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To Soothe or Remove? Affect, Revanchism and the Weaponized Use of Classical Music

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Abstract

Over the past thirty years in the UK, Canada and the US, classical music has come to function as a sonic weapon. It is used a means of dispelling and deterring ‘loiterers’ by making particular public and privately-owned public spaces – such as shopping malls, bus stations, shop fronts and car parks – undesirable to occupy. In this article, I present weaponized classical music as a ‘revanchist’, audio-affective deterrent. Drawing upon Neil Smith’s description of the revanchist city (1996, 1998), I examine how weaponized classical music works to affectively police neoliberal ‘public’ space. While credited with the capacity to ‘soothe away’ deviant behaviour through its calming influence, weaponized classical music ultimately aims to ‘remove’ the figure of the threatening and menacing ‘loiterer’ insofar as it is heard as repellent. Though affect has often been understood in contradistinction to social determinisms, weaponized classical music exemplifies the capacity of musical affects to function as a technology of social reproduction.

Western European classical music has frequently been celebrated as a pinnacle of human achievement: it is said to have the capacity to enlighten, to move, and – as proponents of ‘the Mozart effect’ suggest – improve listeners’ mental capacity. However, over the past thirty years in the UK, Canada and the United States, classical music has come to function not just as art or entertainment but as a sonic weapon. It is used a means of dispelling and deterring ‘loiterers’ by making particular public and privately-owned public spaces – such as shopping malls, bus stations, shop fronts and car parks – undesirable to occupy.

The practice is thought to have begun in 1985, when a branch manager of a 7-Eleven convenience stores in Canadian province of British Colombia began broadcasting ‘classical’ and ‘easy listening’ music into the store’s parking lot to prevent teenagers from congregating there. (Hirsch, 2006) In the US and Canada, classical music has been used as a deterrent on public transport systems (the regional transit department in Portland broadcasts instrumental music and opera at its light rail stations, for example, allegedly resulting in a reduction of

service calls for help); as well as also in library foyers (Central Library in London, Ontario has used Vivaldi to deter smokers and other loiterers); and outside shops. (Turner, 2010; Joy, 2013) Classical music has been deployed in similar spaces in the UK. In 1997 the Tyne and Wear Metro in the north east of England began broadcasting music by the composer Fredrick Delius at some of their stations to target what was described as ‘low level antisocial behaviour’, such as smoking and swearing. Speaking in 2005, the General Director of the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive (Nexus) Mike Palmer stated the aim of the music was ‘to provide a background of music that people who we are aiming at don't actually like and so they move away.’ (Jackson, 2005) The music was described as creating a ‘win-win’ situation: (alleged) troublemakers were driven out, while other passengers found the music helped pass time whilst waiting for their next train. Following the Tyne and Wear metro, Transport for London began broadcasting operatic and instrumental music at forty London Underground stations after a trial period at Elm Park starting in 2003. During the 18-month trial, they reported a 33% decrease in robberies, a 25% decrease in assaults on staff, and a 37% decrease in vandalism. (Duchen, 2008) The Underground’s 40-hour playlist, which is curated by the subcontractor I Like Music (previously BroadChart), consists of melodic music from the eighteenth and nineteenth century; and includes recordings of works by composers including Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, Vivaldi, Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Liszt.

Though such weaponized uses of classical music has gained significant media attention, there has been comparatively little scholarly work exploring this phenomenon. Two notable exceptions are Jonathan Sterne (2005) and Lily Hirsch (2006, 2012), whose work has critically considered the symbolic, ethical and political implications of the deployment of classical music as a deterrent. In this article, I build upon Sterne and Hirsch’s work by examining the affective dimensions of weaponized classical music. ‘Affect’ here pertains to both the actual and desired responses of bodies targeted by weaponized classical music, as well as to the general atmospheres – of fear and anxiety, and safety and security – that it seeks to diminish and amplify. Where other scholars have framed this phenomenon in relation to the consumerism of late capitalism, I propose that weaponized classical music can be recognised as an audio-affective technology of ‘the revanchist city’ (Smith, 1996; 1998). Weaponized classical music, I suggest, resonates with the spatial logics of urban revanchism. It becomes a means to affectively police the boundaries of public spaces, guarding against

unwanted and ‘threatening’ populations. However, there is also an apparent tension in the reported audio-affective functioning of classical music as a deterrent. On the one hand, classical music is suggested to ‘improve’ the behaviour of ‘undesirable’ loiterers due to its purported capacity to soothe and calm. On the other, classical music is understood to drive away and inhibit loiterers from occupying a space by generating ‘negative’ affections – sensations of irritation, alienation and annoyance. The attribution of a capacity to both ‘soothe’ and ‘remove’ might be considered expressive of the complex and contextual relations between sound/music, affect and its ‘others’. Yet while affect has often been posited as a site of ‘freedom’ by comparison to the predictability of social determinisms (Hemmings, 2005) weaponized classical music exemplifies how musical affects can serve to reproduce social stratifications.

