Between sociology and aestheticism
– *yet another attempt to bridge over troubled water*

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> Whereas humanist scholars try to avoid the Scylla of reducing art to its social function, social scientists dread the Charybdis of a purified, defunctionalized, formalistic conception of art ... Taken together, if properly used, their approaches are capable of complementarity.
>
> Vera Zolberg[1]

The present article has been developed as yet another attempt to contribute to the question of what music is, what is meant by 'understanding' music, and what music 'means'.[2] My point of departure is that the musicological school I represent has recently been discussed in two separate articles in *The Swedish Journal of Musicology*. In the first of these articles the sociologist Peter Martin argues that the musicological/ethnological approach used in the majority of studies published in the series of publications from my department do not to a sufficient degree incorporate sociological aspects.[3] In the second article the music historian Bo Marschner takes the opposite stand, arguing that these studies, and not the least mine, to a far too great extent are directed towards the category which he terms 'life', largely social aspects – in opposition to the 'musical work'.[4]

Within the limitations an article allows for, I will thoroughly discuss both Martin's external (social) perspective and Marschner's 'internal' works or aesthetic perspective, but first I will address briefly 'the biological' as well as other 'pre-social' basic prerequisites. Thus, in my opinion, there is important knowledge to be drawn upon from disciplines such as linguistics and psychology, knowledge that makes it possible to see the opposition between 'life' and 'work', a notion increasingly developed from the eighteenth century and onwards, from a more elucidated point of view.

1 Vera Zolberg, *Constructing a sociology of the arts* (Cambridge, 1990), 12.
2 This is a topic I have previously explored on several occasions, see Olle Edström, 'Musikens ursprung – fåglar – människan', in Per-Erik Brolinson et al. (eds.), *Skriftfest. 19 uppsatser om musik tillägnade Martin Tegen på hans 60-årsdag* (Vårgårda, 1979), 63–80; 'Till förståelsen av musikupplevelsen', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 68 (1986), 17–38; 'Fr-a-g-m-en-ts – A discussion on the position of critical ethnomusicology in contemporary musicology', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 79 (1997/1), 9–68; and *En Annan berättelse om den västerländska musikhistorien – och det estetiska projektet* (Göteborg, 2002). I see the present article as an overview for a forthcoming book. The article has been translated from Swedish into English by Mats d Hermansson in collaboration with the author. All quotations in Danish and Norwegian have been translated too.
3 Peter Martin, 'Music and the Sociological Gaze', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 82 (2000), 41–56.
4 Bo Marschner, '"Værk" og "liv" som (modstridende?) musikvidenskabelige grundlag' ('Work' and 'life' as (contradicting?) foundations of musicology), *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 86 (2004), 11–27.

Before Martin and Marschner

The music pedagogue Bennet Reimer recently wrote about an experience he had in China.[5] After hearing an elite ensemble perform a traditional instrumental piece, he was surprisingly asked: 'So what do you think that piece was about?' As he didn't know what to answer the conductor said:

> 'We'll play it again.' He spoke to the ensemble briefly and they repeated the piece, this time even louder and more frantically … The best I could do was to say, when they finished: 'Well, it sure is an exciting situation there.' 'But you still don't know what is going on? … It's about a battle in a swamp,' he said, incredulous that their performance could have been any clearer that that was what the music was describing.[6]

If Reimer had been more knowledgeable, he would have known that the traditional Chinese way of understanding music is by focusing on what Reimers calls 'delineation', whereas he listened to the actual music itself, its 'inherent' qualities.

Similar experiences have presumably occurred to most of us. I remember a lecture recital with different songs from Arnhemland performed by some elderly gentlemen. They were presented by the ethnomusicologist Stephen Wild who introduced their music and, among other things, spoke about the different structures of the songs. I, however, found that the structure of the different songs was more or less the same. I tried, but could not discriminate between the structures, or as the music psychologist Bob Snyder writes, there were no patterns in my long-time memory that I could use while hearing the songs from Arnhemland:

> Identification occurs when we not only recognize something, but are able to connect it with memories of its name and associated with its concept. Conscious recollection, on the other hand, takes place when we purposefully try to retrieve something from long-term memory.[7]

Thus it is obvious that we need to be members of a culture or to be familiar with the ways of a culture to be able to comprehend, broadly speaking, what is going on. As Reimer tells us, it was not so much that he could not discriminate, but that he listened to the music in the wrong way and thus had a limited knowledge of the Chinese ontology of music.

As the reader knows, there are many dichotomies used to describe this division ('inherent–descriptive'); probably, it is more common to speak about the 'inner–outer' meaning of music, the 'intrinsic–external', 'implicit–explicit' meaning, or 'absolute music–programme music', etc. These are presumed dichotomies that musicologists, among others, have written extensively about. But the problem could also be regarded as an illusion.[8]

5 Bennet Reimer, 'Once more with feeling – Reconciling discrepant accounts of musical affect', *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 12/1 (2004), 1–13.

6 Ibid. 6.

7 Bob Snyder, *Music and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000), 10.

8 For the historical situatedness and an elegant implosion of this dichotomy compare Lydia Goehr, 'Writing music history', *History & Theory*, 31 (1992), 182–99.

When it comes to the question of 'what music is', a growing interest in the biological roots of music have developed during the past few decades. I briefly discuss this area of research in the introduction to my alternative presentation of Western music history.[9] Within the past few years, several interesting books have been published within this field.[10] In addition, a great number of articles are continuously published in various magazines within disciplines such as neurology, linguistics, and psychology. A considerable amount of this literature treats what could be termed the pre-social prerequisites. Possibly, from a sociological point of view, it could be argued that what happens on a biological level is of little interest, as it is the same for all human beings in all cultures, not to mention the insoluble dilemma of how to separate the social interaction as such from our biological predispositions, as they obviously must interact in the social situations in which they are studied. It can also be put into question when the transition from a supposed biological to a social level occurs – maybe even if it occurs before birth or, for instance, when the child is one week old! However, within these fields there is much research of interest in connection with the question of how human beings receive music, and how these prerequisites rule the perceptual ability of human beings, which in its turn interacts with and is of major importance for how music is used, understood and what meaning it has within a culture. I will elucidate this with three examples from different fields.

For the past twenty years much research has been made on infants and music. The psychologists McMullen and Saffran refer to research that suggests that newborn babies prefer their mothers' voices, and that already at that stage they can discriminate between the rhythm of their mother tongue and a foreign language:

> It is likely that infants acquire specific information about musical rhythmic information in their prenatal environments as well, assuming sufficient exposure and quality of auditory input (maternal singing is presumably the best source of such input).[11]

After birth the mother communicates with the child in a special way. The cultural anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake describes this cooperation between mother and child as an 'improvised and improved-upon duet', that is 'baby-talk' ('motherese') where a special vocal register is used, 'a higher, softer, breathier, singsong tone of voice'. Dissanayake mentions, however, that in some cultures the infant is not addressed in speech but by means of rhythmical noises 'such as tongue-clicking, hissing, grunting'.[12] It is easy to imagine that the prosodic patterns and sound structures which infants learn to distinguish in these 'pre-linguistic' situations in different cul-

9 Edström, *En Annan berättelse*, 16–29.

10 Ellen Dissanayake, *Art and Intimacy – How the Arts began* (Seattle and London, 2000); William L. Benzon, *Beethoven's Anvil Music in Mind and Culture* (New York, 2001); Patrick N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds.), *Music and Emotion – Theory and Research* (Oxford, 2001); Lawrence M. Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music – Cognitive Structure, Theory, and Analysis* (Oxford, 2002); Isabelle Peretz and Robert J. Zatore (eds.), *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Music* (Oxford, 2003).

11 Erin McMullen and Jenny Saffran, 'Music and Language: A Developmental Comparison', *Music Perception*, 21 (2004), 289–311, on 294.

12 Dissanayake, *Art and Intimacy*, 30.

tures interact with the prosodic elements existent in the songs and music heard by the children then and later. This happens at such an early phase of life that it probably can be seen as a transition from a pre-cultural to a cultural existence.

A second example is the research which, in a wide sense, exists within music psychology and contributes to the support, improvement or rejection of theories within e.g. music theory or music aesthetics. Maybe those aesthetes, for instance Nick Zangwill, who by means of the methods of analytical philosophy blow life into Hanslick's thoughts about how to listen to music, might be influenced by the psychologists Laurel Trainor's and Louis Schmidt's comprehensive article on how listening to music, in similar ways as other emotional stimuli, activates autonomous, subcorticodal, and corticodal systems.[13] Early in their article there are allusions that can easily be understood as a direct retort to Zangwill's article with the title 'Against emotion: Hanslick was right about music':

> It is likely surprising to psychologist to learn that some philosophers have argued that music does not express emotion, given the empirical data showing substantial agreement between listeners as to the emotion expressed in particular piece of music. For example, a century and half ago, Hanslick proposed that music appreciation had nothing to do with emotion.[14]

It is a regrettable fact that it is more common that music psychologists are familiar with the name of Hanslick, than that music theorist have knowledge of contemporary research within music psychology.

