2022

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## Citation Details

"Music: Modernist Remediation and Technologies of Listening," in The Edinburgh Companion to Modernism and Technology, edited by Alex Goody and Ian Whittington, pp. 226-42. Forthcoming, 2022. https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-the-edinburgh-companion-to-modernism-and-technology.html

**This is an Accepted Manuscript (prior to copy-editing and type-setting) of a chapter published by Edinburgh University Press in *The Edinburgh Companion to Modernism and Technology*, edited by Alex Goody and Ian Whittington, pp. 226-42. The version of record can be found in the book (https://edinburghuniversitypress.com/book-the-edinburgh-companion-to-modernism-and-technology.html).**



# Music: Modernist Remediation and Technologies of Listening

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Ludwig van Beethoven, if not exactly a modernist, offers ample fodder for modern artists looking to defend – or expand – their turf. While producing *City Lights* (1928), Charlie Chaplin responded to the newly popular 'talkies' by proclaiming that 'Moving pictures need sound as much as Beethoven symphonies need lyrics' (qtd. in Crafton 1999: 296). It might be tempting to retort that Beethoven's last symphony did have lyrics – and still turned out okay – but taking Chaplin's maxim seriously is more useful (if less instantly gratifying) than the easy dismissal. Chaplin, who composed the score to *City Lights*, understood the supple relationship between image and music even in the 'silent' picture (which, as film historians repeatedly note, was never truly silent). Music in '20s film was increasingly tasked with sustaining the narrative development, on-screen action and extra-diegetic affect of films such as *City Lights*, itself part pantomime and part melodrama (literally, 'music-drama'). Chaplin's later score for *Modern Times* (1936), a sort of semi-talkie, enhanced these tensions: the main love theme, influenced by Puccini's *Tosca* and written to narrate the Tramp's refuge from technology in the arms of sentimental domesticity, attached to the popular imagination two decades later as the popular song 'Smile'. From operatic melodrama to silent film melodrama to *melos* without drama, this

music was churned through a dialectical factory-wheel to which lyrics added considerable exchange value.

Emerging alongside Chaplin's melodramatic pantomimes were 'city-symphonies' by Dziga Vertov (*Man with a Movie Camera*; 1929), Walter Ruttmann (*Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*; 1927), Fritz Lang (*Metropolis*; 1927) and Alberto Cavalcanti (*Rien que les heures*; 1926), as well as avant-garde experiments such as Fernand Léger's *Ballet Mécanique*, which features Chaplin ('Charlot') in puppet form. Even without the noisy accompaniment of George Antheil's score, composed and performed independently for pianolas, sirens, electric bells and percussion, Léger's gestures to Chaplin invoke the rhythmic physicality of a 'mechanical ballet' and disrupt any pretence to pure formal abstraction. Films had sound whether they 'needed' it or not: the presence of music and speech were not silenced by film but reanimated by it and helped to act on the sensorium in unexpected ways.

This chapter examines how modernist radio and film remediate musical expression, not only leveraging music's appeals to sentiment but representing music as a media technology in its own right. I focus primarily on two films produced by the British General Post Office (GPO) Film Unit: Stuart Legg's *BBC: The Voice of Britain* (1936), featuring a set piece in which Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is performed for a broadcast audience, and Humphrey Jennings's *Listen to Britain* (1942; edited by Stewart McAllister). By depicting the performance and broadcasting of music in a different medium, these films remediate the technological propensities embedded in musical sound, using the technologies of cinema to extend those propensities further. Modernist composers conceived of their own music as something technological, wired into the material networks of communication, machinery and infrastructure that we reflexively associate with 'modernity'. Before turning to Legg and Jennings, then, some

attention is due to the intermedial aesthetics of modernist music, extended by these GPO films: though the music in Jennings's and Legg's films is not modernist (Beethoven, Mozart, dance music, Welsh folk song), it is rendered modernist in effect through hybridised juxtapositions of genre and medium.

### *Modernist Music as Media*

Modernist texts seek ways to transport the voice across media and spatiotemporal limits. In perhaps the most canonical modernist example, T. S. Eliot's typist, listening to 'a record on the gramophone' in the aftermath of an indifferent assault, exemplifies modernists' preoccupations with recorded music, as it remediates a subject's recuperation from trauma, and dissociation from her own voice, by inscribing distant voices onto the perceptual texture of the present. Decades later, at the tail end of 'modernism' as conventionally defined, the protagonist of Francois Poulenc's *La Voix humaine* (1958), named Elle, talks to her former lover on the telephone, and hears the sounds of a jazz record emanating from the other end. The audience does not quite listen along with her; as in Cocteau's original 1928 stage play and Gian Carlo Menotti's opera *The Telephone* (1947), and in the tradition of radio dramas such as Lucille Fletcher's *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1943), we hear only Elle's reactions to the conversation and to the failures of the technology. We participate partially in Elle's aural discovery, however. An outburst of classicised jazz locating Elle's 'ex' in a new lover's home marks a moment of semi-diegetic music: an orchestral imitation of what she hears, and an interruption of the opera's formal self-containment, as if to echo the telephone's fragmentary effects. Dropped calls, hang-ups and wrong numbers limn a failed human connection and an alienated relationship with technology (marked even by the name/pronoun 'Elle'). This 'monodrama' soon turns melodrama, as Elle pleads insanity and dies, strangled by the telephone cord.

