

What Death of Art Music? The
Contemporary Composer in the Age of
Music Technology and Experimental Rock
by Andrew McManus

Music 375: Popular Music: The Experimental Tradition
Final Paper
Yale University
May 8, 2006
Revised: November 2008

Introduction

Composer Kevin Puts currently lives the life that today's young composers dream of. He receives commissions from around the world; so many, in fact, that he had no need to continue teaching at the University of Texas at Austin to support himself. His music is performed by the brightest and best in the performance world to critical acclaim. A graduate of the Yale School of Music some years ago, Mr. Puts was invited to speak to a joint session of the graduate and undergraduate composition seminars here at Yale on March 30, 2006. His presentation included his *Symphony No. 3 ("Vespertine")*, a work written in 2003 and premiered in 2004 by the Marin Symphony Orchestra under Alasdair Neale. During his presentation Mr. Puts discussed the inspiration for the work, Icelandic pop singer Bjork's album from which the symphony gets its name. That Mr. Puts could draw on Bjork's music, or any envelope-pushing "experimental" popular music was not beyond me, especially as a composer who has come to greatly admire the experimental tradition in popular music. What did strike me, however, was the following quote from Mr. Puts: "Bjork's one of the artists we're allowed to say we like."

There may not need of more evidence that contemporary composers still treat so-called popular music with kid gloves, no matter how experimental its nature. But Mr. Puts also referred to his symphony as being the "less experimental" version of Bjork's music. The combination of these two statements gives rise to a problem: what exactly creates this divide in the minds of contemporary composers, and why does it necessitate Mr. Puts writing a "less experimental version" of Bjork's work? Furthermore, what is implied by the fact that this divide does exist? What does it mean for the place of the contemporary "serious" composer in the artistic world of today?

Historical Background

Perhaps the most obvious reason for the divide in most educated contemporary composers is their acquired artistic respect for the greatest composers of the Western European tradition. These composers grew up steeped in eighteenth and nineteenth century artistic aesthetics and ideas, such as the Beethovenian image of the composer as the creator of transcendent, cosmic works that bring the world to its knees. In short, the nineteenth century's elevation of concert music to such astronomical levels still has its effect on today's composers because of the education system that teaches them to love it. What persists, however, is not Romanticism but rather the "serious" nature of the music or the notion of

music as a work of high art. Ferruccio Busoni, while heatedly making the case for “absolute” music over “program” music in his effusive essay “Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music,” says the following:

To music, indeed, it is given to set in vibration our human moods: Dread (*Leporello*), oppression of soul, invigoration, lassitude (Beethoven’s last Quartets), decision (*Wotan*), hesitation, despondency, encouragement, harshness, tenderness, excitement, tranquilization, the feeling of surprise or expectancy, and still others; likewise the inner echo of external occurrences which is bound up in the moods of the soul. ¹

These words only scratch the surface of Busoni’s fervent passion and barely begin to explain the extent to which this artistic tradition was esteemed. It should not, therefore, come as a surprise that artifacts of these ideas of high art still exist today.

But what of the massive changes that have occurred in the past century? The death of Romanticism certainly did not mean the death of lofty artistic goals. Schoenberg, for instance, believed he had a historical duty to devise his twelve-tone system to “ensure the supremacy of German music for the next hundred years.”² Schoenberg’s music has always been considered difficult to understand, but Alban Berg in his famous 1924 defense of Schoenberg “Why is Schoenberg’s music so hard to understand?” says the following of his teacher’s work: “A mode of composing that results from such unerring musicianship embraces all compositional possibilities and is, therefore, never totally comprehensible.”³

This lack of comprehensibility led to an isolationist art by mid-century. Milton Babbitt’s well-known essay “Who cares if you listen?” describes the problem that had developed at the time: listeners and performers were shunning the art that the avant-garde was creating. The only productive course of action for the contemporary composer, therefore, is to create truly “new” music in total isolation. Babbitt advocates research akin to that performed in the sciences; he was, after all, also a mathematician who applied rigorous logic to his theories of music.⁴ The art Babbitt describes once again is miles above other forms of art. While he does not fervently extol Romanticism like Busoni, Babbitt nonetheless holds the same view of the artistic height of the music he advocates:

¹ Busoni, Ferruccio. “Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music” from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Elliott Schwartz and Barney Child, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. 8

² Morgan, Robert. *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1991. 188

³ Berg, Alban. “Why is Schoenberg’s Music so Hard to Understand?” from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Elliott Schwartz and Barney Child, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. 67

⁴ Babbitt, Milton. “Who Cares if You Listen?” from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Elliott Schwartz and Barney Child, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. 243

Advanced music, to the extent that it reflects the knowledge and originality of the informed composer, scarcely can be expected to appear more intelligible than these arts and sciences to the person whose musical education usually has been less extensive than his background in other fields. But to this, a double standard is invoked, with the words “music is music,” implying also that “music is *just* music.” Why not, then, equate the activities of the radio repairman with those of the theoretical physicist, on the basis of the dictum that “physics is physics?”⁵

Today’s learned composers are almost always well-versed in this hyper-advanced music, and the intellectual rigor behind it is still considered a virtue today despite the fact that the style itself fell out of favor decades ago.

The context of more accessible “serious” music in the twentieth century is also extremely important to understanding the mind of today’s serious composer. The neoclassicism of Stravinsky and the exotic folk-based music of Bartók are always a part of a composer’s training. Composers such as Stravinsky and especially Satie may have attempted, to different degrees, to divorce themselves from the cosmic aesthetics of Romanticism, but their art is nonetheless considered “high.”

The tradition in the academy of emphasizing a comprehensive study of the European art music tradition has effectively assigned today’s composers the role of creating more “serious” music in the context of an elevated art. There should be no question that this artistic stratification still exists, but certain obvious trends in the new music world today cast doubt on this claim. The infiltration of “low” art into the serious music world began as early as the 1920s, but more relevant to the modern composer is the reception of minimalism and its explosive influence on the music of the latter half of the twentieth century in the United States. The uptown-downtown serialist-minimalist divide was a rigid one in the 1960s and 1970s, and the two sides did not think highly of one another. The minimalist style, however, represents only one facet of what could be considered the infiltration of low art into the high.

But what caused this infiltration? A survey of the work being done today in the field of new music reveals that tonality, world music, popular music and comprehensibility have all “sullied” the high art of old. But is concert music today actually artless, having been stained by corrupting influences? One would think that the background composers receive in the tradition of high art would be sufficient to instruct them how to adopt the myriad influences of modern times in a way that allows their music to have particular aesthetic goals. Today’s

⁵ Ibid, 247

composers do this. Which influences they choose to adopt are up to them, but the tradition of creating elevated art remains.

Adopting these influences, however, results in a potential undermining of distinctions between genres. It is one thing to write jazz for the classical orchestra, but entirely another to incorporate the actual sounds of another genre. The addition of sounds from popular music eventually led to the incorporation of the very media that has come to define the sound of popular music.

The context of technology

The audio technology that developed in the twentieth century was adopted by the serious music world in an exclusively experimental context; it would be decades before electronic composition became somewhat more “mainstream” in the world of art music. Pierre Schaefer wrote the first magnetic tape pieces (*musique concrète*) while Edgar Varèse finally found his “new instruments” that he had been pursuing with “what may have seemed fanatical zeal”⁶ in both tape music and synthesized sounds. Stockhausen wrote many synthesized works, and Milton Babbitt advocated “voluntary withdrawal from this public world to one of private performance and electronic media”⁷ as a way to accomplish his goals of musical “research.” Whether it was because serious music had an acoustic tradition, or because serious music lacked a commercial incentive, serious music failed to adopt music technology in the comprehensive way that popular music did. The recording studio was a tool for mass production, so it is not surprising that popular musicians were ready to experiment with the technology that enabled this mass production. As a result, popular musicians relied more and more on the studio and music technology consequently approached becoming inextricably tied to the popular music aesthetic. What began as simple amplification with the advent of microphones turned into the studio defining a popular artist in a way that live performance could not.

