

## AN IMAGINARY HOUSE OF MUSICAL SPACE

### **Musical space as ‘ready-made’**

*le lever du jour au bord de la mer*

Stealing a leading question from Thierry de Duve’s book *Kant after Duchamp*, I begin with a similar question: what if a Martian musicologist comes to earth in order to study human music?<sup>1</sup> Among the many documents and musical events to be studied, the Martian is forced to reconcile Luc Ferrari’s piece *le lever du jour au bord de la mer* with everything else that the Martian has learned about music on our planet. This Martian might arrive, as does de Duve’s Martian, at something like an “institutional theory” of aesthetics. A piece of music is deemed ‘music’ by the consensus of a particular culture after the piece has been “anointed” by a recognized composer. Our Martian might also observe that space, or the *illusion* of space in music, is somehow a “family resemblance” among diverse musical works—a shared characteristic between Ferrari’s piece, and for example, Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony (two otherwise very different works). *Le lever du jour au bord de la mer* is an unedited, unfiltered audio recording of sounds produced by the activities of animals and people near a boardwalk. The sound of something hitting wood with various degrees of force, motor sounds, bird calls, voices, etc. occupy a semi-densely populated space. We are aware of little else, except a sense of the relative proximity of the objects.

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<sup>1</sup> Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, (Cambridge, 1999).

In many ways, the piece is a repeatable rendering of a Cagean silence piece. Surely, our Martian would have run across the music of John Cage and *musique concrete* along the way and would have learned to divorce a sound from its real world context in order to contemplate the sound's aesthetic role in a piece of music. Contemplating a sound for itself, as Cage would have us do, somehow transforms the way we hear the real world. By applying the concentration we normally give to music, to the listening of ambient environmental sounds, we will open our ears to a ready-made aesthetic experience around us, which resides in a "non-intentional" flow of non-composed sound. Perhaps the listening activity that is the most exposed by Cage's experiment, however, is the way we *listen to music*. In many of Cage's pieces, we are caught in the act of searching for music. We are caught doing what it is we do when we our intention is to listen to music, but without necessarily hearing what we take to *be* music. We are left with the *activity* of listening without the object that typically signals its undertaking.

Ferrari's piece is more of a Duchampian "ready-made" than Cage's *4' 33"* in its specificity. We can listen to it as a document of a particular place at a particular time, or we can contemplate it as an aesthetic object brought to our attention by a *composer*. Cage's experiment may fail for two reasons: either because we as listeners fail or because our listening context fails. But Ferrari's piece has been "anointed" by a composer, and therefore we regard his piece as music. As in Cage's piece, we are caught in the act of listening, but we can repeat this act over and over with the same document. Ferrari's piece gives us the chance to hear it again, if something prevents us from finding the 'music' in it the first time. When we think about what we hear in formal terms, trying to

note the different materials striking the wood, the rate of change, the density and direction of the moving bird sounds, etc. we look for internal relationships (something like musical forms) in the space we are hearing. The experience becomes “aesthetic,” in a Kantian sense, because we are indifferent to the sounds beyond these formal properties. Removed from their original context, the sounds are not providing information for which we might have some vested interest. Electro-acoustic music puts real world sounds and/or synthesized sounds in a new context—a musical space that houses the sounds and argues for them a meaning not possible in reality. Occasionally, such music is criticized for its lack of visual stimulation or for the lack of a human element of performance, but it is precisely because of that lack that it reveals so much about the nature and function of musical space.

### *Music for a House*

Where is it that these sounds go when they leave the real world and we no longer see or care about their cause? They enter into a “musical space” that requires us to distinguish between something like an *inside* and *outside*. The cause of a sound is removed and the sound itself is placed “inside” a musical context that is also separable from the listening space. With this *inside/outside* sense of the space metaphor in mind, consider *Music for a House*. Stockhausen, the composer, describes the piece/event:

*Music for a House* was another collective composition in which I again made the process plan and gave examples of how to compose individual text compositions... every instrumentalist carried a time plan and watched the clock—each had a 10 minute break between performances. So the public would sometimes meet different musicians with their instruments walking around the rooms on the way to perform somewhere else. In a given room you could see a trio all of the sudden reforming into a quintet—two musicians were leaving while four others entered from different places: there was a continual exchange of performers. ... tape recorders were also used to add electronic music or recorded short wave sounds to the instrumental

music of the actual event—this was part of the whole composition and so it wasn't unusual for the tape to play over the speakers. But the music recorded from the day before was [eventually] being played back, the musicians were beginning to leave, and the people thought: they're going to another room!

