



Listen !

Antoine Hennion

► To cite this version:

| Antoine Hennion. Listen !. MAIA - Music and Arts in Action, 2008, 1 (1), 10 p. hal-00840062

HAL Id: hal-00840062

<https://minesparis-psl.hal.science/hal-00840062>

Submitted on 1 Jul 2013

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

MAIA | Music & Arts in Action

Listen!

Antoine Hennion

Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation | École des Mines de Paris | France*

ABSTRACT

This article reformulates the sociology of music as an exercise that is not content with merely circling around music, either in order to give it a context or to turn it into a social resource for any kind of claim. By contrast, I examine musical works in terms of what they do and make us do, and to press beyond the ill-conceived dualism posed by disciplines – the all-in-the-work vs. the all-in-the-social. This means aiming for a sociology of art, but now in the ablative sense; in other words, what can sociology do 'from' art, as opposed to what it can do 'with' it (as we would say of something we'd rather do away with...). This project requires a pragmatic turn and an anti-dualist vision. By understanding as part of the same movement both the presence of the world and the presence in the world, the object known and the act of knowing (a point conveyed so well by the notion of 'affordance'), pragmatism leads us to say that the work *is* the list of its occurrences and of its effects. What clearly sets this posture apart from aesthetic essentialism and from sociological reductionism is that, in this position, the object matters a great deal – but an object seen now through the 'feedbacks' and reactions it enables. This reformulated music/sociology involves the co-formation of the work, its frame of appreciation and the sensibility of a listener, leading us away from the sterile oscillation between the meaning contained in the works and the meaning projected arbitrarily onto them.

Translated by Jérôme Hansen, PhD candidate in media and cultural studies and associate tutor in music studies, University of Sussex, UK)

*Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation, Ecole des Mines de Paris, 60 Boulevard Saint Michel, 75272 PARIS Cedex 06, France

LISTEN!

It seems to me there is hardly a more straightforward way to introduce the theme of my contribution on the place of the 'work' of music itself within a sociological analysis than to actually make you listen to one. *Here*, I prepared a small file for you. Now pretend that you are closing your eyes, as if you were in a conference room. I put on the CD, press 'Play', and you listen to a minute of the selected track:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsFPYQkVgZA>

Well, then: what does it do to you?

Let me reassure you: nothing. In most cases, nothing. Even less so in the context of a paper as you were made to imagine, as if I were 'showing' something with the support of a musical example intended to somehow prove what I am saying – according to a classic figure of musicology conferences, in which, after a brief introduction, the speaker then plays an extract, as if it was 'plain to see', as if what he or she had just said was at once shown in the music. But music doesn't show anything. It only has this effect on the speaker. In general, the very opposite occurs: Music brings the commentary to a halt. Silenced by the false evidence of what the music has just shown, the speaker moves on to the next point.

No, what I have offered you was not music, neither was it an argument made 'self-evident' (as we say nowadays to mean 'convincing' – but other synonyms would also borrow from the visual register: 'it's clear', 'at first glance', 'with one's eyes closed', etc. – thereby indicating the completed shift of persuasion from speech to image). On the contrary, what I have shown was the listening experiment itself. The object of my little scenario was not the disc, but rather the strange, artificial nature of the kind of situation I asked you to imagine. 'Listen to this!' But why? with what expectations? what am I supposed to hear?... This experiment in listening, of what it does and more crucially what it *doesn't* bring about, is one I frequently repeat with my students in the seminar entitled 'Loving Music (Aimer la Musique)'.¹ I should point out that its participants form an eclectic mix. Some have a serious musicological or musical background; others are sociologists or historians with a strong knowledge of music, or play instruments themselves while others, and particularly those who come from rock, hip hop, techno and other areas of popular music, have only vague ideas about notes and chords, as well as a limited grasp of other genres.

WHAT DOES IT DO TO YOU?...

