

CHAPTER 4 *Listening (to Listening): The Making of the Modern Ear*

What might the *responsibility of a listener* be today, in the era of digital recording and sampling, who, far from receiving a musical work as “something to be heard,” would assume *responsibility for its making*? In what sense could one say, taking into account an increasing *instrumentation* of listening (by radio, tape, recordable CD, sampler, etc.), that *it is listeners who make music* (just as Marcel Duchamp said, “It is the viewers who make paintings”)? How can one accede to the notion of listening *as arrangement*, and of the work as it is (and *must be*) as something that is *still to come*?

We must reweave the scattered reasons that have accompanied us to this point—the place for arrangement, the legal status of musical works—in order to let them say what they have to say about *the listening that musical modernity configures*. Where, in fact, does a certain “structural listening” come from, a *great listening* corresponding to *great music*, with whose form and details it is supposed to agree perfectly?

This will be, finally, *our* history, the story of the listeners we are today. But if this history that I am getting ready to relate to you summons data that can be called “sociological,” I would also, and perhaps especially, like to deduce it from *the works that there are*, and from what, in them, *awaits us and includes us*. Two connecting threads weave through this history to begin with:

one, now familiar, of arrangement, of those arrangers who sign their listenings; and one, somewhat stranger, of a theater or a stage where we meet *characters listening*, where we, listeners and spectators, go *see them and hear them listening*.

Before reaching this fable that tells about *us*, allow me to begin with the end: with the *moral*.

Types of Listening (Adorno's Diagnosis)

We are indebted to Adorno's *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*¹ for a typology of *attitudes of listening*—a typology that for its author is almost equivalent to a definition of the sociology of music as such: “Asked to say offhand what a sociology of music is, one would probably start by defining it as knowledge of the relation between music and the socially organized individuals who listen to it” (1). After that, the whole question is what is meant by “music itself.” For Adorno, it seems that it is above all individual *works*. That is the presupposition that governs his inventory, his cartography of the “typical modes of conduct in listening to music under the conditions that prevail in present-day society” (1). His typology depends, then, on a *history*, the history of the progressive emergence of the notion of a *work*.

“Accordingly,” Adorno writes, “the canon,” the norm, “guiding the construction of the types [in this typology] does not—as in the case of purely subjectively directed empirical findings—refer exclusively to tastes, preferences, aversions, and habits of the audience” (3). So it will not be a question here of a simple “compilation of inarticulate facts,” a simple statistical gathering of the opinions given by a panel of listeners. And we can readily agree with Adorno that no collection of “information”—as objective and stripped of prejudice as it may be—contains in itself, intrinsically, the criteria that allow us to choose some of them as more significant than others. In other words, the statistical investigation is possible only “if we know what is pertinent and what we would like to obtain more information about.” Adorno

has the merit of assuming straightforwardly this *explicit* typology that is his own; and that, he says, rests “upon the adequacy or inadequacy of the act of listening to that which is heard” (3). This is where the *presupposition*, affirmed and avowed, of the *work* intervenes:

A *premise* is that works are objectively structured things and meaningful in themselves, things that invite analysis and can be perceived and experienced with different degrees of accuracy. What the types want . . . is to stake out realms of their own, realms that range from fully adequate listening, as it corresponds to the developed consciousness of the most advanced professional musicians, to a total lack of understanding and complete indifference to the material. (3; emphasis mine)

The work, the works: that seems to be for Adorno the only *objective* pole on which can be propped a sociology of musical listening that threatens otherwise to be lost in the elusive and infinite variety of *subjective* individual reactions. And, faced with this single objective possibility—to start from works—Adorno refuses to get involved with seemingly more “scientific” methods (“experimentation” recording “the literal, perhaps physiological and thus measurable, effects which a specific music exerts,” such as “accelerated pulse rates” [4]) or the most currently “sociological” methods based on “verbalizing their own musical experiences,” since the former cannot grasp “the esthetic experience of a work of art as such” (which is, we will readily agree, of a different order from simple stimulus-response), whereas, in the case of the latter, “verbal expression itself is already prefiltered and its value for a knowledge of primary reactions is thus doubly questionable.” That is why, Adorno concludes, provided one can “grasp an attitude” (an attitude of listening), one must start with “the specific quality of the object,” namely *the work*.

I will try to show you both the soundness, the necessity of Adorno’s position, and its essential limitations, stemming from

the fact that he places the work in the position of precisely an *object*. No doubt one can, one should, start from works. But they are not *objective data* by means of which one should measure the adequacy of a listening: for the very reason that works bring into play *competing listenings*, as you will see in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, which we will listen to soon. There is no ideal way of listening to *Don Giovanni*, then (and more generally: to a work), since *this opera makes us hear several different listenings*. We listen to *some* listenings (characters, "types" listening)—which irremediably complicates Adorno's analysis.

Moreover, and even more seriously, we cannot say that the work is the objective pole of listening, since the history of the notion of the work *conditions* the history of listening, and *vice versa*. That there is a history of the notion of a work is not self-evident; but I hope I have convinced you that the seemingly obvious idea according to which *individual musical works exist* has emerged only slowly, in close correlation with the constitution of authors' rights and with the consolidation of certain practices of performance. That there is a history of *listening* seems even more *improbable*: if Adorno can write that "in many sectors of material sociology, we lack comparable and reliable research data on the past" (1), what can we say about listening? What could be the "reliable" traces of *actual* attitudes of listening, other than those provided by the "experimentations" Adorno speaks of (but they concern only our present) or by the "verbalization of their own musical experiences," which tells us nothing about listening *itself*?

My hypothesis here is that the history of arrangement—due to the fact that an arranger is a listener who signs and writes his listening—does indeed open up the possibility of a history of listening *in music*. I will come back to that. But let's look now briefly at what Adorno's typology consists of.

The "first type" is that of the "expert." He is defined by "entirely adequate hearing":

He would be the fully conscious listener who tends to miss nothing and at the same time, at each moment, accounts to

himself for what he has heard. . . . Spontaneously following the course of music, even complicated music, he hears the sequence, hears past, present, and future moments together so that they crystallize into a meaningful context. Simultaneous complexities—in other words, a complicated harmony and polyphony—are separately and distinctly grasped by the expert.

