

USES AND FUNCTIONS

The uses and functions of music represent one of the most important problems in ethnomusicology, for in the study of human behavior we search constantly, as has been pointed out time and time again in these pages, not only for the descriptive facts about music, but, more important, for the meaning of music. Descriptive facts, while in themselves of importance, make their most significant contribution when they are applied to broader problems of understanding the phenomenon which has been described. We wish to know not only what a thing is, but, more significantly, what it does for people and how it does it.

The title of this chapter implies that there is a difference of meaning between "uses" and "functions" and that the difference is a significant one. Ethnomusicologists in the past have not always been careful about making this distinction, and, indeed, the problem still exists to some extent in anthropology in which the concept of function has played an extremely important theoretical and historic role. In speaking of the meaning of these two words, it must be made clear that the concepts are complementary and are applied initially as they stem from within the society. While it is the outside observer who makes the judgments, using analytical evaluation, his frame of reference is not himself but rather whatever phenomenon he is studying in its own context. In observing uses of music, the student attempts to increase his factual knowledge directly; in assessing functions he attempts to increase his factual knowledge indirectly through the deeper comprehension of the significance of the phenomenon he studies. Thus music may be used in a given society in a certain way, and this may be expressed directly as part of folk evaluation.

MERRIAM, ALAN P. THE ANTHROPOLOGY
OF MUSIC. EVANSTON: NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1964.

The function, however, may be something quite different as assessed through analytical evaluation stemming from the folk evaluation. The student can, for example, learn something of the values of a culture by analyzing song texts for what they express; however, he does so from the folk and analytic points of view. Thus his conclusion is not only that he has found such-and-such values in song texts, but also that song texts perform particular functions for the society through the fact that they do express values. Function, in particular, may not be expressed or even understood from the standpoint of folk evaluation—such evaluations we would group under the heading of “concepts.” The sense in which we use these terms, then, refers to the understanding of what music does for human beings as evaluated by the outside observer who seeks to increase his range of comprehension by this means.

When we speak of the uses of music, we are referring to the ways in which music is employed in human society, to the habitual practice or customary exercise of music either as a thing in itself or in conjunction with other activities. The song sung by a lover to his love is being used in a certain way, as is a sung invocation to the gods or a musical invitation to animals to come and be killed. Music is used in certain situations and becomes a part of them, but it may or may not also have a deeper *function*. If the lover uses song to woo his love, the function of such music may be analyzed as the continuity and perpetuation of the biological group. When the supplicant uses music to approach his god, he is employing a particular mechanism in conjunction with other mechanisms such as dance, prayer, organized ritual, and ceremonial acts. The function of music, on the other hand, is inseparable here from the function of religion which may perhaps be interpreted as the establishment of a sense of security vis-à-vis the universe. “Use” then, refers to the situation in which music is employed in human action; “function” concerns the reasons for its employment and particularly the broader purpose which it serves.

The concept of function has been used in social science in a number of ways, and Nadel (1951) has summarized the various usages into four major types. First, ‘having a ‘function’ is used as a synonym for ‘operating’, ‘playing a part’, or ‘being active’, the ‘functioning’ culture being contrasted with the sort of culture archaeologists or diffusionists reconstruct.’ Secondly, ‘function is made to mean non-randomness,’ that is, that ‘all social facts have a function . . . and that in culture there are no ‘functionless’ survivals, relics of diffusion, or other purely fortuitous accretions.’ Third, function ‘can be given the sense it has in physics, where it denotes an interdependence of elements which is complex, intermediate, and reciprocal, as against the simple, direct, and irreversible

Uses and Functions

dependence implied in classical causality.’ And finally, function “may be taken to mean the specific effectiveness of any element whereby it fulfills the requirements of the situation, that is, answers a purpose objectively defined; this is the equation of function with purpose which, since Spencer, has dominated biological thought” (pp. 368-69).

A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, whose theoretical orientation is closely connected with the concept of function in contemporary anthropology, tends to stress the third and fourth of these usages, but with particular application to the social system:

By the definition here offered ‘function’ is the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part. The function of a particular social usage is the contribution it makes to the total social life as the functioning of the total social system. Such a view implies that a social system . . . has a certain kind of unity, which we may speak of as a functional unity. We may define it as a condition in which all parts of the social system work together with a sufficient degree of harmony or internal consistency, i.e., without producing persistent conflicts which can neither be resolved nor regulated. (1952:181)

Radcliffe-Brown stresses two further points which are of importance here. “One is that the hypothesis does not require the dogmatic assertion that everything in the life of every community has a function. It only requires the assumption that it *may* have one, and that we are justified in seeking to discover it.” This, of course, negates the position subsumed in the second use of “function” as noted by Nadel. “The second is that what appears to be the same social usage in two societies may have different functions in the two. . . . In other words, in order to define a social usage, and therefore in order to make valid comparisons between the usages of different peoples or periods, it is necessary to consider not merely the form of the usage but also its function” (p. 184).

