

Everyday Sonic Warfare: Affect, Ideology and the Weaponised Use of Classical Music

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Western European classical music has frequently been celebrated as a pinnacle of human achievement: it is said to have the capacity to enlighten, to move, and – as proponents of ‘the Mozart effect’ suggest – improve listeners’ mental capacity. However, over the past thirty years in the UK, Canada and the United States, classical music has come to function not just as art or entertainment but as a sonic weapon. It is used as a means of dispelling and deterring ‘loiterers’ by making a particular social space – be it a shopping mall, bus station, fast food outlet or car park – undesirable to occupy.

In this talk I’ll be discussing the weaponised use of classical music, considering its affective and ideological dimensions; as well as how it simultaneously reinforces and refutes longstanding moralistic ideologies about classical music’s worth. I’ll start by introducing the weaponised use of classical music in a little more detail, before turning to consider its function as what I call an audio-affective deterrent.

Weaponised classical music

In recent years, the uses of music as a weapon and torture device have been a source of interest for both academic and mainstream discourses. Music (as well as sound more generally) has been deployed as a weapon of war by the US army – from the bombardment of President Manuel Noriega with rock music during the US invasion of Panama; to the blasting of Guantanamo detainees with the music of Metallica, Christina Aguilera and Eminem (Cusick, 2006). In more ‘everyday’ contexts, too, sound and music have come to be weaponized.

Music has been used as a mode of punishment – Colorado judge Paul Sacco, for example, sentenced violators of noise legislation to listen to one hour of music, including songs by Barry Manilow (The Telegraph, 2008). It has also been used as an auditory deterrent, as is exemplified by the use classical music to disperse and dispel loiterers.

The use of classical music as a deterrent has similarities with a notorious ‘everyday’ sonic weapon: the Mosquito device. Indeed, the deployment of classical music has been proposed as a more ‘humane’ alternative to the Mosquito. In 2005, the Mosquito device became audible (to some) in what might have once been considered public spaces. Operating according to similar principles as ultrasonic pest controls, this ‘anti-loitering’ device emits an uncomfortable, pulsing high-pitched frequency around 17khz, at a 35-40 metre range and at a maximum volume of 108 decibels. It aims to dispel ‘undesirable’ groups of loitering young people and prevent them from congregating in particular areas, such as outside shops, building foyers and housing estates; and without the need for face-to-face confrontation. The sound is designed to only be heard by those under twenty-five, since the higher bandwidth of audible frequencies deteriorates with age. For those who can hear it, the sound makes the spaces in which it is audible uncomfortable and unpleasant to locate for a sustained period of time.

The deployment of the Mosquito has been controversial and has faced significant opposition – namely, because it indiscriminately affects children and young adults and is argued to impinge on their human rights. Since 2010, Compound Security Systems – the original manufacturer of the Mosquito – has been offering a ‘Music Player’ for those who feel they are no longer able to use the Mosquito due to ‘local public youth pressure.’ (Compound Security Systems, 2012). Rather than emitting loud and uncomfortable high frequency

tones, the ‘mood-calming’ music system plays ‘royalty free Classical or Chill-out music’ in order to deter and disperse groups of loiterers.

Though it has been proposed as an alternative, the use of classical music as a deterrent in fact precedes the Mosquito device. In 1985 branch managers of 7-Eleven convenience stores in British Columbia, Canada began broadcasting classical and ‘easy listening’ music into the stores’ parking lots, so to inhibit teenagers from congregating there. (Hirsch, 2007). Since then, classical music has been used as a deterrent on public transport systems (the city train station in Portland Oregon broadcast classical music and opera, for example, allegedly resulting in a reduction of service calls for help); but also in library foyers (Central Library in London, Ontario has used Vivaldi to deter smokers and other loiterers); and outside shops. (Turner, 2010; Joy, 2013) Fast food outlets in poor, urban areas have used classical music to ‘improve’ their clientele. In a 1997 article entitled ‘McFugue, no cheese: Beethoven and the Dead European Males clean up notorious street corner’, Thomas Korosec reports how a Macdonald’s in downtown Dallas used classical music in combination with improved street-lighting and litter prevention to improve the outlet’s image. According to Korosec, the ‘very urban’ Macdonald’s had previously been nicknamed ‘Crackdonald’s’ due to ‘the myriad species of thug life that hung out there.’ (Korosec, 1997) The former manager of the outlet, James Oby claimed that even the fast food workers looked ‘a little dangerous in their gold jewellery and mismatched uniforms.’ However, the broadcasting of baroque, classical and early romantic music not only inside the store but also outside onto the surrounding sidewalks and nearby plaza reportedly led to an ‘astounding’ drop in police calls and arrests. According to the manager Oby, the classical music created a different atmosphere that discouraged criminal behaviour: ‘you don’t walk or act the same way when there’s classical music on...It’s just the way it makes you feel.’ (Korosec, 1997) Consequently, Korosec reports that ‘On a

