

2 On the role of music

2.1 Some notes on the sociology of music

There are two different types of sociological research related to culture and music: a first tradition of sociology of art focused on the decoding of social meanings in artistic work, and a second tradition based on a micro-scale and detailed empirical field research investigating the processes of music production and consumption. Whereas the first approach is concerned with analyzing the work of art per se, the second approach deals with the study of situations and contexts in which specific social practices and artistic products are produced and consumed; while Adorno is the most authoritative exponent of the first tradition, Becker is the main representative of the second approach.

Adorno's contribution to the sociology of music can be basically found in three of his works: *Philosophie der Neuen Musik* (1949), *Dissonanzen* (1958) and *Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie* (1962). In his account, Adorno refers to popular music as a product of the cultural industry which is an integrated component of the capitalist economy; as a result, music follows the same rules of production that characterize industrial commodities. Fetishism and degradation are the main features of popular music which requires the musician to adapt to the regularity of success, following the rules and modes of the standardized manufacture, sacrificing her/his individuality.

Adorno conceives mass culture as a form of adaptation and adjustment not only to the market, but also to the consumer; as he highlights in this regard, “the pre-digested quality of the product prevails, justifies itself and establishes itself all the more firmly in so far as it constantly refers to those who cannot digest anything not already pre-digested” (2003 [1991]: 67). For his part, the consumer of popular music listens atomistically, in a childish, primitive and retarded way, and dissociates the music material even if in the light music there is nothing more to decompose. As a result, contemporary mass music has a regressive effect on the listener, not only turning him away from more important music, but also confirming him in his neurotic stupidity. And, consequently, “if the standardized products do not permit concentrated listening without becoming unbearable to the listeners, the latter are in any case no longer capable of concentrated listening” (Ibid.: 49).

Talking about the function of light music, Adorno points out that light music cooperates with mass culture in preventing individuals from reflecting on themselves and their world, and from making them believe that the world is following the right path since it provides such abundance of consolations. Through the “language of angels,” a language without concepts and a tone of delight, where the minor mode is banned, light music is able to deny distress and discomfort characterizing present life. At the same time, Adorno attributes to mass music the power of creating a feigned sense of community, of fictitious integration, and the illusion of warmth for those who feel the coldness of the harsh struggle of all against all that characterizes modern society. It is in this way that light music succeeds in disciplining individuals, allowing them to virtually escape from reality without changing the status quo since, as Adorno notes, the status quo can only be modified by those who, instead of confirming themselves and the world, reflect critically.

In juxtaposition to light music, Adorno introduces the idea of progressive music: as stated by the scholar, “the all-powerful culture industry appropriates the enlightening principle and, in its relationship with human beings, defaces it for the benefit of prevailing obscurity. Art vehemently opposes the tendency; it offers an ever-sharper contrast to such false clarity. The configurations of that deposed obscurity are held up in opposition to the prevailing neon-light style of the times. Art is able to aid enlightenment only by relating the clarity of the world consciously to its own darkness” (Adorno, 2002 [1958]: 15). Thus, if popular music keeps humanity in its state of dark unawareness, progressive music - as a form of art - has the ability to illuminate the human condition, making people aware of the darkness in which they live. Adorno considers Schönberg's expressionism the prototype of modern music and confers to his production a central role in the process of *Aufklärung*, since with his music, the composer shows and forces the individual to become aware of what the cultural industry tries to hide and deny.

In line with Adorno, in her article “How autonomous is relative: Popular Music, the Social Formation and Cultural Struggle,” Garofalo (1987) provides new insights into the functioning of the cultural and music industry in particular. The scholar relates to the classical reading of Marx, which views society as consisting of the economic base and of the superstructure: whereas the basis is characterized by a peculiar “mode of production,” comprising the technical means and the social relations of production, the superstructure is conceived as “the realm of culture and ideology, is seen as been determined by the base” and reflecting “those ideas, values, and beliefs which are favorable to the ruling class, and which therefore support the status quo” (Garofalo, 1987: 79).

