



MSI110: WEEK 1

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THINKING ABOUT
AUDIO CULTURES**

MODULE CODE: MSI110 AUDIO CULTURE AND CRITICAL THEORY

MODULE CREDITS: 20

MODULE LEADER: FRANKIE STEVENS

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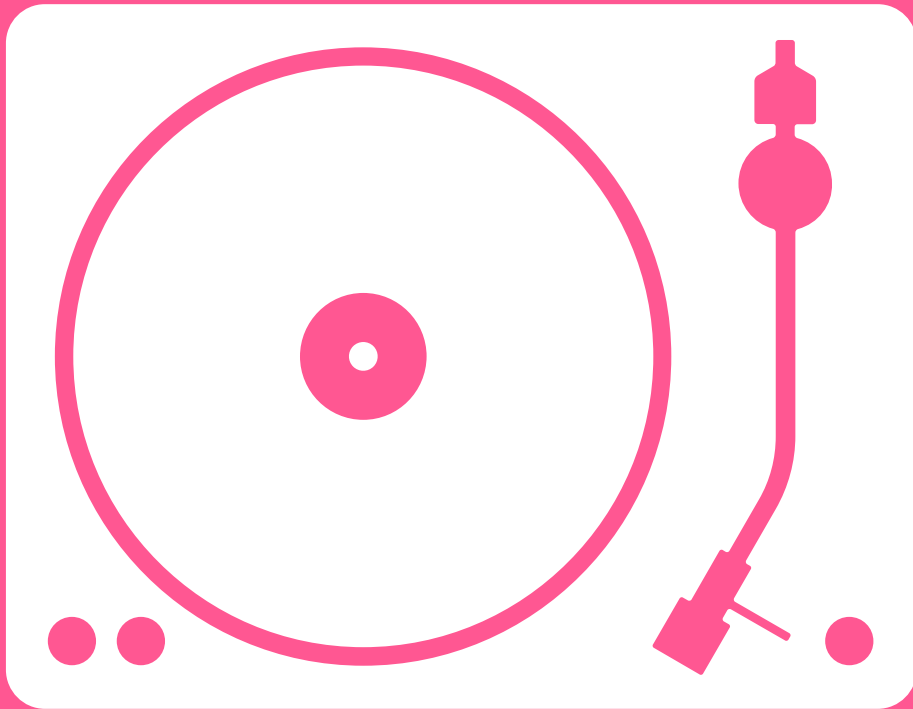
**MODULE STAFF: FRANKIE STEVENS, DR SIMON POOLE
& DR RYAN NOLAN**

DATES: SB1, WEEKS 1-13

ASSESSMENT: ESSAY 100%

DEADLINE: CHECK MYFALMOUTH FOR EXACT DATE & TIME

**CONTACT TIME: 10 LECTURES, 10 SEMINARS, 5 WORKSHOPS
+ DROP INS**



THIS MODULE EXPLORES SOUND AND MUSIC PRACTICES AS THEY EVOLVE WITHIN EVER-CHANGING AUDIO CULTURES. WE WILL BE EXAMINING THE CONTEXT AND CULTURE, IN WHICH YOU AS ARTISTS AND MUSICIANS ARE WORKING, SO AS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND CRITICALLY QUESTION THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSIC, SOUND, NOISE AND CULTURE. WE WILL BE ENGAGING WITH VARIOUS THEORETICAL CONCEPTS THAT WILL ENABLE YOU TO DEVELOP INTERPRETATIONS OF AUDIO CULTURE AND TO FORMULATE CRITICAL THEORIES WHILST BECOMING SELF REFLECTIVE OF PRACTICE.

