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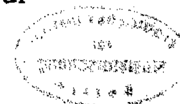

THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF MUSIC

Performance as ritual: sketch for an enquiry into the true nature of a symphony concert

Christopher Small

This essay will consider the symphony concert as a phenomenon within our society. I shall try to show that a symphony concert partakes of the nature of a ritual, a celebration, undertaken not fully awares, of the shared mythology and values of a certain group within our deeply fragmented society. The meaning of the ritual has changed profoundly over the past fifty years or so, even if its outward form remains apparently unchanged. This is of course not unusual for symbolic behaviour; Raymond Williams has pointed out how the word 'art', like other key words in our society such as 'class', 'culture', 'industry' and 'democracy', has changed its meaning and emotional resonance in the last hundred and fifty years,[1] and it is certain that many of those objects (including sound-objects) that we call artistic masterpieces have similarly changed their meaning even while retaining their outward forms. It is not just that a symphony by Beethoven, for example, has a different significance for us, to whom it is thoroughly familiar, even over-familiar, from that which it had for its first audiences, to whom it was fresh, surprising, even grotesque and frightening (we recall that Weber, who was a great musician and no fool, declared on hearing the Seventh Symphony that Beethoven was 'now ripe for the madhouse',[2] an expression of contemporary sensibility and experience and a metaphor for the cracking-open of social forms. The audience for the music, too, has changed its character in a way not always recognized; the nineteenth-century aristocratic and middle-class audience was full of confidence and fertile with ideas and invention, while today's audience feels itself beleaguered, its values and its position under attack. It is not inconceivable that a

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musical mind of the stature of Beethoven or Bach might appear today in our society, but it is hardly possible that his or her music could fulfil the same function for us as did Bach's and Beethoven's for their times, since, for the overwhelming majority of music lovers new music has nothing whatsoever to say to them; they remain apparently content with the familiar world of 'The Great Classics' (there is a world of meaning in that definite article, with its suggestion of something completed and closed). I believe this virtual freezing of the repertory to be an important phenomenon, and it will be a major purpose of this essay to investigate it.

What, then, is a ritual? I take it to be an act which dramatizes and re-enacts the shared mythology of a culture or social group, the mythology which unifies and, for its members, justifies that culture or group. According to Mircea Eliade, it celebrates the 'sacred history' of the culture – its creation, the coming of the civilizing heroes, their 'demiurgic activities' and finally their disappearance.

> The 'sacred history' – mythology – is exemplary, paradigmatic; not only does it relate how things came to be; it also lays the foundations for all human behaviour and all our social and cultural institutions. From the fact that man was created and civilized by supernatural Beings, it follows that the sum of his behaviour and activities belongs to sacred history; and this history must be carefully preserved and transmitted intact to succeeding generations.[3]

It is interesting that Eliade explicitly confines his comments to what are called 'traditional' or 'primitive' societies. 'Modern man's originality,' he says, 'his newness in comparison with traditional societies, lies precisely in his determination to regard himself as a purely historical being, in his wish to live in a basically desacralized cosmos.'[4] In other words, modern western man believes himself to have become divorced from (many would say, to have outgrown) the beliefs and ideas which shaped the lives of previous generations. Even Eliade is doubtful whether this is in fact so. I believe, and shall argue in this essay, that it is not true to any significant degree, that Eliade's comment in the preceding paragraph holds as well for modern western society as for any other, past or present. A symphony concert, as an important ritual of the power-holding class in our society, shows the modern westerner to be as much dependent on, and, to the extent that he suppresses any

awareness of them, bound by his mythologies as any member of a 'traditional' society.

A symphony concert operates simultaneously on two levels. We can, as most of the audience do, content ourselves with the surface experience, contemplating the beauty of the music and the seemingly miraculous communication of ideas and emotions from one individual to another through the medium of organized sound; this is music, the abstract art, as it is celebrated by composers, performers and audiences alike and written about by critics and musicologists. But it is the second, the ritual level, generally unperceived or ignored since it is so close to us, that is the really important and interesting aspect of a concert, that gives us a clue to what it really is that keeps symphony orchestras playing and concert halls lit. To perceive a concert at this level we need to begin by examining it, not just as organized sound, but also as an event taking place within our society, at a particular time and in a particular place, involving a particular group of people.

In the first place, it is usual for the event to take place within a building that has been specially constructed or set aside, generally at considerable expense, for performance of and listening to music. Most often it is used exclusively for musical performances, although on occasion a church, the hall of a great house (themselves spaces that are built for ritual purposes, either religious or secular) or some other large space will be pressed into service. Either way, the desirable space is as nearly as possible soundproof, so that auditory connection with the outside world is cut off, while visual connection is also reduced to a minimum. Some kind of ante-room is desirable for the audience, where socializing (not possible during the performance) and the taking of refreshments can take place before and in the interval of the performance. Direct access from the outside to the performance space itself is not thought desirable (I have heard this given as a grave disadvantage of the otherwise admirable church-turned-concert-hall of St John's, Smith Square in London), presumably because, as in a temple, some transitional area is felt to be necessary between the world of every day and the space in which the central business of the event is to take place. It is also necessary to have a place by the entrance where tickets are bought and sold since, as we shall see, it is important to ensure that only those entitled to attend do so, and the passing of money is the symbol of this entitlement. In the performance space itself it is not thought desirable today to provide too much visual interest

(earlier builders seem to have had no such inhibitions – further evidence perhaps of the changed function of a concert) since this is thought to distract attention from the real business of the event. The basic arrangement of the space is as formal as that of a traditional school classroom, which in many respects it resembles; both places reveal, before a word has been uttered or a note played, the nature of the communication that is to take place therein. The audience, the non-active participants in the event, are seated in more or less comfortable seats arranged in rows; the rows are generally curved to centre the sightlines on the middle of the performers' platform, to which the audience has no access. Unlike a theatre, a concert hall has no proscenium, so that at first sight the visual spectacle is somewhat diffuse and lacking in focus; closer attention shows that the players are also seated in concentric rows, whose centre, as with the audience's seats, is also on one spot at the front centre of the platform – the conductor's podium, which thus is at the point of intersection of the two foci of attention, the power centre of the entire proceedings.

