



12-2009

Sound Scenes: Performativity, Politics, and Capital in New Music Ensembles

John Robison Pippen

University of Tennessee - Knoxville

Recommended Citation

Pippen, John Robison, "Sound Scenes: Performativity, Politics, and Capital in New Music Ensembles." Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2009.

https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/551

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses by an authorized administrator of Trace: Tennessee Research and Creative Exchange. For more information, please contact trace@utk.edu.

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by John Robison Phippen entitled "Sound Scenes: Performativity, Politics, and Capital in New Music Ensembles." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Rachel May Golden, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Leslie C. Gay, Jr., Wesley Baldwin

Accepted for the Council:
Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by John Robison Phippen entitled "Sound Scenes: Performativity, Politics, and Capital in New Music Ensembles." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Music, with a major in Music.

Rachel May Golden, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation or thesis
and recommend its acceptance:

Leslie C. Gay, Jr.

Wesley Baldwin

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges
Vice Provost and Dean of the
Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

Sound Scenes: Performativity, Politics, and Capital in New
Music Ensembles

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master's of Music
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

John Robison Pippen
December 2009

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my partner, Abigail Shupe, a wonderful musician and my dearest friend. Abby provided my initial contact with Alarm Will Sound, and helped me find lodging with friends in New York City for my fieldwork. She has encouraged me from the beginning and helped me clarify my ideas many times along the way.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude for the people who helped me with this project. To all the members of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire, many thanks for agreeing to participate. I really appreciate your patience with my questions and with my presence at your rehearsals. Thanks to the other musicians, especially my good friends Sarah, Dave, and Jeremy, for granting me interviews. I am grateful to Aisha Ahmad-Post, Aleks Dubov, and Caleigh Drane for putting me up in New York City during my fieldwork. I am also indebted to my parents, Julie and Keith Schap, who have been incredibly supportive of my project.

Finally, I owe a great deal to my professors, Dr. Leslie Gay and Dr. Rachel Golden for all their help. They taught me to think critically and write well. Both pushed me hard while encouraging me all the way. I hope to have as positive an impact on my students as Les and Rachel have had on me.

Abstract

This thesis examines classical music as a cultural practice and centers on my ethnographies of three musical ensembles in the United States: Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire. Each group is a non-profit performing arts organization formed by conservatory-trained members and each performs and promotes new classical music, or “new music” as it is commonly called. I draw also on my own experience performing and interacting in new music communities.

From these mixed domains, I demonstrate new music ensembles as dynamic and complex entities in which individuals negotiate between the elitist conventions of classical music and populist ideals. In particular, I argue that aesthetic differences correspond to political struggles for recognition. Groups perform musical works in certain styles that reflect their respective aesthetics. With such activities, new music ensembles endeavor to make a name for themselves and gain prominence in new music culture. They thus embody a struggle for prestige. The mechanism for these pursuits entails a circulation of symbolic capital and its conversion into real capital. I frame the activities of the three ensembles within an established history of practice and examine the documented tensions between classical composers and commercial musics, and between internal struggles of modernist and postmodern composers and performers. Finally, I problematize evolutionary concepts of modern and postmodern by portraying the older groups, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird as postmodern, and the younger group, Yarn/Wire, as comparatively modernist.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
CHAPTER 1 AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF NEW MUSIC	1
TERMINOLOGY.....	5
METHODOLOGY	12
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	24
CONCLUSIONS.....	30
CHAPTER 2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEW MUSIC PRACTICE	31
SERIALISM AND THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ART MUSIC	34
EXPERIMENTALISM AND INDETERMINACY	38
MINIMALISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND ACCEPTING POPULAR MUSIC	42
CHAPTER 3 (DIS)ORDERED BODIES: PERFORMANCE, DIFFERENCE, AND TIME.....	52
BREAKING THE MOLD: THE POSTMODERN PERFORMANCES OF ALARM WILL SOUND AND EIGHTH BLACKBIRD.....	65
YARN/WIRE IN THE CONCERT HALL.....	83
CHAPTER 4 IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY: PATRONAGE AND SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE.....	89
SYMBOLIC CAPITAL	92
"REAL" CAPITAL	98
CONCLUSION	106
CHAPTER 5 REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS	108
CONCLUSIONS	110
BIBLIOGRAPHY	115
APPENDIX	125
VITA	141

