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# Digital Listening: The Reproduced Musical Work

by

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"Without music, life would be a mistake."
- Miles Davis

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# Introduction

Music, as an art form, has meant different things to me at various junctures in my life, just as I have created different meanings in music at other points. One piece in particular, though, remains as personally significant as ever: *Pictures at an Exhibition*, by Mussorgsky-Ravel. When I was around five or six, I couldn't fall asleep without music, and this piece was one of my favorites - but I had only one recording: the Berlin Philharmonic under the direction of Herbert Von Karajan. Through osmosis and at least one listen per week for several years, this recording is deeply embedded in me: it was and still is my gold standard for Mussorgsky and Ravel's ideal interpretation. When I saw the piece performed by the New York Philharmonic under Lorin Maazel, though, I was so struck by the interpretative differences that at the end I declared, to my thunderstruck parents, that I didn't enjoy the performance at all.

This reaction, however, shook me. How could a piece be performed so differently? And who was I to judge? As I matured as an individual and a musician, this question continued to effect me. How could two people have such radically different approaches to the same score? How could they both be correct? Most importantly, how did one CD that arbitrarily ended up in my bedroom shape my perception of music forever? Should I have listened closer? Should I have read the score before I ever heard the recording? These questions remained unanswered, and form the foundation of my intersection of interests between critical theory and musical aesthetics.

As I soon discovered, these two fields were studied in earnest as art and media followed society into the industrial age. Until this point art was something experienced by the observer in a mediated, serene environment. There was no other way to observe a painting, for instance, than to pilgrimage, as it were, to the work's unique *milieu*. These constructs were radically altered, however, upon the invention of photography, which presented visual art in different settings. The camera offered virtually unlimited and free *entrée* to works that were previously impossible to see or access by the general populace, and in so doing fundamentally altered artistic perception.

This might seem an entirely positive development: why not allow as many people as possible to see a work? In principle it is very democratizing; nevertheless it created deep issues, namely authenticity, that art is working to resolve to this day. For if the visual work can be reproduced, does the original still hold the same credibility as it once did? What happens to the original if it no longer requires a pilgrimage? And, perhaps more significantly, what are the social and economic implications of reproducibility for the industry of art and art's place in capitalism?

Music, however, was as yet untouched by such developments. It still retained its status as a unique and ephemeral work of art. It was only a matter of time before music suffered a similar fate, and indeed the capability to record live performances, albeit poorly, developed in the early 1900's. This did not last long, however, and advancements in recording were first widely exploited by the invention of the radio, which saw wide-scale public utilization by the 1920's. By the 1930's, though, the gramophone was already becoming a household item.

With public acceptance of technological development and widespread social change, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, two of the most important authors to my thesis, crafted their seminal works. Benjamin was an aesthetician and devoted Marxist whose work has often been credited as foundational for the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Arguably his most well known essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, first published in 1936, forwards a sociological and aesthetic theory for an age when all art forms were capable of being reproduced.

Benjamin's core concept in this text is aura, which is an analytic device used in his differentiation of painting and film. Concisely defined, aura is manifest through art's contextualization and history in conjunction with the presence of the work in the here-and-now before the observer. Though more thoroughly unpacked later in my thesis, this understanding is necessary to introduce Adorno's texts and the lineage of post-Frankfurt School thinkers.

For Adorno, specifically, much can be derived in the immediate wake of Benjamin's work. Where Benjamin's texts avoid the contextualization of music (he instead focuses primarily on photography and film), Adorno does not shy away from musical study, and takes on a Marxist critique of what he terms the Culture Industry, which uses music's commoditization for profit. In combination with music's physical commoditization and music's mechanical reproduction, new listening habits dominated popular culture. In his *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno discusses the consequences of a world in which the majority of listeners have contact with recorded and reproduced performances rather than live performance. He believes that works make structural demands upon the listener, and that in responding to these demands a

listener might come to understand the musical work, but ultimately concludes that there is an important classification of listeners who consume records capitalistically.

Adorno divides listening into two categories: Adequate and Regressive. The former category contains the 'expert listener,' who is educated, intellectually curious, and able to understand music on both structural and philosophical levels.[1] The latter category contains 'atomistic listeners,' or those who listen to music for pure entertainment. Such a listener fetishizes musical fragments, and consumes music for distraction and its status as a commodity. It is the polar opposite of structural listening: the atomistic listener forms a disjointed memory of the work that is based on themes and grandiose musical moments.[2]

It is necessary to have a basic understanding of these premises because a large part of my thesis is couched within post-Adornian and post-Benjaminian thought. Two principal authors utilized in this fashion are Jacques Attali and Friedrich Kittler, both of whom fall into this lineage but simultaneously work with these premises through unique methods: where Attali takes a much more Marxist approach in his contextualization of listening habits, collecting practices, and consumption patterns, Kittler has a much more marked Benjaminian approach in his analysis of the gramophone's ability – or inability, as the case may be – to project lifelike characteristics through mechanized sonic reproduction.

Thereafter, I shift gears slightly and look at the bigger picture. My thesis asks fundamental questions about the nature of a musical work of art, and finds some footing in a mildly phenomenological approach to performances and listening via

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[1] Max Paddison, Adorno's Aesthetics of Music (Cambridge England ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993). 210-211.
[2] Paddison 212.

Stan Godlovitch, who analyzes the relation of scores to performance and the musical work of art in his book *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study*. But this thesis purposefully contrasts the chronological progression of technology with this increasingly complex notion of the musical work of art, and makes its first attempt at a coherent theory - replete with the sociological, aesthetic, and philosophical foundation offered by the aforementioned authors - upon the introduction of Stephen Davies' *Musical Works and Performances: A Philosophical Exploration*. Most importantly, in this text Davies establishes what he terms a "robust, causal chain" from compositional intent to performance, which, for the author, is the primary method to determine whether a work of art is in fact instanced.

I eventually broach modernity and digital technology, and my thesis examines these questions in light of the entire breadth of technological innovation, from the gramophone to the MP3. It attempts to assess where this leaves listening habits, musical performance, and most importantly, the musical work of art. It is important to note, however, what this thesis contributes to the dominating presence of such canonical texts; what has yet to be understood and codified is the auratic listening experience in the 21st century, with specific pertinence to digital or recorded audio's effect on the musical work of art and its respective instantiation, be it in a live or controlled environment. For instance, questions such as, 'If a piece of pre-recorded material is queued before an audience on a stage, is it an experience of a work of art as such?' have yet to be investigated through these lenses.

It is worth noting that this thesis operates within a particular paradigm of musical thought, specifically, that which has been derived from the classical canon of

music - this isn't to say that the paper ignores musical developments since that time; on the contrary it addresses them outright. What it means, though, is that my thesis is embedded within, and grapples with its confinement by, the critical lineage established in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Hence I find myself in agreement with Lydia Goehr's *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music,* which is in large part a response to the lineage described above. Goehr conjectures that today's understanding of musical works is derived from the 1800's, with specific reference to E.T.A. Hoffman's romantic conception of the musical work of art.

> The fact that Hoffmann's understanding of musical works corresponds exactly to the understanding the majority of us still have today is more pertinent. Thus most of us tend, like Hoffmann, to see works as objectified expressions of composers that prior to compositional activity did not exist…we assume, further, that the tonal, rhythmic, and instrumental properties of the works are constitutive of a structurally integrated wholes that are symbolically represented by composers in scores. Once created, we treat works as existing after their creators have died, and whether or not they are performed or listened to at any given time. … And when called, finally, to give examples of works, we usually look to the tradition of western, European, classical, 'opus' music, to works, in otherwords, of a 'purely instrumental' or 'absolute' sort.[3]

Goehr posits that the conception of the musical work of art in our time is in fact the same that was utilized and conceived 200 years ago. Even though society and music have advanced since that time, we as an intellectual community - and, more broadly, general society - have not advanced our notions of a musical work.

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[3] Lydia Goehr, The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works : An Essay in the Philosophy of Music (Oxford England, New York: Clarendon Press ; Oxford University Press, 1992). 3.

Her overall argument seeks to reveal the limitations of analysis within this sort of ideological formation and forward the idea of a contemporaneous approach to understanding a musical work of art, wherein study of music's advances in the present day will yield an updated, more pertinent definition. Goehr's book is both a methodological inquiry into how to create this new theory as well as how a philosopher could and should treat these concepts given their anachronisms and shortcomings, if we assume the claim (that she appropriately proves in her chapter "The Central Claim") that the work-concept, as she terms it, began to regulate musical practice and taste at a given point in time. Goehr's argument is, in effect, a wholesale indictment of the use of the term 'musical work of art' and any implications therein. Though my thesis does make use of this concept, I apply it within this Goehrian framework, and by the end partly conclude that indeed this particular conception of a musical work of art is faulty and impractical.

However, it is impossible to entirely discount the work of authors such as Adorno and Benjamin and those in their wake, for these theorists uncover issues that plague music to this day, even if their formulation of the 'work-concept' is intrinsically antiquated. Hence my thesis, if only provisionally, utilizes the definition that has been commonly accepted yet remains, at its core, an anachronism.

Nevertheless, this thesis is important because one of the central questions facing music today is the degree of authenticity surrounding digital music, which has become a point of contention among artists, consumers, and the music industry alike. It matters because although people acknowledge that music listening has become increasingly distracted, with music serving more and more of a background role in

pre-recorded and contrived contexts, there is still desire for the authentic, enveloping experience. Even though it may require different terminology to state and different origins to complete, this thesis couches itself within the terms already in use by the public and academic lexicon and attempts to carve a perhaps intermediary path to what such a new concept might look like in light of what has come before it.

Through an analysis of the musical work of art, of listening types and their relation to socio-economic structures, of media study, and of musicological ramifications, this thesis situates the musical work of art within a new technological age with respect to listening, performing, and artistic understanding. As such, my thesis forwards the claim that an authentic listening experience is in fact possible in today's day and age, but that it is increasingly difficult to find. In so doing I must necessarily, by the end, make the claim that there need to be new modes of understanding music as a result of the increasing incongruence between music in the digital age and the canonical theories that have come to dominate the art form. In combination, these dual conclusions serve to inform future works about the importance and validity of the contemporary musical work in its various technological manifestations, and to suggest that further inquiry is required to have a well-rounded understanding of its current and future definition and implications.

# Music in the Age of Technological Reproducibility

## A Benjaminian Approach

Walter Benjamin's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility," (1936) is one of the seminal works to emerge from the Frankfurt School's investigation of how emerging mass media challenge and transform modes of perception embedded in traditional media and art forms. Though Benjamin primarily focuses on painting's progression to photography and film, his text proposes a new aesthetic theory for an age when art in all forms is reproducible. Central to Benjamin's argument is aura, which he uses to discuss the essential differences between painting and film. To elucidate Benjamin's concern with the *disappearance* of aura in what he terms 'the age of technological reproducibility,' I will contrast his essay with two works that address similar concerns with regard to music: Theodor Adorno's essay "On the Fetishism in Music and the Regression of Listening," (1938), and the first chapter of Freidrich Kitter's book *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter,* (1986). In so doing, I can begin to unpack the musical complexities left untouched in Benjamin's argument so as to begin my larger undertaking to consider the musical work of art in a new technological age.

In order to contextualize Benjamin's work, one must understand his goals for the essay as a whole. Primarily, "The Work of Art" is an attempt to mimic Marx's visionary study of capitalism in which, "he presented [the basic conditions of capitalist production] in a way which showed what could be expected of capitalism in

the future."[1] By tracing past and present capitalist conditions and their social context, Marx wrote an accurate prognosis for the future of the capitalist mode of production. In applying this two-pronged approach to art, Benjamin attempts to predict art's future in an age of technological innovations that shift art's production and modes of experience.

Benjamin therefore starts his text with a historical analysis of artistic reproduction, contrasting the mechanical production of the moving type, lithography, and eventually photography, with reproductions produced painstakingly by master copyists. Upon this paradigm shift in production, then, reproduction remained nothing more than a copy of the original. "In even the most perfect reproduction*, one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art – its unique existence in a particular place. It is this unique existence – and nothing else – that bears the mark of the history to which the work has been subject."[2] Benjamin differentiates the original work of art from its reproduction by the original's unique lifespan as a tangible physical object. For example, if a sculpture is moved and slightly damaged, only the original work will bear the exact markings of this particular incident. Hence the work is both marked by, and indelibly linked to, a history that no physical reproduction can share – that is to say, there is literally no other object that can ever perfectly mimic history's imprint upon the original work of art and the overwhelming presence of this history before the viewer in a unique moment of perception.

Benjamin then tackles this delicate concept of authenticity *vis-à-vis* the notion of here-and-now, which is the comprehension of the specific physical, historical, and

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[1] Benjamin, Walter, Marcus Paul Bullock, Michael William Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith. *Selected Writings*. 3 Cambridge Vol, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1996. 101.
[2] Benjamin 103.

locational singularity of the original artistic work. "The here-and-now of the original underlies the concept of its authenticity … [and] the whole sphere of authenticity eludes technological – and of course not only technological - reproduction."[3] Authenticity, for Benjamin, is the combination of the here-and-now with the physical work itself: the specific amalgamation of a work's singularity with its inimitable presence.

These views undergird the notion of aura, which for Benjamin is, "a strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance however near it may be."[4] In order to understand his rather vague definition, it is necessary to consider aura with relation to its aforementioned qualities. As observers settle for a reproduction rather than a pilgrimage to the original work of art, uniqueness vanishes from the original; that is to say, the work becomes detached from its physical singularity. Ironically, though, in the increasing demand for reproducibility, the uniqueness becomes central to the observer, who must realize that the reproduction *is of* a singular original that exists in a unique physical reality. Aura is precisely this apparition of the original's historically unique existence, in combination with reverential perception of the work in its near but distanced temporal singularity.[5]

Technological reproduction, however, removes the work from its authentic physical existence, insofar as the original work exists in one physical location at any given moment. Whereas the observer must pilgrimage to view the original work, technological reproducibility renders this pilgrimage obsolete. "By replicating the

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[3] Benjamin 103.
[4] Benjamin 104-105.
[5] It is important to note that aura is not a possessable trait of the artwork per se, but rather an analytic tool introduced by Benjamin to explain a particular historical phenomenon.

work many times over, it substitutes a mass existence for a unique existence."[6] In the age of technological reproduction the work no longer has a unique, esteemed, physical singularity, or a dialectical sense of nearness and distance insofar as it is physically near the viewer but viewed from a reverential distance. Hence aura vanishes in technological reproduction as the work of art is transported into the observer's locational reality.

This leads to a paradigm shift in modes of perception. It represents, in Benjamin's terms, the liquidation of tradition and the rise of assimilation: the work's transformation into a possessable thing. In other words, what was once a unique object with a specific historical tradition is now ubiquitous in mass culture. "Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at close range in an image, or, better, in a facsimile, a reproduction. And the reproduction … differs unmistakably from the image."[7] What is missing from this reproduction is the here-and-now, the contextualized specificity, the reverence of distance or nearness, and the singularity of the perception – in sum, the aura – of the original.

Benjamin clarifies this concept through the example of the status of Venus. An object of worship for the Greeks, it also happened to be an object of distaste to medieval clerics, "But what was equally evident to both was its uniqueness – that is, its aura."[8] In order to veritably view the authentic work of art both civilizations had to journey to see it in its original setting, and in so doing were able to comprehend the work's aura, its historical and physical singularity. However, through reproduction, i.e. photography or film, the work was separated from its aura and neither the

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[6] Benjamin 104.
[7] Benjamin 105.
[8] Benjamin 105.

apparition of the here-and-now nor the physical individuality of the object were perceived.

Applied to a broader scale, this realization has several effects on both artistic works and the observers who view them. On a positive note, Benjamin states that reproduction disassociates artworks like the statue of Venus from their religious connotations, allowing them to be appreciated as artworks in and of themselves rather than mere objects of ritual.[9] Simultaneously, in the work's reproducibility more people perceive it and can make it an object of study. In this way there is a democratization of expertise, and Benjamin thinks that this has the potential to create a wide, almost utopic standard of knowledge in mass culture. However, in a more creative sense, "to an ever-increasing degree, the work reproduced becomes the reproduction of a work designed for reproducibility."[10] Original works, assuming that they will be reproduced, are intrinsically created as reproductions designed to be reproduced intrinsically devoid of aura.[11]

Benjamin's primary example of this dramatic loss of aura lies in film. For Benjamin, the art form can be reduced to a series of photographs of an action performed in a film studio, or controlled environment, replayed at high speed to create the effect of motion and movement. "The work of art is produced only by

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[9] Religious intent and ritual play a marginal role in Benjamin's essay, but on page 106 he says, "[The theology of art] in turn gave rise to a negative theology, in the form of an idea of 'pure' art, which rejects not only any social function but any definition in terms of a representational content." Benjamin at least implies that observing art outside of its religious context and implications is possible, but simultaneously cautions art against the creation of a theology of art in the very attempt to free itself from religious connotations. For further discussion of Benjamin's notions of the religious in art, see Aleida and Jan Assman's "Air from Other Planets Blowing: The logic of Authenticity and the Prophet of the Aura" in *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*.

[10] Benjamin 106.

[11] Three years later, in his essay "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," (1939) Benjamin will utilize Baudelaire's poetry as evidence of this disappearance of aura.

means of montage. And each individual component of this montage is a reproduction of a process which neither is an artwork in itself nor gives rise to one through photography."[12] The act of filming is merely documentation of a contrived event that attempts to mimic something authentic. The very form of the art itself, the camera, is the mechanical means of reproducing the authentic work of art, which in this case is the acting.[13] "Those who are not visible, not present while [the actor] executes his performance, are precisely the ones who will control it."[14] The final cut must appease the masses that fill theaters, *not* the actors, or directors involved with the production. Because film is intended for the invisible audience, its control is even more exacting in its absence; everybody involved must be willing to adhere to the mass' desires; the only feedback they will receive is after the project is complete. Thus the film actor, director, and the film itself are directed by popular taste and interest.

