

Music Perception

The Public – Effective Communication in Music Management

Asst. Prof. Dr. Mihaela Oana Balan

Academy of Music “Gheorghe Dima” Cluj-Napoca
oana.balan@amgd.ro

Abstract. From the perspective of information theory, communication is a process of sending a message (verbal or written text, sign, symbolic gesture etc.) from one source to another, using a certain language (code) and a channel/ medium. Roman Jakobson¹ divided verbal communication into six constitutive parameters to which he assigned distinct functions: transmitter, receiver, message, context, code, contact. To them were added a number of expressions such as sensibility, conation, poetic expression, referential, metalinguistic and phatic communication.

Keywords. communication, music, management, public

1 Methodology - communication concepts

Actions of communication existed since prehistoric times. Communication is a dynamic, transformational phenomenon, and is currently present in all relations between people and / or institutions. Paul Watzlawick defines communication as a “*conditio sine qua non* of human life and social order”[1]. The same author identifies communication as a form of human behaviour. Other scholars consider that the term “interaction” would be closer to the idea of communication [2]. The German sociologist Michael Kunczik offers a more complex profile of the communication concept, dividing it into three subcategories:

1. The first definition is **unidirectional**, the message is issued by an individual X trying to communicate with an individual Y, irrespective if the second receives, decodes and reacts to the expected level. Kunczik considers that for the individual X the communication process is realized completely, even if one can not speak about reciprocity.
2. Intrapersonal communication in which an individual interacts with himself, from the superior psychic level up to unconscious neuro-vegetative reactions.
3. The third definition is in fact a characterization of **interpersonal** communication, in which the message to be sent is placed in the foreground. According to this de-

¹ 1896-1982, Russian-born American linguist, pioneer of the structural analysis of language.

scription, without a correct feedback from the receiver the communication process can not be complete. Since the field on which we try to relate the concepts of communication often employs subjective analyses, we shall return to the *meta-communication* axiom developed by Watzlawich that we accept as valid for our study. According to his assertions, any observer should exclude the possibility of “non-communication” as each manifestation of a phenomenon, human or physical (such as verbalization, silence / pause / hesitation, gestures, paralinguistic messages, etc.) are valid information on the material taken for analysis. Consequently our task will be to identify the forms of communication, based on musical ideas and passing to the more concrete area pertaining to communication in institutions of music and communication actions to support the promotion of artistic events (music marketing).

At the same time we also adopt the socio-cultural model and the definitions offered by psychologist Abraham Moles² to analyze communication strategies throughout history in music. According to him, “communication is the act which makes an individual I, located in an era in a certain place, to acquire experience regarding ambiance dates and events of another individual or system E, using mutual elements of knowledge.” Transposed in our study, the “individual I” will be the equivalent of the receiver, “system E” will be the transmitter and “mutual knowledge elements” will be the messages, which in our case are identified in the musical materials.

We will employ a number of “permutable actors” who can swap, depending on the context, the roles of transmitter and receiver. To clarify from the outset what are the categories on which we focus, we will list them chronologically, highlighting in brief the importance they had throughout music history.

The trinomial composer-performer-audience in musical communication

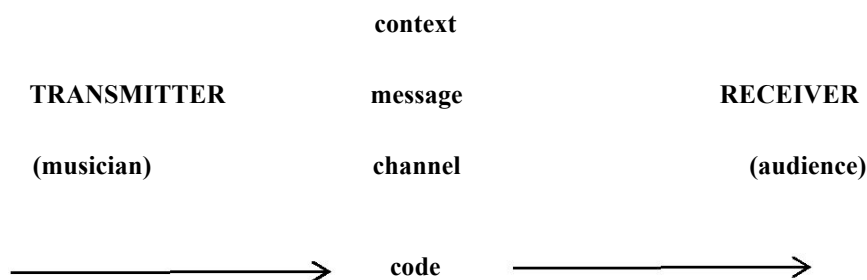
The relationship between the creative, artistic product and the musical public denotes a relatively recent concern. It seems strange that at least until the second half of the 20th century theorists have not felt the need to study to what extent the musical creation satisfies the need of the listeners: “(such a relationship) did not need to be taken into account as long as the creator and the audience member were integrated in the same layer of culture, strongly homogeneous. (...) We hesitate to equate the audience nowadays with the groups that frequented places where music was performed several centuries ago: courts, church, occasional gatherings. Music was at that time a ritual tool or at least had a circumstantial nature.”