The technology and logistics of a symphony concert are worth a moment's consideration. Each event involves a high degree of organization, both within the hall and outside it. Apart from the obvious complexities of booking artists, often members of the international jet set, often years in advance, of preparing publicity material and tickets, of planning programmes (a matter I shall discuss at more length later), apart from the obvious requirements of lighting, heating and maintaining the large building, there is required a sophisticated technological and organizational infrastructure by means of which all the 2,000-odd persons who attend, say, a Royal Festival Hall concert in London are informed of, obtain tickets for, and are brought to and taken from the event, some travelling a hundred miles or more for the purpose, with very few indeed free from reliance on some form of public or private transport.

Then there is the built-in proletariat of the concert hall, whose task is to keep the place running smoothly without any appearance of effort: booking clerks, ticket collectors and ushers, programme sellers, electricians and sound men, piano tuners, hefty men to shift the piano and arrange seats for the orchestra, bar and restaurant staff, and of course the cleaners, those ubiquitous but ever-invisible Nibelungen of the modern industrial state, without whose scandalously underpaid services not only concert halls and theatres, but also airports, offices and educational institutions

would quickly clog to a standstill on their own detritus – all working as unobtrusively as possible to contrive the illusion of a magical world set apart from everyday reality where nobody has to work.

Clearly, such an event cannot happen spontaneously, either for the artists or for the audience; the very siting of such palaces as the Royal Festival Hall or the Albert Hall in London or the Fisher Hall in New York makes it highly unlikely that anyone just passing will decide on impulse to go in. Much planning, on both sides of the house, is clearly needed; in fact an observer at a performance would hardly gain the impression that spontaneous behaviour was called for from either performers or audience. Although, for the audience, conventions of dress have become much relaxed in recent years, there are still conventions of behaviour, both in the performance space itself and in its ante-rooms, which most people find binding. From the moment of entering the building one's behaviour changes, becoming more formal and inclined to be muted. Within the performance space itself this becomes even more marked; the arrangement of the seating does not, in any case, encourage interaction with any but one's immediate neighbours. And of course during the actual performance total silence and as nearly as possible total immobility are enjoined. Even to move one's foot gently in response to the music's beat is to invite condemnation as an ignoramus or a boor. Audible expressions of opinion during the performance are regarded as an offence, not just against the piece being played, but against the very event itself; histories of music make much of occasions such as the first performance of *Le Sacre du Printemps* or Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, when the audience did express its opinion forcefully during the performance, referring to them as 'scandals', and thus by definition deplorable. There is, however, one time when spontaneous or quasi-spontaneous behaviour is not only tolerated but positively expected, and that is at the end of a performance, either of an individual work or of a concert as a whole. Even here the range of behaviour is circumscribed, being confined to hand clapping and, in cases of extreme approval, shouts such as 'Bravo!' and rising in one's seat. But booing to signify disapproval is also tolerated at this time.

The behaviour of the performers is even more formal. Conventions of dress still remain more binding than for the audience; a uniform style is more or less universal for men, although some latitude is allowed for women. It is still almost universal for female

orchestral musicians to wear black, although the actual cut of the dress is left to the individual; female soloists on the other hand are permitted (even encouraged?) to wear brighter colours, so long as the dress has the necessary formality and, if possible, glamour. The fact that some avant-garde groups wear, for instance, black trousers and coloured shirts or rollneck sweaters need not disturb us; the uniform remains, and all that is happening is that rollneck sweaters are becoming accepted for more formal purposes (this is a constant process in the history of fashion – today's high formal dress for men is an adaptation of Victorian hunting costume, while the movement up the social scale of blue denim would have astonished those gold prospectors of the '49 who first wore jeans).

The performers enter by a separate door and remain out of sight when not actually playing; they rarely if ever speak to the audience from the platform, and thus the audience never sees or hears them in anything other than their formal role. Despite the fact that the music they are performing is generally highly dramatic, it is considered bad form actually to show outward signs of emotion; the conductor or instrumentalist who engages in empathetic gestures with the music is often judged to have something of the charlatan about him. Singers seem exempt from this rule and are indeed expected to act out, with discretion, the emotions presented by the song; to look happy, sad, jocular or coy in accordance with the sentiments expressed by text and music. Whether this is just a carry-over from the opera stage is hard to say; I am inclined to feel that the reason lies in the concrete and specific nature of the emotional situations depicted in songs and arias, in contrast to the abstract and generalized nature of purely instrumental works. In any case, all these conventions serve to depersonalize the performers and to emphasize the universality and timelessness of the proceedings. In this there is a striking similarity to another, explicitly ritual, set of actions, those of the celebrant priest in a Catholic Mass, whose individuality is likewise concealed, by his robes, his stylized gestures and his artificial voice production. Here again it is the timelessness of the ritual that is important; the message is that priests (or musicians) may come and go but the Church (or the music) goes on for ever.

What then of the music itself, the occasion for this expensive building, this extensive staff of workers of magic, these musicians, this assembled audience? A symphony concert is usually planned to begin with a not too demanding piece, an overture perhaps, or some other lightweight work, ostensibly to allow performers and

audience to settle down. Then follows a longer and more substantial piece, a concerto perhaps, or a symphony, after which an interval is taken, lasting generally about twenty minutes, at which time refreshments are taken in the foyer. There is no *physical* necessity for a break in the proceedings; people who know they are going to have to sit still for two or three hours or more, at events as various as a performance of *Das Rheingold* or a coronation, prepare themselves and manage without apparent discomfort. And certainly nobody need feel hungry or thirsty during such a short timespan. The truth is that the interval is not a break in the event at all but an essential part of it, providing opportunity for social intercourse with members of one's own reference group, to crystallize one's response to the event by discussion (intervals seem interminable to those with no one to talk to) and even to be seen as present by those whose opinions matter (by no means as discreditable a reason as many seem to believe). After the interval comes a further substantial piece, again usually a concerto or a symphony, making in all a duration of about one and a half to two hours. There are obviously many variations on this scheme – a work of great length such as Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or Mahler's Second may appear alone or preceded only by a short piece (even after a twenty-minute Mozart symphony it is common to take an interval), while an oratorio or passion may constitute the entire performance. Alternatively, the entire concert, usually aimed at a less initiated audience, may consist of an assortment of shorter, lightweight pieces, such as Sir Thomas Beecham used to refer to as 'lollipops' – a significant term to which I shall return later.