Sounding affect, weaponizing sound

In recent years, increasing attention has been paid to the affective dimensions of sonic experiences, accompanying a more general ‘affective turn’ in the humanities and social sciences. The notion of affect has also had a growing presence within urban and human geographies, with which the emotional, sensuous and embodied dimensions of social space have been foregrounded. (Anderson, 2014; Gallagher, 2016) Affect is understood to play a crucial role in the establishment and transformation of geo-political pasts and presents: for example, it has been considered integral to the instatement of and investment in neoliberalism. (Anderson, 2015) However, as many commentators have noted, there is currently no consensus of affect’s definition. Affect might be synonymous with emotion, affection or feeling; it might refer to a more general ambience, atmosphere, mood, ‘vibe’ or ‘background feeling’; or it can pertain to a body’s capacity to affect and be affected – to act and be acted upon, its potentials and limits for action. It might refer to ‘structures of feeling’, the ‘feeling of existence’ or ‘forces of encounter’. (Anderson, 2015; Seigworth and Gregg, 2010) Generally speaking, approaches to affect have in common a shared interest in the open-ended, processual and transformative relationships between bodies, environments and worlds. From the perspective of affect, bodies, *contra* post-Cartesian paradigms, tend not to be autonomous and free-willing agents; they are affected as much – if not more – than they affect.

The growing interest in sound and music within contemporary affect theory; and of contemporary affect theory within sound and music studies reflects the intimate relation between sonic and affective contours of everyday life. This includes the capacity of sounds to express and generate affect; to put listeners at ease or call them to alert; for music to function as a 'glue' that draws bodies together or provide a sense of security and belonging; or to cause listeners to smile or cry, perhaps in spite of themselves. (Grossberg, 1997; Kassabian, 2013a; Thompson and Biddle, 2013) To be sure, sound and music are often held to be exemplary of affective experience. Greg Seigworth, for example, suggests that most everyday understandings of affect come from encounters with music, as well as with young children: 'In an encounter with either there are moments of unspeakable, unlocatable sensation that regularly occur: something outside of (beyond, alongside, before, between, etc.) words [...] why do certain pop songs reshape our surroundings, sometimes literally altering our sense of the immediate landscape and of the passage of time itself?' (Seigworth, 2003, p.85) Anahid Kassabian, similarly, notes how sound and music can modulate bodily states 'with a mere fraction of a second's intervention (a slamming door and without our conscious consent'. For Kassabian, sound and music 'have long been, and are ever becoming, more and more finely tuned technologies of affect modulation...Sound has an extraordinary capacity to work on us before consciousness, to (as American slang might put it) 'yank our chains', to tune us like instruments. It works across bodies, both within and across populations, and offers possibilities that visual materials cannot.' (Kassabian, 2013b, p.179) As these descriptions suggest, sonic experience is affective experience, insofar as sound *does* things: for example, it amplifies, softens and interrupts feelings; transforms the relations and the perception of relations between bodies and environments; and generates and intensifies sensation.

The turn to affect in sound studies and musicology has been accompanied by and intersected with a growing interest in weaponized sound and music. (Anderson, 2014; Cusick, 2008; Goodman, 2013; Johnson and Cloonan, 2008) The verb 'weaponize' has been increasingly used in discussions of culture and society, often to capture the ways in which 'everyday' tools, artefacts, institutions and concepts that are not primarily weapons can nonetheless be used in a strategic and targeted manner against a particular social groups and for particular goals. The focus on the way in which sound and music have been used to invoke fear and dread by audibly simulate bombings; as a mechanism of so-called 'no

touch' torture by U.S. military personnel; and as a means of provoking and humiliating prisoners have been revealing of the affective and ethical ambivalence of the sonic. Indeed, though music is often associated with positive affects – a capacity to soothe, uplift or even enlighten – the recent attention on music's capacity to be used as a weapon or a form of torture has worked to exemplify the ambivalence and contextual specificity of music's affects, effects and ethics. As Susanne Cusick summarises apropos of the use of music as torture:

We in the so-called West have long since come to mean by the word 'music' an acoustical medium that expresses the human creativity, intelligence and emotional depth that, we think, almost lifts our animal selves to equality with the gods. When we contemplate how 'music' has been used in the detention camps of contemporary wars, we find this meaning stripped away. We are forced, instead, to contemplate 'music' as an acoustical medium for evil. The thing we have revered for an ineffability to which we attribute moral and ethical value is revealed as morally and ethically neutral – as just another tool in human beings' blood-stained hands. (Cusick, 2008).