The fully adequate mode of conduct might be called “structural hearing.” (4–5)

Structural hearing: the expression is fertile. Here, as we see, it designates a form of *plenitude* that admits no void, no distraction, no *wavering* in listening, other than that of the brief comings-and-goings of memory between past, present, and future. It is a *functional* listening (it is a *function of the work*); it is a listening that, even though it *analyzes* (in order to grasp “simultaneous complexities . . . separately and distinctly”) is finally aiming at a *synthesis*.

Despite some negations of Adorno’s, the types that follow seem to be a *degraded* version or a progressive *degradation* of the first type:

Under the prevailing social conditions, making experts of all listeners would of course be an inhumanly utopian enterprise. . . . This is what bestows legitimacy on the type of the *good listener* as opposed to the expert. The good listener too hears beyond musical details, makes connections spontaneously, and judges for good reasons, not just by categories of prestige and by an arbitrary taste; but he is not, or not fully, aware of the technical and structural implications. Having unconsciously mastered its immanent logic, he understands music about the way we understand our own language even though virtually or wholly ignorant of its grammar and syntax. (5)

Now, according to Adorno, this type, as an intermediary type, tends to disappear and to be replaced by a “polarization toward

the extremes” of typology until we have only the *expert* face-to-face with the representatives of an increasingly *fallen* listening, until music becomes pure “entertainment.”²² “The tendency today,” writes Adorno, “is to understand everything or nothing.”

What I would like to demonstrate is that this logic of *all or nothing* that Adorno thinks he can diagnose as a tendency in the recent history of listening is above all one that underlies his typology, and for good reason: it slips into it, surreptitiously but powerfully, thanks to the very presuppositions of *work*. Or more precisely: owing to a *particular* notion of the work. In other words, anticipating things somewhat greatly: with the notion of a work as Adorno presupposes it, we are *necessarily* led to this alternative: either to understand/hear *everything* (as it is, without arrangement being possible), or to understand/hear *nothing*.

Perhaps most surprising, especially if we ponder the fact that this typology is not mainly guided by concern for its statistical relevance, is the absence of one possibility, as “theoretical” and quantitatively insignificant as it may be: namely, that *distraction*, *lacunary* listening, might also be a means, an attitude, to make *sense of the work*; that a *certain* inattention, a *certain wavering* of listening, might also be a valid and fertile connection in *auditory interpretation at work*. Listening is not reading. But the comparison between the two can shed light on the surprise of which I speak. Reading a text, reading it in an “expert” way, we rewrite it, we draw quotations from it that are sometimes quite far apart from each other in the “body” of the text, we contrast and compare them, we make meanings and sometimes contradictions or paradoxes emerge from them that the linear structure of the text did not immediately make visible. One could even say that reading does not truly become *criticism* until it breaks with the temporal linearity of the stream. Until we render it discrete [*dis-cré-tiser*] by a certain *analysis*. What does this *critical condition* become in listening?—That, in brief, is the question that stays with us after we read Adorno.

It is with his typology still resonating, schematically outlined, and in the echo of this question, that I would now like to lend

an ear—but which one?—to a “work”: *Don Giovanni*. All the while keeping as a backdrop or stage curtain the two extreme types of *structural listening* and *entertainment*.

“Listening, I Follow You” (Don Giovanni)

Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* was performed for the first time in Prague in 1787. The opera would be performed again the following year at the Burgtheater in Vienna (on May 7, 1788). Its success in Prague was as complete as its welcome in Vienna was lukewarm. For this difference in its reception, there are probably a thousand contextual reasons. One of them (which we will return to) might stem from the change that Vienna was in the process of undergoing in its canons of musical listening. But there is also a scene that Mozart and his librettist, Da Ponte, had explicitly addressed to the Prague public. This scene, a veritable potpourri (or “remix,” as they’d say today), is an *arrangement* of opera tunes recently performed in Prague. It interests us for several reasons: first of all, because it portrays Don Juan and Leporello, like two “disc jockeys” (DJs) before the letter, playing pop hits for each other, repeating existing works in the key of *distraction*; then, because it is a prelude to another scene (the penultimate) where this *distracted listening* would not only be punished, but especially be *compelled* to comply with the law of a serious, responsible listening, paying attention the whole time. Through these two scenes in *Don Giovanni* there is a *certain* form of responsibility of listening that we will see outlined *in music*, shown in a conflicting relationship with arrangement as principle of *dissolution*. Faced with the listening we want to call the *wavering* of Don-Juan-the-dissolute (I’ll nickname him DJ here, his initials), the Commendatore will come to embody a recall to the order of a *legitimate* listening. A structural one.

Scene 13 of act 2 reveals a room, a table set for a meal, and some musicians. “Play, my dear friends,” DJ sings; “as soon as I spend my money, I want to be entertained” (*io mi voglio divertir*). At which the musicians on stage play a few bars of *Una*

cosa rara, an opera by Martín y Soler to a libretto by Da Ponte, performed in Prague not long before the creation of *Don Giovanni*. Leporello names the piece: “Bravo! ‘Cosa Rara.’” Then, while still supervising the service and bringing dishes, he announces the next piece on the musical menu: “*Vivano ‘I Litiganti!’*,” he exclaims, while the musicians play a few bars of a condensed arrangement of the hunting minuet from Giuseppe Sarti’s opera *Fra i due litiganti il terzo gode*. As for DJ, he is eating. He tastes and comments on the dishes, implicitly grafting his culinary vocabulary onto that of musical taste, according to a traditional metaphor that becomes here doubly pertinent: the arrangements that follow each other in the manner of a potpourri belong to the tradition of “dinner music” (*Tafelmusik*); and, above all, they are in a way the musical symbol for DJ’s *delectative*, or *dilettante* (from the Italian *dilettare*, “to take delight in”) listening. The main course is well known: it is a self-quotation of Mozart, from his *Marriage of Figaro* (Figaro’s famous aria, *Non più andrai*, at the end of act 1); it is a popular song taken from this opera that, not long before *Don Giovanni*, had enjoyed immense success in Prague. Leporello’s commentary: “I know that one only too well!”

All these allusions, both nominal and musical, constitute a form of self-reflection in *Don Giovanni* on its context and genesis. But they also portray and summarize the *figure of listening* that is DJ, calling for or evoking works by their names and by *morceaux choisis* [selected snippets].

