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Against Music? Heuristics and Sense-Making in Listening to Contemporary Popular Music

Vincenzo Zingaro (ORCID)

Dipartimento di Lettere e Filosofia, Università degli Studi di Firenze, 50121 Firenze, Italy;
vincenzo.zingaro@unifi.it

Abstract: Is the ubiquity of contemporary popular music akin to a deliberate aggression to the hearing, making the listening experience devoid of any sense? If so, is there any strategy to morph this supposed confusion into meaningful stimuli? Relying on epistemology, we attempt at promoting the act of listening as a proper way of world-making and refer to Mark Reybrouck, Bruno Nettl, Steven Brown and Joseph Jordania—among others—to gather appropriate heuristic tools. In the last part of the essay, we advance the concept of *timbral quotation* as an additional means to grasp meaningful cues in the timbrical richness of contemporary popular compositions. We shall sustain the particular fitness of this tool especially with regard to nowadays' Western popular music, more and more timbre-centered rather than harmony-centered.

Keywords: contemporary music; aesthetics of sound; umwelt; contemporary popular music; epistemology; heuristics; timbral quotation; listening experience; digital audio

1. Orienting in the Ubiquity of Contemporary Music: A Sound-Guided Approach

In 1994, the Italian philosopher Manlio Sgalambro published a controversial pamphlet titled: *Contro la musica* ("Against Music"). In a handful of pages he expressed a filo-nihilistic view upon contemporary music addressing, in particular, the dynamics of nowadays' listening experience. His criticism hinges on a reversal of the music–listener relationship that he explains as follows:

> The main problem is a critique of the listening. When listening was accused of having regressed, mass music was blamed. The regress however has other causes. The regressed listener "refuses" to listen. Sounds have to hit him without his participation. Here I am, says the regressed listener, but I am not listening at all. It is sounds that are listening to themselves. The regressed listener does not want to enter them. He wants to listen to music dismissing any responsibility. The overbearingness of music baffles him. [...] Whereas in the past one had to chase music and cover leagues on muleback in order to listen to it, today it is the one that makes itself felt without remission. Wherever you are, it grabs you by the neck forcing you to listen with various promises. [1] (pp. 12–15).[1]

The most peculiar trait of Sgalambro's reflection is to be found in the very first lines of the quote, as he clearly sets himself apart from any naïve crusade against the (supposed) poverty of mass-music compared to classical and "cultivated" music in general. The philosopher's stance seems, instead, more interested in a "sound-affair", something concerning both the pervasiveness and the kinds of sound contemporary music is made of. As he points out:

> Music has reached its present state since it could count on the listener as unaware instrument. In fact, it does not sound bassoons, saxophones, percussions or violins—even if it may seem so—it sounds its unsuspecting listeners. The love for the instrument, before which the poor player falls to his knees as before a creature

of flesh and bones, [. . .] is now replaced by love for the listener on whose nerves the bow dances. [1] (pp. 16–17).

Truthfully, the core of Sgalambro's critique lies in what he considers a betrayal of the true aim of music, that, according to him, is to relieve mankind from the pain(s) of existence by setting itself apart from the world, as a sort of "safe place" that shares nothing with human existence, able to wind up the human world in an apologetic gesture.[2] Following Sgalambro (and the critical tradition to which he belongs), what music seems to do, instead, is to "purr" at the human world, allegedly trying to comfort existence up to making itself heard everywhere, at any time, be it even forcefully.

