

Should Music be Political? The Role of Music in Communicating Political Ideology

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Abstract

The topic of music and politics is frequently explored by scholars due to the significance of music to the society. Individuals listen to music contemporaneously, consuming the music on a day-to-day basis through purchasing of records, watching films, listening to the radio, advertisements and television (Street, 2013).

Keywords

Social culture; Musical Communication; Protest music; Politics; Revolutionary music.

1. Introduction

Hebertand Kertz-Welzel (2012) state that musicians have the potential to a significance influence on the society, whether it is in creating a new genre of music, new fashions or influencing something as crucial as political ideologies. However, music is sometimes considered as just commercial must with minimal or no artistic credibility, although it is difficult to argue that music has no significance role in the society instead of something, which is just enjoyed for pleasure. Accordingly, people who have been exposed to music have been subconsciously been affected by the music, whether the specific music reinforced capitalist ideologies or urged the individual to take a more radicalised approach. For instance, Firth (2004) emphasises on the significance of popular music indicating that it utilises emotional capabilities that have a bigger impact on its listeners. Music serves as a medium that is consumed by many different people, where these individuals can comprehend complex ideas since it is accessible to the mass. Gwmaher(2012) also indicate that music play a significance role in the society especially in political movements giving examples of New Labour and Tony Blair's use of Brit-Pop during the time of their campaign.

This report traces musical experience and theoretical struggles that are within political ideologies from Gramsci's work of counter-hegemonic struggles to the postmodern struggles of present day that relates to the theory of Hardt and Negri as well as analysis of music communication through aesthetic theory. As will be illustrated, the ability of music to affect people's feelings and emotions allows the music to intensify the political ideologies, which inspires the music audience to becomes part of the political ideologies, whether its supporting a political movement or starting an autonomous movement. Music and politics share a unique relationship. Music plays a crucial role in the communication of political ideology making it one of the facilitating factors of politics in a nation.

2. Nature of Musical Communication

In this section, the nature of musical communication and how it relates to the framework of thought, behaviour and feeling will be discussed. This discussion will elucidate on how music is able to facilitate communication.

Music is considered to be a very powerful tool of communication since it offers the means by which people can share their intentions, emotions and meanings even through these individual's languages may be mutually not understandable. Music also offers a crucial lifeline when it comes to human interaction since it exert strong physical effects and create profound and deep emotions within people (Pieschl&Fegers, 2015). Communication through music brings about thought, which creates feelings leading to certain behaviours. Often musical communication is associated with a location or a place (Greitemeyer, 2011). For example, a certain piece of music usually brings certain memories, where individuals recall the place they first heard the song, the people they were with, what they were doing as well as the mood that the piece of music brought in. As such, music creating good memories, thoughts, contributes to feelings of a good mood or happiness, which may result to positive behaviour by the individual and vice versa.

Most researchers agree that different situations are very significant determinants when it comes to thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Human behaviour is not simply written into the human DNA but it is determined by various situational factors such as incentives, provocation and other cues (Coyne& Padilla-Walker, 2015). In case of musical communication, a certain piece of music may play at a bad time or convey the wrong message at the wrong time, which may provoke the human behaviour to aggression. In such a situation the thoughts and the feelings triggered might not be pleasant leading to a negative outcome. Overall research shows that music communication has both positive and negative influences (Greitemeyer, 2011; Pieschl&Fegers, 2015; Coyne& Padilla-Walker, 2015). Among the negative influences, Pieschl and Fegers (2015); Coyneand Padilla-Walker (2015) indicates that it contributes to aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviours. On the other hand, Greitemeyer (2011) indicate that positive influences of musical communication contribute to decreasing aggressive cognitions, behaviour and affect. As such a situation of a piece of music communicating violent music may contribute to aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