*La Voix* re-enacts recurring modernist concerns about technologies that may expand the cultural status of music or threaten its aura. Elle's singing voice both signals her instability and awakens modernist anxieties about the 'material practices and technologies through which voices become audible' (Weidman 2013: 236). In short, *La Voix* alerts us to the technological character of music itself. Poulenc imbues his onstage and offstage music, and Elle's description of the music she hears, with all the qualities of a technology, which mediates information and interacts with other technologies. Entwined with Elle's elliptical narrative, the telephone's mediations are re-mediated by Poulenc's music, tasked with both the narrative work of filling in half of a conversation and the thematic work of redoubling Elle's alienation. Inasmuch as the orchestra and Elle's voice must suggest an acoustic presence on the other end of the line, these sounds mediate the act of listening; Elle's singing and the orchestral accompaniment must do the work of re-composing Elle's disjointed auditory engagement.

Poulenc and Cocteau had long participated in a modernist musical milieu that synthesised art with technology. The scandalous 1917 Ballets Russes production of Erik Satie's *Parade* reinvents ubiquitous media images in order to uproot aesthetic hierarchies and 'reconfigure the fashionable life' (Davis 2006: 129). Satie's mechanical noises, musical loops and parodies of ragtime complement Cocteau's scenario drawn from a barrage of popular American media: 'The *Titanic* – "Nearer My God to Thee" … The *New York Herald* … gramophones … posters … Charlie Chaplin' (qtd. in Perloff 1991: 113). The media savvy of *Les Six* – a group of composers, including Poulenc, known for their fashionable 'lifestyle modernism' and distaste for the 'sauce' of nineteenth-century music –yielded compositions such as Arthur Honegger's *Pacific 231* (1923), an orchestral homage to the locomotive; and *Les Mariés sur la Tour Eiffel* (1921), a ballet collaboratively composed by five of *Les Six* in which 'human gramophones' comment on a

series of *tableaux vivants*. The soundscape is no mere 'background' for dramatic action: the music and the gesturing body simulate the presence of other visual, textual and recording media. A text, such as *La Voix* or *Parade*, that is openly intermedial – situated between different media and their clashing 'signifying systems' (Clements 2016: 46)[1] – understands music as a technology in both form (as media begin to resemble each other) and function (as we experience these technologies' alienating effects). 'All mediation,' Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin write, 'is remediation': each medium enters into 'relationships of respect and rivalry with other media', just as a medium's 'representational power' presumes familiarity with a media ecology (2000 [1999]: 65). Modernist art partakes in a similar 'heightening [of] medial awareness' (Murphet 2009: 4). Sara Danius (2002) argues that as the modernist novel reconstructs a crisis of perception, it approximates a Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*: contending with compartmentalised sense experiences by abstracting and then subsuming them into a genre-bending synthesis. Danius's theatrical analogy suggests that modernist aesthetic forms – literary, musical, visual and cinematic – are constantly staging a confrontation with modernity's sensory assaults, through explicit reference or through immanent formal development.

Julian Murphet notes that the figureheads of the European avant-garde (Marinetti, Ball, Apollinaire, Tzara), and later artists whom they influenced, were 'aware of themselves as media artifacts' (2009: 4), an apt description of musical as well as literary practices. The so-called *Bruitistes* accompanied asemantic 'sound poetry' with mechanical noises, turning the poet-performer's body into an anti-technological technology, a resonant mediator for sounds that recuperate (often through primitivist kitsch) an essential irrationality. In Futurist texts such as F. T. Marinetti's *Zang Tumb Tumb* (1914) and Luigi Russolo's manifesto *The Art of Noise* (1913) and composition *Awakening of a City* (1914), the sensationalised noises of mechanised warfare

are glorified as the basis of a sonic art that 'conquer[s] the infinite variety of noise-sounds' (Russolo 1986 [1913]: 25). Futurist music aimed to explode music's autonomy by heightening its contradictions, using the noisy soundscape to break down Art-with-a-capital-A, which built its 'respectability' on acoustic technologies and cultural norms that excluded noise (or tried to) from both stage and audience (Bailey 1998).

