

Music, Technology, and Psychological Warfare

by E. Michael Jones

“No change can be made in styles of music without affecting the most important conventions of society. So Damon declares and I agree.”

—Plato, *Republic*

The late Sam Shapiro used to tell a story about two Englishmen in China who wanted to demonstrate the superiority of their culture to one of the mandarins they had met. They erected a tennis court in front of his residence and proceeded to play in front of him in the hot sun for two hours. After the game was over, the two sweaty Englishmen asked the mandarin what he thought. “Wouldn’t it be simpler,” the mandarin replied, “to have your servants do this for you?”

The mandarin’s response brings us directly to the question of delegation and indirectly to the issue of technology, which makes much of the delegation of modern life possible. There are some functions that no one, not even the very rich, delegates. Chewing food comes immediately to mind. So does begetting children, although the inexorable march of the technically possible has muddied these waters somewhat. The other end of the spectrum is made up of the sort of activity that no one (in his right mind) would do if he could pay someone to do it for him—shoveling manure from a stable, mowing the lawn, changing oil in your car, and all of the myriad other mechanical tasks that make life possible.

What about the vast space between these two extremes? What about, say, making a chair or building a brick wall? Here, skill plays a role in helping us make the decision. Generally, if we cannot do it ourselves, we have to pay someone to do it for us. If we can do it ourselves but do not have the time, it falls into the “shoveling manure” category above. There is, however, some intrinsic satisfaction in making something like a wall or a chair, a satisfaction that cannot be purchased, no matter how skillful or cheap the carpenter or the mason we might hire. If I have the requisite skills, only I can make the chair that really expresses my desires about whatever it is I plan to do in that chair—reading, for example, or playing the mandolin.

Where does music fit into this spectrum of human activity? Is it something that you make or something that you buy? Well, it depends on who you are and when you lived. If you were poor and lived a long time ago, you made your music yourself or you listened to other people make it at various public events: Mass, processions, coronations, etc. If you were wealthy, you could pay other people to play music for you, a practice that often meant that, if you were very wealthy and lived in a country where musical traditions went deep, you could hire some of the best musicians who ever walked the face of the earth.

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Today, you can now buy a CD, pop it into your stereo, and have, as it were, Beethoven performing in your living room. Given this possibility, why would anyone make music on his own, especially if, as in the case of yours truly, he most certainly lacks the skill of an Arthur Rubenstein or a Yehudi Menuhin or a Christopher Parkening? Or is listening to a CD like having your servants play tennis for you?

I played guitar in a rock band in Germany 30 years ago, but, when I returned to the United States, I suddenly decided that I did not like that music anymore. So I put my guitar away (except for rare occasions) and spent the next 25 years listening to recordings of classical music. Then something happened. My youngest son inherited a violin from my wife’s family, and, around the same time, the two of us attended a ceili at a local parish, where live Irish music was being played. I suddenly realized that I liked the music, that the two of us could play that kind of music, and, most importantly, that I wanted to play my own music for a change, even if other people could play more sophisticated music better than I could.

Just why I felt this way became clear to me only years later, when I read Ralph Vaughan Williams’ book *National Music*. Music, according to Vaughan Williams, is the expression of a deep emotion, and so paying other people to do it for us is something like paying for someone else to cheer for you at a football game. If your team has just scored a touchdown, you want to cheer yourself, because, if you do not, the emotion you feel will not get expressed. The sports analogy is especially apt for our age, when most people experience sports vicariously by watching professionals perform it on television. Since we live in what Vaughan Williams calls “an age of specialization and delegation,” we see nothing strange in the fact that we “get other people to play our games for us and look on shivering at a football match, instead of getting out of it for ourselves the healthy exercise and excitement which should surely be its only object.”

Paying people to make music for you is nothing new. The wealthy have long done this, but they have paid a price for their enjoyment in more ways than one. “Music,” Vaughan Williams says of himself and the English, “is not an industry which flourishes naturally in our climate.” As a result,

those who want it and can afford it must hire it from abroad. This idea . . . began in England, I think, in the early 18th century, when the political power got into the hands of the entirely uncultured landed gentry and the practice of art was considered unworthy of a gentleman, from which it followed that you had to hire a “damned foreigner” to do it for you if you wanted it, from which

in its turn followed the corollary that the type of music which the foreigner brought with him was the only type worth having and that the very different type of music which was being made at home must necessarily be wrong.

Taking his cue from Ricardo and the Manchester school of economics and their idea of “comparative advantage,” Vaughan Williams compared the English penchant for cigars to the English penchant for music and concluded that the English have a comparative advantage in neither field. Vaughan Williams feels that, when it comes to something mechanical like cigars, the English should pay other people, like Cubans, to make them for them. He does not, however, feel the same way about English music. There are some things that only you can do.