This charming family meal also prepares the way (it is even its prime dramatic function) for the entrance onto the stage of the Commendatore. This entrance is announced several times and delayed in the course of scene 14: after Donna Elvira, it is Leporello who goes to see the “thing” that stands at the threshold to the house and knocks. Cry of fear from Leporello and a question from DJ: “Leporello, what is it?”

This is where, in Leporello’s reply, a rhythmic theme is heard that will take on increasing importance. Leporello mumbles,

stammers, imitates the *footsteps* of the “stone man” who is approaching: “If you heard (*se sentiste*) the sound he makes, Ta ta ta. . . .” This *theme of the Footstep* (as the poet Pierre-Jean Jouve so aptly calls it), uttered in long, regular beats, imposes its *imprint* on Leporello’s discourse. And right away it is associated with *listening* (“If you heard,” *se sentiste* . . .), as are also the blows the Commendatore soon strikes on the door: “LEPORELLO.—Ah! Listen (*sentite*). DON GIOVANNI.—Someone is knocking. Open. . . .”

After the dissoluteness and distraction of the potpourri scene, these footsteps (along with their echo in the blows on the door) come to *recall listening to a structural memory*. For, when DJ goes to open the door himself to the statue (while Leporello hides under the table), not only does he open the door to a ghost who will hasten his punishment, but he also opens the music of the opera onto his own past, onto the harmonies and rhythm of the Overture. In other words: after the meanderings of the dilettante listening of the dinner music, the Commendatore comes to recall the law of a *structural listening*. Forcing the opening of the door with his footsteps and blows, he comes to remind us that an opera must remember its Overture; that, in order truly to conclude, the conclusions of a work, or an *opus* (singular of *opera* in Latin), must repeat its beginning, must loop the loop of its unfurling, must close the circle of its *compositional economy of listening*.

Scene 15 (the penultimate) gives this recollection the *force of law*. It is clear that, in his first words, the Commendatore is *returning* (he is a revenant) in order to sound a reminder of the *cadence* of the Overture. And, as Michel Noiray so aptly says, he does this “by nailing the name of his victim onto it.”³ It is this address with its unforgettable scansion—“Don Gio-vanni . . .”—that inexorably imposes the trochaic, solemn rhythm of the Overture onto the *name* of DJ. Recalling him to order (and recalling us listeners along with him), to the law of a definite responsibility of listening.

Every promise, the Commendatore seems to be saying here, must be kept; there could be no *musical* disloyalty in the finale of an opera. At the cemetery (act 2, scene 11), the statue had promised to accept DJ's invitation ("Will you come to dinner? Yes."). A promise that it recalls in the beginning of scene 15: "Don Giovanni, you invited me to dine with you, and I have come." By this call to order of a promise given and kept, the Commendatore essentially interrupts the delectative drift of listening, he *stops* it: "Stop" (*ferma un po'*), he says gravely to DJ who is getting ready to serve him his meal; "he who has tasted heavenly food does not taste earthly food." But, in the end (after a complex exchange that produces a change in the system of listening), far from yielding to DJ's invitation, the Commendatore *invites* him, in turn, to yield to a certain *economic law* of listening, putting an end to the dilettante drift that after that seems essentially like a *waste of time*:

DON GIOVANNI: Speak, then: what do you want . . . ?

THE COMMENDATORE: I speak, listen: I have no more time [*Parlo, ascolta: più tempo non ho*].

DON GIOVANNI: Speak, speak: I'm listening to you [*ascoltando ti sto*].

THE COMMENDATORE: You invited me to dinner, you know now what your duty is. Answer me: will you yourself come to dine with me?

As this dialogue unfolds (complicated by Leporello's asides), it is time, then, that is counted once again, to put an end to the boundless expenditure of auditory distraction. To DJ who, in the beginning of scene 13, sang "As soon as I spend my money, I want to be entertained," the Commendatore recalls that there is no more time; or rather, that he must *answer* (answer *for the time that's passing and for the music that is passing by in it*), in short, that *the time of listening cannot be spent without being*

counted. That is, one cannot delay indefinitely, by means of meanderings in the form of potpourris or trifling arrangements, the return to the *payoff* that the beginning of the work had *musically promised*, in terms of the *economy of the composition* (themes, motifs, harmonies . . .). And, in fact, time—after DJ has said “I am listening to you”—is as if *measured by footsteps* in the orchestra: everything stops, the race comes to an end, we hear only one note repeated in cadence . . .

The answer around which everything pivots, the answer that confirms the victory of one *regime of listening* over the other, is in fact DJ’s answer when he says “*ascoltando ti sto.*” How can we translate these words of DJ’s, so idiomatic in his language, Italian? How can we adapt them in “good” French, while keeping all the possible readings they contain? How, in a word or more than one word, can we *arrange* them into another language, to let them resound with the echo of their own future, from whatever in them *remained yet to be heard*? The translation that imposed itself on me—beyond the versions that are indeed correct but are dully ordinary, which we find pretty much everywhere (“I’m listening to you . . .”)—is this, which I’ll give you first as is, in all its linguistic abruptness: “Listening I follow you” [*Écoulant je te suis*].

By abusing (a tiny bit) French, we can also hear in this: “Listening [to you] I *am* yours.”⁴ But, this time by forcing Da Ponte’s language, one could also begin to understand: “Listening [to you], I *follow* you,” I follow your *footsteps*, your rhythm, your step, I submit myself to the law you dictate to me by posing it as a theme or a thesis. We have indeed misused the Italian, in order to make it say what it says and what the music (the orchestra) utters without really saying it. On the other hand, what no translation or adaptation can convey is the resonance of the Italian *stare*. This verb (here conjugated in the first person singular, *sto*) in fact conveys the *stop*, the *stance*, or the *stasis* of one who, up until this fateful sentence, has been fluidity itself: the inscribable flow of a musicality that, like wine or blood, pours out in waves.

Listening to you, DJ says to the Commendatore (and this time I am no longer translating), I am paying attention to you, I come to a stop. Stop! Your law is a judgment [*un arrêt*] stopping [*arrêtant*] my fate—my fate as a dissolute listener and, beyond me, the fate of all of you who are listening to me at this very moment.

On the edge of the modern regime of structural listening, of *economical listening*, *Don Giovanni* portrays this listening in the violence of its law, in the takeover by force it carries over other regimes—the dilettante regime, for example.