You see, nobody knew exactly when the music would be over. A whole house was sounding with the same kind of music heard earlier on, but no instrumentalists were around. People went to it into the next room, thinking here they are, but no one was there. The music was still playing, so they walked into another room: no one there, either. And so the public was left wandering around the house completely alone while all of the participants were eating at a distant restaurant. [Laughs]<sup>2</sup>

In 1968, when *Music for a House* was first performed, there would have been nothing unusual about a loudspeaker playing music in an empty room, (i.e. with no musician around). By then, the acousmatic experience of disembodied music was a familiar one to listeners. No one would have been duped by Stockhausen's trick had he not first had instrumentalists in different rooms, playing live and then moving about from room to room during the course of the piece. As a joke, it is not really that funny—a bait and switch kind of trick. What's interesting is that the illusion of disembodied sound had to be *reinvented* by devising an experience where acknowledging the physical presence of an instrumental sound source was initially a requirement for the listener. Only then would the listener assume that the sounds were live.

*Music for a House* suggests to me a general image for the listeners' engagement with musical space: an imaginary house wherein each room constitutes a different mode of spatialization: an *inner subjective* room, an *outer subjective* room, an *inner*

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<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Cott, *Stockhausen: Conversations with the Composer* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 206.

*morphological* room, and an *outer morphological* room. A description of these different rooms is the goal of this chapter but first, I wish to linger a little longer in Stockhausen's house. As stated, the acousmatic experience of hearing concert music removed from the concert hall is not unusual. Stockhausen's disappearing-musician trick hinges on the fact that aspects of the listening activity remain consistent while others change. The musicians are in the house and then they are not, but their sounds continue. By forcing performer and listener to cohabit a typically domestic space, the piece recalls a salon-like performer-listener interaction. For this occasion, new music is removed from the social conventions of the recital hall. This would have been, in 1968, perhaps the central thrust of the piece, a critique of the spatial-social conventions of concert music. It was a time for such critiques.

I imagine the experience to have seemed somewhat daunting to the listener, particularly non-musicians. Spatially, the listener would have to confront the physical presence of a musician (the personal space surrounding his or her body), confronting as well the sound of instruments in an unusually enclosed space at close proximity. It must have seemed something like walking around a music school with all the practice room doors open. One is aware of all the *work* being done perhaps more than one is aware of music being made. Witnessing all of this work being done makes the listener consider *the job of listening*. Movement from room to room on the part of the listener is propelled by activity, influenced by somewhat random and unpredictable motivations such as attention, desire, and interference. The listener is more or less aware that their desire for stimulation motivates their attention. The close proximity of an action/sound does not

necessarily mean a listener is inattentive to other spaces. Do they choose to remain in one room while concentrating on sounds coming from another, or do they choose to move on? Does the movement of musicians and other listeners interfere with, or enhance, the listening experience? Listening to *Music for a House* implies an oscillation of attention from room to room mirroring the listeners' physical motion, though it is not synonymous with it. A search for cohesiveness among layers of sound is dependent upon the perception of a spatial hierarchy of sound. But the hierarchy is unique to each listener; it is impossible to predict from listener to listener what is foreground and what is background.

Stockhausen's trick is also a reminder of the essential trickery of the acousmatic experience. The listener searches for "where the action is." The physicality of the exchange between listener and performer is no longer present. The physicality of the exchange is transferred rather to other searching listeners left alone in an empty house. This is not unlike the effort required by the acousmatic experience in general, especially in the concert hall. We transfer the physical exchange had between listener and performer, to one between listener and listener by way of alternative modes of physicality. We choose to dance, socialize, shop, or sit and contemplate the music together. The social conventions of space channel our listening activity into forms of physicality just as the concert hall channels that activity towards sitting quietly. Stockhausen's piece reminds us of this *act* of listening, by representing through the physical motion of listeners and players, the attention, desire, and interference that propels, or inhibits, the act of listening.