While much scholarly work on weaponized sound and music has focused on its use within war-zones – and its capacity to generate more 'extreme' affective states of pain, anguish and fear – in more mundane contexts, too, sound and music have been strategically deployed as mechanisms of affective modulation in relation to particular target bodies. As Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan assert: 'sound is a potential weapon, and ubiquitously actualized as such in everyday life, especially in its diverse technological forms.' (Johnson and Cloonan, 2008, p.12) In this regard, the term 'weaponized' produces a connection between (as opposed to a conflation of) militarized and 'everyday' uses of sonic force. The use of classical music as an anti-loitering deterrent is one of a number of ways in which the affects of sound and music have been deployed strategically against particular 'target' bodies within public and privately-owned public space (i.e. space that is privately owned but open to the public). Indeed, it is important to note that this 'function' has by no means been unique to classical music: other forms of sound and music have been used as a means of repelling, moving and displacing particular bodies – for example, the use of Long Range Acoustic Devices to disperse G20 protesters in Pittsburgh, the notorious 'mosquito' device that strategically exploits the sensitivity of listeners under twenty-five to frequencies over 17kHz, the use of 'cheesy' music by Cliff Richard and The Carpenters to irritate 'young hooligans', or even the use of certain types of popular music as an auditory 'welcome' and

‘keep out’ sign for retailers seeking to attract a particular customer base. (Cook, 2013, DeNora, 2004) However, unlike Long Range Acoustic Devices and the Mosquito, classical music does not displace by causing pain and physical discomfort; and in comparison with the alleged ‘disposability’ of popular music, classical music is often imagined to hold a cultural value and significance that makes its weaponized usage both novel and – for some – sacrilegious. (Hirsch, 2012) Indeed, its use of an anti-loitering device can be understood to capitalize upon classical music’s ‘exclusionary’ history and culture so as to displace certain listeners from shared social space.

Everyday sonic warfare and the revanchist city

While sound has long been implicated in the governance and policing of public space – from the late-seventeenth to nineteenth-century folk ritual of ‘rough music’, used to shame transgressors of community norms; to the use of urban noise abatement legislation to prohibit certain forms of activity that are deemed a breach of the (aural and moral) peace – the weaponized use of classical music as an anti-loitering deterrent can be understood apropos of the spatial, economic and affective logics of what Neil Smith (1996, 1998) has referred to as ‘the revanchist city’. Drawing comparisons with the mixture of militarism and moralism that characterized the bourgeois, reactionary ‘Revanchists’ of late-nineteenth century Paris; and the geo-political climate of New York in the late-twentieth century, Smith identifies the revanchist tendencies of neoliberal urban policy. Neoliberal revanchism names a broad set of intersecting and dynamic social, political, legal and economic processes – including housing and eviction, changes to law and order legislation, economic restructuring, changes to and dismantlement of welfare policy, and changing conceptions of ‘publicness’ and public space – that are framed in relation to vengeful approach to those deemed enemies to ‘civil societies’. Though initially outlined in relation to New York city, neoliberal revanchism has been considered an applicable heuristic for understanding and characterizing changes to urban life in a variety of European and American cities. For Smith, the vengeful reaction that emerged in New York and elsewhere was a response to ‘failed urban optimism at the end of the 1980s. For many who succeeded as yuppies in the previous decade, the 1990s has been a time of economic retreat and the dismal defeat of often unrealistic expectations.’ (Smith, 1996, p.212) Where the antiurbanism manifest in revanchist ideology and policy was by no means new – Smith notes that antiurbanism ‘runs deep in US public culture’ – one factor that distinguished revanchism from this more

general antiurbanism was the ways in which the panoply of ‘fear and fury’ came to dominate public media visions of urban life. (Smith, 1996, p.213) The vengeful urbanism was intensified in New York under the Republican Mayor Rudolph (Rudy) W. Giuliani, who, amid growing anxieties about ‘disorder’ in public spaces, identified certain groups – the homeless, sex workers, graffiti artists, squatters, ‘reckless bicyclists’ and ‘unruly youth’ – as ‘enemies within’. (Smith, 1998, p.3)