recent afternoon, there was no hangin', no chillin', no dealin' – just office workers, commuters, school kids, and conventioners queuing up for their Macburgers and fries.' (Korosec, 1997)

Here, it is suggested that classical music performs two conflicting functions. On the one hand, it is thought to minimize the presence of 'undesirable' clientele, subsequently attracting more 'desirable' customers to the store. On the other, (as highlighted by Oby's remarks) the classical music was perceived to 'improve' customer's behaviour – the music encouraged them to 'walk' and 'act' in different ways. In other words, it is implied that the music both drives out and keeps out those deemed 'undesirable'; and transforms 'undesirable' loiterers into well behaved consumers. We'll come back to this tension repeatedly throughout this talk but the question remains – is the music to soothe or remove?

Classical music has been deployed in similar spaces in the UK – namely public transport stations, shopping centres and outside shops. Weaponized classical music was first deployed in the UK in the North East of England in 1997 when Tyne and Wear metro began broadcasting music by the composer Fredrick Delius at some of their stations to target what was described as 'low level antisocial behaviour', such as smoking and swearing. Speaking in 2005, Mike Palmer, the general director of the Tyne and Wear passenger transport executive (Nexus) stated the aim of the music was 'to provide a background of music that people who we are aiming at don't actually like and so they move away.' (Jackson, 2005) The guiding premise behind this practice was fairly simple: groups of 'youths' are the cause of anti-social behaviour and vandalism; 'youths' do not like and are consequently irritated by classical music; playing classical music in a space would thus prevent 'youths' from hanging around and causing trouble. In an article for the BBC, Melissa Jackson (2005) described the

music as creating a ‘win-win’ situation: the (alleged) troublemakers are driven out, while passengers find the music helps pass the time whilst waiting for their next metro.

Transport for London have also used classical music at London underground stations. Following Tyne and Wear’s metro system, Transport for London began broadcasting operatic and instrumental music at forty stations after a trial period at Elm Park station starting in 2003. During the 18-month trial, it was reported that there was a 33% decrease in robberies, a 25% decrease in assaults on staff, and a 37% decrease in vandalism. (Duchen, 2008) The underground’s 40-hour playlist, which is curated by the subcontractor I Like Music (previously BroadChart), consists of melodic music from the 18th and 19th century; and includes pieces by composers such as Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, Vivaldi Tchaikovsky, Prokofiev and Liszt.

The use of classical music as a deterrent is a particular manifestation of what is known as ‘crime prevention through environmental design’ (CPTED). However, while its advocates claim remarkable effects, it is unclear precisely how classical music inhibits criminal and/or antisocial behaviour. One suggestion is that it has a soothing effect on potential troublemakers. A BBC News report on the use of music on the Newcastle Metro and London Underground, for instance, describes the music as having ‘a calming influence’. (BBC News, 2006) Similarly, in their crime prevention guide for the owners, tenants and managers of heritage assets, the public body English Heritage suggest that ‘where there is an anti-social gathering on a regular basis, consider playing classical music, which may have a calming effect.’ [as well as plant sweet smelling plants] as you can see Such measures are said to reduce ‘some of the triggers for illegal and antisocial behaviours’, while also ‘contributing

towards a more welcoming environment for legitimate [sic.] users' (English Heritage, 2013: 13).