At first, the experiment is always very fruitful, since it provides the perfect antidote to this idea that music should invariably 'do' something, just because it does something to *us*. This setting does not replicate a scientific experiment as much as a scene from everyday life, in which we are trying to share something that we love. 'You just have to listen!' In other words, I love this music so much that everyone will see, as I do, how beautiful it is, just by listening to it. Projection of one's own taste, naïve faith in the object's presence – this is all well known. However, far more convincing is to observe this so-called 'blindness' developing in its details, and to then play out its simplistic reductions. After the first listening to the extract I have just played for you, the famous – and fabulous, says my inner music lover – theme of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, one of the seminar's participants, a reggae enthusiast, first

¹ 'Loving Music': Musicology of taste, sociology of music, history of the amateur', seminar coordinated by CSI-EHESS and held since 1997 under various institutional forms. Co-directed with musicologist Joël-Marie Fauquet (CNRS), and later with Geneviève Teil (INRA).

noted, well, ‘nothing’. It is the same blunt expression I had in mind when reminding you that, in most instances, this is exactly what music does to someone who doesn’t know it, i.e. nothing at all. But we are also testing other means of making oneself appreciate music: is it enough to listen to it again?, is it simply a matter of familiarisation? What will become of this first impression after a second or third listen? And what about influences? How will the passionate taste of other listeners sitting right next to us affect our own impressions? Our reggae fan, still equally blunt, notes: ‘the more I listen to it, the less I find it interesting’.

We are not only working on this problem, perhaps too frontally – *I like/ I don’t like* –, but also on issues of perception: what do I hear?, what can I say about it?, what seem to be the characteristics of this music, regardless of my taste for it? Nothing is self-evident on that level either. ‘It sounds like a film score... would be perfect for a costume drama’. More comments, delivered in the prevailing half-hearted tone: ‘it’s the kind of music my parents enjoy’, ‘it’s just notes, well composed, but superfluous... doesn’t touch me at all’. Other participants, more versed in reflexivity, disapprove of the setting of the seminar: ‘I can’t feel anything in these conditions, it’s too sterile; I feel like a schoolchild about to pass an exam’. A musicologist who had failed to identify the piece now feels caught out when I tell him it is Bach. Still, contrary to sociology’s obsession to see taste as the site of endless contests of legitimacy and conformity, this kind of reaction is fairly rare. The opposite is actually more striking: no one feels *compelled* to like anything anymore.

Each successive listen indeed has an effect: it brings closer to the sound, for example of the instrument, of the dynamic, of the playing, as if we were moving from the wider frame to the objects it contains – which points to a potency gained by the presence of the object of listening, but doesn’t bring us closer to the issue of the work itself. To the contrary, this decentring towards a more technical and descriptive posture, that of the would-be expert, in most cases further brackets out the question of ‘what it does to me’, the question of one’s own taste but also that of value (is it great?, is it beautiful?...). No doubt this is partly due to the inhibition caused by the setting of the seminar, as demonstrated *ab absurdum* by the converse example of a participant who, following a sophisticated commentary on the harpsichord, the performance, the theme and the reactions of the audience, lets out – as if by a slip of the tongue, or at least in a noticeably altered tone: ‘Personally, I think it’s sublime!’ In this sudden, very affective utterance, she ends up connecting back together the different levels that the exercise had so far kept separated: I listen, I analyse, I find it beautiful, I explain why; but *also*, on another plane: it touches me deeply, it’s a profound, overwhelming *jouissance*.

Another possible perspective (we usually conceive of the experiment in seminars in terms of a gradual investigation of potential explanations): musical genres. For the majority of participants, classical music is not the reference point, although it is one for education and good taste. Isn’t this unwieldy status in large part responsible for a number of effects, some positive but mostly negative, which the above word ‘inhibition’ conveyed so well – in other words, bringing us back to the infamous issue of legitimacy?

So, let us test another, more intermediary genre. I pause here to give you *another extract*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgS9BxQG5U>

Again, I invite you to please listen to another minute in silence. A bit tensed, constrained, as always in such circumstances. I break the suspense: it was *Koko* by Charlie Parker. Why this choice? To engage in another path, but without directly addressing the kind of music favoured by participants. Certain genres call for a more stirring reaction than others: isn't the indifference with which classical music is met a priori mainly due to the way it has systematically bridled, disciplined and internalised the most basic of corporeal outbursts? I'm not only talking of the dancing element, or the tapping of feet – not so easy on *Koko* either, come to think of it! I mean that in the broader sense of music as the act of performers, whose bodily movements mimetically guide those of the listeners who identify with the saxophonist, the singer, the virtuoso pianist, and act out their gestures mentally in order to produce the music in their own body. Bach was a 'learned musician', as his biographer Wolff puts it (Wolff 2000); he was composing from 'within' an overcoded musical tradition. What here of this compelling expressive impulse, this sort of explosion, this force; what of the eloquence of the sax, its generosity and tonicity?... No? Isn't it 'self-evident', all these things that I hear, as an amateur? Of course not. However familiar to most participants, jazz does not pass the test any more successfully.