The masses, therefore, are able to dictate their ideal entertainment, and, Benjamin argues, their own ideal reality. In laying claim to the film industry by their preferences, the camera has become the eye through which the audience views an intricately constructed reality, one that they have created themselves through their control of the lens.[15] "Thanks to the camera, therefore, the individual perceptions of the psychotic or the dreamer can be appropriated by collective perception."[16] In

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[12] Benjamin 110.
[13] A film, to Benjamin, is only a work of art insofar as the director establishes the montage of images – that is to say, the montage of reproductions – as the selection of record.
[14] Benjamin 113.
[15] Lindsay Walters, in "The Cameraman and Machine Are Now One" in *Mapping Benjamin*, takes this thought further in her argument that there is no distinction between the photographer, the cameraman, and the lenses which they respectively control. For Walters, their eyes are literally the mechanical lenses through which they, and by extension the observers, view the illusion that's created. And because film is also necessarily an external storage device, the viewers have the same eyes and memory as the machines; they are one.
[16] Benjamin 118.

effect, anything can be seen, understood, and adopted into the mass consciousness. The camera, then, is the eye of the masses into a reality for and by themselves.

Consequently, Benjamin's criticisms of film and its reception are ultimately linked to politics. Because the camera is now the mass eye, it can appropriate, or reject, any form of individual perception. "This same technologization has created the possibility of psychic immunization against such mass psychoses. It does so by means of certain film in which the forced development of sadistic fantasies or masochistic delusions can prevent their natural and dangerous maturation in the masses."[17] Through art's technological reproduction it can transform into a political force:[18] a mass psyche that both controls and is controlled. In the former, the mass psyche remains the invisible puppet-master, pulling the strings of filmmakers to perpetuate an always-identical escape from the drudgery of Marx's capitalist reality; in the latter, the art's standardization and loss of aura creates a mass, one-dimensional being.[19]

Benjamin, however, doesn't declare the human race lost to homogenized existence. Instead he distinguishes between two types of reception, one exemplified by the (proletarian) masses, the other by the (bourgeois) art-lover. The masses are trained to seek illusion that transports them out of their daily, regimented lives. The art-lover, on the other hand, seeks to renounce subjectivity in the face of auratic art, to be immersed in the here-and-now. "A person who concentrates before a work of art is

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[17] Benjamin.

[18] Adorno, in his correspondence with Benjamin, critiques this political assessment insofar as the work of art is an object of ritual and has a magical existence – Adorno says that Benjamin far too easily assigns a counter-revolutionary tendency to the magical, unique nature of art in his construction of the subsumed mass-psyche. Adorno instead believes that the unique work should, within itself, compound the magical, auratic element *as well as* its sign of individuality and freedom in place of standardization.

[19] The association with Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* is unintentional, although he would have probably agreed with this particular conclusion.

absorbed by it; he enters into the work … By contrast, the distracted masses absorb the work of art into themselves."[20] While the art-lover is literally lost in the work, the distracted masses remain intact as individuals but do not connect with art on an artistic level. Both, for Benjamin, carry negative connotations. In entirely subordinating the self to the work of art, the art-lover loses any individuality, and in their state of distraction, the masses seek nothing more than pure entertainment. Benjamin is more critical of the art-lover than he is of the masses; distraction is simply a new historical fact of the mechanized age, and in a conscious dismissal of aura the masses become experts with respect to the illusionary quality of film - as opposed to the art-lover who adores the work despite its intrinsic reproducibility.

## Aura and Music

Though Benjamin studies these arguments with nearly exclusive respect to film and photography, it is useful to apply Benjamin's aura and cultural theory to other art forms so as to understand technology's effects on art in a larger sense. Thus, I will confront Benjamin's theory with music, an art form left relatively untouched by his work. This is important in today's digital society so as to understand, given music's increased accessibility, the art form's effects on social interaction and the musical work of art's place in modern life. Therefore, in what remains of this chapter, I will first show how Friedrich Kittler's cultural-historical arguments regarding technological reproduction and the aural reception of music challenges Benjamin's Marxist analysis of reproduction so as to lay the groundwork for further arguments (in later chapters) regarding the application of historical examples to modern practice.

[20] Benjamin 119.

Thereafter, Theodor Adorno's cultural and aesthetic criticisms will yield vital conclusions regarding listening habits as altered in the technological age.

It is easy to see why Benjamin strayed from music: authenticity is confounded in the face of questions regarding the musical 'work' and where it might lie in the grey area between the score and the performance, let alone questions regarding reproduction and what this might mean for listening to, rather than visually observing artworks.[21] To understand these it makes sense to begin with Kittler, who addresses these questions by an approach that prioritizes a purely technological analysis, and continue with Adorno, who discusses these concerns from a more social and political standpoint.

In examining Kittler, then, I will first look at how he describes photography's parallel to the gramophone in his analysis of the work of Rudolph Arnheim in the introduction to *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*

> '[Photographs] are not only supposed to resemble the object, but rather guarantee this resemblance by being, as it were, a product of the object in question, that is, by being mechanically produced by it – just as the illuminated objects of reality imprint their image on the photographic layer,' or the frequency curves of noises inscribe their wavelike shapes onto the phonographic plate.[22]

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[21] These are questions that ultimately fall outside the scope of my thesis. In moving from visual to aural forms of reception, Adorno, on page 321 in *Walter Benjamin & Theodor Adorno: The Complete Correspondence,* questions Benjamin's purely visual definition of aura by contrasting his definition in "Work of Art" with that in *The Writer of the Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire,* 'to experience the aura of a phenomenon is to lend it the ability to look back in turn.' For Adorno, this formulation means that there must necessarily be some form of human labor and cognition in order for a piece to have aura. For music, then, to have an auratic experience, it is required that listeners have an experience that is genuine and focused; which setting this occurs in is, however, will be investigated in later chapters.

[22] Friedrich A. Kittler, Gramophone, Film, Typewriter, Writing Science (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999). 11-12.

In the case of the gramophone, the reproduction acquires its validity insofar as the sound waves of the original performance are in fact the same as those transmitted onto the record. It wouldn't be an accurate reproduction of, say, "Pictures At An Exhibition" by Mussorgsky if the sound waves on the gramophone record were different.

The technological reproduction of the musical work, however, has no intrinsic emotional significance; all that's reproduced are pure sound waves with no significance or connotation. The gramophone is the only device capable of capturing all audio information *prior* to any meaning. "Thus, the real … has the status of phonography."[23] Hence the phonograph record, for Kittler, contains pure sound devoid of intrinsic social or political meaning: an untainted sonic reality with which listeners interact.[24]

This premise is important for Kittler because he views technology as impartial human sense in the same way that the camera lens almost literally becomes the human eye. Technology comprises a second skin that can extend the human senses beyond their physical capabilities. Specifically, the record's capability to store sound serves as a larger memory bank and its capability to listen, as it were, to a performance that occurred in a specific location serves as an extended ear. "The 'sound of music in my ear' can exist only once mouthpieces and microphones are capable of recording any whisper. As if there were no distance between the recorded

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[23] Kittler 16.

[24] A contrasting argument is provided by Levinson in the chapter "What a Musical Work Is," in *Music, Art, & Metaphysics,* wherein he concludes, "that the pure sound structure of a musical work, while graspable in isolation, does not exhaust the work structurally," (88) and hence it is impossible to consider any music as simply pure sound. To be fair, Levinson doesn't mention recorded music and this is but an aside that would require a larger work to flesh out.

voice and the listening ears …"[25] Benjamin agrees that technology transports the observer out of his or her temporal reality and into the original moment in which the action or sound took place; but instead of being transported visually via film, the gramophone extends auditory perception over time and space.

What might this then mean for Benjamin's aura? A possible interpretation of Kittler's 'second skin' would be to say that the recording transmits the aura from the original performance into the minds and ears of listeners. Indeed, renowned media theorist Marshall McLuhan, in *The Global Village,* states that the acoustic space of a recording is a dwelling place for individualists and unconquered non-conformists that requires neither proof nor explanation.[26] Extrapolated, this means that every recording has an aura and that listeners have authentic, individual musical experiences insofar as the record serves as an extended ear and transports instrumentalists to living rooms. As such, McLuhan implies that the gramophone has an aura that is made possible by its function as an ear, as it were, to the unique original.

Benjamin would disagree, however, and insist that this technological reproduction of music strips the aura from the authentic performance in the same way that photographic reproductions strip the aura from authentic paintings. He would argue that in order for sound to have aura, there must be the apparition of space and time, the here-and-now of the instrument making music in the particular venue, just as the statue of Venus can only have aura in its particular manifestation. With records, this apparition is non-existent; there is no concert hall, no musician creating sound

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[25] Kittler 37.
[26] Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers, The Global Village : Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). 37-45.

from an instrument in every room in which there exists a record player. The sound is precisely the same every time; the technology is designed for perfect repetition of a particular instance of sound, and hence there can never be an unequivocally unique sonic experience, even if the listener approaches the recording differently every time.[27] The gramophone exudes an *as though* here-and-now, not the inimitable singularity that Benjamin ascribes to aura.[28]

This is illustrated in the short story titled "Goethe Speaks into the Phonograph" reprinted in Kittler's "Gramophone" chapter. The main character of the story, Pomke, becomes so entranced with the voice of Goethe as reproduced by gramophone that she falls in love with him. Her husband, unsuccessfully, attempts to explain the phenomenon that is occurring. "I do not want to deceive you, my dear. Yes, it is Goethe, his voice, his words. But it is not an actual replay of words he actually spoke."[29] Pomke envisages Goethe's larynx as physically real, while her husband explains that the record is merely playing a reproduction of his voice, the as though here-and-now, that will always be precisely the same, never actually human or unique. This explanation, in the end, is in vain, as Pomke remains enamored by the second skin of technology that transports Goethe himself into her world. When her husband destroys the gramophone in a jealous rage, however, Goethe vanishes; she is forced to realize that her longings were based upon interactions with a piece of

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[27] In chapter four of *Noise: The Political Economy of Music,* Jacques Attali takes this argument a step further into the social realm when he posits that recordings are purely repetitions that encourage the stockpiling of memories in the physical manifestation of records, the goal of which is to simply possess noise.

[28] Although there is no aura, it will be seen, in chapters three and four, that there is some hope for an *authenticity* of recordings, a fidelity to the recorded performance that yields some theoretical footing on the possibility for authentic experience via recording.

[29] Kittler 62.

technology that transported a *replication* of Goethe's voice rather than Goethe himself.

Kittler continues this analysis when he writes about high fidelity stereophony and its transportive nature. "Hi-fi stereophony can simulate any acoustic space, from the real space inside a submarine [in the case of the Beatles] to the psychedelic space inside the brain itself."[30] For Kittler, technology makes spaces real so the reproducible experience of hearing a record ostensibly becomes the auditory world in which the listener exists; all other aspects of reality and social existence are subordinate to the technologically constructed realism. Benjamin's counter, here, would be that no matter how exact the hi-fi experience may be, it remains as such rather than an authentic performance received in the here and now. The experience is always repeatable, never distinctive. Benjamin's theoretical rebuttal may be well and good, but for Kittler, the advent of hi-fi stereophony unequivocally heralded the beginning of an age in which technology subsumed social and artistic existence.

Consequently, in this technological age, artistic significance, specifically musical significance, lies with recorded, reproduced hi-fi reality. Technology's ultimate goal, for Kittler, is to impose itself as a second skin that acts as an extension of sensory perception and provides the listener with a privileged ear into a prior performance. The emphasis for music, then, is on recording performances rather than specific instances of unique, live endeavors.[31] With respect to listening, then, recorded music becomes high quality documentation of a performance that lends the listener a privileged perspective into the performance. Kittler specifically avoids any

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[30] Kittler 103.

[31] This is a direct parallel to Benjamin's notion that reproduced art creates artwork intrinsically designed for reproduction, as was discussed earlier in this chapter.

social or political implications of his media theory and subordinates these analyses to his technological examinations, which, for him, dominate over any other mode of understanding.

As much as Kittler avoids the social and the political, Jacques Attali, in his *Noise: The Political Economy of Music,* can offer leverage on these implications. In the era where technology reigns, music, insofar as it's physically manifest in vinyl, becomes material for exchange and profit for the industry created around it. "The phonograph, then, is part of a radically new social and cultural space demolishing the earlier economic constructions of representation."[32] In this setting, the technology and its products matter more than the recordings themselves; listeners stockpile for the sake of owning the physical thing rather than for the sake of owning the music. There is no longer a sense of live or auratic musical performance in the art form's reification. All that's left are reproductions, the reign of technological superiority, and representations of the original performances that are bought and sold.

## Adorno, Listening, and Technological Reproduction

In this brief mention of Attali lies a fundamental link from Kittler to the writings of Theodor Adorno, who writes extensively on what technological reproduction means for listeners, for music itself, and for the way people interact with art as a whole. His social works on the subject will be cited throughout this thesis to offer important insights on both technology and the listeners it affects. In comparison to Kittler, Adorno tackles questions of technological reproduction from an altogether different approach, and it is necessary to transition to his socially oriented approach

[32] Jacques Attali, Noise : The Political Economy of Music (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). 95.

through the lens of a middle ground between Adorno and the purely technological analysis of Kittler.

In Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory,* the concept of interaction with technological reproduction rather than the unique artwork is central to an argument that emphasizes the aesthetics of the original work. Adorno describes an imageless world in which all art, through technological reproduction, is commodified to the point that auratic artworks hold no place in modern society. "In the midst of the imageless world the need for art intensifies – as it does also among the masses, who were first confronted with art through mechanical means of reproduction – tends to arouse doubts rather than, given the externality of this need for art, enabling art's continued existence to be defeated."[33] Adorno herein ventures that the first contact with an artwork, for the masses, is via reproduction.

For Adorno, this means that, in effect, such works don't exist for the majority of listeners. The masses are, instead, familiar with the recorded experience of the work of art. As a result, in agreement with Attali's analysis of Kittler's technological reality, art becomes objectified; in its association with recordings, the physical records become objects of desire. "The poles of the artwork's deaestheticization are that it is made as much a thing among things as a psychological vehicle of the spectator."[34] Here Adorno moves from a strictly technological introduction to a more aesthetically sociological paradigm. Though the listener has a subjective experience with the record, the art is simultaneously objectified. Anything that the artwork may say is necessarily interpreted, re-processed, and possessed by the spectator as the

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[33] Theodor W. Adorno, Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedeman, Aesthetic Theory, Theory and History of Literature (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). 18.
[34] Adorno 17.

commodifiable object by association with the physical reproduction. Therefore the listened experience is, in effect, one had with the record itself, not with the artwork it reproduces.[35]

It is clear then, that aura in music is not found in commoditized records and gramophone reproductions, for it must remain with the here-and-now of performance. Even though Adorno leaves some hope for an authenticity of subjective possession of the record, Adorno concludes that subjective sublimation of the record occurs more capitalistically rather than with respect to work of art. Regarding Benjamin's original film arguments, that the reproduction of acting via cameras lifts any auratic quality from the acted performance, it appears evident that the recording of the active performance is lifted, reproduced, and records an attempt at auratic experience with an authentic work, in the Benjaminian sense, is not possible with recordings.

The answer, however, isn't quite that simple. The current operational dialectic of live performance as authentic and recorded music as commodity is investigated to ends that complicate this seemingly concrete conclusion in Adorno and Horkheimer's chapter "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* Their argument begins by situating music within the constructed 'culture industry,' within which every work exists and is reproduced.

The authors acknowledge that art sometimes attempts to use this system of technological objectification and commodity value to its advantage with the superficial goal of selling records. However, there are also works that come to epitomize a method of creativity and individuality irrespective of the commodity

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[35] This claim will be re-examined in chapter four regarding studio works, but for now it suffices as a concept to be introduced and scrutinized.

system, within which they may exist. The former category is what is termed 'light art,' while the latter, 'serious art,' represents a stylistic individuality that serves to separate serious works from other, more generic products.

> The moment in the work of art by which it transcends reality cannot, indeed, be severed from style; that moment, however, does not consist in achieved harmony, in the questionable unity of form and content, inner and outer, individual and society, but in those traits in which the discrepancy emerges, in the necessary failure of the passionate striving for identity. Instead of exposing itself to this failure, in which the style of the great work of art has always negated itself, the inferior work has relied on its similarity to others, the surrogate of identity.[36]

Art, then, is inseparable from its style, or its method of creation. Inferior, 'light' works are identified by a similarity to other, popular works geared specifically to market desires. These 'light' works take into account nothing regarding individuality or uniqueness; they are made for standardization and reproduction as a purely reified object and artistic style. In a Kittlerian sense, light art, musically speaking, is designed primarily for replay via gramophone; there is never intent for the work to exist authentically, and it embodies his purely technological approach to art's reproducibility.

Great works, however, for Adorno and Horkheimer, are identified as a style themselves; in their originality, they embody a method of creating a work of art. The great work, though, is so original in its methods that these techniques are necessarily epitomized in the work. Because they are so integral to the work, it can transcend the artistic methods it epitomizes as the work can then be interpreted on its own terms, as

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[36] Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno and Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, Dialectic of Enlightenment : Philosophical Fragments, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002).101.

opposed to in relation to cultural trends, similar works, or market forces. It is precisely this admission to its failure to overcome a style or genre by so embodying it that makes a great work great. And insofar as the work is serious, it ignores forces pulling the music into the market and intentionally goes against these forces.[37]

Recordings of serious musical works that are performed, then, are simply recordings that, with respect to Kittler, give the listener an ear into the concert hall.[38] Aura is still present in the here-and-now of performance, and the record is but a valuable document of that instance. Light musical works, conversely, *never possess aura in the first place*. Like film, they are created in an environment with an invisible audience that dominates the actions of musicians with the goal being, in the same way that film becomes the 'montage of record,' to establish the 'take of record' in the recording studio. In this way it will be more easily consumed and geared towards a mass, standardized taste for music without any regard to style or originality.[39] This model fundamentally breaks with Kittler's technological argument by placing the primacy of serious music above light, commoditized, recorded music.

In Adorno's "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," he describes this commodification and how regressive listening yields mass listeners who revere records as if deities. In order to state his thesis, Adorno relies on Marxist theory: "Marx defines the fetish-character of the commodity as the

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[37] Paddison 103.

