Sound of Silence" copied the style most associated with wealth and success in popular mass culture. The original Wednesday Morning, 3AM version of "The Sound of Silence" did not fit into the real of mass culture, but Wilson's interpretation certainly does.

To understand "The Sound of Silence" in relation to Horkheimer and Adorno's theory of mass culture, the song must be understood within the confines of a genre. Horkheimer and Adorno chastise mass culture without conclusively defining mass culture in opposition to other forms of cultural expression. When *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* was released, the Simon & Garfunkel brand was unknown. The duo existed somewhere in public consciousness, but not at the forefront and not under the "Simon & Garfunkel" name. The cover for the record was designed to read: WEDNESDAY MORNING, 3AM / exciting new songs in the folk tradition by / SIMON & GARFUNKEL. Discussion and diagnosis of genre is contentious as the lines tend to be drawn by passionate fans rather than artists themselves. It is unclear whose idea it was to add the subtitle "exciting new songs in the folk tradition," but this line of text is salient in analysis of the record in terms of genre and audience.

*Wednesday Morning, 3AM's* subtitle is cautious as it relates the record to the folk style without specifically calling it a representation of folk music. Fabian Holt, in his book *Genre in Popular Music*, summarizes accepted distinctions between popular and folk music stating "commercial popular music [is] produced

for “the people” and authentic folk music created *by* “the people.”<sup>110</sup> The subtitle’s noncommittal nature allows the music to be understood both as folk culture, emergent from the people, and as mass culture, intentionally created for the masses and for a profit. “Exciting new songs in the folk tradition” is almost a cop-out, since it allows the record not to commit to either the folk genre or the popular, mass-cult genre. While it is impossible to determine the specific reasons *Wednesday Morning 3AM* initially flopped, its lack of success could be due to its genre nonconformity. Even if genre often works to limit the nature and extent of an art, it is useful in providing the potential consumer with information about the piece. During a time when authenticity was cherished among the most devoted and vocal fans—see Bob Dylan at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival—fans were quick to latch onto music perceived as most authentic to a particular genre.

Wilson’s overdubbing and subsequent rerelease of “The Sound of Silence” coincided with Dylan’s famous electric set at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. These two instances perpetuated the rift of the two artists—Dylan and Simon & Garfunkel—away from the “folk” association under which they worked. Unlike Dylan, for Simon & Garfunkel, the move away from the folk style was uncontested and proved beneficial for the future of the group’s career. The pair was not yet popular enough in folk circles to alienate its fan base by “selling out” and offering music in the pop style.

Horkheimer and Adorno’s would likely disparage “The Sound of Silence,” labeling it another piece of meaningless mass culture. But as they say, “the whole

---

<sup>110</sup> Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 31.

world is passed through the filter of the culture industry.”<sup>111</sup> The general public is unaware of the culture industry filter, and consumers are drawn to material they find attractive. “The Sound of Silence” is an excellent representation of a pseudo-intellectual cultural object attractive to the masses. Its lyrics seem meaningful when they are indeed empty, and the song’s popularity only begun once the industry made it more accessible. “The Sound of Silence” has been quite literally filtered through the culture industry, due to Wilson’s overdubbing of the song.<sup>112</sup> Wilson essentially manufactured a would-be failure of a song in such a way that piqued public interest and later caused a sensation.

Horkheimer and Adorno place too high an importance on the negative consequences of the culture industry. In their writing, they demonize all mass culture because of its lack of depth, originality, and usefulness. “The Sound of Silence” is not a work of earth shattering art; it is a popular song that people enjoy listening to. It is indeed a product of the culture industry, but it is still an important piece of American popular culture.

### **“The Sound of Silence” as an Object**

The literary meaning of “The Sound of Silence” reifies the song’s reception as a mass cultural object. Biographer Marc Eliot criticizes the song, claiming it

---

<sup>111</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, 99.