A third example is how different thought systems can be explained on the basis of how the actual syntax of a certain language affects our perception of the surrounding world. I take my point of departure in the double condition that language is the primary means of communication and a discourse which to the highest degree affects for instance how we understand music and what meaning it has:

> The important thing here is not only that we learn to use language without really knowing what complicated rules we constantly employ ... but that along with language, we gain much knowledge about the world, knowledge that is contained in the language, as it were, and which, although we would not be able to formulate it, continually guides us when we think or speak in that language.[15]

With the general approach of this quotation in mind, maybe the concrete scenario presented by another linguist, Richard Levinson, will surprise the reader.[16] His research on a number of languages, not belonging to the Indo-European family, shows

13 Nick Zangwill, 'Against emotion: Hanslick was right about music', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 44 (2004), 29–43; Laurel Trainor and Louis Schmidt, 'Processing emotions induced by music', in Peretz and Zatore (eds.), *The Cognitive Neuroscience of Music*, 311–24.

14 Ibid. 311.

15 Friedrich A. von Hayek, 'Über den "Sinn" sozialer Institutionen', *Schweizer Monatshefte*, 36 (1956), 512–24, as quoted in Rudi Keller, *A Theory of Linguistic Signs* (Oxford, 1998), 65.

16 Stephen C. Levinson, *Space in Language and Cognition – Explorations in Cultural Diversity* (Cambridge, 2003).

for instance that these languages entail totally different prerequisites for understanding concepts of space and direction such as right, left, north, south, etc. It has always been assumed, until now, that our conception of space is always relative and is based on our bodily experiences, but this is not correct. According to Levinson, this view is plainly an ethnocentric mistake.

Through thorough studies of some non-Indo-European languages and their use, Levinson has shown, contradictory to the assumptions of cognitive psychologists, that there is a complicated interactive linguistically directed process, which results in different ways of understanding the world. Levinson summarizes:

> Despite the fact that so much current theory emphasizes the innate basis of linguistic and conceptual categories, the facts of linguistic and cognitive diversity point to an important role for constructivism in human cognition ... A language 'canalizes' the mental landscape, offering complex concepts that would otherwise be mostly out of the range of independent invention – complex concepts, like specific instantiations of frames of reference, that then come to dominate the internal coding of states of affairs and events.[17]

This perspective – although put together by a large number of cultural factors – is also used by the psychologist Richard Nisbett, who discusses how the surrounding world is understood from a Western and Eastern perspective respectively.[18] The message he conveys is similar, and here we can refer back to Reimer's experience: when a Chinese and an American person see the same painting [or hear the same music] they do not see [hear] the same thing. Nisbett simply shows – and very convincing too – that the reason behind the Chinese and American students not seeing the same thing when looking at the same picture is explained by two different cognitive styles. The origin of these is lost in time, but can be traced back a few thousand years. The Western style is connected to the Greek inheritance: the Greeks were primarily tradesmen who often met other ethnic groups speaking different languages. The Greeks learnt how to argue and make deals, they were interested in nature and had a language system with many nouns suited to an analytical and mathematical way of thinking. As Nisbett writes: 'If one proposition was seen to be in a contradictory relation with another, then one of the propositions had to be rejected'.[19]

In the much more densely populated China the dominating group was the Han people, depending on agriculture. Here cooperation and the bringing of different opinions into line with each other was important. The Han people spoke the same language, and a written language developed based on graphical imitations which made the language legible in spite of different dialects. At the same time, in one sense, the meaning of the words to a high degree depended on the context (in addition, the meaning of phonemes depended on pitch). One thing/one object was never

17 Ibid. 325.

18 Richard Nisbett, *The geography of thought. How Asians and Europeans think differently, and why* (New York, 2003).

19 Ibid. 25.

really simple to define. Objects were not seen as separate entities, but were always embedded in a context – 'in which the elements are constantly changing and rearranging themselves'.[20] Thinking was rather concrete than abstract.

Nisbett discusses how these different ways of thinking ('mentalities') affect most aspects of the cultures and that the monophonic Chinese music reflects the Chinese predilection for unity.

At an early stage, the concurrent factors: ecology (climate, situation, contacts), language, interest and attitude towards logics, the view on objectivity–subjectivity, etc. resulted in different ways of understanding the surrounding world, ways and strategies which Nisbett has proved are still valid today.

The intention here has been to show that musicologists (irrespective of terming themselves music historians, theorists, ethnomusicologists, aesthetes, etc.) can benefit from partaking of the results of research within psychology, linguistics, biology, and similar disciplines. This applies both to findings which show that the new-born infant is not a *tabula rasa* and research and theories that can help musicologists understand the social prerequisites of music.

It is the latter that will now be discussed, i.e. questions such as what happens when we understand something when we listen to music, what 'meaning' music has, as well as what meaning music has for our lives.

Music and 'the Social'

Peter Martin's book *Sound & Society – Themes in the sociology of music* (1995) was welcomed as an important contribution to sociomusicology. In general, it received positive criticism.[21] Martin's choice to elaborate on certain parts of his discussion in his article in *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*[22] was partly due to his participation in a colloquium in Gothenburg in 1999 and partly due to my article 'Fr-a-g-me-n-ts' (1997) published earlier. In his article Martin states that musicologists do not use a sociological point of view to a sufficiently high degree, which means that musicologists still understand music as something 'in itself'.

It becomes clear that Martin is well acquainted with the Anglo-American musicological debate which has been going on since the 1980s. Initially, John Shepard and Susan McClary are mentioned as scholars who by means of music analysis wanted to show how music reflects various aspects of the values of Western society. As Martin writes, in their analysis they want to 'go beyond the notes themselves to elicit the fundamentally social meanings which they convey'.[23] Others, as I and some of my colleagues in Gothenburg, have instead chosen to integrate the production, the performance, and the perception of music in their analyses. Accord-

20 Ibid. 27.

21 An exception – that somehow bounces back on the reviewer – is Robert Walser's review in *Contemporary Society*, 27/3 (1999).

22 Martin, 'Music and the Sociological Gaze'.

23 Ibid. 41.

ing to Martin, in neither of these schools the interest of 'the social' has led to a 'sustained engagement with the themes and traditions represented within the established discourse of sociology'.[24]

Martin points out that the task of the sociologist is not to determine the value of different types of music, but to show *why* different types of music are *conceived of* as having different value. The sociologist, who is not more objective than others, can remain objective or unbiased towards the results of the sociological construction behind the investigated values through the sociological method. This is followed by a discussion of what is meant by this social constructivism – and here Martin focuses on recent sociology which:

> has focused on the ways in which the 'objective facticity' of the intersubjective world is produced, reproduced, and changed through organized practices which, however routine and regularly occurring, must nonetheless be enacted be real people in real situations.[25]

But although musicologists have realized the importance of these processes, Martin is of the opinion that it is problematic from a theoretical point of view to say, as for instance Shepherd does, that music indirectly can decode a specific view of society ('world-sense'), which a certain social group is supposed to hold. Martin points out that it is not sufficient to emphasize the importance of taking into account the situation in which the music is performed – here he refers to my article[26] – but to see 'the social' as fundamental – 'as the focal point where all other factors ... are brought together'. Furthermore, he adds that 'all of what we call 'experience' is mediated in some way or another',[27] which means that, from a sociological point of view, it is always through the analysis of context and situation – and not musical works – that we understand something of what I termed 'the ethnomusicological knowledge of the everyday usage, function, and meaning of music'.[28]

As a consequence of the fact that culture is continuously created in a co-operative interaction between human beings, it is suggested that the concept 'appropriation' should be used instead of 'reception'. It is emphasized that this social process continuously goes on by means of conversation/language.

The article is finished off with three exhortations. The first is to study all forms of music from a sociological perspective. The second is to realize that musicological interpretations often have the character of 'politics of meaning'. Here Martin means

24 Ibid. 42. The first method equals the one treated by Zolberg, *Constructing a sociology of the arts*, 53–78 under the heading 'Studying the art object sociologically'. Here Zolberg discusses a number of different ways and methods through which sociologists have studied various art forms. The second method is equalled to 'The art object as social process' (ibid. 78–106). Initially, it is stated here that, contradictory to the former way of looking at art, the 'sociologist who work in this mode undertake to explain how work comes to be defined qua art'.