The noises of Futurism and *Bruitisme* were absorbed by French and Anglo-American musical modernists, including and beyond Cocteau, Poulenc and *Les Six*. Edgard Varèse's *Amériques* (1926), an homage to New York City in which duck-calls and air-raid sirens share space with the conventional orchestra, was an instant sensation. Antheil's riot-inducing concert versions of *Ballet mécanique* earned him the fandom of the Anglo-American modernist literati, including Pound, Yeats, Joyce and one Hedy Lamarr (with whom Antheil collaborated on a 'frequency-hopping' torpedo patent). Though defended by the composer in the language of neoclassical formalism, Antheil's *Ballet mécanique* prompted a noisy debate over the relationships between music and capitalism, joined by Ezra Pound's tracts comparing the piece to a musical factory (Epstein 2014). William Carlos Williams felt that with Antheil's help, they had 'gone up over' the noise of the New York subway (qtd. in Thompson 2007: 143); Antheil's music seemed to recalibrate the 'audile technique' of urban listening.[2]

At the centre of this soundscape was jazz, soon to become, in Geoffrey Jacques's words, 'a standard against which the modernity of other art forms was measured' (2001: 74). Especially early in the century, 'jazz' encompassed a multifaceted range of idioms that, in their mass-distributed forms, served as a 'transmitter' of verbal conventions – vernacular dialects and minstrelsy 'cross-talk' – coextensive with the linguistic hybridity of modernism (Jacques 2009: 14, 78; North 1999). Perhaps because the term itself is so elastic, jazz found itself appropriated by

the European avant-garde in overdetermined ways. Glorified and vilified as a symptom of war trauma and mechanised city life, both celebrated as raw emotional expression and fetishized as a kindred spirit to the 'anti-art' sensibilities of Futurism, Dada and Cocteauvian 'lifestyle modernism', jazz was 'affixed to … activities of the avant-garde like a decal on a traveler's bag' (Rasula 2003: 14).

Modernist music, and jazz specifically, was thus positioned as a technological intervention into a 'battle over the significance and value of modernity' (Chinitz 2000: 10). Modernist studies has (mercifully) abandoned the rhetoric of a 'cultural divide' that exempts 'high art' from the technological dependencies of popular art – or has worked to historicise the vested interests that invented such a divide. Discourses of 'absolute' music that claims no extramusical 'meaning' are no less subject to technological mediation, both extensional (sound recording) and intensional (the technical means of musical language). The experiments of the Second Viennese School, conceived not as an avant-garde attack on art so much as an extension of Austro-German Romanticism, struck Theodor Adorno as a 'musical technology' that revealed the mutual dependence between technical discipline and a 'blind state of nature' (2002 [1934]: 207). As Arved Ashby (2010) argues, the *ethos* of sound recording supports an 'absolute' ideal of music by rendering a sound autonomous from its context. This severing heightens questions of authenticity, performance style, subjective sense-memory and textuality with which music contends. As Rick Altman writes, with respect to film sound, 'Recordings do not reproduce sound, they represent sound' (1992: 40): a recording is an interpretation and inscription of the sound's performed materiality. For Igor Stravinsky, who ostensibly resisted individual interpretations of his music, a recording was functionally 'coincident with the work without … displacing or replacing it' (Ashby 2010: 201–2). Stravinsky's formalism, in any case, was a

rhetorical posture as much as a compositional practice. His fascination with Russian folk traditions invokes contemporaries such as Béla Bartók, Leoš Janáček and Percy Grainger for whom the phonograph was not only a tool to preserve 'authorial intention' but a means of investigating indigenous vernaculars.

In these and other ways, the modernist musical text represents a technology of form built on technologies of performance, recording, distribution and ethnography. Modernist music – however 'absolute' in conception – is remediation all the way down.

### *The GPO: Documenting Musical Intermediality*

The intermedial qualities of opera, film, ballet and narrative radio give an additional thrust to music's technological character: both employing new musical noises and actively representing music as a social actor, exploiting the affective qualities of music (as in non-diegetic background music) and making visible its technological circulation. If cinema was often imagined, after Kandinsky, as the telos of the synesthetic total artwork (Murphet 2009: 147–8), modernist films often defamiliarise their own synthesis, unfolding a dialectic between the artwork and its material substructure. The technological self-awareness of these films, like that of *Parade* or *Les Mariés*, produces what Matthew Wilson Smith (2007) calls the 'crystalline' total artwork: one that foregrounds its own 'hypermediacy' by spotlighting its multiple constituent media (of which some, like cinema, seemed 'total' to begin with).

