

Ritual and Music: Parallels and Practice, and the Palaeolithic

Iain Morley

Considerations of the emergence of symbolic and spiritual culture have understandably often focused principally on the rich record of representational and abstract imagery of the Upper Palaeolithic of Europe. There is, however, at least one other medium of expression relevant to such considerations and which can leave an archaeological trace – musical activity. Although there are some notable discussions of evidence for musical activity in the Upper Palaeolithic (many of which are cited in this chapter), discussions of music in the context of the early manifestation of symbolic and religious activity are surprisingly rare, with early musical artefacts and activities receiving a brief mention in that context, if they are mentioned at all (a particularly notable exception is provided by d’Errico et al. 2003). The archaeological record of reputed sound-producers from the Upper Palaeolithic is, in fact, a relatively rich one, including over 120 objects which have been, at various times (admittedly with variable likelihood), interpreted as flutes and more than ninety objects interpreted (again, with variable likelihood) as whistles (see Morley 2003; also Morley 2005). There are also a number of other objects with sound-producing potential, interpreted as bullroarers (Dams 1985; Alebo 1986; Dauvois 1989, 1999; Scothern 1992) and rasps (Huyge 1990, 1991; Dauvois 1989, 1999). Finally the sound-producing potential of rocks and caves themselves also appears to have been exploited (Glory 1964, 1965; Dams 1984, 1985; Reznikoff & Dauvois 1988; Dauvois 1989, 1999). At present the oldest widely accepted musical instruments are two swan-bone pipes dated to around 36,800 +/– 1000 years BP, found in context with Aurignacian II split bone points at Geissenklösterle, Germany (Hahn & Münzel 1995; Turk & Kavur 1997; Richter et al. 2000), and a remarkable

multipart pipe made from mammoth ivory from the same site, of around the same age (Conard et al. 2004).

Along with language, musical behaviours and religious behaviours are conspicuous in sharing an apparent universality amongst modern humans. As John Blacking (1995) said in a now oft-quoted passage, “every known human society has what trained musicologists would recognise as music” (p. 224), and whilst a precise definition of ‘religion’ might be no more easily reached than of music (see Henshilwood, this volume, for a discussion), it would probably be true to say that every human culture exhibits behaviours that we would recognise as ‘religious’. Very often these two sets of behaviours coincide, with musical activities forming a fundamental part of ritual activities, and spiritual significance being attributed to musical activities.

It is important to remember that in discussing music we are not talking about detached ‘autonomous’ patterns of sounds. As Begbie (2000) puts it: “To insist that a work of music consists entirely of sound-patterns heard in a certain way, or sound-patterns codified in a score, is artificial and inadequate – for it also consists of actions, and this means actions that can only properly be understood as temporally constituted and situated” (p. 10). This embodied and contextual aspect of musical activity is one that is often overlooked, from the perspective of modern western art-music. The only form in which music might genuinely be said to *lack* embodied and performance-dependent traits is that of sheet music. Nevertheless this concept of music as something which can exist as an entity in its own right, a pattern independent of action and situation, is one that prevails amongst much analytical discussion of it. In contrast, a discussion of music and ritual must rely upon a consideration of its form and role in human action and context.

Equally, it is important to remember that, on the basis of what we know of other societies from around the world, and ours until very recent years, for the vast majority of people for the vast majority of the past there would be no separation between ‘religion’ and other daily activities. ‘Ritual’ and belief might be as much a part of (what we would call) a daily practical activity such as making a tool out of stone or metal, or cooking a meal, as they are a part of an activity like making a votive offering in the corner of a room. By the same token, making a votive offering in the corner of a room might be seen as just as ‘practical’ as making a tool or a meal. Each such activity may equally be viewed as one which has to be

carried out in order to ensure that the world is the way that it needs to be in order to ensure survival. A religious belief system can provide ethics, moral guidelines, laws, explanations and understandings of the world, of people, and of illness and mortality. For many, it constitutes philosophy, science, law and medicine – a framework for understanding and interacting with the world which is thus integral to daily life. A ‘belief system’ is not as in the sense that we often use the term, an *accessory to knowledge* and *understanding*, but *is* knowledge and understanding.

Music and ritual: shared roles, shared traits and shared conceptions

With this in mind it might be expected that religious significance of some form would be attached to almost all activities, and its association with musical activities is thus perhaps unsurprising. However, there is more to it than that. Musical activities and religious, or spiritual, activities have much in common. Both are frequently orchestrated by an ‘empowered’ individual, or individuals, but are highly communal, social and integrative activities. Both have the potential to elicit powerful emotional responses in participating individuals, and to have significance, both at a very private, personal level and at a social, communal level. Both musical and religious behaviours can thus be simultaneously profoundly personal and at the same time creators of communality through shared experience. These traits are explored further later in this chapter.

