Music, censorship and colonialism

In 1953, the Indian government founded the National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama in New Delhi for the preservation and development of these arts. The main national institution then established (and safeguarded through this institution was unity through diversity and the cultural and moral uplift of the population through art). In 1974, however, the government founded institutions like the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts and made use of its monopoly over All India Radio (and later state television) to disseminate national music. By broadcasting Indian classical music on the radio, the government not only aimed at promoting the public’s knowledge of music but also manipulating its taste. The harmonium, for example, was banned from the radio in 1950 and remained off the air until the mid-1970s. In the footsteps of Rabindranath Tagore and Western ethnomusicologists like A. H. Fox Strangways and Arnold Bate, the Indian government declared that the instrument’s fixed-pitch did not confirm Indian flexible intonation and therefore was harmful both to the singer’s and audience’s perception of musical refinement. Likewise, songs from films that contained elements derived from Western popular music, were banned from radio on moral grounds. Alternatively, to breed the idea of unity through diversity and the cultural and moral uplift of the population through art, music was also manipulated through commercialisation, thus high-lighting not only music's diverse uses at the social level, but also the ever-fragile relationship between aesthetics and morality (back-cover).

Music and Manipulation


A mong human beings (and ani- mals), music has always been a key mode of communication, being able to influence individual and group behaviour and to create social cohe- sion in times of conflict. Rhythm, har- mony and melody manipulate and can be manipulated. The interdisciplinary anthology under review contains three- related but separate essays from musicologists and psychologists about the use and control of music in society. It is the first volume to address the social ramifica- tions of music’s behaviourally manipu- lative effects, its morally questionable uses and control mechanisms, and its economic and artistic management through commercialisation. The high-lighting not only music’s diverse uses at the social level, but also the ever-fragile relationship between aesthetics and morality (back-cover).

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