Polemology of Listening (Berlioz and the Art of the Claque)

Opera in Latin is the plural of *opus*, “work”; but *opera* (the dramatic-musical genre) comes in fact from the Italian *opera*, “work,” and its plural is *opere*.

Don Giovanni is an opera. And this opera portrays the two extreme types in Adorno and makes them confront each other: structural listening and entertainment. Already for this very reason, *Don Giovanni* is not a *work* in the sense that Adorno gives to this notion in his typology; it is above all not a work according to the *function* that Adorno assigns to works, namely a certain objective norm by which one can measure the adequacy of a listening. According to the etymologies I’ve just mentioned to refocus them a little, *Don Giovanni* is rather *several works*; not one *opus*, but a few *opera*. First of all, because *Don Giovanni* includes several fragments from other operas, adapted or arranged for the occasion. And then, because *Don Giovanni* comprises *some* listenings, two at least: that of entertainment (the “dinner music”), which belongs to an era *previous* to the notion of work; and the structural listening that throughout the nineteenth century will grow to accompany the *consolidation* of this notion of the work. In this sense, *Don Giovanni* is not several works in one, joined together in *one* work; we’ll say, playing on the ambiguity of the singular and the plural, that it is *the works* (understanding *opera* as the Latin plural of “work”).

However, *Don Giovanni*, in its dramatic architecture, *tends* to be a *work*, to be unified *as one work* precisely to the extent that one type of listening wins out over the other. Or rather: to the extent that the structural listening *condemns* the other, makes it at the same time obsolete (outdated) and *forbidden*. In this sense, *Don Giovanni* is certainly part of the *emergence of the notion of the work*, a complex historical movement that implies at the same time—as you’ll remember—a related change in the legal apparatus regulating musical practice, conditions of performance of music, and attitudes of listening.

We can get some idea how much the idea of the work, and the listening it involves, must have been *imposed*, obtained after a hard fight against secular habits, by reading Berlioz’s account in his *Memoirs*, written in 1835.⁵ Here Berlioz describes his own attitude of listening at the Paris Opéra, surrounded as he, the *expert* listener, was, by a “little club” of enthusiasts, or “good listeners,” as Adorno would say:

When we saw, by the title-page of the orchestral parts, that no change had been made in the opera, I went on with my lecture, singing the principal passages, explaining the instrumental devices to which certain effects were due, and so enlisting the sympathy and enthusiasm of the members of our little club beforehand. Our excitement caused a good deal of surprise among our neighbors in the pit, for the most part good country folks. (53)

Berlioz the expert knows the score by heart, then; he explains it and analyzes it in advance to the *limited* circle of his friends who are “good listeners,” to the great surprise of the average public surrounding them. Although he is not holding in his hands a printed copy of the *work* (as occurs sometimes with certain music-lovers today), he has still brought the score with him; he has it on him, *in him*. *Before* hearing, *while watching*, the performance of the work:

The three taps . . . announced that the opera was about to begin. . . . We sat with beating hearts, silently awaiting the signal from Kreutzer or Valentino. When the overture had begun it was criminal to speak, beat time, or hum a bar. . . .

As I was intimately acquainted with every note of the score, the performers, if they were wise, played it as it was written; I would have died rather than allow the slightest liberty with the old masters to pass unnoticed. I had no notion of biding my time and coldly protesting in writing against such a crime—oh dear no!—I apostrophized the delinquents then and there in my loudest voice, and I can testify that no form of criticism goes so straight home as that. (54)

Berlioz the expert exercises at the opera not only a kind of close surveillance of his neighboring listeners (imposing an attentive silence on them), but he also and especially watches over the *conformity of the performance to the preexisting score*. He “despotically” (his word) exercises “active criticism” (56). And this seems to him singular and unusual enough to be recounted at length and in detail.

Although it already foreshadows modern fidelity to the work (what the Germans call *Werktreue*), Berlioz’s attitude seems not only a minority view, but it also falls short of the *silent* respect that would generally be observed later on. For, when with his “club” of “good listeners” he expresses enthusiasm and approbation, Berlioz seems hardly to care at all about the totality of what is being performed:

Then you should have seen with what a frenzy of applause we greeted the passages which no one else noticed—a fine harmonic bass, a happy modulation, a right accent in a recitative, an expressive note in the oboe, etc. The Public took us for *claqueurs* out of work, whereas the real chief of the *claque*, who was only too well aware of the true state of affairs, and whose

cunning combinations were deranged by our thunders of applause, looked as furious as Neptune. (56)

To understand something about the *politics of listening* that are in play here, you have to know what the (French) institution of the *claque* was. This, as Michael Walter explains in his “Social History of Opera in the Nineteenth Century,”⁶ formed an “intermediary field” between the public and the performers of the Opéra. From the time the Paris Opéra was under the direction of Louis Véron (1831–35), the *claque* was in the hands of a certain Auguste Levasseur: who, in exchange for his services, received either cash (from the singers or from the composer) or free tickets (from the management or the artists), which he could then sell at a profit. All this was the subject of an explicit contract. Whoever bought a ticket from Levasseur was automatically a member of the *claque*. The *claqueurs* (as Berlioz calls them; in *The Art of Music and Other Essays* he speaks of “the system of paid applause”) were supposed to applaud at Levasseur’s command; not, however, according to the arbitrariness of chance, but according to an in-depth study that Levasseur had made of the score, by attending rehearsals regularly and having discussions with the theater director as well as the singers. Often, on the days before the premiere, Levasseur decided on his plan with Véron after analyzing the opera. On the evening of the premiere, the *claqueurs* came in before the public in order to be better and more strategically placed. And Levasseur, dressed as conspicuously as possible, gave the signs for the beginning, the duration, and the intensity of the applause. So he was transformed in a way into a conductor, the mirror or double of the other, directing the public as the conductor directed the musicians.

The public concert, ever since it came into being,⁷ has been in effect a kind of mirror of listeners. It is not just a place to hear works. It is also a theater where the members of the public observe each other. And themselves. It is a space where we come to

look at those who listen. Where we go to see people listening, or even to listen to people listening.