Similarly, Legg's *BBC: The Voice of Britain* and Jennings's *Listen to Britain* capitalise on the effects of music while characterising the technological structures that disseminate it. As Janice Ho argues in her contribution to this volume, GPO Film Unit documentaries formally represent a social contract defined by the technologies and media that bind a citizenry. This ideal

of mediated citizenship motivates the use of musical noise and rhythm in several GPO productions. In Harry Watt's *Night Mail* (1936), a paean to the postal train, a W. H. Auden poem is accompanied by Benjamin Britten's noisy score using industrial objects as percussion. Just as it muddies distinctions between diegetic and non-diegetic sound, *Night Mail* 'redraws geographical and intersubjective boundaries' through intermedial rhythmic play (Milian 2019). Jennings, too, juxtaposed 'art music' with provincial music and industrial noises; films such as *Spare Time* (1939) critique the pressures of wartime production by creating separate 'sonic spaces' that use 'musical temporality [as] refuge from the noisy reality of modern life' (Claydon 2011:183; Mansell 2011: 166).

The GPO's artistic and ideological rifts, though beyond my present scope, offer additional context for Legg's and Jennings's uses of music. Sensibilities clashed, for example, over the relative merits of 'city-symphony' films such as Ruttmann's *Berlin* and Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera*. Directors who championed a realist aesthetic, such as Paul Rotha, found these films too ideologically vague to effect social reform; *Night Mail* seemed to Rotha to have 'no social purpose whatsoever' (qtd. in Richards 2011: 3). John Grierson, who admired Eisenstein but found Vertov's films aimless, left the Unit in 1937, dismayed with its new direction. With the hiring of surrealists including Jennings and Cavalcanti, the GPO gravitated away from documentary realism toward experiments with montage and sound-image counterpoint, influenced by Vertov's deployment of music as both method and diegetic subject. *Man with a Movie Camera*, for example, opens with the tuning of an orchestra; the conductor and players await the projectionist, their motions captured and conducted into being by the film strip, which is then pruned throughout the film's narrative (Roberts 2000: 49–50).

GPO films, too, use music as a symbol of national community and institutional command, a self-aware technological actor marshalled for cultural repair. Though neither Legg's nor Jennings's film employs modernist music, both remediate 'classical' music as a modernist form within a modern media ecology. Beethoven serves as Legg's primary example of musical sublimity, re-racinated by the sounds of politics. *Listen to Britain* cross-fertilises the industrial, military and urban sounds of blitz-era London with music-hall numbers, Welsh folk songs ('The Ash Grove'), North American folk songs (Canadian soldiers singing 'Home on the Range') and Mozart. Through layered remediations, Legg and Jennings defamiliarise how the production of music feeds into 'second-nature' daily rituals – which, in times of national distress, may have ceased to feel natural and found themselves in need of reconstruction.

Aiming to cultivate public listening habits and shape a coherent 'imagined community' of tuned-in listeners, BBC music programming served as a support system for cultural production. The BBC programme *Music While You Work*, which *Listen to Britain* quotes directly, designed its programming to increase industrial productivity in concert with the rhythms of the working body.[3] Synchronizing the BBC with images of labour, Legg and Jennings weave music into a process through which British subjects constitute, in lived time, a cohesive public that both whistles and listens while they work. Simultaneously, these films strive to preserve concern music's integrity as a (contingently) self-sufficient medium through which citizens can realise themselves. *Voice* and *Listen* reconstruct music as a 'technology of the self': a mediated 'cultural resource' that actors 'mobilize for their ongoing self-construction' (DeNora 1999: 32).

### *Conducting the Voices of Britain*

'Classical' music fit the BBC's pedagogical aims for the new medium. Promoting the BBC as a 'sustained endeavour to … build up knowledge, experience and character', founding Director

General John Reith argued that programming 'high-brow' music would popularise it to the improvement of national tastes (qtd. in Doctor 1999: 27–8). This approach would, Reith hoped, prove democratic, enabling the 'shepherd on the downs, or the lonely crofter in the farthest Hebrides' to 'sit side by side with the patron of the stalls and hear some of the best performances in the world' (*BBC Handbook* [1928], qtd. in Scannell 1981: 244). The programming of modernist composers (including those discussed above) met with mixed responses, but rather than change the programming, the BBC supplemented it with the *Radio Times*, *The Listener*, school pamphlets and listener handbooks (Scannell 1981: 245; Briggs 1995 [1965]: 181–2). According to Debra Rae Cohen, the BBC constructed its 'voice' intermedially through collaborations of sound and print, propping its public image on *The Listener*, which endeavoured to train listeners as discriminating 'aural citizen[s]' (2012: 579). And if *The Listener* was used to 'assuage anxieties about broadcasting' with 'oracular' pronouncements about the 'magic of radio,' it did so only by 'eliminat[ing] that "noise" that validates the radio signal' and 'underscore[s] its immediacy' (Cohen 2012: 585).