The revanchist city thus seeks to reserve public space for populations that are either explicitly or implicitly held to be morally, economically and culturally desirable, through the dispersal and containment of populations associated with ‘decline’. White, middle class sensibilities, which are in turn conflated with notions of ‘decent society’ and ‘quality of life’, are posited as under threat from minorities – the working classes, immigrants, political activists and other ‘deviants’. (Smith, 1998, p.4) Individuals become responsible for social ills and the undesirable circumstances that they find themselves in: ‘In this classically vengeful conservatism, the connections between societal process and individual predicament are reversed.’ (Smith, 1996, p.222) Revanchism seeks to displace rather than address social problems, as well as the populations associated with social problems in the name of ‘cleaning up’ the city. With this, public space – increasingly defined apropos of commercial interests – is ‘secured’ against those deemed ‘dangerous’ and/or non-consumers.

Sound has played an important role in reconfiguration of urban areas in alignment with neoliberal revanchism. Lilian Radovac has argued that strategies of noise control and abatement have long been a means of asserting the borders of ‘the revanchist city’, insofar as ‘disputes over sound necessarily reflect social struggles over space.’ The alternate containment and displacement of marginalized communities has been accompanied by ‘increasingly stringent constraints on their aural and spatial practices.’ (Radovac, 2011, p. 313) Muzak has been used to provide an ‘aural script’ within shared spaces such as shopping centres and waiting rooms; and is often programmed to correspond with the aesthetic tastes and sensibilities of a desired (i.e. affluent, white, middle-class) clientele. (Atkinson, 2003; Sterne 1997) Personal soundscaping technologies such as noise cancelling headphones that provide ‘quiet comfort’ in allowing the (white, Euro-American, male) business traveller to isolate themselves from the unwanted noise of shared social space

reproduce neoliberalism's prioritisation of individual privacy and control against an unwelcome and non-conforming 'other'. (Hagood, 2012) Weaponized classical music, then, is one of a number of sonic strategies through which the borders and boundaries of revanchist urban space are (re)constituted; and through which 'legitimate' and 'non-legitimate' engagements with shared space are defined.

Often associated with neoliberal revanchism's securing and policing of public urban space is the design movement of 'Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design' (CPTED). As the name suggests, CPTED seeks to deter (potential and actual) criminal activity through architectural interventions to shared space. Common CPTED strategies include improvements in lighting; promoting and inhibiting pedestrian movement through certain spaces; the removal of overgrowth and shrubbery in and around car parks, buildings and wasteland; bars and armrests on benches to prevent people from lying down or skateboarding on them; and 'anti-homeless' spikes outside of buildings, intended to prevent rough sleeping. (Cozens, Saville and Hillier, 2005) As Jonathan Sterne notes, in seeking to modify social behaviour of 'others' so as to make preferred occupants feel more secure, weaponized classical music can be considered a particular aural manifestation of Crime Prevention for Environmental Design. The public body English Heritage, for example, refers to classical music in their crime prevention guide for the owners, tenants and managers of heritage assets. They suggest that 'where there is an anti-social gathering on a regular basis, consider playing classical music, which may have a calming effect.' Such measures can reduce 'some of the triggers for illegal and antisocial behaviours', while also 'contributing towards a more welcoming environment for legitimate [sic.] users' (English Heritage, 2013, p.13). As this description demonstrates, classical music is broadly-defined: it tends to refer to late-seventeenth to early-nineteenth century instrumental music but may also refer to operatic pieces. Of more importance than generic fidelity is music's perceived impact on various social groups.

Though classical music is often described as a crime deterrent, the precise meaning of the term 'crime' in this context tends to be ambiguous. Indeed, Smith argues that one of the characteristics of urban revanchism has been 'a more active viciousness that attempts to criminalize a whole range of 'behaviour''. (Smith, 1996, p.222) While 'crime in particular has become the central marker of the revanchist city' Smith notes 'the more so as the fears

and realities of crime become desynchronized.’ (Smith, 1996, p.209) Criminality is reframed so that ‘the sign and symptom become the thing; it is identified with certain forms of social presence in the urban landscape.’ (Smith, 1998, p.3) As English Heritage’s description demonstrates – and in keeping with the spatial logics of revanchism – weaponized classical music results in social subjects being divided into two types: the respectable and desirable commuter/consumer, whose presence is to be permitted and encouraged; and the unpermitted, undesirable, antisocial, and (potentially) dangerous loiterer, whose presence is to be discouraged and abated. This latter subject – the primary target of weaponized classical music – is typically referred to via ‘dog-whistle’ pejorative terms for working-class youth, including ‘yobs’, ‘thugs’, ‘hooligans’ and ‘hoodies’. The employment of these terms supports the (implicit or explicit) construal of target bodies as criminals - or potential criminals – who thus generate and are worthy of suspicion.