References to classical music's capacity to deter crime due to its calming influence connects to a longstanding ideology that classical music can exalt, improve and 'civilize' individuals. I consider this in more detail later. At this point, however, it is important to note that such explanations do not account for classical music's alleged power to disperse 'undesirable' groups. Indeed, it is its capacity to prevent crime by irritating, alienating and consequently displacing that is more frequently referenced in reports of its use as a deterrent. In other words, even if it is accepted that classical music's purportedly calming influence is what discourages criminal activity, this does not explain why it causes loiterers to leave a space. Again, this reveals the contradiction in explanations for weaponized classical music's effectiveness – it is credited with both improving the behaviour of purported troublemakers through its calming influence; and dispelling and deterring would-be troublemakers.

Moreover, though the weaponized use of classical music is often described as a crime deterrent, the precise meaning of the term 'crime' in this context is often ambiguous. Discourses surrounding this practice divide social subjects into two types: the respectable and desirable commuter/consumer, whose presence is to be permitted and encouraged; and the unpermitted, undesirable, antisocial, and (potentially) dangerous loiterer, whose presence is to be discouraged and abated. This latter subject – the target of weaponized classical music – is typically referred to via 'dog-whistle' pejorative terms for working-class youth, including 'yobs', 'thugs', 'hooligans' and 'hoodies'. The employment of these terms supports the (implicit or explicit) construal of target bodies as criminals, or alternatively, *potential* criminals. However, as Jonathan Sterne argues, conceiving of the targets of weaponized music in relation to crime is highly

problematic, insofar as people who loiter in convenience store car parks, skateboarders at public fountains, or homeless people in front of a fast food outlet are not doing anything illegal by being there. Articles describing the use of music as a deterrent tend to draw little distinction ‘between teenagers with lots of time (but not much money) on their hands and other forms of activity that are actually criminal.’ Rather, ‘teens, drug dealers, the homeless, sex workers and low-income non-white populations are all lumped together as targets’ (Sterne, 2005: 4).

In dispersing those judged to be troublemakers, the weaponized use of classical music might be more accurately described as alleviating *fear* of crime rather than crime itself. Indeed, it is telling that Tom Yeoman, a spokesperson for Nexus, claims that even if the loiterers congregating at Tyne and Wear metro stations ‘didn’t have a violent agenda, they looked like they might have.’ (Jackson, 2005) The groups congregating in stations were judged to be menacing and so inhibiting their presence, via music, was understood to make the ‘right’ clientele feel more secure.

The policing and management of social space through weaponized classical music – the attraction of certain bodies and the repelling of others according to age, social and economic status – can be thought of as a form of ‘low-intensity class warfare’ (Kindynis, 2012): it entails deploying what has historically been the music of the (social, cultural, economic) elite against economically and politically ‘weak’ social groups. I have already noted how the use of classical music as a deterrent and the discussions that surround it draw a division between the rough and the respectable – the unwanted, undesirable and potentially dangerous loiterer (which is, in turn, conflated with working-class youth); and the wanted, desirable and potentially lucrative customer. The abatement of the former in order to encourage the presence of the latter is

underlined by the assumption that convenience store customers or transport passengers should not have to see or come into contact with those of a lower socio-economic class. As Jonathan Sterne notes, the use of music as a deterrent ‘is about organizing urban space in a way that, as best as possible, reduces the chances of cross-class encounters – especially those encounters where people out shopping might interact with people who can’t afford to be out shopping.’ Consequently, it helps ‘discourage people from perceiving outdoor environments in terms of shared, multiple meanings and uses.’ (Sterne, 2005: 5)

Given the economic imperatives that lie behind classical music’s usage as a deterrent, there are also resonances here with Susan Buck-Morss’s description of loitering as subversive strategy. She states:

The loiterer refuses to submit to industrial social controls [...] Loiterers ignore rush hour; rather than getting somewhere they hang around [...] Instead of pursuing private ends they enjoy (the public) view. (Buck-Morss, 1986: 136)

The loiterer remains still in spaces where continual movement is encouraged – shops, stations, fast-food outlets and car parks. Not only do they fail to partake in economic exchange (hence the opposition between illegitimate loiterer and legitimate customer), the loiterer is understood to also threaten economic exchange – they generate fear and, consequently, on a micro-scale, disrupt the flows of capital. Weaponised classical music, then, aims to remove this blockage, to smooth out this disruption, to inhibit stillness.