In the late 1920s, the conductor Edward Clark pulled off successful radio performances of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (1918) and Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) and *Gurre-Lieder* (1913), showing that British listeners were prepared to engage with the 'new music' (even the proudly late-Romantic music of *Gurre-Lieder* offers its share of challenges for listeners). After the hiring of Adrian Boult as Music Director in 1930, the BBC Symphony Orchestra emerged as a world-class ensemble; the BBC established a Concert Hall in Broadcasting House for both live and broadcast audiences (Briggs 1995 [1965]: 164–5). While underscoring the BBC's confidence in its musicians, *Voice* presents the production of culture as an interactive process, tempering the BBC's self-seriousness with a playful respect for the music itself.[4] And as

Legg accompanies Boult's performance with images of the *Radio Times* flying off the presses, music's intermediality broadens its civic influence and leaves it more prone to desacralisation. A film that depicts, à la Joyce or Woolf, a 'day in the life' of BBC operations, *Voice* emphasises the 'unifying and integrative nature' of radio (Richards 2011: 7), counterpointing Beethoven with comedy acts, dance music, children's programming and a production of *Macbeth* (featuring a baby-faced Jennings as a Weïrd Sister). After a series of opening dissolve cuts that introduce Reith's pontifical inscription on Broadcasting House, the sounds of a Morning Service are dubbed over images of rural citizens listening on the wireless. Returning to the BBC offices, the mail is sorted, the contradictory injunctions of complaint letters heard in choric voice-overs ('More variety! Less variety!') as an army of typists responds. A 'gramophone specialist' tries, and then destroys, a crooning new record; professional 'practisers of noise' prepare noisemaking devices for *Macbeth*; a voice-over extols the station's extensive gramophone library; a producer casually eats an apple during the 'Dancing Daughters'. The studio work is treated with more irony than reverence, a tone that throws into relief, temporarily, the gravitas of Beethoven's Fifth.

If the choice of this symphonic warhorse, rather than Schoenberg or Poulenc, avoids debates over the niche appeal of 'modern' music, it accentuates a recurring modernist interest in Beethoven's music. In an excellent recent monograph, Nathan Waddell reads 'Beethovenian' modernism as both a Romantic challenge to 'restrictive aesthetic norms' and a 'valuing of the artist as a socially and politically transformative figure' (2020: 6). Literary modernists 'buried' Beethoven in their work, showing how 'music seemingly available for all to enjoy is bound up with the economic hierarchies it is so often said to transcend' (Waddell 2020: 49). In E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, a narrator remarks that 'all sorts and conditions are satisfied' by Beethoven's Fifth, proceeding to show competing interpretations of its 'sublime noise' being

'broadcast' over a metaphorical 'field of battle' (Forster 1998 [1910]: 25). Similarly, Legg's *BBC* extends outward, showing the music's production and then mapping out a cultural 'field' over which it is 'broadcast'. This field, and its 'hierarchies', matriculate into the rest of the film; Boult's performance is 'bound up with' the radio's daily operations, as the BBC's social mission is bound with the music's immanent tensions. This set-piece reads as a defence of reflective listening – the interruption of which does not devalue music, but humanises it, reintegrating it with other fare and with the 'sorts and conditions' listening back.

Legg frames the Beethoven performance with images of medial self-consciousness, at the scenes of both production and reception. A voiceover names the four movements of Beethoven's Fifth as the presses churn out the *Radio Times*. Accompanied by an oscillating chime, an announcer lists imperial outposts where the broadcast will be heard. We then hear the voice of Reith – a somewhat sinister radio talk promoting the Empire Service, which promises to induce 'greater sympathy' to imperial subjects across the globe. Legg crosshatches a synthesis between technological infrastructure and musical performance: first, a series of angular cuts between orchestra musicians and radio engineers (Fig. 1) — complete with the whirring howls of the technology generating the signal— then Boult and his antenna-like baton empowered by a series of low-angle shots (Figs. 2–3). Interrupted briefly by a hand at a dial panel (Fig. 4), Boult's conducting downbeat – and Beethoven's opening motif – create a circuit between the technology of broadcast, the body of an engineer and the body and baton of Boult himself. The music runs for some five minutes, dubbed first over fragmentary shots of the orchestra, then over images of domestic 'attentive listeners', explicitly linking the players to their fellow citizens in whose ears and name the music resonates.