[38] To these ends, Stan Godlovitch argues, in *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study*, that sonic experience is merely a *part* of any veritable performance, and as such the purely sonic experience of a recording is not a performance. Rather it is a trace, or record, of a performance, much like a photograph is the trace of a painting.

[39] This concept will be expounded upon in thinking about works specifically for studio performance, and light works with this intentionality can be distinguished form more legitimate works intended for such a performance.

veneration of the thing made by oneself which, as exchange-value, simultaneously alienates itself from producer to consumer."[40] To "fetishize," then, is to idolize a thing so highly that it is perceived as a quasi-religious object detached from whatever use-value it might otherwise have.

Adorno subsequently outlines how the live performance has become a fetishized commodity. Because the event has become so venerated, only attendance, not the performance, is what is bought and sold with the ticket, "The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the Toscanini concert. He has literally 'made' the success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognizing himself in it."[41] The concert-goer objectifies the experience itself. What matters is not the performance of the music but the having-been to the concert.

The fetishizing concert-goer, in the end, is no different from the masses that commoditize records. They both objectify that which they desire: the experience, in the case of the former, and the physicality of possessing the record, in the case of the latter. Both categories overlap in that they create and continuously feed the musical commodity structure, the commodity structure that turns a Toscanini concert into a ticket and the performance into a mere document.

To understand this, it is useful to contrast this argument with Benjamin and Adorno's respective concepts of distraction. Benjamin defines distraction as a fundamental concept in the capitalist structure with relation to habit, as something that's done without significant forethought: a purely thoughtless mass mentality.

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[40] Theodor W. Adorno, Richard D. Leppert and Susan H. Gillespie, Essays on Music (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2002). 296.
[41] Adorno 296.

Adorno, on the other hand, in conjunction with 'light art,' describes regressive listening, which is a paradigm shift in listener perception in which the mass ear, as it were, is attuned to listen for the melody that has become standard to popular music, and nothing more. In the age or reproduction, however, regressed listeners lose the fundamental ability for conscious perception of music. "[Listeners] fluctuate between comprehensive forgetting and sudden dives into recognition. They listen atomistically and dissociate what they hear."[42] Listening regresses to recognizing, which, in the age of technological reproduction, is reduced further to inattentive listening for brief melodic snippets.[43]

This regressive listening leads to what Adorno terms deconcentration. In this state the listener perceives active, concentrated listening as unbearable and is incapable of focused, structural perception. "They cannot stand the strain of concentrated listening and surrender themselves resignedly to what befalls them, with which they can come to terms only if they do not listen to it too closely. Benjamin's reference to the apperception of the cinema in a condition of distraction is just as valid for light music."[44] Deconcentration and regressive listening, in conjunction with light music, means that in response to its listeners, music has become so standardized that Adorno posits that there only one musical form: it's all the same.

Yet there still remains Adorno and Horkheimer's 'serious-art,' which retains some possibility of aura. Adorno applies this concept to music as the concept of 'artistic music,' which is diametrically opposed to popular music. In artistic music is expressed something unique and un-identical to the standardized, popular form.

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[42] Adorno 303.
[43] This will as well be fleshed out in chapter four; here I simply introduce the concept.
[44] Adorno 305.

"[Regressive Listening] could suddenly turn around if art, in unity with the society, should ever leave the road of the always-identical."[45] Although Adorno isn't optimistic about the possibility of concentrated listeners and artistic music, he doesn't entirely reject their plausibility. There still remains the possibility of entering into a work in the here-and-now. Ultimately music is capable of auratic performance, though it is more likely that the average mass listener will encounter these performances via technological reproduction.[46]

Has aura disappeared in the age of technological reproduction? Given the rise of new technologies, the question has become yet murkier. In order to answer one might first consider in which settings does aura appear in an age of easy availability and instant downloads? If aura is possible in this setting, does the live performance become obsolete? As a result of these and other questions the aforementioned arguments raise, a historical study of musical reproducibility is hereafter undertaken that takes into account watershed moments when, as so interested Kittler, a new medium attains discursive power.

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[45] Adorno 314. This artistic music can be found primarily in Mahler, who attempted, through prolonged sonata forms, to foster a sense of concentration whilst simultaneously pulling material from regressive listening in his melodies, as though to draw in deconcentrated listeners only to trick them into a state of concentration.

[45] A topic not thoroughly discussed by the aforementioned authors, though of equal importance, is the *progression* of aura's loss in the advancing age of technology. It is only briefly mentioned in Adorno and Benjamin's correspondences, as Adorno muses that, in freedom from artistic form (rather than total admittance of it), art can be consciously and intentionally produced rather than subsumed and controlled by method.

[46] This perpetuates the creation of light music designed for reproduction and reception in a state of deconcentration because, in the Benjaminian sense, the invisible audience dictates the actions of the artists

# The Work, The Score, and its Interpretation

## The Musical Work of Art

In Chapter One I introduced the concept of the work of art and its transformation, with specific reference to music. In order to unpack the complex concepts therein, I will now more precisely define a work of art in a musical sense, so that this definition may be henceforth utilized in a larger analysis of music's place as an art form in modernity. The problematic nature of the musical work of art is the relation of the work to the score and the performance, as well as their respective modes of reception. In this chapter, I aim to primarily situate the musical work of art in a purely classical sense, in order to outline a provisional definition of such a work of art that will undergird the following chapters' study of the relation of this definition to technological and sociological developments.

In this investigation it is useful to begin where we left off: with Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.* Though I extrapolate from Benjamin, my thesis offers a provisional definition of the work of art, buffered by insights from Adorno and post-Adornian aesthetics that attempt to faithfully grapple with the musical work of art and its place in the capitalist system.

The musical work of art is a problematic term. In principle, there is a score, an interpretation of that score, and the performance of the interpretation. The term 'work' has been and continues to be used to refer to all three of these stages of evolution,[1] which creates issues when using the term in discussing a performance in a

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[1] This formulation is, of course, made in light of Goehr's work that was cited in the introduction and is the central premise of this thesis, which is that this conception needs modification; in order to do so, however, a historical understanding is required, which is what I undertake here.

concert hall, or the musical work of art's reproduced forms as appropriated, distributed, and interpreted in a capitalist society.

Therefore, it's easy to understand why Benjamin avoided a discussion of this topic in the *Work of Art* essay, but it has nonetheless become an important subject matter in the 21st Century. In the digital age, music is more ubiquitous than ever before.[2] Hence it is necessary to begin with Benjamin's concept of the work of art and thereafter transcend it in a discussion of the musical work of art. Benjamin's analysis touches on such a definition at the beginning of section five of the essay, in his discussion of art's relation to its living, breathing tradition. He employs the statue of Venus to forward his argument that aura exists in the here-and-now of the original; he simultaneously posits that the work of art is most manifest in ritualistic settings, since the original meaning and context of the auratic work was occult. "The unique value of the 'authentic' work of art always has its basis in ritual. This ritualistic basis, however mediated it may be, is still recognizable as secularized ritual in even he most profane forms of the cult of beauty."[3] For Benjamin, the authenticity of a work of art, though thoroughly complicated in the technological age, ultimately returns to its basis in ritual.

Eventually, though, art was no longer ritualized and adored in religious settings but was rather secularized by the cult of beauty fostered during the Renaissance. In the Venus example, the statue existed as a religious monument for Greeks to worship in a devout setting. Upon its discovery by later civilizations, there

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[2] With this boom means more money to be made and more distribution to be had, and in light of recent copyright debates and intellectual information laws, what precisely is the intellectual property of the composer, that is to say what is the musical work of art that they own, has become one of the most defining issues of our time.
[3] Benjamin 105.

was nothing lost from the aura of the work: it still exists in the here-and-now before the viewer. But what *is* lost is the occult value the statue once embodied; what was once a religious icon is now merely an artfully carved piece of stone. Nonetheless it is still admired in a cultish fashion, for once it is deemed to be beautiful[4] the statue takes on a ritualistic air, forming what might be termed the cult of the aura. This first took root during the Renaissance and, for Benjamin, meant that the work was still observed in a ritualistic, albeit secular, manner.

With the creation of different types of technological reproduction, however, art was removed from its ritual setting. Upon the advent of photography, art was out of its auratic context. Instead of forcing the viewer to actively participate in the secular ritual of beauty by meeting the work in its environment, the artwork could now meet the viewer. "For the first time in world history, technological reproducibility emancipates the work of art from its parasitic subservience to ritual."[5] As such, art became *designed* for its inevitable reproducibility. In moving away from its pilgramistic nature it moved towards a non-representational, decontextualized, purely hermetic form.[6]

This shift, says Benjamin, is termed *l'art pour l'art*, or art for the sake of art, and it's the result of art freeing itself from its once constrained nature. Auratic art is based in ritual, and *l'art pour l'art* is a secularized form of art in which the artwork is no longer part of a religious ritual but an aesthetic ritual that has taken the place of religious ritual. Benjamin calls it, "a theology of art [that] in turn gave rise to a

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[4] The concept of beauty is another thesis itself; hence the present thesis doesn't have time or scope to give the concept the unpacking it might otherwise deserve.
[5] Benjamin 106.
[6] This art is distinguished with art that doesn't have this degree of self-awareness. This type of art, as a result of reproducibility, is thrust unbeknownst into the political realm.

negative theology in the form of an idea of 'pure' art, which rejects not only any social function but any definition in terms of a representational content."[7] As ritualistic worshiping of works of art declined, art accepted its new practice that was no longer based in ritual. In this context art wanted to be appreciated on its own terms, for its own beauty, with no qualifiers. In the process, however, technological reproduction created its own category of works: those politically appropriated or fundamentally based in politics.

Music underwent this same ideological and technological process, but the shift from ritualistic to technological reproduction is harder to grasp. It has been seen that the musical work of art lies somewhere between the score, the performance, and the interpretation therein. However, authors use the term work rather loosely, and it is important to note that for the purposes of this thesis the term is used in a provisional sense, as it is the object of its study – that is to say, it will be redefined and modified throughout the thesis as the term is recontextualized. In chapter one, the understanding of what might constitute a work of art was problematized because of an ever-increasing degree of reproducibility. Although this requires further investigation, what is sure is that Benjamin's ritualized notions of art and aura apply to the musical work of art, for music is necessarily realized through performance.

Performance, at least in a historically traditional setting, is a highly ritualized practice, in which the work is performed in an uninterrupted stream of sound. This performance is inextricably linked to Benjamin's aura, insofar as the cult of the performance is in fact a cult of the here-and-now, and that in order to properly aurally

[7] Benjamin 106.

appreciate a musical performance, the performance must be treated with a religious degree of respect and rigidity. Like the statue of Venus, musical performance "[is] unique and could not be technologically reproduced,"[8] at least in the era where it was created. Once rendered, a performance would never be heard again, hence the here-and-now of the performance involves the technical parameters of the hall as well as the linear integrity of the performance itself.

Musical performance is, then, a cult environment into which the music ritualistically sounds, but unlike the cult surrounding Venus, the cult surrounding musical performance involves the choice of space itself, the method in which the performance is delivered, and the manner in which it is received. Consequently the meaning of a musical work of art is, to a certain extent, predetermined.[9] The musical work of art is perhaps inherently born into the cult of beauty that subsumes visual art; but once modernity removed the religious sheen from performances in religious spaces, performance found itself under the auspices of the Renaissance cult of beauty.

Accordingly the work of art, according to Benjamin's notions of ritual and reception, lies in a provisional ground that includes the score as well as the performance, for such a performance is necessarily deduced from the score to which it refers. In order to further explicate this middle ground, it is useful to employ the lens of Adorno's *Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction*. A large part his theory is formulated as an explicit reaction to Benjamin's aesthetics and political philosophy. Specifically, Adorno directly responds to Benjamin's Marxist leanings in his cultural critiques, and builds upon Benjamin by adding an artistically informed perspective to

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[8] Benjamin 108.

[9] For instance, it would have been unthinkable to see Bach anywhere other than a concert hall or a church, or to see Rossini outside of an opera house.

an otherwise broader, lifelong socio-political project. In this text that survives as a draft, Adorno attempts to grapple with the inherit differences between the score and the sound it represents, and where a work of art might be born in the interpretation and reproduction of musical texts.

Adorno builds his draft upon the dialectic of musical text (the score) and its respective performance (or interpretation); there is, and always will be, a fundamental difference between the text and the sound it ideally indicates. "No musical text, not even the most meticulously notated modern score, is so unequivocally decipherable as to force the appropriate interpretation of its own accord."[10] Every musical text requires, at least marginally, some degree of interpretation because the visual information it conveys must be reproduced sonically. Every time the mental and physical process of converting the visual indicators into sound occurs, the result will necessarily vary. In an ideal world, perhaps, there might be a Platonic form for every musical score, but in the world we inhabit each sonic result will differ.[11]

Primarily, this is because the musical work that is written onto paper is independent of empirical music making. The piece needs to be 'estranged,' as it were, from its print form in order to be sonically 'rendered.' "Works … are fixed through writing and print, and thus independent precisely from empirical music-making … The work can only be rendered once it is estranged."[12] Adorno compares musical interpretation to literary translation; in the same way as the mind turns the indicated text to words, music must also be translated from the musical text into sound. The

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[10] Theodor W. Adorno and Henri Lonitz, Towards a Theory of Musical Reproduction: Notes, a Draft and Two Schemata (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2006). 163.
[11] Granted, this is taken into account by many composers and is to a large degree expected. However, in describing a work of art it is necessary to explain.
[12] Adorno 166.

paradox of the allusion is that there is one correct sonic word for every piece of literary interpretation, but that musical translation yields many possibilities. In the end, though, both musical and literary texts are designed for interpretation.

In this allusion is also implied the notion of signification. To write music is to write sound as to write words is to write speech. This principle undergirds Adorno's conception of a Platonic interpretation of music in which there is only one correct definition of every signifier. This is further explicated, as he makes sure to unpack the notion of being faithful to the work in this context:

> This is clear to see in the history of reproduction; the obedience that is faithful to the work ultimately destroys it. It is only the social obedience reflected in that fidelity that has enabled music to speak against the existing society, and ultimately it drives it from within that social activity which is simultaneously preparing to absorb it from without.[13]

So the chase for the perfect interpretation, the obligation to be perfectly faithful to the written piece eventually turns the mimetic language into something entirely different: a social activity whose sole purpose is a reified act of fetishism that takes away from the work and in its stead purports to be a perfect interpretation.[14]

This, for Adorno (and certainly for most musicians) is something to be avoided; the goal of the performance should be, in theory, to appreciate the auratic instance itself rather than placing the entire emphasis on the interpretation. Nonetheless, the performance is fundamental to the work, and

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[13] Adorno 174

[14] This is fundamentally related to the reification and fetishization of the live that becomes a spectacle. For what is now paid for is, partly, the expectation and anticipation of a 'perfect' sonic interpretation in the auratic setting.

there must be criteria of proper interpretation for performances to be deemed legitimate. "This reflection at once reveals the implications of the ideals of sound, notation, and rendition respectively … Being of mimic nature, [music] is not purely legible of purely imitable as a language. It therefore divides itself into the sound-ideal and the writing, and requires interpretation as the ever-renewed effort to achieve a reconciliation of these divergent elements."[15] These three categories, the ideal of sound, notation, and rendition, all revolve around the score, and the score is mimetic but never idealistically perfectly interpretable. Though the work was written with an ideal in mind, the end product is, ultimately, a compromise between all sonic and written elements.

## Interpretation and The Zone of Indeterminacy

Music needs something beyond itself, however, in order to balance this compromise; the work, at its core, demands interpretation. "In other words, reproduction is necessary; music requires it … as an answer, so to speak, to the question that music as such appears to pose through its very existence: how can music become a language, and, vice versa, how can the symbol become an image?"[16] Interpretation, and its resulting rendition in delicate harmony with the sound-ideal and mimetic score, is the answer to the question of how music can exist in the first place; music is that which results from the combination of interpretation, its respective instantiation, and the relation of these elements back to the score. Without all these elements music could not exist.

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[15] Adorno 180.
[16] Adorno 180

Although it's easy to say that these three elements come together in a fusion to create 'music,' the underlying complexities of these core elements need to be thoroughly explicated. With reference to the mimetic impulse of the work, then, there exists what Adorno terms the "Zone of Indeterminacy," which is the grey area that exists between the text and its fulfillment as an artistic performance. "No notation, however complete, could eliminate the zone of indeterminacy."[17] The written state of the work contains within it a riddle that can never be solved, and yet contains its own solution. This relates to the previously discussed Platonic ideal; there is always such a performance of every work as indicated by the score, but this solution to the riddle is never attainable.

The only way to solve this paradox is immersion in the written notation that will yield a performance-based determinacy for the specific event that is created out of the Zone of Indeterminacy. Interpretation must do its part to musically imitate the writing, and although the musical score isn't perfectly mimetic, it offers the potential for sonic resolution of the signified and the signifier. Performed interpretation, or determinacy, is therefore mediated through the intentional reading of these symbols. A resolution of these musical symbols and the determinacy that results from their activation into intentional sound is the sonic imitation of that which is written; hence the Zone of Indeterminacy, through reading and faithful intentionality, becomes determinacy.

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[17] Adorno 181.

So a determinate performance is fundamental to the concept of a work, but whether this performance, and hence the work, is then completely ephemeral raises deeper structural questions. Indeed these questions set the musical work of art apart from all others: the musical 'work,' as it were, is always multiple. It is as much the score as it is the relevant interpretation and performance. The work can attain different qualities in diverse places and times; nonetheless, the musical work of art is recognized in its multiplicity.[18]

In response to this line of thought Adorno introduces what he terms the 'objective historical unfolding' of the work. "[This is] a process of questioning that transforms the musical text into a scene of historical dynamics … [it is] thus the constitutive historical process."[19] The musical work is consequently an object that is subjectively perceived but objectively influenced and constantly evolving. The work becomes a living, breathing product that, through its historical lifespan, grows through and with every performance. "The fundamental tension between notation and music, however, reveals the assumption of the works' static content as their core to be an illusion."[20] Each performance of a given score adds to the history of a given work, which adds to the context and subsequent renditions of the piece.