25 Martin, 'Music and the Sociological Gaze', 46.

26 Edström, 'Fr-a-g-m-en-ts', 64.

27 Martin, 'Music and the Sociological Gaze', 48.

28 As quoted in Martin, 'Music and the Sociological Gaze', 42.

when a musicologist through his/her analysis of a piece of music claims that the music can, should or ought to be heard in a certain way, and which easily can acquire a factual character. Against this position Martin poses sociological studies which e.g. show and reveal the social mechanisms facilitating a certain form of hearing.[29] The third aspect, which has been mentioned, is that musicologists rather than studying how music expresses the interests and values of a social group, should study how these values emerge within the culture.

Martin develops his criticism further in a review essay.[30] Here he returns to the shadow cast by Theodor W. Adorno over the connection between music and society, i.e. that sociomusicology has predominantly been occupied with the question of how free individuals have created supposedly autonomous works, which 'none the less contained "social messages" or meanings'.[31] When it comes to 'new musicology' and the research of Susan McClary, Martin returns to the problem of how 'the social' enters music, and he points out that when McClary writes that Mozart's Prague Symphony 'relies on tonality's harmonic flexibility to persuade us that we are hearing individualist expression',[32] he does not know whether she is saying that the meaning is in the music itself or if the meaning of her utterance is to listen to music her way. Martin finds that McClary provides no real evidence of how the notion of how social content is 'inscribed' in musical works is taking place. Again, he says that it is not music's 'truth content' that is interesting to the sociologist, but how the meaning of music is constituted in the social processes of this discourse. In fact, 'new musicology' is very similar to 'old musicology' and is actually not less ideologically based.

Probably, Martin is correct when he assumes that musicologists not seldom write about the music they/we like and value highly.[33] It is very likely that in many cases it has been difficult to place the personal experience in a sanctuary free of values and then step out of it and observe the field objectively. The music has been a non-separable part of the identity of the individual. Probably, Martin has a point when he claims that I and others have not to a *sufficiently* high degree seen 'the social' as the cause and effect of everything. I can also appreciate that the concept 'appropriation' is wider than 'perception', but question of course whether the former should be delimited against the increasingly more common concept 'affordance' (see below).

29 Among the examples of prominent musicological analyses mentioned by Martin are Tia DeNora's analysis of the concurrent social conditions and behaviour which facilitated Beethoven to emerge as the most distinguished composer of all in the early nineteenth century, cf. Tia DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius* (Berkeley and London, 1995).

30 Peter Martin, 'Over the Rainbow? On the Quest for "the Social", in Musical Analyses', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 127 (2002), 130–46.

31 Ibid. 132.

32 Ibid. 144.

33 Personally, however, I have written the least about the music I have come to like the most. I wrote my dissertation on the *jojk* of the Sami (Laplanders) and have written much about contemporary Sami music, about the popular hit song before the Second World War, about the CD *Dangerous* by Michael Jackson, but less about jazz and Western art music.

Otherwise I cannot see that there is any actual opposition between Martin's and my epistemological standpoints.[34] An exception, of course, is that I am not prepared to give up that part of our activity which deals with the actual music, because then we would become nothing else than sociologists, but I will return to this topic later.

Naturally, there are other sociomusicologists who work with some of the problems brought up by Martin such as a) how music is used and so what it means for contemporary human beings, b) how in this process the mediation between society and music can be understood, and c) what an accomplished theoretical music analysis used in a sociomusicological context would mean? This article only allows for a brief presentation of the fields and methods of these scholars. Initially, I will supplement the presentation with some studies by Tia DeNora, who, together with Martin, is one of the general editors of the series *Music and Society* (Manchester University Press).

Tia DeNora is a well-known sociomusicologist and among her previous work there are at least three important books.[35] Against a background of my aim here, I will touch upon what her analysis of a musical work in an article from the mid 1990s has to offer. Here she is asking:

> [n]ot only about how the social 'gets into' the musical (the social provenance of a musical work), but also about how the musical 'gets into' the social.[36]

After having touched upon the advantages and disadvantages of the concept of homology,[37] DeNora concentrates on how a piece of music can act as a non-verbal resource at the same time as it provides non-verbal resources for the clarification of perceived reality. DeNora describes a period when she often had to connect to a server by means of a telephone line. She often experienced the short connection period as very long:

> One day, during a week when I hade been reading an essay about Bizet's opera … I pressed the key to the repeated rhythmic phrase that appears in the opening four bars of the Habañera … And even before Carmen had begun to sing the words … I was on the mainframe. Somehow, this 'playing' of Carmen became a habit.[38]

34 Hopefully – if he had been able to read Swedish – Martin would have noticed that my presentation (Edström, *En Annan berättelse*; forthcoming in English in 2006) is an attempt in the direction he is asking for, although from an ethnomusicological standpoint.

35 DeNora, *Beethoven and the Construction of Genius*; Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge, 2000); Tia DeNora, *After Adorno – Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge, 2003).

36 Tia DeNora, 'The musical composition of social reality? Music, action and reflexivity', *The Sociological Review*, 43 (1995), 298.

37 The study discussed here is Willis' work about the use and meaning of music among young English bikers (Paul E. Willis, *Profane Culture* (London, 1978)). The concept of homology is also used by Alf Björnberg, *En liten sång som alla andra – melodifestivalen 1959–1983* (Diss.; Göteborg, 1983), 147 ff., as a possible explanation in connection with his study of the Swedish Melody Grand Prix. Cf. also Middleton's profound discussion on the value of the concept in Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Milton Keynes, 1990), 147 ff.

38 DeNora, 'The musical composition of social reality?', 302.

What had previously been experienced as a long waiting time was now perceived as a short period. The music, a few bars of Bizet's opera *Carmen*, 'had the effect of translating time'. On these occasions she found herself in, or thought 'in music, as opposed to thinking about music',[39] and she wondered what in the music that she related to when it became, for instance, a time resource; i.e. how a non-musical time of waiting and a musical behaviour merged into an experience. And, it is added, how should we describe this?

The answers are taken from a traditional musicological model of explanation – where the interesting part is how DeNora combines various aspects in a sociological reading. Because, she says, the repeated bass figure in these four bars is in a style that can be musically recognized. In addition, in every bar the figure functions as something that begins and ends ('it "goes up" and "comes down"'). She also experiences a rhythmical analogy (beginning–end).[40] Therefore, DeNora's conclusion is:

> [t]he opening of this music isn't 'about' waiting; rather the music itself is in waiting, and it is in waiting in order to do the musical work of paving the way for the melodic passage that will follow a few seconds later when Carmen starts to sing.[41]

The four bars functioned as a nice social-musical time experience. With her analysis DeNora wants to get away from a (musicological) analysis which shows what music signifies.[42] Although DeNora admits that there are musical structures which have acquired a strongly fixed meaning within a certain culture, she insists that a focus on the structure is not enough as 'the social is not "in" the text; rather it is "in" the interaction between text and actor'.[43] DeNora adds that 'we have to regard music criticism as a part of this interactive, constitutive process', i.e. again she warns us against the eagerness of the musicologists to tell the readers what music means, what she calls the 'politics of reading'.

The micro-process described by DeNora in her article is basically about the concept 'mediation', understood as the factors involved in the social process which affects the structure of the music – and vice versa. But, naturally, the concept can also be elevated from an individual to a general perspective, where it is applied on society at large. Such a macro-perspective is used by the sociologists Hennion and Grenier.[44] The aim of their article is to analyse mediation by focussing on the different interacting 'musical' processes which take place here.

39 Ibid. 303.

40 It would be an overstatement to say that DeNora's theoretical music analysis is completely free from objections. For instance she writes that there is a change between the tonic and dominant in every bar, which I hardly find likely. She misses that the bass figure of the four bars functions as a kind of drone on the tonic. It is also said that every bar 'sketches the octave' – although the ambitus per bar is a tenth.

41 Ibid. 305.

42 Here DeNora discusses Susan McClary, *George Bizet's Carmen* (Cambridge, 1992).

43 DeNora, 'The musical composition of social reality?', 311.

44 Antoine Hennion and Linn Grenier, 'Sociology of Art: New Stakes in a Post-Critical Time', in S.R. Quah and A. Sales (eds.), *The International Handbook of Sociology* (London, 2000), 341–55.