Music is something worth doing, and anything worth doing is, as Gustav Holst used to say, worth doing badly. There are some emotions that only I can express, even if I express them badly. No one can sing every song well. Just because someone can sing “Nessun Dorma” does not mean that he can sing “Moon River.” Luciano Pavarotti’s performance during the Three Tenors concert in Los Angeles is proof of that. Most people would say that my voice does not compare to Pavarotti’s, but I can sing “Moon River” better than he can because I am an American. Similarly, no one would insist that the English produce their own cigars, but something got lost when the English stopped producing their own music. If the wealthy English pay “damned foreigners” to make their music for them, they will end up with damned foreign music, and Englishmen will forever be at odds, in some profound sense, with their own emotional being.

The advent of recording technology suddenly put the average man in the position of the 18th-century gentry, but it did not really change anything. Technology simply deferred the question, which Vaughan Williams raised in 1932 when he gave the series of lectures at Bryn Mawr College on which *National Music* was based. In the face of all of the expert performances now available to us, wouldn’t it be “Better [to] give up the struggle and become a merely passive listener?” No, because “Music is, first and foremost, self-expression; without that it is a falsehood.” If we all became “passive listeners,” “Whom should we find to listen to?” Music would die of “inattention.”

Vaughan Williams points up a paradox that C.S. Lewis developed roughly 15 years later in his essay *The Abolition of Man*. What we call technology is really the power of some men over others, which means that technology is implicitly but invariably exploitable as a form of control. Technology means an increase in power, but that power is always at the disposal of the people who control the technology. In realms mechanical, we accept this fact as the price of doing business, but in realms of the spirit—production of culture, for example—the price quickly becomes exorbitant. Paying other people to produce our culture for us is like hiring other men to sire our children. The children who result from this act will not be our own. Lewis mentions the airplane, the wireless, and the contraceptive as examples of the technology that allows some men to wield power over others. He might just as well have mentioned the record player, because, as soon as music was recorded and sent over wires, it was used as a form of control. It happened 10 years before Vaughan Williams spoke at

Bryn Mawr and 25 years before Lewis wrote his essay.

Muzak, otherwise known as elevator music or dentist music, came into existence in 1922, the result of two technological breakthroughs. The first was the development of propaganda theory during World War I; the second was the ability to reproduce music mechanically. The man who brought both together was Brig. Gen. William Owen Squier, one of the early pioneers in social engineering. Once it became possible to reproduce music and send it over wires, it was possible to apply concretely the insights Plato and Aristotle had garnered in their study of the effect of music on the soul: social engineering masquerading as entertainment. Squier studied techniques of crowd control and the then-nascent field of industrial psychology, specifically Frederick Winslow Taylor’s 1911 blueprint for human behavior, *Principles of Scientific Management*. Over the years, the Muzak Corporation worked on refining particular forms of music as way of generating specific kinds of behavior.



Melanic Anderson

Muzak president Waddill Catchings assigned each song in the Muzak library a stimulus code, which was to produce in the unwary listener the effect desired by the establishment. In factories, the desired effect was increased productivity. In stores, it was an increase in consumption. In restaurants, the music’s tempo was quickened during busy hours, and the people who listened to it were found to chew faster and leave the restaurant sooner, freeing up seats and increasing sales. According to Joseph Lanza, author of *Elevator Music: A Surreal History of Muzak, Easy Listening and Other Moodsong*, “twelve young English women employed in making paper firecrackers apparently worked better and harbored less of a resentful attitude when exposed to morning music.” Results like that caught the attention of social engineers.

The key to achieving these results was “Stimulus Progression,” the Muzak Corporation’s method of organizing the music in an “ascending curve” by accelerating the tempo in order to counter the “fatigue curve.”

The progression from more subdued songs to more stimulating songs in 15-minute sequences throughout the average workday yielded more efficiency and productivity than did random programming. Play lists were soon tailored to offset workers’ mood swings and peak periods as measured on a Muzak mood-rating scale from “Gloomy—minus three” to “Ecstatic—plus eight.”

With the outbreak of World War II, music was once again integrated into the field of psychological warfare. Impressed

with its success in increasing productivity, the U.S. government put Muzak to work as part of the psychological arsenal that would defeat Hitler. Richard Cardinell, a member of the U.S. War Production Board (and later, a research director for Muzak), envisioned a world where each day would begin with military marches and a fox trot or polka “to wipe the gloom off the faces of the incoming employees and perhaps to instill a little *esprit de corps* into the whole group.” According to Cardinell,

the worker should be no more aware of the music than of good lighting. The rhythms, reaching him subconsciously, create a feeling of well-being and eliminate strain. . . . In some cases it is possible to achieve a direct production increase by playing a program which completely ignores employee preferences and concentrates on the functional aspects only.