In ethnomusicology, these terms have often been used interchangeably, though usually in one or another specific sense in a given context. For example, it is often noted that music is an everyday and all-pervading aspect of life in nonliterate societies. In our own society, it is said, we tend to compartmentalize the arts; that is, we stress the differences, or supposed differences, between “pure” and “applied” art, and between the “artist” and the “commercial artist” or “craftsman” who are differentiated both in role and function. We also draw sharp distinctions between the “artist” and his “audience,” with the first group tending to be small in number and limited to “gifted” individuals and the second expected to be a more or less undistinguishable mass whose perceptions vis-à-vis art are of varied

and usually indiscriminating quality. In nonliterate societies in general, "It can safely be said that . . . no . . . distinctions of this order prevail. Art is a part of life, not separated from it" (Herskovits 1948:379). This does not necessarily mean that specialization is absent in the music of nonliterate peoples, but rather that relatively large numbers of people in nonliterate societies are competent to participate in music. Music is held to be functional in the sense that it draws from a large proportion of the people of any given nonliterate society and that almost everyone participates in it, thus emphasizing the lack of basic distinction between "artist" and "craftsman" or between "artist" and "audience."

When we speak of music this way, we are using "function" in the sense first described by Nadel, that is, as a synonym for "operating," "playing a part," or "being active," and perhaps even more specifically we are saying that music is "more functional" in nonliterate societies than in our own. We may note that Nadel dismisses this use of the word "function" as "an indifferent and redundant use, which can be disregarded," and it seems clear that what is really being talked about in this respect is use rather than function. But there is an equally important point here, and this is the question of whether music actually is *used* more in nonliterate societies than in our own. This seems to be a question which has never received really serious discussion; rather, it is simply an assumption.

It is quite true that in our society we tend to make a distinction between pure and applied art; in respect to music, we accept what we call "classical," or better, "art" music as pure, and such forms as movie, radio, or television music as applied. There are, however, several questions which may be raised in connection with this distinction. In the first place, is this a real distinction or merely a question of splitting semantic hairs? The lines of distinction between so-called "classical" music and much of contemporary "jazz" are difficult indeed to draw, and we tend to speak at present of certain folk music as being "art." On the other hand, is program music really divorced from "application" in the sense that it is supposed to impart specific emotions and impressions? Second, in the interpretation of whether music is pure or applied, it is of considerable consequence to know who precisely makes the application. We often tend to forget that United States society consists of a large and differentiated mass of people whose judgments and perceptions of music vary widely. In truth, the division of music into pure and applied types is made only by a certain specific segment of that society; its validity for large numbers of people is a matter for some doubt. Finally, we do not really know whether nonliterate peoples make these same sorts of distinctions. We do know that some music in such societies is used exclusively for entertainment; we do not know whether this forms the basis for judgments concerning

Uses and Functions

"pure" art, nor do we know whether nonliterate peoples regard songs used for medicinal purposes, for example, as a more "applied" form of music.

Taking the problem a step further, we may also inquire as to how clear-cut our own distinction is between the "artist" and the "commercial artist" or "craftsman." Certainly there are some definite cases, but it must be allowed that the man who makes modern cutlery may be described as falling on either side of the imaginary line, and the same is true of today's "third stream" composer associated with modern jazz. On the other side, it seems logical for us to assume that such distinctions are not made in nonliterate societies, but again we do not seem to have accumulated much evidence to this effect. What of the professional "wandering minstrel" found so frequently in Africa? Is his the role of the craftsman? Is there no distinction between his role and that of the journeyman chorus member? We have already seen that many societies support professional musicians in one way or another and that the composer's role is differentiated as something special; are such specialists craftsmen or artists? We do not have a clear-cut answer to this question.

The artist and audience question is similarly rife with problems. While it is true that our concert performers tend to be rather sharply differentiated from their audience, what of contemporary folk music situations in which the audience is encouraged to participate, or certain aspects of jazz in which the audience joins the musicians fully, perhaps by dancing? Again, in nonliterate societies we have had occasion to point out a number of situations in which the musician performs before an audience; true, the audience participates by clapping its hands rhythmically, or dancing, but this happens as well in our own society. And to the assertion that more people, proportionally, take part in music in nonliterate societies than in our own, one can only point to the incredible numbers of music instruments sold in the United States and to the almost overwhelming estimates concerning the numbers of people who perform some kind of music, be it for themselves or for others.

