

INTERNET - (DIS)CONNECTING PEOPLE THROUGH MUSIC

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Abstract

The article is trying to expose how the internet is (dis)connecting the society from the point of view of music. Some specific areas are exposed: internet and its use in listening to a live concert, internet and CD (mp3, mp4, iPod...), the connection between internet, music and national identity and internet and its use in music pedagogy.

1. Introduction

Human beings have often been categorized as “social animals”,¹ however it is nowadays clear, that it is simply not enough to be just only “social animals” but to transform ourselves from social creatures into community creatures which is possible with internet.

Millions of people are communicating and participating in computer-formed social groups known also as “virtual communities” (Rheingold, 1993), just because to babble together, to exchange opinions, to sell something, to find informations... or simply just to use this virtuality as a form of psychotherapy.

Less known is the use of internet and its influence on some particularly areas of the music art as live music concerts, CD, mp3, mp4 and iPod, on formation on the national identity through music as also on its use in the area of music pedagogy.

As inexpensive personal computers are capable of offering high-quality multimedia today it is certainly interesting to see how the internet is (dis)connecting people in the above mentioned topics.

2. Internet and live music concerts – how to be (dis)connected

The internet offers us the possibility to listen to music pieces, to a performer (or performers) “live”, inspite of our absence on the event which can be caused by:

- a) the distance (the place where the concert is happening is to far from us),
- b) the price of the concert ticket - it is much cheaper to watch the concert by internet then bying a ticket for the concert,

¹ Aristotle, book one Politics.

- c) our unwillingness to stay for hours and hours in a crowd, just waiting to buy the concert ticket,
- d) our disablement to take part at the happening.

The best part of watching live music concert by internet is that it enables us to take part after the concert on a blog site, to exchange our feelings or to be involved in a discussion where a lot of people is taking part, far much more than it would be the case directly on the concert. In this case we are connected with a huge uncountable society, which has taken part on the internet on the same concert event.

On the other hand, it is true, that the feeling which is created on such venues (the “fluid”) is missing if we are listening to the concert by internet. Actually, the interaction between us and the performer (performers) is missing as also the reactions of the audience on the concert event (in or outside the concert hall). This can be partly substituted by listening the concert on the internet together with someone else in our home, but still there is missing the original place of happening, the lightening, the audience etc.

The great paradox is that we can be connected with a huge virtual community while listening to a live concert on the internet and in the same time also very disconnected from this same society, because after all, we are behind our computer, watching alone or in company the concert and the huge unknown society is somewhere else, hypothetically spreaded out in the whole world.

3. Internet and the use of CD, mp3, mp4 and iPods.

The invention of the CD (compact disk) in 1980² and its mass distribution in 1985 by Phillips and Sony was certainly a revolutionary solution for playing music, although it allowed later also the preservation of other files of data. Only a few years later (1989), the German Company Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft licensed the invention of mp3,³ in 2001 was invented the iPod and in 2003 mp4.

These inventions have changed the very first attitudes toward internet, personal computers and of course toward different devices for reproducing and preservation of music not only of the consumers but also of the companies who have searched and are searching further for better and the best solutions in reproducing/preservation music and the reproduction devices.

One is for sure: the possibilities that these inventions are allowing is almost endless. For the first time in the history of music, an individual has the opportunity to listen to an unbelievable amount of music pieces and to save them for another listening session. The pieces can be saved in a special order, which means that we do not have to buy a CD, because just of one or two pieces that we like the most. For the first time, we can make a CD which contains only our favorite songs or music pieces.

When we are downloading music pieces or sometimes whole albums (mostly), we are saving definitely money, because our own created CD, or music saved on mp3, mp4 or iPod devices which are mass produced, is cheaper then if we would buy an expensive CD in a music store because it includes several taxes and the author rights.

At the time we are downloading music, we are a part (again) of a huge society, who is doing just the same as we do: downloading a music piece or listening to it. We are actually

² The Russells company Battella licensed the invention of the compact disk (CD) already mid-60s.