The authors question the traditions within sociology which place the actual artistic process and the work of art outside the research area of sociology. Thus, within these traditions the art objects are only seen as signs mediating different social processes.[45] Hennion and Grenier, on the other hand, would rather like to see a sociology of art *in favour* of art instead of one *against* art, a direction that 'acknowledge the singularity of these products as events which are irreducible to either their origins or their effects'.[46]

They point out that something more is needed than the concurrent factors which according to Howard S. Becker form the process through which works of art are constituted and through which it is determined whether they will last or perish.[47] But when all the intermediating – and reciprocally interacting – factors have been taken into account within the world of art, the ones who like, enjoy and use art should not be left out. The authors strive for a method which shows how the mediating factors result in something more, than what is achieved by a mechanical addition of their interaction:

> Mediations are of a pragmatic status: they are the art which they bring forth, and they cannot be distinguished from the appreciation they generate. They can thus help us better understand the contingent ways in which particular intermediaries, entities and processes participate in the progressive emergence of a particular artistic work, as well as the complex and changing ways in which specific value judgements of appreciations become linked to specific art works.[48]

However, the authors do not express that they commit themselves to the value of a work of art, but want to understand the connection between the work and reality and how the work is appreciated. Their starting point is that the connection between a work and taste is contingent. But they point out that the thought of the effects of mediation can be developed. In a broader sense, the creation of a work occurs 'in all the interstices between the multiple intermediaries involved in producing and appreciating art'.[49]

What this possibility for a study, using mediation as a tool, might result in is, however, not explained in greater detail in the article. On the other hand, in other articles by Hennion[50] it becomes clearer why music in particular is an optimal candidate for showing how mediation operates. The object of music is sounding

45 In addition, as we know according to the sociologist Jean Baudrillard's analysis, today the signs are void of their content. We perpetually hunt for new emptiness. For a discussion see Edström, *En Annan berättelse*, 293.

46 Hennion and Grenier, 'Sociology of Art', 344.

47 Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, 1982).

48 Hennion and Grenier, 'Sociology of Art', 350.

49 Ibid. 351.

50 Antoine Hennion and Joël-Maire Faquet, 'Authority as performance: The love of Bach in nineteenth-century France', *Poetics*, 29 (2001), 75–88; Antoine Hennion, 'Music and Mediation: Towards a new Sociology of Music', in M. Clayton, T. Herbert, and R. Middleton (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (New York and London, 2003), 80–91.

notes, but the mediated process can be studied, as 'music has nothing but mediations to show; instruments, musicians, scores, stages, records'.[51] A study by Hennion and Faquet on how the interest and passion for Bach and his music emerged in the nineteenth century is presented as an example. The sociological problem is that the image of Bach either depends on Bach – his creative 'genius', i.e. his music – or it is we who have created his importance as a brilliant composer. In an attempt to get past this they try to study all three: 'Bach, us, and "the music"'. Among other things it is pointed out how a certain performance practice of Bach's music developed, and how other music by French and other composers was 'bachified' due to the steadily increasing interest in Bach's music – its structure and his method of composing – among composers and the general audience. It is emphasized that of the three parts the important thing is neither the genius, Bach himself, nor ourselves today:

> – but *the intermediary work on his oeuvre, in the most concrete meaning in the term*, that which is transmitted through various media and through multiple interpretations, and which changes us each time by simultaneously forging our taste and the yardstick by which we measure that taste.[52]

Later, when Hennion formulates the task, he sees this way of working as practicable in attaining understanding about the meaning of music, the music taste of people, and the function of music. However, he emphasizes that 'the work itself', what sociology tends not to mention, should stand out more clearly.

But this expectation does not include the sounding music, except from the point of view that Hennion sees it as an interactive factor. As a musicologist I would have hoped for a clearer discussion regarding how the understanding of the musical structure is changed in this process. From a musicological point of view this process can be seen as the reception history of a work. Hennion and Faquet do point out – and more consistently from a sociological point of view in comparison to musicologists – the 'double-sidedness' in the process. They write that 'Bach is becoming music' and that 'music is "becoming Bach"'. As I understand this, the very notion of what music is was affected by the Bach renaissance of the nineteenth century, at the same time as this process stylistically had a retrograde effect on those from this period who wrote, played and listened to music. Both these developments affect our view of what music is.

In any case, Hennion gets closer to music 'in itself' and attributes it 'in itself' more significance than for instance Becker did in his classical work. But he does not grapple with the musical structure and deals only to a little extent with the question

51 Hennion, 'Music and Mediation', 83. As self evident, however, as it might be that music 'in itself' cannot be the bearer of meanings, the idea that it can has often been propagated. For a recent contribution that comes very close to suggesting that music's expressive qualities literally resides in the music 'itself', see Leo Treitler, 'The language of Interpretation of Music', in Jenefer Robinson (ed.), *Music & Meaning* (Ithaca, N.Y, 1997), 23–54.

52 Hennion and Faquet, 'Authority as performance', 85.

of how Bach might have been understood and experienced by those who heard the music. Disregarding DeNora's discussion regarding the syntactical possibility of music to fit into and be integrated with a social activity, it can be stated that music is perceived as an object which in co-operation with and under the influence of another social activity can be part of individual and collective activities. Still, for a musicologist, Hennion's and Grenier's thoughts that mediations 'are the art they bring forth', and that mediations 'cannot be distinguished from the appreciation they generate', miss the point of the power and meaning of music as a sounding and affecting object. It is hard, at least for a musicologist, not to think and experience that music somehow talks back to the knowledgeable listener, and that it is possible to extract and pinpoint the musical factors, making this possible.[53]

Moreover, music and especially song, talks back or rather interacts with the person all the time, since listening to a song is almost always an active pursuit and an act that very often makes it possible for the listener to sing the song or part of it. Thus, the process of internalizing and performing as part of listening makes it quite a different type of cultural pursuit than for instance looking at a painting. A song sings in me because I, as almost everybody else, can also sing it out loud, but I cannot paint in my inner self, the painting I have just seen.

Regarding the previous analysis by DeNora of the waiting time/bars from *Carmen* it can be questioned if there is a difference to express and show a) from a *musicological* point of view: that the musical structure (the properties of which have been found through a more thorough and correct analysis) functioned as a tool which DeNora used rhythmically as an integrated part of her experience waiting to be connected; or b) from a *sociological* point of view claim: that by entering the musical structure it becomes a 'cultural "work place" for the articulation of meaning and action, a real structure upon which one can "hang" or "map" non-musical associations and activities'?[54]

The musicologist sees/hears the structure as both a tool and as a sounding symbol of the waiting time, whereas the sociologist understands the music structure and the action as referents to each other in an event/action which changes the experience of the waiting time. The difference is obviously due to the fact that the musicologist with his/her detailed knowledge of the music tends to understand the music as a 'subject' whereas for the sociologist it is only an 'object' among others – an object which human beings can socially acquire ('appropriation') or, as an increasing number of sociologists and psychologists express it today, what music can 'afford'.[55]

53 The phrase 'talk back' comes from Peter Cook and Mark Everist, 'Introduction', in id. (eds.), *Rethinking Music* (Oxford, 1999), 4.

54 DeNora, 'The musical composition of social reality?', 306.

55 DeNora uses the latter concept in her empirically oriented study *Music in Everyday Life*. It is used by a number of authors in Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda (eds.), *Music and Emotion* (Oxford, 2001), in Clayton et al. (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music*, as well as in Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook (eds.), *Empirical Musicology – Aims, Methods, Prospects* (Oxford, 2004). It has become somewhat of a vogue-word.

As the music psychologist Eric F. Clarke has explained the concept 'affordance' was introduced as a substitute for value, what an object has to offer.[56] The concept is often used in a dynamic sense, what something makes possible for somebody in a specific context and with a specific aim. Seemingly, the concept has an infinite flexibility; it is possible to imagine that what music 'affords' depends on its structure and how it is performed. Plainly expressed, it is possible to envision that in addition to an emotional content there is also an integrated conceptual content. If it had been possible to measure these – both could have a scale from 0 to x. This would imply that 'affordance' functions as an all-embracing sociological explanation, and inversely that the object offers everything. Of course, the thought of such a radical essentialist stance is not plausible for a musicologist; starting from scratch is not possible for an object (e.g. music) as there is always an underlying tradition. In addition, within a specific culture the structure of the music is not contingent in relation to the use of the music.