List of Figures

Figure 1. "Manifesto" by George Maciunas.....	126
Figure 2. The Bang on a Can All-Stars with guest violinist Owen Pallett.....	127
Figure 3. Audience arrangement at the 2008 Bang on a Can Marathon	128
Figure 4. Standard arrangement for a modern symphony orchestra	129
Figure 5. Arrangement of classical musicians.....	129
Figure 6. Program of Alarm Will Sound's concert with Dennis DeSantis.....	130
Figure 7. Alarm Will Sound's program from 2007 Arrhythmia concert	131
Figure 8. Alarm Will Sound publicity photograph	132
Figure 9. eighth blackbird publicity photograph	132
Figure 10. eighth blackbird publicity photograph	133
Figure 11. eighth blackbird publicity photograph	134
Figure 12. Yarn/Wire publicity photograph.....	135
Figure 13. Yarn/Wire's standard performance arrangement.....	136
Figure 14. Second page of score from David Bithell's <i>Whistle from Above</i>	137
Figure 15. John Orfe's online biography from Alarm Will Sound's website.....	137
Figure 16. Nicholas Photinos's online biography from eighth blackbird's website.....	138
Figure 17. Matt Albert's online biography from eighth blackbird's website.....	138
Figure 18. Daniel Schlosberg's online biography from Yarn/Wire's website	139
Figure 19. Cover of Alarm Will Sound's second album.....	139
Figure 20. Cover of Alarm Will Sound's fourth album	140

Chapter 1

An Ethnography of New Music

In 2007, I decided to examine new classical music, often known as “new music,” as a topic for ethnographically oriented research. My interest in new music culture stemmed in part from my own background as a conductor and horn player, and my experiences with twentieth- and twenty-first-century repertoire. I had often performed and programmed new music, and enjoyed the acquaintances and friendships of emerging composers and performers. After beginning graduate school, my perspective on new music shifted toward a more cultural focus.

My work in my first ethnomusicology course exposed me to the research methods associated with ethnography. Recognizing the course’s emphasis on non-western cultures, I suspected that ethnography had been only scantily applied to new music and classical music in general. After reviewing the small amount of research on new music as a cultural practice, I determined that a study of performing ensembles would contribute to the scholarly study of music as a collection of human beliefs and activities.

As a conductor, I had joined the League of American Orchestras in order to establish connections in the classical music community. My membership included a daily email titled “In the News,” which summarized newspaper and internet articles about classical music. I began reading about performances of new music in non-traditional concert spaces (bars, clubs, and art galleries) and about groups employing innovative lighting and staging. Excited by what I perceived to be

progressive attitudes in classical music culture, I started surfing new music blogs for similar concerts. This was the beginning of my fieldwork in new music. The blogs provided me with previously unavailable points of contact with musicians, critics, and ensembles; through these explorations I initially learned of the group Alarm Will Sound.

During the fall of 2007, I met Alarm Will Sound's artistic director, Alan Pierson at a new music ensemble concert at Indiana University. My girlfriend Abby Shupe sang with the university group and introduced me to Alan at an after-concert party. During our discussions, Alan expressed interest in my ideas and agreed to give me an interview.

My conversation with Alan, however, ultimately raised more questions than it answered. Did others share his views of new music? What factors motivated people to form new music ensembles? How did groups choose repertoire and clothing? Realizing that I needed to talk with more people, I began to expand my perspective to include more ensembles.