As Sterne suggests, conceiving of the targets of weaponized music in relation to crime is highly problematic, insofar as people who loiter in convenience store car parks, skateboarders at public fountains, or homeless people in front of a fast food outlet may not be doing anything illegal by being there. Articles describing the use of music as a deterrent tend to draw little distinction ‘between teenagers with lots of time (but not much money) on their hands and other forms of activity that are actually criminal. Rather teens, drug dealers, the homeless, sex workers and low-income non-white populations are all lumped together as targets’ (Sterne, 2005, p.4). The figure of the ‘loiterer’, then, is used to blur the boundaries between criminality and other non-conformist (and non-criminal) uses of shared space that ultimately conflict with commercial interests. As Susan Buck-Morss argues, the loiterer is subversive insofar as they refuse ‘to submit to industrial social controls [...] Loiterers ignore rush hour; rather than getting somewhere they hang around [...] Instead of pursuing private ends they enjoy the public view. (Buck-Morss, 1986, p.136) The loiterer remains still in spaces where continual movement is encouraged – shops, stations, fast-food outlets and car parks. They not only fail to partake in economic exchange but is understood to also threaten economic exchange – they are thought to create generate a frightening and menacing atmosphere that repels legitimate users and, consequently, on a micro-scale, disrupt the flows of capital. Indeed, in dispersing those felt to be troublemakers, the weaponized use of classical music might be more accurately described as alleviating *fear* of crime. In this regard, it is revealing that Tom Yeoman, a spokesperson for the travel

organisation Nexus, claims that even if the loiterers congregating at Tyne and Wear metro stations ‘didn’t have a violent agenda, they looked [sic.] like they might have.’ (Jackson, 2005) The groups congregating in stations were felt to be menacing by other passengers, irrespective of whether their actions were illegal and so inhibiting their presence, via music, was understood to make the desired clientele feel more secure. One of the purposes of weaponized classical music, then, is to produce a felt atmosphere of ‘safety and security’, defined in relation to the aesthetic tastes and norms of those deemed legitimate users of public and privately owned public space. If the loiterer in the revanchist city produces an affective blockage by amplifying unease, fear and suspicion, then weaponized classical music aims to remove this blockage.

To soothe or remove?

As with other forms of programmed muzak, weaponized classical music relies on the commodification of not only music but also a listener’s affective response to music (Hagood, 2012, Sterne 1997). It aims to help establish an atmosphere of safety and security in alignment with the spatial logics of neoliberal urban revanchism. Yet weaponized classical music is also affective insofar as it influences the feelings and capacities of specific target bodies. In this regard, weaponized classical music functions – or is imagined to function – as an ‘audio-affective’ deterrent: it is accredited with the capacity to modulate feeling, sensation and bodily capacities via sound, for the purposes of regulating and policing public space.

There is, however, an apparent tension within the reported audio-affective functioning of classical music as a deterrent, insofar as it is credited with both ‘soothing’ and ‘removing’. Classical music has often been credited with ‘soothing away’ deviant behaviour: as English Heritage’s crime prevention guide demonstrates, it is held to have a ‘calming’ effect. This assertion is frequently repeated in media accounts and interviews: for example, when questioned about the use of classical music as a deterrent at a nearby subway stop, a Boston store owner postulated that ‘music tames the savage beast’ (Timberg, 2005); whilst the head of Boston’s transit police remarks that classical music ‘can lift the human spirit, even the spirit of the cynical teenager’ (quoted in Hirsch, 2006, p.347). Similarly, in a news report entitled ‘McFugue, no cheese: Beethoven and the Dead European Males clean up a notorious street corner’ Thomas Korosec reports how a McDonald’s in downtown Dallas

used classical music in combination with improved street-lighting and litter prevention to improve the outlet's image. According to Korosec, the 'very urban' McDonald's had previously been nicknamed 'Crackdonald's' due to 'the myriad species of thug life that hung out there.' (Korosec, 1997) The former manager of the outlet, James Oby claimed that even the fast food workers looked 'a little dangerous in their gold jewellery and mismatched uniforms.' However, the broadcasting of baroque, classical and early romantic music not only inside the store but also outside onto the surrounding sidewalks and nearby plaza reportedly led to an 'astounding' drop in police calls and arrests. According to Oby, the classical music created a different atmosphere that discouraged criminal behaviour: 'you don't walk or act the same way when there's classical music on...It's just the way it makes you feel.' (Korosec, 1997) Consequently, Korosec reports that 'On a recent afternoon, there was no hangin', no chillin', no dealin' – just office workers, commuters, school kids, and conventioners queuing up for their Macburgers and fries.' (Korosec, 1997) As Oby's remarks suggest, the music, in modulating the 'feel' of the environment – the affective relation between bodies and space – was perceived to 'improve' listeners' behaviour ('you don't walk or act the same way'), leading to, as Korosec concludes, the transformation of the restaurant and its clientele.