In the end this dialectical and historical issue is resolved in imitation. The score is the original, and the performance is the imitation of the absent

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[18] This is why Benjamin strays from the musical work of art in his *Work of Art* – he knew that in order to define the musical work of art he would have had to write a much longer and significantly more complex document, and this longer discussion of the multiplicity of the work would have ultimately detracted from his larger arguments. Hence Adorno's more focused, prolonged response to his works.
[19] Adorno 189.
[20] Adorno 194-195.

original, and the nonexistent, unquantifiable location of the work between and in the two defines the objectivity of the perception of the spontaneity of the performer.

> This imitation of the absent original is nothing other than the x-ray image of the text. Its task is to render visible all the relations, transitions, contrasts, characters, fields of tension and resolution and whatever else the construction consists of, while these things otherwise lie concealed – both under the mensural notation and the sound's sensory surface.[21]

Performance and rendition are structured to reveal the totality of the work, to realize that which is in the score as realistically as possible while also applying a subjective, emotional, extra-textural evaluation to the performance that should, ideally, convey these presupposed *and* explicitly indicated elements.

### Godlovitch and Davies: Performance and Intentionality

As evidenced by Adorno's labored critiques and occasionally meandering arguments[22], the nature of the musical work and its situation in the "Zone of Indeterminacy" between the score and the performance is delicate. But since Benjamin and Adorno's publications, there have been writers who attempt to grapple with the same questions that, in large part, eluded definite conclusion. Two such writers are Stan Godlovitch and Stephen Davies, who help to clarify some of the larger issues left unresolved by Adorno and Benjamin. Both Godlovitch and Davies present arguments that

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[21] Adorno 202.

[22] As much as these arguments do meander, one must give Adorno the benefit of the doubt, for the text is, in the end, still a draft.

dovetail the aesthetics of Adorno and Benjamin with respect to the musical work of art. Godlovitch presents a typological argument of what constitutes a musical performance, and ultimately concludes that a human element is necessary in every performance for their respective realizations. Davies, on the other hand, argues more specifically than Godlovitch over a broader range of issues. In choosing to focus on the relationship of the musical work to the performance he concludes that live performances are in fact necessary for the realization of the musical work, and that to the informed listener the recorded or broadcasted performance is fundamentally different from the auratic live experience.

Primarily, in Godlovitch's *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study*, the troubling relation of the score to the performance is discussed in detail, and results in a case study of ritualized performance and its relation to the artistic work. Godlovitch sets forth three categories within which he will work: composition, which is written onto replicable scores that represent certain sonic elements of the work, performance, or presentation of the sonic elements represented by the score, and listening, or audition, which is the active apprehension of these sounds in a performance. Performances "are particular instances of a universal composition, of works that underdetermine the performance."[23] Hence performance is a value-driven, specialized manual skill that is a representation of the musical work to which it refers.

It's important, however, to more precisely iron out what is meant by performing in comparison to simply playing. "Playing neutrally captures occasions of

[23] Stanley Godlovitch, Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998). 11.

creating musical sound. Performing applies more restrictedly as a species of playing."[24] Performing, then, is a restricted type of playing that must refer to the musical work that undergirds it. Godlovitch notes that the performance doesn't necessarily relate to work on a purely theoretical level.[25] The two must interact, but in the end a performance of a work is *at* a recital or *at* a concert; the location of the rendition is not incidental but it must not overshadow the work.

After an investigation into intended audiences, playing practices and phenomenological analyses of sonic instances,[26] Godlovitch arrives at a practical definition of performances and their relation to works, which will help us to better understand performances. "Performance requires skilled agents causing specific intended sound sequences for the intended benefit of the audience."[27] In actual performance, sound sequences are derived from and strictly determined by musical works that could not have been performed without the intent to do so.

Indeed, in beginning his discussion on performances and musical works, Godlovitch makes sure to remind us that interpretation is a privilege granted to the performer by the composer. Hence, "functionally, performance serves primarily to instantiate the work for listeners; and ontologically, the existence of much performance is contingent upon the work's existence."[28] Composed works are notated

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[24] Godlovitch 13.
[25] As discussed, the concert space plays an important part in auratic authenticity. That hasn't been forgotten – what's being worked out here, however, is the pure sonic phenomenology of performance that thereafter plays an integral role in aura's creation.
[26] All of which fall beyond the necessary scope of this paper, insofar as they contribute to an understanding of a phenomenology of a work rather than the work's place in our time.
[27] Godlovitch 30.
[28] Godlovitch 81.

with musical constraints that are translated into performance, and as such performance conveys these constraint parameters into sonic form.

Therefore, there is a necessary subordination of performance to the notated work. Because the performance is reliant on that which is afforded by the written score, Godlovitch posits that the score imposes creative and technical limitations and expectations onto the performer. With regard to the former Godlovitch concludes that creativity isn't so extremely limited that score-guided playing is simply following instructions; with regard to the latter he states that it is possible for the work to be stretched, augmented, and changed by performances that each demand a certain novelty. In either case, the performance is nonetheless subordinate to the score that it intends to sonically read. "Subordination makes performance an optional aspect of music, as secondary to the musical enterprise as reading novels aloud is to the present literary enterprise."[29] So although the performance instantiates the work, for Godlovitch it isn't necessary in order for the work to theoretically exist.

Godlovitch, though, isn't so quick to write off performance altogether. There is a fundamental difference between a 'reading' of a work, wherein the work is heard in the reader's head, and a performance of a work, where an interpretive and sonic occasion provides the work 'out loud,' as it were. "Merely hearing such a [sound] sequence can never inform one about a work as fully instantiating it. This is surely because the unperformed work is systematically incomplete."[30] In contrast to the conclusion drawn in his introduction, here Godlovitch permits that the performance demands collaboration between the scored work and the performer, and that this

[29] Godlovitch 83.
[30] Godlovitch 91.

performance is intrinsically different but equally necessary to the notated skeleton of a work as is silently reading.[31] The notated score, he analogizes, is the skeleton that the performance clothes with living flesh.

Godlovitch admits[32] that among the five major areas wanting more discussion are, "The implications for ontology, the primacy of performance [and] creativity and invention in improvisation and score-playing."[33] In other words, Godlovitch is looking, in order to truly complete his argument, for a discussion of the musical work and the framework in which it is created. That is to say he is looking for a way to closely examine the multiplicity of the musical work of art, which is outside the scope of his work but which I will explicate, using pertinent authors, in this thesis.

In contrast to Godlovitch's patently phenomenological writing, Stephen Davies offers a more musicological and aesthetic perspective of the theoretical framework of the musical work and its relation to performance. In Davies' text one finds the answer - or at least the groundwork for the answers - to some of Godlovitch's unfinished treatises. In his introduction Davies states that he intends to ask and answer questions concerning the ontology of performances, improvisation, and musical works themselves. In directly addressing these questions Davies makes a natural linear choice for the continuation of Godlovitch's phenomenological research.

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[31] Although I contrast Godlovitch to himself here, I included the former section so as to understand the contrasts and problems leading to the current point in the thesis.
[32] He admits this at the end of the introduction, where he enumerates the many unfinished questions of this text.
[33] Godlovitch 7.

For Davies, "Musical works are usually thought of as sound structures indicated by their composers."[34] In this way, Davies essentially discards the improvisational lens studied by Godlovitch; improvisation finds itself in an entirely different category from written works and their respective performances in his analysis.

I fundamentally take issue with Davies' characterization of a non-work of art, however. I believe that improvisation is a very important art-form, and deserves recognition as such. Indeed, this is one of the many reasons I frame this thesis around Goehr's work in my introduction, so as to illustrate that the majority of authors are still working within the two to three-hundred year old definition of the musical work. By now, however, it is widely accepted that the work of art can have, in a loosely indicative score, intended improvisation that naturally instances the work differently every time. This topic will be developed further in chapter three, but is a necessary caveat with which I view Davies' work.

So with improvisation qualified by Davies as a different sort of art form, there must be an appropriate appreciation of the gap between the instantiation of the performance and the work from which it derives, as well as the notational ambiguity of the work that is bridged by performance. "The proper interpretation of a score requires knowledge both of conventions for the notation and of the performance practice shared by the composer with the musicians for whom the score is directed."[35] But Davies as well acknowledges that there are ambiguities in the score that can obscure the identity of that which it signifies; hence to be a performance of a work

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[34] Stephen Davies, Musical Works and Performances : A Philosophical Exploration (Oxford England; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2001). 3.
[35] Davies 4.

there must be a suitable degree of correspondence - a "robust causal chain"[36] - between the performance and the work's contents. If the performance does not employ these standards it will not instantiate the written, notational work.[37]

Davies further problematizes the work-performance relation by designating three typologies of work: those for live performance, those for studio performance, and those that are purely electronic and not for performance within which there are sub-categories, of course. So within a score there is a written intentionality that provides some insight into whether the performance is necessary to the musical work. An instance of such a work for performance is within a range of performable possibilities. "In my view, the work cannot be purely mental; it must be specified in the public domain. Works composed for performance are conveyed via a set of instructions addressed to their potential performers." Works for performance must forcibly convey intent to be performed, and the presence of intention indicates that in order for the work to be veritably instantiated, there must be a causal relation of the sound to that which is indicated by the score.

## Interpretation and Intent Revisited

But what, exactly, is compositional intent? In order to *truly* comprehend the authorial intent one would have to be able to read minds. In truth, the only understood compositional intent is through interpretation, or in a diminished, secondary degree. It's a circular argument; every artwork has a kind of inner coherence in the way its

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[36] Davies 5.

[37] To emphasize the caveat just made, it is then possible for a score to indicate improvisation. As a point of reference, however, a proper defense of this caveat would require another thesis itself – it must be borne in mind that this thesis, in large part, attempts to point the way towards a new conception of a work of art, while acknowledging its place within the theoretical canon that utilizes an older, Goehrian definition. This caveat is central to these claims.

commensurate parts come together to form its totality. Any veritable attempt at a performance of the work attempts to get as close as possible to rendering, correctly, that inner coherence of the artwork. And what is the core of that inner coherence? Compositional intent.[38]

However, Davies heads off such an argument at the beginning of the chapter "Works, their Instances, and Notations." He lays out six different cases of instanced musical works, "[A] involves neither the composition nor the performance of a work … [B] is of a kind designed for live presentation. [C] simulates a live performance of the same work. [D] describes a different piece … Yet another kind of work is described in [E] and [F]. It is purely electronic and is for playback, not for performance."[39] These aren't merely typologies of works and performances but are methods of understanding compositional intent and the various resulting interpretations. These categories represent, "place where there is a change in the criteria on which we base our understand and evaluation of what is happening."[40] Though there is a basis for evaluation of interpretation, it's always impossible to understand compositional intent in an idealized fashion. Though performance may approach the ideal, there will always be something missing.[41]

What exactly is maintained by these performances remains unclear. The robust causal chain can sometimes be stretched quite thin, and it becomes difficult to tell where the work lies within the performance, and what was or wasn't indicated by

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[38] This is precisely the argument used by Adorno in his Zone of Indeterminacy – the orchestra will never quite interpret the score perfectly.
[39] Davies 7.
[40] Davies 9.
[41] Hence the work of art is impossible to pinpoint even if the composer conducts. This is the fundamental beauty and problem of music, is that there are always others involved.

the composer. "I maintained above that our appreciation, both of the work and the performance, depends on our awareness of what is supplied by its composer and performer, and why … If the source work is fairly detailed, as is usually the case, what is common to the various realizations it might be given … is much leaner than the piece as specified by the composer."[42] This is the introduction of the analogy of thin and thick, the former meaning a wide variety of performative options and a less instructive and indicative, thin score; hence thick means just the opposite. In the case of thin works, many possible interpretations are acceptable, and critical listeners would hence allow performers to creatively stretch and create within the loose confines. For example, the score of Alvin Lucier's *(Hartford) Memory Space* reads:

> Go to outside environments (urban, rural, hostile, benign) and record by any means (memory, written notations, tape recordings) the sound situations of those environments. Returning to an inside performance space at any later time, re-create, solely by means of your voices and instruments and with the aid of your memory devices (without additions, deletions, improvisation, interpretation) those outside sound situations.[43]

This example is of a thin work: the instructions, though pointed in intention, leave vast possibilities for interpretation – indeed the title of the piece is even unsolidified. The causal chain, in this instance, is very obvious; if the performers simply follow these instructions to the best of their ability they will have Davies' robust causal chain to the score. This does not imply, however, that the end result will sound the same. On the contrary, the score is designed for a myriad of instantiations with nearly unlimited resulting possibilities.

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[42] Davies 11.
[43] Alvin Lucier and Douglas Simon, Chambers (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

However in thick works, like classical music, the audience, composer, and score provide much less room for error or creative risk. An opposing example might be the score of Mussorgsky-Ravel's *Pictures at an Exhibition.* In stark contrast to *(Hartford) Memory Space,* the sonic outcome and instructions given predicate a score that explicitly dictates exactly what the ideal result should be. The thickness of this score is why all performances of *Pictures at an Exhibition* sonically resemble one another, whereas the thinness of *(Hartford) Memory Space* is why its many and varied instantiations can be difficult to detect as the same work, without prior knowledge. What is clear is that, irrespective of the thickness or thinness, the work is not instanced until it is manifest in its intended form: the causally robust performance within its respective boundaries.

So in the case of works for performance, the specificity of the work at hand is the key factor in determining its performative settings, methodologies, and varied executions. "Composers have something to 'say', but, because what they say has no independently specifiable semantic content, it can be successfully communicated only in their own accents and idiolects … To hear their voices at their clearest, we must listen to performances on period instruments."[44] Though not necessarily implied by the thick and thin binary, the importance of ensuring the composer's 'voice,' as it were, via period instruments is a part of Davies' robust causal chain. In this way the work for performance is contingent not only on fidelity to the score but on historical accuracy as well.

[44] Davies 71.

It's important to bear in mind the Benjaminian notion of ritualistic historiography and Adorno's notion of the living performance with respect to Godlovitch and Davies. In this light, the terms thick and thin are necessarily relative; what might have once seemed a thick score could, with the advent of certain performative technologies, seem thin in today's world, or vice versa. Once the work is removed from its ritualistic setting and introduced into the cult of beauty, new renditions can escape the historical traditions that once governed ceremonious performance. Nevertheless, the work enters a new historical era that, in an Adornian sense, shapes future performances and fundamentally contributes to the work's sense of life.[45] Even though these terms become relativistic in this light, it is still useful to note that they continue to provide an important framework for the musical work of art, which, in some cases are still necessarily comprised of these historically contextualized scores, thick or thin, along with their interpretations and performances. Hence Adorno's philosophy offers a way to remodel Davies' anachronistic argument; although it might be more compositionally authentic to use period instruments, modernity allows for more leniency with the score and as such the non-use of period instruments becomes part of the work's living history.

The fundamental difference, though, between the work for performance and the work for electronic reproduction of whatever kind is the detail with which we can take in the performances. Electronic compositions are contingent on the fidelity of the speakers, whereas live or studio performances are contingent upon the entire sonic spectrum of human hearing. These electronic pieces, however, are still works; the

[45] This occurs, as will be seen, via stockpiling the musical work of art and the mass documentation and collection of physically fetishized performances.

composer works directly with the sounds themselves rather than instructing others to make synchronized sounds. "As well as being unlike pieces such as Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in not being for performance, purely electronic works differ considerably from it in the extend, depth, and saturation of their work-determinative properties…Because an electronic work is sounded directly when it is instanced, the properties defining it are at the same level of detail as those characterizing performances."[46] Hence both types are works in their own right. Both have intended settings, Adornian-like rituals, and instructions surrounding their instances, and thus each have precautions taken to ensure their specificity and accuracy.

In terms of studio works, the studio itself becomes an instrument utilized for the completion of the work. "A studio performance is one that exploits the special resources of the studio … A studio performance of a work originally created for live performance typically differs from a studio performance of a work composed for studio performance."[47] Davies' primary example is that of raising the voice up a fourth via studio technology; in rock music, composed for the studio, this would be totally legitimate, but in an opera it would be considered blasphemy. Studio recordings of works intended for live performance are intended to simulate such a performance, whereas a recording of a work conceived for studio performance aims to create the sound of a virtual performance via the studio as an instrument.

These contexts of performance have only dealt with the work and the score in a more traditional, ritualized setting so as to grapple with these issues in a more confined space in the attempt to work out a provisional definition of the work of

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[46] Davies 27.
[47] Davies 36.

musical art, and of course the differences between these typologies will be a central point of contention in this thesis moving forward. Within the philosophical context of Benjamin, Adorno, and Godlovitch, and Davies, this definition can be stated as such: composition of the score, accompanied by its respective intent, combined with a robust, interpretive fidelity to the score in a performance setting comes to constitute a musical work of art.

To be clear, however, this chapter does not claim to solve the argument of musical authenticity definitively. In no way can it assert that the ontological question of the musical work of art is forever resolved in an argument of multiplicity and causal links, for this and all other hypotheses are always posited in an unstable context. In the same vein, Goehr is of particular import from here forward, for her argument that a musical work of art needs redefining in modernity is particularly applicable in critiquing and analyzing the aforementioned concepts. At the same time, in a pre-Benjaminian era there were questions of different connotations in different performance settings, and with an Adornian sense of technological advancement, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the argument becomes complicated even further. What is clear, though, is that there are definite traits that can be pinpointed to undergird a larger contextualization of the musical work of art and as such help to understand its evolution and place in modern society

## Radio, Gramophone, and Listening

The previous two chapters have dealt with the musical work of art in a more traditional, ritualized setting so as to work out a conditional designation of the work of musical art. In chapter one I presented a technological introduction to music, its reproduction, and its modes of reception; chapter two provided the philosophical underpinnings for an in-depth analysis of technological developments and their effect on the musical work of art, as well as the aesthetic and musicological implications of such changes. The current chapter begins with the premise that the difficulty in hearing and appreciating a musical work of art in the age of its technological reproduction runs necessarily parallel to the societal and technological advancements that complicate the classical, pre-technological understanding of the work of art.