LECTURE SERIES

WEEK 1: INTRO TO THINKING ABOUT AUDIO CULTURES (FS)

WEEK 2: MY WAR: MUSIC, HEGEMONY & THE STATE – DR SIMON POOLE

WEEK 3: GENRE RULES – DR SIMON POOLE

WEEK 4: GENDER, MUSIC & SOUND – DR D FERRETT

WEEK 5: CANONS IN MUSIC – SAM MURRAY

WEEK 6: *READING WEEK*

WEEK 7: QUEERING SOUND: MUSIC & SEXUALITY – FRANKIE STEVENS

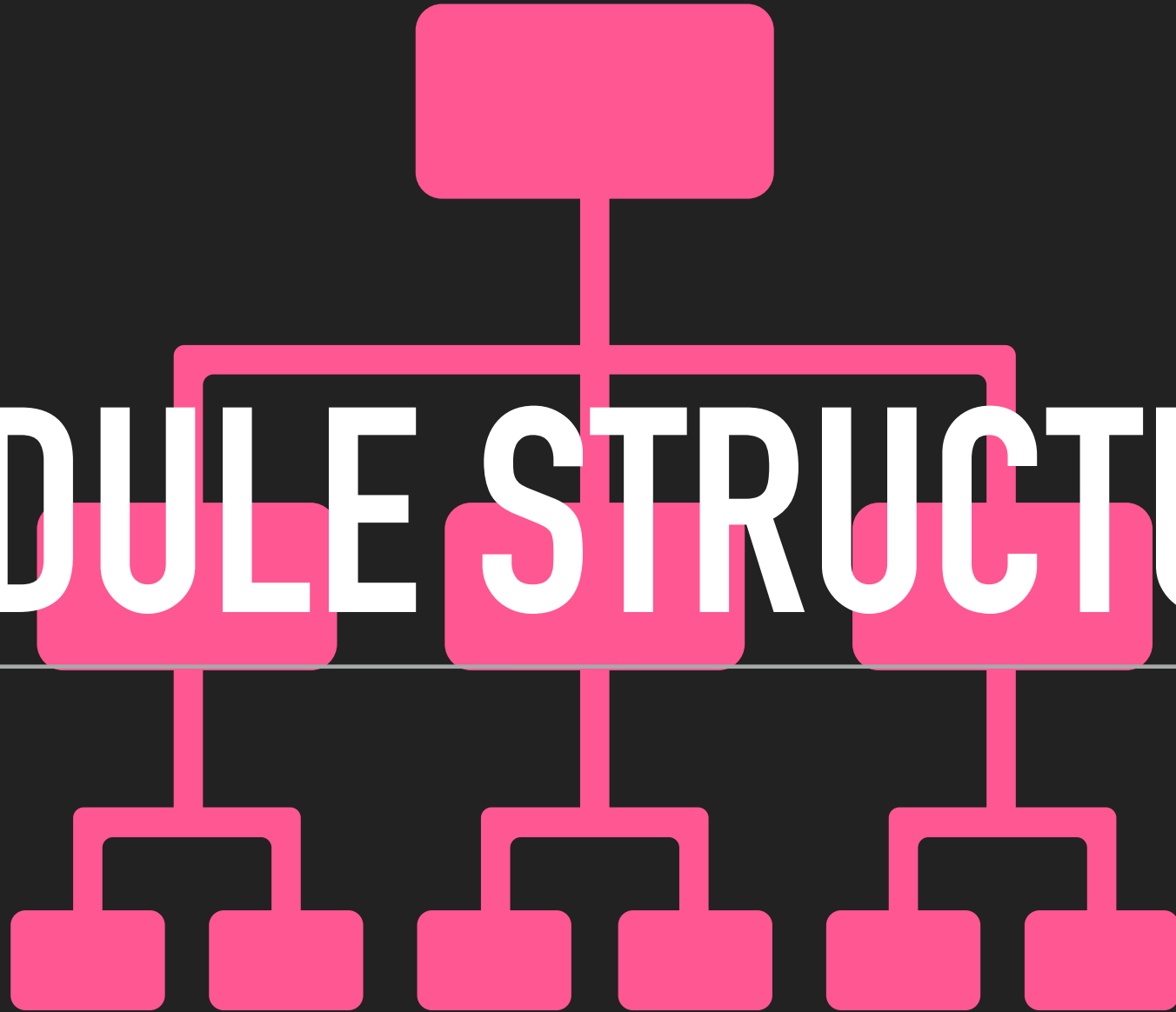
WEEK 8: BETTERED BY THE BORROWER – DR RYAN NOLAN

WEEK 9: MUSIC AND RACE – FRANKIE STEVENS

WEEK 10: 'LYING WITH INTEGRITY': FOLK & AUTHENTICITY – DR JOHNY LAMB

WEEK 11: SUBVERSIVE COMPOSER, COMPOSITION, SOUND – DR ANTTI SAARIO

MODULE STRUCTURE



LEARNING SPACE LINK

OVERVIEW, ASSESSMENT, MODULE FORUM, RESOURCES, WEEKS

EACH WEEK:

STEP 1: TOPIC INTRO VIDEO

STEP 2: READING – TALIS

STEP 3: LECTURE – TIMETABLED SESSION

STEP 4: SEMINAR – TIMETABLED SESSION – BY COHORT

STEP 5: ACADEMIC SKILLS WORKSHOP / ESSAY
PREPARATION



ASSESSMENT

**ESSAY QUESTION:
2500 WORDS (+/-10%)**

**DISCUSS HOW AN ARTIST, GROUP AND/OR BAND
EITHER CONFORM TO OR RESIST THE 'DOMINANT
IDEOLOGY' OF A RELEVANT CULTURAL CONTEXT.**

ESSAY QUESTION:

2500 WORDS (+/-10%)

DISCUSS HOW AN ARTIST, GROUP AND/OR BAND EITHER CONFORM TO OR RESIST THE 'DOMINANT IDEOLOGY' OF A RELEVANT CULTURAL CONTEXT.

- > CULTURAL CONTEXT**
- > THOROUGH RESEARCH**
- > MODULE CONCEPTS.**
- > APPROPRIATE**
- > CRITICAL REFLECTION**
- LANGUAGE**

WITHIN YOUR DISCUSSION YOU MUST INCLUDE SECTIONS THAT:

- 1. INTRODUCE YOUR ESSAY TOPIC, MAIN ARGUMENT, AND THE SCOPE OF YOUR WORK.**
- 2. IDENTIFY AND DEFINE THE DOMINANT IDEOLOGIES SPECIFIC TO YOUR EXAMPLE.**
