

# On the mutual perception of Creator and Listener in Electroacoustic Music: a briefly attempted outline

**Clarence Barlow**

In my opinion, a discussion of the relationship between the Creator and the Listener in Electroacoustic (and indeed in any) Music would be incomplete without preliminarily examining certain aspects of the two protagonists' mutual perception – as for instance

1.Aspects of the Listener as envisaged and/or encountered by the Creator, of which an understanding can be approached on at least two levels, viz.

a) physical, e.g. whether the Listener, apart from being human, can also be of alternative provenience such as mammalian, reptilian (Stockhausen was once fascinated by the effect of snake charmers on snakes, until he was told the latter are deaf), cybernetic, herbaceous (the effect of music on the performance of cows and of plants has been repeatedly reported on) etc.; at all events, the appropriate treatment of physical parameters such as frequency, dynamics and duration will have to be investigated here, and

b) cultural, an audience possibly containing listeners

informed or ignorant (about performerless music from loudspeakers),  
involved or unwitting (the latter as in a summer open-air audio-installation of bird sounds),  
visible or invisible (the latter as e.g. seated at home in front of the radio or television),  
sympathetic or hostile (this being usually dependent on geo-/chronocultural factors),  
present (who might manage to make it today) or future (summarily termed “posterity”),

conservative (preferring aged and/or commercial forms) or progressive (the opposite),  
audiophile (heads inside a pounding bass-drum) or audiophobe (ears finger-plugged),  
etc. etc. and

2.Aspects of the Creator as viewed by the Listener of which an understanding can be approached on at least two levels, viz. those of

a)relation, e.g. personal (as in friends or relatives), financial (as in colleagues or customers), etc. and

b)regard, the compositional work assessed hereby as being

voluntary or arbitrary (the latter taken as random noise-making),  
masterly or quackish (the latter as in “my baby child could do better!”)

familiar (in recognition of tried devices?) or novel (from ears open to shoulders shrugged),  
viewed in a halo of vainglory (powered by avarice?) or of idolisation (as reflected e.g. in the usual self-flattery of The Hague's legendary standing ovationists), etc. etc.

As a final observation in this all too brief outline, here further are two unique constellations: the Creator as Listener, the music's maker frequently receiving its initial audition (even if only through the mind's ear) for a possible subsequent critical appraisal, and the Listener as Creator, whereby the music being currently auditioned is sporadically adjusted by mental transformation for the increase of the satisfaction perceived.