Because Alarm Will Sound had roots in the classical conservatory, I sought out other groups with ties to conservatory culture. By chance, Yarn/Wire came to Knoxville's University of Tennessee for an April 2008 performance. The group's promotional flyer and their name caught my attention, and, after contacting ensemble member Laura Barger, I interviewed the entire group. Interestingly, their descriptions of their aesthetics seemed in many ways antithetical to those embodied by Alarm Will Sound, even while Yarn/Wire's operational parameters appeared to

mirror Alarm Will Sound's: both groups were registered non-profit entities and both promoted their conservatory educations in relatively similar manners.¹

The polyphonic² nature of the ensembles' responses suggested to me an endemic disparity of aesthetic values within new music communities. Further, the philosophical differences between the groups suggested political forces at work in an artistic "field of production" (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 263), a perspective that came to centrally underlie my thinking about new music's sociocultural domains. As I shifted my focus to presentation and performance, I sought out a third group, and in May 2008 eighth blackbird³ agreed to participate in my study. Like Alarm Will Sound and Yarn/Wire, eighth blackbird's members had attended prominent conservatories and the group originated in the conservatory. eighth blackbird, when compared with the other two groups, enjoyed an extremely high level of prestige and recognition, thereby adding greater depth to my investigation of power in new music communities. Through my interaction with this third group, I hoped

¹ Since the completion of my fieldwork for this thesis Yarn/Wire's membership has changed (David Schlosberg is no longer a member of the ensemble) and certain aspects of their performative style have shifted accordingly. In spite of such transformations, many aspects of the current group remain as I describe them in this thesis.

² Polyphonic, a term commonly used in conservatory music history classes, describes music in which multiple parts or voices sound simultaneously. I deliberately use the term here to express the connections and divergences among the complex and interdependent ideologies of the people who participated in this ethnography.

³ I will use lowercase letters in reference to this ensemble because group members identify it as an important part of their collective identity.

to gain a broader understanding of new music practice, and confirm a connection between aesthetic difference and political struggle.

In the course of conducting phone interviews with ensemble members, interacting with blogs, and writing my thesis, I came to view the related complex of websites, reviews, rehearsals, and performances as enacting and embodying a rich texture of expression. Many musicians explained their behaviors and ideologies as championing underrepresented repertoire and challenging established performance practice, thus creating a network of meaning that required considerable prerequisite knowledge. Similarly, blogs, including my own,⁴ used hyperlinks to connect with other blogs and sites in order to explain the concepts discussed. My blog posts, often drawn from my fieldnotes, positioned my preliminary work in a space where others could read and critique it. I also used posts to promote the performances, recordings, and general activities of new music musicians. Through such activities, I hoped to improve my connections to and comprehension of new music.

My research has been informed by my own preconceptions about music, a fact that warrants some scrutiny here. My training in ethnomusicology has led me to understand music as a complex collection of objects, practices, aesthetics, and politics. For me, and in keeping with my ethnomusicological perspective, musical works and activities have no inherent value outside of particular sociocultural

⁴ <http://soundscenes.blogspot.com>.

contexts; rather, people apply cultural rubrics that shape their understandings of music. In no way do I view certain musics as intrinsically superior to others.

As I demonstrate later, concepts of hierarchy and inherent value frequently manifest in the perspectives and attitudes of my interlocutors. The aesthetics of eighth blackbird, Alarm Will Sound and Yarn/Wire originate, in large part, from the conservatory cultures in which the members studied. As described by interlocutors, and in popular, scholarly, and web-based literature, conservatories usually deify dead European and American composers, imbuing their music with a strong, even spiritual power (Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995). Ensemble members accordingly approach new music from a position that values tradition, canonization, and an evolutionary paradigm of music history. Indeed, the rhetoric of new music can be heavily laden with such ideas.

Terminology

Untangling the discourse surrounding new music is complicated by the fluidity of the terms employed. Interlocutors generally identified with three types of musical styles, which they referred to as classical, new, and popular music. Even while most of the musicians with whom I spoke understood these labels as reductive, they nonetheless used them to describe distinctive spheres of musical activity. Further, their use of these labels denoted not only musical styles, but also their own political positions.

While Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire selectively describe themselves as classical ensembles, the term classical in itself does not fully

articulate their self-conceptions. Each group adopts additional, nuanced labels that describe their music and their perceptions of the broader musical community.