In assuming correlation between class and/or age (which is, in turn, equated with criminality) and aesthetic taste, weaponised classical music is ripe for Bourdieuan analysis (though I do not intend to offer that analysis here).

Classical music is considered an effective deterrent, insofar as it is assumed that

loiterers dislike and are consequently irritated by that type of music. Conversely, 'desirable' subjects are understood to be unaffected (or perhaps even entertained) by it. Nexus's Mike Palmer exemplifies this assumed correlation: he claims that Frederic Delius's Incidental Music was 'the one that would really put the youths off... They just go away'; whereas if the stations had 'put on Oasis perhaps we'd gather more youths.' (Palmer, quoted in BBC News, 1998) Indeed, classical music's lack of 'coolness' is understood to be integral to its repellent capacity. As BBC reporter Melissa Jackson suggests apropos of the Tyne and Wear metro: 'it is pretty uncool to be seen hanging around somewhere Mozart is playing.' (Jackson, 2005) Consequently, classical music is not just repellent because of the order and nature of its sonic materials – what might be called the 'music itself'. Rather, it is off-putting to some because of its symbolic capital and cultural baggage: its associations with elitism, 'old-ness', particular types of dress and certain behavioural rituals. Thus as Lily Hirsch suggests while 'some young people might enjoy or be indifferent to classical music, concerns about losing their status through proximity to such associations ensure the success of classical music as a teen deterrent.' (Hirsch, 2006: 350) In short, classical music's symbolic values have the potential to make a space uncomfortable for those who are unfamiliar with or alienated by them: it creates a sense of 'non-belonging'.

The audio-affective deterrent: to soothe or remove?

It is not just a question of what weaponized classical music means or signifies; but how it *feels* and what it *does* (or rather – these two dimensions are intimately connected) When used as a weapon, classical music becomes an *audio-affective* deterrent: it involves the use of sound to modulate feeling so as to inhibit a body from occupying or acting in a space. This 'body' might be thought of as the individual subject but it might also be thought of as a composite crowd or 'group-body', since weaponized classical music is

primarily intended to dispel ‘gangs’ of loiterers rather than (or as well as) particular individuals: its purpose is to break up a collectivized body and remove it from a space so that it no longer generates a menacing atmosphere.

Explorations of the affective dimensions of music have often focused on what might be loosely described as its ‘positive’ affects – its capacity to empower, uplift, soothe, motivate, seduce, relax, and collectivize. Music can provide us with a sense of belonging and security; and call to us emotionally. (Grossberg, 1997) It can put us at ease after a stressful day, set the mood for a romantic evening, or help motivate us to run faster for longer whilst in the gym. It can cause us to smile, without us even noticing; or induce the urge to dance (DeNora, 2004; Thompson and Biddle 2013). As noted previously, accounts of the weaponized use of classical music sometimes make reference to its ability to mobilise these ‘positive’ affects – its potential to calm, soothe and relax would-be troublemakers. In this sense, such deployments of classical music might be understood to operate in an analogous manner to programmed ‘functional music’, or, as it is better known, ‘muzak’. Indeed, insofar as it is a form of ubiquitous music; and is broadcast via similar technologies, the weaponized use of classical music might be thought of as a type of muzak (Sterne, 2005).