Perhaps it was not that the concert music world was averse to technology so much as technology had become such an integral part of popular music that any use of certain kinds of technology could not help but invoke it. Amplification, the use of instruments like the electric guitar and the use of certain synthesized sounds would carry with them a “popular” association, thus invoking popular idioms in a way objectionable to many serious composers.

⁶ Varèse, Edgar. “The Liberation of Sound” from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Elliott Schwartz and Barney Child, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998. 202

⁷ Babbitt, 249

Electronic sound collages have existed since Pierre Schaeffer, but only in recent times have amplification, electric instruments and synthesized sound gained acceptance in the concert music world.

Why was concert music so slow on the uptake? In Peter Shapiro's introduction to *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music: Throbbing Words on Sound*, Shapiro writes about musicians who "make no bones about their relationship to machines; they don't masquerade in the cloak of roots or tradition."⁸ Shapiro also writes:

Electronic musicians have jimmed open the bars and staves that have imprisoned western music for centuries and created their own multidimensional configurations of sound. Turning the noise of the city, hot-wiring the hearts of their machines, diving headfirst into mysterious realms, reinstating lost rituals and imagining new identities, these musicians have opened their minds to the possibility that the supposedly dehumanizing machine might actually make us more human.⁹

Could it be that technology interferes with the serious acoustic tradition? Does it dehumanize a music that is supposed to be in the same tradition as nineteenth century romantic music, which takes humanity to the extreme? Does the incorporation of technology mean that serious music can no longer call itself artistic?

Some of the answers to these questions lie in the work of certain "popular" musicians in the latter half of the twentieth century. Artists and bands such as The Velvet Underground, Frank Zappa, Glenn Branca and Faust are just some of the experimental popular artists of the latter half of the twentieth century. The artistic context in which they work, however, is hardly dissimilar from that of today's concert composers. All of these artists and bands have rock music origins and a deep grounding in the use of technology. Their artistic accomplishments in the field of experimental rock music may not only hold the key to understanding today's concert music composers but also help explain the confusing pluralism that is concert music today. Just what is good music?

The Velvet Underground and the rock song paradigm

The music of the Velvet Underground can generally be described as rock and roll that bursts intentionally at the seams. Most of their music plays off tensions of sound and form, intentionally calling attention to the places in which it defies the commercially successful cookie-cutter 1960s rock and roll track. As Van Cagle writes, "the Velvets were attempting to

⁸ Shapiro, Peter, ed. *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music: Throbbing Words on Sound*. New York: Caipirinha Productions, 2000. 2

⁹ Ibid.

self-consciously denounce the limits of contemporary rock and roll.”¹⁰ The band’s background with Andy Warhol’s Factory and 1960s New York subculture explains not only their often shocking material but also their anti-commercial sentiments, and it is true that in spite of their incredible influence on rock music in later decades, they were not commercially successful.

A representative example of the Velvets’ divergence from the rock song paradigm is found in “White Light/White Heat,” the title track from their second album released in 1968. The 8-bar I-V harmonic structure with the insertion of the occasional IV is highly characteristic of the commercially successful rock and roll of the 1950s, as are the backup chorus that sings “oooooh....white light/heat,” the driving eighth note pulse and the piano and guitar accompaniment. The key of Ab major is not particularly unusual either. What is divergent is track’s sound quality. The Velvets were known for the volume levels of their playing, but the conspicuous nature of the digital distortion in this track surpasses even that of “I’m Waiting for the Man” from *The Velvet Underground and Nico*. Though similarly based on driving repeated eighths, “I’m Waiting for the Man” has a far cleaner sound. The quasi-doo-wop backup chorus further dirties the texture of “White Light/White Heat” by being occasionally out of tune.