Ensembles and individual members promote the term “new music” in reference to themselves and their work, and generally prefer “new” to “classical.” While I discuss these two concepts as distinct, they are in fact strongly connected and draw upon a shared cultural history. To be sure, the esteem of tradition (“classical”) may seem at odds with the emphatic pursuit of cutting-edge (“new”) music. However, classical represents a necessary and consistent component of the identity formed and promoted by each ensemble. Classical thus emerges as a sort of metagenre that describes both new and old art music, as ensemble members themselves acknowledge (L. Kaplan, Personal Communication, July 31st, 2008).

Classical music has historically employed devices that distinguish between art music and other forms of musical expression. The canon—comprised of composers and musical works said to be of exceptional, even timeless quality—is the primary apparatus of distinction employed in classical music culture. According to historian William Weber (1992) the concept of a canon developed in eighteenth-century England, where societies and organizations promoting “ancient music” held concerts and festivals featuring works “over about two decades old” (ibid, p. 13). Though the recognition of a full canon of “musical classics” occurred gradually, its core values of elitism and prestige were in place from the start. Weber writes: “The critique of commercialism, the desire to get musical taste upon a loftier plane, was integral to the musical canon from the beginning” (p. 243).

In discussing similarly conceived, timeless, and hierarchically organized musical practices in the United States, Lawrence Levine (1988) extends the concept of canonization to nineteenth-century America. At that time, classical music functioned as popular music; concerts often featured an eclectic mixture of styles ranging from Italian opera to popular songs. As permanent American orchestras were established at the end of the nineteenth century, the respective repertoires of opera houses and symphonies changed from an amalgamation of various musical styles and traditions to a more homogenous selection that emphasized and ultimately deified the works of western European composers. Simultaneously, operatic and orchestral financial models shifted away from commercial competition toward private patronage, which provided musical organizations with dependable fiscal support without requiring the approval of the masses. The sacralization of European, and eventually American, art music had begun.

The distinction between “art” and “popular” music directly contributed to a broad social and economic elevation of European art music in America. Since then, “classical music” has come to describe music presumed to possess an intrinsically superior artistic quality.

For many of my informants, elitist connotations surrounding classical music pose particular problems. In response to such concerns, interlocutors choose to see the performative customs of classical music as malleable. As Alarm Will Sound’s managing director Gavin Chuck told me: “[Y]ou have to recognize that the concert culture was invented” (G. Chuck, Personal Communication, May 31st, 2008). Thus,

groups challenge certain historically grounded aspects of classical music culture and endeavor to cultivate a broader audience than that currently associated with classical music.

Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn Wire all claim ties to classical music. Yet because of classical music's nonpareil status, many of my informants ostensibly object to classical as a label. Rather, musicians employ euphemisms such as "concert music" or "art music" to separate themselves from potentially problematic concepts. Classical music's negative connotations and association with older styles have encouraged use of the term "new" rather than "classical" music as the standard phrase for describing recently composed art music.

Informants' use of the term "new music" reflects their musical educations, experiences, and worldviews. The specific temporal meaning of "new" varies widely; some practitioners equate it with a specific date, such as music after 1960, and others give a range of time in relation to the present, such as music written in the last five years. Informants also hesitate to describe the exact stylistic characteristics of new music, but they universally emphasize innovation and experimentation.

Just as musicians object to the term classical, many employ a variety of terms to function as vague alternatives to preexisting aesthetic categories within new music. Along such lines, Yarn/Wire percussionist Russell Greenberg preferred to

describe his ensemble as “experimentalist” and took issue with my description of the ensemble as modernist, a characterization I discuss further in Chapters 2 and 3.⁵

I interpret such specific negations as examples of euphemizing practices within the new music field of production as outlined by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu explains this phenomenon:

[W]ith total sincerity, in full unawareness of what they [artists] are doing, they serve their own interests, i.e. specific interests, highly sublimated and euphemized, such as the “interest” in a particular form of theatre or philosophy which is logically associated with a certain position in a certain field and which ... has every likelihood of masking its political implications, even in the eyes of its protagonists (1981, p. 277).

Thus, the specific articulation of a group’s aesthetics and actions can potentially obfuscate the broader implications of its products.