In sum, questions of this sort are not so easily answered as has often been assumed. The fact of the matter is that when we make distinctions we are speaking of special cases within our own society as opposed to assumptions made for all nonliterate societies. We speak primarily of what we call art music, but we do not consider the many other kinds of music that are also a part of our musical culture. If such distinctions have some element of truth, as they probably do, it is reasonable to ask whether the exceptions are not so significant as to vitiate any usefulness the distinctions may seem to have. In any case, describing the role of music in the manner noted here is not really to speak of function, but rather to call attention to the use of music.

Another kind of assertion made by ethnomusicologists about the "functions" of music concerns the oft-repeated statement that while music is used in and integrated with almost all aspects of life among nonliterate peoples, such is not the case in Western society. Thus examples such as the following, which refers to the Tutsi of Ruanda, are cited:

... songs for boasting purposes, for war and greeting, songs sung when young married women meet together and reminisce about absent friends, children's songs, songs to flatter a girl, and many more. Of special importance to the Tutsi are songs dealing with cattle, and these subtypes include boasting songs called *ibirimbó*, in which two men sing in competition with each other, alternating musical phrases; they may vie either in praising one cow or in singing of the merits of one cow against another. Special songs, not *ibirimbó*, are sung in praise of cows, others to indicate the importance of having cows; there are songs for taking cattle home in the evening, for the herder when he is getting ready to take the cattle home, when he is drawing water for the cattle, when he is with other herders in the evening. Praises for the royal cattle, *inyumbó*, are sung; children sing special cow songs, and other songs are sung when cattle are being shown to visitors. Special flute songs circumvent cattle thieves at night, and other songs recount historical events in which cattle have played a part. (Merriam 1959a:50)

This impressive list of song types refers to but one element of Tutsi musical culture; it could be extended dramatically if reference were made to marriage songs or other subtypes, and this is to say nothing of religious songs as a body.

Again, when we speak of music in these terms, we are dealing primarily with the usage of song, i.e., Nadel's "operating," "playing a part," or "being active." If we also emphasize, as we often do, the concept that music in nonliterate societies is "more functional" than in our own, there must be some evidence to support the contention. On the face of it, there would seem to be. United States society certainly does not have a series of songs which compares in detail with that created around Tutsi cattle, and yet we often overlook the wide variety of uses that is present in our music. We have love songs, war songs, sport songs, funeral songs, and working songs; we use music to stimulate activity in work and play and to lull us as we eat; housewives are supplied with special music to accompany their work; exercisers are accompanied by music, and so forth.

The crux of this problem, however, seems to lie in the fact that the word function is wrongly used in this context. When we speak of music in

Uses and Functions

nonliterate societies as being "more functional" than in our own, we imply that it is also of greater importance; what we really mean is that music in nonliterate societies may be used in a greater variety of situations than in our own society. In this sense, music in nonliterate societies may well be used more in minute and directly applied ways, but it is by no means necessarily more functional.

There is another sense in which music has been described by ethnomusicologists as being functional, and this concerns the fact that in some cultures, at least, music is not abstracted from its cultural context. Among the Basongye, for example, the total body of music is a known rather than an unknown, as in our culture, and further, individual songs are recognized instantly in terms of their use. This means that music as such does not exist apart from its context; to the contrary, the context may well determine the conceptualization of music. We shall have more to say on this matter in Chapter 13, but the use of the word function in this interdependence of elements which is complex, intermediate, and reciprocal, as against the simple, direct, and irreversible dependence implied in classical causality."

We may take this a step further, however, for the extent to which the musician and his music are functional in some nonliterate societies has rarely been commented upon. It will be recalled that among the Basongye, non-musicians are considered to fall low on the social scale; both musicians and children to become musicians. At the same time, the thought of a village without musicians and their music is inconceivable, and it can almost be said that the Basongye view includes the value that life without music is not to be considered life at all.

More specifically, a major funeral cannot take place among the Basongye without the presence of a professional musician and his music. Such a funeral extends over a period of seven days, with the interment of the body usually taking place on the second day. The professional musician makes his appearance after the body has been interred and performs a number of functions which he alone can contribute. There is no other person who takes the role of the foil for aggressive pantomime carried on by the female relatives of the deceased; the pantomime serves to help establish the magical or non-magical nature of the death, allows the externalization of inner tensions on the part of the women, and publicizes their emotional and innocent involvement in the death of their kinsman. Without the professional musician, these various expressions would have to be shifted to some other person, but as the funeral is presently structured it is the musician who performs these functions. It is also the