The musical works are, for the most part, the work of long-dead composers, who through the medium of notation are able to control the actions of orchestral musicians in our own time. Many of these works are termed 'immortal masterpieces', although in fact very few of them were created more than 250 years ago, a short time even by the standards of European history, and a mere flash when one considers that the first recognizable works of art that have come down to us were made probably 300,000 years ago. As Alejo Carpentier says in his remarkable novel *The Lost Steps*,

> Every time I saw the members of a symphony orchestra seated behind their music-racks I waited impatiently for the moment when time would cease to pile up incoherent sounds and fall into an organized framework in response to a prior human will

> speaking through the gestures of the Measurer of its Passing. The latter was obeying decisions made one century, two centuries ago. Inside the covers of the score were set down in signs the orders of men who, although dead inside some ornate mausoleum – or their bones lost in the dreary disorder of some potter's field – still held author's rights on time, imposing the measure of motion and emotion on future men.[5]

The musicians on the platform, then, have no creative role to play, only a re-creative one, to carry out, under the direction of the man Carpentier calls the Measurer of the Passing of Time, the instructions of long-dead humans, to produce sounds these humans had imagined in their heads and to give them life. This is a remarkable phenomenon, but even more remarkable to my mind is the fact that living, or even recently deceased, composers are sparsely, to say the least, represented in the repertory of regularly performed works. With very few exceptions, the repertory virtually froze around the time of the First World War (a disaster whose catastrophic effect on the morale of western middle-class culture still remains not fully appreciated), and little that has appeared since carries the appeal for the average audience of 'music lovers' that earlier music does; it carries the pejorative label 'modern music' and is viewed with the utmost suspicion. Those who advocate 'modern music' await its assimilation into the wider awareness much as the early Christians awaited the Second Coming, greeting each performance of *Arcana*, *Chronochromie* or *Jakobsleiter* as the first rays of a new dawn. But it does not happen and, in my opinion, cannot happen. The only music of the post-First World War era which has gained, or is likely to gain, anything like general acceptance is that which, like the later works of Sibelius or Rachmaninov, shows an immediate affinity with the world of nineteenth-century romanticism (this is by no means to devalue the work of these or comparable masters).

The virtual freezing of the repertory has had the consequence that a concert very rarely provides any genuinely new musical experience. The number of composers whose work is regularly represented in orchestral concert programmes is not large – around fifty at most, with a few others represented by perhaps one or two, often immensely popular, works (Bruch's First Violin Concerto and *Scottish Fantasy*, for example, or Dukas's *Apprenti Sorcier*) – which means that most concerts consist mainly of a limited number of works which get played over and over again,

with minute variations in interpretation, and that audiences become extremely skilled in perceiving these variations and comparing them. They also become skilled at detecting deviations from the written text, either deliberate or accidental, and such deviations incur their severe disapproval.

In view of this situation it is astonishing that such an enormous volume of orchestral music has been composed since 1920 or so, and it is true that much of it does get played in concert halls by symphony orchestras, although mainly under the direction of second-string conductors rather than the superstars – the latter mainly prefer to continue honing and refining their performances of the existing repertory and show little interest in new music. One after another, composers have made their bids to have their works taken into the concert repertory, but remarkably few have succeeded, and of these, as I have said, almost all have been those who have retained strong links with the familiar world of nineteenth-century romanticism, or even of eighteenth-century classicism. For the rest, some works are performed occasionally – even if, like Stravinsky, Schoenberg or Varèse, their composers are considered to be great twentieth-century figures – while others are heard perhaps once or twice, are received with more or less respect, then disappear without trace. It is a tribute to the power of the creative impulse – with, no doubt, a shove or two from wordly ambition – that several generations of musicians have continued to compose, put their works before the public, and stake their claim to immortality of a kind. But the number of post-1920 works that have become as regular a part of the orchestral repertoire as are those of Beethoven, Brahms or Tchaikowsky is tiny indeed.

The orchestral musician, it seems, becomes inured to the experience of playing this small repertory of works over and over again – although the American critic Henry Pleasants believes that he will be – or become – 'emotionally and imaginatively stunted'. He says,

> He has no music of his own, nor can he play anyone else's music with the immediacy that it had for those to whom it was originally addressed, or expect from his listeners the same immediacy of response. Given such constraints as these, compounded by the stagnation of the repertory, it is a tribute to the Serious [sic] musician's skills, diligence and patience that he is not a duller fellow than he is, especially the orchestra musician, playing more or less the same notes in more or less the same way under the daily supervision of a variety of opinionated conductors year in and year out, or the itinerant virtuoso, condemned for the rest of his life to play a small bag of viable concertos by Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms.[6]

I do not wish to echo Pleasants's clear tone of condemnation of this state of affairs, being more interested at this point in understanding it. Nonetheless his comments do point up the extraordinary nature of this everyday phenomenon of the western concert world.

The human desire for novelty is not, however, dead, even in this situation, and it is met by the researches of musicologists into ever more obscure corners of the past repertory. The rediscovery of the Baroque in the 1930s and 1940s was, at least in part, a response to this desire, and there is no doubt that many neglected master composers from Monteverdi to Telemann were restored to the consciousness of concert audiences at this time. Again, Bizet's youthful and undeniably enchanting Symphony in C, now a regular concert item, lay, I am told, virtually unperformed until discovered in the 1930s; it is only one of many such. But such quarrying of the past for the semblance of new musical experiences must come, as with all strictly non-renewable resources, eventually to an end; although still possibly containing untapped fields for exploitation the resources are not unlimited, and already musicologists are becoming reduced to exhuming the works of ever more and more minor composers, or ever more obscure works by major composers, even making notional completions of incomplete or mutilated works (Mahler's Tenth Symphony and Schubert's Eighth come to mind) – anything that is new to the audience but bears the reassuring stamp of the familiar musical language and gestures. The search for novelty, frustrated in the one direction that could genuinely provide it, takes the form also of reassessment and reworking of familiar masterpieces (recent small-scale performances of Messiah for example) with a view to restoring 'authenticity' – whatever that is – or the digging out of early, often discarded, versions of others (Beethoven's *Leonora*, the early, and unsuccessful, version of *Fidelio*, recently recorded for the benefit of armchair musicologists). There are of course other reasons given for these researches, but I believe them to be mostly rationalizations of the raw fact that it is the human need for new experiences, unable to take its true direction, that provides the

basic drive. A culture able to take full advantage of present creativity would not feel this compulsion to nitpick at its past.