Slightly arrhythmic guitar material begins to enter before the 2:00 mark, at which point the tempo accelerates slightly and the arrhythmic guitar material takes over. The driving eighths gradually disappear and the guitars, with ever-increasing levels of distortion and feedback, finish the song after having obliterated the connections it had with the rock paradigm. Even the tonal scheme has been thrown out, as the final pitch is a clear Gb.

The Velvets produced this tension of paradigm and genre in their music mostly through the technological manipulation of sound and the use of the recording studio. Nearly forty years after the Velvets produced this music, contemporary concert music composers often do the same, having embraced today’s technology and using it to manipulate sound in an aesthetically meaningful way. Technological manipulation is by no means the only way in which today’s composers accomplish the task of creating this kind of tension, but the fact that it has become an accepted part of the concert music color palette is evidence of the convergence of experimentalism in popular music with that of concert music.

¹⁰ Cagle, Van M. *Reconstructing Pop/Subculture: Art, Rock and Andy Warhol*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995. 93

Frank Zappa's rock album paradigms

What the Velvets did not do in *The Velvet Underground and Nico* and *White Light/White Heat* was obliterate the connections between tracks. Frank Zappa, conversely, toyed with the format of an entire rock album. *We're only in it for the Money*, for instance, contains passages of what could be called self-contained rock songs, but it is rife with interruptions, non-sequiturs and dialog. More importantly, however, is the extent to which Zappa's album is studio manipulated. *We're only in it for the Money* is far more a product of the studio than any of the Velvets' albums, and as a result it loses the feel of a collection of live singles put together in a particular order; it is instead a continuous work with less of a "live" feel to it. Like the Velvets, Frank Zappa's music can be considered influential because of his use of both technology and the tension of rock music paradigms. Satire, parody and quotation also loom large in Zappa's music; these things are all present in concert music as well. It is Zappa's concert music, however, that has the biggest implications for the intersection of popular and serious genres.

Zappa's music for orchestra

Frank Zappa made it known that he greatly desired the opportunity to write acoustic concert music, although it was equally well known that he had never had any formal training in composition.¹¹ He had many opinions on classical music, both past and contemporary, and his rock albums often have small excerpts of twentieth century music. Sometimes it is not clear what his goal is in quoting Stravinsky, Holst or Rossini. As Jonathan Bernard writes in "Listening to Zappa,"

None of these quotations...lasts more than a few seconds, a fact which might arouse the suspicion that they are nothing more than in-jokes, or the aural equivalent of the "potzrebbies" in Mad Magazine – or simply trashings of high culture à la Spike Jones.¹²

No matter to what extent a given quotation of serious music defies explanation, it is always clear that Zappa understands the music that he is quoting. His orchestral music certainly reflects a level of understanding of orchestration and other concepts pertinent to serious orchestral music. There are enough similarities between Zappa's popular output and his acoustic concert works, but the differences that exist unfortunately may just codify the concept Kevin Puts was referring to (see above): the notated, acoustic version is always going to be the less experimental one.

¹¹ Bernard, Jonathan. "Listening to Zappa" *Contemporary Music Review* 2000 18:4, 65

¹² Ibid, 71

Zappa's freshman effort with an orchestra was with the London Symphony and Kent Nagano in 1983, and it was not the best of experiences and left Zappa slightly disillusioned.¹³ Nonetheless, the works the orchestra recorded provide insight into the problem at hand: what is the relationship of concert music to popular music and how does one composer approach writing both? "Bob in Dacron" is a work whose two movements portray two different aesthetics. The first movement is firmly planted in a kind of generic modern atonal orchestral sound world: the winding melodic lines are in some ways reminiscent of Schoenbergian Expressionism. What the first movement lacks is any sense of satire; this is music that takes itself seriously. What is also missing is any similarity at all to Zappa's popular style. At about 2:20 in the second track, however, a drum beat finally takes hold and finally takes on some of the satirical nature of Zappa's popular work only to relapse in the fifth minute. The last two minutes of the track approach Zappa's popular work again by becoming more schizophrenic; Zappa goes back and forth between non-sequiturs, but none of these deconstruct the serious concert medium in the manner of his rock albums. The work ends on a rather serious string chord, perhaps in a way negating the attempts at recreating Zappa's popular work.