## Different rooms in a house of musical space

As first discussed in the introduction, the act of listening is an imaginative process that involves a combination of spatializing actions or thoughts: to *make* spatial, to *think of* as spatial, or to *invest with* spatial qualities. We can analytically pull these combinations apart and look separately at different “spatialities” suggested by these individual actions or thought processes. I imagine the space categories that I have presented—the *inner subjective*, *outer subjective*, *inner morphological*, and the *outer morphological*—as “rooms” in an imaginary house. The listening activity is like the roving listener whose attention oscillates from room to room in Stockhausen’s house. Musical space is not just a surveyed space, but it is a felt space. With that thought, I echo Gaston Bachelard, a philosopher of science who swerved into literary criticism when he wrote *The Poetics of Space*. With this book, he began a project that was to occupy him for years: “the problems posed by the poetic imagination.” *The Poetics of Space* addresses “space that has been seized upon by the imagination [and which] cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor.” Bachelard sought to define a space which “...has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly [space which] nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect.”<sup>3</sup> In beginning with an analysis of poetic “house images” and the “material features of the house” as a protector of daydreams, Bachelard posits in daydreams a space in which solitude is creative. Creativity, therefore

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<sup>3</sup>Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas, (Boston: Beacon Press 1964) pp. x1-74.

becomes the place where the unconscious is “happily housed.” “If we compose a poem about a house,” Bachelard writes, “it frequently happens that the most flagrant contradictions come to wake us from the doldrums of our concepts, and as philosophers would say, free us from our utilitarian geometrical notions.”<sup>4</sup> A house has an interior and exterior, and it is both archetypal and intensely personal. In dream analysis of a Jungian persuasion, the house is taken to be a symbol for the self. The house can make a kind of semiotic square of possibilities, open to multiple connotations and narrative paths. The house represents the imaginative activity of listening, and the rooms of the house represent different types of musical spaces, our awareness of which combine (as the hearing of rooms/spaces combine in various mixtures in Stockhausen’s piece) to complete a picture of musical space. The rooms in the imaginary house are the *inner subjective* (the bedroom), *inner morphological* (the stairway), *outer morphological* (the entrance hall), and the *outer subjective* (the parlor or living room).

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 53.



*Inner subjective space (the bedroom)*

In this imaginary house, I think of the *inner subjective* as a bedroom—a private space in the house. In the third chapter, I explore how this *inner subjective* space is depicted in *Vertigo*, in the “state-of-mind” music suggesting the main character Scotty’s obsession. The *inner subjective* can refer to qualities, feelings, or images that sometimes accompany the act of listening to music that are spatial, though not synonymous with the *morphological* spaces of musical form. While the *inner subjective* might be motivated by form, by “heard-spaces,” the *inner subjective* is a space one imagines to be *in*, not unlike imagining the self as constituting a kind of space. Most people who listen to music recognize that listening to music can be a private act, even when surrounded by others. Some have seen this as music’s special power to correspond with an “inner space” of subjectivity, as Rilke does in his ode to music.

To Music

Music: breathing of statues. Perhaps:  
stillness of pictures. You speech, where speeches  
end. You time,  
vertically poised on the courses of vanishing hearts.

Feeling for what? Oh, you transformation  
of feelings into ...audible landscape!  
you stranger: Music. Space that’s outgrown us,  
heart-space. Innermost us, transcendently  
surging away from us,-holiest parting,  
where what is within surrounds us  
as practiced horizon, as other  
side of the air,  
pure,  
gigantic,  
no longer lived in.

Rilke's metaphor for music as 'time vertically poised' requires a perception of time/music as this almost tangible material: 'feeling for what...audible landscape [?].'

His question continues with an ellipsis that seems to struggle for words to describe what music seems to be, arriving at a spatial description of music as 'heart-space'. This is an *inner* space that paradoxically seems capable of enveloping us in that it has 'outgrown' us. Rilke is not alone in identifying space as somehow being a mechanism in the process of transforming music into feelings. What he describes is a way of listening, and it captures the essence of what I am calling music's *inner subjective* space.