For the scholar, nowadays the basis of society is characterized by a capitalistic mode of production which has also affected the music realm. In particular, as Garofalo notes, capitalistic music industries – called record companies – occupy the power center of the popular music sector, wherein commercial enterprises, such as radios, concert promotions and booking agencies, management companies and the music press, constitute its industrial infrastructure (Ibid.: 79). In her analysis, Garofalo lays emphasis on the power of the music industry which, with its production, marketing, promotion and distribution prerogatives, is able to fragment the audience and limit the varieties of composed and performed music. In this regard, she notes that “the commercial imperative of the music industry necessarily leads to the promotion of a star system which limits, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the range of music available to the public” (Garofalo, 1987: 81, 86).

For Garofalo, this music apparatus represents one of the agencies of the superstructure which, together with the education system, the family, the church, etc., promotes and reinforces the power of the state and its hegemony, which is “achieved when ideas, values, beliefs and practices which are favorable to the dominant culture come to be seen as ‘normal’, ‘commonsensical’ – in short, when they appear to define lived reality” (Ibid. 89). Nonetheless, Garofalo acknowledges that the media and, especially, popular music have a “relative autonomy” from the ruling class: in fact, in her opinion, popular music has the peculiar potential to ideologically challenge this hegemony, producing counter-hegemonic practices. This was, for instance, the case in the rock-and-roll movement, the punk movement and the anti-war movement, all grounded on the emergence of new musical forms which, through music, succeeded in amassing counter-cultural energies and producing new meanings, promoting an alternative vision of social relations and organizations.

Returning to the two main approaches of the sociology of music, while Adorno focuses on music as an artistic and symbolic artifact building and giving meaning to people’s experience, Becker takes into account the contexts and ways of the production and consumption of music. More specifically, with an approach influenced by symbolic interactionism, Becker concentrates on the social relations that develop between individuals and institutions that compose the various musical and artistic worlds. His contributions in this field can be found in the book *Art Worlds* (1982).

According to Becker, the art world can be described as “the network of people whose cooperative activity, organized via their joint knowledge of conventional means of doing things, produce[s] the kind of art works that art world is noted for” (1982: X). In his theorization, art world is conceived as a collective

action, a joint activity of a number of people who are linked and involved in the production, commission, preservation, promotion, criticism, and sale of art.

Despite Becker's conceptualization of art work as collectively produced by a network of people, this cooperation activity does not necessarily take place in a state of equilibrium since art work is not exempt from the influence of internal tensions and external changes. In this regard, worthy of note is that Becker does not agree with artists and ideologists of art like, for example, Adorno, who affirms that the main feature of art, conceived as expression of thoughts and mood, is its uniqueness and who explains artistic variation as the result of the artist's individual particular contribution to the art world. Instead, according to Becker, a central role in the artistic change is played by the organizational development and by the innovator's ability to create an apparatus of people around herself/himself, who sustains and furthers her/his ideas in a cooperative way, capturing an existing network or developing a new one. Becker also refers to Schönberg's work, defining his contributions as an artistic revolution, since the introduction of the twelve-tone system changed not only the logic and character of the works produced, but also the conventions to produce them (Becker, 1982: X). For Becker, what is fundamental for the success and permanence of an innovative work is not its intrinsic worth, but rather the extent to which it achieves acceptance and is incorporated into the artistic world. Therefore, innovators introduce new ideas and visions to the larger artistic world, but only proponents who can mobilize the support of others and give their changes an organizational basis can ensure durability to their artistic innovations.

Becker was not the first author to conceptualize the art work as the result of a collective effort. Indeed, before the publication of *Art Worlds*, Frith had already pinpointed the complex network of actors involved in the production and distribution of music, stating that "between the original music and the eventual listener are the technological processes of transferring sounds to tape and disc and the economic processes of packaging and marketing the final product; like the other mass media, records rely on capital investment, specialized technical equipment, and on the organization of a variety of skilled roles" (1981: 5). In identifying these functions and roles, the author calls attention to the centrality and autonomy of the listener in the process. Frith strongly criticizes the positions of the *Frankfurter Schule* – i.e., Adorno – which conceives the consumer of popular music as passive and the meaning of music as predetermined by the music industry itself. On the contrary, for Frith, neither does the consumer listen passively nor are the music meanings determined by the commercial means of production. Interestingly, Frith lays emphasis on the allographic character of music. The consumer is free to choose what to buy and what to listen to: she/he can listen to a record independently from other consumers and from the actors

and agents involved in its production process, so that, for the author, once a record has been issued, it seems to live by itself (Ibid.: 38-42).