Sgalambro's critique stems from the individuation of a common origin for all music in sound[3]; indeed, his reasoning is imbued with references to *acoustic* sounds, albeit its roots shall be found in the lines that Ernst Bloch dedicated to philosophy of music in his *Spirit of Utopia*. Here, the German philosopher finds in the character of Orlando di Lasso the very first example of tonal freedom for multiple voices. With his *Penitential Psalms*, writes Bloch, "everything is ready for expression to the broadest extent, the tonal edifice has been built, the range, the perspective, the transcendence of the tonal space, all truly and properly "musical" for the first time, are there in prototypes" [2] (p. 37). As we can see, Bloch sets the "tonal edifice" as leading to what is "properly musical", hence music supervenient as organized sound. To Sgalambro, this precise moment translates in the transformation of sound from *Es* to *Id* that is, from sound in itself (pure sound) to heard sound, meaning: the structured sound. This is how Sgalambro derives his meaning to music, i.e., the way we try to cope with an original never-ceasing sound lying beyond our attentive listening yet before our hearing. It is as if we were creating music to give an order to the "pure" sound, hence we try accomplishing the task with a two-fold movement of transformation: from "anarchic" sound to music (that is, an order of sounds) and from music into listening. Thus, the experience of sound is divided in two: on one end there is music as an order—one which may become such a sophisticated mechanism to amend the need for a listener (i.e., *art pour l'art*). On the other end there is the listener which, albeit craving music to comfort her existence, may feel so drowned in it to actually start repelling it, almost offended by its ubiquity.

Nowadays, this framing looks even more at place as physical sounds are more and more the result of translations from the digital domain (i.e., digital signals) and both the speed and bandwidth granted by the digital codification of analog signals allows much more information to be spread on a far broader spectrum than before. Not surprisingly, this applies to music too, by virtue of the several audio file formats available and it is no mystery that one in particular, the MPEG-3, really put the throttle up in terms of diffusion. Hence, the pervasiveness claimed by Sgalambro seems absolutely real, advancing serious questions as to what the sonic world of the contemporary listener is made of and what is its structure.

Given such framing it would seem almost impossible to foreshadow anything more than a progressive unbearableness of music, doomed to becoming persistent and nonsensical, a prevision which by every mean would gather some consensus among the most "nostalgic" and critical listeners. Yet, is this exactly the case? Is there any chance to reverse such a paradigm and claim that such a broader world of "signals" (such as the omni-comprehensive digital ones) demands a positive step forward in a broader act of "ordering" the ever-growing world of sound?

2. From Regressed to Expert Listeners: Mark Reybrouck's "Musical Umwelt"

The question concluding the previous section leads us to an attempt to find in epistemology a key to make sense of the contemporary musical world. To do so, in the next two parts we will refer to the work of a number of well-established musicologists and philosophers in order to revive some of the heuristic instruments they provided. We shall start by following, in particular, the approach of the Belgian musicologist Mark Reybrouck. Relying especially on Jakob von Uexküll's biological methodology, Reybrouck proposes a

constructivist take on the task of making sense of the musical world. He does so precisely by overturning the supposed "aggression" from the external world of sounds into the act of progressively building an own's *Umwelt*. This latter concept, as von Uexküll clarifies, defines the subjective universe of experience and is centered on the so-called "functional cycle" determined by the interaction between perceptor and effector [3] (p. 10). In this cycle, the first entity is the sense-organ cueing a perceptual meaning and the second is the organ which may perform an intervention or a modification on what is perceived, thus investing the object of an operative meaning. In von Uexküll's words, "[. . .] all that a subject perceives becomes his perceptual world and all that he does, his effector world. Perceptual and effector world together form a closed unit, the Umwelt" [3] (p. 6).

Therefore, a world of meanings, here, is superimposed on the perceptual data and is made of the historical and biological sediment of past experiences. By the way, this has an impact on what can be heard and grasped by each listener, not to speak about the *delicacy* of her education to find meaningful cues into what is heard. Thus, according to Reybrouck:

> Each listener has his listening competence that is the result of previous interactions with the sound, and the way he constructs his musical *Umwelt* is dependent upon the way he gives meaning to the sounds. This is in close parallel with the statement of von Uexküll that the objective qualities of objects are not attributes of the objects themselves, but are acquired by the objects' having entered into diverse relationships with subject organisms. [4] (p. 6).