Founded in 1934 by Major General George Owen Squier, the Muzak Corporation offered programmed background music for the workplace. This music, it was claimed, could stimulate workers, boost morale and enhance productivity by inducing particular psychological and physiological effects. In the American factories of the mid-twentieth century, Muzak ‘functioned to attenuate the more grossly intolerable effects of the mechanized, assembly-line labor process, softening the edges of the more brutal aspects of Taylorism’ (Jones and Schumacher, 1992: 159). Muzak was intended to remain barely noticeable yet affective. Its programs were composed of simplified

arrangements of light and popular music. Potentially distracting musical features such as dramatic or sudden shifts in volume, tempo and key; instrumental solos; rhythmic and melodic complexity; and abrasive harmonies and atonality were avoided.

With the decline of Fordism and the rise of post-Fordism, muzak became increasingly audible in retail and service environments, such as shops, malls, bars and restaurants. (Jones and Schumacher, 1992). In these milieus, muzak was understood to affect the psychological disposition of not just the worker but also the consumer. It generated a pleasant ambience, so as to attract and invite clientele, relax customers and encourage them to spend longer in a sales environment. With the right musical accompaniment, browsing could be transformed into buying.

Like muzak, the recorded classical music played on the Tyne and Wear metro, fast food outlets, car-parks and English Heritage sites is ‘functional’ – its primary purpose is to have a psychological effect on its listeners; rather than being a source of entertainment. However, there are some key aesthetic and affective distinctions between muzak and weaponized classical music. Given its aesthetic blandness and banality, muzak is often deemed exemplary of ‘bad music’. R. Murray Schafer, for example states: ‘Moozak [sic]. Reduces music to the ground [...] it reduces a sacred art to slobber.’ (Schafer, 1992: 98) Conversely, the music that has come to be played at stations and outside shops is that of the canonical ‘greats’: it is that which is so often held to be the epitome of ‘good music’.

In both its Fordist and post-Fordist manifestations, muzak is primarily intended to soothe, calm and uplift – it acts as an auditory ‘welcome mat’. While these affects are sometimes ascribed to it, the principal function of weaponized classical music is to irritate, drive out and exclude – rather than

serving as a 'welcome mat', it acts as a 'keep out' sign (DeNora, 2004). Indeed, as I have already highlighted, there are two seemingly contradictory claims that are made for the weaponized use of classical music – it is accredited with the power to both soothe and remove troublemakers. Such uses of classical music thus require a consideration of music's 'darker' side – its ability to induce 'negative' affects. When used as a deterrent, classical music is intended to displace by generating 'unhappy' feelings – discomfort, irritation, annoyance and alienation.

The use of classical music to evoke negative affects brings it into relation with the use of music as a method of 'no-touch' torture, as it has notoriously been deployed against prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Iraq and Afghanistan by the US military. In this context, music is intended to function as unwanted, disruptive and uncontrollable noise and consequently makes the space in which it is audible (i.e. the prison cell or shipping container) unpleasant or unbearable to locate. Neither the loiterer nor the prisoner have any control over the music that is played at them – for the latter, music is selected by the prison guard; and for the former, music is selected by a store owner, travel company, or – as is the case with the London Underground – a third party organisation.

However, just as there are a number of key divergences between muzak and weaponized classical music, there are crucial differences between the use of classical music as an audio-affective deterrent and the use of music as a mode of torture. Perhaps most obviously, the loiterer exposed to classical music can leave the space in which music is played (indeed, that is the desired outcome); the tortured detainee cannot. There are also significant differences in terms of aesthetics and amplitude. Lily Hirsch suggest that the US government 'for the most part favours aggressive music for torture.' (Hirsch, 2006: 346); however,

there are notorious exceptions to this, such as the use of the theme tune to children's television show, *Barney the Dinosaur*. (Smith, 2008) Moreover, as former Guantanamo detainee Ruhai Ahmed testifies, music played in the context of torture at extreme volumes 'does not sound like music at all'; instead it sounds like 'loud shouting and loud banging'. (Ahmed, quoted in Cusick, 2008). Music, in this context, is not heard as such; rather it is experienced as sheer vibrational force. Conversely, the use of classical music as a deterrent relies on the symbolic value of a particular type of music – classical music's affective capacity when deployed as a deterrent is (purportedly) determined by its perceived 'uncoolness'; and its association with particular social groups, cultural rituals and aesthetics.