This line of reasoning conceals a more profound complex of problems which seem difficult to solve and which from an epistemological point of view apparently march back and forth in the same spot: On the one hand, to claim that there *is* an essence, a content in music, would imply that this already exists on a pre-cultural and pre-symbolic level and then in a noumenal world. Essence is given an a-historical dimension.[57] On the other hand, the opposite – an anti-essence – would mean that it is 'the social' that forms our understanding of everything, which leaves us with the problem of how this process interacts with ourselves, with humans as biological beings.[58] In fact, we only know to a limited extent the nature of our brain, how it functions etc. The hope that we at some point will understand it fully actually seems to be contradictory from a logical point of view.[59] At the same time as a constructivist point of departure is adhered to, it is necessary to remember that cultural history is characterized by the view that specific objects in themselves have certain meanings, and that this view has been handed down from generation to generation.[60] Furthermore, to avoid that the concept becomes an amorphous, contemporary replacement of 'appropriation', it should be emphasized that from a musicological perspec-

56 Eric Clarke, 'Empirical Methods in the Study of Performance', in Clarke and Cook (eds.), *Empirical Musicology*, 77–102.

57 Cf. Tony Jackson, 'Questioning Interdisciplinarity; Cognitive Science, Evolutionary Psychology, and Literary Criticism', *Poetics Today*, 21 (2000), 319–47. Among musicologists belonging to this school are of course those who are so idealistic that they believe in eternal values ('romantics') or who *know* what has quality and so is best for all of us ('modernists').

58 In this group of musicologists those can be found who have adopted the beliefs of post-modernism and those who, like the philosopher Richard Rorty, see the culture you live in as the departure point of everything.

59 For a similar biological-sociological survey of various theories and interdisciplinary possibilities, see Jackson, 'Questioning Interdisciplinarity'. Discussing a corresponding dichotomy, here expressed by the concepts essentialism vs. relativism, he finds that he cannot see any possibility for either side to get past its own limitations, ibid. 344.

60 For a well-informed article on the use of the concept affordance in another context see Ian Hutchby, 'Technologies, Text and Affordances', *Sociology*, 35 (2001), 421–56, and the following debate between him and Brian Rappert in *Sociology*, 37 (2003), 565–89.

tive nothing is gained if the musical structure is not discussed, its meaning is analysed, and this knowledge is integrated in the sociomusicological presentations. Sociomusicological research must deal with *both* music *and* sociology. I usually express this by insisting that the musicological answers should be sought by means of an analysis consisting of the combined factors of a) the individual, b) the situation, c) the structure of the music, and d) the performance, where the first two words deal with 'the social' and the second pair with 'the music'.[61] This means that the expertise of music history and music theory, which we have acquired, comes to good use in a sociomusicological analysis as well. In addition, of course, we must not forget the qualitative meaning which individuals attach to their personal experiences of music. At least since the Age of Enlightenment, music increasingly has become part of the social life of a great number of people and it is of major importance for the individual and his/her individuality. It cannot be reduced to a dry sociological fact.

Thus, as this survey has sought to point out, there is every reason, in DeNora's usage of language, to study music–society–man from the sociological epistemological standpoint of 'interactive constructionism' and, in addition, to take seriously Martin's statement about 'the social' as the cause and effect of everything. But I think that according to the rules of the game, musicologists will also henceforth continue to pay greater attention than sociologists to the sounding/played music and to the group-individual's experience of the music. Although it is hardly possible for anyone to measure epistemologically the difference between two ideal analyses, one musicological and one sociological, of the same musical situation, I rather see the difference as positive than negative. Divergent standpoints are necessary for the improvement of the methods of both disciplines.

Music and understanding

Before I discuss the epistemological tradition which Bo Marschner represents, I will mention briefly the question of music as a language and the semiotic possibilities of music. This topic will here by necessity rather be confined to a determination of a position than to a more comprehensive discussion. Three short sentences may serve as an abstract: *Music is not a language in the sense of our spoken/written language. The spoken/written language is our dominating form of communication. Music has a strong emotional quality, but is weak from an abstract-conceptual point of view*. Add to this the following as a short background:

The psychologists McMullen and Saffran, previously mentioned, find that there is no reason to believe that the ability of human beings to intuitively learn a musical syntax is principally different from that of language, but in the case of music this takes place at a later stage of childhood.[62]

61 Cf. Olle Edström, 'The Place and Value of Middle Music', *Svensk tidskrift för musikforskning*, 73 (1992/1), 51; Olle Edström, *Göteborgs Rika Musikliv – en översikt mellan världskrigen* (Göteborg, 1996), 142–42, 673.

62 Cf. McMullen and Saffran, 'Music and Language', 292–93.

Music, however, is not a semantic system, but shares many prosodic elements with language.[63] Gradually we learn to speak to varying degrees about the experiences music transmits/brings forth, i.e. we describe this metaphorically by means of the language we have learnt. Here, in line with the linguist Rudi Keller, language is understood as an instrumental system of signs through which we transmit thoughts, ideas, and feelings.[64] According to this view there exists no pre-programmed specialized language module or anything similar. We use a sound sign which can function as an index, icon or symbol to make the receivers understand our intentions. We interpret the semantic content of the words and the message in a specific social context.

Note that the signs in themselves are only *tools* and do not contain meaning, but that the receiver can understand the received message because of the signs, provided that she understands the syntax of the language. The words are understood through their use, which means that the signs are instruments of communication. Keller emphasizes over and over again that meaning can be formulated without the use of explanations that contain concepts which, so to speak, represent something from the start. We do not learn the concept because the word music signifies the concept, but we learn by degrees the differences between music and non-music through the use of music, and in this way the concept of music is formed for us. Words classify as well as represent and, in addition, facilitate communication.[65] Because of this, for Keller the idea that it is language that reflects the private, inner corporal experiences is wrong; what happens here is that we search for analogous icons when we try to describe our experiences.[66] For Keller metaphors are an iconic technique through which something acquires an added and extended dimension.[67] As is well known, once the metaphors have become part of our language, they are extremely often used in our oral/written description of music.

Alternatively, as Keller formulates it, what facilitates that a receiver understands my thoughts, i.e. the meaning of the signs, is not the same thing as these thoughts: 'If meaning were something to do with thought or cognition, if it were something mental, it could not be an aspect of signs'.[68] The signs make possible that a high degree of causality can be attained so that we can interpret 'the sense' of what is said:

63 It seems likely that in the evolution of mankind we have used sounds that contain prosodic elements (like the signals of primates today). Language developed later. Music/song, as for instance the olfactory sense, are pre-verbal 'faculties', which explains the difficulties involved in describing smells and music.

64 Rudi Keller, 'Zeichenbegriff und Metaphern', in Gisela Harras (ed.), *Die Ordnung der Wörter – Kognitive und lexikalische Strukturen* (Berlin, 1995), 179–92; Rudi Keller, *A Theory of Linguistic Signs* (Oxford, 1998).

65 In this context Keller criticizes the so-called cognitive linguistics: 'Cognitively oriented semantic theories contain two fundamental errors: they are, for one, representationally conceived, with all the resulting problems; furthermore, they employ circular arguments. From observations of linguistic circumstances, the existence of corresponding cognitive structures is inferred-structures that are then used to "explain" the observed linguistic circumstances.' (Keller, *A Theory of Linguistic Signs*, 70).

66 Cf. Snyder, *Music and Memory*, 110.

67 Keller is working with the sign concepts symptom (which equals Pierce's index), icon and symbol. When it comes to symptom it is said that this is a sign which lacks an intention 'of its own'; when leafs suddenly rustles an animal may experience this as danger, but that is not the 'intention of the leafs'.

68 Keller, *A Theory of Linguistic Signs*, 95.

> The interpretation of an uttered sentence is like the establishment of truth in a trial based on circumstantial evidence. Meanings are circumstantial evidence provided by speakers to addressees, hopefully enabling them to guess the sense of the utterance on basis of their familiarity with rules of use and their situational or contextual knowledge. 'Meanings' and 'sense' are completely different categories. The sense of an utterance is the objective pursued with its use; the meaning of a word is its rule of use. Knowing to use a hammer would be knowing its meaning. Understanding why someone uses a hammer to pound a nail into a wall would be knowing the sense of using a hammer and the sense of this action.[69]

If we transfer Keller's way of thinking to music, we understand that the possibility of music to function as a means of communication is limited. Music has other functions. One way of breaking up Keller's instrumental approach would be to point out the prosodic character of music and that we have an ability to make cross connections between different areas of experience, what Zbikowski terms 'cross-domain mapping'.[70] He states that we form categories that can be understood pre-verbally. Aided by these we can acquire a larger system of concepts at the same time as we form a dense net of cross modal references by means of metaphors – that music 'moves', feels 'heavy', that a phrase is experienced as 'light-footed', etc. However, the problem, of course, is that the pre-verbal Zbikowski is talking about is described with language in his presentations (as in the presentations of everybody else), which, in my opinion, means that we again end up with Keller if we want to talk about the 'meaning' of music, the 'content' of music, and what music can communicate.