Another significant trait that music and ritual have in common is the difficulty of their definition – ontologies of which are apparently at least as numerous as the cultures practicing them. Some cultures famously have no single word for music itself, although they have words for musical activities and instruments of various sorts (e.g. the Hausa people of Nigeria); others have terms for music which encompass activities which we, from the Western tradition, would not consider to be part of music. Delineating the parameters of ritual activity faces similar problems. Nevertheless there are particular combinations of traits of both ritual and musical activities which allow us to recognise them, even if it is difficult to impose parameters on them.

It is not simply that musical and ritual activities have many traits in common, however. One thing which becomes clear upon examination of ontologies of music in other cultures is the frequency with which

conceptions of music are inseparable from ritual and religion. In considering the varied ways in which music takes roles in other cultures Bohlman (2002) conspicuously chooses to illustrate this diversity with examples of music's roles within religious practice:

By the epistemology of music we mean its ability to be a part of culture as a whole and thus to acquire meaning in relation to other activities. Examining music cross-culturally, we recognise that religious meaning accrues to music in many ways. Music may serve as a vehicle for shaping the voice of a deity; it may demarcate time so that it is more meaningful for the performance of ritual; music may provide one of many ornaments that make religious practice more attractive; certain domains of music-making (e.g. instrumental music in many religions) may raise images of magic or immorality, thus causing some religions to prohibit music in worship. (p. 5)

But music is frequently more than just a facilitator of ritual and religion, and in many cases is conceptually inseparable from them. Of thirteen different ontologies of music from around the world given as examples by Bohlman (2002), eight are explicitly associated with religion and/or cosmologies. These vary from concepts such as *qirā'ah* (in Islam) and *ta'ameh ha-mikrah* (in Judaism), the chanting of religious texts, which would be identified as music by external observers but never by practitioners (music being defined by them not by form but by context), to the Afro-Brazilian *candomblé* religion in which music is so ubiquitous that the term is used virtually synonymously for religion and music.

Another example of synonymy of music and ritual is provided by the Maring of Papua New Guinea (Rappaport 1999). At the Kaiko festival Maring groups perform a dance which signifies commitment to come to the martial aid of the group who is hosting the festival, should such aid be required in the future; the dance and the ritual are inseparable. The dance in this sense is indexical, indicating a pledge – it does more than to symbolise the pledge, it is indexical of it because to the Maring to dance *is* to pledge – pledging is intrinsic to the conventionalised act of dancing (Rappaport 1999). A fundamental characteristic of ritual here is its ability to bring about a conventional state of affairs – to affirm, transform, or bring into being a particular natural order – that is, it is meant to affect the world (ibid.).

In this latter sense ritual is separated by Rappaport from 'drama' by its intended causal influence on the world. A participant in a ritual has a

part in ‘the enduring order that their participation brings into being’ (p. 136) unlike an actor whose part and actions last only as long as the performance. Coming from the western musical tradition we tend to be inclined to consider the actions of a musician, the act of performing, and the performance itself, in much the same way as those of the ‘actor’ and the ‘drama’ – with no lasting or causal influence on the world. However, as the above example illustrates, such a distinction from ‘causally influential’ ritual cannot always be made, either for ‘drama’ or for ‘music’.

Indeed, substituting the word ‘performance’ for ‘drama’ and ‘performer’ for ‘actor’ in the above discussion, it is made equally relevant for both music and drama. As Rappaport himself observes, a particular act may contain both ritual and drama [performance], and ‘stand somewhere on a continuum . . . between the two polar forms’ (p. 136). Certainly there are numerous examples, one of which cited by Rappaport is the performance of religious music in a church. Others that present themselves are that an actor or musician (or writer) might hope that their performance would have some transformative effect on the world, through its effect on the audience. Conversely a ritual participant may adopt a persona (of an ancestor or animal for example) for only the duration of the ritual, but this is still nevertheless perceived to have a lasting transformative effect on the order of the world.