Further, musicians in new music often participate in a broader nihilism of labels and definitions. For example, in an interview with Bloomberg television, eighth blackbird cellist Nick Photinos stated of new music: “I kind of enjoy it when it’s as loosely defined as it can be” (as cited in Massar, 2007). In other words, people avoid clearly identifying what new music *is* in order to allow for what it *can be*.

Within the larger category of new music, two broad subcategories emerge: modernism and postmodernism. Ethnomusicologist Georgina Born argues that modernism philosophically positions “music as vanguard, autonomous, necessarily

⁵ I connect experimentalism with a broader modernism in Chapter 2.

difficult, and antagonistic to the debased musics of the ‘mass’ marketplace” (1997, p. 482). Such aesthetics manifest in music of modernist composers, which is often written according to complicated parameters. Formal and structural features figure prominently while connections to broader society manifest only occasionally. Modernist music typically draws small audiences comprised of intellectuals, specialists, and other musicians.

Postmodernism manifests in many ways, in part as a reaction to modernism. For the purposes of this thesis, I understand postmodernism as a practice that seeks larger audiences by variously emulating styles thought to be more familiar to the general public. In contrast with modernism, which often seeks an abrupt break with the past, postmodernism tends to embrace certain ideas of past generations of artists. This agrees with Jann Pasler’s argument that postmodernism can embody “a breakdown in boundaries between elite and popular culture and [a] receptivity to those on the margins of power” (Pasler, 2009). Connections with diverse popular or world musics are common in postmodern concerts and individual works. Structural characteristics still emerge as important within discourses addressing postmodern works, though less so than in modernist counterparts.

In Chapter 2, I expand upon both concepts and connect them with established composers in the United States and Europe. I argue in Chapter 3 that *Alarm Will Sound* and *eighth blackbird* embody a primarily postmodern position while *Yarn/Wire* embraces comparatively modernist aesthetics. Crucially, however,

I problematize the divide between modernism and postmodernism by illustrating the similarities between their respective financial and performative practices.

While classical refers to non-commercial art, “popular” music, for my informants, connotes more commercially oriented music. This term describes an enormous range of musical expressions practiced primarily outside formal conservatory contexts. From the new music perspective, popular musics operate in accordance with capitalist market forces. Further, popular styles are portrayed as generally enjoyed by the public, while classical music is portrayed as underappreciated. Situated between these two worlds, new music acts as liminal space that draws on both traditions as a way to establish individuality and relevance for contemporary audiences.

My informants often express a strong appreciation for various forms of popular music; Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird in fact arrange and perform popular music alongside new and classical music. Mixing repertoire reflects both the experimental ideology of new music communities as well as the constant pursuit of barriers ripe for destruction. Just as musicians create a distinction between “art” and “popular” music, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird distinguish themselves from classical convention by promoting popular music in their programming. They also connect the concepts associated with popular music—diversity of interest, range of styles, and easy access—with their respective group identities.

New music’s idiosyncratic acceptance and incorporation of popular music and its aesthetics can be seen as an innovative and even rebellious act. Symbols of

popular culture, be they clothing, music, or performative style, seem to imbue new music, and by extension classical music, with vitality and diversity.⁶ But this auspicious narrative glosses over the fact that the creation and performance of “high art” requires a foil that positions other music as “low.”

Members of new music communities assume a range of positions on the debates raised here. Some believe in themselves as connoisseurs or “artists.” Others openly question this label and deliberately avoid its connotations. The result constitutes the dynamic nature of new music discourse.

Methodology

The complex and ostensibly contradictory beliefs of new music culture, in combination with their polyvocal manifestations, encourage an interdisciplinary approach. In order to consider this discourse both critically and empathetically, I combine methods from musicology, ethnomusicology, sociology, and cultural theory with my ethnographic work. My mixture of these approaches allows for a reading that addresses both the behavior of new music’s participants and my informants’ diverse views. I embrace my own experiences and perspectives in demonstrating new music as intricately interwoven collections of sounds, behaviors, exchanges, and ideologies.

⁶ Symphonic and chamber musicians outside of new music cultures have, perhaps less extensively, also adopted less formal clothing and styles in performance. I have seen evening piano recitals played by performers in jeans, and some orchestras, for example the Ft. Wayne Philharmonic, present “casual” concerts as part of their main series.