I have discussed elsewhere[7] some of the technical features of symphonic music, and although I do not intend to reiterate that discussion here, there are one or two features of it that do bear comment. First, the music is highly dramatic in character, full of strong, even violent, contrasts of mood and emotion; its central technique, to which all others are subordinate, and which unifies all the music written between about 1600 and 1900, is that of tonal functional harmony, the arranging of chords in meaningful sequences by means of which the listener is led forward in time, his expectations being frustrated and teased but ultimately satisfied by the final perfect cadence in the home key (it is remarkable that there is scarcely a single piece written in the period that does not end in this fashion). There is no space here to expound the significance of tonal harmony, but, in a word, it is the essential field upon which is worked out that drama of the individual soul which is the symphonic work. We participate through the music in the experience of the composer, in his progression from doubt to affirmation and triumph. As Wilfrid Mellers says, 'In a sense, all our art has been an assertion of our post-Renaissance pride, for it has implied that other people care, or ought to care, about our experience.[8] And in so far as it passes from one individual soul to another through the medium of the orchestra and the concert hall, it celebrates the autonomy and essential solitariness of the individual in modern western society.

It is interesting that virtually all the most popular orchestral works, whether symphonies, concertos, symphonic poems or whatever, follow this dramatic progression from doubt and turbulence to triumph and even apotheosis of the soul (Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony is an exception of genius) with a period of respite and quietness between the turbulent beginning and the triumphant end; it is as if an old world were being dissolved and a new one brought into being. In its form the typical symphonic work suggests the representation of a passage rite, whose tripartite form has been remarked upon by van Gennep and others.[9] The sequence noted by van Gennep – (1) separation from the outside world, (2) seclusion and (3) celebration – represents, as Victor Turner suggests, 'the ultimate victory of life over death'. 'Herein', he says, 'is contained a dialectic that passes from life through death to renewed life'[10] – an excellent characterization of the symphonic process at work. The criteria by which the average listener judges

a work of symphonic music are essentially dramatic; he cares little for the factors of logic, development, unity or variety by which critics seek to rationalize the process, but is concerned with the force of the struggle and the effectiveness of the triumph that is achieved in the music. The average listener is not for that reason to be scorned, since he is concerned with the ends of the music, while the critic is liable to find himself bogged down in means. But the drama remains an abstract one, taking place in the minds of the participants without the intervention of the body – a fact attributed by some observers, among them Harry Partch, to the Christian tradition's denial of the body (in a single robustly written chapter in *Genesis of a Music*[11] Partch dismisses virtually the entire western 'classical' tradition as hopelessly lost in abstraction, the arch-villains of the piece being – Bach, Beethoven and Brahms). In any case, the abstract-dramatic nature of the work can be judged from the storm of applause that follows immediately (too immediately on occasion) on the end of an admired performance of an admired work. To the majority of the audience the drama is as familiar as *Hamlet* is to a Shakespearian audience (theatregoing is of course equally a ritual activity – but that is the province of students of theatre), and holds no real surprises, but the excitement generated by the music seems to be no less real than if it were the very first time that the work had been played. Because of the abstract nature of the music it is not permitted to give physical expression to that excitement during the performance, and the whole response to the drama must be bottled up until the end, when it is likely to explode with a lack of moderation that would sometimes put a football crowd to shame.

What of the orchestra itself? The modern professional symphony orchestra is the very model of an industrial enterprise, a highly efficient body permeated through and through with the industrial philosophy, directed like all industrial enterprises towards the making of a product, namely a performance. Its social relations are those of the industrial workplace, being entirely functional and depending only upon the job to be done; players may know and care nothing about colleagues' lives apart from the job, and if, as in other jobs, friendships do develop these are irrelevant to the task to be performed. The written notes control the actions of the players and mediate their relationship. As in any other job, too, the rank and file are rarely consulted about the nature of the product to be made, but are required simply to play whatever notes are set before them, under the direction of as dynamic a

managerial type as it is possible to engage. Time is money; the workers are highly unionized and generally unwilling to work extra time without extra pay, while the foreman (known as the leader) acts as middleman between rank and file and higher management. There is a distinct social hierarchy within the organization, with the string players accorded the highest status (white-collar, one might almost say), the brass and percussion having on the other hand a distinct blue-collar image, being generally regarded as jolly fellows, not over-sensitive and given to the consumption of large quantities of beer. The close association between the industrial mode of production and the symphony orchestra can be seen in societies that have recently been converted to industrialism (the industrial philosophy can of course be seen as overriding the ideological differences between capitalism, socialism, communism and most other isms); the formation of professional symphony orchestras and the appearance on the scene of a number of *Wunderkind* performers is often the first indication that such a conversion has taken place and become interiorized.

The rigid division of labour among instrumentalists in the orchestra (by no means a necessary condition of highly developed concerted music making, as can be seen, for example, in the Balinese gamelan, where each player is expected to take his turn at each instrument) is again in the interest of efficient production of a performance; each player is highly skilled on a single instrument or small selection of related instruments, and the skills of sight reading and rapid response are especially cultivated, while those of memory and improvisation are neglected to virtual extinction. The musicians' skills are such that mistakes in the notes are relatively rare, and total breakdowns almost unknown; in any case, the majority of the repertory is so familiar to any experienced orchestral player that he could almost play it blindfold. Among conductors, too, the ability to produce a competent performance in a short time is a highly desirable attribute, so that it is not surprising that the most successful conductors of our time tend to be cast in the same mould as industrial tycoons. More retiring or introspective types (Anton Webern was reputedly one such) who prefer to explore a musical work and let a performance emerge in its own time are, however fine their musicianship and deep their musical insights, left behind in the race for fame. (The recent rash of competitions for young conductors and instrumentalists also works in this direction, favouring those highly competitive personalities who are at their best in highly competitive situations

– it is in this way that a culture gets the musicians it deserves.)

What is the reason for this remarkable state of affairs, in which the majority of the music played by symphony orchestras is utterly familiar to both performers and audience, and yet still clearly has the power to attract and fascinate a large number of people? It has been much condemned but little understood, mainly, I believe, because we fail to perceive that a symphony concert, or indeed any musical performance, is not purely, or perhaps even primarily, an aural experience but a social ritual of profound importance to its participants, and the suspension of the passing of time implied by the freezing of the repertory is an important part of that ritual. I remarked in my book *Music, Society, Education* that modern man is starved of ritual; I now see that this is not really so. Rituals and mythologies are as much 'givens' of the human experience as is eating, and they play as important a part in the lives of modern westerners as they do in the lives of any 'primitive' people, even if we cannot always perceive them as such.