'It's too fast, unnecessarily so'; 'it's an avalanche of notes, somewhat hysterical'. Above all, it is also an old-fashioned music, 'we know it', it does not surprise us. It brings back memories, almost the same ones: 'it's like a soundtrack' (although now the scene has shifted from Versailles to 1950's Black America), or 'it's something I remember from when I was young'. Our reggae fan can now flip the argument of familiarity: it's the music of my youth, it's OK, I was born into it, it's a given, let's move on. When the discussion takes off, the participants themselves become aware of this basic mechanism according to which the least a specific music 'works' for us, the more we tend to read it through the signals it sends back to us, so that we take it as a marker standing for a wider environment. If we ask ourselves the question of what it does, a new, more precise theme emerges: about the emotions, the melody, the voice, the body – all crucial in order to 'enter' the music, particularly when we are not so accustomed to it. In that sense, be-bop is as removed from popular music as are classical or contemporary music. Its fast-paced rhythms frustrate these common starting points. To love it, you have to love it... This statement confirmed by the dialogue which soon followed, by one of the rare jazz amateurs: it reminds him of *Cherokee*, the theme that inspired *Koko*, the boppers having doubled its pace to the point where their colleagues, including Coleman Hawkins, had to give up hope of ever following them. That's what *Koko* represents for the fan: it's a whole myth, the foundation of another jazz, a shared history, but one that also tells of the risk of playing to the limit, at the cutting-edge. It is that same tension in the performance which incites the mimesis of the listener – how hard for an amateur not to see herself blowing the horn when she listens to a saxophonist play. *Well, of course!* All this is true, but only amateurs are sensitised to it.

WHAT WORKS DO... IF WE MAKE THEM DO IT

We are now reaching the heart of the issues faced during the collective adventure of this seminar, whose initial project had been to formulate the conditions of possibility for 'another' sociology of music; one that is not content with merely circling around music, either in order to give it a context or to turn it into yet another ruse, a mere pretext for games whose determinations are ultimately social. The aim is exactly the one taken on by this journal: to put the work of music to the test, as Genette would say,² of what it does and makes us do, beyond the ill-conceived dualism posed by

2 who speaks of the work of art [l'oeuvre de l'art] as a means to indicate this pragmatic turn in relation to the work of

disciplines – the all-in-the-work *vs* the all-in-the-social. This means aiming for a sociology *of* art, but now in the ablative sense; in other words, what can sociology do ‘from’ art, as opposed to what it can do ‘with’ it (as we would say of something we’d rather do away with...).

This is where the pragmatic turn comes into play. To put it simply, there are two kinds of sociology: the ones that conceive of actors as *having* resources or *being* determined (on that level, the most positive and the most critical ones resemble each other; they both circumvent the moment of being in the world in order to reduce what is going on to a collection of causes, factors, structures, determinants), and those that believe actors to possess resources only if they make them act as such, so that no determination plays a part without being given a part to play – a point made clearer by the dual meaning of ‘determined’, i.e. to be decided to be or to do what we are or do. To this latter conception, shared by comprehensive sociology and ethnomethodology as regards the ways of doing, pragmatism (at least in the radical form envisioned by William James (James 1996)) adds that the same should also apply for things, these *pragmata* which are never given but make themselves present through the gestures that bring them into being. Pragmatism is first and foremost an anti-dualism. By understanding as part of the same movement both the presence of the world and the presence in the world, the object known and the act of knowing (a point conveyed so well by the notion of ‘affordance’), pragmatism leads us to say that the work *is* the list of its occurrences and of its effects. What clearly sets this posture apart from aesthetic essentialism and from sociological reductionism is that, in this position, the object matters a great deal – but an object seen now through the ‘feedbacks’ and reactions it enables; this hypothesis of a co-formation of the work, its frame of appreciation and the sensibility of a listener, effectively renders null and void the sterile oscillation between the meaning contained in the works and the meaning projected arbitrarily onto them.