A good example is given by the Catalyst Model by Ferguson et al. (2008), where the researchers in the development of the model indicate that music can act as a catalyst, which influences certain behaviour as a result of let say violent music leading to violent behaviour. While the Catalyst Music present music communication as a catalyst that influences certain behaviour, the General Aggression Model (GAM) by Anderson & Bushman (2002) indicate that music communication contributes to certain situational factors that influences cognition affect and arousal that contributes to engaging in certain behaviours. However, the Catalyst Model ignores a person's free-will of making a decision in choosing their behaviour, which presents a flaw to the model since just because a certain catalysts such as music communicates violent behaviour it does not necessary mean that the individual is going to engage in the violent behaviour (Ferguson et al., 2008). People's personal features that entail personality, self-concept and genetic predispositions should be considered in determining how a certain situation such as presented by music counts in determining their behaviours.

3. Impact of Protest Music

Protest music, which represents much of the vibrant society, is still relatively unknown following the limited literature on the subject. The neglect of this genre has led to stereotypic behaviour among which form the standardized structures or features of protest music. Protest music can be folk, classical or commercial in terms of genre and is associated with a movement of change mostly social change and also forms part of music that is connected to the current events (Ingram, 2008). Protests songs over the years have been associated by several social movements such as women's suffrage movement, abolition movement, labour and human rights movement, anti-war, feminism, civil rights, and recent movements such as gay rights,

veganism, environmental sustainability and gun control (Lebrun, 2016). These types of music are usually situational since they are associated with a certain social event or movement. Protest music may have crucial cognitive context since the message communicates a deeper meaning that is supposed to provoke a movement.

Protest music has great significant influence on civil and social change (Peddie, 2017). These protest music have been taken to an extent where people have been seriously injured or died. Nevertheless, in 1960's, America was experiencing a social turmoil from the Vietnam war to the civil rights movement and as a result it saw a form of art known as protest music that contributed to civil and social changes that has shaped America to what it is today (Ingram, 2008). The protest music encouraged union organizers to protest against inequalities there were experiencing as well as a movement towards the end of the Vietnam War. Clearly, protest music plays a crucial part in influencing civil and social change.

Political ideologies and decisions inevitably contribute to opposition. There are numerous channels of expression where individuals can express their discontent with a certain particular events. The urge of the people to foster extensive dissemination of their voice has contributed to various social critics to include protest music in their political campaigns so as to ensure that they are able to publicize the imperfections of the status quo that are perceived (Peddie, 2017). While researchers have diverted their attention to the research of various types of political expression, the comprehension of the influences of protest music remains limited. In terms of how protest music impact political ideologies, it should be viewed as a form of political persuasion since one of the role of protest music is to attempt to create outside support regarding the critical views they put forward. When it comes to political persuasion, protest music induces sympathetic reactions to the audience, which forces them to react based on the views of the music. However, Lebrun (2016) observes that political persuasion provided by protest songs rarely lead to positive responses, which limits their use in successful campaigns since they mostly contribute to negative attitude change to the listeners.

4. Music and Politics

4.1. Patriotic Music

Patriotic music forms a part of the culture and history of a nation and is responsible for encouraging feelings of honour. Patriotic music carry and pass on identity and values of individuals that signify as well as remind them of the significance of their independence as well as the shared bond between citizens of the same country (Thram, 2006). It signifies how a person identifies with their country of origin and the values that guide them towards having a social integration that leads the country. Music has often been used to unite people from different backgrounds. In addition, music connects people while ensuring that it provides confidence to people as well as motivation and a sense of belonging. Thus, musicians often consider combining national identity with collective memory as a symbol of patriotism. The national identity of a nation is often represented by songs. Music is viewed as the strongest expression of culture and national pride.