While music can be imagined to have a space-like material constitution, this quality has always challenged philosophical investigations of music. Schopenhauer was clear in his assertion that music is a temporal art—one that operates "in absolute exclusion of space"—but he also privileged music among the arts as coming the closest to achieving the "will's objectification." And yet, it is hard to say just what this will-object is made of. How music actually "relates to the world" remains somewhat a mystery. Music is somehow *in* the world, and at the same time, is *removed* from it while referring "to the innermost being of the world and our own self."

... yet the point of comparison between music and the world, the regard in which it stands to the world in relation of a copy or a repetition, is very obscure. Men have practiced Music at all times without being able to give an account of this; content to understand it immediately, they renounce any abstract comparison of this direct understanding itself.<sup>5</sup>

Musicians and listeners alike are content therefore with music's inability to imitate nature with the kind of directness and mimetic accuracy achieved by painting, drama, and

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, tr. E.F.J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969) Book I, p.256

literature. Music indirectly makes manifest something 'innermost' though nevertheless "in and of the world."

In chapters four and five, I examine how musical space in contemporary music has become something regarded as a kind of material, as objectified, and which depends more on *morphological* over *subjective* concerns. The space metaphor continues despite a lessening emphasis on these more *subjective* aspects. I see this transformation as one that nevertheless depends on the reputation of *inner subjective* space as a primary medium for musical meaning; it depends on a notion that spatiality in music is valuable. At the very least, we can see this growing interest in the *morphological* over the *subjective* as apart of an effort to distance new music from 19th century musical values. The *inner subjective* space in music is an invention of the 19th century, as Peter Gay notes; it is in tune with the prevailing aesthetic of the age for self-reflection.

Historians have taken Freud's psycho-analytic techniques and theories of the mind as pivotal moments in the transition of Victorian culture to the 20th century. So they were, but they also represent the culmination of a century-long effort to map inner space.<sup>6</sup>

Gay considers the changing behavior of audiences at music concerts throughout the 19th century as evidence of a changing status for music. The more that silent and attentive listening became the accepted concert etiquette, he argues, the more music is valued as an individual experience as opposed to a social one. At least one should *appear* as if one were attending solely for the listening experience. It was an individual experience that was to be made available to everyone present, almost a duty. "What the Victorians did with the power of music, as with inwardness general, was to democratize it."

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<sup>6</sup> Gay, Peter, *The Naked Heart, The Bourgeois Experience, Vol. IV* (New York, 1995).

Musicologist Michael Chanan regards this idea of music corresponding to an inner space as a subset of a larger effort to define the individual. Like Gay, he sees this as a legacy of the 19th century, when it was necessary to construct a new kind of a given subject:

And the problem only intensifies in proportion to the success of the political and economic project of the bourgeoisie as the individual is economically isolated and pressed into the antagonistic relations of the market, and politically the subject is redefined in terms of universal abstract rights. For the same process, by releasing the individual into lonely autonomy, abandons the subject to its own private space, which can be reached only by the imagination; that is to say the symbolic exchange of identities by aesthetic means ...<sup>7</sup>

The inner subjective space describes the forum for this symbolic exchange. While the nature of these symbols may resemble language (although one without the capability of direct signification), the forces binding them together, in which their juxtapositions are organized, resemble a kind of *space* that the listener may feel to cohabit.

### *Inner Morphological (the spiral staircase)*

In the house of imaginary musical spaces, I think of the *inner morphological* space as a spiral staircase. The spiral alludes to Roger Shepard's spiral model of pitch space that describes pitch as a continuum with vertical lines imagined to connect pitch classes. I consider form-giving elements that are conceptual in nature as falling under the category of *inner morphological* space. Pitch space is the most prominent spatiality in this category. The "phenomenal motion of tones," as Scruton called it, is an 'indispensable

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Chanan, *From Handel to Hendrix* (London: Verso, 1999) p29.

metaphor' for listening. When the term "musical space" is used, the *inner morphological* space of pitch is what is typically meant by it.