<sup>112</sup> A similar story surrounds Bob Dylan’s music of the same period. Many of Dylan’s songs were popular in their own time only thanks to other artists’ covers of the songs. One of the more notable instances of this is Peter, Paul, & Mary’s cover of “The Times, They Are A-Changin’.” Simon & Garfunkel’s case is different because all salient versions of “The Sound of Silence” feature the pair. Still, an external source was required in order for the song to gain popularity.

isn't about anything at all. Eliot sees the song as pseudo-intellectual pop music "redeemed by the complex harmonies the two had worked out and by the simple but gorgeous fingerpick that rode under their two voices....the song had a way of sticking in the brain, like a jingle for chewing gum." Eliot argues that the song's images don't connect, particularly because the meaning of the sound of silence is never revealed.<sup>113</sup> Eliot sees the unknown meaning of the sound of silence as diminishing the song as a piece of literature, which reinforces the song's commercialism.

A further look into "The Sound of Silence" as a musical work reveals concepts that simultaneously struggle with and reinforce the concept of mass culture as religion and deception. Musically, the song resists conformation to a specific mode, with each verse beginning in the minor mode, moving to the major mode in the middle, and returning eerily to the minor mode at the close of the verse. Much of the folk and popular music at the time adhered either to the major or the minor mode, or related to the blues scale. The song oscillates between the major and minor modes in such a way that reinforces the commonly held misconception that the major mode is happy and the minor mode is sad. Simon's harmonic choices are contentious; on one hand, the modal ambiguity makes the song seem complex and intellectual rather than the typical harmonically simple pop song, while on the other, the song caters to the mass consumer culture programmed to process musical emotion solely on the basis of its presented mode.

---

<sup>113</sup> Eliot, 39–40. NB: Eliot's criticism of the song specifically focuses on the 1964 *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* version.

“The Sound of Silence” is lyrically enigmatic and often assigned deep literary meaning. At approximately 10a.m. on February 14th, 2012, American poet Sherman Alexie tweeted: “‘Hello, Darkness, my old friend.’ That should be the first line of every love song.”<sup>114</sup> Alexie, notorious for poking holes in American cultural paradigms, is commenting here on the ubiquity of “The Sound of Silence” and the vague meaning of the song’s lyrics. One would be hard pressed to argue that “The Sound of Silence” is a love song, since there is no mention of a love object or words used that typically signify a love connection. Instead, “The Sound of Silence” is an inexplicable poem with only pockets of discernable meaning. Alexie’s tweet exposes the song’s noncommittal nature while poking fun at American culture’s need for every song to be a love song.<sup>115</sup>

Structurally, “The Sound of Silence” works more like a poem than a pop song; it is in strophic form. The five verses all end with the word “silence,” and refer to the concept of silence. Simon’s disregard for standard verse-chorus form allows “The Sound of Silence” to sound less like a pop song than musically accompanied poetry. Dismissal of verse-chorus form is typical of singers in the Greenwich Village ‘60s version of the folk revival. While Simon was never formally part of that particular scene, his music and attitude can be linked to singers like Bob Dylan and Joan Baez. While Simon is never as politically charged

---

<sup>114</sup> Sherman Alexie (@Sherman\_Alexie), Twitter post, February 14, 2012, 10:06 a.m., [http://twitter.com/#!/Sherman\\_Alexie/status/169437309329080320](http://twitter.com/#!/Sherman_Alexie/status/169437309329080320).

<sup>115</sup> Another example of the obsession with love songs and stories as paradigm is the opening number of Elton John and Tim Rice’s 2000 musical *Aida*, “Every Story is a Love Story.” Perhaps Alexie could argue that “The Sound of Silence” is a love song despite its lack of allusion to love.

as folk singer Phil Ochs, “The Sound of Silence” takes on a form common to Ochs’ style. Ochs’ mid-decade song “Love Me, I’m a Liberal,” is in seven distinct verses, each ending with the tag, “so love me, love me, love me, I’m a liberal.” Ochs famously called himself a “singing journalist” rather than identify as a pop or folk singer.<sup>116</sup> Ochs’ primary identification as a journalist is displayed in “Love Me, I’m a Liberal,” since the distinct verse form allows for more literary content within the song than the more common verse-chorus form. Simon’s use of the form in “The Sound of Silence” alludes to Ochs’ desire to churn out literary content over musical ideas. Simon diverges from the form at the end of each verse, writing inconsistent tag lines. Each closing line ends with “of silence,” but the lines begin differently throughout the verses. Simon’s subtle manipulation of the form allows him additional poetic liberty as well as an extra iota of originality.