My approach engages analytical frames with a “critical orientation” to examine broader contextual implications (Prior, 2008, p. 303). In part, I treat theory as a toolkit, a concept outlined by Michel Foucault:

The notion of theory as a toolkit means (i) The theory to be constructed is not a system but an instrument, a logic of the specificity of power relations and the struggles around them; (ii) That this investigation can only be carried out step by step on the basis of reflection (which will necessarily be historical in some of its aspects) on given situations (1980, p. 145).

Foucault’s call for historically oriented reflection encourages the adaptation, as necessary, of the theoretical models we employ. In other words, theory is not the end, but the means by which we demonstrate cultural significance.

To further support my critical approach to ethnography, I draw upon anthropologist James Clifford’s (1986) concept that ethnography itself is a “partial truth” comprising both fact and fiction. Along these lines, I draw upon my recordings, notes, and memories of my fieldwork to create a text that describes new music as a cultural practice. My own perspectives constitute a significant portion of the “data” from which I construct the material for this thesis. Clifford’s premise relies on anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s position that “Analysis ... is sorting out the structures of signification ... and determining their social ground and import” (1973, p. 9). The work I present here thus represents my *own* understandings of some aspects of new music’s practices, rather than an objective explanation of new music.

Ultimately my interpretations, like all interpretations, must in turn rest upon other people's cultural and individual constructions. To quote Geertz:

Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is. It is a strange science whose most telling assertions are its most tremulously based, in which to get somewhere with the matter at hand is to intensify the suspicion, both your own and that of others, that you are not quite getting it right. But that, along with plaguing subtle people with obtuse questions, is what being an ethnographer is like (1973, 29).

Along similar lines, cultural theorist John Van Maanen has argued that ethnography posits "questions at the margins of two cultures [that of the ethnographer and that of the people he or she studies]" (1988, p. 4). Van Maanen's observation brings to light the constructedness of ethnography in general, and illustrates the subjectivity of my own research. Whenever possible, I have endeavored to share with my interlocutors my interpretations of the activities I have observed. Ultimately, the constructs, frames, and language I employ describe my own position as much as those of my informants (Kisliuk, 1997).

My desire to problematize my own findings stems from the all too often accepted presentation and examination of new music as a collection of fixed, analyzable objects. All musical scholarship consists of partial truths constructed from other partial truths, though many scholars seem prepared to argue otherwise. Indeed, in much musical scholarship the dogmatic objectivism of music theory

promotes the goal of impartial analytic completeness and can hide the inherent subjectivity of the analysis and the music it treats.⁷

Scholars thus often treat “music” as an autonomous and abstracted object, free from external reference, defined solely as a collection of “purely musical” parameters (Kingsbury, 1988). Theorist Michael Kowalski, for instance, states: “Until willfully structured sounds are played by someone and enjoyed—as a structure—by someone else, there is no music” (1982, p. 6). Ethnomusicologist Henry Kingsbury argues that architectural terms commonly used to portray music, “such as ‘structure,’ ‘form,’ ‘level,’ and ‘bridge,’” privilege fixity, “greatness,” and monument as crucial elements of musical value (1991, p. 199). In Kingsbury’s examples and Kowalski’s statement, the veneer of written impartiality in fact betrays biases toward structuralism.

However, some ideas associated with structuralism can be reinterpreted and reapplied in useful ways. Criticizing approaches that limit “musical structure” to form, musicologist Susan McClary advocates cultural consciousness and somatic awareness. She writes:

The power of music—both for dominant cultures and for those who would promote alternatives—resides in its ability to shape the ways we experience

⁷ Lydia Goehr has noted, “Few theorists still seem to feel comfortable working solely within the parameters of their traditional methodology. And the number decreases as the original criticisms proffered by Continental theorists of Hegelian or phenomenological influence are reinforced and developed by followers of Barthes, Derrida, Foucault, Gadamer, and Habermas” (Goehr, 2007, p. 6). While I am inclined to agree, I am surprised by the continued prevalence of formalist studies of music, which approach music as an object governed by internal forces.

our bodies, emotions, subjectivities, desires, and social relations. And to study such effects demands that we recognize the ideological basis of music's operations—its cultural constructedness (2000, pp. 6-7).