It is my belief that a symphony concert is a celebration of the 'sacred history' of the western middle classes, and an affirmation of faith in their values as the abiding stuff of life. As these values, and those of industrial society in general, come more and more under attack from both critics and the pressure of events, so the concert becomes more vital as a ritual of stability in an unstable world.

The lives and personalities of the 'great composers', their sufferings, their failures and their triumphs, their loves and their hates, all embodied quasi-autobiographically in their music, are paradigms for this belief, which is rehearsed every time their music is played before a paying audience in a concert hall. Beethoven's triumph over his deafness, the secure, death-obsessed Protestantism of Sebastian Bach, the barely controlled hysteria of Tchaikowsky, the warm, rational Enlightenment optimism of Haydn, Vaughan Williams's comfortable English agnosticism, Brahms's solid North German intellect and reticent sensibility, Delius's nostalgia for a world that never was, Richard Strauss's bourgeois vulgarity, Elgar's espousal of the imperialist extravagance of Edwardian England (comforting to an England currently in decline) and, perhaps most relevant of all for the late twentieth century, Mahler's outward success and prosperity and inner alienation and misery – all these and others are models for the experience of their audience, the performance of the music a ritual enactment of their mythology, an affirmation of the belief that the issues of the music

are the important issues of life, and that things will not change.

The 'history of music' as perceived by the average music lover is seen in mythological terms, populated with heroes and their adversaries, tasks to be accomplished, the tricks of fate to be overcome, and destinies to be fulfilled. However obsessively, in the attempt to place them in historical time, musicologists may date and order the works in the catalogues of Köchel, Deutsch, Longo or Hoboken, the works obstinately remain, in the minds of most music lovers, in mythological time, outside and independent of historical time altogether. No other attitude could produce a moment's credence to the claim that these works are 'immortal masterpieces'. The violence of the reaction of music lovers to any suggestion that the works of Beethoven or Bach may not be in the literal sense immortal but will one day cease to have any meaning for performers or listeners and will simply disappear from our consciousness testifies to the power of the myth. The ritual of stability in an unstable time cannot afford heroes who are alive in the present; with Theseus, Maui, Gilgamesh, Arthur and other civilizing heroes, 'the great composers' belong in the mythological past, and their works must live for ever.

Other elements of the symphony concert reinforce the idea of its ritual function. Eliade makes much of the idea of a 'sacred ground' on which the ritual takes place, an area set aside from the places of everyday living. As we have seen, just such a sacred ground exists in the concert hall, a place set aside at great expense for the performance of symphonic music, and for that alone (some music lovers feel that the Royal Festival Hall has been somehow violated when it has been let for a rock concert). Admittance to the sacred ground is gained by the purchase of a ticket (any ritual not involving the passing of money would ignore one of the most sacred functions of our society, whose mystical belief in money's absolute value and mysterious efficacy is enshrined in the policies of successive governments of the last decades).

Even the much-admired 'raising of performance standards' (that is, a demand for ever greater precision in the performance of the written notes and the development of digital dexterity to meet that demand) over the past decades speaks, for me, simply of a greater insistence on the accurate performance of the ritual, as with some American Indian healing rites, in which a single wrong word, sound or gesture can render the whole procedure invalid. The insistence is understandable; as our grasp of present events becomes ever more precarious, so we tighten our grip on the past

with a magical ceremony for averting the catastrophic change we fear and for keeping things as they have been. Associated with the insistence on accuracy in the notes goes the quest for 'authenticity' in performance, and the research carried out to discover (we can *never* be sure) how the music sounded in the composer's own time. The 'sacred history' of our culture which, as Eliade says, 'must be carefully preserved and transmitted intact to succeeding generations' has become, as it never is for 'primitive' and especially for non-literate peoples (Duerden, for example, says that African societies 'not only remember creative events and forget destructive ones but deliberately refuse to adopt symbols which will last long enough to be destructive of the existence of these societies'[12]) fixed and rigid, leaving little or no room for creative development. This urge to preservation has an ally in the gramophone (indeed, one wonders if the recording of music would have become so ubiquitous in a more self-confident time – certainly Edison never imagined that his brainchild would be used for such a purpose); Stravinsky, for example, tried to capture his own performances of all his works on record so that succeeding generations would receive them intact. What Haydn would have had to say to that is a matter for conjecture, but it does show the extent to which the ritual function of music has changed since the First World War, and become the expression of something like desperation, as if the culture were trying to hold on to any possible semblance of stability. There are, on the other hand, other musical cultures within our society, mostly existing remote from its power centres, that don't give a damn about preservation, being too busy with the task of creation; this is true of much vernacular music, including the despised but vigorous and superbly self-confident disco culture. If those musicians think about the matter at all (and there is no reason why they should), they probably feel that there is plenty more where that comes from.

Since Lévi-Strauss the connection between music and food, both of which involve the transformation of natural materials into cultural products, has become something of a commonplace. Music and food are, in most societies, highly ritual matters, hedged around with rules and taboos, and it would therefore be surprising if there were not some such connection within our own society. Certainly the popular imagination has always perceived a connection, as can be seen from the widespread use of gastronomic metaphors in the discussion of music. One often reads of a 'feast of music'; over-enthusiastic attendance at a music festival can result

in 'indigestion', while Sir Thomas Beecham referred to lightweight pieces of music used mainly for entertainment as 'lollipops'. I myself treasure a critic's comment some years ago which likened a concert by a famous American soprano to 'an entire meal of very delicately flavoured apple jelly'. The analogy is apt, as we shall see if we examine Mary Douglas's analysis of a meal. She points out that its very structure is a social code; a full meal, for example, is different from the less structured institution of 'inviting people for drinks'.

> There is no structuring of drinks into early, main, light. They are not invested with any necessity in their ordering. Nor is the event called drinks internally structured into first, second, main, sweet. On the contrary, it is approved to stick with the same kind of drink, and to count drinks at all is impolite . . . . The same lack of structure is found in the solid foods accompanying drinks. They are usually cold, served in discrete units which can be eaten tidily with the fingers. No order governs the choice of solids.[13]

She points out that drinks are a less intimate occasion than a meal; one invites people for drinks whom one would not necessarily invite for a full meal.