- 3. PROVIDE DETAIL AROUND THE RELEVANT CULTURAL CONTEXT.**
- 4. EXPLORE AND ANALYSE THE MODES THROUGH WHICH YOUR EXAMPLE CONFORMS OR SUBVERTS IDEOLOGY**
- 5. DISCUSS THE LIMITS OF SUBVERSION/CONFORMITY.**
- 6. CONCLUDE YOUR ARGUMENTS.**

YOUR ESSAY MUST INCLUDE:

- ▶ **A BIBLIOGRAPHY**
- ▶ **REFERENCE TO AT LEAST SIX ACADEMIC SOURCES**

ESSAY (100%)

MODULE AIMS:

- ▶ **CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES RELATED TO AUDIO CULTURES**
- ▶ **PRELIMINARY ENGAGEMENT WITH MUSIC AND SOUND STUDIES, CULTURAL STUDIES AND CRITICAL THEORY**
- ▶ **THE ABILITY TO RESEARCH AND ARTICULATE AN ARGUMENT PERTAINING TO MODULE THEMES**

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

CRITICAL THINKING

ARTICULATE CRITICALLY INFORMED OPINIONS DEVELOPED IN THE MODULE THROUGH WRITTEN COMMUNICATION AND DEMONSTRATE A PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING OF A RANGE OF THEORETICAL DEBATES PERTINENT TO AUDIO CULTURES

RESEARCH

USE APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES AND MATERIALS TO EXPLORE A QUESTION WITHIN AN ESSAY-WRITING CONTEXT

SKILLS

DEMONSTRATE EFFECTIVE, CLEAR AND CONCISE WAYS OF ARTICULATING AND DISCUSSING DEBATES AND ARGUMENTS IN WRITTEN FORM AS WELL AS AN ABILITY TO FOLLOW STYLE GUIDELINES

**WHAT ARE AUDIO CULTURES?
WHAT IS CRITICAL THEORY?
WHY STUDY THIS TOPIC?**

CONSCIOUS PRACTICE

A large, stylized graphic of pink headphones is centered in the background. The headband is a thick pink arc at the top, and the two earcups are solid pink shapes pointing downwards.