By 1946, *Readers Digest* was asking, “Have you tried working to Music?” “[M]usic is now being piped into banks, insurance companies, publishing houses and other offices where brain workers find that it lessens tension and keeps everyone in a happier frame of mind.”

Ethnic music is ordered music, based on melody, and there is a moral order in melody because, in arousing the emotions and then bringing them back under control, returning them to the note with which they began, melody teaches lessons about the moral order even before the age of reason.

Not everyone was happy about this psychological manipulation through music. During the postwar period, a lawsuit was filed against the Washington, D.C., transit authority when it began piping Muzak into its buses. The Supreme Court eventually decided that being forced to listen to elevator music while sitting in a bus was not unconstitutional, but the bus company discontinued it anyway.

By the mid-50's, Vance Packard's *The Hidden Persuaders* voiced the growing concern that “many of us are being influenced and manipulated, far more than we realize in our everyday lives.” Packard cites the complaint of an advertising executive that

Social scientists in the past have paid attention to the irrational patterns of human behavior because they wish to locate their social origins and thus be able to suggest

changes that would result in more rational conduct. They now study irrationality—and other aspects of human behavior—to gather data that may be used by salesmen to manipulate customers.

What Packard did not know at the time is that these advertising techniques, as well as the increasingly manipulative nature of social life in general during the 1950's, were part of a larger strategy of psychological warfare developed by the OSS during World War II and then continued in clandestine fashion after the war. The principal justification for this clandestine coercion on the part of our government was the threat of international communism. Packard was witnessing the techniques of psychological warfare, refined in the battle with fascism and communism, now being used to engineer consent with neutral nations and with targeted populations at home. Mass marketing was, in many ways, the most benign form of social engineering being practiced at the time. What Packard exposed was merely the tip of the iceberg, which is always the least threatening part. The advertising agencies and p.r. firms that were manipulating public opinion on behalf of their clients were merely a part of a larger, government-funded operation whose goal was the use of communication to dominate, both at home and abroad. According to Christopher Simpson, in his book, *Science of Coercion*,

Military, intelligence and propaganda agencies such as the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency helped bankroll substantially all of the post-W.W.II generation's research into techniques of persuasion, opinion measurement, interrogation, political and military mobilization, propagation of ideology and related questions. The persuasion studies, in particular[,] provided much of the scientific underpinning for modern advertising and motivational techniques.

The purpose of psychological warfare—later called by the euphemism “communications theory”—was, according to Simpson, “to suppress or distort unauthorized communication among subject peoples, including domestic U.S. dissenters who challenged the wisdom or morality of imperial policies.”

With the Nazis defeated, the core group of psychological warriors which staffed the OSS and its related offices was free to define the enemy as it saw fit. Simpson makes perfectly clear that “The targets of U.S. psychological warfare were not only the ‘enemy,’ but also the people of the United States and its allies.”

As Plato could have told us, before music could be used as a form of control, it had to be turned into an instrument of cultural revolution, because tyranny has always had revolution as its necessary precondition. Richard Wagner took part in the retreat from Leipzig with Bakunin at the end of the Revolution of '48. A musical revolutionary as well, he compared melody to Metternich and Minna, his first wife. Break the rule of melody, and you can overthrow the state. His way to break the hold of melody was known as chromaticism. You can hear its subversive effect in the later Paris version of *Tannhauser* but most clearly in *Tristan und Isolde*.

One of the impressionable young people of the time who fell under Wagner's sway was Friedrich Nietzsche. *Birth of Tragedy* was written under the spell of Wagner's *Tristan*

und *Isolde*. Freud, in turn, got the Oedipus complex from Nietzsche. Wagner was the new Oedipus, who forced the Sphinx to divulge its secrets.

Another impressionable young man who fell under Wagner's spell was Arnold Schönberg. His brother-in-law Zemlin-sky described "Verklärte Nacht," Schönberg's first and most influential piece, as "a smeared version of *Tristan*." "Verklärte Nacht" ("Transfigured Night") was about sexual liberation. Schönberg's wife took the message of Richard Dehmel's poem to heart and had an affair with a painter from Vienna. The affair turned out badly. Schönberg found out; the painter killed himself, and then Schönberg, who had become a Christian, reverted to Judaism and decided to kill Western music. He was fairly successful in this regard, beginning in 1911 with his assault on chromatic harmony, atonality, a direct result of the rage he felt toward his wife. His second, more successful attempt was known as 12-tone music, a system he stole from an eccentric Austrian named Josef Matthias Hauer.