The *inner morphological* space is the subject of the chapters four and five, but in order to contextualize it within my house model: think of the stairway in a house as a functional space though not a room per se. The stairs are a means to an end, tools for linking other spaces. As constructed spaces go, stairs strike me as rather abstract; they are not places one necessarily wants to *be*. Children play on stairs, however, and it may serve my house analogy to speculate on why. Stairs represent a forbidden place, a dangerous place that is eventually mastered, step by step. The challenges of the terrain are replayed with toys climbing up and tumbling down. Stairs allow children to imagine different physical relationships with rooms. A few steps above make the child taller relative to one space and hidden below (or made tiny) compared to another. *Inner morphological* musical spaces are like imaginary stairs. Our ideas of form may be ends in themselves (like children playing on the stairs), or they may be a means to an end, linking the motion of tones with subjective and/or social functions of music. A theoretical listening, for example, emphasizes the *inner morphological*, but the theoretical listening is no less connected to the *inner subjective* space (with pleasures of formal purity or expression), or the *outer subjective* space (with the social pleasures of the seminar room, a space of musical discourse!) That is why I situate the *inner morphological* within a larger context of *musical space/music-and-space* categories. We may imagine musical space in a Bach prelude in terms of unfolding middle-ground voices abstracted from the texture, but we probably won't think about it in those terms when we hear it played while coming up the

escalator in Penn station. Nevertheless, the *inner morphological* is always at work; it helps us to recognize the Bach prelude in the first place.

### *The outer morphological*

The *outer morphological* space is something like the entrance hall in our imaginary house. The *outer morphological* space represents form-defining aspects that are determined by physical space such as resonance or the spatial location of a sound, for example. The entrance hall connects rooms; one passes through it on the way to a perhaps more desired location. Sometimes from the entrance hall, one is aware of the activities in different spaces around a house. In the house of musical space, the *outer morphological* is the physical proximity of music, the sound's physical presence and characteristics. It represents to me a kind of space that must be "passed through" before other imaginary realms can be activated. Ferrari's *le lever du jour au bord de la mer* depends on the contrasting characteristics of an *outer morphological* space (our listening space) with those presented in an *illusion* of one (the recorded place). The recorded space's status as illusion encourages our treating the sounds as objects of contemplation. The sounds come to us divorced from their cause. We need to make this leap between two *outer morphological* spaces before we can begin to appreciate what the sounds have to offer.

Though more of a concern of the final chapter of my dissertation, I'll mention again here that composers have come to treat the *outer morphological* space of location as "material" to be manipulated. Electro-acoustic practice, for example, often tends to

activate the *outer morphological* space through the spatialization of sounds coming from multiple speakers. The technique is an effort to either draw attention to the *outer morphological* space of listening or to enhance an illusion of an alternative space. The work of Maryanne Amacher situates the *outer morphological* in a slightly different way. Her site-specific installations have sounds traveling through walls and floors, and are thus meant to highlight “structure-borne” sounds. “The rooms themselves become speakers, producing sound which is felt to the body as well as heard.”<sup>8</sup> The *outer morphological* space in this context becomes musical space because it is physical space made musical. Similar to Stockhausen’s *Music for a House*, the physical motion of the listener realizes the narrative trajectory of listening.

#### *Outer subjective space (the living room)*

In the imaginary house of musical space, the *outer subjective* space would be the living room. Perhaps the “parlor” or “salon” would prove a more apt room—a place where the domestic and the public meet. The *outer subjective* refers to those aspects of *musical space/music-and-space* that relate the listener to the space of music as a sign. The social conventions of listening determined by space influence the imaginative activity, channeling the outward physical behaviors of the listener. When one hears dance music in a club, the expectations for demonstrating one’s engagement with the music is different than if one hears the same music played at a dinner party. The same could be said for concert music removed from the concert hall. Depending on what type of listener

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<sup>8</sup> Maryanne Amacher, Program notes for *Sound Characters Making the Third Ear*, Tzadik 1999.

we are, these real and imagined spaces provide the appropriate cues for assumptions we are to make while listening: are we dancing, are we using music to interpret visual signs, are we making our way through an “autonomous” musical form, are we having our shopping experience enhanced by background music, etc.

Nicolas Cook examines the social implications of and factors contributing to discrepancies between theoretical modes of listening and the experiences had by ‘everyday’ listeners. In *Music, Imagination, and Culture*, he states that “it is precisely in terms of a listener’s imaginative activity that critics [listeners] have generally sought to draw a line between music and non-music.”<sup>9</sup> If a listener is bored or frustrated, as with music too complex or too simple for their taste and experience, their “imaginative activity” is hampered, he asserts, and they are likely to dismiss the music. Definitions of musical space require similar boundaries and are equally determined by the listening mode. To imagine a Schenkerian middle ground while listening is not necessarily incompatible with imagining an “enchanted garden.” It is the “imaginative activity” that makes up the conceptual reach of a spatial metaphor. The spatial metaphor not only allows us to imagine musical forms but it also allows us to conceptualize the act of listening as a simultaneously private and social activity.