musician's role to help the mourners begin to forget the tragedy of death. Upon his appearance, the entire course of the funeral is changed; people begin to smile and joke for the first time since the death; social dances, whose function is specifically that of helping people to forget, are introduced and encouraged by the musician; by acting the clown he contributes heavily to the release of tensions which to this point in the funeral have been on a high level of intensity. Again, other individuals could perform this role as well as the musician, but the point is that in Basongye society other people do not perform it. The musician is a key figure in the funeral. He is similarly a key figure in other kinds of activities, including dancing, hunting, certain religious behavior, and other aspects of Basongye life as well. Indeed, without the musician, whose numerous roles have barely been touched upon here, the structure of much of Basongye behavior would be markedly changed. The integration of the musician into the fabric of society at large is extremely important, and it illustrates Nadel's fourth use of the word function, i.e., "the specific effectiveness of any element whereby it fulfills the requirements of the situation, that is, answers a purpose objectively defined; this is the equation of function with purpose. . . ."

At one time or another, then, ethnomusicologists have used the concept of function in three of the four senses described by Nadel, but in the great majority of cases in his first sense, that is, as synonymous with "operating," "playing a part," or "being active." When employed in this way, the more precise term is "use" rather than "function"; in such cases, although we know how music is fitted in with other activities, we do not know what its purpose, or "function," may be.

Having made these distinctions, we can now attempt to obtain some idea of the various uses and functions of music in human society. Turning first to the former, it is evident that music is used as accompaniment to or part of almost every human activity. Anthropologists have devised a number of schemes for encompassing all of any given culture and at the same time dividing it into parts which can be handled with relative ease. Among these is Murdock's organizational scheme in which the materials of culture were originally subsumed under forty-six categories (Murdock *et al.*, 1945), and the title of almost every division brings instantly to mind some associated music activity. Among the Flathead Indians fourteen major types of music situation can be isolated, and each of these is subject to numerous subdivisions (Merriam and Merriam 1955). We have already cited the complexity of Tutsi music types in respect to some social songs, and an incomplete catalogue of Basongye songs reveals well over thirty types which could again be subdivided.

While it is not possible or desirable to attempt a catalogue of all the

uses of music, we can at least indicate the range of music activity which cuts across all the aspects of culture. Herskovits (1948:238-40) has devised a useful set of categories for the handling of cultural materials, which will be followed here in broad outline.

His first division, Material Culture and Its Sanctions, is divided into two parts, Technology and Economics; associated music activities are numerous. Work songs seem to be found in almost every culture, including such types as canoe-paddling songs, songs to accompany the grinding of grains, the harvesting of crops, the construction of houses, the carrying of goods, and so forth. Song accompanies the technology of medicine as well as its practice, and it is used to assure a good hunt, good fishing, or a bountiful harvest. The composer, performer, and instrument-maker profit from their activities and contribute to the general economy.

Herskovits' second division is Social Institutions, which comprises Social organization, Education, and Political structures. Social organization is marked at almost every point by song: the life cycle includes birth songs, with special subdivisions for multiple births; lullabies; naming songs; toilet training songs; puberty songs; greeting songs; love and marriage songs; family, lineage and clan songs; songs of social associational groups; funeral songs; and many others of equally specific social application. We have previously noted the use of song for educational purposes and will have occasion to speak of it again. Political structures are constantly involved with song, as in praise songs for political dignitaries sung at the occasion of the investiture of office, comment on political events and desired political aims, and so forth.

Man and the Universe comprises Herskovits' third aspect of culture, subdivided into Belief systems and The Control of Power. Religious beliefs are expressed through musical prayer, myth and legend set to music, divination songs, cult songs, songs of religious functionaries, and others. The control of power is often achieved through songs of supplication; magic songs for curing; hunting, and many other activities which require supernatural assistance; songs of spirits, witches, and other superhuman phenomena; melodic invocations; and so forth. We have already had occasion to note the crucial use of music in the Plains Indian vision quest and in the Basongye funeral. In this connection special attention must be called to the enormously detailed studies of religious ceremonial and ritual among American Indian groups provided by American anthropologists in the early part of this century. These studies include minute descriptions of ceremonies and contain a wealth of information concerning the use of music. Dorsey, for example, gives a minute-by-minute account of the Ponca Sun Dance in which the participation of musicians is meticulously detailed (1905b). In describing the

Osage rite of vigil, LaFlesche gives an extremely tight description of the important part music plays in the ceremony (1925). Mooney describes the use of music and its important role in the Ghost Dance; its significance is emphasized by the fact that he devotes almost forty per cent of his monograph to song texts (1896). Such descriptions are among the most detailed in existence, and each contributes substantially to our knowledge of the way music is used in religious ceremonial.