Sir Edward Elgar composed different songs which symbolised nationalism in England. For example, the 'land of hope and glory' defines what it means to be an Englishman thereby representing attributes of patriotism (Champ, 2010). However, Sir Edward was criticised for representing British jingoism and imperial pride at a time when colonialism had affected most parts of the world. In essence, in the 19th and early 20th century, a need arose on the role of defining nations based on their culture, values, and national pride (Riley, 2007). Elgar performed lyrics of 'land of hope and glory' to represent the pride of being an Englishman while also distinguishing England from the rest of the world (Thompson, 2007). The growing need to define what English is as different from Scottish and Welsh emerged through music. Another

example relates to 'nimrod' out of the Enigma variations as composed by Elgar. The soundtrack of Nimrod has been used by the conservative party in England for political grounds. The fact that the sound track of a song can be used by a political party demonstrates high levels of patriotism linked by Elgar and his lyrics in songs. In a different perspective, being a patriot is often viewed as racist. Critics of Sir Edward Elgar believed that his patriotic songs championing for English were deemed to be racist (Freymann-weyr, 2007). A major assumption is that Elgar represented the ideals of the society in the 19th and 20th century whereby there was growing need to define nationalism at a time when colonialism affected the world. Pride in a country should never be viewed as racism (Adams, 2011). Despite the need for national pride in his country, Elgar also condemned injustices and violence that affected the world during the First World War, as reflected in the lyrics of 'land of hope and glory'.

The significance of a nation is also manifested in the music of Vaughan Williams. Loyalty and devotion to a nation are part of ideologies represented in nationalism. In essence, a citizen develops a sense of national consciousness so that a nation is exalted above all others. Nationalists also place importance on culture and interests of a nation without regard to supranational groups and other nations (Patel & Daniele, 2003). Vaughan Williams music is viewed to be characteristically English based on the need to present folk tunes. In addition, Vaughan Williams composed music with a deepen sense of patriotism for England and giving a feeling to ancient lands. In 1904, Vaughan Williams discovered English folk songs which were deemed to be extinct after being overtaken by oral tradition and increase in printed music (Depalle, Davidson, & Denora, 2004). The preservation of English folk songs makes Vaughan Williams a nationalist and a patriotic citizen committed to the preservation of culture. Several folk songs were incorporated into the songs of Vaughan Williams thereby representing a close connection with the English culture and traditions (Onderdonk, 1999). For example, the 'Norfolk Rhapsodies' reflected the ability of Vaughan Williams to assimilate English folk songs into a distinctive melody and harmonic style.

Nationalist refers to the consciousness of the distinctive features of a nation. As a result, musicians developed and intent to reveal, emphasize and glorify features of a nation. The need for nationalism was prominent in the romantic music, especially in the social and political developments of societies. Romantic composers in western countries such and England were concerned with lyrics that conveyed explicit theme (Sullivan, 2013). In addition, instrumental music also borrowed from romantic attraction by the need to identify with a nation. Richard Strauss is an example of a nationalist who used music to present his viewed about the German society. Tone poems such as the 'don Juan 1888' and 'symphonia domestica (domestic symphony) 1903' presented Richard Strauss as a successful musicians of the time (Griffiths, 1999). The large part of Strauss musical career developed under the need for nationalism as well as political unrest that affected Europe. Strauss in his music embraced the sentiment of German national pride and their superiority over industrial power in Europe. The music compositional style of Strauss is viewed to be empowering self-confidence so that there is a feeling of belonging to a superior German group. For example, the music "Ein Heldenleben (A hero's life) 1898, demonstrates high levels of self-confidence exhibited by Strauss in relation to the German society (Sullivan, 2013). During the time of Strauss, Hitler as part of Nazi Germany has inflicted terror on the Jews. Thus, the music of Strauss was viewed to be confirming to the nationalistic ideals of Hitler and the Nazi Germany (Sullivan, 2013). In addition, "A hero's life" as developed by Strauss is viewed as sympathizing with the Nazi. Sympathy for Hitler and the Nazi administration shows the increased need to use music to champion for political causes in the society at a time when nationalism and political instability affected Europe. Apart from the need to conform to the demand of the Nazi administration, Strauss also exhibited some level of German nationalism and the need to promote the German culture. The need to be involved in social and political affairs can be identified in the music of Strauss.