Thus, far from the shape of a passive entity being constrained to the mere acquaintance of an ontological reality which has always been "out there", the listener shall be seen as a creature endowed with instruments able to detect and select relevant informative contents. Therefore, any sonic world is the result of none other than its listener's own construction and making sense of it means to build such *Umwelt*, step-by-step. By the way, listeners stumble across other listeners and so do their sound worlds, therefore we should talk about *Umwelten* when a single *Umwelt* gets in touch with others and morph in shapes and meanings.

3. Sense-Making in Music: Heuristic Tools from the Work of Bruno Nettl, Steven Brown and Joseph Jordania

The theme of building one's own *Umwelt* implies the quest for building methods and that introduces the broader topic of the actual models of music understanding: a problem that we will tackle in this section. The issue paves way to a longstanding concern about the nature of music: whether it might be thought of in terms of language or rather as a social, anthropological and cultural matter.

If we were to follow the first path, we would solely focus on its grammar and we would have to face two hints. On one end, it would be hard to account for the listening experiences of those who did not receive a musical education, hence the whole spectrum of what music concerns would narrow down dramatically. On the other end, just like every language undergoes small evolutions within a solid structure that needs to be kept stable in order to be shared, the same way we would expect music to evolve at a very slow pace, possibly to minor extents on the short length. Not only this is not the case, as proven by countless musical forms and traditions[4], but it would also be hard to deny, at least in part, that Sgalambro had it right in thinking at a "purring" music: something exclusively eager to comfort, by crystallization and repetition, the same, widespread "winning formula" making its listeners used to it.

It makes little surprise, therefore, to see us taking the other path and cast a gaze on music under the perspective of a social, anthropological and cultural matter. To this extent, is there an element we may account for pretty much everywhere, no matter the width of our focus? A positive answer is given by the notion of "musical universals". These shall be thought of in almost exclusively statistical terms: recurrences pertaining to the structural, temporal and/or timbrical spheres prone to cross cultures and to be found in *many* musical expressions and traditions.[5] To this extent, there is one model in particular we would refer

to: the one advanced by Steven Brown and Joseph Jordania in 2011. This model stems from the work of ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl [13,14] who identified three levels of musical universals. A basic level is the one we may call *0-grade*: it is made of acoustic sounds in general, requiring no "comparative" approach in order, for a living being, to make sense of them since they are perceived at a sensory level. This *0-grade* is followed by an upper level we may call *grade 1* containing all those acoustic events that are not explicitly connected with music but, nonetheless, are common both to music and to the broadest "auditory world". The third step of Nettl's classification (let us name it *grade* 2) pertains to those sounds that exhibit an order and/or some cues (such as the use of idiophones, scales, verbal contexts, predominance of regular rhythms . . .) that, albeit not exclusive to music, possess structures akin to *patterns*. According to Nettl, these regularities or kind of recurrences are common to all kinds of music. This sets the starting point for the work of Brown and Jordania. Stemming from here, in fact, the two scholars add a further level to account for those patterns having a narrower range of musical diffusion (local or regional as opposed to widespread) and yet possessing high significance on a cultural base (we shall name this one *grade 3* only for the sake of reading comfort). The last grade building Brown and Jordania's classification is an inter-categorial modality they name *range universals*. In their words:

> Range universals describe the full range of discrete possibilities for a particular category of music or musical behavior. A simple example is the classification of the world's musics as having either a regular pulse ('measured' music in a metric rhythm) or as lacking one ('unmeasured' music in a free rhythm). The dichotomy between measured and unmeasured musics—while an oversimplification—does convey the idea that there is a range of two discrete possibilities encompassing the rhythms of the world's musics. [15] (p. 8).

From these levels (from zero to four), Brown and Jordania derive a list of 70 proposed universals (see [15], pp. 10–13) divided in two main areas, one gathering *sound structure and expressive devices* [15] (p. 10) and the other accounting for *contexts, contents and behavior* [15] (p. 12). Although some of these universals seem rather puzzling[6], such an extensive list allows for a basic orientation in the task of making sense of the musical world which may appeal to everybody since, at least for some elements, issues such as age, cultural heritage, education and the likes have no impact.