It should be obvious that notated music for an entirely acoustic ensemble will not be the same as music created with electric instruments and manipulated in a recording studio. Zappa obviously perceived this fundamental difference, writing music that appears to be more focused on the serious twentieth-century music that he is familiar with as opposed to attempting his brand of wild eclecticism in an orchestral context. It may be unfortunate that Zappa did not take greater risks in his concert music, but these inherent differences of medium simply classify the means to which Frank Zappa or any modern composer achieves an end of their choosing. Frank Zappa approached serious concert music from "the other side," having experimented with adding classical quotations to his rock albums first before creating concert works for acoustic ensembles. This consolidation of seemingly exclusive art forms in the creative output of one artist likely would not have been possible without the recording studio. Without technology, Zappa would not have been able to insert meanings from *Petrushka* or *L'histoire du Soldat* into his rock music.

Faust's avant-garde rock

More than a decade earlier, however, a West German band was attempting to blur the same distinctions as Frank Zappa. Much like the Velvet Underground, Faust had the context

¹³ Ibid, 85

of an urban youth subculture. The subculture was, however, far more intellectual than those in the United States or Britain in the late 1960s, as it was led by university students. The ideas of Karl Marx, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse and other leftists were the driving force behind the movement, making it far more politically involved than the hippie subcultures of Britain or the United States. This cultural context combined with the dominating presence of the German musical tradition to create the background for the avant-garde rock of Faust.

Faust's self-titled debut dates from 1971 and is characterized by the dichotomy of the real and the surreal. The surreal is achieved by technological means, either by purely electronic sounds or music or by studio manipulation of "real" material. Nonsense lyrics also undermine the sense of reality. The first track, "Why don't you eat carrots?" provides perhaps the best example of the dichotomy in the latter part of the track. The only live-sounding music on the track begins around 4:10. This, along with the extremely surreal electronic noises that fade in a mere 10 seconds later, forms the dichotomy that provides the formal basis for the rest of the track. The two elements coexist for a while until 6:50, when the electronic noises take over and render the live music inaudible. At 7:56 the live music fades in but quickly retreats. It does not, however, disappear as before, instead continuing at a low level underneath the electronic noises. It makes one last prominent appearance at 8:50 before the end of the track.

Of the various interjections in the track, the piano solos that occur at 1:00 and 8:33 are of particular note. The first begins as a quasi-Expressionist, Schoenbergian, dense atonal texture that quickly transitions into the robotic synthesizer music that follows. The second solo is an obvious nineteenth-century piano virtuoso cliché: a descending arpeggio of broken octaves outlining a G dominant ninth chord. Both of these solos imply a real familiarity with the repertoire that they reference, and given Faust's cultural background it is certainly not surprising that they have enough knowledge of the "serious" German tradition to incorporate it into their particular brand of experimental rock music. In this way, their music resembles Frank Zappa's and contributes to a similar mixing of art forms. As with Zappa, it would not be possible to incorporate these types of excerpts without the technology of the recording studio.

Glenn Branca's "Symphonies"

There are, of course, ways to redefine what constitutes serious music other than inserting quotes. Glenn Branca, who also had no formal training, created a music in the late

1970s that was quickly branded as being of indeterminate genre. His music was, according to William Duckworth, “a loosely rehearsed, high-energy music that audiences found electrifying.”¹⁴ Branca made use of alternate guitar tunings and developed a fascination with the overtone series. Both of these concepts were not foreign to the “serious” avant-garde at the time. The father of many trends in the serious avant-garde, John Cage, said that “Branca had me shaking...my feelings were disturbed”¹⁵ after a performance of Branca’s *Indeterminate Activity of Resultant Masses*. This title is an excellent description of Branca’s early music. His *Symphony No. 3* provides a representative example. The first movement begins with successions of guitar clusters that do imply some harmonic direction. A unison Ab occurs at 2:00 and the music begins to acquire some rhythmic meaning with the occasional pulsing of some sounds within the texture. The succession of pitches in the next few minutes focuses on Ab major, although not exclusively. The music becomes more chordal approaching 7:00, becoming even more massive in texture. Not until the fifteenth minute does a rhythm truly begin to establish itself. Drums finally codify the rhythm when they fade in beginning at 15:40. The Ab major chord that has been sustaining for several minutes becomes more and more massive as time goes on and the drums become louder and more involved. In the last few minutes of the track the Ab major chord is sullied by a tone cluster much like those heard at the beginning. The drums drop out, leaving nothing but the cluster.