Listening to (oneself) listening is also making the work into a battlefield: a theater of operations of listening where various camps clash with each other. But this battlefield, this *polemical* space where people listen to themselves listening to each other, sometimes complacently, sometimes bossily—in short, this theater where listeners are exhibited is subjected to a movement of internalizing reappropriation, of which I could unearth a thousand proofs and testimonials for you. Beginning with Schumann, our critic-arranger who, in his works as well as in his articles published by the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, portrays these “companions of David,” the most well-known of whom are Eusebius and Florestan. In order, as he says, to “expose alternately different points of view on questions of art.” When Schumann tallies up the works he has heard publicly, an account directed at his listener-readers, he gives voice to a variety of *Davidsbündler* who oppose each other.

You know as well as I do: it is precisely this way that, in the heart of our most intimate listening, the internalized voices and murmurs of the author and the *claqueurs*, the hissers, the critics and enthusiasts of all kinds, clash with each other in us, each one maneuvering for a cutting-up of the work that conforms to his interests or convictions. And that is why the theater of the *claque*, with all its art and all its refined strategies, has so much to tell us about the *polemology* that inhabits our inner ear.

I would like to read to you, to you who so often come to listen to me listening, the incredible *Memoirs* that I have just discovered. And that resound like a strange counterpoint to the *Memoirs* by Berlioz, that battling listener, militating to hear the work as written. Here is the title page (Paris, 1829):

Memoirs of a claqueur / containing the theory and practice of the art of successes / by Robert, / Chevalier du Lustre, Commandeur de l'Ordre du Battoir, affiliated member of several

Claque Societies, etc. / Edition published, edited, revised, and accompanied by Notes by an old Amateur . . .

This Robert speaks of a “science” of *claque*; and the teaching he receives in this new “profession” has all the characteristics of an *initiation* by a master: “Then, he gave me basic instructions on the science of cabals, and discoursed, like a skilled master, on all the different tactics capable of making plays succeed or fail; I learned from him in what circumstance one should applaud or hiss, cry or laugh, be quiet or shout out, sneeze or blow one’s nose; finally he revealed for me the most secret mysteries of his profession” (15).

The leader of a *claque* being a clever tactician, an acute strategist, is a military metaphor that we find in other works on the claque. Such as this fabulous anonymous pamphlet from the beginning of the nineteenth century: “*The Art of the Claque*, or reflections of an expert *claqueur*, on its formation, its usefulness, its theory, and its tactics.” The first chapter of this brief “treatise” (Paris, 1817) is entitled “On the Necessity of a Theory for This Commendable Art”; and it opens with a parallel to the military art that will soon become *the* structuring metaphor, strung out at great length, of this sixteen-page satire: “Many people have claimed that the art of the claque was purely manual: what a paradox! Might as well say that the art of war is only the art of making sword-thrusts” (3). Thus the brief chapter 3 is entirely devoted to “The Art of the Claque Compared to the Art of War.”

Robert’s *Memoirs*, published by the “old amateur” twelve years after this *Art of the Claque*, also makes reference to *strategies*, in a vocabulary that is also full of military expressions. Thus, when Robert, in chapter 6, quotes the “claquo-diplomatic instructions” that Mouchival, his master, confided in him, it is a matter of “brigades in the service of the Théâtre-Français” (34) as well as “maneuvers” to be carried out during the actors’ exits “nicely graded according to the rank of each artist”; and, here too, the *claqueurs* are organized into a strict hierarchy: “it is

enough to keep one's eye open to the leader who, having the watchword, makes all the proper signals, just like the telegraphic movements of the general" (35).

But the *Memoirs of a Claqueur* are unfortunately silent on the precise nature of the "notes" that Mouchival took in the course of rehearsals. The *claque* remains in the end an "oral" art, then, a tactile tactic without "writing," which the "old amateur" (the publisher of the *Memoirs*) himself regrets in a footnote:

Sometimes manuscripts, on which the passages that should be applauded are indicated in the margins, are given to the leaders of the *claque*. By means of this, the *chevaliers du lustre* ["knights of the houselights," a term used for a *claqueur*] rehearse at home. The one who can read most fluently *acts as author*, and the others practice the handling of the bravos. . . . We regret that M. Robert did not devote a chapter to this part of his art. (312; emphasis mine)

After quarreling with Mouchival, Robert, who now no longer belonged to the *claqueurs* of the Théâtre-Français, entered "into negotiation for employment as head *claqueur* at the Royal Academy of Music" (67). And note 42 clarifies: "These services are sold from hand to hand, and are regarded as a property that is no less transferable than that of authors." This allusion to copyright and to the debates that agitated opinion on this subject at the beginning of the nineteenth century is not an isolated fact, nor is it a random remark. In fact, the *moral* voice, the *authorized* voice of the "old amateur" who edits and annotates Robert's *Memoirs*, makes itself both the spokesman for authors and their rights as well as an antagonist of the practice of *arrangement*. I have often stressed that this conjunction is systematic; but it is no less remarkable that it appears here in the margin of a text on the *claque*. It is in fact in the *countertext* formed by the notes that we find *jointly and severally* asserted: (1) the condemnation of all *organized autonomy* of attitudes of listening (even if the form of

autonomy targeted here, the *claque*, is probably one of the most primitive); (2) the existence of a perpetual literary property; and (3) the prestige of the original over adaptation or arrangement.⁸

Ludwig van (1): Attention

You will have gathered that when Berlioz wants to embody the safeguarding of a *good listening*, faithful to the work, he seems essentially like a *counter-claqueur*. Whatever the case, whether it is a question of the seemingly spontaneous enthusiasm of Berlioz and his “club” or of the strategic and commercial institution of the *claque*, the attitude of silent, meditative listening is anything but dominant in the 1830s.

Further, it would be pointless to think that we can *date* the related emergence of the modern notion of the work and the practices of performance or listening that accompany it and correspond to it. Rather we should view this history, for which I have gathered scattered bits and pieces and various accounts, as a complex, stratified process, involving different *speeds of sedimentation* according to the place and the musical genre.

According to recent musical-sociological studies, then, it seems that the *correlative* notions of “serious music” (or “great music”) and attentive listening (one would like to say: “great listening”), if they were not *born* in Vienna (how, in fact, can we *locate* the “birth” of a type of listening?), were nevertheless *configured and consolidated* there in an unprecedented way in the last years of the eighteenth century. Tia DeNora has recently retraced, in a remarkable historical “micrology,” the emergence of the value of “greatness” in music, crystallized around the name of Beethoven.⁹ This emergence (or this “construction”), in order to be understood, must be seen in the context of a distinct value of “pleasure” that generally characterized “the musical Europe of the end of the eighteenth century.” And which gave way, very quickly (in the span of just twenty years or so), to the “serious” and the “scholarly.” It is a little like our operatic scene in

Don Giovanni that is replayed, in the same years, on the “historic” stage (or the other way round). In twenty years, the Viennese listener has changed his face and his ears; he has renounced the figure of DJ wildly copying and diverting the music of others; listening, he will henceforth be *all hearing*, devoted to the law of the work, to its rhythm, to its *footstep* or *stride*.