Allow another brief anecdote: One day a friend and fellow composer Charlie Kronengold and I were tuned-in to an odd AM radio station broadcasting an old recording of smoky voices singing what sounded like Cuban music. We listened to the strangely sad music

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolas Cook, *Music, Imagination, and Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) p.15.

for a minute or two before Charlie said, “what if everyone tuned into this program were in the same room right now?” We laughed at the prospects of such a gathering. There would probably be a clear difference between those whose radios were permanently set to that station and the channel-surfing wanderers like us. There would probably be a friend or two (a relative perhaps) of the D J responsible for the show. Who else would be there? If each one, like us, were “beamed” into the room, what activity would have been interrupted? Would they have been driving an old car, playing cards, drinking alone, cleaning up the kitchen, singing along, and/or reminiscing about past lives in past places? Some would be mortified and frustrated at not being able to change the channel. Some would be annoyed that others were not listening “properly,” or would feel exposed and intruded upon by the presence of strangers. Others would be delighted at the prospects of meeting new friends, and increasing their social network through a shared interest. My friend’s idea was humorous both because of the marginality of the program, and at the same time, a potential diversity of listeners which could make for an unusual intersection between music, people, and space.

There would be a blend of what sociologist, Richard Peterson, has termed “cultural omnivores” and “univores.” The univores, he explains, are those with interests in culture and leisure activities that are of a limited field. The univores are not necessarily from a specific socio-economic class. They may be rich or poor, their interests “highbrow” or “lowbrow”, but these interests reflect a limited social network, though they are interests with which the participants feel a strong personal identity. The omnivores, on the other hand, might be something like tourists. They are drawn to the new and adventurous. The

possibility exists that our room might be dominated by such cultural omnivores. Peterson might argue that if the experimental party were to continue, eventually the omnivores would outnumber the univores. That is the trend as he sees it. The image of this hypothetical party of listeners, admits to the impossibility of accounting for all the possible subjective thoughts and feelings about music that could be had during such an experience, short of interviewing each guest. Surely the transformation of social space through broadcast technology of sound and image is a commonplace phenomenon in contemporary culture. It is hardly a revelation to assert that musical practice has been affected by such changes. Yet somehow, simply imagining all of the listeners of a single broadcast placed in one room, reminds one of how listening implies a complex negotiation on the part of the listener between music and space. Relationships between subjective accounts of listening and perceptual and cognitive factors are influenced by the hybrid of musical space/music-and-space. Each listener at this hypothetical party will feel a unique relationship to the music, influenced by those around them but inhabiting a highly individualized space.

Richard Peterson's cultural omnivore is a person who is usually but not necessarily from the middle to wealthy classes, and whose tastes for art and leisure activities range from popular to highbrow.<sup>10</sup> 'Cultural capital' is no longer expended exclusively on "the finer things" in order to maintain status, it is perhaps of greater social utility for us to display a diversity of tastes in music and other activities. Not surprisingly, composers are among these cultural omnivores. It would seem from looking at a sample of composers and

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Peterson, "Understanding audience segmentation: From elite to and mass to omnivore and univore. *Poetics* 21, pp. 243-258.

dancers from the last three or so generations, that such artists have anticipated the trend towards omnivorous culture. One from a more recent generation, Evan Ziporyn, speaks like a cultural omnivore in describing his mode of reacting/appropriating/absorbing musical elements from diverse cultures. An artist, he writes, can “learn to speak the other like a native (Lou Harrison, Joseph Conrad) or respect it and to come to terms with it, either by creating self-conscious hybrids (*Finnegans Wake*, Harry Partch), or ones which are designed to have mutually exclusive meanings for different listeners ... this was the intention of my own collaboration with Balinese composer Nyoman Winda.”<sup>11</sup> Musical languages can be said to intersect with spaces and cultural spaces in various manners, in real or symbolic circumstances, performance contexts, etc. These intersections define new musical spaces that juxtapose musical elements and physical contexts in potentially transformative ways. We can interpret music in light of real *and* imaginary spaces. When sociologists speak of “clustering” around specific documents of musical taste (what an aesthete would call participating in the “art institution”), they presuppose an arrangement of these spatialities across a spectrum of real and abstract spaces, separable from “content,” but essential to it.