Within the philosophical context of Benjamin, Adorno, and Godlovitch that was outlined in chapter two, Stephen Davies posits that compositional intent combined with fidelity to the score in a performance setting comes to constitute a musical work of art. In this thesis' attempt to trace technology's influence on music's ritualized paradigm, radio is, historically and technologically speaking, the catalyst in the argument's transition from pure performance - in a Goehrian, historical sense - to a more nuanced theory of the musical work of art in the broader age of technological reproduction. Problematizing such a typology is what Adorno terms "Radio Physiognomics," which is discussed in detail in his *Current of Music.*

## Adorno's Radio Physiognomics

Before a discussion of Adorno's work, however, it is valuable to undertake a preliminary evaluation of the broadcasting phenomenon. Radio distances music from the here-and-now of performance, but maintains the temporal integrity of the music insofar as the broadcast is dependent on the time structure of the music.[1] Adorno addresses this notion with respect to radio broadcast and different types of listening, in conjunction with the aesthetic principles of the radio. The conclusions derived herein play crucial roles in his exploration of technology's intersection with the musical work of art.

Physiognomics is the assessment of character based on visual input; hence radio physiognomics is the assessment of radio's musical character based on its sonic appearance and reception. In his physiognomic analysis of radio, Adorno recalls his notions of light and serious music. "Radio minimizes the difference between light music and classical music, unifying them in comparison to live music."[2] The radio begins the binary of broadcast music and live music; rather than works that are completed by causal performance Adorno now introduces music interpreted and performed, the live, but reproduced via broadcast in a non-ritualized setting.

At the core of radio physiognomics is the "illusion of closeness" wherein radio reproduction brings a psychological 'liveness' to the radio broadcast. Adorno outlines the 'radio voice' to explicate these concepts of closeness and liveness, "The 'illusion of closeness' is as intimately associated with the 'radio voice' as the subject

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[1] This argument will be further fleshed out later in the chapter; I only introduce it here.

[2] Theodor W. Adorno and Robert Hullot-Kentor, Current of Music : Elements of a Radio Theory, English ed. (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009). 46.

matter of radio physiognomics. The obvious reason for this illusion of a speaking radio is that the listener directly faces the apparatus instead of the man who is playing or speaking. Thus the visible tool becomes the bearer and the impersonation of the sound whose origin is invisible."[3] The second degree of liveness brings the illusion of closeness to the radio broadcast; the listener psychologically treats the radio as though the instruments were being played in the very same room.[4] But, in his explanation Adorno clarifies the unique acoustic phenomenon of the radio: namely the hiss that perpetually sounds. He terms it the 'radio stripe,' which is a specific instance of his 'hearing stripe,' and it is integral to the radio as a sonic instrument insofar as it characterizes sounds played by the radio's speaker as played through the medium itself. It is precisely this acknowledgement - that the medium interferes with the sound produced - that distances listeners from the broadcast.

However, one cannot simply reject any relation to the original performance on these grounds alone. After all, the radio symphony is the same note-for-note performance and is yet somehow different. This, for Adorno, can be explained in a similar fashion to reproductions of paintings. "The sound received over the radio in a private room is not only physically a reproduction of the live music played in the studio. Being built out of the elements of the 'symphony as such' and the alteration it undergoes by broadcasting, the *phenomenon in itself has the innate characteristics of reproduction* just as a print has certain innate qualities of reproduction beyond the fact that it actually reproduces the original."[5] The radio symphony, then, is a print of

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[3] Adorno 47.

[4] This argument is made, however, with the caveat of the sonic difference that's created via the sonic limitations of the medium.

[5] Adorno 58.

the original, a replica of an interpretation that is rendered self-evident through the radio voice in combination with the hearing stripe.

In relation to the aforementioned ritualized performance, it's useful to examine how a symphony or other musical works appear in a radio performance. Physically speaking, the radio listener is generally located in a smaller, acoustically inferior room to a symphony hall. In addition, the radio's amplifier and speaker cone yield bellowing-like expressions at high volume and poor quality at low volume. Hence fortes are aurally unpleasant and dynamic range is lost. As a result, "Concentration vanishes; the listener may concentrate upon certain details or parts, but it is most unlikely that he will be able to realize the relation between the part and the whole as well as he could with the intensity of presentation of every moment. Thus the symphonic work, in a way, will be atomized when presented by radio."[6] The term atomistic listening is derived from this intersection of acoustic phenomenon and sociological investigation. The atomistic listener is at the root of the more popular concept of Benjamin's distracted listener; if it is possible to listen to a symphony in recognizable chunks,[7] the listener is able to do other things whilst simultaneously tuning in to minute sections of the radio broadcast.

Is the symphony still a symphony, or a work of art as such, if it is attuned for a small room and is received atomistically? Adorno responds with the claim that expert listeners will have vivid performance memories with which to compare their current experience. "People who already know symphonic music can still realize the symphonic unity when they listen to radio because, from their previous musical

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[6] Adorno 55.
[7] As opposed to hearing it live, in an acoustically secure space, with no hearing-stripe interference.

knowledge they can spontaneously add interrelations which are not expressed through the 'radio voice' itself. The new listener will not be able to do so."[8] A symphony on the radio will never be appreciated in its totality simply because the sound received over radio in a private room cannot physically match that of the performance in reality.[9] Though the seasoned listener can appreciate the replication of the interpretation based on prior memories, the broadcasted symphony never has the same live qualities; someone without these memories, the new listener, will not be able to make the same connections.

Why is it so important for Adorno that a listener be focused and not distracted? A musical work of art is something ephemeral, with each performance akin to a rebirth of the work that the orchestra constructs and the listener creatively receives in the act of listening attentively. In this regard each ephemeral performance adds to the living, breathing work of art in its performance context; creative listening is, in this context, defined as active listening to the particular performance. Non-expert, atomistic listeners do not have this degree of intentionality and experience and as such cannot experience the work of art in the same way.[10]

So where is aura in all this? Where is the musical work of art? Adorno conjectures that, "It is true that we cannot say that in music the 'original' is more authentic than its reproduction because it actually exists only in being reproduced. Every score is, in a way, only a system of prescriptions for possible reproduction, and

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[8] Adorno 57.

[9] Even by current standards, HD and Internet radio still impart an audibly diminished sonic quality with all the aforementioned effects; hence these definitions are still valid.

[10] A complicating extension of this argument that lies beyond the scope of this paper is that concentrated listening is able to find fault with interpretations and performances, but what you think are parts of the conductor's interpretation or faults with this particular performance are in fact issues with your own listening, and so the circle begins anew.

nothing 'in itself.'"[11] Can there be infinite possibilities, among them radio, which would render Davies' definitions useless? This could be valid if applied to the work as living and breathing, insofar as it is now instanced, simply, in a newer fashion.

Nevertheless, I'm inclined to agree with Davies, and indeed place primacy upon the performative setting intended by the composer for the specific work. "The authenticity which Benjamin attributes in the visual arts to the original must be attributed to live reproduction in music. This live reproduction has its 'here' – either in the concert room or the opera – and its 'now' – the very moment it is executed. And what Benjamin calls the 'aura' of the original certainly constitutes an essential part of the live production."[12] Authenticity, in this sense, means that the audience is faced with the thing itself, the veritable here-and-now with no 'radio-voice,' 'hearing stripe,' atomistic listening, or memory interface to get in the way. The work is framed and aided by the space that surrounds it, allowing the listener to focus exclusively on the work and become an expert listener.

Hence musical works, with relation to modern technology, in this case the radio, are still only works in the sense that their respective performances are executed in a manner commensurate with what is indicated by the composer. This puts radio in an awkward position: sonically it might be able to transmit sound, but does the very transmission itself alter the works to the point of destruction? Adorno seems to think so; the hearing stripe and radio voice ultimately cast their shadow onto the work, an unintended consequence of the technology rather than an intended sonic addition by the composer. So in the end what *is* broadcast via radio is a sound closely resembling

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[11] Adorno 89.
[12] Adorno 89.

the original it replicates, but ultimately the radio can never lay claim to a work intended for performance in any other fashion - even if the radio broadcasts a live performance recorded at the show, it's still shrouded in the medium.[13]

In conjunction with listening types and the radio, Adorno addresses aura, the hearing stripe, and the habits and consequences it creates as he compares the radio to the gramophone. In "Time-Radio & Phonograph," Adorno begins a dialogue on the temporal and listening differences between the gramophone and the radio. The notion of presence within the radio broadcast is in large measure what differentiates the radio from the gramophone. In the radio one finds Adorno's concepts of the 'illusion of closeness,' and the second-degree 'liveness' that comes with the radio voice that creates a feeling of immediate presence. When the radio is broadcast live, there is no temporal gap between performance and broadcast. Even if the radio is playing something that's pre-recorded, anything that's played is always necessarily temporal – that is to say it always occurs within a time space.[14] When listening to the radio phenomenon, we are present insofar as there is no time difference between anybody listening to the radio phenomenon – that is to say the broadcast is the same no matter where it is heard. As such the radio creates a primacy of the work, in which the listeners intrinsically have no control over the work's time-space.

When listening to a record, however, there is no such temporal relation. In contrast to the radio, in which the listener can only switch or terminate the performance, the gramophone can be started, stopped, and manipulated at will. It is under total control of the record player operator.

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[13] I mention intention here – I will develop this nuanced discussion later in this, and the following chapters.
[14] Adorno 74.

> There are no narrow time limits as there are with phonograph records. One can listen to a whole Bruckner symphony without interruption. In listening to a recorded symphony the interruptions always remind the listener of the separation between the record and the live performance and destroy the musical continuum, notwithstanding the fact that in a deeper sense the 'radio voice' too, ' breaks the music into bits.' Again, the mobility of the radio allows it to broadcast accidental elements of a performance such as noises of tuning, applause when the conductor appears, conversation of the audience … The elimination of these accidental features helps to make a phonograph objective and 'beyond time'.[15]

Hence in a comparison between radio and gramophone, the radio is a necessarily more faithful reproduction in in its temporal fidelity. The radio, in its nature, forces the listener to conform to its time-space, whereas the record is entirely capable of being manipulated. Even though it's being played back in a different time from the original performance, the record is at least continuous and it forces the listener to conform to its time space, not vice versa.

Adorno clarifies the notion of a time space via the phrase 'time-coincidence,' which can be taken to mean the interaction of time and a given space. "We must be conscious that live qualities of radio are due only to the factor of time-coincidence … The sound itself, however, will show characteristics more akin to the sound of the phonograph … [the radio] *appears* to be a live phenomenon."[16] Thus although the radio shares many sonic qualities with the gramophone, it nonetheless preserves the temporal aspects of the live performance by forcing the listener into the time-coincidence of the live event.

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[15] Adorno 75.
[16] Adorno 75.

In a situation when the radio is broadcasting a live event, the radio listener differs from the live listener in only two ways: the quality of sound received, and the visible phenomenon of the event. This renders the radio listener absent from the here-and-now of live, but the closeness of the 'radio-voice' to the 'now' of the broadcast nonetheless binds the listener to the moment. Even if the radio isn't playing a live performance per se, the listener is still obliged to the time of the event. In the same way, "If the record is broadcast you can listen to it only at the moment it is broadcast. It has lost its mobility in time."[17] The value of the distinction lies in the temporal differences. Although radio broadcasts create the conditions for atomistic listening, the medium introduces the notion of time-coincidence that matters not with respect to atomistic listeners, but may nonetheless conjure memories in the experienced listener.

## Attali and Kittler: Recorded Performance

Jacques Attali addresses this distinction in his *Noise: The Political Economy of Music.* Attali's work, in brief, attempts to revive a historical and social analysis of music's evolution, while coloring such an analysis with economic undertones that come to characterize music in an age of capitalism. The author considers economics as the base for all social interactions and attempts to link this Marxist formulation to music's atypical, specialized status as artistic yet social phenomenon. His inquiry differs from Davies' musicological approach in that it contextualizes music within Benjaminian notions of mass markets, buying power, and industrialization. As such Attali represents a different perspective on the work, one that values technological implications over musicological phenomenon like the score and intentionality.

[17] Adorno 77.

Writing at the time of the gramophone's rise to market dominance, Attali bore witness first hand as music made its foray into the marketplace as a commodifiable, physical entity. The book begins with an economic analysis, and it's important for Attali to lay this fundamental groundwork before he considers the musical implications in line with Adorno's more narrowly musicological analysis of the radio.

As such Attali begins his first chapter on the subject of listening, and it draws heavily from the Frankfurt School's Marxist notion of reification. Music, for Attali, is an organization of noise that, through technology, has become physical, commodifiable, and totally transferable upon the advent of the record, which is primarily a physical storage device. As a social practice, the gramophone renders musical listening a part of the social sphere, where once it was a subjective experience in a concert hall.

> Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them. If it is deceptive to conceptualize a succession of musical codes corresponding to a succession of economic and political relations, it is because time traverses music and music gives meaning to time.[18]

Music, in this way, sits in the space between technological advancement and its implications. What Attali is posits is that music's technologization creates and molds new social norms in technologically influenced interactions.

Attali then specifically discusses these norms with respect to listening, and the ramifications of music's place in the world of gramophone and radio.[19] Primarily, he

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[18] Attali 10.

[19] Whereas Adorno discusses these facets in more of a physical and temporal sense, Attali discusses them and contextualizes Adorno's prior thoughts in a socio-economic sense, wherein

builds off of the prior discussion of Davies' notion of the musical work of art, though in a much more minimal method, by simply assuming Davies' causal chain. He states,[20] "The musical message has no meaning, even if one artificially assigns signification to certain sounds, a move that is almost always associated with a hierarchical discourse."[21] Music as a language is mimetic insofar as its performance is derived from this linguistic material, but any 'meaning' that is derived from the music is an entirely personal experience, one that does not immediately translate to others.

He embellishes this claim with the argument that music, in modernity, has been reduced to a spectacle attended at specific places that is now merely inconsequentially imbued with Benjamin's aura, in line with the argument that it instead derives much of its use-value from the entrance fee. Attali views the performance itself as authentic and unique with respect to Davies, but he agrees with Benjamin's definition of the spectacle as an economized representation of this performance.[22] In this vein, Attali echoes Adorno and Davies' Platonic performance ideals with his own concept of Music as Composition, in which the music heard or performed is precisely what the mind of the composer had intended without the mimetic impulse or need for interpretation.

Attali next categorizes music through repetition, which appears with the advent of recording and stores representation. Each spectator has a solitary relationship with a material object on which the recording is stored: a record. The

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he addresses questions relating to performance, its spectacle, etc., rather than the uniquely temporal-acoustic dimensions described by Adorno

[20] Insofar as it's veritably instanced – he also draws on Adorno's language of mimetic impulse. Such a discussion is necessary to help contextualize the work's new situation within listening habits so as to more clearly refine aura and the musical work of art in our time.

[21] Attali 25.

[22] Attali 32.

consumption and listening experience of records is individualized, and with every play of the record there is a recollection of prior listening experiences, be it of a live or recorded instance.[23] Primarily, the listener has the same sonic experience with the record because it perfectly replays the recording, but it's colored by both the present and every prior experience with that particular recording. The record is therefore capable of storing more than simply performances; it is the literal, physical storage device of memory and subjective experience that is then relived and augmented upon each subsequent listen.[24]

Recording shatters representation because it takes away the unique moment from the experience. Even though representation was commoditized into a spectacle sold to consumers, there was the possibility of an artistic and authentic listening experience. Once the record's conception as a storage device is rooted in mass consciousness via market systems, the public performance becomes the simulacrum[25] of the record. "Repetition began as the by-product of representation. Representation has become an auxiliary of repetition"[26] For Attali, recording is the death of representation.

Attali expounds upon repetition in the following chapter, *Repeating.* He formally rehashes his definition of repetition: the listener attempts to merely possess, maintain, and repeat the experience of noise and noise-oriented memories that have

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[23] This is similarly related to Adorno insofar as each listening experience is unique yet colored by memories, emotions, and experiences.
[24] Attali 41.
[25] This term, used here by Attali, is derived from Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation,* in which he discusses signs, symbols, and their relation to reality. The term Simulacrum, in this sense, means a cultural, or media-derived symbol that constructs a *perceived* reality that is different from the actual reality signified by the *simulacra.* In this case, Attali uses the concept to argue that the performance is the symbol, or advertisement, for the memory that will be stored on the record that is inevitably purchased as a result of having been at the given performance.
[26] Attali 85.

been sold to him as a commoditized spectacle. Economically and culturally speaking, the record was a symbol of ownership and intent to repeat the sonic experience and memory. The gramophone is part of a new social space that values reproduction, distribution, and repetition over representation, or tic, authentic performance experience.

Hence Attali presents more strictly economic and historical analyses that involve an implicit understanding of Adorno's atomistic listener. For in order to forward the concept of repetition, Attali at least implicitly expects that many listeners are those 'experienced listeners' that already have a memory of the piece to be replayed upon each subsequent listen. However it is the inexperienced listeners, the pure consumers, who drive the social and economic downward spiral that Attali portrays. Without the experience of the tic performance, the atomistic listener has mere fragments to build upon and as such fetishizes the physicality of the record more than the music contained therein. Atomistic listening leads to collecting music for the sake of owning a consumer good rather than replaying or reliving an experience.[27]

A notable and necessary addition to contextualize Attali's social and economic argument is the more strictly technological perspective offered by Kittler in his book *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter.* In the Gramophone section, Kittler expounds upon his view that sound is merely something to interact with via an interface, be it telephonic, a video screen, or a phonograph.[28] For Kittler, the question of reference had been entirely recast by new media, and offers an analysis of these

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[27] Attali 101. Not to prioritize the latter – it's certainly not necessarily desirable as a listening habit that's generated by the ubiquity of records, but it's certainly an important contrast to the former.
[28] Kittler 1.

groundbreaking mediums and their constitutive effect on our live and consciousness. In conjunction with Attali, Kittler offers a lens into how, precisely, atomistic listening is formed and spreads simultaneously with his media theory.

This is grounded in the concept that, with respect to records and the radio, nothing is physically transmitted that should emotionally effect listeners, because the radio broadcast and the vinyl record are devices for the transmission of electric signals rather than acoustic phenomena. As such, the purity of physical sound is lost, and the record serves a function of external memory and storage capacity. Thus upon the widespread introduction of the record player, human memory and concentration grow less capable of achieving the type of focused listening described by Adorno that is required for aesthetically genuine l experience of radio broadcasts and record renditions.