So is it possible ever to separate ritual and performance? I would suggest that in fact there is no such thing as *pure* (polar) ritual or *pure* (polar) performance (by Rappaport’s criteria) and that the continuum is one only of varying relative proportions of the two, the ends of which are not absolutes. For example, it is impossible to absolutely separate the two on the basis of the intended temporality of effects of the activity on the world, or on the temporality of the personae adopted. It is also impossible to separate the two on the basis of the extent to which they effect change through appeal to a supernatural agent rather than through other humans. The Maring pledge dance-ritual alluded to above makes no recourse to a supernatural agent, but still brings into being a new state of affairs. It is also impossible to separate ritual and performance in terms of the extent to which change is effected ‘directly’ on the world rather than via affecting the actions of others (as in the actor-audience example above), be they natural or supernatural, for the ‘direct’ effect of a ritual could conceivably only be manifest in terms of a change in human behaviour.

One of the most important traits of ritual activity contributing to the maintaining or changing of established order comes from the sense of unity, *communitas*, that can be created by coparticipation. Once again Rappaport provides an erudite elucidation, and is worth quoting in full here:

Indeed, the boundary between individuals and their surroundings, especially others participating in ritual with them, may seem to dissolve . . . such a sense of union is encouraged by the coordination of utterance and movement demanded of congregations in many rituals. To sing with others, to move as they move in the performance of a ritual is not merely to symbolize union. It is *in and of itself* to reunite in the reproduction of a larger order. Unison does not merely symbolize that order but *indicates* it and its acceptance. The participants do not simply *communicate* to each other *about* that order but *commune with* each other *within* it. In sum, the state of *communitas* experienced in ritual is at once social and experiential. Indeed, the distinction between social and experiential is surrendered, or even erased, in a general feeling of oneness with oneself, with the congregation, or with the cosmos. (1999, p. 220, italics in original)

It will be noted that the description of singing and coordination of movement with others is not merely an exemplar in this conception of ritual activity and its role, but is integral to it. These roles are fulfilled *through* singing and dance activity. Music and dance can fulfil this role so effectively within ritual because, in fact, with the substitution of ‘music and dance activity’ for ‘ritual’ in the paragraph it constitutes as good a description of the potential effects of participation in musical and dance performance as of ritual performance. The difference is that music and dance are intrinsic to the description of the potential effects of ritual activity, whereas the reverse is not the case; i.e. ritual relies on music to achieve these effects, but music does not rely on ritual to achieve them itself.

Performance and participation – audience and congregation

These benefits of, and parallels between, ritual and musical activity depend to a great extent upon direct participation. The perception of being an audience-member, or observer, of a ritual activity would likely only be held by individuals who consider themselves detached from the belief system itself; others would consider themselves participants, to one

degree or another. Similarly, the category of audience, as opposed to participant, is one that is predominant in modern Western music, but is relatively rare elsewhere. So at what point in the experience of musical activity can one be considered to be a *participant*, in the sense that we use the word? Does the simple act of moving your body in time with the tempo of the music transform you from ‘audience’ to ‘participant’? From ‘audience’ to ‘congregation’? If so, at what point in the scale of magnitude – from tapping your finger on the arm of your chair to full body movement dance – do you cease to be audience and become participant?

What do we really mean by *participant* or *participation* in performance – be it ritual or musical? The fact that we would be reticent to apply the appellation of ‘participant’ to someone dancing to recorded music would suggest that there is more to participation than magnitude of physical reaction; indeed, this observation can apply in the case of dancing to ‘live’ music, although in some circumstances this *could* be considered to be participation.

Perhaps, then, it is the extent to which your action is perceived to have an effect on the stimulus to which you are reacting. The extent to which you *contribute*. At what point is response perceived to have an effect on the music (or ritual) itself? For the individual themselves, as soon as they start to react to the music, their reaction itself becomes one of the stimuli; this in itself, then, is not enough to constitute contribution, as this would apply in all cases, recorded or live. So it must be dependent on the perception *by others* that your action contributes to or transforms the stimulus *they* are experiencing. Or, rather, because no one has objective knowledge of others’ perception, it is the extent to which each individual [a] conceives that other individuals [n] perceive that they [a] are contributing to the stimulus experienced by those other individuals [n]. It can be seen that to consider oneself a participant, in the sense used here, in a performance (ritual or musical) relies upon a strong sense of the perception of you by others engaged in the activity, that is, it relies on well-developed theory of mind and social awareness.

Music, meaning and symbolism

In addition to – and possibly because of – music’s roles within ritual and religious practice it also features heavily in doctrine and mythology concerning creation, with early beings very often being musicians, and

using music in various transformative ways (Bohlman 2002), as a building block of humanity and the world, and as a medium for the transformation of boundaries between the natural and supernatural, the sacred and the profane.

