Classical Music 'Hyper-Production' and Practice-As-Research Conference - 30 January 2016

Abstract - The Fickleness of Fidelity

Recent transformations in the ways we listen to recorded music suggest that we are perhaps moving into a post-*high-fidelity* era where the audiophile's prized hi-fi separates and ostentatious floor-standing loudspeakers have been superseded by handy pocketable devices and ear buds. But this transformation is only the latest shift in a century-long evolution of audio hardware that has cajoled and deluded us into believing, at each stage, that we have all but attained our ostensible ideal; perfect sound reproduction.

Simple dereliction of the term *high-fidelity* and all it implies does nothing to discredit this claim. On the contrary, more likely it indicates that fidelity or sonic realism is no longer a goal for which we need strive.

In charting the development of *hi-fi* sound this paper seeks to illustrate the manner in which our powerlessness to resist the thrall of technology has led, not so much to the audio perfection we tend to presume, but to our seduction by particular stylisations to which changing technologies give rise.

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