Herskovits' fourth category is Aesthetics, divided into Graphic and Plastic Arts, Folklore, and Music, drama, and the dance; the relationships to music are very close. Music and the dance have an inseparable relationship, and drama, almost by definition, includes music. Folklore and music are found in conjunction with great frequency as parts of the same social gathering, when song forms a part of a folk tale, through the use of proverbs in song texts, and when praise names are sung. Songs are composed to consecrate masks, song and masking are very frequently found in conjunction, and there are special songs for woodcarvers, painters, potters, metal-workers, and other artists.

Herskovits' final category is Language, and we have devoted a chapter of this book to a discussion of song texts, which exist in the closest association with music. In addition, special kinds of language are conveyed by music devices as in drum, whistle, and trumpet languages; secret languages are also used frequently in music.

These observations comprehend but a fraction of the uses of music in human society and yet they indicate the enormous range of activity in which music plays a part, sometimes tangentially but often centrally. The importance of music, as judged by the sheer ubiquity of its presence, is enormous, and when it is considered that music is used both as a summatory mark of many activities and as an integral part of many others which could not be properly executed, or executed at all, without music, its importance is substantially magnified. There is probably no other human cultural activity which is so all-pervasive and which reaches into, shapes, and often controls so much of human behavior.

When we turn to the functions of music, the problems become more involved, for we are searching primarily for generalizations which are equally applicable to all societies. In attempting to make an initial assessment of such functions viewed as cultural universals, we are using the word "function" primarily in Nadel's fourth sense, i.e., "the specific effectiveness of any element whereby it fulfills the requirements of the situation, that is, answers a purpose objectively defined; this is the equation of function with purpose. . . ." There is, however, a broadening of this usage since we are attempting to discover the purposes, or functions, of music viewed in the widest possible sense. It must also be restated

Uses and Functions

that on this level we are concerned with analytical and not folk evaluations—we are searching for answers to the question of what music does for and in human society. I should like to propose ten such major and over-all functions, as opposed to uses, of music, and each will be discussed below in no special order of significance.

The function of emotional expression. There is considerable evidence to indicate that music functions widely and on a number of levels as a means of emotional expression. In discussing song texts, we have had occasion to point out that one of their outstanding features is the fact that they provide a vehicle for the expression of ideas and emotions not revealed in ordinary discourse.

On a more general level, however, music seems clearly to be involved with emotion and to be a vehicle for its expression, whether such emotion be special (obscurity, censure, etc.) or general. Burrows, for example, makes a special and repeated point in this connection in many of his works concerning the music of Oceania. Speaking of Uvea and Futuna, he writes:

Characteristic of all the singing of the two islands is its social character. Solo singing is confined to leading off a chorus, or to responsive or interspersed passages. This may explain the scarcity of songs expressing more intimate emotions—for example, the absence of lullabies. Where an emotion may be either individual or collective, it is the collective aspect that finds expression in song. . . . In sum, the collected songs indicate that singing in Uvea and Futuna may express and stimulate any emotion that is shared by a group, be it household, working gang, or entire kingdom. (1945:78-9)

In another passage, Burrows lists a number of "functions" of music in the Tuamotus and again stresses the importance of emotional expression:

Stimulating and expressing emotion in the performers, and imparting it to the listeners. The emotion may be religious exaltation, as in the creation chant and song of the sacred red bird; grief, as in the laments; longing or passion, as in the love-songs; joy in motion; sexual excitement, and a variety of other emotions, in the dances; exaltation of the ego in chants of glory; stirring to new courage and vigor, as in the enlivening chants; and doubtless others. . . .

Underlying all of these in greater or less degree is the general function of stimulating, expressing, and sharing emotion. This function is involved even in the work songs. According to the native way of thinking, something more than emotion—namely, mana

or supernatural power—is conveyed in the incantations; but from the European point of view the function actually performed is still of imparting emotion. (1933:54-56)

A somewhat similar point of view, though expressed in connection with Western music, is suggested by McAlister when he notes: "With us a principal function of music seems to be as an aid in inducing attitude. We have songs to evoke moods of tranquillity, nostalgia, sentiment, group rapport, religious feeling, party solidarity, and patriotism, to name a few. Thus we sing to put babies to sleep, to make work seem lighter, to make people buy certain kinds of breakfast foods, or to ridicule our enemies" (1960:469).