When Marc Eliot asked “what is the sound of silence?”<sup>117</sup> in his biography of Simon, Eliot did so without being facetious; the actual sound of silence is never revealed in the song, and poetic analysis is unhelpful in determining the phrase’s meaning. Each of the song’s verses takes a different approach in addressing the sound of silence, and each of the five conceptualizations of the sound of silence cannot coexist with the others. In the first verse, the speaker announces that “the vision that was planted in my brain / Still remains / Within the sound of

---

<sup>116</sup> Quoted in Peter Buckley, *The Rough Guide to Rock: The Definitive Guide to More Than 1200 Artists and Bands* (London: Rough Guides, 2003), 742. Ochs was a journalism major in college at Ohio State University; his major study serves a link between his education and his career as a singer.

<sup>117</sup> Eliot, 39.

silence.”<sup>118</sup> Here, an intangible vision is placed in a sound. The second verse’s conceptualization of the sound of silence fits with the first; it refers to a “neon light...[that] touched the sound of silence.” These two verses both refer to an intangible non-object that approaches and infiltrates the sound of silence, an enigmatic non-entity.

The third verse of the song signifies a change in the large-scale understanding of the sound of silence. Beginning in this verse, the sound of silence becomes a physical entity. Here, the speaker tells us that “no one dared / Disturb the sound of silence.” The sound of silence is either an actual sound—or the absence of sound—or it is a tangible being not to be disturbed. The fourth and fifth verses have a similar understanding of the sound of silence; it is a physical object representing a place. In the fourth verse, the speaker’s “words, like silent raindrops fell / And echoed / In the wells of silence.” The fifth verse refers to a message “whispered in the sounds of silence.” The fourth and fifth verse understandings of the sound of silence can work together, but not with the first and second verse understandings. The incongruous nature of the sound of silence is imperceptible in a surface-level analysis, so the uncritical fan would not be aware of it. The sound of silence seems deep and mysterious when it is in fact incongruous and superficial.

---

<sup>118</sup> I refer to a neutral speaker rather than to Simon himself because the song’s protagonist is unclear. Also, since the song reads like a poem, I am choosing to discuss it as a poem in which the author is not assumed the protagonist of the work.



Simon & Garfunkel broke up their partnership for most of the 1970s following the release of *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, one of their more successful albums. In 1981, the pair reunited and performed a free concert in New York's Central Park that was later released in audio and video formats.<sup>119</sup> "The Sound of Silence" was one of the last songs the pair performed at that concert. Their performance of the song harkens back to the original *Wednesday Morning, 3AM* version, in which Simon and Garfunkel sing while Simon plays guitar. The singers and guitar are amplified but sound otherwise natural. The Concert in Central Park caters to public nostalgia; the songs performed were almost exclusively Simon & Garfunkel hits from the 1960s or Paul Simon hits from the 1970s.

The Concert in Central Park version of "The Sound of Silence" is most remarkably different from prior studio recordings because of its tempo. The versions of the song that appeared on *Wednesday Morning, 3AM*, *Sounds of Silence*, and in *The Graduate* all took the same tempo, approximately quarter note=106. In Central Park, sixteen years after the song attained viral success, Simon & Garfunkel performed it much slower, at approximately quarter note=84, and further lengthened the song with a slightly extended guitar introduction. Accounting for the slower tempo and the extended introduction, the 1981 version of "The Sound of Silence" is over a minute longer than the studio recordings from the 1960s. The extension of the song gives the audience longer to appreciate and enjoy it, while the similar sparse instrumentation and singing