Perhaps the growth in number and influence of the cultural omnivore that Peterson describes is the result of the listener’s ability through recording technology to control the space of listening. A person uncomfortable with the social conventions of listening to punk rock can choose to listen at a safe distance from a punk rock club. It is conceivable that in such cases, a listener likes the music yet feels alienated by the social context of its

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<sup>11</sup> Evan Ziporyn, “Who Listens if you Care?” *New Observations*, No. 86 (November/December, 1991), pp.25-28.

production, or prefers an alternative spatial context for listening. The hypothetical experiment of the radio-listeners suddenly thrust into the same room reveals the potential for favorable and unfavorable responses to the *outer subjective* space of music. Some listeners will welcome the new spatial context and some will not. In either case, subjective and morphological factors will be influenced by the degree to which a listener identifies with the social space of listening.

After Peterson, sociologists and musicologists have theorized about patterns of reception revealing three basic types of “cultural discourses”: the high culture scheme, folk culture scheme, and pop culture scheme. These schemes are roughly based on the behavior of audiences as a reflection of cultural values. The controlled and measured reception that characterizes the high culture scheme reflects a preference for the absolutes, for pure or spiritual symbols, or for high degrees of critical relevance. Conversely, the folk scheme prefers audience participation with the performers, “shuns presumption and eccentricity.” “Rather than looking for status or self-development for intellectual or spiritual challenges, the folk audience seeks security to conformity.” The pop culture scheme emphasizes “excitement, commerce, and fun.” Schulze characterizes the pop discourse as an aesthetic built around narcissism and escapism.<sup>12</sup> These distinctions differ from the traditional elitist-populist approach to culture in that these schemes appear available to cultural omnivores as freely chosen alternatives rather than signifying a single mode of identity, as they might for univores. In terms of class and taste, theorists imagine a kind of “reverse pyramid” with the lower economic groups tending to engage with a limited

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<sup>12</sup> I refer to a summary of Gerhard Schulze work as well as Peterson’s in Koen van Eijck’s “Richard A. Peterson and the culture of consumption”, *Poetics*, 28 (2000) 207-224.

number of cultural outlets. This implies two basic scenarios for the interaction between music and space. On one hand, music and space may seem to be mismatched; there is a cognitive dissonance between the two. The other scenario is that the *outer subjective* space becomes a kind of text participating in the overall aesthetic of symbolic exchange, the match or mismatch is interesting and considered a positive experience.

Peterson and others have noted that the cultural omnivores tend to be urban, suggesting to me that their tastes may be informed not just by access to recordings but to *spaces* as well, to a variety of social contexts of performance wherein they attain fluency in the cultural schemes. It would be interesting to know whether cultural omnivores are as widely exposed to the variety of performance contexts for music as they are to the recorded medium. Of course, that said, it is already a trend in performance venues (like McCarter Theatre in Princeton or BAM in New York) to diversify programming to suit the taste of the cultural omnivore. Spaces are becoming more uniform. We may one day begin to speak of a Benjamin-like ‘aura’ to not just live-music, but to live-music contexts where there is great cultural overlap between performer and listener—where univores dominate. It is not unusual to see the reverse, that is, to see a music that originates in a folk scheme removed from that context and silently received by “respectful” listeners according to conventions of a high culture scheme.

The *outer subjective* space, I would argue, is becoming a more active component in the complex of symbols exchanged through music. An example of this is a performance that occurred during the 1996 Winter Olympics in Nagano, Japan. Included in the Game’s

opening ceremony was a performance of the “Ode to Joy” chorus from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony performed *simultaneously* on a number of continents. Great technological feats were made to give the illusion that these performances were happening at the same time, overcoming the inherent time delay in current satellite technology. The temporality of the music was distorted in order to transform the *outer subjective* space into a shared space large enough for this grand anthem of humanism.