If we interpret them again according to the first model (in either the objectivist or critical mode, as they do not diverge in that respect), the persistent failures of our listening sessions should lead us to side with sociologism, since they appear to underline the incapacity of the ‘works in themselves’ to impose their own qualities. Thus, if the reason we love these works does not come from them, it would mean that our taste for them must come from elsewhere – mimetism, codes of identity, conventions of a group, mechanisms of distinction... It’s a short step to the *illusio à la Bourdieu*: since amateurs insist on telling us that the works are beautiful in themselves, then they must be in denial about the reality of what determines their taste. But, now re-read under the light of the second, performative model, the exact same failures tell a completely different story: yes, the works matter, they respond, they do something – if we make them do it; as many amateurs would put it, beautiful things only offer themselves to those who offer themselves to beautiful things. Instead of interpreting this phrase as the disclosure of an arbitrary code to select the right people at the door of a private club, it is much more fruitful to take it absolutely seriously: one does not appreciate music, one makes oneself appreciate it; music is not beautiful, it makes itself beautiful for those who are courting it.³

Said less poetically, the same analysis enables us to interpret in a completely different way the reactions of listeners during the seminar. Far from ‘entering’ or not into the

art [l’oeuvre d’art]. See Genette 1997. In the field of music, see the work of Tia DeNora, in particular *Music in Everyday Life* (2000)

3 For a comprehensive account of the ‘pragmatics of the amateur’, see Hennion 2004 and 2007.

proposed music on a binary mode – *yes/no, I like/I don't like* – they are in fact unpacking the complex variety of supports to which they can normally access in order to perform this work of ‘making themselves appreciate’ a certain music. Impressions, analogies, reminders of a particular mood, memory work with the music being played, take on their acoustic or rhythmic features, parallels with similar genres, active search for emotions previously felt... No binary opposition there, but rather a continuum in tune with the uneven felicity of these endeavours – along with the musical ‘feedbacks’ with which these efforts will be rewarded.

EXPERIMENTAL SESSIONS

The advantage of the retrospective viewpoint I can take on the seminar – some of the listening experiments I have invited you to replicate by means of this online journal – is that it makes it possible to rewrite its history backwards. The point is not to rationalise the past, but to evaluate what has been accomplished so far and, more essentially, to reformulate the key issues, at least as they appear to me today. In hindsight, it seems to me that the main work achieved throughout these sessions has been to operate, together and not entirely without sour notes, this twofold turnaround. First, we moved from a questioning of disciplines and a critique of their existing approaches – so, broadly, from a research on what the available sociological and musicological tools at our disposal enabled us to do with the moving object that is music – to a questioning of what music itself was doing – and so to the pragmatics of music. At the same time, we were shifting our focus from questions of music to those of listening, of the amateur, of taste; not to abandon the issue of the work, but instead to tackle it afresh from an active mode, through what its amateurs do to it and what it does to them. Of course, these two movements were corresponding with one another, the former tracing our evolution in terms of approach, the latter in terms of our object of analysis.

In many ways, these sessions have thus tried to attend to the very act of loving, of listening, of appreciating, through analyses of the modalities of listening. Not the kind of fixed listening, removed from its context, subjected to the sole rule of the works and prisoner of the injunctions imposed by musical and musicological disciplines (as would be the sort of listening encouraged in music theory classes, practiced in ‘commentary on works’ in every music conservatory, or the listening that music psychologists have attempted to measure experimentally). But a listening understood as a performance enacted in situation, a listening that carries with it the weight of its own history, the individual and collective stirring of bodies, the attention which it expects and favours, its own social and technical apparatus; in other words, listening as a collective, historical, and equipped competency leading to a novel disposition, that of the music lover, who in turn has redefined what is music through and through. For the same question could be formulated the other way around: how can historical or sociological analyses integrate music’s characteristics, presence and effects?