For Kittler, the reproduction that is stored on a record is not what the human brain will remember. He thinks that it will instead remember the *experience* of listening to the record, not necessarily the music exclusively, or in its own right. When the listener hears the reproduction again, the memories of the past experience of hearing it come to the fore, not the memory of the music itself. This lends proof to the claim that the listener projects subjective meaning onto the music being played by the record. So although the record stores music, when the brain hears the repetition, it triggers the memory and emotions of prior listens, not of the music itself.

There is a tension between the original question of the musical work of art as outlined in chapter one and the technological and listening implications of Attali and Kittler. It seems as though the record is simply a storage device, and that in listening

to the record the listener doesn't have an interaction with a work of art in any sense. In light of these listener claims, how can the gramophone claim to contain a work of art, even one that was intended to be made with the vast instrument of the studio?

It should first be argued, in defense of Davies, that there are certain compositions that are intended for studio performance with the studio instrument. This is well and good, but is playing a gramophone an authentic instance of such a work? Perhaps – just as in interpretative, live performance, there is an ideal and a reality to the studio performance. Kittler describes such an ideal through what he terms a 'consciousness phonograph,' which would judge the music itself as if it were played to create the perfect rendition of the studio performance. But in the practical application of such a phonograph, the consciousness within the machine would necessarily corrupt the performance.[29]

It would seem as though we are haven't gone anywhere, until one considers the fact that the gramophone contains nothing more than the music that's played back and that stored memories are a product of the human mind being triggered into memory by the record itself. "Hegel had referred to 'the sound' as 'a disappearing of being in the act of being,' subsequently celebrating it as a 'saturated expression of the manifestation of inwardness.' What was impossible to store could not be manipulated. Ridding itself of its materiality or clothes, it disappeared and presented inwardness as a seal of authenticity."[30] Kittler appeals to Hegel to argue that in being stored, artistic intent and emotion are presented as authoritatively correct insofar as the gramophone was the final cut chosen for reproduction. In this sense, the only

[29] Kittler 33.
[30] Kittler 36.

distance from the work of art as intended is any loss of quality due to the state of the record, speakers, or sonic environment, which means that truly concentrated and focused listeners can have an authentic artistic experience of a work of art instanced in studio form.

In an attempt to draw a qualifying distinction between live and studio performances from a listener perspective,[31] Kittler describes the neurophysiology of live music with an important clarification: the unification of the senses.

> Songs, arias, and operas do not rely on neurophysiology. Voices hardly implode in our ears, not even under the technical conditions of a concert hall, when singers are visible and therefore discernible. For that reason their voices have been trained to overcome distances and spaces. The 'sound of music in my ear' can exist only once mouthpieces and microphones are capable of recording any whisper. As if there were no distance between the recorded voice and listening ears, as if voices traveled along the transmitting bones of acoustic self-perception directly from the mouth into the ear's labyrinth, hallucinations become real.[32]

With live music, the perception is clear and simple: the musicians sit before the audience, physically creating the sound that is heard and registered aurally as an interpretation of a given composition, which, in conjunction with its causal accuracy, creates a work in a classical sense. But with recorded music there is no unity at all: there is no distance between the sound being acoustically created and its capture by studio equipment. As such, in repetition, there is no distinction between sound instanced and the ear and a mental perception. The only visual cues that remain are the machines in operation.

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[31] As opposed to Davies' arguments, which are specifically from the perspective of the work.
[32] Kittler 37.

Technologically speaking, then, the gramophone is a transportation device that plays back the instance of studio performance into speakers, and its playback function encourages a genre of listening that emphasizes a mindset of distracted, atomistic listening that is perpetuated by the listener's control over the time-coincidence of the playback. At the same time, the 'hiss' that Adorno terms the 'hearing stripe' colors the replicated studio performance, but in this case it manifests itself in the pops and cracks of the vinyl.[33] Consequently Adorno's analysis of the work's authenticity applies here as well: the hearing stripe distances the work from the performance setting, be it the studio or the live.

This distance plays into Benjamin's, and later Attali's, Marxist formulations of the work's reproduction, in addition to manifesting itself physically in the record. In its reproduced state the record confirms itself as exclusively a medium rather than a method of performance. It attempts but fails to convey the studio performance outlined by Davies because of its aforementioned inadequacies, and further accentuates the atomistic listening that was initiated upon the advent of the radio.[34]

## Radio and the Gramophone

Though the radio has its own technological space, time, and inventive period, it is inextricably linked to the gramophone in terms of the listening habits it creates and perpetuates, as well as its relation to the musical work of art. Primarily, the radio is a mobile yet efficient mode of broadcast that brings music into spaces exterior to the event of the performance. In so doing the medium of broadcast adds the 'radio

[33] Although this concept is herein considered non-auratic, in our time these pops are considered auratic by some insofar as the medium itself has an aura of historical authenticity.
[34] This is not to say that such an ideal is impossible, only to say that it can't happen with this particular technology. Indeed, I'll explore other such possibilities in the next chapter.

voice,' and the combination of 'hearing stripe' and acoustic speaker impart the medium onto the piece of music, which, although broadcast in time and note-for-note, fundamentally alter the work of art. Those experienced listeners with memories of live performances of the work can make connections to the prior work, while those with no experience are rendered simply distracted by the context of the radio and its social position that necessarily creates a culture of atomistic listening.

By virtue of its own hearing stripe, in the well-documented crackles and pops of the vinyl and amplification by speakers, the gramophone has a similar effect, hence its discussion alongside the radio in this chapter. The record possesses its own hearing stripe. It imposes itself on the work and the studio performance of the work, altering what Davies calls the intended studio performance. What sets the radio apart from the record, however, is Adorno's concept of time-coincidence, wherein the listener is forced into the time of the radio broadcast. As opposed to radio's time-coincidence, wherein all radio listeners listen to the same program simultaneously, the gramophone listener can simply change the song on command.

These technological typologies, as well as their implications, put increasingly complex strains upon the definitions of the work of art as previously outlined. Is atomistic listening really the mode in which Davies believes a work intended for studio performance can be received?[35] Once more Adorno's experienced and concentrated listeners come to the fore to help draw some conclusions. Clearly atomistic and distracted listening exist and are purveyed by the capitalist system that

[35] With respect to a technological difference, there are certainly art forms that embrace and utilize the hearing stripe, which is why it is necessary, in this thesis, to help re-contextualize such a definition. This chapter introduces the concepts that will later be challenged and complicated by our civilization's advancement into a digital age.

commodifies records. That said, for listeners who experience the studio performance in the way the composer intended, be it via record, radio, or in a heightened acoustic setting, the musical work of art can be truly manifest and the listeners can call themselves experienced.

Hence, the musical work of art in the age of technological reproducibility is, albeit reluctantly, dependent upon the listener for the veritable instantiation of the musical work. Atomistically speaking, the work of art is not performed for that person; but in the instance of a concentrated listening of music in its intended manner, the work finds itself creatively interpreted, completely performed, and subjectively understood. However, as will be discussed, such a conclusion is indeed idealistic and in fact quite rare; atomistic listening is ultimately a seductive, and culturally acceptable, form of appreciating works of art. Even upon the advent of the CD - which, as will be seen, offers a higher fidelity to the studio performance - atomistic listening increasingly reigns over extraordinary cases of focused, structural listening.

# Listening to the Work of Art After the Gramophone

## Listening Types and Performance Recapitulated

Chapters one through three, to this point, have constructed a historical and philosophical narrative that leads from the classically conceived notions of the musical work of art - within the framework of Goehr's considerations that the musical work of art, as a concept, is unquestionably outdated - to the problematizing social and economic notions of the radio and the gramophone. These insights raise several parallel questions, namely: what can be defined as the musical work of art, given these complicating factors? Where does it sit between the score, the performance, and the interpretation in light of different performance technologies and interpretive possibilities therein? How does the listener, atomistic or otherwise, interact with the piece, and does this have a tangible effect on the work itself? In the end, this chapter will discuss the original questions surrounding the musical work of art in order to more authoritatively assess them in the post-gramophone era.

In brief, the musical work of art is, as has been discussed, best currently understood as the sum of its parts, those being the composed work, its interpretation, and its intended performance. As long as they are intentionally, causally linked in the way desired by the composer, the musical work of art is realized via performance. After unpacking these concepts, it is clear that in interpretation it is impossible to be inside the head of the composer whose instructions are in the mimetic score that guides the interpretation and following performance.

Performance however, is a loaded term and needs more clarification. Classically there is a performance by musicians in a ritualized, quasi-religious setting.

Concert halls and private shows historically came to the fore as performance environments; nonetheless performances were still ritualized, contained environments, where "[the] unquestionable musical significance is the temporality of the event and hence the vulnerability of the musicians."[1] This is but one type of performance, however, and by the 20th century technology created new means for composers to utilize, namely the radio, the studio, and its partner the gramophone.[2] Hence the aforementioned questions necessarily compound to include listening habits of the live environment in conjunction with listening habits created by the developing technology. Also of import is how these habits interacted with the work as such in the developing and pre-established performance settings.

To unpack these inquiries requires a reconsideration of Adornian thought, in which the dialectic of listening types is between structural and regressive listening. The structural, or concentrated, listener for Adorno, is the ideal listener irrespective of technological developments, who sits enraptured by the music, and pays close, concentrated attention to the work as a whole. This is an educated, reflective listener that engages with the music on a critical and artistic level.[3] The latter, conversely, is created by the fetishization of music in combination with the conception that music functions solely as entertainment, wherein the listener can apprehend the work from a distracted perspective. This leads to Adorno's atomistic listener who, instead of

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[1] Peter Johnson, "Illusion and Aura in the Classical Audio Recording," (2003). 5.
[2] It's notable that we now understand these composers' intentions much more realistically than we do for, say, Renaissance composers because direct, personal interaction was documented and intention was much more clearly established through this documentation. On the contrary, all that survives from older composers is simply the score, and as such intention is much more difficult to derive.
[3] Paddison 210.

appreciating the work as a whole, picks up mere traces of melodies and musical structure.

The atomistic listener, hence a creation of the social and economic systems surrounding the physical commodification of music in the form of the record, raises important questions for the musical work of art, namely does there need to be a listener in the first place? The answer appears to be, in the face chapters two and three, that as long as the work is understood to have completed the causal chain indicated by the composer, it is a work of art as such; the work is mediated, as Adorno says, within itself.[4] If it perceived by an active, concentrated audience, all the better; the more people who understand a work of art, the wider it spreads. So although the atomistic listener is ultimately the product of mass culture, the musical work of art remains a work so long as it is endeavored causally.

What was left largely untouched by this recapitulation however was the discussion of aura with respect to the work, and I chose to leave it until now because of its delicate relation to performance and its reception. A large part of the auratic discussion in chapters two and three revolved around whether a performance was in fact authentic without a sense of aura; in other words does the performance have an aesthetic autonomy from its purely acoustic production?

Once again, the answer lies in intention. There is an inherent antagonism between aura and Davies' argument regarding compositional intent: that if a work is intended for reproduced, electronic performance that it should be instanced as such.[5] Benjamin (and his contemporary, Adorno) believed that the gramophone – and the

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[4] Paddison 208.
[5] For reference, see Davies' arguments in chapter two.

radio – distances the listener and audience from the unique presence of the work of art in its performed moment. In a classical sense, however, the three authors would concur: a classical piece of music is intended for the aforementioned ritualized performance setting, and is reified in the gramophone.

Nonetheless, there is music shaped by and intended for the technology of the studio instrument.[6] The Beatles' *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band,* for instance, would not be the work of art that it is without the studio. In this sense, intended performance is the playback of the recording through the studio effects by means of an intermediate medium. Hence a concentrated listener of such a medium can come to appreciate an auratic performance, as causally intended – for the work, as intended by the composer, is instanced and appears before the listener in its here-and-now.[7]

## Johnsonian Listening

Peter Johnson explores this concept in his article "Illusion and Aura in the Classical Audio Recording." This text is first utilized to offer a contrast: Johnson presents a counterargument to the traditional thinking regarding Benjamin's aura through the lens of reproduced media. Though his text is primarily focused on the genre of classical music – one of the principal reasons why I reject his arguments - the theories and structure lend themselves to an adaptation that stretches beyond the classical realm and into genres of music that specifically allay themselves to studio performance. Indeed, Johnson believes that, "The technology of audio recording, on

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[6] To be fair, this was after both author's lifetimes, essentially, and as such they might have changed their opinions after, say, rock and music that was primarily recorded in a studio rather than purely intended for live settings.

[7] It is certainly possible to produce a certain auratic quality of experience in listening to a musical recording, as is implied here. But such an aura would require a particular type of staging to create the presence of a here-and-now. Aura simultaneously comes out of a tradition of the physicality of the work, and this is lost in the static physical state of recording mediums.

the other hand, has consistently been developed not to destroy the aura of performed music but to cultivate it, to afford the listener an experience at least equivalent to that of the live concert."[8] With respect to classical recordings, then, Johnson believes that the medium offers a "distinctive listening experience, of value not because it sufficiently replicates live performance but because it is able to offer a music that is quite impossible to produce in the concert hall of theatre."[9] He undergirds this claim with the premise that critics in a concert hall allow for music to be just that, music, but framed by the otherwise transient contextualizing factors such as visual stimuli, costumes, programs, and so forth. Hence for Johnson, the musical ideal is to have as little distraction as possible.

So to Johnson, the concert hall can, in many ways, inherently distract the listener from the music, because for Johnson, true auratic experience is one of profound engagement without the spectacle and visual distraction of the hall.[10] Hence the recording can, in theory, afford a concentrated listener the space to focus exclusively on the music at hand, and thus a superior, aesthetically 'perfect' experience that renders the work accessible for a broader, fundamentally less distracted audience. "The strongest evidence for an aesthetic approach to recordings is their capacity to be heard with the same level of deep involvement and concentration as the live concert – or … with enhanced involvement due to the lower levels of distraction in a personally controlled listening environment."[11] In this way

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[8] Johnson 1.
[9] Johnson 3.
[10] Part of the reason that I will take issue with his arguments is this formulation: the hall intrinsically plays a sonic role in the here-and-now and is integral to the work's presence and here-and-now, and is also key to its intentionality.
[11] Johnson 12.

he believes that the music, may be detached from its performance environment and understood as idealized sound. He believes that the knowledge of how the sound is produced acoustically[12] yields an imagination ready and willing to derive meaning and knowledge through a suspension of disbelief, as it were.

Such a formulation, nevertheless, seems quite idealistic and hinged upon the concentrated listener focusing through the repeated work – for listening atomistically means that the work will not be perceived in its entirety, and it's likely that atomistic listening is perpetuated through playback. His argument is also based upon a presupposed common knowledge that recordings of classical pieces are made with the same instruments that are used in a live context, but with the studio as an instrument this is never guaranteed. Simultaneously, as has been previously argued in this thesis, the perfect studio performance is not necessarily that which is intended by the composer.[13] It simultaneously fails to take into account Benjamin's auratic moment, which is completely demolished by a repeatable, technologically reproducible experience, which is precisely what any recording offers; there is no sense of nearness and distance, of here-and now, for in playback the listener can get as close as desired to the work, and has total control over it, whereas in the concert hall the listener is at the mercy, as it were, of the work's interpretive instance through the musicians.[14]

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[12] Such a formulation is necessarily dependent on the expert listener, for the listener who has a knowledge of how the sound is originally produced will necessarily be more likely to listen structurally and take more interest in the work, be it in reproduced form or otherwise.
[13] Indeed, Glenn Gould makes a mockery of such studio performances by playing different movements in different 'perfect' styles and mixing them together to create a stylistically unorthodox recording that is only possible with the aid of the studio instrument.
[14] The discussion of portability, which is implied here, will be breached at the end of this chapter and will be more thoroughly discussed in chapter five.

Similarly, to invoke Adorno once more, both the radio and the gramophone have their respective hearing-stripes that, classically, are sonic intrusions. Davies, too, would fundamentally disagree from the angle of intentionality. He would argue that appreciating recordings as instances of authentic works of art is antithetical to the intentions of the composers in a classical sense. Likewise, Attali would counter that the recording of a classical performance is nothing more than a repetition of a stored, artificial musical experience, in agreement with Benjamin.

Hence I too am inclined to find fault with Johnson's argument, but find it useful with respect to other forms of non-classical, technologically-influenced forms of music; I don't posit that repeatable recording can be auratic. For Johnson, this experience is undisturbed, focused listening with few distractions. However, this formulation is counterintuitive to Benjamin's concept that aura is non-repeatable; it's impossible to produce aura in a living room because the listener has far too much control over the environment. Aura only appears when the listener is forced to disconnect from all the luxuries of home and resign control of the work.

I do believe, however, that there is an authenticity in the idealized listening setting he describes, insofar as each repeated listen, though colored by past memories, is still happening in the now – even if the auratic, overwhelming presence of a *unique* work-experience is not present. "Audio recordings invite us to listen critically and thereby, hopefully, to engage in a participatory listening in which the recording may become what it is intended to be by its performers and producer, namely the means to a fascinating, marvelous listening experience."[15] Although such an experience is

[15] Johnson 13-14.

indeed possible, marvelous and fascinating do not necessarily imply auratic, and within the classical realm the failure to properly instance the work doesn't yield aura. Nonetheless, there is a distinction insofar as such an experience is capable of idealistically and authentically, but not auratically, resonating with a concentrated, educated listener.