³ The official standard format began in 1992.

not very aware of this unknown virtual community, maybe only if we take part on blog sites to make a comment or to read a comment about the performed music piece or to solve problems which are occurring sometimes when downloading music pieces.

The connection between internet and somebody who has downloaded music pieces and saved them on CD, or on mp3, mp4 player or on the iPod is usually also occurring when this “somebody” is reproducing the music to another individual or to a group of listeners.

Downloading music pieces for our own CD compilation or for mp3, mp4, iPod etc. is fun but unfortunately also (in some cases) an illegal act, because we are downloading sometimes music pieces that are protected by the author. In this case it is possible to talk about disconnecting people because of the improper use of internet which is the main cause for disconnecting the listener (consumer) on one site and the author of the music on the other site.

4. Internet, music and national identity

Research works has showed that music is significant in developing the national identity, especially in adolescents.⁴ As music is nowadays a very important part in the life of a lot of people, and assuming that this people use daily internet for listening to music or to download it,⁵ then we can look at internet as on a remarkable and important factor in influencing the national identity through music.

The fact that people have the opportunity to connect by internet with a community which members has the same nationality, nevertheless how distant this community might be, means that the internet is not only influencing ones national identity but it is also connecting people from all around the world making them feel to be a part of this community.

There has also to be considered, that internet is offering an interactive way of communication⁶ which allows the users who are involved in the process of communication to customize informations and products to individual and group needs, which is very important from the view of expressing the national identity.

As internet is offering the connectivity to some national excluded communities in some parts of the world and the open access to the culture of this community, than it is obvious, that internet and its providing of important elements of the national identity, for example the national music, is a new chapter nowadays in expressing and forming the national identity of an individual.

Of course we can argue about all the mentioned statements as internet is free to almost everybody who has the same chances to influence through this media ones national identity providing his own ideas, own cultural values etc., which means that there is always the possibility to look at internet as a media that can also disconnect and individual from his national members.

⁴ See Campbell (1998a and 1998b).

⁵ See: „Media Use Statistics.“ Data available on internet: <http://www.frankwbaker.com/mediause.htm> (05-24-2010).

⁶ Television generally involves the one-way transmission of cultures and values that are different from the local realities of developing nations.

5. Internet and music pedagogy

Several experiments performed by professors of Sciences and Humanities has proved that internet is a valuable tool in distant learning.⁷ It can assist faculty in teaching graduate and undergraduate courses, it can be also very helpful in distant master classes, workshops or other forms of distant learning...

Internet has proved that it is possible to learn music theory or even to play a music instrument online. In this case we can expose the function of internet not only as a teaching tool but also as a tool for connecting different teachers (who has created the programs and lessons) and pupils, nevertheless how distant they are.

Different web sites (for example YouTube, TeacherTube...) are offering quite often several high quality music videos which includes also high quality performances of a huge amount of music pieces and their performers. That means that internet is again connecting a very huge community which members are this time not only listening to different musical interpretations of music pieces but hypothetically also seeking for informations for the pedagogical purpose.

Although well known, the web camera is still not used so frequently as it should be. It is just a fantastic tool which can help very quickly to solve problems which occur very often during playing an instrument (technical problems, how to play, how to use the hands, how to handle injuries gained after playing the instrument etc.), or while learning different musical lessons. Web camera in this case is directly connecting people by internet who are searching for different solutions of their problem in the area of music pedagogy.

As internet provides several videos, music pieces, notation programs, programs for recording music, music lessons online etc., we can ask ourselves if this means also a "oneway ticket" to disconnection, because if someone has access to such huge amount of knowledge on the internet, than why search for an extra teacher(s) out of the world of internet?

6. Literature

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⁷ A very interesting example of using internet for educational purpose is the implementation of NetMuse, an experimental project to pilot the use of metropolitan- area networks to deliver educational materials to music students. This implementation has been provided by a consortium of five Scottish universities led by the Department of Music of the University of Glasgow.