Approaching his analysis from a still different direction, Freeman arrives at similar conclusions in discussing verses known as "Lei Ana Ika," or "U.S.E.D.," sung in Hawaii before, during, and after World War II (1957). In this case, however, he considers three major changing functions of folksongs, two of which involve emotional expression and two of which, overlapping, involve other functions. Freeman's major hypothesis is that "the functional significance of a folksong should be revealed through its interrelationship with other aspects of the social cultural system," and that "a particular type of folk expression should be associated with a particular kind of social organization" which in changing should also "engender changes in the nature of the associated folklore" (p. 215). His conclusions are as follows:

In the first place, social protest verses emerge when the members of a society are deprived of other mechanisms of protest. Such songs will be found in any disfranchised segment of society and will persist as long as these individuals are deprived of other more direct techniques of action. These verses represent an attempt of the members of the society to cope with inacceptable social conditions. On the other hand, they may diminish frustrations—they allow the individual to "let off steam" in a congenial group setting and thereby to adjust to social conditions as they are. On the other hand, they may accomplish social change through mobilizing group sentiment. In either case such verses function to reduce societal imbalance and to integrate the society.

Secondly, when there exists a long-term frustration or conflict in personal needs or cultural demands which is tied in with the mores of society, stabilizing verses will be sung. These will describe the conflict, but they will not end in protest. Rather, they will provide the solution which is sanctioned in the mores. Thus, stabilizing

verses permit the person to "let off steam" and they tend to validate the social system.

Thirdly, when conditions allow other institutionalized modes of personal expression and when long-term moral conflicts are not predominant, verses of a purely recreational type will be evident. Such verses will serve strictly entertainment functions. (pp. 219-20)

Charles Keil, in an unpublished paper (1962), sees music as divisible into a "solidarity function" and a "catharsis," or "release function." We shall speak of his solidarity function later, but the release function he finds best expressed in jazz music. He further postulates that there is a correlation between these two general functions of music and the societies which express them; thus "a cultural tradition that lays stress on social control, moderation, quiet, 'shame' sanctions, etc. is likely to provide at least one or two musical outlets to relieve the tensions that may develop for particular individuals."

Both Freeman and Keil attempt to provide explanation for the function of music as an emotional expression, but the most detailed discussion has been offered by Devereux, who couches his work in terms of Freudian theory and applies it to all the arts (Devereux and LaBarre 1961). Devereux's major point is that art "exists because it meets a social need not gratified by other cultural activities"; this is what he calls the "safety valve function." "In addition to viewing art as a harmless safety valve," he says, "society and the artist alike consider the artistic utterance as *unrepudiable* in regard to *form*, but *repudiable* as to *content*" (pp. 368-69). Devereux continues:

In brief, art can function as a social safety valve precisely because, like wit, it is a compromise and is, moreover repudiable as to intent and content. It permits the artist to say—and the consumer to hear (or to see)—the forbidden, provided only that:

- (1) The utterance is formulated in a manner which a given society chooses to call "art,"
- (2) The actual content of the utterance is officially defined as subordinate to its form, and
- (3) The utterance is understood to be repudiable. . . .

Having demonstrated that art provides a safety valve for the expression of that which is tabooed, we must next seek to define the tabooed subjects which find expression in art. These subjects belong to three main layers:

- (1) The generally human taboos: Incest, in-group murder, etc.

(2) The culture specific taboos: Sex in puritanical society, avariciousness in Mohave society, cowardice in Plains Indian society, etc.

(3) The idiosyncratically (neurotically) tabooed: repressed wishes, etc. . . .

The artist's perception of the rules of his game and his alibi maneuvers, which turns his "obscenity," "rebellion," or "blasphemy" into art, are also significant. . . . The artist must also possess supreme skill in "skating on thin ice." Indeed, the better the skater, the thinner can be the ice (of rules of art) on which he can skate. In other words, the better an artist masters his craft, the nearer he is able to come to expressing, *without loss of affect*, the tabooed. (pp. 369, 380, 370)

We have thus far spoken of the emotional release offered through music to the individual who finds himself in particular social situations, but it must also be pointed out that the creative process itself offers emotional release. Gotshalk calls attention to this fact when he points out the importance of "the satisfaction of the will or of the drive for mastery and achievement that the public object may embody for the creative artist. A work of art for him may be, not the thin wish-fulfillment of a reverie indulged in, but the solid wish-fulfillment of a reality achieved. It may stand in his eyes as a reassuring landmark in the development of his talent, as a symbol of his power to accomplish, and as a victory of his self as a creative force over enormous obstacles and difficulties" (1947:157).

Finally, music can function as a mechanism of emotional release for a large group of people acting together. Such is the case, for example, with the Flathead Indians—and presumably many other American Indian tribes as well—who carry on traditions of certain kinds of songs and dances although the real occasion for their performance has long since vanished. The Flathead genuinely enjoy the frequent occasions on which they perform music and dance intended for war, scalping, marriage, ceremonial occasions, and so forth, although there is no opportunity whatsoever to practice the actions with which most of the songs and dances were created to be combined. Music and dance in this case serve as an expression of emotional release from the essentially hostile culture which surrounds the Flathead and through stressing cultural values it gives an opportunity in a sanctioned situation to release the hostility the Indians feel.