To this extent, however, we can get back to Reybrouck and further evolve this framing by borrowing his profile of "expert listener": "I argue that expert listeners build up their *Umwelt*, and emancipate themselves from mere causal reactivity to a kind of freedom and autonomy" [4] (p. 17).

This evolution from the naïve listener may surely hinge on the universals listed by Brown and Jordania but it can also be fostered by additional instruments more specific to musical contexts. To this extent, there is one criterion that we would like to add, as it seems to fit particularly well a feature of contemporary music: we would call it *timbral quotation*.

4. From Musical Quotation to Timbral Quotation: An Additional Tool in Contemporary Music

Before addressing what we mean with *timbral quotation*, let us give a little context to this notion as it stems from the better known issue of *musical quotation*. Musical quotation is the intentional act of evoking a given musical work (usually by the means of a melodic phrase) in the context of another musical piece. An evident example of this escamotage in contemporary popular music can be found at the beginning, in the mid-section and in the last refrain of the song «*Frog Princess*» by the Irish songwriter Neil Hannon (stage name: *The Divine Comedy*) where a trumpet plays the main melodic theme of the French national anthem *La Marseillaise* but in the context of a different surrounding orchestration.

Though this practice differs from plagiarism and pure coincidence, the legitimacy and actual status of musical quotation—not to mention the kind of intentionality behind it—has raised a number of issues and questions [16–18] opening an interesting debate.[7] Contemporary music, however, has prompted an evolution of this practice—particularly

accelerated by the introduction of sound samplers—which can be told to follow two main directions. On the first, the simple-yet-articulated re-proposition of a given melodic theme in terms of a sequence of tones has progressively handed pace over to the "brute", "cut-and-paste-and-loop" approach, made famous by countless artists creating brand new compositions out of a few bars and/or single sounds (i.e., single drum hits or short grooves) sampled from other recordings.[8] The second pathway is made of the aforementioned *timbral quotations*: with this term we would account for those occurrences in which a given timbre is so connected to a certain age or cultural niche that, no matter the notes or the melody played, it will immediately evoke a certain atmosphere[9] permeating a composition that might share little to nothing with the original context proper to the timbral elements borrowed.

In order to exemplify this latter occurrence, we may cite the use of the peculiar timbre of *sitar* in countless Western compositions sharing nothing with the context of Indian music, such as the song "*I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*" by the cult-band *Genesis* or the chart-hit "*Paint It, Black*" by *The Rolling Stones*. More recent examples of this practice, however, are particularly bound to electronic music, where single timbres recall, more or less specifically, certain periods and their aesthetics: this is eminently the case with some electronic synthesizers. For example, from 1982 to 1985, the Japanese manufacturer *Roland* released several polyphonic synthesizers named "Juno"[10] whose sounds were featured in a huge number of very well-known popular songs of that decade. As fashion and genres shifted, this line of instruments fell into a sort of oblivion during the '90s; at this time, however, finding an exemplar became so inexpensive that many underground musicians started resurrecting them, putting their timbres in use in their new productions. One timbre in particular, the so-called "hoover sound"[11], became a trademark of the Dutch alternative scene known as "gabber" and these timbres, spanning through two decades but in radically different musical contexts, acquired such an iconic state that their usage in nowadays' music is mostly a purpose-driven quotation aimed at recreating certain atmospheres.

Now, as much as we tend to describe musical passages in harmony by appealing to other senses (e.g., a "harsh" dissonance, a "sweet" interval . . .), just as much we do the same with timbres, usually recurring to adjectives such as "silky", "rough", "mellow" and so on. To this extent, since descriptive terms mainly pertaining to timbres usually appeal to the sphere of metaphors, if we were to get back to the mainframe of epistemology, we would now find ourselves endowed with yet another powerful instrument of sense-making.