[FIGS. 1–4 – AVAILABLE ONLY IN PUBLISHED VERSION]

The symphony's generative power is thus remediated by the signals that disseminate it for (global) consumption. Having established the BBC's imperial cultural heft, Beethoven's music opens into the spheres of politics; as in Forster, the music generates unifying connectivity which is dispersed into conflicting modes of reception. Formally, the disorienting cuts and angles that establish Boult's dominance also create an effect of distraction rather than 'attentive' absorption. Beethoven's music is interrupted, moreover, by an S.O.S. signal to a trawler at sea, interrupting sublimity with the contingencies of work. Legg presents a litany of 'leaders of opinion' in close-up, including H. G. Wells on the conditions of socialist Russia, and a wry speech by George Bernard Shaw proclaiming that the 'microphone is the most wonderful tell-tale in the world', a medium that renders a politician's (in)sincerity immediately detectable. Once Beethoven and Boult fade, 'high culture' gives way to Henry Hall's Dance Band, over shots of a policeman on his beat and a couple unceremoniously necking on the street. In a final sequence, a pacing father tells his son to stop whistling along with the performers on-air. Boult's reign does not run here; the music now produces not reverent absorption, but immodesty and restlessness, the voice (and lips) of a whistling bandleader reflexively mimicked by those of distracted listeners. Interrupted by naval exigencies and boat races, Boult's conducting hand, and Reith's extended imperial handshake, are subsumed – with a few ironic remainders – into quotidian rituals.

Beethoven and Boult may not generate the 'attentive listening' behaviours meant to edify public taste, but they do conduct productive listening habits. By treating music as both an object of representation and an acoustic substructure, *The Voice of Britain* capitalises on music's emotional force while connecting it to a material process. The film presents music as a mediation of the labour of production, used to make both trifles and 'warhorses'; and the cultural labour of

reception, performed by those domestic subjects whom radio music proposes to 'educate'. In practice, the film enacts the dialectic articulated by Walter Benjamin (1969 [1936]): if the aura of Boult's performance aestheticises politics, that aura is abruptly punctured by material noises and collisions, allowing a listening public to absorb rather than be absorbed by the artwork.

### *Listening (Out) to Britain: Music and Civic Soundscape*

Beginning his career as a surrealist painter, poet and literary critic (trained by I. A. Richards) before co-founding the ethnographic group Mass-Observation, Jennings long understood media forms as interdependent. His unfinished anthology, *Pandaemonium*, organises a literary history of the Industrial Revolution as 'images … in an unrolling film', exploring the history of the senses and the structures of feeling[5] revealed in writing. Sound and music provide a pulse for this rhythmic literary montage, which juxtaposes Samuel Pepys on the nature of sound and Daines Barrington on birdsong, Robert Hooke's experiments with vibration and John Tyndall's comparisons of air-disturbances in vowels and consonants. *Pandaemonium* hears music as a physical disturbance of matter and as raw material for the imagination, a dialectic that 'unrolls' alongside the engines of capital. Jennings's film aesthetic draws from these same surrealist and materialist instincts, in particular, the use of formal and generic ambiguity to destabilise the 'referential or functional aspects' of concrete 'found objects' (Miller 2002: 232). In Jennings's and Len Lye's *Birth of a Robot*, an animated film made for Shell-Mex, puppets in the vestiges of Roman gods use high-grade motor oil to 'lubricate' a dead motorist back to life in the Egyptian deserts. Lye uses the music of Gustav Holst's *The Planets*, likewise a synthesis of nostalgic mythology and outward exploration, to enact oneiric play rooted in the object-world: an aesthetic that meets the material needs and medial self-awareness of both advertising and surrealism.

If Jennings's version of surrealism feeds into late modernists' 'anthropological turn' – a reversal of modernism's fractured imperialist gaze onto a self-examination of England's own rituals (Esty 2004) – *Listen to Britain* takes a similarly dialectical tack, using concrete sonic particulars to unfold patterns of musical production and consumption. For Thomas Davis, *Listen to Britain* absorbs the ruptures of wartime within a broader sense of everyday ordinariness, suggesting that 'even a day at war is not all that extraordinary' (Davis 2015: 45), and constructs this sense of the ordinary through the formal approximation of consensus, which compensates for the impoverishment of visible meaning. That consensus is reconstructed in the modality of the audible – in intersubjective acts of 'listening out' (Lacey 2013) that constitute the public sphere.