The weaponized use of classical music thus makes apparent the complex entanglement of ideology, signification and affect, insofar as its affective capacity both relies upon and enforces its semantic and ideological dimensions. Classical music is understood to deter and displace because it is alienating; and it is thought to be alienating insofar as it is antithetical to the aesthetic tastes, musical preferences and social values of those it targets.

Classical music, ideology and morality

The use of classical music as an audio-affective deterrent both restates and refutes particular normative ideological values that have been ascribed to Western European art music. First, insofar as it is thought to 'improve' certain social spaces, it invokes the notion that classical music is a force for moral and social good – it enlightens and civilizes. Indeed, classical music's apparently innate 'goodness' has informed, amongst other things, funding distribution, educational programs and curricula. This notion of classical music as morally and thus socially 'good' is particularly evident in accounts that make reference

to its purportedly calming effect. For instance, when asked about music at a nearby subway stop, a Boston store owner responded that ‘music tames the savage beast’ (Timberg, 2005); whilst the head of Boston’s transit police remarked that classical music ‘can lift the human spirit, even the spirit of the cynical teenager’ (quoted in Hirsch, 2007: 347).

There are a number of resonances here with philosophical and aesthetic accounts that posit classical music as having an inherent moral worth, particularly by comparison to popular music (Scruton, 1999; Johnson, 2002). Indeed, the relationship between music and morality has been a frequent tenet of aesthetic discourse since antiquity. For Plato, music had the capacity to influence moral character – it could encourage temperance and nobility; or pettiness, meanness and feebleness (Plato, 1993). Similar conceptualisations of music’s moral dimension are evident centuries later in Europe. For instance, in 1752 the German flautist Johann Quantz outlines some rules for those ‘who wish to apply themselves to music, and by that means make themselves useful members of society’ (Quantz, 1985: 11). The musician is ‘useful’ insofar as they responsibly influence and guide the moral character of the social (Quantz, 1985; Goehr, 2007: 131).

Towards the end of the 18th century, a number of ontological and ideological shifts occurred in German culture, which substantially changed Western European music’s social, aesthetic and ideological status. These shifts mark the emergence of German romanticism. This new aesthetic centred on two interconnected shifts in artistic ideals: ‘the *transcendent* move from the worldly and particular to the spiritual and universal’ and ‘the *formalist* move which brought meaning from music’s outside into its inside.’ (Goehr, 2007: 153). Fine art’s significance no longer concerned ‘its service to particularized goals of a moral or religious sort’; its ability to ‘inspire particular feelings or to imitate worldly phenomena’. Rather, art’s significance lay beyond the social world of

mortals – it concerned ‘its ability to probe and reveal a higher world of universal, eternal truth.’ (Goehr, 2007: 153). Instrumental music’s lack of representational and semantic content enabled it to embody the transcendent. Music was thus idealized as an independent, autonomous and ‘self-sufficient’ art-form (Goehr, 2007: 155).

These ideological and aesthetic values of German Romanticism remain influential and have defined many of the norms and expectations of post-Romantic music practice.¹ The ideal of musical autonomy, moreover, is often ascribed a moral worth – classical music is good because it is autonomous. For instance, Julian Johnson (2002) argues that classical music, insofar as it functions as ‘art’ (as opposed to ‘entertainment’), is morally valuable, since its distance from the everyday and its subsequent lack of immediacy enables it to communicate something fundamental about what it is to be human. In Johnson’s account, there is a slippage between notions of social autonomy (i.e. music’s independence of social function) and economic autonomy (i.e. music’s independence from market forces). Johnson argues that in a culture where all – including humans – can be commodified and reduced to its exchange value, music-as-art ‘claims a special status’, in that it ‘invites us to participate in this sense of being valued in and for itself.’ (Johnson, 2002: 8) The ‘noncontingent’ value of classical music corresponds with ‘the absolute value of the human spirit’ – it ‘gives back to us a sense of our absolute value that a relativist society denies.’ (Johnson, 2002: 8-9). In contemporary culture, classical music remains devalued insofar as ‘the intellectual, reflective activity of the mind’ is marginalized. (Johnson, 2002: 71). In such a culture, classical music becomes ‘an activity of the eccentric – peripheral, undervalued and highly comical.’ (Johnson, 2002: 71) ‘Classical music’, he argues, ‘like the activity of the mind more generally, is too articulate to be cool.’ (Johnson, 2002: 71)