The idea could be to start from a corpus of existing situations where music is being played, interpreted, listened to, and to then work reflexively on the ways in which the music-amateur couple unfolds and takes shape. The purpose being that, from looking at concrete case studies, these collective experiments could provide us with a way out of the initial sterile opposition between musical knowledge and social analysis, reduced to act as a secondary frame ‘around’ the work itself or, for lack of having acquired the necessary ‘affordances’, to take a perverse pleasure in saying

nothing of the music.⁴ The subjects of experiment are the listening devices, in the wider sense of that which makes us listen and appreciate, the not so mechanical relationship between the specific qualities of the tasted objects and the effects they procure, and more broadly, the forms and formats of amateurism (particularly through comparisons with other cases, such as cooking, wine or sport). I cannot present the results in the space of this article,⁵ but here are a few of examples that will give an idea of the work achieved as well as the diversity of the objects treated.

We have been listening to and commenting on various interpretations, baroque or traditional, of 18th century music in order to measure the systematic gap between the explicit decisions of performers or the discourses of their sycophants, and what listeners more or less familiar with this repertoire actually perceive in different contexts. From the heyday of the ‘dispute’ over Baroque style (recording of a radio program, newspaper reviews, letters of amateurs) to our seminar room, the pertinent criteria, salient features, and descriptions of what has been perceived hardly fit within the frame of the original dispute over what constitutes the proper Baroque style.

We have been listening to old sound recordings played on a period phonograph,⁶ and, comparing our responses to those of their contemporaneous listeners, were made aware of the extent to which impressions of naturalness or discomfort vary depending on the degree of familiarisation towards distinct technical devices; and, conversely, the extent to which using such atypical device brought to the surface the intense and specific training that each medium imposes on music (extracts, re-orchestration, tempos, choice of instruments and pieces, etc.). The anxious or even enthusiastic responses encountered at the beginning of the session became attenuated when listeners were faced with these antediluvian sounds and gestures effectively helped ‘denaturalising’ those supports.

Together, we have also replicated the kind of commentaries of work assigned to conservatory students for their exams, and compared the copies submitted by the neophyte and the initiated during this exercise in order to test further the idea put forward by Rémy Campos that every exercise is self-fulfilling, itself underscoring in the piece that which it had encouraged the listener to identify in the first place.

With Joël-Marie Fauquet, we travelled back in time to the ‘dispute’ over *Les Indes galantes* when, in 1974, two rival versions of the piece, from J.-F. Paillard and J.-C. Malgoire, had generated heated debates between the ‘Ancients’ and the ‘Moderns’, and so held partly responsible for launching the so-called ‘Baroque war’. We could see that what had appeared at the time to draw a clear-cut opposition between two fractions seems, in retrospect, far less transparent to the ear; today, their common traits, due to their joint grounding in the context of the 1970s, have far supplanted their previously overstated differences – each listener hearing then what their side had told them to hear...

We heard two music lovers talking about their favourite work, in conditions controlled by an observer⁷ and subsequently analysed together the limits and lines of

4 Nathalie Heinich is exemplary of this perspective, when she defends the idea that it is the sociology of art’s prerogative not to talk about the work of art, in the introduction to her *L’Élite Artiste* (2006).

5 In Hennion (2002) you will find a detailed account of three sessions and the collective effort of reflexive analysis to which they have been subjected: the replication of experiments by music psychologist, a comparison between two presentations on hip hop and techno at the BNF (with Morgan Jouvenet), and the description of a home concert of improvised music (from a band whose members include Olivier Roueff, a participant in the seminar).

6 Session conducted by Sophie Maisonneuve (2001)

7 Maylis Dupont, who has since then defended her thesis, ‘Penser la valeur de l’oeuvre’, at the University of Lille.

force in these situated commentaries over one's taste, the resources mobilised for this exercise, the tension between the duration of the work played and that of the amateur's commentary track running alongside it, the range of supports that enable such speech to take place, built as it is on capacity to mobilise and evoke other listeners' voices (the amateurs' and the audience's) as a means to inscribe the work in its history – and, reciprocally, to inscribe oneself through it.

