

The Sociology of Wind Bands: Amateur Music Between Cultural Domination and Autonomy, by Vincent Dubois, Jean-Matthieu Méon, and Emmanuel Pierru. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 225 pp. \$99.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781409461852.

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How is it that cultural practices are preserved and sustained once the conditions that made them possible are no longer in place? And what is the role played by the populations that enjoyed those practices in bringing about their demise? Three French sociologists explore these fascinating and paradoxical questions via a thorough qualitative study of the world of wind bands in rural France.

For American readers, *The Sociology of Wind Bands* will feel like a “double” translation. On the one hand, of course, to the English language. On the other hand, since the book was published in England as part of a series on folk and popular music, to U.S. sociology. While the work in this series includes some authors who have already become well known for studying cultural production at large and are central to music sociology, like Ruth Finnegan and Andy Bennett, some of the authors cited in the book are peripheral to U.S. sociology, even though they have permeated sociology in other countries. Consider the work of Richard Hoggart, who has been central to debates about the distinction between high, popular, and mass culture in European sociology, but whose circulation in the United States has been confined mostly to the humanities.

The Sociology of Wind Bands is also part of the trend in French scholarship to move like a systole and diastole between the symbolic autonomy of working-class culture and cultural domination. This literature encompasses sociological heavyweights like Bourdieu but also non-sociologists like Eugen Weber, Michel de Certeau, and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, as well as the debate between Geneviève Bolleme and Roger Chartier on the Blue Library. Of central importance in this strain of scholarship has been the work of Claude Grignon and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Le Savant et le Populaire*, which lends some of its key concepts (miserabilism, legitimism) to this book’s framework.

The text is organized around two key questions: What are the conditions for symbolic domination? And how do these relate to the organization of a cultural practice? The book advances these two questions, aiming to put Bourdieu and Becker in dialogue and to present the double exclusion wind band players take part in. They are excluded from legitimacy in elite musical institutions, due to the lack of formal training of half of their musicians, the “transcribed” repertory they perform, and the emphasis on local organizations and associative life. They are also precluded from commercial success; while they participate in the market as consumers of sheet music and instruments, there is almost no market for the music they perform and record, nor is there play time on mainstream media.

Vincent Dubois, Jean-Matthieu Méon, and Emmanuel Pierru advance their argument through two classic sociological tricks. One, they show how despite the association with working-class culture, the population of musicians who perform in wind bands is far from homogeneous, underscoring how the social profile of the musicians is better characterized by the form of its relation to the working-class world than by a working-class condition. Then they look for the dimensions that explain the variation they have found (in this case, the social versus musical opposition as to what organizes an investment of time). Two, working through the paradox that results when wind band players aim to forget domination and distinction—being Ulysses to the sirens of cultural legitimacy—the authors show how the players end up falling into a second trap, favoring local integration and navigating away, in strictly musical concerns, so that the bands' *raison d'être* becomes how much they participate in local social life.

The authors convincingly show how the embedded and autonomous character of the musical world has become increasingly threatened. Part of the explanation has to do with the structural transformations of the social world that supported it; the “de-ruralization” of villages and peasants, the end of rich local associative life around work and municipalities, the widening of horizons that invites cultural legitimacies from the urban central areas of the country into town life. A second, more localized cause is a transformation in the sources of funding and the professional training of conductors and organizers/administrators. The formalization of the training, and the resulting search for certificates to attain proof of it, bring the demise of the old repertory (replaced in a quest for innovation) as well as its diversification, synchronizing the world of wind bands to the concerns of the quality and renewal of the legitimate cultural world and letting its autonomy go as these key cultural intermediaries work to disentangle the practice from its lowbrow character.

The *Sociology of Wind Bands* is full of insights, yet a couple of caveats are still in order. One, in its excessive zeal to get the world of wind bands right and to report on its musicians, personal dilemmas, and organizational conundrums, the book forgets how to formalize what it is presenting and to explain how it could be extrapolated to other cases that might not be about making wind music together but are still about the tension between cultural autonomy and symbolic domination. The only references to that idea in the manuscript are in the introduction to the English edition, and even there they are brief and only in reference to other kinds of wind music. The book lacks an actual concluding section; it ends abruptly, almost refusing to tell us what the lessons are for sociologists not interested in the case *per se* (and there are many, as I will explain in the following paragraph). The second shortcoming for a book so focused on how people make music together, paradoxically, is that there is not enough about the music itself. While we learn about the networks, institutions, organizational and social constraints, and the available ecology of leisure activities, and despite the ethnographic thickness provided by vignettes styled after those in *Actes de la Recherche*, there is very little about what music affords to those who want to engage in it.

Despite the lack of conclusion, there is much that U.S. sociologists can learn from a book like this. While the authors do not try to go beyond the specifics of their case, we can still benefit analytically in a few ways from having read it. First, we can learn not to take for granted the symbolic autonomy of poor people. Recent debates on the culture of poverty have often forgotten that the poor's cultural autonomy might not be a given, but rather something to explore analytically and later to be complemented by how legitimate institutions and their agents inter-

act with working-class people. Second, we can explore the conditions under which social domination becomes symbolically effective—just because there is a hierarchical system of classifications does not necessarily mean that everyone follows it. Third, following in the classic footsteps of Paul Willis (but turning him upside down), this study shows us how those who are in dominated positions sometimes bring about the conditions of their own demise. In this case, it is not about how working-class kids end up in working-class jobs, but how working-class kids undermine their own symbolic autonomy.

This book should be read by people interested in the sociology of music and the arts or in the changing relationship between industrialization and cultural production and by students of classification systems and practices in modern France. It could be assigned for graduate courses in the sociology of culture, undergraduate classes on popular culture, and specialized seminars on comparative approaches to cultural production.