However, musical activities do not *rely* on symbolism or a symbolic capacity for their existence. Whilst many, or even the majority, of musical activities that we experience in the modern world have direct symbolic associations made explicit, the activity itself of music-making need not be predicated upon symbolising.

For example, amongst the Blackfoot and Sioux Plains Indians of North America, music is for the most part considered to have no direct symbolic content. Song has minimal lyrical content, vocalisations instead consisting of *vocables*, which are emotive sounds with no obvious symbolism. It would seem that the main purpose of this type of vocalisation is to contribute to the emotional responses evoked by the music (McAllester 1996), and that it has no (conscious) symbolism behind it. According to Nettl, “native informants are able to say almost nothing on the symbolic aspect of their [nonlexical] music” (Nettl 1956, p. 25). A very similar situation exists amongst the Aka and Mbuti Pygmies of equatorial Africa, also traditional hunter-gatherer societies, in that the majority of the melodic content of their music consists of vocable vocalizations, apparently lacking any direct symbolic content (in terms of lexical meaning or mimicry) (Turino 1992).

This being said, whilst the music itself is said to have no symbolic content, it is clearly often used in close association with activities which do have symbolic content and associations, and a particular song can relate very specifically to a particular activity. It is evident that whilst the creation of music *can* occur without any symbolising, with a symbolising capacity in place music (its performance and perception) provides a perfect medium for carrying symbolic associations, because of its combination of having no fixed meaning (‘floating intentionality’ to use Cross’s 1999 term) whilst having the potential to stimulate powerful emotional reactions.

In a sense, much of what constitutes religious belief systems and practice has the same potential – elements, such as explanations of the world and descriptions of spiritual entities, gain much of their currency from their ambiguity; they can be many things to many people. The combination of enough specificity of meaning to allow an interpretation

to be made, with the flexibility to allow that (process of) interpretation to be personal, is a powerful one, and could apply equally to the experience of a trance state, understanding a passage of doctrinal text, or experiencing/participating in musical activity. The fact that one has to decide upon (or accept) an interpretation of these ambiguities is one of the elements that makes a particular belief system (or, indeed, type of music) powerfully personal whilst at the same time profoundly uniting, in the belief that conspecifics share similar personal interpretations and appreciations.

If one can believe that one has come to a particular interpretation of one's own volition, an interpretation that is thus very personal, but can also believe that others have come to the same interpretation of *their* own volition, this can create the sense of a powerful bond of shared thought and emotion between the individuals, that is, a perceived empathy. This is in spite of the fact that in reality both the sense of independent volition (in coming to an interpretation) and the similarity of interpretation of the individuals concerned, are to an extent illusory. This is because the interpretation is often structured by suggestion (what we might term 'bounded ambiguity') and because the *precise* natures of the 'shared' beliefs are often never made explicit.¹

Music and ritual in the Palaeolithic

So how do the above observations add to our picture of music in the Palaeolithic? Several things are clear: outside of the recent Western musical tradition, ritual and musical practice are often closely related, and in some cases virtually interdependent (even within the recent Western musical and religious systems the two are powerfully related in a number of ways, and such overlaps are explored in some depth by Begbie 2000). The overlaps are a consequence not just of symbolic relatedness emergent from the contexts in which they are carried out, but upon shared characteristics in their forms, execution and their effects on individuals. It seems likely that where we find music in the Upper Palaeolithic archaeological record, we find ritual too. Also, that these are not solitary meditative activities, but communal and integrative.

As noted in the introduction there are numerous examples of objects from Upper Palaeolithic contexts (Aurignacian, Gravettian, Solutrean, and Magdalenian) which have been interpreted as musical instruments

or, less specifically, sound-producers. Unfortunately, in many cases they were excavated before techniques allowed for a fine resolution of spatial and stratigraphic relationships, meaning that palimpsests and the circumstances of deposition are impossible now to detect. As a consequence, with the majority of examples of reputed instruments we cannot be certain as to whether they were used in solitary musical activity or as part of a group activity. In contrast, some of the more recent finds have been subject to far greater scrutiny and thorough contextual recording, including the aforementioned examples from Geissenklösterle, the earliest currently known instruments associated with anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*. The following section describes a few cases of different types of sound-producer where it is possible to say a little more about their contexts of use. Of course, we should bear in mind that musical behaviours and instrumental use are not synonymous, and the former can occur without the latter. It is likely that behaviours we would recognise as musical predated the occurrence of instruments in the archaeological record by many years. Nevertheless, the identification of musical instruments from the Palaeolithic remains the ‘acid test’ of the existence of musical behaviour, and can tell us something about the contexts in which such activities were carried out.