When classical music is deployed as an audio-affective deterrent, this ideology of autonomy is refuted. It exists as neither autonomous ‘art’ nor popular ‘entertainment’; rather it is a medium of social control. When functional and weaponized, classical music loses the distance it is afforded (in discourse, at least) from the social. Instead, its entanglement in the everyday is foregrounded: it becomes embroiled in the micro-wars of the everyday, which, rather than occurring in torture camps and far-away lands, take place in shopping centres, public transport stations and library foyers. Moreover, rather than revealing ‘the absolute value of the human spirit’ weaponized classical music might be said to perform a de-humanizing function – it drives out those who are considered to be a hindrance to business from what once might have been considered public spaces.

Weaponised classical music, then, can be understood to highlight the contingent and relational nature of classical music’s moral ‘goodness’. This is not to deny that classical music might be experienced by some, in certain contexts, as enlightening, empowering and affirmative. However, it also needs to be acknowledged that classical music can be used, in certain contexts, as a tool of oppression and violence. Speaking about the use of music as ‘no-touch’ torture – and echoing Johnson’s remarks – Suzanne Cusick states:

We in the so-called West have long since come to mean by the word ‘music’ an acoustical medium that expresses the human creativity, intelligence and emotional depth that, we think, almost lifts our animal selves to equality with the gods. When we contemplate how ‘music’ has been used in the detention camps of contemporary wars, we find this meaning stripped away. We are forced, instead, to contemplate ‘music’ as an

acoustical medium for evil. The thing we have revered for an ineffability to which we attribute moral and ethical value is revealed as morally and ethically neutral – as just another tool in human beings' blood-stained hands. (Cusick, 2008).

I think that A similar revelation takes place when classical music is weaponized. On the one hand, the use of classical music as an audio-affective deterrent either implicitly or explicitly relies upon the common ideology that classical music is a force for good. On the other, it make assertions of classical music's innate moral 'goodness' untenable: it becomes 'just another tool' through which social space can be stratified.

Conclusion

I feel the urge and perhaps the necessity to conclude this paper with an optimistic remark about the possibility to resist or subvert such strategies. Instead I want to finish with a perhaps stating the obvious.

I don't want to draw hasty equivocations between the use of music as torture in the context of Guantanamo and the weaponised use of classical music in more everyday contexts. However, there is an important similarity which is to do with the perceived severity of these practices. For many, the blasting of detainees with barney the dinosaur and chart pop is kind of funny. It doesn't seem that serious. As Suzanne Cusick notes, for many in the US and UK, unwanted music or noise is a common everyday experience and so these practices seem almost relatable - almost. (Cusick and Joeseeph, 2011). Of course, the reality of it is rather different: as I noted before, music in this context functions as sheer vibrational force: so it doesn't really matter what music is chosen.

The use of classical music as an audio-affective deterrent is perhaps similarly humorous: the idea of blasting surly teenagers with Mozart might seem somewhat cartoonish, invoking references to a clockwork orange. Indeed, in my experience of talking about this, it doesn't take much for people to come on board with the idea, to become complicit: they, for example, make their own playlist suggestions – from Mahler to Sabbath. I don't say this to shame anyone - but I think this response points to something significant. Weaponised classical music seems trivial, funny even. And this headline-grabbing funniness helps to obscure what is actually happening here/ Indeed – and again without wanting to draw too hasty equivocations – weaponised classical music has failed to garner the outrage directed at other crime prevention through environmental design strategies such as the notorious anti-homeless spikes. I think we need to be sensitive to and suspicious of this apparent funniness, so that we can recognise the weaponised use of classical music what it really is: the engagement of everyday sonic warfare against the politically weak, the policing of social space through sound and music.

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