As scholars Caroline Welsh (see [27]) and Ruard Absaroka (see [28]) sustain, in fact, the opaqueness permeating the definition of "timbre" is rooted in its multiple implications—for it concerns simultaneously aesthetics, physiology, psychology, cultural studies, acoustics and engineering—therefore, this is precisely why it sits as a comfortable "crossroads" where musical information grows in meaningfulness and social relevance.

Timbral quotation may be thought of in terms of a proper heuristic instrument to sustain or even guide analyses on contemporary popular music, with special regard to nowadays' challenges posed to creativity by digital technologies. To this extent the speed of connectivity-means, along with the world-encompassing spreading of distal interactions, has undoubtedly promoted a number of training models and processes of mutual influence among creators that definitely smoothed the steepness of the "learning curve" in music-making. Nevertheless, part of this acceleration is also due to strategies of simplification sometimes leading to "smarter" approaches and sometimes to plain dismissal of learning steps, often resulting in a kind of "writing naivety". For example, a ramping trend in musical composition, these days, sees the use of compositional software tools providing a huge number of ready-to-use chords. The user may simply assign any of these to a virtual (as well as to a physical) instrument, letting it play even very complex harmonies without the need to know anything about music theory. Composers relying on these methods would usually favor an ear-guided writing approach (also meant to move away from a personal "comfort-zone") and would consequently focus their "intentional efforts" on the timbral content rather than on the harmonic fabric. It follows that the meaningfulness of these compositions—often everything but naïve—shall rather be grasped by the means of

accounting for their timbral nuances, as they make it highly probable to stumble across purpose-driven choices appealing precisely to communicative will, be it references to past atmospheres or steps-beyond towards the realm sounds yet-to-be-heard-of.

All this, we think, awards to *timbral quotation* the status of yet another extremely useful tool eager to grasp contents and relevant traits in contemporary music by addressing a wide ground of shared knowledge on both a vertical (cultural) and a horizontal (temporal) plane.

By every mean, however, this instrument has inherent limitations. The most obvious would be a marked cultural relativism: to recall an example formulated earlier, it would be unlikely for a non-European listener (of for anyone too distant in age from the heyday of the so-called "gabber-scene") to find anything immediately significant in listening to a typical "hoover sound". It should not surprise, in fact, to find that Brown and Jordania have attributed to preferences in timbres the status of non-universals [15] (p. 242). On the other hand, however, it should not surprise us to consider timbral quotation, alongside with musical quotation, a different kind of entity since a musical context is assumed, whereas Brown and Jordania's classification suits the need for a broad-encompassing categorization. While quotation (be it timbral or musical) cannot appeal to the status of an "universal", nevertheless it is definitely at place in the vast panorama of contemporary music. Also, not every instantiation of it recurs to quotation, indeed the technologically-mediated evolution of contemporary musical genres augments its incidence in today's composition, especially the ones aimed at targeting the broadest possible audience. On one hand, in fact, if the re-proposition of musical themes is able to recreate a "family-air" for the listener, the re-proposition of familiar *timbres* may appeal to a sort of even "deeper", less conscious level: that of the *remembrance*, where the "grain" of a certain sound may evoke memories and sensations stored at a liminal level (i.e., the so-called "Proustian-moment")[12]. On the other hand, given the premises of a proportional relationship between the increase of "compositional naivety" and the availability of digital technologies of sound manipulation, the technique of quotation per se looks to be a tremendously effective device to respect a potential listener's "comfort-zone" and yet still create something that was not available before. This latter chance is absolutely evident with sample-based music, but the breadth of its outcomes is possibly far more extended when the very nuances of a given "sound" (in the broader sense of the aesthetic quality proper to a given musical production or agent) take the stage. For example, a massive chart-hit from 2010 such as Kanye West's "Power" features a sample from the progressive-rock classic of 1969 "21st Century Schizoid Man" by the English band *King Crimson*. This case is particularly interesting because the fragment taken from *King Crimson*'s piece is harmonically coherent with the structure of West's song (up until that moment) and yet it interrupts the flow of the song at all levels and more evidently at a timbrical one, since a marked difference in loudness, sound-fidelity and instrumental arrangement is clearly audible. Both the difference in age and contexts between the two songs would suggest a mutual incompatibility, the same would tell a comparison between each song's typical listeners. Both, however, are extremely popular and the interlocking between the sample and the song is successful at a harmonic level. Hence, what is at stake, here? Shall we infer that Kanye West is willing to pay homage to an icon of rock history, that he wants to engage *King Crimson*'s listeners, that he wants to revive a past sound . . . ? Whatever the intention behind his choice, we are left with something new coming from the clash of two very different sounds, each holding a certain (possibly intimate) familiarity to the "right" beholder and no matter the reason: among the infinite ways he had to "make a change" in his song, the artist decided to employ a very distinct element (the refrain) of an iconic song without altering a single element of its sound.