According to Frith, the Adornian interpretation could well describe the mass media characterizing American society in the 1950s, when opposition to the capitalist social order was absent. However, the social conflicts of the 1960s and the 1970s with their cultural production providing a critique of the establishment cannot be understood in this framework. Indeed, the radical claims which were made through rock music in the 1960s and the political claims formulated through punk in the late 1970s represent an example of music practices beyond the culture of profit. Rock and punk, as forms of pop music, were used as privileged weapons for the cultural struggle against the status quo and for the spread of a counter-cultural ideology (Ibid. 48).

From this theoretical excursus on the two main approaches to the sociology of music, an interesting communality among the above mentioned authors emerges: the recognition of the potential of the medium music in challenging the establishment. In fact, as suggested by Adorno, music may be a progressive force involved in the process of *Aufklärung*, making the individuals aware of the condition of darkness and neurotic stupidity in which they live. As stressed by Garofalo, music may give rise to counter-hegemonic ideologies and practices and may be employed as a weapon in the cultural struggle against capitalistic society, as highlighted by Frith. But then, why is music such a powerful medium? What does confer to music its ideological character? And how has music been used and integrated into political life and, especially, into the life of social movements and organizations in the course of history?

The following paragraphs will be devoted to the examination of these compelling questions, focusing in particular on the ideological content of music, on the role of this medium in social movements and organizations, and on the relationship existing between music and national identity.

2.2 The ideological content of music

As noted by Keller, “that music aptly and effectively conveys ideological attitudes is proven by how often it was, and still is, the frequent object of censorship” (2007: 91). Limiting our observation to the last one hundred years, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and Franco represent only few examples of control and restriction of music on behalf of monopolized power. Thus, it is legitimate to wonder why music, more than other arts, has been attributed this extraordinary importance in the course of history.

In his book *Music as social life: The Politics of participation*, Turino (2008) provides an attentive analysis of the ways in which the Nazi regime integrated this medium into its propaganda machine. From a theoretical point of view, Turino substantiates the political and ideological implications of music by referring to Gramsci's account on the cultural and educational dimension of political movements and the importance of ideological means, in forms of imagery and discourse, to convince people and legitimate the leadership. Gramsci defines this gaining of consent and this internalization of the leadership's vision as "Hegemony" (see Turino 2008: 194).

As pointed out by Turino, the musical heritage of the country has always represented a source of pride for Germany, and the "three Bs" – Bach, Beethoven and Brahms – were considered as one of the main symbols of the magnificence of the German culture. This applied also for the Nazi regime and, indeed, "in 1933 Joseph Goebbels, the Reich minister of public enlightenment and propaganda, proclaimed that music was the most glorious art of the German heritage" (Potter 1998: ix in Turino 2008: 200).

The Nazi regime's music engagement was substantial and diverse, ranging from the sponsoring of international tours of German orchestras as a demonstration of Germany's cultural superiority to the removal of Jewish musicians, conductors, composers, critics and scholars from their positions. With the beginning of the war, light popular music was promoted since its "sentimentality and high pathos" was supposed to provide an escape from the hardship of the war. At the same time, American jazz, swing and popular music were banned since considered ideologically impure.

The Nazi propaganda machine involved also another medium: the radio. In particular, the regime was very "concerned that Germans stayed tuned on the radio stations" controlled by the propaganda ministry and punished for listening to foreign radio stations with five to ten years of imprisonment (Turino, 2008: 203).

Nazi music and musical practices were characterized by both a recreational and a professional character. In fact, besides the activities carried out by several amateur choruses, Nazi songs were developed with the help of professional writers, poets, and musicians hired by the regime. Since 1923, Nazi lyrics had been published in special songbooks. Worthy of note is that, before 1933, this production was devoted to the promotion of the Nazi ideology and had a recruitment purpose; successively, the lyrics were focused on the celebration of the German elected community and of the protective and sacred power of the Führer (Lidkte 1982: 186, in Turino, 2008: 207).