Four of our participants were given the opportunity to play the role of experts for the Parisian public transportation company (RATP) to advise on the kind of background music that should be played in the underground, train stations, carriages, aisles, etc., with the intention to spark inevitable debates around the use of Muzak, but also to throw them off-balance by asking each of them to recall and elaborate on specific instances (and their accompanying reactions) of being confronted with a type of music to which we are normally asked *not* to pay attention.⁸

Other themes of research have included youth radio listening activities in adolescents' bedrooms⁹ and the 'co-production' of music by the public in a jazz club (Roueff 2002), not just in the sense of the support that audiences gives to the musicians in the moment of performance, but also through the endless trials of the sharing of tastes, as re-presented in the form of the many *improvs* – we play at playing what we play; on the ways of characterising the latest musical genres that have yet to be defined, and on the active role of this activity of categorisation; on the vocal *provocations* in hip hop music;¹⁰ on private concerts and the codes of excellence and improvisation in Egypt, with Jean Lambert; on the different kinds of 'hits' at different periods of time; on the history of listening and of the associations of amateurs in the 19th century, with both Jann Pasler and Bill Weber; several other sessions were devoted to comparisons with gustatory tastes (e.g. oenological discourse, or the taste of morels with Pierre Floux). In later seminars, we will be tackling the following: the various scenes of the 'making love' – these more or less successful practices through which amateurs try to share their own tastes with others; the exchange of impressions at the end of concerts; the 'non-taste' and distaste; the amateurs who recompose their communities through internet; an analysis of the experiments designed by a music psychologist, in order to compare the results with a pragmatic analysis of what the experiments themselves reveal...

CONCLUSION: THE PERFORMATIVE CHARACTER OF THEORIES OF TASTE

To put it differently, it is necessary to reinstate the activity of taste with its productive or, to use the more precise English term, its 'performative' character, instead of taking it as a 'given' (Austin 1975). To say that we love – and what we love, how we love, why, etc. – is already to love, and vice versa; hence the active role of the indigenous theories of taste mobilised by the amateurs themselves. To 'taste' does not mean to signify one's own social identity, to wear a badge of allegiance to this or that role, to obey a ritual, or read passively and according to one's competencies the properties already 'contained' within a product. It is a 'performance': it acts, it engages, it transforms and makes one sensitised. In this event, or this becoming, if music counts, it will end up indefinitely transformed through the contact with its public, because it depends on, and is ultimately undistinguishable from, the chain of its modes of execution and appreciation, and of our training to attend to it as such.

8 Vincent Rouzé, author of a thesis on this topic, had organised this memorable session.

9 With Hervé Glévaec, based at the CLERSE in Lille.

10 With Anthony Pecqueux's discussion of the French rap group Sniper.

This is the reason why the relationship between the amateurs and the theories of taste need to be reassessed: the analysis itself forms part of this wider process of collective production. Far from proposing a wide-ranging analysis of taste, the various disciplines fighting each other to impose their own definition have never done more than instrumentalising and elaborating on various aspects of taste. Yet, after this initial phase begins the quite bizarre game whereas they each arbitrarily pick one of those aspects, set it apart, craft it into some higher form of knowledge out of the reach of mere actors, to finally turn it back on them in the form of a determinism acting upon these actors without their knowing (the same applies, to speak only of the two dominant positions, whether taste is reduced to the social games of identity/difference, or to the proprieties of the object, determining but always masked or misperceived due to the added distorting effects of insufficient trainings, the vested interests of intermediaries and commerce, or culture and prejudices). Instead of letting them struggle for the privilege of accounting for an object surrendered to their competitive claims, we need to return these theories back to their performative position by re-localising, recomposing and giving them back to the actors themselves – for it is the amateurs who, collectively, and supported by a multitude of perpetually changing dispositifs, never cease to compose their competencies for tasting, their *savoir-goûter*, by putting together a local sociology, a test on the effects of the object, a situated physiology of their own sensations, and all the highly regulated spatial, temporal and instrumental dispositions of their act of tasting. Instead of extracting such and such dimension of their own work to make it into an external and explicative variable, it is crucial to try to reassemble the kind of composed theories that are much closer to them, and doing so by ‘accompanying’ (in the old sense of the method) this productive work everywhere it gathers its resources.