An important function of music, then, is the opportunity it gives for a variety of emotional expressions—the release of otherwise unexpressible thoughts and ideas, the correlation of a wide variety of emotions and

music, the opportunity to "let off steam" and perhaps to resolve social conflicts, the explosion of creativity itself, and the group expression of hostilities. It is quite possible that a much wider variety of emotional expressions could be cited, but the examples given here indicate clearly the importance of this function of music.

The function of aesthetic enjoyment. The problem of aesthetics in respect to music is not a simple one. It includes the aesthetic both from the point of view of the creator and of the contemplator, and if it is to be considered as one of the major functions of music it must be demonstrable for cultures other than our own. Music and an aesthetic are clearly associated in Western culture, as well as in the cultures of Arabia, India, China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, and perhaps some others as well. But whether the association is present in the cultures of the nonliterate world is a moot point. Involved here is the primary question of what, exactly, an aesthetic is, and particularly whether it is a culture-bound concept. These are important questions to which we will devote Chapter 13; at this point, it must be left in doubt, and it can only be said that the function of aesthetic enjoyment is clearly operative in some cultures of the world, and perhaps present in others.

The function of entertainment. Music provides an entertainment function in all societies. It needs only to be pointed out that a distinction must probably be drawn between "pure" entertainment, which seems to be a particular feature of music in Western society, and entertainment combined with other functions. The latter may well be a more prevalent feature of nonliterate societies.

The function of communication. We have had occasion to discuss music as a communication device in Chapter 1, and it will be recalled that the major problem is that while we know music communicates something, we are not clear as to what, how, or to whom. Music is not a universal language, but rather is shaped in terms of the culture of which it is a part. In the song texts it employs, it communicates direct information to those who understand the language in which it is couched. It conveys emotion, or something similar to emotion, to those who understand its idiom. The fact that music is shared as a human activity by all peoples may mean that it communicates a certain limited understanding simply by its existence. Of all the functions of music, the communication function is perhaps least known and understood.

The function of symbolic representation. There is little doubt that music functions in all societies as a symbolic representation of other things, ideas, and behaviors. We shall discuss this function of music in detail in Chapter 12.

The function of physical response. It is with some hesitation that this

"function" of music is put forward, for it is questionable whether physical response can or should be listed in what is essentially a group of social functions. However, the fact that music elicits physical response is clearly counted upon in its use in human society, though the responses may be shaped by cultural conventions. Possession, for example, is clearly elicited in part at least by music functioning in a total situation, and without possession certain religious ceremonies in certain cultures are considered unsuccessful (see for example, Herskovits 1938b:11, 189). Music also elicits, excites, and channels crowd behavior; it encourages physical reactions of the warrior and the hunter; it calls forth the physical response of the dance, which may be of prime necessity to the occasion at hand. The production of physical response seems clearly to be an important function of music; the question of whether this is primarily a biological response is probably overridden by the fact that it is culturally shaped.

The function of enforcing conformity to social norms. Considerable discussion has been devoted to this function of music in Chapter 10. Songs of social control play an important part in a substantial number of cultures, both through direct warning to erring members of the society and through indirect establishment of what is considered to be proper behavior. This is also found in songs used, for example, at the time of initiation ceremonies, when the younger members of the community are specifically instructed in proper and improper behavior. Songs of protest call attention as well to propriety and impropriety. The enforcement of conformity to social norms is one of the major functions of music.

The function of validation of social institutions and religious rituals. While music is used in social and religious situations, there is little information to indicate the extent to which it tends to validate these institutions and rituals. In respect to the Navaho, Reichard says that "the primary function of song is to preserve order, to co-ordinate the ceremonial symbols. . . ." (1950:288), and Burrows comments that one of the functions of song in the Tuamotus is "imparting magical potency by incantations" (1933:54). We may also recall Freeman's assertion that stabilizing verses are sung when there exists "a long-term frustration or conflict in personal needs or cultural demands which is tied in with the mores of the society"; in such a case the conflict is described and a sanctioned solution suggested. "Thus, stabilizing verses permit the person to 'let off steam' and they tend to validate the social system" (1957:220). Religious systems are validated, as in folklore, through the recitation of myth and legend in song, as well as through music which expresses religious precepts. Social institutions are validated through songs which emphasize the proper and improper in society, as well as those which tell

people what to do and how to do it. This function of music, however, needs to be further studied and more concisely expressed.

The function of contribution to the continuity and stability of culture. If music allows emotional expression, gives aesthetic pleasure, entertains, communicates, elicits physical response, enforces conformity to social norms, and validates social institutions and religious rituals, it is clear that it contributes to the continuity and stability of culture. In this sense, perhaps, it contributes no more or no less than any other aspect of culture, and we are probably here using function in the limited sense of "playing a part."