This may suffice to explain why we advanced timbral quotation almost along with the several modes listed by Nettl and Brown/Jordania described in Section 3. Just as Nettl introduced that which we called *grade-1*, made of acoustic sounds common both to music and to the general world of audible phenomena, we might also suspect there to be a "grade-1b" which accounts for some timbral features able to endow sounds with

qualities which may or may not become salient. Similarly, as Brown and Jordania spoke about *range universals*, though the features of a precise timbre (any timbre) could hardly aim to universality, nevertheless previously local expositions are widening to such an extent and width that we would find it difficult to argument that mass accessibility to popular music has still granted to every timbre some sort of "virginity". Therefore, while *timbral quotation* shall not be intended as an infallible means, still it can highlight a feature of the listening experience that has gradually become critical, following the evolution of the means of sound recording and reproduction, not to mention the new techniques of modern and avant-garde composition and today's trends in sound design. Since we endeavored in accounting for the potential (be it even latent) that mass-addressed popular music has to trivialize the musical enjoyment—and therefore to standardize the aesthetic experience bound to music—in light of reaching the numerically broadest possible audience, we shall state that the task of evolving into *expert listeners*, as sustained by Reybrouck, is both advisable and feasible. To this extent, we attempted at reporting a selection among the several ways and tools to accomplish the goal and, to this extent, epistemology seems everything but "out of fashion" in providing means to address the menace of the lack of sense posed by the pervasiveness of contemporary music.

5. Conclusions

Let us draw our conclusions by quoting a famous line from Theodor Wiesegrund Adorno's essay *On Popular Music*:

> When popular music is repeated to such a degree that it does not any longer appear to be a device but rather an inherent element of the natural world, resistance assumes a different aspect because the unity of individuality begins to crack. [29] (p. 40).

In this warning, not coincidentally appearing in the part named "Theory of the Listener" of the cited essay, resounds what undoubtedly was the main inspiration driving all the resentment expressed by Manlio Sgalambro that we chose to open our writing with.

The question as to whether epistemological models do have place in contemporary aesthetics, in fact, could hardly be tackled by the point of view of music without making clear what is at stake, here, and it is a profoundly delicate issue.

As much as "music is enough for a lifetime, but a lifetime is not enough for music", as Sergeij Rachmaninoff used to say, it is true that the importance and value of such an intimately anthropological trait is endangered by a certain "overexposure" or the fear thereof. While holding the validity of this concern, what we have attempted was to rationalize the actual shape of contemporary popular music in the digital age.

If, on one hand, it is true that music has never seen a comparable pervasiveness, it is also true that, aside the chaos, there are multiple universes of sense right at the fingertips of the listeners. Following this, in the second section of the paper we stuck to Mark Reybrouck's reference to the concept of *Umwelt* in order to describe—also in terms of a constructive strategy—the sonic world each listener is eager to build. Dwelling on the model proposed by Steven Brown and Joseph Jordania, partly derived, in turn, from Bruno Nettl, we provided a fruitful example as to the *how to* perform this task and, in the third and last section, we put special emphasis on the concept and practice of *timbral quotation*. As we tried to show, this latter addresses particularly well a peculiar trait of contemporary popular music (especially related to the Western tradition) as it accounts for those attempts at transmitting meanings and references through specific timbres. This practice takes advantage of timbre's opaqueness in two ways: on one hand, it can convey multiple "pointers" at once in a sort of hidden way by staging an atmosphere rather than trying to stick to a precise meaning. On the other hand, since it can address multiple fields simultaneously, it works as a very powerful "mean of construction", a broad yet solid directory to make sense across styles, genres, traditions and imageries.