The microhistory of this transformation includes the figure of a certain Baron Gottfried van Swieten. This man, who was a diplomat before settling in Vienna in 1777, resided in Berlin where, on one hand, the musical life of the court was essentially centered on the heritage of Bach and Handel, while on the other hand, the movement (originally literary) of *Sturm und Drang* had powerfully configured the notion of the “creative genius” in music. Van Swieten, then, imported to Vienna these two characteristic traits of German taste (especially the former: namely, the cult of a heritage of “ancient masters”).

Van Swieten (and through him a part of the Viennese aristocracy) was thus one of the main actors in this *genesis of musical genius*, as testified by the 1796 edition of the musical *Who’s Who* of the time, the *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag*: the baron, it said, “loves only what is *great* and *exalted*” (emphasis mine: two values imported from Germany); and, at the concert, it is from the “traits” of the baron, “not always easy to make out for the uninitiated,” that “semi-connoisseurs” attempt to read “what one should think of the music being heard.” Around Van Swieten, with unprecedented force, a rift is outlined, between, on one hand, the seriousness of the connoisseur exemplifying the value of “greatness,” and, on the other, a certain casual listening that will be more and more perceived as irresponsible.

The emergence of the value of “greatness” in music is *indissociable* from what DeNora calls the “new conventions regulating musical listening in concert halls.” And, in this matter too, Van Swieten was a “pioneer”:

His attempts in fact foretell the measures taken and institutionalized later on pretty much everywhere to discipline

audiences. . . . According to the composer Sigismund Neukomm [a student of Haydn], Van Swieten “used all his influence in favor of music, even to obtain silence and attention during musical performances. If one heard the slightest whisper, His Excellency, always seated in the first row, solemnly got up and with all his haughtiness, turning towards the guilty party, looked him severely up and down.” (58)

Silence, attention, greatness: all these characteristics—of *great music* and its *great listening*—were imported to Vienna at the end of the eighteenth century and consolidated around the figure of Beethoven in the beginning of the nineteenth. Now, this type of listening supposes, as I have said, an attitude of fidelity to the work [*Werktreue*], as much in the listener as in the interpreter: a loyalty or respect whose conditions seem to have been gathered together very early on in Berlin, before these values arrived in Vienna with Van Swieten.

After witnessing one of the possible scenes of the birth of attentive listening, there is a question that remains, persists, is amplified and resounds in my ears, after our reading of Adorno: If we understand the historical necessity by which the notion of the work and a politics of listening that correspond to it are conjointly imposed, isn't there something that is also lost in the battle as to the *possibility* of an *art of inattentive listening*? In other words: Are distracted listeners always and necessarily *deaf*, musically speaking? Isn't there *also* a share of deafness (perhaps greater than we might think) in the *plenitude*, even the *totality*, that structural listening summons?

Ludwig van (2): Deafness

To let the whole range of this uncertainty develop, let us continue to follow the stratifications of our modern listening through the interpretation Wagner made of a famous deafness, the most legendary of all: that of Beethoven.

In the 1830s, the difficulties of Beethoven's scores were the subject of rival interpretations that all pivoted around his famous deafness. In his *Universal Biography of Musicians*, published in 1837, François-Joseph Fétis attributed to the weakening of Beethoven's memory of sounds certain characteristics—problematic ones, Fétis thought—of Beethoven's last works: "Repeats of the same thoughts were carried to excess; development of the subject he had chosen sometimes went so far as to ramble; melodic thinking became less clear."¹⁰ Deafness here is on the side of certain countervalues that we have identified as being those of *arrangement*: mainly repetition (the "repeats") and distraction (or "rambling"). Similarly, Adolf Bernhard Marx, in his 1859 study of Beethoven,¹¹ attributes to "diseased auditory nerves" the forty-seven repetitions of the same motif in the second movement of the Quartet in F Major, op. 135: this "sonorous image," he says, is "brooding, droning, in the mind" of the Maestro because of the failure of his organ of hearing. Deafness and its droning are the ready-made *excuse* for the inadmissible: a certain *mechanicity* that risks letting "great listening" get *stuck* in one place.

For other exegetes, though, the deafness of the genius is inseparable from his originality. It is even the *condition* for it: it is this deafness that founds genius in its inner clairvoyance, in its *clairaudience*. Deaf, the genius is all the more *transparent to himself* when he closes himself off from the noise of the world. Even if some previous articles had already cleared the way for this thought, it is unquestionably Wagner who raised the deafness of the genius to the level of a *divinatory principle*. Wagner's reading of Beethoven is all the more unusual, though, since it *also* calls attention to a deafness that is blamed for the imperfections of the work, which then (as we will see) must be corrected. *Arranged*. The way Wagner handles and manipulates Beethoven's ear, all the tricks or tropes he makes it undergo, should make us pause: we will see outlined in it a twofold face of listening, the two sides of an eardrum that vibrates and trembles between *clairaudience* and *derangement*.

Wagner's exclamation, in his *Beethoven* written in 1870 to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the Maestro's birth,¹² is famous:

A musician without hearing! Is a blind painter to be imagined?

But we have heard of a blind *Seer*. Like Tiresias, from whom the phenomenal world was withdrawn, and who, in its stead, discovered the basis of all phenomenality, the deaf Musician, undisturbed by the bustle of life, now heard only the harmonies of his soul, and spoke from its depths to that world which to him—had nothing more to say.