### *Housework in Lansky’s ‘Quakerbridge’*

My imaginary listening- house models a listening act, one that negotiates a counterpoint of real and abstract spaces while listening to music. Pieces like Ferrari’s *le lever du jour au bord de la mer* and Stockhausen’s *Music for a House* call attention to the job of listening, thus making every room in the house an active component of the listening process. Paul Lansky’s *Quakerbridge* is a piece that creates a kind of counterpoint between these various spaces—between these various rooms in my imaginary house—by depicting this act from the standpoint of a solitary listener ambling through a shopping mall. An ambient recording of the Quakerbridge shopping mall is filtered to accentuate certain frequencies, and is accompanied by chords that are something akin to a synthesized string timbre. The piece depicts the listening process as a kind of oscillation among space-types.

*Quakerbridge* is among Lansky’s pieces that use digital technology to create what he calls an “aural camera.” Similar to Ferrari’s piece, the source recording seems an

unedited span of ambient sound. It includes the noise of shoppers milling around a mall, parents talking to children, people walking around with boomboxes, etc. But unlike the Ferrari piece, the piece is filtered to allow the frequency of random noises to be emphasized and have pitch. Space is in effect made musical by allowing the ambient sounds, in effect, to play an instrument. While Ferrari's piece may have guaranteed that there is music in ambient sound (he has told us there is by anointing the recording as a composition), Lansky shows us the music that *he* hears in it.

The pitches provide a kind of narrative through the shopping mall, establishing the pace of what we notice and how we notice it. It is as if we are walking through the mall with the ambient sounds surrounding us while the pitched material represents what we "see"—what it is that we concentrate upon while moving through the space. Yet paradoxically, it is precisely these sounds that we *do not* hear as sounds, because they are obscured by the filter and turned into music. Our perceptions of reality hide other aspects of reality. If Ferrari hides the music in the sounds, Lansky hides the sounds in the music.

The pitched material comes about in two ways: these filtered ambient sounds and an accompanying synthesized string section. We hear the *outer morphological* space (the mall's ambience) change as it relates to the *inner morphological* space of pitch and harmony. The filtered sounds and the synthesized strings perform different roles in terms of texture, the filtered sounds behaving more like melody and the strings more like harmony. This creates an interesting tension between the horizontal and the vertical as contrasting space-types. It is rare that we perceive truly "simultaneous" events in a

collection of ambient noises, hearing them rather as overlapping instances that seem more successive than simultaneous. Thus the filtered sounds appear as melody. The mall, however, represents a unifying force, a space where the sounds happen collectively “together.” The string chords attempt to behave like the mall/space by representing a simultaneous “intent” behind the multiple sounds.

At one point in the piece, the filtering process subsides, leaving the synthesized string section to very quietly “harmonize” with unfiltered noises in the ambient space. In other words, we hear the sounds relating to the chords without the aid of the filters as our ears begin to do the job of the comb filters. If Ferrari teaches us to swim by throwing us in the water, Lansky slowly edges us towards the deep end. We begin to harmonize the noises with the chords, because we *internalize* the harmonizing mechanism (the *inner morphological* space).

As in Ferrari’s piece, there is no consistent object or person in close proximity to the microphone. Our experience at Quakerbridge is a solitary one, or at least we are witnessing the depiction of a solitary listening. The listener observes another listener trying to harmonize the surrounding chaotic activity. There is nothing to indicate that the others at Quakerbridge are hearing the same music. The filtered sound—the sound obscured by the music, is an *inner* space both subjectively and morphologically. The boom-box patron heard at one point is engaged in a similar activity, qualifying the shopping space with his or her music, although in a more extraverted manner. Here we get a tension between the *outer subjective* and *inner subjective* spaces. The solitary

listener is influenced by the boom-box music and attempts to “harmonize” it with the solitary listener’s subjective account of space, but soon after, the two listeners go their separate ways.

While the composer presents us with ‘horizontal/vertical’ and ‘inside/outside’ distinctions, onto which we attach our spatializing imaginations, both Ferrari’s piece and Lanksy’s piece focus so much on the listening act itself, that it is hard to imagine who the composer is in them. The works argue that it is perhaps the listener who ultimately “composes” or recognizes the music in what is heard, whose attention drifts from room to room in the imaginary house of musical space.