The relationship between music and morality has been a frequent tenet of aesthetic discourse since antiquity. For Plato, music had the capacity to influence moral character – it could encourage temperance and nobility; or pettiness, meanness and feebleness. Similar conceptualisations of music's moral dimension are evident centuries later in Europe. For instance, in 1752 the German flautist Johann Quantz claimed that the musician is 'useful' insofar as they responsibly influence and guide the moral character of the social (Quantz, 1985). The notion that classical music (broadly defined) can calm away deviant behaviour and thus 'improve' both individuals and shared spaces resonates with a long-standing 'aesthetic moralism' with which classical music is framed as 'civilizing', 'enlightening' and 'enriching'; and thus credited as a force for social and moral good. Aesthetic moralism names a circular logic of affect, aesthetics and morality: classical music is good (for us) insofar as it is good (aesthetically); and its (aesthetic) goodness is evidence of its (moral) goodness. The problem with aesthetic moralism, however, is that it mistakes the *a priori* for the *a posteriori*, innate qualities for that which emerges in situ – for the good (for 'us') with the good (for 'all').

Where some commentators remark on classical music's ability to soothe, turning non-conforming loiterers into complicit 'citizens', this fails to account for weaponized classical music's celebrated capacity to 'remove' and disperse loiterers. In Korosec's account of the use of classical music at a Dallas MacDonalds it is notable that the atmosphere is transformed along with the clientele. When used as a deterrent, classical music is intended to displace by generating and amplifying 'negative' affections – irritation, annoyance and alienation. As Lily Hirsch suggests, in addition to reasserting classical music's transformative and 'civilizing' potential, weaponized classical music also marks a decline in its cultural authority. (Hirsch, 2012, p.28) *Contra* social fictions of classical music as an autonomous and inherently virtuous art form that exists for its own sake, classical music is rendered yet another form of functional music. Indeed, criticisms of the practice are often predicated on concerns with the degradation of a valuable artform, insofar as it is 'an insult to listeners of classical music.' (Hirsch, 2006, p.353) For example, the British cultural commentator Norman Lebrecht states that 'Music is a vast psychological mystery, and playing it to police railways is culturally reckless, profoundly demeaning to one of the greater glories of civilization.' (Hirsch, 2006, p.353; Timberg 2005)

Classical music is considered an effective deterrent insofar as it is assumed that loiterers dislike and are consequently irritated by that type of music. Conversely, 'desirable' subjects are understood to be unaffected (or perhaps even entertained) by the music. Nexus's Mike Palmer exemplifies this assumed correlation in his description of the Tyne and Wear metro's use of music. He claimed that Frederic Delius's Incidental Music from the opera *Hassan* was 'the one that would really put the youths off...They just go away'; whereas if the stations had 'put on Oasis perhaps we'd gather more youths.' (Palmer, quoted in BBC News, 1998) Thus musical materials are selected on the basis that they will be effective as irritants against a particular group of people: it is intended to create a sense of 'non-belonging'.

In his defence of classical music in contemporary society, music scholar Julian Johnson argues that classical music, insofar as it functions as 'art' (as opposed to 'entertainment') is morally valuable, since its distance from the everyday and its subsequent lack of immediacy enables it to communicate something fundamental about what it is to be

human. Johnson laments the devaluation of classical music in contemporary culture: classical music's loss of status is bound up with the marginalization of intellectual, reflective activity of the mind'. (Johnson, 2002, p.71). In such a culture, classical music becomes 'an activity of the eccentric – peripheral, undervalued and highly comical.' (Johnson, 2002: 71) 'Classical music', he argues, 'like the activity of the mind more generally, is too articulate to be cool.' (Johnson, 2002, p.71) Indeed, it is classical music's lack of 'coolness' that is understood to be integral to its repellent capacity. As BBC reporter Melissa Jackson suggests apropos of the Tyne and Wear metro: 'it is pretty uncool to be seen hanging around somewhere Mozart is playing.' (Jackson, 2005) A 16-year-old customer at the aforementioned Dallas MacDonald's referred the music played as 'very uncool'. Similarly, a 22-year-old customer described the music as 'Old man's music...it's nothing you feel comfortable with.' (Kerosec, 1997). Consequently, classical music is not just repellent because of the order and nature of its sonic materials. Rather, classical music is off-putting to some because of its symbolic capital and cultural baggage. And in being off-putting, it serves to diminish the disruptive power of 'undesirable' subjects.