> Drinks are for strangers, acquaintances, workmen and family, meals are for family, close friends, honoured guests. Those we know at meals we also know at drinks. Those we know only at drinks we know less intimately. So long as this boundary matters to us (and there is no reason to suppose that it will always matter) the boundary between drinks and meals has meaning. There are smaller thresholds and halfway points. The entirely cold meal (since it omits a major contrast within a meal) would seem to be such a modifier. So those friends who have never had a hot meal in our home have presumably another threshold of intimacy to cross.[14]

Unlike drinks, a full meal is an intimate ritual and a highly structured affair, requiring internal contrast.

> A proper meal is A (when A is the stressed main course) plus 2B (when B is the unstressed course). Both A and B contain each the same structure, *a* plus *2b*, when *a* is the stressed item and *b* the unstressed item in a course. A weekday lunch is A, Sunday lunch is 2A, Christmas, Easter and birthdays are A plus 2B.[15]

The analogy with orchestral concerts is striking. Like a meal, a concert tends to begin with what Douglas calls an unstressed course – an overture, perhaps, or some other relatively lightweight work – followed by a stressed item – a symphony perhaps, or a concerto. It is generally felt that a symphony is heavier (more 'nourishing') than a concerto, and somehow of more moral/intellectual value (this idea of course dates only from the nineteenth century – Mozart certainly would not have agreed); this being so, it is usual to find the symphony forming the most stressed item of the concert and being placed, like the main course in a meal, as the penultimate item, while the concerto forms a kind of sweets dish which, while still stressed, is not viewed as being of quite equivalent importance to the main course. The situation may be reversed if, for example, the symphony is a relatively lightweight one and the concerto is, perhaps simply by reason of the fame of the soloist, considered more important. Each work, like the individual courses of a meal, contains internal stressed and unstressed elements. In the nineteenth century the conventions were different; meals and concerts alike were gargantuan affairs of many courses or items, reflecting perhaps the appetites of an exuberant middle class. Our own expectations of both meals and concerts are more modest, but the comparison may help us to temper our well-bred horror on reading that at the first English performance of Schubert's Ninth Symphony the movements were 'interspersed with song' according to the custom of the time, or that Beethoven's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, Fourth Piano Concerto and Choral Fantasia all received their first performances, along with a number of other items, in a single concert in 1808!

Other structures are possible. A single large work – an oratorio, perhaps, or a large symphony or cantata such as Mahler's Eighth Symphony or Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* – may constitute the whole of the concert, in much the same way as certain meals may consist of one large and complex dish such as paella – Douglas cites Chicken Marengo as a classic example. In such cases there needs to be enough internal variety and contrast of stressed and unstressed elements within the one dish, or work, to 'preserve the minimum structure' of the meal, or concert – which may explain, at least to some extent, the failure of certain large and admirable

works such as *Gurrelieder*, which do not contain contrasting lightweight elements as well as elements of symphonic weight, to enter the regular repertory, while others which make just as great demands, such as Mahler's Second or Eighth Symphonies, do.

Of even greater interest from our point of view is a third type of concert, which consists entirely of what Beecham called 'lollipops'. Programmes with titles such as 'A Night in Old Vienna', 'Nights at the Ballet' or 'An Evening with Gilbert and Sullivan', consisting of a large number of easily assimilated shorter pieces – overtures, balletic waltzes, operatic excerpts and so on – resemble Douglas's ceremony of drinks rather than a meal; they are more homogenous in their material, less structured in their order, and are apparently designed to attract an audience which is not necessarily fully initiated into the mysteries of symphonic music (many dedicated concert goers would not be seen dead at such events). The overture-symphony-concerto structure is designed for initiates and is the central ceremony of the 'cultured middle class' reference group; the evening of 'lollipops', on the other hand, is more a matter of casual sociability than an intimate ritual. Both types of concert, however, celebrate shared beliefs and attitudes and help maintain those attitudes in the face of attacks from a hostile world. (The works of Webern, being of symphonic weight but lollipop length, have always posed a problem to programme planners and audiences alike; they subvert the ritual conventions of the symphony concert in much the same way as that science-fictional pill containing in one mouthful all the necessary nourishment of a meal would, were it ever to materialize, subvert all the existing rituals of eating.)

Symphonic music concerns itself with such a wide area of human experience, with joy, pain, happiness in and loss of love, with loyalty and treachery, with heroism and patriotism, triumph and apotheosis of the human spirit, that we are inclined to overlook the fact that there are vast areas of experience in which it does not appear to be interested at all, and that those are precisely the areas which fall outside the commonality of experience of the western industrial middle classes of the last two or three centuries. The first and most obvious of these is that of gross material deprivation. This is not to say that composers of the past did not at times suffer poverty, but so far as I know none of them actually starved. Poverty was regarded, if thought about at all, as a temporary condition, to be endured until fame, esteem and financial security were achieved; it was not a way of life as it is for the vast majority

of the human race, and one finds in symphonic music no expression comparable to that in Blind Lemon Jefferson's lines:

> I stood on the corner and almost bust my head
> I couldn't earn enough to buy me a loaf of bread.
>
> Now gather round me people, let me tell you true facts;
> The tough luck has hit me and the rats is sleeping in my hat.[16]

The two great European masters who did die in poverty, Mozart and Schubert, were in fact no exception. Schubert, though undoubtedly poor, was supported by a circle of loyal and admiring friends, and died, almost accidentally, just as he was on the point of 'making it', at the age of 31. Mozart on the other hand, while he had a very clear notion of his worth as an artist, was in his personal life an almost insigificant figure who had no idea how to 'sell' himself or manage his resources; he did at times earn money in quite respectable amounts – very much more than his father ever saw – but constantly allowed it to slip through his fingers. Neither was born to poverty, nor did either accept it as his lot as Jefferson does in his blues. The popular notion of both masters' lives shows, in fact, the way in which the mythologizing tendency allows 'music lovers' to accept fictions which are quite at variance with the easily ascertainable facts.