---

<sup>119</sup> I will be referring to the audio CD release of the album. Simon & Garfunkel, *The Concert in Central Park*, recorded September 19, 1981, released in CD format October 25, 1990, *Warner Brothers Records*.

plays on the audience's nostalgia for the mid-1960s when the song's popularity skyrocketed. The pair extended many of the other songs they performed at the Concert in Central Park, seemingly aware of their playing upon public nostalgia. In addition, they created a false sense of nostalgia in their choice to perform "The Sound of Silence" without additional instruments, since the other songs they performed had electric instruments. The public audience was more familiar with the overdubbed version of the song with drums and electric guitar, but Simon & Garfunkel imposed a layer of non-genuine folklike authenticity upon the song by choosing to perform it with just a single guitar.

Ten years later, in 1991, Simon performed another concert in Central Park, this time without Garfunkel.<sup>120</sup> In this performance, Simon takes the song's poetry and overall melodic and harmonic structure but none of its characteristic stylistic elements. Instead, he unabashedly uses an electric guitar and is accompanied by a drum set. The stylistic elements are more similar to Simon's solo hits from the '70s and '80s than any of his songs in conjunction with Garfunkel. It opens with a guitar solo freely playing the song's vocal melody; Simon's singing enters after a full instrumental guitar verse. Once Simon begins singing, the performance is characterized by subtle yet frequent syncopation, alteration of the vocal melody, and instrumental interludes between verses. Throughout the song, Simon plays to the audience's sympathies at the expense of portraying the song's message. During the third verse, when Simon sings of "ten

---

<sup>120</sup> Here, I will be referring to the audio CD release of the concert. Paul Simon, *Concert in the Park*, recorded August 15, 1991, released November 5, 1991, WEA/Reprise Records.

thousand people, maybe more,” he breaks the fourth wall and acknowledges the enormous crowd assembled in the park, and the audience responds with a loud, sustained cheer. This part of the poetry refers to a mass of people blinded by unoriginality, yet Simon and the audience treat it as acknowledging the crowd gathered at the concert. Simon’s solo performance of “The Sound of Silence” plays up the song’s popularity in a rather extreme manner.

The two Central Park Performances, first by Simon & Garfunkel and later by Simon alone, show that “The Sound of Silence” is a cultural object more than a song or piece of poetry. The performances take different approaches, but both play up the song as a commodity designed for public entertainment rather than artistic expression. In the 1981 reunion performance, Simon and Garfunkel show that they could put aside their differences and once again be Simon & Garfunkel, the folk-pop duo from the mid-1960s. The reunion version of “The Sound of Silence” exemplifies the earlier version of the duo, while still adapting the song to further pique mass public interest. Simon’s solo performance a decade later takes the song to another level, playing it in a popular style designed for mass appeal. Instead of playing the song in the way he wrote it, Simon took the opportunity to be a pop star and play both to and for his audience. These later performances of “The Sound of Silence” show that the original mid-1960s version of the song was only a jumping off point. Simon accepted that he created a work of popular appeal and used it to further the extent of his own popularity.

“The Sound of Silence” became a phenomenon by accident. Based on the circumstances in which it was originally produced, it should not have achieved success. Tom Wilson, the external factor, removed Paul Simon’s authorship—in

spirit, not in copyright—over the song. With the ambiguous authorship came more popular musical material, which in turn led to a massive audience. Simon temporarily became a victim to the death of the author phenomenon, but later found the situation working in his favor: he attained fame and fortune. The song's success was an accident, but it proved a fortunate accident for all involved.

## Chapter 5

### EPILOGUE

I am the entertainer  
And I've come to do my show.  
You've heard my latest record  
Spin on the radio  
It took me years to write it,  
They were the best years of my life.  
There was a beautiful song but it ran too long,  
If you wanna have a hit, you gotta make it fit,  
So they cut it down to 3:05.