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno was member of the Frankfurt School and, like Schönberg, a refugee from the Third Reich. Adorno met Schönberg in Hollywood, where he advised Thomas Mann on the writing of his book on music, *Doktor Faustus*. As Alex Ross writes in his *New Yorker* article "Ghost Sonata," Adorno's virtually unreadable *Philosophy of New Music* "wowed the confused young minds who were seeking new certitudes, new laws, new gods." Adorno then took Schönberg's 12-tone musical "straitjacket" back to Germany, where, in the interest of detaching German composers from the Nazi past, the musical operatives of the Information Control Division—an outgrowth of Gen. Robert McClure's Psychological Warfare Division—encouraged the propagation of what one internal memo described as "modern music of the international repertory." To this end, Darmstadt received in 1949 a grant of 8,000 Deutschmarks from American "reorientation funds."

What followed in America was more insidious. I call it Dionysian Muzak, the music of the MTV culture, calculated to arouse the passions as a prelude to economic exploitation and political control. (I have discussed music as a vehicle for revolution in my book *Dionysos Rising*.) Ethnic music, the sort we make ourselves, is a successful antidote to Dionysian Muzak. Ethnic music is ordered music, based on melody, and there is a moral order in melody because, in arousing the emotions and then bringing them back under control, returning them to the note with which they began, melody teaches lessons about the moral order even before the age of reason. Ethnic music is also accessible, which means that amateurs can play it, and it is a source of common melodies that give identity and tear us away from Dionysian Muzak.

After listening to a talk I had given on ethnic music, a young lady told the story of traveling by van to see ancient ruins in Italy. As soon as she and her 14 fellow students got into the van, each of them put on his headset and tuned into his own private concert, successfully isolating himself from everyone around him. The group could have joined together and sung the same song. Instead, recorded music exerted control through isolation. Technology has made this not only possible but inevitable.

We mistakenly tend to associate ethnic music with something called "folk music." As Bob Dylan reminds us in his recently released autobiography, he became "bigger than El-

vis" by singing "folk music." Folk music comes to us from two words: *music*, which means music; and *folk*, which means "deracination." In becoming famous, Bob Dylan became a fixture in the music industry, which meant he got cut off from the fertile soil of ethnic music. This is important, because all music is ultimately ethnic.

Paying other people to produce our culture for us is like hiring other men to sire our children. The children who result from this act will not be our own.

The fallacy of our age—and by recognizing this, Vaughan Williams was 30 years ahead of his time—is that "the genius springs from nowhere, defies all rules, acknowledges no musical ancestry, and is beholden to no tradition." Vaughan Williams could not have had Bob Dylan in mind when he wrote this, but he could not have described his career more accurately, either. The lesson of Vaughan Williams' book is that musical deracination has consequences every bit as destructive as musical rootedness is salutary. Folk music was music that would lead to war, as another Jewish folksinger, Ronald Radosh, made clear in his memoir, *Commies*, and not just at the hands of such Popular Front apologists as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. Vaughan Williams was prescient enough to see the rise of neocon global imperialism from rootless Dionysian music, over a half a century before it happened. According to Vaughan Williams, who got the idea from G.M. Trevelyan, "the ideal would be for every nation to be different and at peace," but "what we are tending towards is to be all alike and at war." Call it the paradox of globalism, if you will: "[W]e can get our music from Germany, our painting from France, our jokes from America and our dancing from Russia. Has this brought us peace? Does not this colourless cosmopolitanism bring in its train wars, such as our isolated forefathers never dreamed of?"

Ethnic music, however, will only function as an antidote to globalism if people break through the crust of commercial music and MTV culture and make some significant contact with it, and that can only happen if they put down their headsets and start making that music themselves. Vaughan Williams proposed a five-year ban on German music in England. We can propose something similar: a five year ban on recorded music. "What I want to see in England," Vaughan Williams tells us, "is everybody making music—however badly." It is better to play "The Kesh Jig" badly than to listen to an exquisite recording of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, because "even at some immediate sacrifice of good we must develop our own culture to suit our own needs." What I want to see is the same thing—everyone playing ethnic music, even if they play it badly—in the new ethnic America freed from the bad dream of global hegemony.