All this addresses exactly the main concern underlying this paper that is, to rescue music from the clutches of boredom and senseless repetition providing actual means to keep it safe and . . . sound.

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Notes

1　All translations from Italian to English by the author.

2　And yet, to procure accidents to the world, that is what art is supposed to do. Music should make us afraid for the very existence of the world. It should be dismissal. Complete dismissal. [1] (pp. 12–13).

3　First of all music is sound. Only in this sense it is also "happening". [. . .] The entrance of music in the realm of language wants to exorcize sound, its peculiar destiny. [1] (p. 16).

4　It might be obvious and yet not useless, to this extent, to recall just the work of ethnomusicology's pioneer Frances Theresa Densmore (see [5]) during the 1920es as she managed to trace back and preserve the almost-lost music of native American tribes. Musical traditions like those were almost effaced from Earth in the lapse of a couple centuries and hardly a few elements (mostly timbres, by virtue of musical instruments) are or were employed in what today would be considered as the "American musical tradition".

5　Studies on musical universals have been led by several scholars among which we shall recall Alan Lomax [6], Thomas Fritz [7], Catherine Stevens & Tim Byron [8], William Tecumseh Fitch [9], Patrick Savage [10–12].

6　E.g., point number 5 of Brown and Jordania's "Behavior" sub-list says: «Music induces bodily movements and physiological changes in the listener» [15] (p. 13). While the second part of this utterance is surely hard to dispute, the first part may actually be rebutted by a plethora of musical works far from inducing such kind of bodily activation.

7　As the musicologist Philip Keppler held, «The term "musical quotations" covers a wide variety of sins and virtues, ranging from covert misappropriation to [. . .] artistic associations» [19]. Topics concerning the value of "borrowed" themes and counterpoint solutions (both per se and with regard to the composition employing them), the actual moral stature of the composer recurring to others' inventions, the consequence that little to extensive musical quotation may have on the growth and perhaps fortune of a musical tradition—not to mention copyright issues and their evolution—have been raised several times. The reader may find accurate references in works by Peter Burkholder [20], Béla Bartók [21], Olufunmilayo Arewa [22] and Nils Holger Petersen [23]. We shall also recall the comprehensive online repository "Musical Borrowing & Reworking" accessible at the URL: https://chmtl.indiana.edu/borrowing/ (accessed on 23 March 2022).

8　The most famous case is perhaps that of the drum loop known as «Amen Break», sampled from a song from 1968 performed by the band *The Winstons* and featured in over 1500 songs over the last 50 years. See Harrison [24].

9　References to the aesthetics of atmospheres shall be found in Gernot Böhme [25,26].

10　The "family" of instruments was composed by the following instruments: "Juno-6", "Juno-60", "Juno 106", "Alpha Juno-1", "Alpha Juno-2" and the rack expanders "Super Quartet" and "MKS-50".

11　The sound is made by stacking multiple (usually three) oscillators each producing a saw wave-shape and spanning over three separate octaves. The resulting summed waveform is then altered by pulsewidth modulation, along with the application of a chorus effect. During the performance, players often recur to portamento and legato to add a further degree of expressiveness to this sound.

12　To further sustain this, we may cite the Scottish contemporary electronic-music duo known under the moniker «Boards of Canada»: these artists have reportedly made use of old cassette-recorders and vintage (sometimes even malfunctioning) recording equipment/musical instruments in order to soak their otherwise pretty modern sound in a vintage patina. Their aim was precisely that of rendering the low-fidelity sound of worn-out VHS cassette-tapes as that was a key-element within their childhood and adolescence's memories.

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