With the advent of tickets to concerts and the marketing of artistic events, the audience has become an important pillar in the process of musical communication. The development of mass media technologies interposed several elements between the

² <http://www.scribub.com/sociologie/psihologie/comunicare/Modelul-sociocultural-al-lui-A152249187.php>

composer and his audience. Radios, disks, televisions, computers, etc., forced art to adapt to a world under constant production speed.

Isolated moments in music history mention that the audience of musical performances became the object of research through *musical aesthetics*, the one that starting with the eighteenth century analyzed the psychological aspects and tastes of listeners. The concept was later approached by linguistics and semiology and has now come to take shape around the following illustration:



Source: from Roman Jakobson, *Essai de linguistique générale*³.

The audience nowadays is a mixed one, whose preferences are turning either to entertainment music (pop music), folk music, jazz or serious music (classical music, cultivated or symphonic).

Consumers of entertainment music enjoy the facile and repetitive sound structures. Representatives of this category are the most limited and less willing to taste other musical genres. In contrast, educated listeners, those of the classical music, are constantly interested in all genres practiced. However we are witnessing at present a bizarre phenomenon regarding the relationship of cultivated music, which has become too scholarly, and the educated audience which, faced with contemporary creation, makes great efforts to understand the compound emotions defining the sound message and, therefore, what was in the mind of the composer at the time of creation. The reactions of this confused audience are often of shock, fatigue and need to distance themselves from it. So where are we headed? Towards a crisis in communication, we would say, within which the transfer channel is clogged becoming increasingly harder to decode.

We can assert categorically that the musical preference is related to systems with which the audience is familiar, which it understands and whose emotional backgrounds can be enjoyed.

A first requisite in musical communication is to educate the audience, to make known the operating range of codes employed by contemporary music and the symbols used

³ Editura Ruwet, Paris, 1963, p.214.

in recent music creation.

The problem of the communication crisis is that stemming from the desire to be original and superior, avant-garde composers makes their own code for each work, without taking into consideration that they should justify their choices (in our case to reach the listeners), condemning themselves to non-communication: “the musician’s position would be precisely a denial of alienation in a system which not only threatened to dominate him, to impose its forms as a given set of laws, but who is at the same time exhausted, only apparently capable of communication: in fact it produces templates, stimulates standard reactions. Therefore the musician refusing a system of forms did not cancel it by his refusal, because he acted within it, following the disintegrating tendencies that had inevitably already arisen within it.”⁴

The new trend is to present the audience with a syncretic music which includes, in addition to sounds, also images, including lights, scenery, gestures, movements, etc., causing him to accept the system as a whole, even if he only likes sections thereof. Collaborations such as music and cinema, music and the fine arts, music and the visual arts, etc. can improve artistic communication. There is no man who remains immune upon contact with art, so the aesthetic receptivity of the whole may be a good start for the education of the audience, “each work and each element or means of expression provokes in everyone, without exception, a vibration, which, in essence, is identical to that of the artist. The profound, ultimate identity, of the *essence* of the means proper to different arts is the field on which the *sound* of a certain art attempted to support, sustain the *sound* of another, thus yielding particularly powerful effects.”⁵

The dynamics of musical life has always been driven by the growth of entertainment activities. It is desirable to find practical ways to promote and attract new audiences, where they may feel free to live their own emotions, in a familiar and accessible environment. If until a century ago it was restricted to those attending performances in concert halls, at present, by the spread of *audio-visual media*, we have the most advanced tools available to disseminate and educate the masses. We believe that a recovery, by increasing the demands on the artistic quality of the promoted products, could train and raise awareness in the listeners, making it responsive to the true musical value.

The great personalities of mankind knew how to manage their own personality. Understanding the inner building, the talent with which we are born, represent values that must be assessed and used to achieve sustainable excellence.

Successful careers generally occur when people are prepared for the opportunities they meet with, know their strengths and find how best to exploit them.

Present day technology provides us with an abundance of means of dissemination of music creation (live concerts, radio, TV, internet etc.) but also forces us to study the peculiarities of the new communication tools in order to adapt the artistic products to this revolutionized marketing.

The era in which we live is one of breakneck speed, which has moved from convey-

⁴ ***, *Muzica și publicul*, op.cit, p. 33.

⁵ ***, *Muzica și publicul*, op.cit, p. 39.

ance by using empirical means to mechanical and electronic disks, radio, sound film, tapes, transistors, stereo or mono minidisks, TV, tape cassettes, CDs, internet, etc. Consumers today are in a continuous aural appropriation due to this abundance which led them become passive actors of the artistic act.