If we want to find musical analogies to Keller's presentation, the thunder from a thunderstorm far off can be heard as a symptom, or a powerful voice can be understood as a symptom of anger (this equals index for Pierce). A descending third with the note values crotchet–minim in the once-accented octave, in a piece called 'Summer Birds' can be perceived as an iconic sign of a cuckoo.[71] But we cannot, as with language, take it one step further and make the interval of a third into a cuckoo-sign. This is done in the language where the word cuckoo is a symbol of the bird. This can be summarized in German, but neither in Swedish nor English: '*Kuckuck* ist ein Symbol gewordenes Ikon eines Symptoms'.[72]

69 Ibid. 115.

70 Zbikowski, *Conceptualizing Music*, 63.

71 The music semiotician Naomi Cummings presents the example that a high-pitched dynamically strong note in a violin piece can be perceived as an iconic sign for help, cf. Naomi Cummings, *The Sonic Self – Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington, 2001), 91. There is a multitude of literature around on this idea, 'from' *topoi* in classical Viennese art music (cf. Leonard Ratner, *Classic music, expression, form and style* (New York, 1980)) 'via' the Wagnerian *Leitmotiv* 'to' gestures in the symphonies of Allan Petterson (cf. Laila Barkefors, *Gallret och stjärnan: Allan Pettersons väg genom Barfotasånger till symfoni* (Diss.; Göteborg, 1995), 366). The idea that onomatopoetic words (icons) are the possibility available to a person to convey information about something goes back to Plato (Keller, 'Zeichenbegriff und Metaphern', 59).

72 Keller, 'Zeichenbegriff und Metaphern', 183.

Of course there is causality in the syntax of the music, a syntax which the individuals of a culture learn, but in the way Keller understands language, both the meaning and sense of a musical gestalt/structure are much weaker. Because of this, a musical symbol in the sense that a specific gestalt/sound structure has acquired a *fixed* denotation does not exist. It is a vain wish to exchange linguistic for musical and to introduce an equally valid theory for musical signs.

Neither does it help to make use of Derryck Cooke's 'terms', Leonard Ratner's *topoi* or Charles Seeger's/Philip Tagg's ideas about a smallest sound structure as the carrier of musical meaning, *museme*, analogous to the smallest unit of significant sound in a language, *phoneme*, as the museme does not work syntactically in the same way as the phoneme. Musemes cannot be separated from each other in the same way as phonemes, and they cannot form words as phonemes do; there are no musical nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. From the outset, the structure of music does not allow for a lexical formation analogous to that in language.

If, however, there is a sufficiently large number of musemes the flow of the music can be semanticized if the context is right, or inversely if the structure of the music has been carefully adapted to the use of the music in a specific context.[73] But even in these special cases music will always have an elasticity of meaning which is far greater than that of language. This always means that the contextual circumstances: where, when, for whom, by whom the music is performed, in what culture and the general position of the music within the culture, is what determines *if* and to what extent the music transmits a semantic content. Use and context are the most prevalent factors for the meaning of music in everyday situations.

Although it is possible to attribute meaning to instrumental music in our culture, this is not something that people in general do or have done in everyday life. They would probably know that a piece should be called a waltz, or in another case perhaps that the melody was called 'Champagne-galop', or know that the title of the piece played by the symphony orchestra was 'Finlandia'. For a majority, however, it is problematic to describe musical experiences in greater detail should they be asked to do so. This means that some people only would be able to say that it was 'beautiful' or that they 'did not like the music', whereas an author interested in music can write a page, and a musicologist an article, an essay, or a book about the same piece. In the latter cases, factors such as a) the degree of general cultural and musicological knowledge the scholar has, b) how close the presented views/results are to those held at the same time within the culture, and c) the (literary) form used in the presentation, are of major importance for how the views/results will be received and how they will affect the receivers.

Although it would be tempting to discuss further this complex of problems, which have kept philosophers, music writers, music aesthetes, and musicologists

73 For a successful study see Philip Tagg, *50 seconds of television music: toward the analysis of affect in popular music* (Diss.; Göteborg, 1979). Also Nicholas Cook clearly shows how music interrelates with and effects the meaning in different multimedia contexts, cf. Nicholas Cook, *Analysing musical multimedia* (Oxford, 1998).

occupied for centuries, I have to leave it here. As the reader now anticipates, in most cases I have a sceptical attitude towards the advanced readings, launched in the past few decades, of what instrumental music tells/means/transmits. My sceptical approach is also due to my opinion that the general idea of our music history is not entirely correct.[74] An exaggerated focus on absolute instrumental music, music which is supposed not to have an underlying programme or title alluding to something extra-musical, has distorted our view of how music has been used by a majority of people. As I have mentioned earlier, song has always been the instrument closest to human beings. Primarily, humans have sung themselves through history, and have, in general, had an idea of what the text of the song was all about. This was equally true for instance during the Age of Enlightenment, the Romantic era, in the nineteenth century and is still the case in our time. When instrumental music was played or heard the pieces often had descriptive titles as 'Träumerei' which – to those who knew the titles – gave the music an extra-musical context, which somehow could be integrated in what was heard. As we know, through history there has often existed an interest in finding out what a piece of instrumental music 'is all about', e.g. a movement with the title 'Sonata quasi una Fantasia'. We do this to 'understand' the music better. Of course, the motive for 'translating' a musical experience to communicate what we have experienced varies according to the situation and our aims. It can be a question of confirming our identity in a group, transmitting knowledge with an educational aim or that we in a scholarly situation want to change the ideological understanding of a piece etc.

Consequently: That people within the same cultural sphere who listen to a piece of instrumental music should be able to describe what the music 'is about'/'expresses'/'describes' with some kind of general agreement is a hermeneutic dream. It is easier to achieve general agreement regarding what the music is not about. Music in our culture has rather a) a rhetorically intensifying, b) an emotional and/or c) limited associative dimension – everything and to what extent depending on the individual, time, place, and the structure/performance of the music. To travesty DeNora, what music communicates could be nothing, anything, or everything. Here, she speaks about 'the work itself'. As the reader anticipates, in a sentence like this there is a polemic against the view of a piece of music as a *Work* i.e. an *aesthetic object*. What this implies in connection with Marschner's criticism will be the task of the next section to explore.

74 Cf. Edström, *En Annan berättelse.*

Marschner and Music

It is now ten years ago since I first read Edward Said's book *Musical Elaborations*. Considering his position and other well-known books, I was surprised by sentences such as:

> Some years ago Adorno wrote a famous and, I think, *correct* account of 'the regression of hearing', in which he emphasized the lack of continuity, concentration, and knowledge in the listeners that has made *real* musical attention more or less impossible.[75]

One important reason for this, according to Said, is due to the fact that so few persons today are *connoisseurs* (Kenner), which means that a majority have a limited knowledge of musical works.

When you read his presentation it is clear that Said had a major knowledge of musicology and in addition – to all appearances – was a good pianist. The entire book testifies a profound and personal love of Western art music. For instance he can explain what a piece by Brahms meant to him in terms that made me hear reminiscences of authors such as Moritz, Tieck, Hoffmann, and others: 'I found myself finally coming to a sort of unstatable, or inexpressible aspect of his music'.[76] He presupposes that the person who listens, plays or think about music can carry these experiences within himself: it is said that you hear 'the music of his music'. On the last pages of the book he returns to his special theme of a particular musical structure 'musical elaborations', the essence of which:

> [c]an be transformed and reflective, that it can occur slowly not only because we affirm and reaffirm its repetition, its meandering course, but also because it too seems to be about the same process, the way for example, there is something both reflective and circular – without regard for impressive development – in the leisurely, majestic unfolding of Bruckner's Ninth Symphony.[77]

For me the underlying important message in Said's book was his ability to substantiate extensive contemporary literary, musical, and cultural knowledge and *at the same time* give evidence of an equally profound understanding of a traditional view, emerging from the Age of Enlightenment, of art's possibility of insight into music's 'own' world, to among other things, what he calls the music's music of Bruckner and Brahms.

Bo Marschner has written a comprehensive account on Bruckner, where he among other things discusses the connections between the development of form and motive in Bruckner's symphonies, something that is also presented against a background of Bruckner's personality.[78] By employing a wide-ranging analysis, Marschner

75 Edward Said, *Musical Elaborations* (New York, 1991), 3.
76 Ibid. 96.
77 Ibid. 102.
78 Bo Marschner, *Zwischen Einfühlung und Abstraktion – Studien zum Problem des symphonischen Typus Anton Bruckners* (Diss.; Aarhus, 2002).

simultaneously points out advantages and disadvantages in the process of studying the music of Bruckner – both as an analyst and a listener – with a structuralist or a phenomenological-hermeneutical disposition. As finally expressed, the experience that the listener eventually retains is mostly an immediate aesthetic experience.