At the end of World War I when Germany was defeated, Strauss continued with a strong devotion for German nationalism and respect for German culture. In particular, Strauss continued to focus on the arts while discussing the administration of culture by the Weimer Republic (Sullivan, 2013). The development of music under the Weimer republic from 1919 to 1933 is viewed as entirely positive towards defining German nationalism and culture (Taruskin, 2006). Major developments in the period involved the introduction of 12-tone composition, experimentation with jazz, as well as instruction of music theatre. After World War I, the struggles of Germany based on the conditions placed by Treaty of Versailles, musicians such as Strauss were influence by social and political unrest which contributed to cultural attitudes (Sullivan, 2013). The musical compositions of Strauss are said to have been influence by extremist views of the Nazi party to respect conservative and traditional cultural ideals promoting German romanticism while denouncing foreign influences. Kennedy (2006) argues that Richard Strauss was part of the Romantic genre of music which focused on the return to traditional German music. In essence, Strauss used music to champion for German nationalism and culture at a time when Germany experienced several political challenges such as defeat in the World War I and the need to define German nationalism.

4.2. Revolutionary Music

They are political songs that praise or advocate for revolutions to boost morale or to enhance political agitation or propaganda. Music serves a critical role in revolutionary politics. In most cases, music is used to serve those in power or rebel against oppressors in a society (Sheinberg, 2017). A major attribute of music relates to its irresistibility and ability to influence the ideas of the public. Therefore, music is used by several political players to promote their ideas and beliefs. For example, national anthems are key examples of how music promotes nationalism. Furthermore, war times in different nations have also been defined by music. For example, music is often used to raise support for troops in war as reflected in the American fight in WW2. Apart from the United States, the soviet government have also used songs to entertain the military for the purposes of enhancing morale (Reichardt, 2017). Music is also used against governments, especially when the need for revolutions arises against an oppressive government. A major advantage of music during revolutions is that it creates a bond between people while fostering unity. In most cases, music is used as a voice of resistance.

During the years of Russian revolution, music played an important role in giving a voice to the people. Dimitri Shostakovich used music to give voice to the sufferings and triumphs of the soviet people in the 20th century. In particular, Shostakovich used music to express the horrors and inspiring events of the society in the 20th century (Shuttleworth, 2017). Within the Russian society, Shostakovich believed in the need for socialism as an ideology to make Russia a better world. In one of the quotes, Shostakovich says that "I am a soviet composer, and I see our epoch as something heroic, I consider that any artist who isolates himself from the world is doomed" (Shuttleworth, 2017). Shostakovich wrote several symphonies to fight against oppression of the Russian people during the real of Stalin. In 1927, Shostakovich wrote a symphony known as "to October" reflecting the struggles of the Russian people during the October revolution. In essence, Shostakovich uses music to set out to ingratiate himself to the soviet authorities. Furthermore, Shostakovich composed satirical works such as "antiformalisticheskii Rayok" which focused on attacking soviet positions on the arts (Woods, 2006). Therefore, music was majorly used by Shostakovich to present disaffection with the Stalinist regime as well as the soviet rule as whole which had inflicted horrors on the society.

Shostakovich is viewed as the champion of revolution in the Soviet Union. In particular, Shostakovich remained faithful to socialism as well as October revolution. In addition, Shostakovich detested Stalin and the bureaucracy that affected Russians in the 20th century (Woods, 2006). All the suffering of the people of Soviet Union were covered and expressed in

Shostakovich's music. As a result, the last three symphonies of Shostakovich have been viewed as music championing for the liberation of the soviet people (Shuttleworth, 2017). Revolutionary politics focused on the need for change in the society so that current norms can be replaced. In the process of looking for change in the Soviet Union, Shostakovich effectively used music to capture the suffering of the people while motivating the society to stand together and fight against an oppressive system.