INTRODUCTION TO THINKING ABOUT AUDIO CULTURES

THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL



▶ 1930 – HORKHEIMER

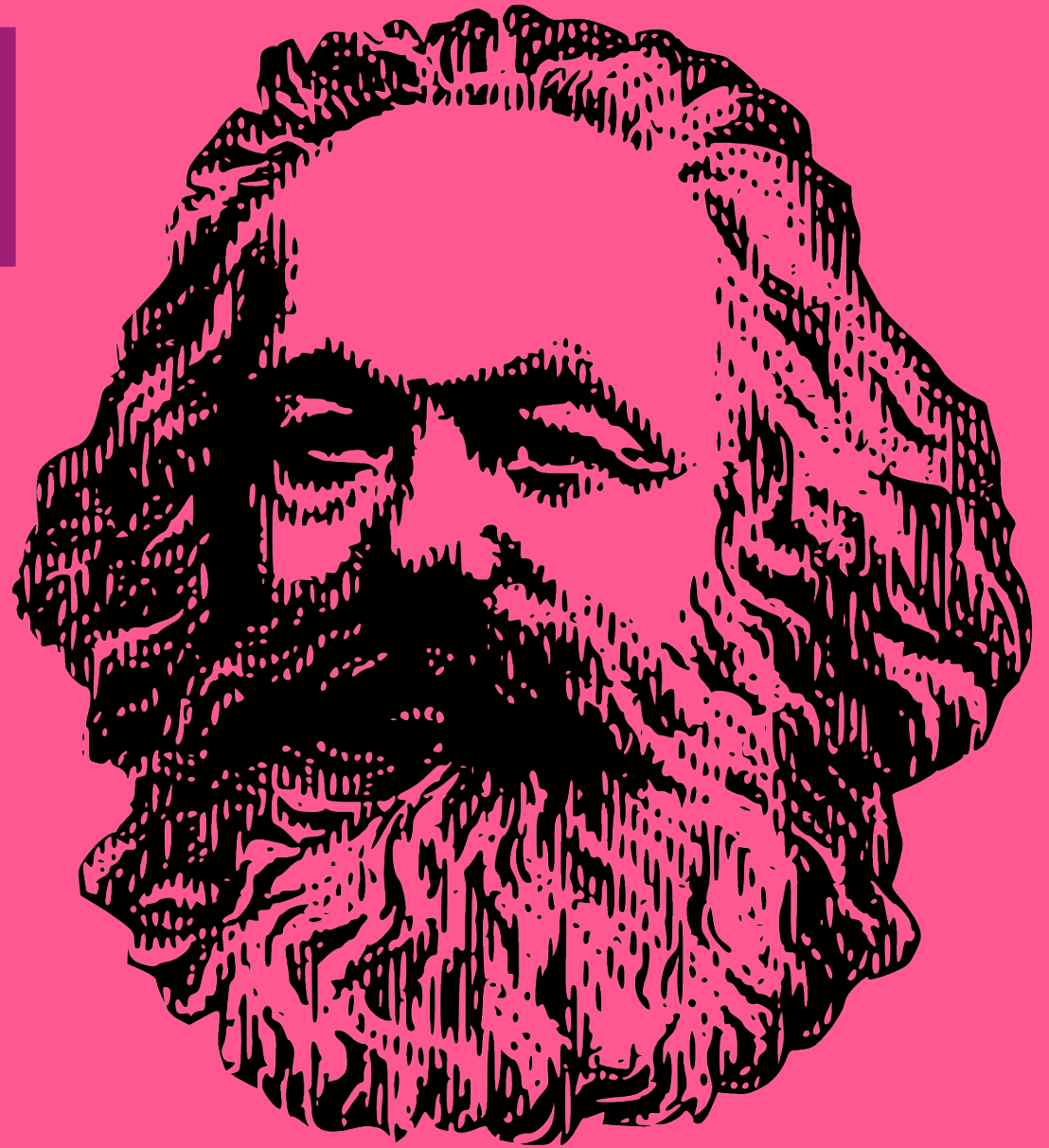
▶ STUDY OF PEOPLE, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