Put simply, the shift in our approach also implies a profound reconsideration of the status of theories; to say it, again, in a slightly caricatured way, they have so far been little more than excessive, purified and competitive rationalisations of a partial knowledge exercised in situation. The true object of theory should thus be the reflexive description of the many ways in which this assemblage of heterogeneous skills affects the pragmatic formation of taste – as opposed to the critical reduction of existing tastes through their subjection to a purified interpretation. Whether we talk about the tasted objects and their qualities, the collectives of amateurs, the body engaged in this trial and its capabilities, the techniques developed and the materials to be gathered, all these components come into being, reveal themselves in the moment of their production. They appear, in unstable and changeable ways, and find their consistency in situation; they are being scrutinised, questioned, put to the test and redefined reflexively – this is precisely the object of performance, of savouring, of pleasure. It requires a ‘holding together’ (this could involve physical contact, as if often the case, but also the more indirect support of communities, traditions, narratives and texts, or the taste of others); it requires a training of faculties and perceptions (both individual and collective); it requires habits and ways of doing, access to a repertoire, systems of classification and a host of other techniques that will make the differences in the objects speak; finally, it requires a conscious effort of attending to a body that makes itself sensitised to these differences, and will not only teach itself, but also invents itself and take shape in this process.

None of this is given in advance, which is why taste is always a test. It is not about appreciating based upon what we know, but about discovering oneself an amateur through practiced and repeated contacts with something that, until then, was not

perceived, and, thanks to this elaboration (but first of all thanks to this first encounter for which other amateurs so often act as mediators), to eventually make oneself sensitised to things. We have now come full circle, in this conclusion, and came back to our initial montage, on what music does – or what music doesn't do, 'just like that', by listening to it, to those who do nothing to it, and vice versa. There is neither 'self-evidence' nor impotence on the part of the work itself. It is simply because it does not 'contain' its effects – a point well established by aesthetics: taste reveals itself precisely from the uncertainty, variation and deepening of the effects of a work, effects that do not belong solely to it but also to its moments, its unfolding, its circumstances. This brings us back to the idea of performativity, the resources we give ourselves in order to grasp the object, to equip our listening (in the case of music) are part of the effects it produces. It is in this sense that we can claim that music lovers have written the history of music, as much as the history of music has produced its amateurs. They have composed each other. Without common history, music is nothing. It does nothing to those who make nothing of it.

REFERENCES

- Austin, J. L. ([1962] 1975) *How to Do Things With Words*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge.
- DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Genette, G. (1997) *The Work of Art: Immanence and Transcendence*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian, Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London.
- Heinich, N., *L'Élite Artiste*, Paris, Gallimard, 2006.
- Hennion A. (2004) 'Pragmatics of taste', in *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Culture*, M. Jacobs, N. Hanrahan Eds., Oxford UK/Malden MA, Blackwell;: 131-144
- Hennion, A. (2002) 'L'Écoute à la Question', *Revue Française de Musicologie*, 88(1): 95-149
- Hennion, A. (2007) 'Those Things That Hold Us Together: Taste and Sociology', *Cultural Sociology*, 1(1): 97-114.
- James, W. ([1912]1996) *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, University of Nebraska Press: Lincoln.
- Maisonneuve, S., 'Between history and commodity: The production of a musical patrimony through the record in the 1920-1930s', *Poetics*, 2 (2001), 89-108
- Roueff, O., (2002) 'Faire le Jazz: la co-production de l'expérience esthétique dans un jazz-club', *Revue Française de Musicologie*, 88(1): 67-93.
- Wolff, C. (2000) *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Learned Musician*, Norton: New York.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antoine Hennion is Professor and Research Director at the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation, École des Mines, Paris. His research in the sociology of music and culture focuses on the cultural industries, advertising and design, mediators, services and users. He is currently working on a comparative analysis of various forms of attachment, through a study of amateurs. He is author of numerous articles on music, mediation, education, taste and advertising. His books include *La passion musicale* (Métailié, 2007), *La grandeur de Bach. L'amour de la musique en France au XIXe siècle* (with J. M. Fauquet, Fayard, 2000) and *Comment la musique vient aux enfants. Une anthropologie de l'enseignement musical* (Anthropos, 1988).