Signifiers such as 'loiterer' and 'yob' are de-individualising: as noted previously, they serve to homogenize disparate but collectively stigmatized urban populations. In this regard, it is significant that weaponized classical music is intended to dispel 'gangs' of loiterers rather than (or as well as) particular individuals. As noted earlier, what tends to connect theories of affect to one another is the relational perspective the term affords. From this perspective, a body need not be treated as synonymous with the autonomous and enclosed (Cartesian) subject; nor does it need to be defined in accordance with epidermal boundaries. Instead, following a Spinozist definition, a body can be defined in accordance with its relations of movement and rest (i.e. its composition); and its power to affect and be affected (i.e. what a body can do; the ways in which it might act and be acted upon; the relations of which it is capable). As Deleuze states 'a [Spinozist] body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds... *a social body, a collectivity*' (Deleuze, 1988, p.127, my emphasis). It is with this definition in mind that collectivized groups of loiterers might be considered as a body. Weaponized classical music is meant to diminish the affective power of not just the individual the 'gang' or group by weakening or destroying its composition. The menacing atmosphere accredited to the presence of loiterers might be considered the anticipatory sensing of their capacity – or their imagined capacity – to act: of what a social body might

do. Weaponized classical music, then, aims to decompose and thus diminish a collectivized social body so that it no longer generates a menacing atmosphere.

Affect and its others

The accreditation of classical music with the capacity to ‘soothe’ and ‘remove’ might be considered symptomatic of the complexity and open-endedness of musical affects and their determination *in situ*. However, many media accounts assume a straightforward causal relationship between music and its effects: ‘undesirable’ (targeted) listeners are either calmed or irritated and thus dispersed. As has already been noted, such determinism fails to recognise that the affective capacities of music are not innate nor guaranteed but contextual and contingent. A consideration of music’s affects and effects – both real and desired – requires a consideration of causality; but in a manner that recognises the complexity of causal relations. In the context of weaponised classical music, these relations can be understood to traverse various but entangled registers, that is, the ideological, geo-political, economic, affective, aesthetic and signifying dimensions of social life.

Central to a number of recent discussions of the ‘turn’ to affect has been the question of how affect relates to other modes of mediation, relation and experience, insofar as the embrace of affect as a ‘new’ approach has risked overstating its independence from and capacity to overturn ‘old’ critical perspectives, methods and theories. Yet as a number of commentators have noted, this ‘origin myth’ of affect theory risks reifying historical and conceptual dualisms. (Pedwell and Whitehead, 2012, p.118) Ruth Leys asserts that framings of affect as ‘independent of, and in an important sense prior to, ideology’ serves to reproduce rather than complicate dualisms of body/mind, intuition/reason and feeling/meaning. (Leys, 2011, p.437). Lawrence Grossberg, similarly, notes that if affect is ‘mistakenly’ set in opposition to forms of signification, then this fails to account for the ways in which affect is organized by ‘discursive or cultural apparatuses.’ (Grossberg, 2010, p.194) For Grossberg, the relationship between affect and ideology is multidirectional: not only are ideologies lived affectively; they also gain authority via ‘affective investments’ that grant particular significations the capacity to ‘represent the world.’ (Grossberg, 2010, p.195)

This bifurcation of affect and its others has been both restated and critiqued in the context of sound studies. Steve Goodman, for instance, in his philosophical study of sonic warfare and

