

SOCIALLY STUDYING MUSIC AND MUSICAL SEMIOTICS.

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Abstract. This article explores the social significance of music through the lens of musical semiotics. It discusses how music is not only a reflection of society but also a powerful force that shapes social experiences, identities, and power dynamics. While some theorists, such as Adorno, emphasize the autonomy of art, others argue for music's direct role in social interaction and political influence. The text critiques the limitations of traditional musicology and social sciences, which often neglect the meaning conveyed by sound itself. It calls for a deeper understanding of how musical sounds contribute to communication, identity, and social change.

Keywords: musical semiotics, social identity, power dynamics, cultural theory, musicology, musical meaning, ethnomusicology, political function of music, sound and society

Frith and Laing, among other academics, have often asked musicians for specific help. Musicologists as well. Most cultural theorists and sociologists find pentatonic majors, E minor sevenths, to be uncomfortable, so their requests have largely gone ignored. Pentatonic majors, E minor sevenths, digital delay and quantizing, expected downbeats, and sociologists don't feel comfortable in their environment. Expected downbeats, digital delay, and quantizing; artists are socially forced to, for the sake of their personal muso reputation, stay in the ghettos of anti-verbal "art" or "kick-ass." Tagg 1999: 2. In the social circles generating it, music has always had a purpose. In the fantasy of art's autonomy, too, authors like Adorno claim that the goal of music is dependent on its lack of function, for it is exactly this lack that protects against totalitarianism. Adorno, 1980. Historically, human societies have employed music for political, social, and religious reasons. Music was for a while considered a passive reflection of political and economic superstructural phenomena and difficulties (Wade 2002; Pelinski 2000). Yet, it has become increasingly obvious recently that music directly influences the formation of our social experiences and identities.

Frith 1996; Tagg 1999; Vila 2002. Music is socially relevant because it allows people to express themselves. Music could help people dance and entertain themselves and become inspired. Have various points of view, manage their emotions, and engage with a group. For these reasons, music also affects the power dynamics of every human group: it can encourage authoritarian imaginaries or help to articulate resistances. Governments could use it to increase allegiance to symbols and also as capital to drive expansion by altering people's desires. It also acts as a strong link for social movements and helps reveal and question power abuses. Music is politically important.

The music industry, for its part, generates jobs and produces tremendous wealth on a global scale as it moves thousands of millions of dollars annually. Music, always present on television and in various pursuits (Tagg 1999), welcomes consumers on portable devices, in concerts, and in the context of dance and other activities. Every one of these copies is linked by a value chain to which follow legions of performers, composers, producers, sound engineers, distributors, instrument manufacturers, and so on. Music consumption today sets into motion economic mechanisms of worldwide reach like never previously in human history. Music is financially important.

However, none of this would matter if it weren't for the message that music conveys. Artistry communicates different things to different people. Still, even if we always utilize music for goals not limited to the musical (to inspire ourselves, to unify us, to relax ourselves, to move quicker, and so forth), it is a fact that we still know very little about how music suggests. The power of Ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and economists often overlook the power of musical sounds in society and their ability to shape human life. Often overlooking musical sounds in society and music's capacity to shape human life, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and economists still, not all academics in these disciplines have the resources to investigate how these significations propagate in musical tone and, thus, their comments largely emphasize the discourses used to give music meaning. From this perspective, musical sound is still like an unknown territory, even if it is significant. Ramón Pelinski claims that [Simon] Frith observes that the interpellative function of music results not from natural connotations but from the meanings the listeners themselves provide the music. As in the instance Just like with homology, the listener can't connect with them; therefore, musical meanings should be seen as social constructs; this is why Ethnomusicology Translations, no. 2 (2016) Four would explain their repeated contradictions (which also shows that sound structures are not very interesting to sociologists, anthropologists, and popular culture scholars). Pelinski 2000:167, original italics. This part illustrates how certain social science theorists have artificially separated the process of generating sound. Frith and others conclude that there can be no form of association at all given that sound has no necessary relationship with social structures—as implied by theories of structural homology prominent in the 1970s. They argue, therefore, that the study of meanings should center on speech instead of sound. Although it does not clarify why not only any music can be used to generate simply any sort of meaning, this approach rightly stresses that every individual "negotiates" musical meaning in many ways. Musicologists and music theorists govern the enigmatic language of notation and music theory, so they are supposed to have the most tools to access concepts drifting in sound. Musicology has long been obsessed with the idea that only with outstanding effort can music point to something outside of itself. Though based on reasonable logic, this strategy has occasionally led to the mistaken idea that Though based on solid grounds, this way of thought has occasionally led to the mistaken idea

that music cannot imply "signification" here assumed to be reference to an extramusical reality.

In conclusion, the social study of music through musical semiotics reveals the powerful role that sound plays in shaping human identity, interaction, and cultural meaning. While traditional disciplines like musicology and sociology have often overlooked the meaning embedded in musical sound itself, a semiotic perspective brings attention to how music functions both as a personal and political tool. Music is not just entertainment or aesthetic experience—it is a medium of social expression, resistance, and influence. Therefore, to understand music fully, it is crucial to integrate both sonic analysis and social interpretation.

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