5. Music and Religious Ideologies

The relationship between music and religion is complex and diverse. Within religions of the world, music is viewed as the voice of gods as well as devils. In essence, music is the most pure form of spirituality while it has also been condemned since it can be used to portray evil aspects of the society (Greitemeyer, 2011). In religion, music promotes an aspect of worship while separating secular and religious music. In most cases, music has a positive or negative value reflected in the religious sphere. However, after the emergence of industrial revolution in western world, music was reduced to the realms of art and entertainment, and occasional use within religious settings. Within religion, music is often isolated within sanctuary walls. Religious behaviour is often articulated within religious music (Kerman, 2000). Furthermore, religious music defines the morals and ideals of the society as well as figures viewed as gods to be worshiped and respected within the society. In most cases, religious music signifies the traditions of a society in relation to religion. Furthermore, music is the main medium of contact with the spiritual world. The world's major religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism use music for religious observances while respecting the spiritual world.

Religious music has values, forms, and users which are diverse and depend on specific cultures based on religious traditions that govern the development of religious music. In Christianity, liturgical music is based in European traditions while Hindu religious music is largely based on Indian tradition (Hebert and Kertz-Welzel, 2012). A major assumption is that religious music is a reflection of the religious traditions of a society. Sounds, forms, and instruments within a particular society are often used to compose music while also contributing greatly to the musical life of different religions and regions of the world. Music can also transcend cultural limits. For instance, secular music can transcend different cultures of the world.

The use of music to present religious ideologies is manifested in the works of William Byrd. Byrd is considered as Queen Elizabeth's favourite composer. In particular, Byrd is a catholic who wrote music for catholic worshippers. Even Queen Elizabeth and other protestant contemporaries could not resist the musical genius of Byrd (Kerman, 2000). In essence, Byrd used music to respect the traditions of the United Kingdom in relation to the Queen and the royal family while also establishing a connection between the British people and religious music. Even other religious groups such as Protestants found solace in the catholic music developed by Byrd (Kerman, 2009). Therefore, it is evident that music transcends across traditions of a society despite differences in religious affiliations.

Byrd was born in 1540, a volatile time in the history of the English people. During this period, King Henry VIII engaged in dismantling of monasteries and convents (Kerman, 2009). In essence, libraries in monasteries were looted and religious books used for scrap paper, some paper found their way in toilets. Furthermore, there was also a negative attitude toward ancient liturgies and music of the Catholic Church. King Henry VIII also banned Latin mass, replacing them with English service. Byrd emerged as a musician committed to the restoration of the catholic worship process (Kerman, 2000). For example, Byrd developed English carol dedicated to Queen Elizabeth. In essence, Byrd used music to convince the society that religious music is not only for Catholics but the rest of the society. The use of Byrd's catholic music by Protestants is a clear indication that worship music is not only for certain religious sects but the whole

society based on their traditions. Byrd also used music to show the society that devotion to religious music should be viewed separately from one's personal life. Despite criticism of living two lives, Byrd managed to convince the society that religious music should not be used to target composers deemed to be against the ideas of Catholicism.

6. Conclusions

Music plays a role in communicating political ideologies such as patriotism, nationalism, revolutionary politics, and religious ideologies. Sir Edward Elgar is an example of how music can be used to explore nationalism in the case of England. The 'land of hope and glory' defines what it means to be an Englishman thereby representing attributes of patriotism at a time when the rest of the world was affected by colonialism, racism, and the need to define national identities. Loyalty and devotion to a nation are also evident in the music of Vaughan Williams viewed to be characteristically English based on the need to present English folk tunes. The preservation of English folk songs makes Vaughan Williams a nationalist and a patriotic citizen committed to the preservation of culture. In revolutionary politics, music is used to serve those in power or rebel against oppressors in a society. A major attribute of music relates to its irresistibility and ability to influence the ideas of the public. Dimitri Shostakovich used music symphony to capture the suffering of the people while encoring a common cause towards removal of Lenin from soviet rule during the Russian Revolution of 20th century. In terms of religion, music plays an important role in representing the religious traditions of a nation in relation to their gods as well as political figures. In the case of William Byrd, music was used to present the ideals of Catholics as well as music that appeal to Protestants.

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