In 1974, singer/songwriter Billy Joel released his third studio album, *Streetlife Serenade*, featuring the semi-autobiographical song "The Entertainer." Joel's tongue-in-cheek account of showmanship admits to conscious selling out of artistry and values in order to be a famous singer. With this song, Joel admits—with an inkling of shame—to being a product of the popular music industry, but the eventual production of the song assumes his complicity with the system.

I am the entertainer  
And I know just where I stand:  
Another seranader  
In another long-haired band.  
Today I am the champion;  
I may have won your hearts.  
But I know the game: you'll forget my name  
And I won't be here in another year  
If I don't stay on the charts.

Beginning roughly in the 1960s and extending to the present day, musicians have embraced “schlock and kitsch...incorporat[ing it] into their very substance.”<sup>121</sup> “The Entertainer” is only one example of countless displays of complicity within the culture industry system. The thread of selling out that begun in the 1960s has shaped our culture ever since, valuing the consumer’s interests and often also the artists’ aesthetic interests. To paraphrase T. S. Eliot: this is the way highbrow supremacy ends: not with a bang but with a flood of pop songs.

---

<sup>121</sup> Frederick Jameson, “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” *The New Left Review* (1/146), 55.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adlington, Robert, ed. *Sound Commitments: Avant-garde Music and the Sixties*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Adorno, Theodor W. "Analytical Study of the NBC Music Appreciation Hour." *The Musical Quarterly*. Vol. 78, No. 2 (Summer 1994).
- Barker, Hugh, and Taylor, Yuval. *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana, 1977.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, trans. Hannah Arendt. London: Fontana, 1968.
- Bernstein, David W., ed. *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde*. Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2008.
- . *Omnibus*. The Archive of American Television. 4-DVD box set. Produced by Robert Saudek Associates. Port Washington, NY: E1 Entertainment, 2010.
- . *Young People's Concerts*. Leonard Bernstein and The New York Philharmonic. 9-DVD box set. Directed by Roger Englander. West Long Branch, NJ: Kultur Video, 2004.
- Buckley, Peter. *The Rough Guide to Rock: The Definitive Guide to More Than 1200 Artists and Bands*. London: Rough Guides, 2003.
- Burton, Humphrey. *Leonard Bernstein*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Denisoff, R. Serge, and Richard A. Peterson, eds. *The Sounds of Social Change*. Chicago, Illinois: Rand McNally & Company, 1972.
- Duckworth, William. *Talking Music: Conversations With John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1995.

- Eliot, Marc. *Paul Simon: A Life*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2010.
- Eyer, Ronald. "Are These Concerts Still Concerts?" *New York Times*, January 22, 1967.
- Encyclopedia of Popular Music. "Simon and Garfunkel." 1989-2008.
- Fink, Robert. *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2005.
- Friedman, Devin. "Middlebrow: The Taste That Dare Not Speak Its Name." *GQ*, June 2011, <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/mens-lives/201106/middlebrow-culture>.
- Gelleny, Sharon. "Leonard Bernstein on Television: Bridging the Gap Between Classical Music and Popular Culture." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Vol 11, Issue 1 (March 1999).
- Hamm, John, Elisabeth Moss, Vincent Kartheiser, January Jones, and Christina Hendricks. *Mad Men*. Season 1. New York: Lionsgate, 2008. DVD.
- Holt, Fabian. *Genre in Popular Music*. Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Howe, Sondra Wieland. "The NBC Music Appreciation Hour: Radio Broadcasts of Walter Damrosch." *Journal of Research in Music Education*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Spring, 2003).
- Hoffman, Dustin, Anne Bancroft, Katharine Ross, William Daniels, and Murray Hamilton. *The Graduate*. Directed by Mike Nichols. New York: MGM Studios, 1967. DVD.
- Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor W. Adorno. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, ed., Edmund Jephcott, trans. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.
- Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism." *New Left Review* 1/146 (July/August 1984): 53-92.
- Kauffmann, Stanley. "Cum Laude." *The New Republic*, Vol. 157, Issue 26, December 12, 1967.
- Kingston, Victoria. *Simon & Garfunkel: The Biography*. New York: Fromm International, 1998.