With these lines, Wagner has powerfully contributed to establishing the interpretation of deafness in *visionary* terms. The *clairaudience* of the now-deaf Beethoven indeed always allows us to explain the lack of comprehension his music produces; thus Wagner writes, "What could the eyes of men of the world who met him still perceive of him? Certainly nothing but misapprehensions." But this clairaudience also makes his music—the music of "all the works of the Maestro that . . . come from that divine era of his complete deafness"—into the instrument that could absolve the listener from all "guilt" [*Schuld*]. "Thus," Wagner adds, "these miraculous works preach repentance and penitence." The Wagnerian listener, listening to the deaf genius, is, so to speak, structurally in the wrong, guilty, and indebted to his works. Which, however, in their complete transparency *to themselves*, preserving and recording without any background noise the clairvoyant idea of the divine seer, promise him, the listener of the world of appearance, a kind of *redemption*. But at what price?

It seems that deafness, according to Wagner, is the exact obverse to *total listening*, totally subject to the structural law of the work. Listening *askew* here becomes, if not impossible, at least unpardonable *in law*. But since the equals sign that Wagner implicitly draws between deafness and total listening is reversible,

we are right to wonder, in turn, if this total listening isn't precisely a form of deafness *on the part of the listener*. To listen without any wandering, without ever letting oneself be distracted by "the noises of life," is that still listening? Shouldn't listening welcome some *wavering* into its heart? Shouldn't a *responsible* listening (which can account for itself as well as *for* the work, rather than simply respond *to* an authoritative law) always be *wavering*?

If I summon here the expression "wavering listening," it is of course because I am thinking of Freud's famous phrase, a phrase that might basically be saying this: the sense of a discourse is not a *given* to be deciphered, but must be *constructed conjointly* by the one who utters it and by the one who listens to it. It obviously does not go without saying that this *psychoanalytic* listening can be translated into the vocabulary and practice of *musical* listening. We will simply note, leaving the parallel open, that Wagner, as a good reader of Schopenhauer, also anchors his thinking on listening in a *theory of dream*, but of a dream that, unlike the one Freud will speak of, essentially remains the fruit of a consciousness that is transparent to itself.¹³

Thus buttressed up by a scaffolding of *ad hoc* philosophical foundations, the *clairaudience* of Beethovenian deafness was promised a fine future. Wagner, however, barely three years after his *Beethoven*, would make an about-face in his opinions. This reversal is expressed in a text published in 1873 entitled "On Performing Beethoven's Ninth Symphony."¹⁴ Here we find this phrase, so unexpected to all appearances: "There can be no doubt that Beethoven's deafness had the effect of blunting his aural image of the orchestra, to the extent that he was not clearly conscious of precisely those dynamic instrumental relationships" (99). Wagner writes this after having conducted the Ninth in the old theater of Bayreuth, on May 22, 1872, on the occasion of the placing of the first stone of "his" own Bayreuth, the *Festspielhaus*; and he says he "afterwards studied ways and means of remedying the evil as I saw it" (97).

So it is Wagner who would introduce variants, improvements, into the works of the clairvoyant genius. Wagner, in other words, transforms himself here into an *arranger*; and, in order to justify his alterations, he reverses the value of the deafness that he had glorified in the phrases we've seen already; he turns it into a *derangement*.

Some modifications will be justified by the evolution of instrument-making: the horns and trumpets, especially, had become chromatic since Beethoven's time, and we might not see any harm done to genius in alterations that confine themselves to letting the works profit from recent organological progress. Because these instruments, before the invention of valves, could not reliably play certain notes, Beethoven's scores include passages where their parts are *incomplete*. Thus Wagner cites the "terrifying fanfare" of wind instruments that opens the last movement of the Ninth: a fanfare in which the trumpets are only included in a fragmentary way, thus creating an absence of a rhythmic beat that, according to Wagner, "did not free the melodic line" (108). Here, then, it is only a matter of remedying a melodic incompleteness that "the master could not possibly have intended." Thus Wagner decides "to join the trumpets to the woodwind throughout the two opening deliveries of the fanfare" (108).

But Wagner went even further. Aiming for the "*restitutio in integrum* of the composer's intentions," wanting to "rescue a melody from obscurity and misunderstanding," Wagner sometimes thinks he has to *rewrite* entire melodic sections. Thus he explains at great length the alterations he made to a certain *espressivo* passage in the first movement of the Ninth (bars 138–42). The instrument in question, this time, is the flute, which has not, unlike the brass, undergone drastic modifications in its fabrication. Or rather, beyond the flute, it is the virtual ear of the listener that demands rewriting: for it is perhaps *this ear that has changed its fabrication, even more radically than certain instruments*. And the various arrangements, Wagner's among others,

have their place in this evolution or revolution of *auditory organology*.

But let's look more closely at what Wagner does to Beethoven, at the auricular surgery he performs on this part of his corpus that this *espressivo* passage comprises. "The flute," Wagner writes, "instantly attracts attention: the listener is bound to be confused if the melody it delivers is mishandled," since the flute is the "topmost instrument" of all the instruments in the orchestra, something that "in the course of time Beethoven appears to have completely disregarded" (110). In his years of deafness, Beethoven may have had melodic ideas that were more clairvoyant than those of anyone else, but he has forgotten to transmit them in a sufficiently understandable way to the ears of his listeners. So much so that it is up to Wagner to fill this chasm between the "organ of dream" of the deaf man and "men of the world" trapped in appearances; it is up to Wagner to help the latter cross the abyssal distance that has indeed made the visionary idea possible (by untangling it from the "noises of the world"), but that has prevented its *realistic* representation.

In fact, in the *espressivo* of the first movement of the Ninth, Beethoven "gives the theme to the first oboe," adding the flute to it to double certain notes of the theme in a higher pitch, thus "distracting attention from the lower instrument [i.e., the oboe]" (110). Wagner, then, is intent on remedying this "damaging effect," this "disturbing" defect. Note that the negligence of Beethoven's genius, though it is not attributable here to a constraint of instrument making, bears on a point very similar to that of the trumpets of the last movement: namely, the rupture, the interruption, the *dis-traction of a melodic trait* that *should have been* continuous, but that is cut up into pieces by the partial intervention of an instrument (the flute) monopolizing attention. "Who can claim," Wagner asks, "ever to have heard the melodic content of those bars *clearly brought out?*" (114; emphasis mine). Wagner's decision, faced with the melodic uncertainty of this passage, is to remove all ambiguities. In order to *let everything be heard in full daylight*.