SEEK “HUMAN EMANCIPATION” IN CIRCUMSTANCES OF DOMINATION AND OPPRESSION.
(HORKHEIMER 1972)

“ A CRITICAL THEORY PROVIDES THE...BASES FOR SOCIAL INQUIRY AIMED AT DECREASING
DOMINATION AND INCREASING FREEDOM IN ALL THEIR FORMS.” (BOHMAN 2019)

MARXISM

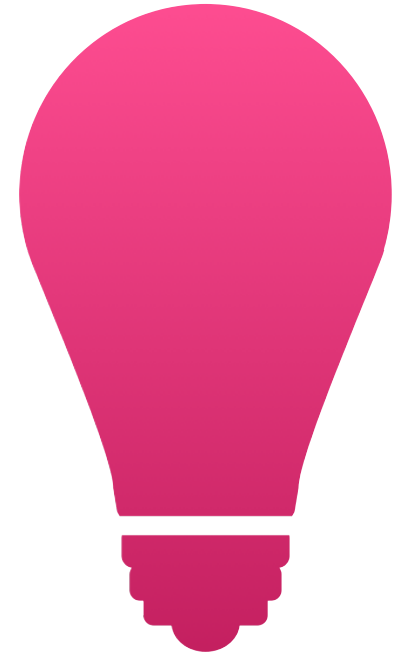
- ▶ **KARL MARX**
- ▶ **GERMAN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER AND ECONOMIST**
- ▶ **THE MANIFESTO OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY (ENGELS AND MARX, 1848)**
- ▶ **REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNISM**
- ▶ **'POLITICAL POWER... IS MERELY THE ORGANISED POWER OF ONE CLASS FOR OPPRESSING ANOTHER' (1848)**



**“THE RULING IDEAS OF EACH AGE HAVE
EVER BEEN THE IDEAS OF ITS RULING
CLASS”**

Engels and Marx 1848

IDEOLOGY



- ▶ **IDEOLOGICAL FORMS: IDEAS, MEANINGS, CONCEPTIONS, THEORIES, BELIEFS**
- ▶ **A SYSTEMATIC SCHEME OF IDEAS USUALLY RELATING TO POLITICS, ECONOMICS OR SOCIETY AND FORMING THE BASIS OF ACTION OR POLICY; A SET OF BELIEFS GOVERNING CONDUCT. ALSO: THE FORMING OR HOLDING OF SUCH A SCHEME OF IDEAS.**

DOMINANT IDEOLOGY



- ▶ WORKS TO NORMALISE SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN DOMINANT AND SUBORDINATE GROUPS
- ▶ WORKS TO ESTABLISH AND RE-ESTABLISH THE INTERESTS OF THE RULING POWERS AS COMMON TO ALL
- ▶ WORKS TO REAFFIRM COMMONLY HELD TRUTH ASSUMPTIONS AS NORMAL/NATURAL AND AS IF NOT CONSTRUCTED [COMMON SENSE]
- ▶ WORKS TO CONCEAL POWER RELATIONS IN OUR SOCIETY (CLASS, RACE, GENDER...)

HOW?