By far the richest known source of intentionally produced sound-makers is Isturitz, in the French Pyrenees. This cave site was an important focal point for large groups of people throughout the Upper Palaeolithic (Bahn 1983), showing evidence of use from Aurignacian through to Magdalenian contexts. It seems to have been a focus for major gatherings in spring and autumn in particular and has produced a variety of art and bone-working. Seventeen bone flute-like objects have been retrieved, from throughout the period of occupation of the site, and several of these show deliberate signs of working, with truncated ends, holes bored and then smoothed, incised lines, and even some which might have been block-and-duct examples (like a modern recorder) (Scothern 1992). Graeme Lawson and Francesco d’Errico (2002) have carried out extensive analyses of the most complete examples (Lawson and d’Errico 2002; d’Errico et al. 2003), and suggest that at least two of the Aurignacian examples seem to have been designed to be played as end-blown trumpet- or reed-voiced pipes, rather than as flutes. There seems to be a great consistency in their manufacture, and they closely resemble numerous Mayan and mediaeval examples. It is the various Isturitz

examples that are most frequently cited and discussed in the literature regarding Palaeolithic instrumentation, and they are particularly significant in appearing to indicate large scale communal musical activity or, at least, musical activity at large scale communal gatherings, and over a very extended period of time.

Similarities in the stone and bone artefacts with those from the Dordogne area, and the transferral of flint over distances over 100km (Gamble 1983) suggest wide social contact (Scothern 1992). Parallels in the bone flute design and engravings are displayed by examples from Mas d'Azil, Le Placard, and Marcamps; Mas d'Azil shows similar evidence of large aggregations of people (Scothern 1992), and this may also be represented by the nine examples from the Magdalenian contexts of the site of Le Placard. At least two of these are made from eagle bone, a choice which it is hard to believe did not have significance beyond its sound-producing potential, given the likely difficulty of the acquisition of the material. It is worth remembering that a perfectly functional flute/pipe can be made from much more readily available materials than bird bone, let alone that of an eagle.

The flutes are commonly found inside the decorated caves of these sites, suggesting either that acoustics were particularly important, or their relation to the cave art, or both. Of course, this is not to suggest that all music (or ritual, or artistic) activity was carried out in caves, as evidence of such activities in other locations is less likely to be preserved or to be discovered. It is also difficult to demonstrate whether the production of music in the caves was a group activity indulged by all or an activity performed only by a select few, an issue which also applies to the production of cave art. However, in her analysis of the Solutrean lithophones (natural cave structures such as stalactites, stalagmites and stalactitic flutings which produce clear tones when struck) Dams (1984; 1985) notes that they occur in caves which generally also allow a number of people to congregate in nearby chambers, up to twenty to thirty people at Roucadour, for example (Dams 1985). Indeed, the cave of Nerja has been used in recent times as a venue for concerts and dance during the summer months (Dams 1984). It is worth noting, however, that the locations of the lithophones are dictated by natural cave features rather than human agency so their position in relation to other large chambers is not pre-meditated. What would be particularly valuable as a comparison would be to know of caves in the same regions with the same calcified structures in

them that *haven't* been decorated and used percussively. If such examples exist, it might suggest that the ones in the caves described by Dams were chosen selectively because they could accommodate many people.

There are many similarities between the features and decoration of the lithophones at the various widespread sites that Dams describes, which suggests wide social contact between the people responsible and the possibility that large groups of people congregated to experience (and perhaps participate in) the sound produced by them. Whether the activities involved many or few people, it is clear from the work of Glory (1964; 1965), Dams (1984; 1985) and Reznikoff and Dauvois (1988) that the acoustics of the caves were highly significant, and that sound production bore an important relationship with both abstract and representational art.

A set of six mammoth bones from Mezin, Ukraine, dated to twenty thousand years ago, provides another potential example of public percussive sound production. These appear to have been deliberately and repeatedly struck, and were found in context with two beaters and a variety of ivory 'rattles' (Bibikov 1978). Also found in the same settlement were piles of red and yellow ochre, and other mammoth bones which had been incised and painted. The 'orchestra' bones (including a shoulder blade, thigh bone, jaw bones and skull fragments) produce a selection of tones when struck with beaters (Bibikov 1978) and were found in a large, open-fronted, communal hut in the Mezin settlement, rather than a small dwelling. This does suggest, if it is indeed a collection of instruments, that the sound produced was supposed to be heard by the community, and was not performed in solitary private rites.