Sexual love and desire, again dealt with quite explicitly in the blues, is the subject of only the most oblique of treatment (romantic love, on the other hand, is a major preoccupation); perhaps *Tristan and Isolde* comes nearest to confronting it directly, though even there it is subordinate to other, more general, philosophical issues, and the highly stylized treatment of love-making in the second act (there have been productions in which the protagonists do not even *touch* each other) lacks the raw and vivid realism that one finds in many other cultures, notably African and Afro-American. Political freedom and oppression are dealt with in abstract and heroic terms (*Fidelio* and the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, or Berlioz's *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*), never in terms of such gross realities as are actually experienced by the persecuted; Schoenberg's attempt to confront the matter head-on in *A Survivor from Warsaw* is considered tasteless, or at least flawed, the raw subject matter insufficiently assimilated into art. Likewise the experience of dispossession, of proletarianization, of racial discrimination and above all of total

dionysian abandon and ecstasy (the finale of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony is often cited as an example of this, but in fact it is *about* ecstasy rather than *being* truly ecstatic, being tempered and moderated by the demands of the classical style for internal contrast and formal cohesion) form no part of the concerns of this music, lying as they do outside the experience, and thus the mythology, of the middle classes in western industrial society, with whose rise and apogee (and perhaps decline) what is loosely called 'classical' music is contemporaneous. (It should not need to be said here that to point out the non-universality of the values of symphonic music is not necessarily to condemn it, since all cultures define themselves as much by what they are not as by what they are; it is only our assumption of the superiority and universal validity of European values that blinds us to that obvious fact.) In any case it is ironic that the very surplus wealth that made industrial society (and symphony concerts) possible came to a major extent from the labour of those enslaved Africans whose descendants' music is today constituting the first major challenge to the dominance of classical music.

It need not, I hope, be emphasized that all musical performances everywhere partake to a greater or lesser extent of this ritual function and attest to shared beliefs and attitudes. Even within our society the ritual function is clearly recognized with certain types of vernacular musical performance, which are much studied from that point of view – rock music, for example, currently a favourite adventure playground for sociologists,[17] reggae and the blues, or even the singing of Mass in a Catholic church. If, therefore, in a symphony concert this function goes unrecognized it is because it is essential for its participants that this be so, since part of the industrial myth that it celebrates is, as we have seen, the idea that we have outgrown myth and thus ritual; as Eliade says, we like to regard ourselves as purely historical beings. For example: music lovers often complain about those who go to concerts, not for the music in itself, but because it is the socially correct thing to do. I can see nothing wrong in this; such people, attending concerts without a real understanding of the conventions by which the composer has sought to establish communication with his listeners, are simply staking their claim to membership of a particular middle-class reference group within our highly fragmented society. The 'genuine' music lover apparently feels that they are attending the ceremony under false pretences, but it seems to me that they are perfectly entitled to do so provided they can afford the price of

a ticket (a ritual matter in itself in our money-devoted society) and are prepared to abide by the conventions of behaviour in the sacred space. Their actions are no more reprehensible than those of the Catholic who does not necessarily have to like or 'understand' the music of Palestrina to which the Mass is being sung, but does not for that participate any the less in the ritual. Of course, it is understood that full initiation into the ritual, which includes the ability to carry on informed discussion of the conductor's tempi, the soprano's vocal quality, the pianist's technique and so on, can occur only if the participant is fully experienced in the conventions and values of the culture, but, as with other societies of initiates, there is room for catechumens and permanent semi-outsiders as well as for full members. It is in this light, too, that we can understand those concert and opera performances which are presented as a matter of protocol for visiting heads of state; host and visitor are affirming a community of values (and the nature of those values – different values would be affirmed were they to attend a roller-disco or punk concert) which is necessary before serious business can begin to be transacted. It does not matter if, as is quite possible, both are thoroughly bored with the proceedings, since the display is more for the benefit of the public than for each other. In earlier times it would most likely have been Mass that they attended.

If the function of a symphony concert, then, is primarily ritualistic, and if the virtual freezing of the repertory since about 1920 is a result of that ritual function, what are we to make of those composers who since then have attempted to renew or revolutionize concert music – the so-called Second Viennese and Darmstadt Schools before and after the Second World War, or Varèse, Cage, Messiaen and a host of greater and lesser musicians? One thing is certain: in so far as the music continues to be presented in concert halls to paying audiences, the concert hall will impose its own conditions on whatever they do; there is no escaping it. There may be a revolution in forms, in sounds, in techniques, but it remains within the tradition and the set of conventions of gesture and behaviour, tied to the mythology of the industrial middle classes and to an unchanged attitude to the world.

And, indeed, it is clear when considering the work of those composers that nothing of any real importance *has* changed. The activity of music making remains the property of highly specialized experts – indeed, it would seem to have become even more arcane

if the pages of *Die Reihe* and *Perspectives of New Music* and the activities of the Paris IRCAM are any guide. The composer still remains the architect of the musical work, dictating the actions of the performers by remote control, 'imposing the measure of motion and emotion' on them – and this remains as true of the most aleatory works of Cage and Stockhausen as of the totally controlled works of Boulez and others. The composer has arrogated to himself the function of arbiter of what the audience ought to like to an extent that would have horrified Haydn or even Beethoven. (Boulez has written, 'What do the feelings of some rag-and-bone man matter to me? My opinion counts a thousand times more than his; mine is the one which will last.'[18]) But then Beethoven, Haydn and their contemporaries knew on which side their bread was buttered, and had no complacent Arts Council or university music department to fall back on should their aristocratic patrons fail to like their music.

The contemporary musical work is still performed within the same kind of building, and under the same conditions, even, for the most part, by the same performers, as already described for traditional symphonic works, and it is disseminated in similar ways; the only change perhaps is that these works establish the ritual of a slightly different, if related, mythology. It is the myth of the technological fix, a faith in the ability to improve matters by a change in technique without a change in social structures and relationships. It is true that among even European avant-garde composers there seems to be some awareness that relationships within the concert hall *are* in need of change; thus, Berio places members of the chorus of *Passagio* (itself in its subject matter a plea for changed social relationships) among the audience to represent its views, while Pousseur in *Votre Faust* allows the audience certain options in deciding the course of the story – but both remain operas, performed in conventional spaces before paying audiences. Xenakis in *Terretekhtorrh* seats the orchestra among the audience – but this merely underlines, rather than destroys, their ritual separation from each other. Stockhausen in *Aus den Sieben Tagen* provides no written notes, merely verbal suggestions for improvisation – but it is said that the pieces work really well only under his direction. And Stockhausen, Kagel, Ligeti and others have satirized and even attempted to sabotage the sacred conventions and traditions of the concert – but, even when these do rise above the level of undergraduate pranks, they merely succeed, like blasphemies, in paying their tribute to the