[FIGS. 5, 6, 7 – AVAILABLE ONLY IN PUBLISHED VERSION]

*Listen to Britain* expands this intersubjectivity of listening across the spheres of work, play and education – creating a total artwork while preserving the porous openness of sound in the world. Jennings connects a schoolyard clapping routine, lovingly surveilled by a woman nearby (Fig. 5), to military preparations – the work these children may someday join – through distorted sounds of engine noise and Bren gun carriers. As we move into a montage of travel – starting with a plane's-eye-view of the English landscape, cutting to a truck moving forward through a tunnel as a train horizontally crosses the screen – we hear the music of 'Calling All Workers', Eric Coates's rousing theme to *Music While You Work*, over the 'keynote sound' of helicopters.[6] An assembly line of women factory workers sing along as 'Yes, My Darling Daughter' is piped through a speaker (Fig. 6), which sets the beat for the assembly line and the singing workers (in that order) (Fig. 7). Work, study, play and war, moving along the X, Y and Z visual axes, create a shared habitus of listening, conducted by the BBC.

This factory sequence pivots on an 'acousmatic' voice: a sound without a visible presence. Acousmatic sound, as Brian Kane writes, functions as a 'node in the tensile mesh of a form of life', a 'point where disparate auditory and cultural practices intersect' (2014: 226). Here, a loudspeaker amplifies the materiality of this 'mesh': disciplining us to listen to the 'absolute' sound-object, while recalling the phantasmagoric technology that occludes its material source (Kane 2014: 119–20). Jennings's depiction of sound piped through speakers connects the music to affective and economic mobilizations of war, an act of mediated listening both compulsory and voluntary, conducted by an invisible voice in defence against an unseen enemy.

*Music While You Work* (hereafter, *MWYW*) was initiated in 1940 in response to a concern that as women's labour grew increasingly repetitive, production and morale would diminish. As Keith Jones (2010) and Christina Baade (2012) have detailed, the implementation of *MWYW* on the BBC and in the factories (and, eventually, for home listeners) was provoked by a surge of studies in the 1930s and '40s speculating on how music might ease boredom and obviate the need for frequent breaks. *MWYW*, Baade writes, was based on 'research in industrial efficiency that focused on workers' bodies, psychology and welfare; and the conviction that, in a state of total war, the contributions of every citizen mattered' (2012: 61). BBC administrators used listener research surveys and interviews with factory workers and managers to parse the effects of musical elements – tempo, rhythm, melody – on workplace productivity. Managers hoped that *MWYW* might 'restore the rhythm of the work within the chaos of mechanical din', though new acoustic and practical difficulties emerged (Bijsterveld 2008: 87). Wynford Reynolds, the first producer, claimed in a 1942 directive that *MWYW* would have the effect of a cup of tea, a 'tonic' for worker morale (qtd. in Kirkpatrick 199) – as long as the music was neither too spiritual nor too sentimental, neither too *rubato* nor too syncopated. The complex rhythms of 'hot' music,

Reynolds warned, would create 'a confusion of sound' that interfered with the rhythms of workers' bodies and machines, building on a 'deeply rooted symbolism of sound which associated noise with chaos and rhythm with order' (Bijsterveld 2006: 327).

*MWYW* was conscripted in the service of health, tasked with increasing (without over-stimulating) the body's output. Such efforts to standardise workers' bodies, and nurture the body politic, buttress Jennings's images of cheerful labourers tunefully whistling along to a speaker that regulates their movements from afar. This factory scene thus represents an administered technology of production, conducted by the *acousmêtre*. If, as Baade argues (quoting Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*), *MWYW* 'subjected music to a "mechanics of power" in order to render it useful to the war effort' and made itself akin to 'the systems of factory discipline that transformed workers into docile bodies' (66), Jennings locates this internalised docility in the mediated structure of listening itself, placing music not outside but at the nexus of technology and labour. The injunction to 'listen to Britain' enjoins us also to listen to listening, to hear music as part of an ongoing process of cultural labour both patriotic and disciplinary.

*Listen to Britain*'s most formally innovative moment occurs when Jennings transitions from the music hall, featuring the comic duo of Flanagan and Allen singing 'Underneath the Arches', to a performance in London's National Gallery of Mozart's Piano Concerto no. 17 in G major, K. 453, by pianist Myra Hess and the Royal Air Force Orchestra. Moving from an interactive ritual to a solemn one, Jennings connects two forms of listening through a musical pivot chord: the penultimate dominant chord of the music-hall song is Mozart's tonic chord. Jennings claimed this to be a happy accident of editing, nurturing his surrealist faith that unconscious structures reveal themselves in material coincidences. What Grierson called the 'umbilical cord' between spectator and state, his ideal for documentary film, is here replaced

with what we might playfully term an umbilical *chord* – a modulating musical resonance that binds, without equating, listening habitus of different classes.