IDEOLOGICAL STATE APPARATUSES (ALTHUSSER):

FAMILY, EDUCATION SYSTEM, THE CHURCH, THE MEDIA, CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

THE LAW, POLICE, ARMY

COMMON SENSE

'IT IS PRECISELY ITS 'SPONTANEOUS' QUALITY, ITS TRANSPARENCY, ITS 'NATURALNESS', ITS REFUSAL TO BE MADE TO EXAMINE THE PREMISES ON WHICH IT IS FOUNDED, ITS RESISTANCE TO CHANGE OR TO CORRECTION, ITS EFFECT OF INSTANT RECOGNITION, AND THE CLOSED CIRCLE IN WHICH IT MOVES WHICH MAKES COMMON SENSE, AT ONE AND THE SAME TIME, 'SPONTANEOUS', IDEOLOGICAL AND UNCONSCIOUS. YOU CANNOT LEARN, THROUGH COMMON SENSE, HOW THINGS ARE: YOU CAN ONLY DISCOVER WHERE THEY FIT INTO THE EXISTING SCHEME OF THINGS. IN THIS WAY, ITS VERY TAKEN-FOR-GRANTEDNESS IS WHAT ESTABLISHES IT AS A MEDIUM IN WHICH ITS OWN PREMISES AND PRESUPPOSITIONS ARE BEING RENDERED INVISIBLE BY ITS APPARENT TRANSPARENCY ' (HALL 1977: 325).

COMMON SENSE

**IDEOLOGICAL STATE
APPARATUSES (ALTHUSSER):**

**FAMILY, EDUCATION SYSTEM,
THE CHURCH, THE MEDIA,
CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS
THE LAW, POLICE, ARMY**

DOMINANT IDEOLOGY

**IDEOLOGICAL STATE
APPARATUS**

**CRITICAL QUESTIONING OF
COMMON SENSE**

WHAT IS CRITICAL THEORY?

'In brief, critical theory has to do with how a theory relates to its object, and how it deals with the contradictions of its object. At the same time it has to do with the contextualisation of the object of inquiry - a process which embraces not only the 'objective' social and historical context, but also the interaction between individual and society (the 'subject-object relationship') which is embedded in that context.' (Paddison 1996: 14-15)

RELATIONSHIP OF THEORY TO OBJECT

- ▶ E.G. MUSIC THEORY TO MUSICAL WORK

CONTRADICTIONS OF THAT RELATIONSHIP

- ▶ (THEORY – OBJECT)

CONTEXT OF THE OBJECT

- ▶ SOCIAL AND HISTORICAL
- ▶ INDIVIDUAL–SOCIETY

WHAT IS CRITICAL THEORY?

'To the extent that it [critical theory] examines history and historical artifacts as the intertwining of subjectivity and objectivity, the kind of approach represented by Critical Theory offers valuable insights for the contemplation of music - and, indeed, for thinking about musicology itself as a discipline' (Paddison 1996: 15)

'...the concern [of a critical theory of music] is to examine assumptions about music through seeing it as one of the ways in which we 'make sense' of the world, and through which meaning is constructed.' (Paddison 1996: 22)

WHAT IS A CRITICAL THEORY OF MUSIC?

A CRITICAL THEORY OF MUSIC

Music as: 'self-contained' AND social fact

' Above all, the theoretical models offered by a critical theory would emphasise that, although music and the arts in general may seem - in the West at least - the most individual and personal of activities, they are also always social.' (Paddison 1996: 24)

'It is in this sense that cultural artifacts tell us something about the world and the way we relate to it, and it is in this sense, therefore, that art works may be regarded as a form of knowledge' (ibid: 24)

'A critical theory of music thus becomes a parallel process to that of the music work itself. Just as the work of art may be understood as the embodiment of the historical intertwining of the subjectivity and objectivity, so would a critical theory of music aim to illuminate and interpret that relationship' (ibid: 25).

WHAT IS A CRITICAL THEORY OF MUSIC?

THE AIM OF A CRITICAL THEORY OF MUSIC IS NOT TO LOOK AT MUSIC AND MUSICAL ARTIFACTS SO SIMPLISTICALLY: THE AIM IS TO LOOK AT THE HISTORICAL INTERTWINING OF SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY – AND TO MAKE SENSE OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS. THAT IS THE INSEPARABLE RELATIONSHIP OF MUSIC TO CULTURE, AND CULTURE TO MUSIC.