But his solution could not be more unexpected. In fact, he goes for help, in order to *settle* the melodic truth, *to an arranger*. Here is one more arranger, then, *from whose arrangement* Beethoven's intention can be brought back to itself in all its transparent truth: "Liszt with his unique insight was the first to reveal it [the melodic content of this passage]—I refer to his superb piano arrangement of the symphony. Ignoring the flute's continuation of the oboe's theme, the effect of which is mainly disturbing, he gives the continuation to the oboe, thus preserving Beethoven's notation from any misunderstanding" (114). Surprising Wagner, who, as if despite himself, letting down his guard, begins to multiply the intermediaries, as if the original truth of a musical idea was above all not to be sought in the original, as if it could come only from a *medium* even more lucid than the divine seer himself . . .

By arranging Beethoven, even by looking for his truth in the arrangements of others, Wagner, despite or beyond his seeming reversal on the question of deafness and clairaudience, contributes to *recomposing listening* (to making a new ear, like the good instrument-maker of hearing that he is). That is to say, he sets up and establishes a *regime of listening* under which *the melodic idea no longer suffers from any discontinuity*. Thus Wagner asserts that it is "vitally important . . . that the melody—which . . . may often be presented only in its tiniest fragments—should *hold us in its grip*" (119; emphasis mine) [*nous captive avec continuité*, "captivate us with continuity"]. Thus all instruments are continually called on to *outline a continuous melody for the ear*: to impose on it *the total listening of a compositional thought finally restored to itself, in its entirety*. Beyond the superficial differences between the two Wagners (the one who writes *Beethoven* and the one who conducts Beethoven's Ninth), it is the latter who contributes *practically* to completing the theoretical work of the former. In the meantime, between the two, the figure of the arranger has nonetheless slipped in, as if underhandedly or smuggled in. But this is the better to make us forget him, the better to erase, in the rediscovered experience of the work *in integrum*,

the critical force of arrangement, as well as its configuring and reconfiguring power, too, when it comes to listening.

Schoenberg: "To Hear Everything"

That is the path Schoenberg in his turn would take, when he set himself to the task of arranging (that is, orchestrating) Bach or Brahms. And when he turns himself into an arranger this way, it is still and always with the purpose of a kind of reform of listening: to contribute to *constructing*, to *fabricating*, this modern ear that he has bequeathed to us or grafted onto us. Here is how he meant us to listen, as listeners to his or others' music.

In effect, Schoenberg has signed some *great listenings* to works of the past. By making us listen to his listenings, he has written down our own. That is why, beyond even what he may have said or thought about them, he was a *maker of listening*. At once a ferryman and a builder. A maker of organs attuned to those musical organisms that are, according to him, the compositions.

Schoenberg rarely said anything about transcription or arrangement in general. We can find some views expressed here and there, though, including a letter written to the conductor Fritz Stiedry;¹⁵ in it, Schoenberg justifies his instrumentation of a chorale prelude by Bach in the following terms: "Our 'sonorous demand' does not aim for coloration 'in good taste'; colors [instrumental timbres] rather have the objective of clarifying the unfurling of voices, which is very important in the contrapuntal fabric. . . . We need transparency so we can see clearly. . . . Therefore I think the right to transcription becomes a duty here." So it is a question, for Schoenberg, not only of validating his right [*Recht*] to arrangement, but of making this right into a sort of moral obligation [*Pflicht*]. More precisely: one no longer has the right to transcribe without *absolute necessity*, out of a simple "taste" (even if it is the best of "good taste"). Henceforth there must be the constraint of this demand that was already

Wagner's: the demand for "transparency." What *commands* one to transcribe is the *total* audibility that Bach's work requires.

That is also the argument given by Schoenberg when he explains the reasons that led him to orchestrate Brahms's G-Minor Piano Quartet: "My reasons: 1. I like the piece. 2. It is rarely played. 3. It is always very poorly played, for the better the pianist is, the louder he plays, so that you hear none of the strings. I wanted to hear everything, and I succeeded."¹⁶ Here too it was a question of rewriting, of orchestrating in order *to hear everything*. Not to adapt or negotiate, but rather *to make the work absolutely transparent to listening*.

And the listening in question here is not that of a given listener, or of a category of listeners one has to *take into account*; it is rather *structural listening* in Adorno's sense—or even, beyond Adorno, a listening *without listener* in which *the work listens to itself*. For Schoenberg, as we know, couldn't care less about the expectations of our ears. His often-quoted reply to the conductor and composer Alexander Zemlinsky, concerning the "cuts" Zemlinsky had suggested in *Pelléas and Mélisande* for a concert in Prague, bears witness to this;¹⁷ about the "concerns due to the listener," he declares: "I have as few for him as he has for me. I know only that he exists and that, to the extent that he is not 'indispensable' for acoustic reasons (since an empty hall does not resound well), he disturbs me."

Beyond the provocative tone, we hear an organicist concept of the work being strongly articulated here (where the work is a whole that doesn't allow any cuts)¹⁸ and a regime of listening whose ultimate, ideal aim is the absorption or *resorption of the listener in the work*. A listener who is somewhat distracted, inattentive, who would skip over a few tracks daydreaming—such a listener could fall away like a dead limb. Useless. Bringing nothing to the great *corpus* of the work. This organicism, in the radical (or structural) tendency that Schoenberg gives it, forms the cornerstone of the *construction* of a modernist regime of listening. It no longer allows any arrangement of or with the work,

especially not any cuts. Or rather, it allows only one function of arrangement: its function of *auditory organology*, the only one that can still justify it, that is to say, make it *necessary*. There is no more arrangement except arrangement that lives up to this *obligation*: to hear everything.

So we can understand that, faced with this regime of *total or structural listening* (whose establishment we have followed from Beethoven to Wagner and beyond), what Adorno called the “arbitrariness of the arranger” becomes inadmissible. We understand why, for Schoenberg as well as for Adorno, a Busoni seems like the representative of another era of listening, a kind of *ancien régime* under which it was still possible to *adapt conjointly listening to the work with the work to listening*. Where the work and “its” listening (this being henceforth precisely not *its own* throughout) were both constructed in reciprocal negotiations or arrangements.

It is not a question, for us, of *restoring* here this “ancien régime.” It is rather a question of showing how the modern regime of musical listening not only secretes its own paradoxes and resistances, but also is confronted with other mutations—those of the *media* of music—that destabilize it and prevent its accomplishment. The question that has accompanied us implicitly has always been: isn’t a *certain* distraction a condition that is just as necessary for an *active* listening as total, structural, and functional listening is?