Simultaneously, this medium contributed significantly to the life of political youth organizations, proliferating in the Nazi period, whose meetings were characterized by the presence of music and moments of collective singing. In this

regard, Turino stresses that collective singing, also due to its repetitive character, represents a powerful emotion-producing experience and that, during these events, “through singing communal songs individuals would be swept up by the totality, would lose their sense of self-identity and be merged, momentarily at least, with the organic wholeness of the German Volksgemeinschaft (national-racial community)” (Ibid.:187-88 in Turino 2008: 210).

But then, returning to the topic of the current work on the role of music in contemporary Russian political youth organizations, in what does the ideological potential of this medium consist and how can its contribution in forging and sustaining collective identities be explained?

According to Keller (2007), the peculiarity (and power) of music lies in its complex nature: in fact, aside from being an object-sound, music comprises several processes, experiences, social and commercial activities which require the participation of people at different levels of engagement and power structure. It is in this multiplicity of processes and levels that music acquires “its uncanny potential to attract, catch and collect symbolic meanings of various kinds in magnet-like fashion” (Keller, 2007: 93).

For Keller, one of the main potentials of this medium is its ability to create identities and foster a sense of belonging to a culture, subculture, nation, social class, religion, etc. A central moment in the process of creation of identities and meanings through music is represented by live performances. In fact, as underlined by McNeill (1995), the mutual synchronizing of sonic and bodily experience creates a precognitive bond perhaps deeper than shared conscious meaning, and the effects of temporarily coordinated bodily activities such as marching, chanting, singing, and dancing foster a form of solidarity that is richer and more robust than cognitive agreement. As stated by the author in this regard, “moving our muscles rhythmically and giving voice consolidate our solidarity by altering human feelings” (McNeill, 1995: viii). McNeill defines this mechanism as a “boundary loss” and a “feeling one,” in which the individual self-awareness decreases and a fellow-feeling intensifies among all those participating in the dance (Ibid. 8). Remarkably, for the scholar, the “emotional bonding through rhythmic muscular movements affects those who take part in it more or less independently of how they may have been connected (or divided) by prior experience” (Ibid.: 52).

Additionally, as highlighted by Keller, “whenever identity is affirmed, a musical performance may help articulate or even develop the values and attitudes of the social group claiming them” (2007: 101). This process leads to an intensification of the sense of belonging and identity among in-group members and, at the same time, to a deepening of the gap with the Others who do not share this experience and, therefore, are not part of the imagined community.

Similarly, Turino also underscores the centrality of music, dance, festivals, and other expressive cultural events in forging and sustaining collective identity. For him, “the performing arts are frequently fulcrum of identity, allowing people to intimately feel themselves part of the community through the realization of shared cultural knowledge and style and through the very act of participating together in performance” (Turino, 2008: 2). These public events represent privileged occasions for the process of identity formation since they allow the public presentation of the peculiar features and feelings which confer to the group its unique character (Ibid).

2.3 Music in social movements and organizations

Music has been an important element in many major movements, such as the labor movements, the Civil Rights movement, the oppositional movement during the dictatorship in Argentina, and various ethno-nationalist movements as, for instance, the Estonian national movement against the Soviets, which is also known as the “Singing Revolution.” Nonetheless, despite music’s contribution in the formation and remembrance of a wide range of social movements, Eyerman and Jamison note that “these musical components have seldom been examined explicitly in the social movements, or broader sociological, literature” (1998: 7). Moreover, the authors point out a tendency among scholars of social movements to operationalize culture (and music) as a dependent variable, ignoring its role in “supplying actors with the sources of meanings and identities out of which they collectively construct social action and interaction” (Ibid.: 162). Similarly, Rosenthal emphasizes that, although it is often asserted, the value of music for social movements is only rarely examined so that we do not really know “what functions does music provide for social movements and how does it provide these tasks” (2001: 11).

Talking about the contribution of music to the life of social movements in the 1930s and 1960s, Eyerman and Jamison (1995; 1998) and Eyerman and Barretta (1996) underscore its political functions of enlightenment and recruitment. More specifically, by adopting an approach focused on the identification of the ways in which social movements affect knowledge production, Eyerman and Jamison stress how singers and songs contributed in raising popular consciousness and were central in the identity formation of these groups (1995: 451). In their opinion, the popular music of the 1960s was one of the main mediating forces through which the ideas, values, and attitudes characterizing the movement reached a broader segment of people, granting them a more lasting effect (Ibid.: 458). As noted by these scholars, not only the form, but also the content of

this medium was of pivotal importance: in fact, due to the quiet sounds characteristic of folk music, the lyrics became the prior source of meaning. The texts were not ideological in any dogmatic way: rather, they dealt with universal themes of peace and brotherhood without presenting any specific political line or strategic action. For the authors, it was while singing these songs that a new common consciousness was formed and shared among the members and activists of these movements (Ibid.: 458).

