



Music and Politics

By John Street

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Music and Politics By John Street

It is common to hear talk of how music can inspire crowds, move individuals and mobilise movements. We know too of how governments can live in fear of its effects, censor its sounds and imprison its creators. At the same time, there are other governments that use music for propaganda or for torture. All of these examples speak to the idea of music's political importance. But while we may share these assumptions about music's power, we rarely stop to analyse what it is about organised sound - about notes and rhythms - that has the effects attributed to it.

This is the first book to examine systematically music's political power. It shows how music has been at the heart of accounts of political order, at how musicians from Bono to Lily Allen have claimed to speak for peoples and political causes. It looks too at the emergence of music as an object of public policy, whether in the classroom or in the copyright courts, whether as focus of national pride or employment opportunities.

The book brings together a vast array of ideas about music's political significance (from Aristotle to Rousseau, from Adorno to Deleuze) and new empirical data to tell a story of the extraordinary potency of music across time and space. At the heart of the book lies the argument that music and politics are inseparably linked, and that each animates the other.

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Editorial Review

Review

"No, this is not another book about Sting, Bono and St Bob doing their good works while singing of the world's troubles. Rather, it is a serious, intelligent and surprisingly comprehensive study of the complex interplay between music and politics ... This is a meticulously researched book, which makes a powerful case for the enduring importance of music and its vital role in politics."

Sydney Morning Herald

"Unearths a submerged tradition in political thought that gives music a central place. Exploring the politics of the star rating system, the ability of musical events such as Rock Against Racism to stir people into political action, censorship and music policy and the role of the musician as political advocate, Street argues that whenever music inspires collective thought and action, it becomes a political act."

The Age

"Dives into this world of power, influence and catchy choruses with gusto. Music and Politics is a great book. Readable, provocative and incredibly informative, Street walks the tightrope between academic and fan."

R2 Magazine

"No other scholar is better positioned or as well equipped as Street to tease out the manifold ties that bind together the musical and the political."

Music and Letters

"A thought-provoking analysis of the role of music in shaping how we see the world and how we organise ourselves. Whether music truly is politics, and politics music, is a matter of contention. What is clear is the political power of music as a force in our lives."

Songlines

"A must read for scholars interested in music as well as politics, and also for those music lovers who are willing to learn more about topical participatory events of western popular music like *Woodstock*, *Rock Against Racism* and *Live 8*."

Journal of Contemporary European Studies

"John Street's *Music and Politics* is splendid. Drawing deftly on a unique blend of encyclopedic knowledge about popular music and mastery of political theories, Street helps us see how music matters, why culture counts, and how political affiliation emerges out of public processes and private practices."

George Lipsitz, author of *Footsteps in the Dark: The Hidden Histories of Popular Music*

"From ancient Athens to Zimbabwe; from Amnesty International and A+ albums to white supremacists and the songs of the Wombles; John Street confronts the serious and the silly. Blending passions of a pop fan with the skepticism of the scholarly critic, this book offers an indispensable guide to how musicians make politics and politicians manipulate music."

Keith Negus, University of London

"With a breadth and depth that one would expect to find in an edited collection, John Street's *Music and Politics* argues for expansive definitions of music and the political without inflating them beyond all

meaning. The book problematizes all the intricacies of the relationship between the two, even as it interrogates the crucial connections that make them inseparable."

Reebee Garofalo, University of Massachusetts

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

John Street is Professor of Politics at University of East Anglia.

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