its ecology of fear, states that ‘the linguistic, textualist and social constructivist perspectives that have dominated cultural theory in the 1980s and 1990s’ are ‘of little use’ to a consideration of these practices and their histories. (Goodman, 2010, p. xiv) Brian Kane, however, has challenged such dismissals, insofar as ‘auditory cultures’ play a key role in shaping affective engagements with sound. Kane traces the terms upon which ‘sound studies’ distinguishes itself from ‘auditory culture’. The former, exemplified by the work of Goodman, amongst others, is characterized by an interest in the ontological, the affective and ‘the virtual’. The interests of sound studies are posited as distinct from ‘representation and signification’. As Kane argues, ‘representation’ and ‘signification’ act as floating signifiers, standing in for a range of ‘hermeneutic and interpretive commitments’, including cultural studies, phenomenology, historicism and deconstruction (Kane, 2015, p.4) Yet, as Kane asserts, the strict separation of ‘sound studies’ and ‘auditory culture’, and, correspondingly, of ‘affect’ and ‘representation/signification’ ‘body’ and mind’, ‘autonomic’ and ‘cognitive’, ‘ontological’ and ‘epistemological’ fails to account for the ways in which sound’s signification, or ‘knowledge’ more broadly, can be considered to impact upon the affective responses generated by and through sound. Kane gives the example of how the fear and dread activated by a persistent sound with an unknown origin might turn to relief once the source is discovered. With this, he calls into question Goodman’s temporal priority of affect over cognition, which misses what Kane describes as a crucial dialectic: ‘the capacities of the body are cultivated at the same time that cultures become embodied.’ (Kane, 2015, p.8)

While the affective is clearly integral to the functioning of weaponized classical music, it exists in complex relation with its ‘others’: ideology, signification and meaning. This relation is co-constitutive and multidirectional. As noted earlier, weaponized classical music as a practice is both underlined by and reproduces the spatial and affective logics of urban revanchism. Classical music’s symbolic power – that is, its affective and representational association with a particular demographic (i.e. middle-class, white, ‘elite’) – is partly what makes it effective as a sonic irritant. Weaponized classical music is both informed by and serves to reinforce classical music’s raced and classed connotations: the musical materials are selected on the basis that they are at odds with the cultural values and aesthetic tastes of ‘loiterers’. Likewise, the longstanding investment in classical music as a force for moral good underlines and is reinforced the imagined capacity of weaponized classical music to calm, soothe and abate deviant behaviour. Thus, apropos of Kane’s distinction, weaponized

classical music can be understood to exemplify embodiment of culture that occurs with, through and alongside the cultivation (and policing) of bodily capacities.

In the context of weaponized classical music, then, affect does not exist in clear isolation from its 'others'. Nor can affect be associated easily with the 'quirky', 'unusual', 'unexpected', or 'the new'. As Clare Hemmings notes, some approaches to affect have been marked by an emphasis on 'the unexpected, the singular, or indeed the quirky, over the generally applicable, where the latter becomes associated with the pessimism of social determinist perspectives, and the former with the hope of freedom from social constraint.' (Hemmings, 2005, p.550) *Contra* the 'optimism' that has been attached to affect as a critical object, weaponized classical music as exemplifies the potential for both music and affect to be deployed as technologies of social stratification: affect is modulated via music as a means of reproducing and maintaining the classed and racialized borders of public and privately owned public space. However, to critique the 'optimistic' rhetoric of certain strands of affect theory this is not to revert to a crude determinism. As Michael Gallagher (2016) notes, although it is possible to identify common or repeated affective *tendencies* in relation to sound (such as bodies being agitated by sudden loud sounds – or, in this instance, young, working-class urban populations being irritated by classical music), this should not be mistaken for a straightforwardly deterministic relation between sound and affection. While there is an intimate relationship between music and social identities, aesthetic tastes and affective responses are not entirely predictable. Similarly, there is not a straightforward causal relation between classical music's ideological and affective dimensions: to suggest that music's affects exist in relation with its ideological components is not to simply reverse the affect/ideology binary so that ideology 'causes' affect. Indeed, there can be multiple affective responses to the ideological dimensions of both classical music and revanchism: from the subversive pleasure in occupying spaces and engaging with musical materials that are not 'for us' to apathy and indifference. Thus, irrespective of the crude determinisms offered in many media accounts, there are no guarantees as to weaponized classical music's affectivity.

To summarize, weaponized classical music can be understood apropos of the affective and spatial logics of the revanchist city: it functions in alignment with the revanchist desire to secure public space in alignment with white, middle class tastes, sensibilities and values; and

against the 'threat' of groups associated with urban decline. In this context, the figure of the loiterer is felt to establish a threatening and menacing atmosphere. Weaponized classical music aims to reconfigure and affectively police public space for the benefit of desired and desirable populations by displacing certain social groups associated with broadly-defined notions of 'criminal behaviour'. While credited with the capacity to 'soothe away' deviancy and thus establish conformity with the socio-economic norms of public life, weaponized classical music ultimately aims to diminish the perceived affective power of the loiterer through its repellent capacity and, in the process, transform a 'menacing' atmosphere into one of 'safety', 'security' and (selectively-defined) 'normality'. In this regard, weaponized classical music exemplifies the capacity of musical affects to function as technologies of social reproduction.

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