We find that contemporary audiences have reduced their ability to concentrate on the quality stimuli and thus have lost interest in professional performances/ productions. The present culture has become uniform, standardized, losing its humanist-aesthetic basis which made it particular in the past eras.

We believe that the so-called ambient music has become an aggression which immunizes the population with all possible sound resources, starting from the ringtones of mobile phones to background music in bus stations. Because of its excessive broadcasting, audiences tend to isolate themselves and prefer the intimacy of their homes to listen to quality musical recordings.

We know from studies that have been conducted so far that music can be a real incentive, measuring its social dimension through the adhesion and empathy generated in the audience during concerts or other collective events of this kind. It works on an unconscious level, being able to produce specific physiological and psychological effects: catharsis, euphoria, increased cognitive efficiency etc.

There are many music lovers, without specialized studies, who like concerts because they offer a strong emotional state. However it often happens to find people whose musical tastes are built in order to label themselves, to communicate their own values and how they would like society to assess their attitudes.

In 1997 Steven Pinker, one of the most reputed experts in cognitive and language science in Canada, held a conference at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in which he explained why music is actually a pleasure-seeking behaviour: “music pushes buttons for language ability (...) in the auditory cortex, a system that responds to the emotional signals in a human voice (...) and the motor control system that injects rhythm into the muscles when walking or dancing” [4]. To measure its psychological capacity, the same author demonstrates in *The Language Instinct - How the Mind Creates Language* that music exists and is consumed although it is biologically unnecessary, pointing out that it, in fact, has no concrete topurpose; it does not prolong life nor does it help to a better understanding of surrounding phenomena, as in the case of, for instance, vision, language or social reasoning. For example Pinker lets us understand that music could vanish from our species without changing the course of life, more so now, in modern times, when society is connected to an agitated and very concrete reality, which does not allow too many breaks for the soul to rest.

Another psychologist, Dan Sperber, believes that man has developed the cognitive ability to process complex patterns even since the primitive era and that music is in fact an evolutionary parasite which exploited the functions of true communication.

We continue to believe that music plays an important role in “the development of the species,” both from a social standpoint as we have already argued, and from a medical one.

Music therapy, a field that uses art as a clinical tool, succeeded to improve and even cure serious diseases such as Alzheimer’s, autism disorder, post-traumatic stress, dementia, cerebrovascular accident, dyslexia, pain management, stress and anxiety,

coma etc. For people with Down syndrome and autism, who have abnormal neural and cognitive development, it was proved that music is particularly useful for communication and empathy. It happens often that this kind of diseased persons are very receptive to and talented at music

(neuroscientists explain this phenomenon by the “double dissociation,” namely by the existence of certain genes that influence extroversion and musicality).

Furthermore, music is an important component in the development of children, training their thinking for future social and cognitive activities. Certain analyzes conducted by aural stimulants can predict from an early stage possible language difficulties in children. It results that for this category of consumers, music acts in biological processes before the brain reaches maturity, causing them to explore new perceptions before the mind is fully developed.

Since time immemorial in the mother-child relationship singing and rhythmic swaying have replaced the lack of capacity of the child to distinguish sensory information during the first months of life. So between the two, the link is established through musical communication, giving the child a familiar contact that becomes imprinted in the brain.

Listening to music activates almost all brain regions that, in addition to detection, process and systematise audible stimuli, submitting them to a detailed process of analysis (the pitch of the sound, tempo, timbre, etc.). The first structure that is stimulated through the musical activity is the one under the cortex formed of the cochlear nuclei, cerebellum and torso. The impulses are then sent through the auditory cortices on both sides of the brain and if it happens that the musical material is familiar, they reach the memory centre, the hippocampus, as well as some sections of the frontal lobe.

If we are involved in a musical activity, even if only to tap to the beat of a song, other new circuits are activated: the chronometer of the cerebellum, the motor cortex behind the frontal lobe, the somatosensory cortex responsible for the sense of touch, the visual cortex if reading a score, the language centres if we need to remember the lyrics of a song etc.

This amounts to the biological complexity brought by music to the development of the species.

2 Conclusions

We are anchored in a permanently changing society, with a demanding public who require products to match. The new political-cultural strategies are currently focused on everything that is reflected by reality, that is, the technological developments and the confrontation with other types of public. Culture can be a valuable source of innovative ideas that has the potential to recover the economy and to re-educate the society.

No nation can exist without culture, without national identity. Regardless of the direction it is analyzed from, art must preserve clearly defined values and norms. Finding a method of “actively storing” the heritage, with its uniqueness, is a high priority con-

cern of the contemporary age and an increasing concern when it comes to inclusion, society, economy, and community integration.

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