This movement certainly deserves to be called a symphony because of its grandiose nature and massive textures. Despite its grandiose nature, however, the movement sounds like nothing more than an introduction to the other movements. The implication here is: if the introduction is this grandiose and this drawn out, how amazingly massive will the symphony proper be? Branca’s work clearly invokes some form of Romantic grandiosity. Branca did, in fact, turn to the acoustic orchestra in later years for his *Symphony No. 7* (1989) and even to chorus for *Gates of Heaven*.¹⁶ Doing so is clearly only a natural extension to the music he was writing.

Perhaps the loftiness and grandiosity of Branca’s music places it on artistic par with some “serious” music, but what Branca’s music definitely does is contribute to the blurring of distinctions between art forms. Unlike Frank Zappa, whose acoustic music contains passages that diverge greatly from his rock albums, Branca’s music is more suited to direct transfer to

¹⁴ Duckworth, William. *Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers*. New York: Schirmer, 1995. 418

¹⁵ Ibid, 419

¹⁶ Ibid, 419

an orchestral medium. This carries even greater implications than Zappa's music, as it shows how the same composition could actually exist in two versions and be almost the same piece. The rock band of guitars and drums is made to sound orchestral, while the orchestral version will sound like rock music. Branca therefore represents some of today's contemporary composers; his compositional thought does not know any limits of genre or medium.

Cecil Taylor and the Divide

To say that the divide between the serious and the popular has vanished from all compositional minds would be entirely incorrect. Methods and approaches still differ depending on background, as Cecil Taylor would testify if asked. Cecil Taylor received a conservatory education, and one could argue that this made his jazz improvisations unusual and complex enough to puzzle listeners. But when Taylor was faced with John Cage criticizing modern jazz "for using regular intervals and for being based too much on the emotions,"¹⁷ Taylor responded by saying that Cage had no right to comment on a tradition he was not adequately versed in. Taylor also had a run-in with Stockhausen over improvisation techniques. He accuses Stockhausen's approach of being inhuman, referring to Stockhausen as a "meticulous, slow worker who knows each instrument but [who] doesn't create any music...any music that's resulted from his creation has been accidental; not even incidental, but accidental."¹⁸ Cecil Taylor's adherence to the spirit of jazz certainly created conflicts with big names among the avant-garde, but A.B. Spellman does go on to note that Taylor does import innovations that he believes are pertinent to his music, providing the example of Taylor's prepared piano. Importing the sounds of a prepared piano may seem to be a tiny concession to outside influences (perhaps Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes*), and one may wonder why Taylor refused to be all-encompassing in the way that other artists crossing the divide did. Cecil Taylor's music already had incorporated a large outside influence: the western art music tradition that he had spent years studying. His disagreement with Stockhausen was most certainly not borne of ignorance or narrow-mindedness; rather, it was borne of a difference in background and understanding. Although Cecil Taylor has crossed the divide between jazz and serious music, his experience demonstrates that doing so is not always so simple and that certain divisions still do and always will exist. Cecil Taylor perhaps struggled more than the artists already mentioned with being neither here nor there.