Although this conclusion eliminates Johnson's central claim of auratic repetition with specific reference to classical music, there is still an application for the essay non-classical music intended for non-traditional performance, for example Davies' more modernized work types, and music not intended for concert performance. This is why Davies, among others, leaves his sometimes-anachronistic ideals for classical music open to more contemporary compositional intentionality's and genre-specific performance mediums. This is what Johnson fails to do in his article despite the potential in his arguments, and it is what I will, in part, investigate in this chapter: what a Johnsonian experience might look like given non-classical music and non-classical instantiation.[16]

The historical and philosophical arguments to this point leave us at a crossroads whose magnitude cannot be over-emphasized: classical music offers a marvelous study of auratic experience in a concert hall that, upon the advent of the radio and gramophone, is destroyed and turned into a spectacle. Despite this commodification, the live performance cannot be discounted as an intentional, sonically authentic instance of musical work, whereas radio and studio performances

[16] To be fair this would take a much longer article, and he did bracket the discussion to exclusively classical music, hence I am taking a bit of a liberty to suggest that he should have done this in the time and space that he had allotted to him. Nonetheless the extrapolations I will make based on his arguments are, I think, not unduly thin, and are always based in the Goehrian framework in trying to seek new terminology and ideals for music in the 21st century.

fail to produce an equivalent experience. At the same time, however, it is possible to have a concentrated, educated, and musically informed listening experience with a recorded piece of music that uses the studio instrument in earnest whilst the audible intention of studio and recorded performance are manifest in its eventual playback.

The conundrum herein, as was hinted at in chapter three but which now comes to the fore, is the synthesis of Benjamin's aura, technological development, Attali's socio-economic critiques, Davies' causal links, and Adorno's listeners. The musical work of art is capable of auratic, causally robust (in a Daviesian sense), faithful, intentional performance. However, technology, social systems, and markets come together to foster a culture of atomistic, repeatable listening that ultimately makes the perception of such works challenging at best and impossible at worst. This thesis forwards the idea that this perception is theoretically possible and, in some less common instances, with respect to an educated, structural listener, veritably fruitful.

### Listening, Concentration, and Technological Development

With this formulation in mind, this thesis now turns to the technological advancements of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, first with tape cassettes, followed by CDs, and finally by the digitation of audio. Primarily, with tape cassettes, the questions of atomistic listening remained the same, if ever more obvious. Because the tape cassette, relative to the gramophone, was so small, it was instantly more portable and more integrated into daily life.[17] Repeated music as portable was something inconceivable with the gramophone record, but with cassette tapes all one needed was a car radio, a boom box, or a Walkman to have a comparable sonic

[17] Indeed, the tape was never intended to replace vinyl as a medium, as was the CD, but was rather an attempt to make vinyl cheap and portably convenient.

experience. This increase in portability merely increased the entrenchment of atomistic listening into social and cultural idiolect. Now both more portable and playable, music entered the realm of the background: music to drive to, music to exercise to, music to talk to, and so forth.[18]

It is impossible to concentrate as desired by authors like Johnson and Adorno while driving a car, for instance, and all other circumstances that music's technological reproduction make available to it, be it walking down the street with headphones on or putting on a cassette as background music. In sum and substance, the tape cassette's decrease in size and portability merely amplifies the socio-economic issues of the gramophone and firmly cements atomistic listening as the homogenizing social standard.

The same, however, cannot be said for the CD. In brief, the differences between the cassette and the CD are, sociologically speaking, quite minimal. They are both physical manifestations of recorded music - equally portable and reified into commodities. Sonically, however, the purity of sound on a CD is much higher than that of a cassette tape purely because the laser-read sound has a greater durability and, intrinsic to its design, a wider sonic spectrum. Of similar import is the elimination of the 'hearing-stripe' on the CD. On the cassette, music is read off of a plastic strip. There is a sound inherent to the medium; however, because a laser reads the CD, there is no such sound imposed onto the work.[19] The CD player instead uses a laser to read the bumps on the device that are then interpreted as bytes, and finally as sound.

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[18] These new possibilities for music actually opened up entire new genres, in part influenced by and in part designed for these very situations. The musical product, in a pop music sense, was restricted by and made for the new social situations designed by music's increasing portability.
[19] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into too much detail regarding the 44.1kHz sampling rate afforded to CDs, different bit rates, and the more technological details that make this so.

Hence upon the advent of the CD the studio instrument became ever more important because of the fidelity afforded by the medium – although both tape cassettes and CDs fundamentally encourage atomistic listening, focused listening is more possible because of the sonic increase in quality between cassettes and CDs.

As Johnson outlines in his paper, high fidelity, non-distracted acoustic spaces can in fact yield an authentic instance of the musical work[20], and with CDs this becomes a reality. CD's unique stature has its root in Adorno's hearing stripe that, as explicated, is a fundamental constant in all forms of media prior to the CD.[21] But CDs do not have this disadvantage; because of CD's reading format, the only restraint upon the quality of the audio on the CD is the fidelity of the sound system and the audio that is put onto the CD itself. Out of high fidelity comes the sensation of being close to the work that yields the *illusion* of auratic listening which, as previously explained, is undermined by the medium's repeatability; hence this listening can be labeled authentically engaging on a structural and intellectual, but not auratic, level.

This is also when the notion of a work for studio performance can attain the quality outlined in Johnson's theoretical high-fidelity space. As Davies underscores, the work intended for studio performance is that which uses the studio as an instrument in the work. Through Johnson's applied context, we may finally see how such a work might be veritably instanced *sans* any interference from the hearing stripe.

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[20] Johnson 13-14.

[21] Even though the hearing stripe, in the case of the vinyl record, is notably problematic, in recent years it has become associated with authenticity; as standard digital music quality has diminished the record, ironically, has become a symbol of fidelity. So even though I am claiming here that the CD can facilitate a more authentic listening experience, it can be seen that different mediums, if properly appreciated and listened to, can have a similar yet nonetheless slightly inferior .

First, though, it's useful to get a firmer grip on the studio instrument phenomenon via Andrew Goodwin, who, in his article titled "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Digital Age of Reproduction" demonstrates, amongst his larger argument regarding digital sampling and its ramifications for pop music at large, how such an instrument might be utilized.

> Much of today's technology allows musicians to play into the programme, using drum pads, keyboards, or perhaps even the buttons on the machine itself. This information will often register at very fine degrees of subtlety, encompasses parameters such as velocity and extremely small shifts in tempo and placement of the beat, and might trigger digital samples of 'real' sounds that are indistinguishable from the originals. The result can be that the machine programme contains every bit as much information as any piece of 'real' playing.[22]

In the same way, the musical work is realized irrespective of the necessarily 'real' aspects that Goodwin describes. Many works intended for studio performance unabashedly utilize drum machines or digital sampling that patches in, say, specific keyboard or pre-recorded sounds – but because they were intended for performance with the studio as an instrument these tactics are not beyond the scope of these works, whether or not they're 'real,' per se.[23]

Previously, performances captured and colored by the studio were reproduced in such a way that in listening to them, their authenticity was removed by virtue of the playback medium and hearing stripe. But with the advent of the CD, such

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[22] Andrew Goodwin, "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Digital Age of Reproduction," Critical Quarterly 30.3 (1988). 40.

[23] This is not to diminish the importance of quality musicianship; I firmly believe that stronger musicians make better music with the technological instrument of the studio at their disposal. That said, one cannot discount music made that utilizes these technologies to make the sounds that are heard as the end product. The distinction between 'real,' or human, and machine is one that's expounded upon by Goodwin, as well as many other authors, but is a can of worms far too large to be opened in this thesis.

shortcomings are overcome but once more at the expense of increasing the ease of atomistic and portable listening. Simply speaking, the portability of the technology made reification and atomization far too easy to avoid on a mass scale. As such what began with the record reaches a zenith with the CD: most music[24] adopted the five-minute, or shorter, song format so as to cater to this listening type.

Another of the major issues tackled in Goodwin's article, although not stated as such, is how such a performance can be reproduced in a live setting in the era of the dominant studio performance. As much as the CD can provide an authentically musical listening experience, people still want to experience the overwhelming physical presence of the unique, even if this means adapting the work to compensate for the lack of studio instrument. For some bands this meant producing a live show that involved a degree of spectacle to compensate for the lack of sheer musicianship; for other groups, this entailed actually being able to perform a virtuosic show.[25] "Most electro-pop acts who don't perform 'live' persist in maintaining the pretense that they *can* actually play 'live' … For other acts, authorship and authenticity reside in the ability to actually play."[26] The technology, along with the CD and cassette tape, was at this time (mostly the 1980's, at first) able to electronically reproduce the studio

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[24] I say most, not all, and I exclude classical, some forms of free jazz, etc. By this formulation I really mean music intended for studio performance, which, through gramophone's widespread acceptance, became the primary medium for which music was designed.

[25] This is more genre specific, and here entails an important distinction between pop/electronic genres of music and the aforementioned classical realm. While authenticity and aura was under assault from the technological perspective, traditional classical performance still remained in a dialectical sense of tension between the auratic live and reproduced recordings, as outlined previously. So it's not that I'm ignoring the classical here, it's that there were newer, more technology specific genres that require attention currently. At the same time, it's also necessary to note that the genre-groupings here are quite broad for the sake of argument – I'm not claiming that no other genres of music existed apart from these two, nor that there aren't any grey areas. I simply with to state that, for the purpose of the argument regarding new technology, that the distinction is most clearly made between these two polar forms of music.

[26] Goodwin 44.

instrument in a live setting. So for those groups that relied heavily on the studio instrument the live show became less about being able to physically play whatever instrument the studio was able to electronically reproduce, and was rather about the spectacle and the other side of aura that has yet to be touched upon by this thesis: the star fetish.

The aforesaid concept of aura, with specific reference to film audiences, substantiates the fetishization of the film star via the combination of the illusory film and the advertising and commoditization of the *film-cum-product*. In brief, Benjamin defines this cult as the artificial personality of the actors outside of the film studio. Because the film distances the audience from legitimate acting, they must grasp onto some sort of reality, in this case the artificial, constructed reality of the film star; the star is auratic insofar as there is a unique presence of the star before the audience, but perceived at the distance of the screen.[27]

The book *Mapping Benjamin* can help us to understand this concept, as it is described in the chapter on "Fetish." "Benjamin explicitly states … that the value of authenticity has not disappeared … the progress of history may well overcome the state of the religious cult … but we seem to be stuck with a fixation on objectness and materiality that we can neither control nor definitively repress."[28] Here the authors describe the aura of the work in relation to the fetishization of the object of the actor, and in so doing offer the inescapable observation that the actors, in their respective

[27] This, of course, is the distance and presence dialectic that's integral for aura's presence.
[28] Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Marrinan, Mapping Benjamin : The Work of Art in the Digital Age, Writing Science (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003). 196.

star-cults, serve as the sense of reality and materiality that the film audience searches for in film's destruction of aura.[29]

To this point we have been working with a few assumptions: First, that gramophone, radio, and cassette tapes all remove aura from a musical work of art because of their reproducibility, commodification, and distance from the uniquely distinctive work-instance; Second, that musical works of art *are* in fact possible to be performed in a studio setting if the composer intends to utilize the studio as an instrument in the composition; and Third, that upon the advent of the CD, which removes Adorno's hearing stripe from the music, it is possible, as is outlined by Johnson, to have a structural, personally authentic though definitively non-auratic listening experience with a reproduced studio recording - although these experiences are few and far between given the discussions of atomistic and distracted listening in chapters two and three.

Because these authentic listening experiences are so rare, however, the masses yearn for aura they miss, at least subconsciously. Both the film audience and listeners want to feel the presence of the work in reality in a live context. So although the film audience fetishizes the actors in their beloved films, the musical audience fetishizes that which it can: the musician stars and, to a larger extent, the overwhelmingly present, auratic quality of the music in a live setting.

There is, however, a very important caveat in this formulation. Although for pop acts it has become easy enough to replicate the studio instrument and hence

[29] It's necessary to reference the star-cult for the sake of undergirding an argument about music in its respective age of technological reproducibility, namely, at this point, via the CD and the studio instrument that is able to be transferred, to a certain extent, into a live setting.

studio performance on stage,[30] there are still those aforementioned groups that pride themselves on musical virtuosity, even if the studio instrument is still utilized. For *these* case studies it's important to note that the musician is in fact the very proliferation of his or her material. Whereas with classical music the performance is the fulfillment of the work of art, with more contemporary genres the studio performance fulfills this function and as such the live experience is more about the charisma of the musicians, the spectacle of their performance, and the musical moment of the band itself.

This opens another line of comparison to Benjamin's film arguments - this time to the film expert. In brief, Benjamin believes that in an age of technological reproducibility it's theoretically possible for most people to become an expert on a given piece of art because of its very ubiquity. This manifests itself most clearly in film, for as a reproducible form of entertainment it's possible for people to see the stars on the screen as many times and in as many varieties as they desire.

Henning Ritter briefly discusses this concept in his essay "Toward the *Artwork* Essay" in *Mapping Benjamin*, wherein he attempts to grapple with this and many of the larger philosophical issues that have perplexed the academic community about the *Work of Art* essay: "In reality, the film audience might assume as much of an expert stance toward film as has every audience toward representations that take the audience itself into account and include it."[31] Hence every audience of every piece of art forms a unique, expert interpretation, mostly because reproducibility brings attention to art that previously wouldn't have garnered it. With enough experience

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[30] Though it will never be an instance of their musical work of art because of the setting, it can still have star-aura.
[31] Gumbrecht 208.

anybody can reasonably claim to have an understanding of a piece of art, reproduced or otherwise.

This is applicable to music insofar as the live is a spectacle and the musicians occupy a cult status similar to that of film actors and the films themselves. If anybody can become an expert, in the film sense, so too can audiences of musical spectacles. The live repetition of a studio performance is a reproduced spectacle that relies on the musician-stars to be created; hence for bands that rely on a degree of musicianship in performance there will necessarily be better performances than others.

What this means, for the audience, is that there can be experts about an individual band just as there can be experts about specific actors and films, though with music there are experts who have detailed memories and experiences seeing the band, and more simple fans who might more casually enjoy the music. Take, for instance, expert-fans of the Grateful Dead who follow the band. All social connotations notwithstanding, these audience members who have studied the spectacle of the band can most certainly be considered experts in the same way as Benjamin's experts who watch and understand film with the sense of star-cult and second-degree comprehension.[32]

Hence with this sort of live performance, the work matters less than the spectacle – for the listeners and attendees have presumably already listened, atomistically or otherwise, to the studio performance for which the work was

[32] Such experts, however, are fundamentally different from Benjamin's notion of a journalistic or academic expert. At the same time, movies enable the creation of an expert community, or a collective of experts about the same thing, but Benjamin's individual art lover and collector offers a distinction – the travelling fans here described are among the former typology, but on an individual basis exist as the latter in their unique, individual relationship to the original work (in this case the instance of studio performance) and its performative instance.

intended. For comparison, it is possible to be an expert on a classical 'work,' but one doesn't attend a classical performance for the specific band at hand, but rather to see an instance of the work's intended manifestation through the particular musician's interpretation - an important but subtle distinction.[33]

In the context of the larger historical and aesthetic perspective of this chapter and thesis, what is sought is the ideal artistic experience in the age of technological reproducibility. Davies' argument of robust causality in conjunction with composer's intention offered some leverage, but Attali's and Kittler's post-Adornian hypotheses regarding technology and atomistic listening complicated Davies' ideas. Thereafter I worked through and undermined Johnson's arguments about auratic listening to classical recordings, but in so doing the chapter achieved a conceptual divide between auratic experiences and those that are artistically and emotionally stimulating upon each listen yet necessarily repeatable. Though it isn't auratic, such an experience is immensely satisfactory on intellectual, emotional, and sensory levels. It seems, after all, that this rarefied form of non-auratic listening is in fact authentic and sonically faithful with respect to the work of art in this intended form.

These technological advancements were then applied to a live setting in Goodwin's article, and it became apparent that there was a divide in the late 20th century between music intended for studio performance reproduced with the studio

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[33] A pertinent example might be the "Ring Nuts," those rabid fans who chase Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* around the world. These fans are certainly experts on the work of *The Ring*, which has been instanced in performance many times over. Though some of these fans might have particular favorite performances by specific Opera companies, the musicians in this case are more vessels for the work's intended performance rather than the end sought in itself, which is the case in the aforementioned Grateful Dead example. The difference is subtle but important: the 'Ring Nuts' chase Wagner's work irrespective of the musicians or the orchestra, whereas the 'Dead Heads' chase the musicians and the band as a result of their status as experts on the band's performance spectacle and qualities.

instrument, as opposed to virtuosic musicians, in a live setting. However the performance was in the former a spectacle, and in the latter something people attended because for virtuosic musicians rather than the music itself. In either case it's apparent that the live instance, for works intended for studio performance, was sought out of a desire for the auratic – by a desire to be overwhelmed by the presence of the thing. Irrespective of causal instantiation, there is, inescapably, the aura of the star-cult in the spectacle of performance.

The dominance of atomistic listening, created by the sociological and technological developments of the 20th century, can only yield a structural, authentic listening experience upon the advent of high fidelity, non-hearing-stripe audio devices, and this is as yet only manifest upon the advent of the CD. With this development, however, comes the portability and destruction of auratic potentiality with increasingly atomistic modalities of perception. The overwhelming majority of these modalities create a gap in the musical consciousness: the lack of auratic musical experience. The aforementioned performance spectacles fill this fissure with the unsuccessful attempt to recreate the studio performance through either increasingly grandiose forms of sensory onslaught or the growth and domination of the star-cult and expert experience of seeing a virtuosic yet unique[34] concert.

In concluding this chapter, I remind us of this important caveat: the enclosed argument is polarized for the sake of clarity, time, and space. There are indeed several grey areas, for instance experimental music such as the works of John Cage that in fact de-emphasize the performative spectacle of the live and are not necessarily

[34] Unique insofar as it's not causally linked in the sense described above – it's a singularity in this way, it's not unified with any grander sense of 'work.'

intended for performance in a pejorative sense. On the other hand one could make the argument that these forms of "new-classical" music are just that: works that are instanced by their performances, regardless of how open the instructions of the score might be. I'm inclined to agree with this argument, and although there are countless specific examples to the contrary, the majority of music, in the pre-digital era, was divided into the two main categories of works for concert performance and works for studio performance, in conjunction with the sub-categories therein. As will be seen in the next and final chapter, however, newer technologies will call for modification of these categories within the several constructs outlined in the current chapter, such as the utilization of the studio instrument for radio and mp3 performance via compression and other novel techniques

# Contemporary Implications and Conclusions

## The Musical Work of Art in the Digital Age

Technological innovation has profoundly altered both sociological and musicological understandings of the musical work of art and its reception by subsequent listeners. Specifically, the radio, gramophone, CD, and tape cassette altered the landscape of musical consciousness and listening habits from reverential and ritualized to atomistic and decentralized - away from the concert hall. This shift motivated a new typology of musical works of art, as seen in Davies and thereafter in works by Johnson and Goodwin, which respectively detail intended modes of reception, the possibility for an auratic listening experience in an age that Benjamin deemed to create distracted and inauthentic listening experiences, and technology instanced and manipulated in a performance setting. My thesis, however, would not be complete without the inclusion of the lineage of these ideas and technologies: the digitization of music and its effect on listening habits, the musical work of art, and the auratic sonic experience.