While the artefacts do show wear from percussion, Scothern (1992) and Lawson et al. (1998) point out that this does not necessarily merit a musicological explanation, as many daily activities involve percussive actions. Hopefully further microscopic and use-wear analysis of the assemblage in the future may help to resolve the issue of whether they were directly struck by the neighbouring 'beaters' or whether they were struck indirectly as part of another process. Their contextual association with the reindeer antler mallet and beaters, as well as what appear to be rattles, counts in favour of the musicological interpretation, though. There is evidence for the trafficking of raw materials and visually related goods between European populations and those of the Russian plains

of the Magdalenian (Scothern 1992), so it is quite possible that sound-production traditions were also shared.

Concluding remarks

Musical and religious activities have much in common with each other, in the ways that they are carried out and their effects on individual participants. In many cultures conceptions of music are to various degrees inseparable from conceptions of ritual and religion. Indeed, 'ritual' and 'performance' are in many ways synonymous. Music is often conceived as a medium for the transformation of boundaries between the sacred and the profane, and the natural and supernatural, probably because of the roles that it fulfils in that respect in many societies' rituals. These roles, in turn, are a product of the commonalities in the potential effects of musical and ritual performance. The generation of a state of *communitas* is an important product (and often goal) of much of both ritual and musical activity, and in the context of ritual frequently dependent on musical activity to be achieved. Because musical activities themselves stimulate some of the same reactions as ritual activities can, and share some of the characteristics of religious stimuli, musical activities are a remarkably effective facilitator of the desired effects of participation in ritual activities.

The performance and perception of music can provide the perfect medium for carrying symbolic (including religious) associations because of its combination of having no fixed meaning ('floating intentionality') whilst having the potential to stimulate powerful emotional reactions. Many elements of ritual and doctrine share the same combination of having no fixed meaning (which in these circumstances might be called 'bounded ambiguity') and of having the potential to stimulate powerful emotions. This combination of traits allows the experience of a particular belief system or type of music to be powerfully personal whilst at the same time profoundly uniting, in the belief that conspecifics share similar personal interpretations and experiences.

The ability to hold such beliefs about others' beliefs and mental states relies on a well-developed theory of mind ability, and this can be argued also to be the case for actual participation in performance activities: to be a *participant* in performance can be argued to rely on the individual conceiving that others perceive them as contributing to the stimuli to

which they are all reacting; that is, it is highly social and also relies on a well-developed theory of mind.

Given the above we can reasonably expect that amongst anatomically modern humans, musical activity is likely to have played an important role in the situations where we see evidence for ritual activity, and where there is archaeological evidence for musical activity it will frequently have had associations with concepts that we would think of as religious. It is perhaps, then, unsurprising that where we have contextual evidence for musical finds from the Upper Palaeolithic, they are frequently in association with other evidence of symbolic and communal activities. Much of what we have at present comes from cave contexts; this is due largely to taphonomic and excavation biases, so should not be taken to indicate that this is the main context in which musical (and indeed artistic or ritual) activities took place.

Much of the material that is already known warrants further examination such as that carried out by Scothern (1992) and d'Errico et al. (2003), but there are nevertheless some cases where it seems that musical activity was an important part of large communal activities. Undoubtedly the majority of the music archaeology of the Palaeolithic has been lost; hopefully there is much still to be found and recognised. Increasingly accurate archaeological knowledge of the contexts of deposition of the evidence for musical activity in the Palaeolithic will allow us to flesh out the relationship between ritual and musical activity at that time, but we can reasonably expect that there was a powerful relationship between the two.

In considering the relationship between music and ritual, music can seem on first examination to be a mere condiment, or at best, an optional ingredient in ritual activity, subservient to the requirements of ritual; on closer inspection it is revealed to be a prime mover in determining the nature and genuine effects of ritual, with rhythm, dance and song frequently relied on to confer many of the most important individual and social benefits associated with ritual activity.

This chapter has only scratched the surface of the potential parallels and overlaps between the functional qualities of ritual and music; this is an area with much potential for future investigation. Exploration of the phylogenetic and ontogenic relationships between ritual, play, music and performance activities could all bear significant results for models of the emergence of modern social relations, beliefs and symbolism.

NOTES

- ¹ Of course, these properties also have the potential to be profoundly divisive, with differing interpretations being seen as personally incompatible, and easily identified with ingroup/outgroup categorisations.

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