At the same time, not many elements of culture afford the opportunity for emotional expression, entertain, communicate, and so forth, to the extent allowed in music. Further, music is in a sense a summatory activity for the expression of values, a means whereby the heart of the psychology of a culture is exposed without many of the protective mechanisms which surround other cultural activities. In this sense, it shares its function with others of the arts. As a vehicle of history, myth, and legend it points up the continuity of the culture; through its transmission of education, control of erring members of the society, and stress upon what is right, it contributes to the stability of culture. And its own existence provides a normal and solid activity which assures the members of society that the world continues in its proper path. We may recall the Basongye reaction to the suggestion that musicians be eliminated from their village, or cite the remark of a Sia Indian to Leslie White: "My friend, without songs you cannot do anything" (White 1962:115).

Waterman has summarized the contribution of music to the continuity and stability of Yirkalla culture in Australia in pointing out that as an enculturative mechanism, music reaches into almost every aspect of life. He writes:

Basically, music functions at Yirkalla as an enculturative mechanism, a means of learning Yirkalla culture. Throughout his life, the Aboriginal is surrounded by musical events that instruct him about his natural environment and its utilization by man, that teach him his world-view and shape his system of values, and that reinforce his understanding of Aboriginal concepts of status and of his own role. More specifically, songs function as emblems of membership in his moiety and lineage, as validation of his system of religious belief, and as symbols of status in the age-grading continuum. They serve on some occasions the purpose of releasing tensions, while other types are used for heightening

the emotionalism of a ritual climax. They provide a method of controlling, by supernatural means, sequences of natural events otherwise uncontrollable. Further, some types of songs provide an outlet for individual creativity while many may be used simply to conquer personal dysphoria. In every case, the enculturative function of the music in helping to shape the social personality of the Aboriginal in the Yirkalla pattern rather than in some other, is apparent. (1956:41)

The function of contribution to the integration of society. In a sense we have anticipated this function of music in the preceding paragraph, for it is clear that in providing a solidarity point around which members of society congregate, music does indeed function to integrate society. This function has been commented upon by a number of writers. Nketia, speaking of the Yoruba musician in Accra, says, "For the Yoruba in Accra, performances of Yoruba music . . . bring both the satisfaction of participating in something familiar and the assurance of belonging to a group sharing in similar values, similar ways of life, a group maintaining similar art forms. Music thus brings a renewal of tribal solidarity" (1958:43). Elkin remarks that while the varied activities of the Australian Songman might bring him admiration, "it would not make a social institution. This arises from his function as a unifying and integrating factor in his clan and tribe" (1953:92). Freeman's remarks (1957) concerning Hawaiian folksong suggest that songs of social protest may allow the individual to let off steam and thus to "adjust to social conditions as they are," or they "may accomplish social change through mobilizing group sentiment. In either case such verses function to reduce societal imbalance and to integrate the society." We may also recall Keil's dichotomy (1962) between the "solidarity" and "release" functions of music, in which composers are "attempting to express cultural unity" in their music and inviting "the listener to identify with the collective American experience, binding every conceivable musical device to that purpose." Finally, in speaking of the Andamanese dance, Radcliffe-Brown stresses the integrative function:

The Andamanese dance (with its accompanying song) may therefore be described as an activity in which, by virtue of the effects of rhythm and melody, all the members of a community are able harmoniously to cooperate and act in unity . . .

The pleasure that the dancer feels irradiates itself over everything around him and he is filled with geniality and good-will towards his companions. The sharing with others of an intense

pleasure, or rather the sharing in a collective expression of pleasure, must ever incline us to such expansive feelings. . . .

In this way the dance produces a condition in which the unity, harmony and concord of the community are at a maximum, and in which they are intensely felt by every member. It is to produce this condition, I would maintain, that is the primary social function of the dance. The well-being, or indeed the existence, of the society depends on the unity and harmony that obtain in it, and the dance, by making that unity intensely felt, is a means of maintaining it. For the dance affords an opportunity for the direct action of the community upon the individual, and we have seen that it exercises in the individual those sentiments by which the social harmony is maintained. (1948:249, 251, 252)

Music, then, provides a rallying point around which the members of society gather to engage in activities which require the cooperation and coordination of the group. Not all music is thus performed, of course, but every society has occasions signalled by music which draw its members together and reminds them of their unity.

It is quite possible that this list of the functions of music may require condensation or expansion, but in general it summarizes the role of music in human culture. Music is clearly indispensable to the proper promulgation of the activities that constitute a society; it is a universal human behavior—without it, it is questionable that man could truly be called man, with all that implies.