Man and Everyman

Assembling the Fragments

by Joseph Pearce

The *Abolition of Man*, C.S. Lewis's masterful critique of the relativism that was as rampant in his day as it is in ours, represented the culmination of the author's quest for the quintessential meaning of man's being and purpose. Always a diligent searcher after truth, Lewis had climbed a long and arduous path from the faithless rationalism of his youth to the pinnacle of perspective from which *The Abolition of Man* was written. Following in Lewis's footsteps will enable us to understand not only the arduous path that he had taken but the ardor with which he trod it.

Lewis's long ascent began from the depths of the valley of doubt into which he had descended following the loss of the lukewarm Christianity of his childhood. "And so," he said, in his autobiographical *Surprised by Joy*, "little by little, with fluctuations which I cannot now trace, I became an apostate, dropping my faith with no sense of loss but with the greatest relief." By 1916, he was dismissing all religions with a 17-year-old's arrogant ignorance, stating superciliously that he believed in no religion because, as he said in correspondence, there was "absolutely no proof for any of them," adding that his atheism was merely a reflection of "the recognized scientific account of the growth of religions." Superstition had always "held the common people, but in every age the educated and thinking ones have stood outside it."

In spite of his superciliousness and his atheism, Lewis never sank into the quagmire of relativism. On July 6, 1922, he wrote in his diary of his intention to write a dissertation on "the hegemony of moral value" and, two years later, read a paper of that title to the Oxford Philosophical Society. He was, therefore, a believer in the Absolute and an advocate of the Permanent Things long before his conversion to Christianity. It was this belief in, and desire for, order that animated his objections to the aesthetic experimentation of the modern poets in general, and of T.S. Eliot in particular.

Lewis's didacticism and his desire for order and formality were at loggerheads aesthetically with the subtlety and obscurantism of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Lewis was seeking to unify "moral value," bringing all the pieces together according to the harmonizing principle of the Absolute, whereas Eliot was shoring up "fragments" of "broken images," scattering the pieces apparently at random. Appearances can be deceptive, however, and, after many years, Lewis finally came to accept Eliot as a kindred spirit. Eliot's *Modern Education and the Classics*, published in 1934, complemented Lewis's own "Reflections on Education With Special Reference to the Teaching of English," which was the subtitle of *The Abolition of Man*.

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Both works insisted that education cannot be divorced from morality and that the latter must inform the former. Similarly, Eliot's *The Idea of a Christian Society* (1939) and his *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture* (1948) dovetailed with Lewis's position regarding the necessity of Christianity to any genuine restoration of European culture. Most notably, Eliot's poetic depiction of "The Hollow Men," published in 1925, prefigures Lewis's "Men Without Chests" in *The Abolition of Man*. It is indeed a little odd that Lewis remained apparently blind to these multifaceted and multifarious similarities between his own work and that of one whom he deemed an "enemy."

This singular and peculiar blindness extended to other kindred spirits, such as Roy Campbell and Edith Sitwell, both of whom were satirized mercilessly in Lewis's *The Pilgrim's Regress*, the former as the "bearded singer" and the latter as "Victoriana," two of the "Clevers" in Eschropolis. Lewis also attacked Roy Campbell in his poem "To the Author of *Flowering Rifle*" and, as with his belated friendship with Eliot, would only later recognize his affinity with one whom he had presumed to be an enemy. Similarly, although he had dismissed her so acrimoniously in *The Pilgrim's Regress*, I cannot imagine Lewis failing to appreciate Edith Sitwell's later poems, such as "Still Falls the Rain" or "The Shadow of Cain," the latter of which, being the first of her "three poems of the Atomic Age," resonates profoundly and disturbingly with the diabolical scientism of the N.I.C.E. in Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. "The Shadow of Cain" was written in 1945, the same year in which *That Hideous Strength* was published, and both works share the same "merely Christian" response to the destructive triumph of technology over humanity in the "atomic" age. Lewis's original inspiration for the N.I.C.E.—the National Institute of Coordinated Experiments—had been the controversy surrounding the founding of an atomic plant near Blewbury, 15 miles from Oxford. Sitwell's "Shadow of Cain" was inspired by the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and was about "the fission of the world into warring particles, destroying and self-destructive." Both works also employed the imagery of coldness as a metaphor for the atomic age long before the post-war nuclear impasse became known as the "Cold War." One of the diabolical materialists in *That Hideous Strength* is named Frost, accentuating the chilling hardness of his characterization, whereas Sitwell characterized her poem as a description of "the gradual migration of mankind . . . into the desert of the Cold, towards the final disaster, the first symbol of which fell on Hiroshima." According to Sitwell, the first two pages of her poem "were partly a physical description of the highest degree of cold, partly a spiritual description of this."

We did not heed the Cloud in the Heavens shaped like
the hand