Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 848 (1985)[1]

Privacy of sound and individual freedom of musical choice

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Informed of the Symposium on Privacy of Sound (Cork, May 1985), organised by its Committee on Culture and Education, with the support of the European Organising Committee of European Music Year, as part of the official European programme for the Year ;

2. Wishing to defend music for its intrinsic value, and as a means of expression, as a bridge between nature and culture, and as a biological pace-maker with therapeutic effect ;

3. Accepting sound to be a part of the social environment ;

4. Believing that each person has a right to determine what kind of music or other sound to hear as long as he does not impose it on other persons ;

5. Concerned, however, at the growing over-saturation of the soundscape with music, as with other sounds, and their increasing intrusion into the private life of the individual ;

6. Drawing attention in particular to the direct harmful effects of exposure to over-amplified artificial music, which may involve physiological damage to the brain ;

7. Noting also the possible psychological dangers such as :

&mdash nuisance,

— dulled appreciation (as a result of passive consumption, in particular of over-repetitive music),

— subliminal manipulation (whether in a commercial context or as background music in media),

— undermining of social communication ;

8. Noting the contribution developments in communication technology have made to making music both more widely available, but also more extensively misused ;

9. Stressing the fact that music and sound begin to have their effect on the individual even before birth, determining at a very early stage both musical taste and social aptitudes ;

10. Pointing out therefore the importance of introducing children and adults to as wide a diversity of musical experience as possible, linking contemporary music to the historical tradition whether of European, local or other musics ;

11. Noting the work of the Council for Cultural Co-operation relating to contemporary music and to the culture industries,

Research

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1. Assembly debate on 28 September 1985 (14th Sitting) (see Doc. 5458, report of the Committee on Culture and Education, and Doc. 5478, opinion of the Committee on Social and Health Questions). Text adopted by the Assembly on 28 September 1985 (14th Sitting).

12. Expresses its support for the co-ordination of European research in such fields as music therapy, psycho-acoustics or sound design ;

13. Calls for further research into the aesthetics of music and the problem of the non-appreciation of contemporary or new music ;

Culture industries and management

14. Asks those responsible for providing music in places used by the public to be more aware of the possible harmful effects of this music on their audiences and also those employed in the process ;

Design

15. Calls on planners and designers to pay great attention to the sound environment ;

Public authorities

16. Urges public authorities to be more sensitive to the problem of excessive or unwanted music and sound, and make greater use of such measures as :

— nuisance legislation,

— licensing of premises likely to produce sound (such as bars or night clubs),

— planning controls and encouragement to sound insulation,

&mdash banning audible music from certain places (such as public parks, water areas or beaches),

— provision of areas of silence (for example in certain railway carriages) ;

17. Reiterates its recommendations for music education for all as set out in Recommendation 929 (1981), while placing further emphasis on the need to make provision for experience of all kinds of music with a view to the enlargement of tastes and the development of critical attitudes ;

Education and information

18. Calls on parents and educators to be more aware of the importance of music from the earliest age, to encourage musical variety and to pass on understanding of how music relates to the individual, both consciously and unconsciously ;

19. Asserts the importance of public service broadcasting as a means of ensuring a diversity and plurality in broadcast music, and so contributing to the broadening of musical experience ;

20. Calls on the media and other responsible bodies to inform the public, possibly by means of campaigns, on :

— the physiological and psychological dangers resulting from over-amplified music,

— the importance for the individual to be aware both of the quality of his soundscape and of the possible nuisance of sounds he might produce.