underlying and enduring mythology. I do not presume to criticize these fine musical minds, who I am sure are honestly seeking a new way for music, but I cannot help feeling that whatever happens in a concert is going to be inescapably subjected to the ritual requirements of the sacred space, which will subsume to itself everything, no matter how revolutionary or subversive in intention, which occurs there – and that it is no help to take over other spaces such as old railway-engine sheds or sports stadia (both interesting ritual spaces of industrial mass society[19]) and transfer to them the convention of the concert hall. The search by composers for renewal simply through new sounds, new techniques, like the search for new technologies as solutions to the problems created by the old, succeeds only in affirming, willy-nilly, those values whose bankruptcy those same composers have themselves proclaimed in the past. The profound wisdom of George Ives's famous advice, 'Don't pay too much attention to the sounds – for if you do you may miss the music',[20] becomes apparent here. New sounds do not make new music; only a new set of relationships can do that, as Ives senior knew well. He saw the old stonemason not just as the source of the raucous sounds that were being ridiculed but as a complete and loved man, in whose eyes one could see 'the wisdom of the ages'. It was in the whole man and not just in the sounds that the real music lay. The tonal explorations of the avant-garde, fascinating and beautiful as many of them undoubtedly are, are for the most part as strictly irrelevant to the spiritual problems of modern man as are the creations of contemporary epigones of the Romantic movement; they simply perpetuate, in the ritual of the concert hall, the separation of performer from composer, of performer and composer from audience, and above all the separation of the whole man from his music. Without an awareness of the ritual function of music, the 'researches' of Boulez and his colleagues of the Paris IRCAM remain a naive, gee-whiz celebration of the most superficial aspects of modern technology, and claims made by them and for them that they are attempting to come to terms with its problems and possibilities for the sake of the community as a whole seem no more credible than similar claims made by ICI, British Nuclear Fuels Limited – or Buckminster Fuller, whose 'rational madness' (to use Alex Comfort's telling phrase[21]) seems often to be mirrored in Boulez's writings about music.

It is often pointed out that to claim to have no politics is to proclaim, all unawares, the politics of the status quo. Similarly, I

believe, to be unaware of the ritual nature of the act of performing and listening to symphonic music is to be entrapped by the mythology of a culture whose time is fast running out. As John Blacking has said, 'The chief function of music is to involve people in shared experiences within the framework of their cultural experience. The form that the music takes must share this function'[22] and, again,

> The rules of musical behaviour are not arbitrary cultural conventions, and techniques of music are not like developments in technology. Musical behaviour reflects varying degrees of consciousness of social forces, and the structures and functions of music are related to basic human drives and the biological need to maintain a balance between them[23].

We have not outgrown this condition, nor shall we; nor indeed does it even seem desirable that we should, since it is in human relationships that the richest source of creativity (above all in music, the social art *par excellence*) is to be found. If the music is felt to be in need of renewal, as many have felt, it is because our social relationships are in need of renewal – and this renewal is not impossible, even within the present situation. We have seen how the relationships within a symphony orchestra are strictly functional – the relationships of the industrial workplace. But every kind of musical ensemble establishes its own sets of relationships, both within itself and between itself and its audience. The Afro-American tradition, to take only one example, provides countless examples of more intimate and direct relationships, usually unmediated by any score, in which each member of the ensemble has a creative role to play – rock groups, reggae bands, country bands, jazz combos of many kinds from big bands to duos; this intimacy and directness reaches its apex perhaps in free jazz, where there is not even a set of chord changes to structure the musical relationships. In free jazz the most intense personal and technical discipline is practised, but freely and unforcedly; it can be at least as satisfying to its listeners as to its performers, all being caught up in a situation whose intensity can almost be described as erotic, and it is here perhaps that the true ritual nature of the musical act reveals itself, unencumbered by the layers of habit and consuetude that conceal from us the true nature of a symphonic performance. At its best, free jazz celebrates a set of informal, loving relationships which are experienced by performers and

listeners alike, and brings into existence at least for the duration of the performance a society unlike that celebrated by the symphony concert, a society whose closest political analogy is perhaps with anarchism.

It is not my intention to conclude this essay with a polemic in favour of free jazz, or indeed, of any other specific way of making music (though I must confess that certain recent experiences in improvised music have given me more intense and satisfying experiences than anything in a concert hall); my intention is merely to show that other mythologies, other shared visions and other social relationships can be celebrated than those of symphonic music, in rituals of a different kind. It will, however, be clear that I do not believe that the act of performing symphonic music – or indeed western 'classical' music of any kind – is inherently superior to any other kind of musical performance – a belief that has profound implications for one's approach to music education. Whatever form of music making or listening we care to engage in, we may be sure that we are taking part in some way in a ritual which affirms the values we ourselves hold. One man's ritual may be another man's anathema, a fact attested all unawares by Cromwell's men as they smashed the medieval stained glass in one English church after another, as well as by the failure, after several generations of 'music appreciation' classes in English schools, to attract more than a small proportion of pupils to classical music; unless we grasp the essentially ritual nature of all our concert life we shall not begin to understand the forces that make it as it is.

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Notes

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The social interpretation of modern jazz[1]

Alan Lewis

Introduction

The history of jazz, unlike that of classical music, has always tended to be viewed in social as well as musical terms. Although its origins are still unclear, it emerged as the folk art of a specific group of people, American Negroes, whose segregated social situation produced distinctive cultural patterns. Then again, in its popular commercialised forms of ragtime, dixieland and swing, the evolution of jazz seems obviously related to broad social changes associated with the development of mass consumption, mass media, and mass entertainment. The rapid changes in jazz musical styles here are clearly related to changes in entertainment venues, recording technology, and the processes of commercial organisation surrounding entertainment music. Popular music was – and is – a commodity, and has to be in tune with the times if it is to be saleable on a large scale. Since the 1940s the more esoteric traditions of jazz have been seen as the increasingly self-conscious high art development of the original set of folk musical traditions and elements, elaborated particularly in reaction against the pressures of commercialisation and white imitation. As part of this artistic development jazz evolved as a black instrumental music in which instrumental virtuosity in improvisation is its core. The rapidly changing character of the American black community, particularly the shift from an agrarian to an industrial basis, transformed the conditions of production and reception of this music and interacted with the processes of commercialisation.

The intensification of the 1950s civil rights movement and the ghetto riots and broader radicalisation of the 1960s have left their marks on the social interpretation of jazz. Three works in particular stand out as sociologically sophisticated attempts to connect the musical evolution of jazz with changes in racial relations and black political and cultural consciousness. *Blues People* by Leroi Jones,[2] the black poet and writer, appeared in 1963. Using a social anthropological perspective, Jones analyses