In their book *Music and Social Movements*, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) analyze the relationship existing between movements' collective identity and music. The authors refer to the work of Hunt, Benford & Snow (1994), who were among the first scholars to introduce the study of culture into the sociology of social movements by using the concept of "framing." In this view, culture – and, therefore, music – can be compared to the border surrounding a painting, to the frame which structures the picture of reality, conferring that peculiar shape to the ideational activities of the movement and guiding the actors in pursuing its goals. As they state in this regard, "the so-called 'Master' frame is seen to provide interpretation of the context in which the movement is operating, something akin to what Marxist-oriented social scientists call ideology or what Weber meant by ethos" (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998: 18). The scholars dwell on the constructive nature of this cultural frame which can be conceived as an analytic device produced by the movement's theorists and intellectuals. During the construction of this cultural frame, the collective identity of a movement is articulated and becomes the ideological framework of interpretation and reproduction of the movement; Eyerman and Jamison define this process of identity formation as "cognitive praxis."

The introduction of the notion of "cultural frame" in the sociology of social movements and organizations has led to methodological innovation and to the adoption of a new approach – the cognitive approach – focused on the content of social movement activities rather than on its forms and organization, studying social movements as discourses and texts (Ibid.: 21-23). In this light, the authors analyze the contribution of music to the cognitive praxis of the social movements of the 1960s, defining their identity as a "collective structure of feelings" and highlighting the central role played by the music medium in its making and reorganization (Ibid.: 166).

In line with Eyerman and Jamison, Roscigno, Danaher and Summers-Effler (2002) argue that music and its emotional and cognitive impacts can be fundamental to the construction of social movements' culture and collective identity. In their view, music can be conceived as an important mechanism for social organization and cohesion at the most general level, able to forge and sustain solidarity among group members but also to legitimate and motivate challenges

to existing structures (Roscigno & Danaher 2001; Roscigno, Danaher and Summers-Effler, 2002: 145). Through music, an identity amplification process can take place, since music lyrics might influence the individual salience hierarchy, so that lower-ordered identities are strengthened in order to foster participation in collective action (Ibid., 2002: 143).

The authors identify three fundamental components of social movement culture: a sense of group identity, an alternative interpretational frame of cause and effect, and a sense of group political efficacy; in their opinion, song lyrics may affect all these dimensions of social movement culture (Ibid.: 145-146). A content analysis of the songs characterizing the mobilization of southern textile workers in the 1920s and 1930s is presented by Roscigno, Danaher and Summers-Effler as evidence of this mechanism. In their account, through the large use of a collective language such as “we,” “us” and “our” as well as the clear delineation of grievances, accusations, and issues of universal concern for southern mill workers characterizing the lyrics, music delivered the cultural tools necessary for the movement’s formation and persistence, in terms of identity, interpretational framework and collective efficacy (Roscigno, Danaher and Summers-Effler, 2002: 163).

Talking about the protest and propaganda songs composed in the folk idiom, Denisoff well schematizes the six primary functions fulfilled by music in relation to social and political movements:

1. “The song attempts to solicit and arouse outside support and sympathy for a social or political movement.
2. The song reinforces the value structure of individuals who are active supporters of the social movement or ideology.
3. The song creates and promotes cohesion, solidarity, and high morale in an organization or movement supporting its world view.
4. The song is an attempt to recruit individuals for specific social movement.
5. The song invokes solutions to real or imagined social phenomena in terms of action to achieve a desired goal.
6. The song points to some problem or discontent in the society, usually in emotional terms” (1972: 2-3).

The scholar distinguishes between two kinds of propaganda songs: the rhetorical and the magnetic. Whereas the rhetorical songs are focused on the identification and description of a situation socially characterized without suggesting any ideological or organizational solution, the magnetic songs have an ideological scope and aim at persuading people, both emotionally and intellectually, to become

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