If 'high' and popular art are 'torn halves of an integral freedom to which, however, they do not add up' (Adorno 1977 [1936]: 123), to connect high and popular forms through the umbilical chord of listening is to fashion a synthesis that unfolds its own social tensions. From rear-angle shots of Flanagan and Allen conducting their audience playfully, Jennings cuts to medium-shots of the active spectators, then to shots of the National Gallery's exterior; then to its interior. As a counterpoint to Flanagan and Allen's participatory whistlers, Hess's audience listens blissfully, sanctified by the presence of the Queen Mother (smiling with arms folded) alongside a wounded soldier and an economically diverse audience. Hess's lunchtime Gallery concerts, which cost a shilling, were noted for their cross-class appeal and cosmopolitan programming[7] – a reputation confirmed by a shot of the programme, which features Mozart, Smetana and Howard Ferguson (*Four Diversions on Ulster Airs* [1942], newly composed for the BBC in Northern Ireland). The Steinway piano, revealed in a deep-focused shot from the audience, features as a mediator of this internationalism: a material instrument and a synecdoche for the 'House of Steinway' (founded in 1850s New York by a German immigrant), and no less a cosmopolitan technology than radar or radio. The image of Hess (a Steinway loyalist) at the piano produces music as a network of auditory mediations.

The film closes by merging material technologies with idealised music: over a shot of metal being forged, a chorus of 'Rule, Britannia!' fades in asynchronously with shots of the earth and air. 'Rule, Britannia!', like the title of the film, speaks in the imperative mood, instructing the Empire to rule itself through acoustic introspection. Presenting the 'voice of Britain' as an acousmatic collective, this chorus can be heard as non-diegetic (externally imposed) or diegetic

(produced by land and sky, sublated from the noises of labour and aerial warfare). In either reading, the anthem frames the music of Britain as a remediated artefact, by acknowledging (through violation) the artificiality of the film's formal premise, or by unpacking the material sounds and social practices that produce this ethereal chorus. The final frame presents a snippet of 'Rule, Britannia!', in the key of B-flat, overlaid by a cannon crossed over a violin. The musical notation ends not with the song's final words, however, but with the leading tone: the A-natural, corresponding with the word 'waves', that a listener expects resolved to the tonic (Fig. 8). Closing mid-thought, this musical image attenuates the film's final words – 'Britons never, ever shall be slaves' – a message that, like the title of Jennings's *London Can Take It!* (1940), raises more anxiety than closure about Britain's absorption of trauma.

[FIG. 8 – AVAILABLE ONLY IN PUBLISHED VERSION]

Jennings, a classmate of William Empson, may have felt this a necessary ambiguity, a gesture to the 'radical openness,' 'plurality' and 'intersubjectivity' of a listening 'public sphere', premised on acts of 'faith in the act of listening that there will be some resonance with the address' (Lacey 2013: 7–8). What exactly does it mean to 'listen to Britain', anyway? Who is listening to whom? Jennings captures the ambiguity of the acousmatic address: the possibility that no one is listening, that no one perceives the human behind the voice, and that we must continue listening still. The injunction to 'rule' lies in suspended tension with the injunction to 'listen': Jennings implicates the 'human voice' with human listeners, their auditory acts of 'faith' reciprocally inscribing a material network of musical technologies. In these films, all music is 'music while you work', conducted in the context of factory labour, the theatre of war and the field of cultural production.

NOTES

[1] Clements employs this definition of intermediality in a discussion of Gertrude Stein's and Virgil Thomson's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*, building on Rajewsky's excavation of 'intermediality' as an 'umbrella term' for other discourses (2005: 44). See also Lewis (2020) on the visual elements of intermedial form; Lewis employs the concept of intermediality, in congress with methods of 'new formalism', to show how intermedial forms awaken newly mobile and 'protean' spatial and temporal reading practices.

[2] For an exceptionally lucid explication of Pound's *Antheil* treatise, see Moss: 2019. The phrase 'audile technique' is Sterne's (2003).

[3] Braun (2012) compares *MWYW* to noise-abatement campaigns and industrial music management in Germany, both under the Nazi regime as well as in the German Democratic Republic (62–4). See also Bijsterveld's foundational work on *MWYW* in relation to industrial noise (2006).

[4] Inevitably, Legg's film sidesteps debates over the material interests of working musicians and institutional tensions between national and regional programmes. See Scannell 1981: 251.

[5] Upon Jennings's untimely death, Raymond Williams's name was offered as a potential editor of *Pandaemonium*. (Williams, finishing his *Culture and Society: 1780–1950*, was unavailable.)

[6] 'Keynote sound' is R. Murray Schafer's term for sounds that establish a soundscape's basic tonality and 'become listening habits in spite of themselves' (1994: 9).

[7] Forster praised Hess in a BBC radio talk, contrasting her liberal internationalism with the Nazis' xenophobia (Deutsch 2016: 220); he would rehearse this claim in a screenplay for Jennings's *A Diary for Timothy* (1945), which extols Beethoven's humanism.

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