In his inauguratory speech Marschner also dwells on Bruckner and different ways of understanding and analysing music.[79] Initially, it is stated that whether a work is studied from a structuralist or a hermeneutic point of view it is the single works of art that are the central objects of research in aesthetic contexts. The various methodical facets of hermeneutics are discussed and it is stated that an important aim is to find an explanation for 'the context of meaning behind the material and formal whole'.[80] Marschner, nevertheless, points out deficiencies in some hermeneutic approaches, but pleads for an aesthetic hermeneutics where an immediate understanding of the aesthetic work within a human world is the foremost interest. By means of language, the hermeneutic theorist suggests an explanation to the work, based on its specific character with which individuals identify themselves, or as Marschner summarizes it, the hermeneutic work's 'most prominent distinguishing feature: its assimilation with the given object and with the spirit (in the widest sense) which, mysteriously, has given it its special character'.[81]

It was, thus, with this knowledge that I took part of Marschner's contribution at conference of The Swedish Society of Musicology in Gothenburg in May 2003.[82] His aim was to show what musicological research focussing on 'musical aesthetic objects … music as *work*'[83] implies. Based on Dahlhaus it is said that the work has an '"extra" quality, which gives the music a character of something that is distinctly more than a historical source or a document of its time'.[84] Because of this the work is a more important category to study for a musicologist than the surrounding life of the work, 'the social', and consequently Marschner advocates that scholars within the humanities as much as possible should turn their backs on the politico-social views 'dictated' by society. Instead we should use the tools '*value, interest, cogency, and acribi,* in the mentioned order'.[85]

Marschner sees these tools, within a frame of a humanistic research ideal, as suited to music as 'art', contrary to the tradition of 'life' which in Sweden above all has developed at the department of musicology in Gothenburg, 'the home par excellence of the sociomusicological school in Sweden'.[86] For Marschner this form of musicological annexation to the social sciences is not particularly positive. In his article he refers to a short example of this type of research, found in my book *En*

79 Bo Marschner, 'Hermeneutik som musikvidenskabelig kategori' (Hermeneutics as a musicological category), *Cæcilia*, [4] (1995–97), 71–88.
80 Ibid. 76.
81 Ibid. 88.
82 Marschner, '"Værk" og "liv" som (modstridende?) musikvidenskabelige grundlag'.
83 Ibid. 11–12.
84 Ibid. 13.
85 Ibid. 16.
86 Ibid. 17.

Annan berättelse, which he states 'has been the most interesting for me and still at the same time has given me the most doubts'.[87]

Thus, Marschner's aim is to emphasize that it is the task of the musicologist to prove the value of the work of art, a value that otherwise is at risk of not being understood or of being forgotten. Marschner says that '[t]he work is what has been created once and for all', and he adds that the work has something that can be called truth, which can only 'be sought as a complex unity of objective and subjective moments'.[88] Indeed, the field of 'life' too is part of the scholar's task, but Marschner sees this primarily as an 'ideographic perspective'.[89] Because of this, a consistent theme for Marschner is that irrespectively of its age, the work does not lose its meaning and as he writes: 'Art has a – quite singular – significance, and the science of art has as one of its irremissible tasks to interpret this significance from an aesthetic-cognitive point of view'.[90]

In the same way as I supplemented Martin's article with the views of a few other scholars, I will here briefly introduce a recently published Norwegian book called *Musikk og mysterium* (Music and mystery).[91] One of the fourteen authors of the book, the musicologist Erling E. Guldbrandsen contributes with an essay about his experiences listening to Bruckner's Ninth Symphony. This personal attempt to express what this implies is in some respects similar to Marschner's approach to Bruckner's music. Here, as in Marschner, the question is brought up what a sober established line of research cannot determine and what cannot be caught by technical or graphical reductions or 'let itself be fully interpreted in a purely aesthetic understanding'.[92] Guldbrandsen continues:

> It seems to be something *different* that appears, something faceless which moves at the bottom of the sounding experience, something dark and unmentionable which at short moments comes forth through the musical figures.[93]

On the one hand, Guldbrandsen places his own musical experience in a discourse which circles around Bruckner's time and environment. As Marschner, he discusses,

87 Ibid. 21.

88 Ibid. 23.

89 Ibid. Here Marschner refers to his presentation in Marschner, *Zwischen Einfühlung und Abstraktion*, 115–47, where Bruckner's development of form is discussed from the point of view of knowledge abut his personality, Dilthey's hermeneutics as well as Jung's psychological theories regarding introversion and extroversion.

90 Ibid. 16. In a recently published article, Marschner gives evidence – in connection to my article on Brahms' opus 118:1, 'Ett pedagogiskt intermezzo – utkast till en "lecture recital"', *Studia Musicologica Norvegica*, 28 (2002), 38–62 – of what a musicologist can say about music by employing his craftsmanship of music theory, see Bo Marschner, 'Den priviligerede analyse: Nogle reflexioner over ett kritisk tilstand i dagens musikvidenskab', in Alf Björnberg et al. (eds.), *Frispel – Festskrift till Olle Edström* (Göteborg, 2005), 464–75.

91 Erling Guldbrandsen and Øivind Varkøy (eds.), *Musikk og mysterium – fjorten essay om grensesprengende musikalisk erfaring* (Oslo, 2004).

92 Erling Guldbrandsen, 'Bruckners mørke mysterium' (Bruckner's dark mystery), in Guldbrandsen and Varkøy, *Musikk og Mysterium,* 11–39, on 13.

93 Ibid.

among other things, Jung's ideas about the archetypal and how Bruckner created his long developments of form. Guldbrandsen goes on to write that the effect of a specific development of form is purely musically based and affects how we can pinpoint, by means of language, experiences 'which seemingly comes "before language"', and he says that there are 'things that imply that the psychologically unconscious can transcend the shackles of time and space and causality'.[94]

Thus, Guldbrandsen aims to reach further than the available contemporary scientific paradigms allow, and he speaks about the third way of art, that the work of art 'concerns something more than itself, but *this other is maybe only conceivable through the design of the work of art itself*'.[95] The methods consequently, used to varying extent by both Marschner and Guldbrandsen, of psychologizing, analysing, and understanding the works of Bruckner, are mostly within the category described by Goehr as 'transcendentalism and formalism'.[96]

As I have discussed in my book *En Annan berättelse*, the various ways of understanding and using music – which in different ways have been expressed by these scholars – was a socially applied path trod upon from the late eighteenth century by a slowly increasing group of people from the top layers of society.[97]

Those who had access to this newly articulated understanding were people – including those who only listened to music, amateurs who played/sang, music teachers, professional musicians, music writers, etc. – who had acquired a major fascination for music, due to their upbringing and personal involvement. Naturally, the personal practical knowledge as well as the theoretical knowledge of music varied, but these individuals had been socialized into behaviours and opinions of music as an important factor for reaching a fuller inner life. To varying degrees, thoughts of art music as the highest form of music were held, music which could both express the inexpressible but also portray an artist's fixed idea of love to an actress. These groups had read about and discussed art and had realized that the word aesthetic, in different combinations, was part of the discourse through which various types of music was differentiated, and lower forms of music were kept at bay.

This process continued during the twentieth century and for a long time with good speed. However, changes in society and the development of mass media resulted in a gradual slow down of the process, but also that it transformed into new forms leading to new musical aims.[98] As a consequence of this, music is used in many new ways, which has also led to that it has acquired new meanings, that new genres are created in the lime light of contemporary 'commercialism' at a rate and scope that would have been unthinkable only fifty years ago, that it is possible to

94 Ibid. 33, 34.
95 Ibid. 37.
96 Goehr, 'Writing music history', 192.
97 Cf. Edström, *En Annan berättelse*, 136–89, where I have termed these strategies aesthetic II and aesthetic III.
98 Ibid. 191–312.

encounter music from more centuries than before and music from an increasing number of cultures through the Internet etc. One consequence of this for musicology has been that a decreasing number of students have encountered Western art music during their childhood and adolescence. Today, this genre of music, although always briefly introduced along with other genres, is less frequently used in ordinary music lessons in the comprehensive school, and few pupils study music in grammar school. The younger generation seldom listens to 'classical music' (played on Swedish national radio channel 2), and in the Swedish municipal music schools, instead of Gossec's 'Gavotte', tunes from the 'pop-repertoire' is increasingly used as practice pieces even for the pupils who learn to play the violin.

This change has not only affected the younger generation, but also older generations. Today retired persons, too, listen to what was previously called youth music and their use of music has changed as well, although not so fundamentally as for younger people. As a consequence of the same process the previous priority of interpretation, in favour of Western art music, has changed, as well as the view of the value and meaning of this music.