Klein, Howard. "Bernstein Gives Children Lesson," *New York Times*, October 18, 1964.

———. "Bernstein Gives Old Mode A New Twist". *New York Times*. October 23, 1966.

The Leonard Bernstein Collection. Papers. The Library of Congress. Partially available online at  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/bernstein/>

The Leonard Bernstein Office, Inc. "Leonard Bernstein."  
<http://www.leonardbernstein.com/index.htm>

Levine, Lawrence W. *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988.

Lipman, Samuel. *The House of Music*. Boston, Massachusetts: David R. Godine Publishers, 1984.

Lyons, Russell. "High-brow, Low-Brow, Middle-Brow." *LIFE Magazine*. April 11, 1949.

MacInnis, John Christian. "Leonard Bernstein's and Roger Englander's Educational Mission: Music Apperciation and the 1961-62 Season of *Young People's Concerts*." Master's Thesis, Florida State University, 2009.

Martin, Peter J. *Sounds and Society: Themes in the Sociology of Music*. New York: Manchester University Press, 1995.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964.

Michele, Lea, Jane Lynch, Alfonso Gomez-Rejon, Bill D'Elia. *Glee: The Complete First Season*. Los Angeles, California: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, 2011. DVD.

Miller, Karl Hagstrom. "How to Write About Bob Dylan: A Step-by-Step Guide." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*. Volume 3, Issue 3, September 2011.

Mostel, Zero, Gene Wilder, Christopher Hewett, William Hickey, and Anne Ives. *The Producers*. Directed by Mel Brooks. New York: MGM Studios, 1968. DVD.

Nyman, Michael. "An Interview With Steve Reich." *The Musical Times*. Volume 112, No. 1537, March 1971.

- Ostrofsky, Kathryn. "Taking *Sesame* to the Streets: Young Children's Interactions with Pop Music in the Urban Classrooms of 1970s New York." Paper presented at the 2012 EMP Pop Conference, jointly held with the IASPM-US Annual Conference, New York University, New York, March 2012.
- Peyser, Joan. *Bernstein: A Biography*. New York: Beech Tree Books, 1987.
- Potter, Keith. *Four Musical Minimalists*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Rainbow, Paul, ed. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
- Rastogi, Nina. "Steve Reich and Nonesuch Pull Controversial 9/11 Album Cover," *Slate Magazine*, Browbeat, August 11, 2001  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2011/08/11/wtc\\_9\\_11\\_steve\\_reich\\_and\\_nonesuch\\_pull\\_the\\_album\\_s\\_controversial.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/browbeat/2011/08/11/wtc_9_11_steve_reich_and_nonesuch_pull_the_album_s_controversial.html).
- Reich, Steve. *Writings on Music, 1965–2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Replogle-Wong, Holley. "Crossover and Spectacle in American Operetta and the Megamusical." PhD diss., University of California Los Angeles, 2009.
- Ross, Alex. "The Sounds of 9/11," *The New Yorker*, News Desk, May 5, 2011.  
<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2011/05/the-sounds-of-911.html>.
- Rubin, Joan Shelley. *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- S., H. C. "Bernstein Offers A Lesson in Music." *New York Times*. January 19, 1958.
- Simon, Paul. *Concert in the Park*. WEA/Reprise Records, 1991. CD.
- Simon, Paul, and Art Garfunkel. *The Concert in Central Park*. Warner Brothers Records, 1990. CD.
- Stahl, Bob. "Musician With a Cause." *TV Guide*. January 18, 1958.
- Taruskin, Richard. *Oxford History of Western Music*. New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2009.

Tsioulcas, Anastasia. "Addressing 'Unfinished Business': Steve Reich on Sept. 11", NPR Classical, Deceptive Cadence, September 5, 2011.  
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2011/09/05/140156217/addressing-unfinished-business-steve-reich-on-9-11>

Whitehead, J. W. *Appraising The Graduate: The Mike Nichols Classic and Its Impact in Hollywood*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011.