Conclusion

¹⁷ Spellman, A.B. *Four Lives in The Bebop Business*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1966. 34

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 35

Being neither here nor there is certainly a possibility in today's compositional world, as the tide of pluralism can make one's head spin. It seems as though our influences can be absolutely anything of our choosing, and that there truly is no right or wrong. Perhaps we would not be in this pluralist world without the advances in technology that have marked the past half-century, because without those advances artists such as Frank Zappa and Faust would not have been able to incorporate references to serious music into their work, and the Velvet Underground would have had to find some other way to be experimental. Does the concert music world owe these advances to the creativity of these artists and others? In the introduction to *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*, Paul Greene accuses the West generally of failing to use its own technology to really develop its music.¹⁹ The following may provide a reason for this:

Many high-tech musics reflect a longing to erase (Eric Clapton unplugged) or exceed (metal guitar overdrive) music technologies. Also accompanying the spread of sound-audio technologies come anxieties of engineering fakery: that studio-altered or fabricated sound products can 'dupe' listeners into thinking that they are hearing an 'authentic' recording of a performance event. This raises concerns because for many listeners an originary presence of actual voices, bodies, instruments, or performances is very important; it functions, in some sense, as an anchor, a guarantor of the recording's meaning and value.²⁰

Meaning and value obviously remain important to the music makers of the West. Although the claim that technology can dehumanize music is only partially true, the desire to keep music human has its roots in the fiery humanist Romanticism of the nineteenth century. The precise implementation of technology is obviously very important, as it can be used either as a means for creation of new sounds or as a cheap and mundane imitation of real ones. Experimental minds, first in popular and subsequently concert music, discovered an aesthetic that explores new sounds, challenges the listener and continues the tradition of creating high art.

It is not, therefore, the task of the concert music composer to write the "less experimental version" of something we have been influenced by. Doing so would be failing the mission we share with all who create music, regardless of what sounds we make, instruments we use or what "genre" the music might be classified in by others. We are called to be, first and foremost, experimental and original. In doing so we continue to create art that challenges its listeners just as the composers before us did.

¹⁹ Greene, Paul D. and Porcello, Thomas, eds. *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005. 2

²⁰ Ibid, 10

Bibliography

- Babbitt, Milton, "Who Cares if you Listen?" from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Schwartz, Elliott and Childs, Barney, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.
- Berg, Alban "Why is Schoenberg's Music so Hard to Understand?" from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Schwartz, Elliott and Childs, Barney, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.
- Bernard, Jonathan. "Listening to Zappa" from *Contemporary Music Review* 18:4, 2000.
- Busoni, Ferruccio, "Sketch for a New Esthetic of Music" from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Schwartz, Elliott and Childs, Barney, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.
- Cagle, Van M. *Reconstructing Pop/Subculture: Art, Rock and Andy Warhol*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995.
- Chadabe, Joel. *Electric Sound: The Past and Present of Electronic Music*. Saddle River, Prentice Hall, 1997.
- Cunningham, Mark. *Good Vibrations: A History of Record Production*. London: Sanctuary, 1996.
- Greene, Paul and Porcello, Thomas, eds. *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005.
- Morgan, Robert. *Twentieth-Century Music: A History of Musical Style in Modern Europe and America*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991.
- Shapiro, Peter, ed. *Modulations: A History of Electronic Music: Throbbing Words on Sound*. New York: Caipirinha Productions, Inc., 2000.
- Spellman, A.B. *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1966.
- Varèse, Edgar, "The Liberation of Sound" from *Contemporary Composers on Contemporary Music*, Schwartz, Elliott and Childs, Barney, eds. New York: Da Capo Press, 1998.
- Von Dirke, Sabine. "All Power to the Imagination!" *The West German Counterculture from the Student Movement to the Greens*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.
- Watson, Ben. "Frank Zappa as Dadaist: Recording Technology and the Power to Repeat" from *The Frank Zappa Companion*, Richard Kostelanetz, ed. New York: Schirmer, 1996.

Discography

Faust, *Faust* (RER Megacorp) (1971)

Frank Zappa, *London Symphony Orchestra Vol. 1* (Rykodisc) (1995)

Glenn Branca, *Symphony No. 3 (Gloria)* (1983)

The Velvet Underground, *White Light/White Heat* (1968)