After CD's widespread acceptance, of course, came the personal computer. With the ability to import music into a 'library' on a computer came digitized formats of music; the most popular to this day has been the MP3, which is an abbreviation of *Motion Picture Experts Group One Audio Layer Three*, a compression program

which reduces the amount of space required to store music on a digital device by encoding data to remove parts of the audio that are hard to detect by the human ear.[1]

The more technical aspects of the MP3, as well as its transferal of music into a virtual collectable medium rather than a physically collectable medium[2] are discussed in David Beer's article, "The Iconic Interface and the Veneer of Simplicity: MP3 Players and the Reconfiguration of Music Collecting and Reproduction Practices in the Digital Age." This provides a useful starting point in understanding what the MP3 means for music, and its implications are twofold. "First, greater quantities of music can be stored on ever smaller and more mobile reproduction devices and, second, music can be more easily and rapidly transferred over global networks."[3] The MP3 necessarily means that the sonic experience becomes redefined by its spacial liquidity, and that music's constant accessibility and collectability means that the rarefied auratic listening experience, *à la* Johnson,[4] is further specified to work intended for MP3 playback. Hence it is more atypical in the mass lexicon of musical experience that shifts even further towards atomistic and distracted listening.

In reality, the MP3, and its respective technologies of playback, don't vastly deviate from the previous discussion of the CD's implications on listening habits. Without delving too deeply into a discussion of listening habits and their effects on

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[1] David Beer, "The Iconic Interface and the Veneer of Simplicity: Mp3 Players and the Reconfiguration of Music Collecting and Reproduction Practices in the Digital Age," Information, Communication, and Society 11.1 (2008). 73

[2] As compared to Attali and Kittler, why discuss collection and collecting in music's reification in the marketplace as a cultural phenomenon that drives atomistic listening and the base desire to collect for collecting's sake.

[3] Beer 73-74

[4] For my more detailed discussion, see the previous chapter.

daily lives,[5] it's easy to see the parallels between the CD, its portability, and the MP3. The CD, in essence, was portable enough to be brought into virtually any space via the Walkman, car radios, and boom boxes. The same goes for the MP3; instead of the Walkman the portable device has been made smaller, and the accessibility to several-CDs-worth of songs has been rendered easily attainable.

Though the CD and MP3 are crucially similar in this way, how they differ is perhaps even more important to understanding MP3's repercussions on the musical consciousness. In so doing, however, it is necessary to invoke the prior discussion of Attali. Attali believes that that in music's reification it becomes a collectable signifier for knowledge and musical experience; people stockpile music for the sake of collecting it, and in so doing music simply becomes a consumer good. Though this is a somewhat pessimistic outlook, it offers an interesting backdrop onto the differences in physical collectability of music; where Attali sees music objectified as a physical consumer good – in the context of the vinyl record, the tape cassette, and the CD, the MP3 is an intangible, virtually replicable good.

The musical collection was redefined upon the advent of the MP3, which shifted societal focus from physical to virtual. In Attali's case, this shift from physical to virtual would complicate his argument; for if there is no sense of physical collection, why would anybody stockpile for the sake of stockpiling? Beer can offer an answer: people would stockpile for the increasing portability of large quantities of music, and because in the same way a physical collection can create a material

[5] Which, it must be said, is beyond the scope of this paper (and if it were to have been discussed, would have begun with the gramophone), but is touched upon in Beer's article in a discussion of managing times and spaces with musical intervention that is now technologically possible.

biography in a Benjaminian sense, so too can a digital collection that is time-stamped and dated by import.[6]

Nonetheless, the virtualization of what was once physical causes structural issues with these arguments that run deeper than this surface level cover, and Beer opts to use the portable playback device, the MP3 player itself, as a way out of this conundrum. For him, the iPod[7] as a storage device and portable music player is the entrance into a mobile music collection.[8] "The MP3 player is merely the visible dimension that conceals these other aspects behind a veil of fetishized simplicity and user-friendliness."[9] In other words, the music collection itself, according to Beer, becomes part of everyday life through the simulacrum of the playback device; contained within it is as much a biography as a physical record collection, but its brought to physical life through the device on which it is contained. The iPod, then, is the material embodiment of this collection, that which brings it to life.

All this is simply to say that the collecting of music, though brought to a head by its virtualization, continues and is expedited with the same implications of a physical, biographical collection, only now the physicality is manifest in the playback device rather than the record or CD upon which the music is contained. This creates the possibility for a drastically increased capacity for music storage, and with no worry about the physical space of the music it is as though all of music is collectable and transferable onto a physical storage device. With reference to Attali and the arguments made in chapter four regarding listening, it seems as though this would

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[6] Beer 76-78.
[7] Or, for that matter, any MP3 player such as the Zune, a cell phone, etc
[8] Beer 79.
[9] Beer 80.

encourage atomistic listening and push a Johnsonian, authentic listening even further towards the fringe of rarefied (though possible) public experience. This feeds into an insatiable consumerist attitude of instant gratification and instant recall that leads to perpetual distraction insofar as the atomistic listener constantly searches for new stimulation - listening becomes a purely consumerist mode of behavior.

This amassing, in the age of digital music, is aided and expedited by the resources of the Internet, which allows for vast, rapid stockpiling of musical files on a more permanent storage device, the computer, and thereafter on the portable storage device. This process is detailed in Sean Ebare's "Digital Music and Subculture: Sharing Files, Sharing Styles," wherein the author undertakes a more sociological study regarding online musical communities and in so doing addresses issues of musical accessibility and its increasing effects on mass audiences.

Ebare begins his discussion of mass, subculture, and identity with an invocation of Benjamin's argument regarding loss of aura, and applies it to the Internet's accessibility of music. For Benjamin, as art becomes decentralized and de-ritualized, it becomes more accessible to a wider audience. Hence when music is removed from its intended form of performance, it is received by a broader audience via the Internet in MP3 format *without* a reproduction of a studio, electronic, or live performance.[10]

What is important to note, however, that consumers of this onslaught of digitized music can be organized along a continuum from production to consumption that respectively runs from creating musical works of art for intended performance to

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[10] Sean Ebare, "Digital Music and Subculture: Sharing Files, Sharing Styles," First Monday 9.2 (2004). 3.

atomistic listeners who consume, stockpile, and only halfway listen to the music itself. The middle of this spectrum becomes more complicated, in the space where this new form of technology sees itself being used in a creative medium.

> Near one end of the continuum is the custom playlist of MP3 players and the mix-tape, which may be exported, exchanged, or transported. Here, music is rearranged and recontextualized, but the original recordings are not altered. In the middle of the continuum are the users of samplers, turntables, and mixing decks. This group remixes prerecorded music in ways that alter the original, and creates a new original out of the source material. At the other end of the continuum are the users of computer software, MIDI, and conventional recording equipment – who, in the most extreme "producer"-type-cases – record entirely new sounds from physical audio sources, and arrange them into compositions.[11]

Hence the new technology offers perplexing implications for auratic performance and listening types alike. Where exactly a performance of a work of art rests, given this blurred line of technology, is difficult to precisely pinpoint. A first premise is Davies' performance types, after which is found this spectrum of listening and performance. Clearly, studio performance and synthesis of sound via production are instances of intended electronic or studio performance, but does the utilization of reproduced studio performance count as an auratic performance? Given Ebare's contextualization of fundamentally altering the sonic experience of the original studio recording, the answer would seem to be yes: in this way a new work is created insofar as the

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[11] Ebare, 6. Though it is necessary to state that things such as DJ-ing live and mixtapes originated upon the advent of records and tape cassettes, digital technologies such as computer recording software have significantly blurred the aforementioned distinctions regarding performance intended for performance via certain technologies. This is discussed earlier with reference to performance types. There, I take Davies' types and note that there are certain types of intended performance that utilize the technology of the time to create new music. Here that portion of my larger argument reaches its logical conclusion as digital technology blurs these lines even further.

original is sufficiently transformed enough to instance a new aural comprehension, otherwise it is simply a non-auratic, inauthentic occasion of the original.[12]

Ebare's description of the continuum draws the line at mixtapes, wherein reproduced studio performances are simply decontextualized and rearranged. Here there is no composition of a work of art per se, and although the work may be decontextualized in the context of its conjoining pieces, it's still an instance of the original reproduced performance with no change or alteration. Hence although technologies do offer up new avenues for the realization of works of art, auratic performance, and concentrated listening, a Johnsonian ideal is increasingly rarefied upon the spread of increasingly portable (and hence increasingly susceptible to atomistic listening) and increasingly collectable online MP3 files. Indeed Ebare admits this himself in his conclusion, wherein he makes a not-so-subtle reference to Adorno and Benjamin when he says that "'Mass Culture' or 'passive reception' models deserve serious consideration"[13] in thinking about the implications of file-sharing and the rampant accessibility of music on the Internet.

The final frontier for music, it seems, is the technology afforded by virtual reality, wherein the world is represented in various different ways to the user. This is a complex problem to tackle with respect to aura, but its precisely the subject tackled by Bolter et al. in "New Media and the Permanent Crisis of Aura" in their assessment of aura with specific reference to Mixed-Reality technologies that combine many of

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[12] An apt analogy is that this instance of a studio performance creates a new work of art in the same way that *The Wasteland* is a new, brilliant work of art created out of many original source materials. What is not so subtly hinted at, but avoided due to scope and length are, sampling, DJ-ing, and turntable scratching. While these concepts would take another thesis-length work to unpack with respect to the topics discussed here, they are the next frontier in re-contextualizing the musical work of art, as well as the listening habits and sociological implications therein.
[13] Ebare, 10.

the elements purported earlier in this paper to constitute a concert experience, among them visual, aural, and textual, in computer-generated environments that aren't 'real.'

Such a musical example of mixed reality can be found in concerts streamed online, wherein, "an MR [Mixed Reality] application re-presents the world to the user, by enhancing (or distorting in a creative way) the user's physical and social space."[14] Such an experience draws on the here-and-now of a particular spectacle, as well as the here-and-now of the user. Ostensibly both the event in question and the online viewer, in the streaming example, have a hear-and-now with aural and visual cues to indicate its 'live-ness,' but only one of the events is 'real.' So where, with reference to Benjamin, might the auratic experience be found?

In answering, it's useful to follow Bolter et al. to Benjamin's discussion of aura in 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,' wherein Benjamin's main concern is that of aura with respect to memory. "Benjamin defines aura in this context as the 'associations, which, at home in the *memoire involuntaire*, tend to cluster around an object of perception.' Still photographic and film cameras, we learn here, extend the range of voluntary memory because they provide a permanent, visible record of the sound and sight of an event."[15] This means that for technological innovation, an indication of the event, either sonic or visual, induces the memory of the experience that conjures the *feeling* (but not the actuality) of aura once more. In this way, YouTube can be said to conjure memories in the same way as aforementioned media

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[14] Jay David Bolter, Blair MacIntyre, Maribeth Gandy and Petra Schweitzer, "New Media and the Permanent Crisis of Aura," Convergence 12.1 (2006). 23.
[15] Bolter et al. 25. This is the concept utilized by Kittler in his description of records as storage spaces of memory and Attali's description of repetition of experience; for them the record does sonically what Benjamin says the photograph does visually.

types in the expert listener, but YouTube is unique insofar as it has a visual component that is also sometimes able to trigger memories more forcefully.[16]

In this conclusion, though, is implicit a sense of nostalgia – for if the listener has a strong sense of memory, might it be wistful longing for the experience? YouTube might bring the listener back to the original experience; nonetheless the expert listener, who conceptually operates within the normative structure of classical music, has quantifiable knowledge regarding the instanced work. In contrast, an inexperienced, naïvely nostalgic listener doesn't. In both instances, though, YouTube brings the listener back to the original through the potent memories it conjures, *not* through an auratic listening experience.

The authors go on to draw a distinction between completely Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality, which is important with reference to music in distinguishing different sonic experiences from one another in a Virtual Reality environment. "If the user ceases to be aware of all this technology, according to Lombard, she can be said to be present in the VR (Virtual Reality) environment. The definition is not limited to VR; any medium can potentially generate a sense of presence, if the user is made to forget the technology."[17] This definition is crucial in understanding the intended yet failed attempts of musical technology up to this point. It's the goal of radio, specifically with respect to time-coincidence; it's the goal of the gramophone with

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[16] This analogy only holds insofar as the youtube video, like the photograph, is of the experience previously had. A larger discussion of examples, such as whether similar videos also have aura, would be too long and detracting to be included in this paper. As well, there are many examples of youtube videos that have video that is disconnected from the performance that's designed to give a sort of visual ambiance to the music. These don't function in the same way – this formulation is made with specific reference to reproductions of performances found on the Internet.

[17] Bolter et al. 28.

respect to a reproduced studio performance – the pitfall is the hearing-stripe, so the user is always aware of the technology.

However, as astutely noted by the authors, destroying a sense of presence by taking that which was once far and bringing it near is the ultimate destruction of aura. Another complicating factor is that the designers of Virtual Reality have the additional hurdle of making the participant forget the fact that Virtual Reality is itself a reproductive technology, wherein everything is equally near with no aura whatsoever.[18] In the end the user might feel a nostalgia for the real thing and seek it out, but it would seem as though the sense of mediation via mediums like the radio and the gramophone are not enough to encourage the physical sensation of presence as outlined by aura.

This seemingly critical counter argument is still defensible via Davies and his notions of technologically intended works, and this clarification is useful with respect to the thought that a YouTube or a stream might itself be auratic. Despite any possibility to the contrary, YouTube videos cannot be classified as auratic - they can only imply nostalgia for the original insofar as the video conjures a memory, which in turn feeds the Benjaminian desire for immediacy that cannot be readily fulfilled by a live experience as such in the age of technological reproduction.[19] Again, the closest that the new technological form gets to such a formulation is a Johnsonian experience of a studio recording in high fidelity played in a concentrated listening environment.

[18] Bolter et al. 29.
[19] Bolter et al. 33.

## Conclusion

In essence, this thesis brought the discussion of the musical work of art – in line with the critiques of Lydia Goehr – into the digital age, and considered the fate of aura under these conditions. Because the term 'musical work of art' has been used almost entirely to mean something epitomized and fulfilled by a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in a concert hall, this thesis was constrained within these theoretical boundaries utilized by the aforementioned authors. At the same time, however, it pushes the boundaries of these theories by challenging their merit and practical application in the digital age.

As has been seen, the linked models of the performance and the musical work of art are massively complex: both in terms of their implications and their chronology, these models stretch several hundred years and through many technological ages. Our investigation began with an exposition of Benjamin's aura, which is loosely defined as the presence, or here-and-now, of the artwork. In his pivotal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility," Benjamin describes aura's disappearance in an industrialization and capitalism.[20] Through a listener-based critique, along with working through various definitions of the musical work of art in their normative, generally classical conceptions, my thesis has introduced the notion that technology has the capability to reduce listening to a ubiquitously atomistic level while nurturing structurally focused audiophiles.

[20] Though, given his definition of the term, it can be argued that upon the gramophone's cult status, the hearing stripe creates an aura of the medium - insofar as the hiss corresponds to a here-and-now of the record player being used - that lends authenticity to the works being played by the medium.

Where do these conclusions leave the live performance, in the digital age? Is live music itself just a stale, classical conception? I'm inclined to disagree, and instead forward the conclusion that the live means something different depending on the work of art. In a purely classical sense, yes, the ritualized live experience is the only proper way that the work was intended to be performed and as such heard, and upon the advent of the radio and gramophone, these performances became all the more important and emphasized. But with respect to modern forms of music that were composed and intended for different forms of reception and instantiation, such a closed off definition would be antiquated and nostalgic at best. Indeed, Goehr conjectures that part of the effect of recording is to remove the necessity for an "imaginary museum of musical works" - which was traditionally conceived as memories of past performances - in favor of a literal, physical museum of recorded performances. Simultaneously, the existence of superior technology endows older, inferior recording technologies, and thus the music they contain, with historical authenticity. This argument, in conjunction with my final chapter, yields the realization that contemporary modes of listening and reproduction, under the right circumstances, can indeed instance musical works of art.

At the same time, it's difficult to say that an intended form of reception is the distracted, atomistic mode of listening fostered by the proliferation of increasingly portable modes of musical storage. Instead what is here warranted is a middle ground between the two extremes, one that Johnson idealistically outlined but overestimated in his application to classical music: it is essentially possible, given technology's capabilities of high fidelity, for music intended for a given type of performance to be

heard in an authentic environment, in which the musical work of art is present before concentrated listeners. Though more study into the minutiae of the pathway to this conclusion are needed, in an age when superficial listening and extreme portability reign supreme it is necessary to step back and note that what technology has given music isn't all bad - quite to the contrary it has afforded composers new, creative avenues of expression and listeners the fidelity of sound to listen to the fine details of musical works of art that were once either lost in the concert hall or to the hearing-stripe.

Ultimately, my thesis suggests that such widely disseminated quality has the ability to democratize expertise, as was so desired by Benjamin, and simultaneously create classes of listeners that are able to transcend the structural-atomistic dialectic. In its combined state of high fidelity and placement within current society, music has the ability to connect with listeners in new and unique situations previously unimaginable to many of the aforementioned theorists. This argument would require another paper of substantial length to fully develop, but I herein create the groundwork for the conception of such a theory that is rooted in our time. What is immediately clear, though, is that regressive listening is a widely accepted modality of comprehending works, but this fact is not necessarily problematic so long as society continues to appreciate music for the art that it is, and continues to listen often and at a diversity of capabilities.

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