Thus, when I try to evaluate Marschner's critique, I recall the reactions his lecture evoked in the hall filled with about sixty musicologists, as well as the comments that were recently made (March 2005) when his text was brought up at a doctoral seminar at my department. In both cases a majority expressed a lack of understanding of much of Marschner's epistemological approach, which in general was seen as antiquated and too narrowly aimed at the music 'in itself'.

My view, however – which might be a bit unexpected for the reader – is that in general I can both understand and use music in ways similar to Marschner's approach. But – which is evident in my presentations – I rather see it as my main task as a scholar to explain *why and how music was/is used and so was/is understood in the way that I from my position understand what it was/is. And then, the approach, the methods and my conclusions become different*.

Naturally, I see my own and Marscher's (as everybody's) points of view as socially imprinted and know that there is an immense literature which describes a similar attitude towards the view and use of the categories of objects which in the nineteenth century came to be experienced and termed as art, aesthetic objects, etc. In several essays I have tried to describe the social processes in which these views and sometimes beliefs regarding 'the effect of art', 'art's inner life', 'the deeper truths of art', 'true and false art', and so on, became a natural part of life.[99] In general, these and a thousand other verbal expressions, relating to the 'content', 'meaning', and 'importance' of music, how music should be 'understood', etc. have been something that people have experienced as real and true. In the continuously ongoing, more or less obvious transitional period which people probably always live in, there has always been a major agreement among people how reality is experienced.

99 Cf. footnote 2.

As I have argued, the understanding of, what in a middle class culture in the past two centuries was understood as 'aesthetic experiences' was layered over by other aesthetic experiences during the second part of the twentieth century.[100] But that does not change the fact that today there are still many persons who, due to upbringing, education, or ethnic background, will agree with both Said's and Marschner's views of the special functions of Art. But as the reader has already anticipated, I think that the basis for this form of experiences slowly but definitely will decrease. Although I do not agree with Adorno regarding the cause and effect of these changes, I think there is much truth in his assumption that the era of Art music is – maybe not over – but declining.[101]

Because of this, Marschner's study of the works of Bruckner from the point of view that they are aesthetic objects is not problematic to me, if the purpose is to explain why this is/was possible and what it implies. But studies which implicitly insinuate that art music as an aesthetic category is an ahistorical entity with an eternal quality composed into the work, or that there is an actual 'underlying' value or essence or 'even worse' that it, in some respect, has a truth – they even make me worried epistemologically. On the contrary, I am of the opinion that it is equally important to point out why the priority of interpretation which has been prevalent for a long time for this type of view of what should be termed a Work, how the work should be listened to, 'understood', etc., and why the normative claims built into this view to an increasing extent is met with scepticism today.

A further explanation to this reaction is that it occurs in a period when the world of music is more or less totally dominated by vocal music, which means that the traditional tool box of music analysis is opened less often and that the previous habit among musicologists to listen to longer instrumental works in concert halls has become less common. In the long run this change might lead to that it will be increasingly difficult to motivate younger generations to go through the type of learning process necessary to listen and understand, for instance, Bruckner's symphonies in a way similar to that of the relatively small number of persons who lived during his and a few following generations. As I see it, this as an ongoing change. As Norbert Elias has taught us *sociogenesis* and *psychogenesis* are connected.[102] Although I assume that the change of culture, like the change of nature is blind, I will not deny, nevertheless, that it is difficult for me to hold the opinion that it is positive that an increasing number of people probably will not know how to approach the music of Bruckner or Brahms – 'just to sit still and listen to the same music for an hour?!?!?'

Of course, music is not something that exists in itself in a noumenal world, even though it has become possible for human beings during the evolution of mankind to think that it might be like that or is like that. A result of this in my opinion, is that a one-sided concentration on the work 'in itself', as if it existed outside time and space, or for that matter the work/composer 'in themselves' leads to incomplete

100 Cf. Edström, *En Annan berättelse*, 191–297, where I have termed these new aesthetic strategies from the twentieth century aesthetic IV and aesthetic V.

101 Cf. ibid. 201 ff.

102 Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (1939; rev. edn., Oxford, 2000).

descriptions. As everything – from the point of view of our biological predispositions – is socially mediated, the cause of something is just as important as the effect. Because of this I always try to make the user perspective my point of departure and think from the perspective that music has always been used or is used by a group-individual. I remain sceptical to privileged interpretations – grounded in a reading of the music – of what instrumental pieces 'mean' or as a variant of this, that the music is subjectivized, gets a life of its own and can supply societal knowledge. My user perspective could be compared to what DeNora writes on how musical compositions 'come to be *situated* within particular social contexts … a given music's properties may lend themselves to various significances as its situation changes'.[103]

Thus, it is from the viewpoints of what a) situation/time, b) place as well as c) the structure and d) performance of the music that I draw the conclusions I find relevant. One cannot discuss what music means/expresses etc. from a point of view that presupposes a general a-historic form of reception. How music functions and is used i.e. how it is/was listened to – in a concentrated way or hardly heard – depends on these four factors. It is important to understand that none of these factors are fixed but that everything cooperates and is integrated in the whole fabric of society.[104] If there was/is ideas that place the power and meaning of music in 'non-worldly areas' or which are based in beliefs, it is necessary to explain as far as possible, how these beliefs were formed and what function they have for the group-individual. To the greatest possible extent it is also important to pursue a necessary self-reflection. Naturally, this is a challenge, but the possibilities should at least be better if you manage to keep one foot in each camp, one in sociology and one in musicology, which is likely to give an understanding of both a more ideological use of music and a contemporary use. As evident, I find it important that a musicologist can approach the sounding structure of the music and explain what is going on. And, as I mentioned briefly in my introduction it is also necessary to be informed and make use of results from psychology, linguistics, and other disciplines of relevance to musicologists, not the least to put a-historical and a-cultural standpoints behind us.

This is somewhat like finding tenable methods and simultaneously by means of them lifting yourself in your own bootstraps. I refrain, however, from resorting to some kind of transcendental trick to explain what my present methods and ideas cannot clarify. But returning to Elias, it is possible to find a better balance between the two approaches, detachment and involvement, which is significant of all research, and not the least sociology and musicology. As the sociologist Richard Kilminster recently has discussed, there are signs of processes of change within Western societies at large that I find support the possibilities I hope for.[105]

103 DeNora, *After Adorno*, 28.

104 For a detailed sociological analysis of the mechanisms involved in the shaping of a literary field cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art* (Cambridge, 1996).

105 Richard Kilminster, 'From distance to detachment: knowledge and self-knowledge in Elias's theory of involvement and detachment', in Steven Loyal and Stephen Quilley (eds.), *The Sociology of Norbert Elias* (Cambridge, 2004), 25–42.

Fully aware of the danger of trying to look at both sides of a coin at the same time (you then only see the edge) it is a question of changing perspectives. It is my belief that it is possible to do research both as a sociologist and as a musicologist either one studies *jojk* in the seventeenth century, Brahms in the nineteenth century, or popular songs in the twentieth century.

As the title of this article expresses I usually find myself on the move between sociology and aestheticism. Or maybe I should write that I strive for a synthesis and turn out to be located in a position in-between both and at the same time.

Summary

The sociologist Peter Martin and music historian Bo Marschner have recently criticized the modus operandi of the Gothenburg School of Musicology. The former alleges underprivileging sociological aspects in our studies while the latter suggests neglect of the musical work itself.

My critique of these issues is prefaced by my argument that there is much to be learned from research in linguistics and psychology that deals with 'pre-social' and 'biological' prerequisites for music and culture. Then I discuss what is implied when Martin and other contemporary sociologists insist on the importance of the social as the focal point where all other factors – music among them – are brought together. I include in this part a discussion of the advantages of the concept 'affordance'. With Keller's theory of linguistic signs as a point of departure, I explore the ontological status of music and the possibilities of the use of music as a means of communication. I argue that music in our culture has a rhetorically intensifying, emotional and limited associative dimension. Further I consider Marschner's epistemological outlook and views of music as an aesthetic experience, and his critique of my sociomusicological works. His views are supplemented with the views of a few other scholars.

In a concluding discussion I attempt to bridge the gap between a sociological and an aesthetic understanding of music, as both lead to an incomplete understanding of the use of and meaning of music. I argue for an understanding of music from the viewpoints of a) situation/time for, b) place of, c) the structure of, and d) the performance of music. What is important to me is to understand why and how music was used and is used in what ways. It is from a contemporary reflexive position that I argue for an understanding of the ongoing social process.