Structures, at once musical and cultural, prove fluid, encode power relationships, and speak to personal subjectivities.

New music's "cultural constructedness" changes and reacts according to the subjective perspectives of those who produce and consume it. Like ethnography, the sociomusical domain consists of both facts and fictions, continually deconstructed and reconfigured. Despite claims to the contrary, the practice of new music does not exist outside social or cultural contexts. Elsewhere, McClary (1989) has written extensively on the abstracted and elitist opinions of dominant American avant-garde composers. She argues that much stands to be learned from a culturally grounded study of this music. Ethnography, with its double focus and reflexive stance, strikes me as particularly valuable for approaching avant-garde performance. New music shapes people's lives in tangible, experiential, and empirically observable ways. The poetics of new music culture express complex relationships, multiple meanings, and dynamics of power.

The primary rubric I apply to new music is that of "culture" itself. Culture is a complex collection of practice, belief, and behavior (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Ethnomusicologist Aaron Fox outlines the need to treat culture with sensitivity and careful consideration (2004, p. 33). I address Fox's observation by emphasizing performance as part of both formal and everyday interaction.

Performers, and perhaps performance in general, have traditionally received only passing notice in historical musicology's studies of art music.⁸

Ethnomusicology has, I would argue, done a much better job of positioning performance as deserving of scholarly attention (Feld, 1990; Gay, 1998; Kingsbury, 1988; Nettl, 1995; Turino, 1983; Zemp & Malkus, 1979). Performance in both ritualized concert and everyday life constitutes a useful rubric by which to examine the production and consumption of music and the sociocultural negotiations that accompany these activities.

Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's theory of an artistic "field of production" informs my interpretation of conflict—at once aesthetic and political—among and within new music communities. Bourdieu (1980) identifies two general levels of distinction through which *avant-garde* art communities form identity and create value.

The first fundamental ideology separates the artistic field from the external world. According to Bourdieu, artistic cultures purport to practice a general "refusal" of the 'commercial' [economy]," commonly expressed as "disinterestedness" in financial gain. (Along such lines, players⁹ often state "I'm not

⁸ I do not wish to neglect, however, the work of historians who have paid particular attention to performers, such as David Osmond-Smith (Osmond-Smith, 2004) and Michael Nyman (1999). Such studies remain the exceptions, while standard teaching texts such as *A History of Western Music* (Grout, Palisca, & Burkholder, 2006) have continued to promote a composer-centered view of music history.

⁹ Bourdieu refers to the broad production of artistic meaning as a "game" (1980, p. 267). I thus use players to refer to the artists, musicians, gallery owners, critics, experts and other participants in the circulation of symbolic capital.

in it for the money” or “It’s not about the money.”) In lieu of money, networks of artists, critics, intellectuals, gallery owners, and connoisseurs create and circulate “symbolic capital” as a determinant of artistic value (Bourdieu, 1980, pp. 261-262). Though players can potentially earn a great deal of money by selling their works, an increase in symbolic capital must parallel an increase in economic capital in order for the artist to maintain artistic legitimacy. Bourdieu observes, “producers and vendors of cultural goods who ‘go commercial’ condemn themselves,” finding themselves ostracized from the network of players that shuns commercial interests (1980, p. 262).

In his second level of distinction, Bourdieu addresses interactions and struggles for success within the artistic network. Artists gain symbolic capital by “making a name for [themselves], a known, recognizable name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects or persons and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation” (ibid). Novice players create identities by aligning themselves and their products with certain styles, genres, or ideologies. As products gain favor over time, their authors accrue symbolic capital in the form of artistic and critical acknowledgement.

In making a name, however, players implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, oppose previously established, “dominant” artists, critics, or venues. Novices mount strategies designed to discredit opponents while simultaneously promoting themselves as true believers. Dominant producers, for their part, work to preserve their position by enacting “essentially defensive strategies, designed to perpetuate

the status quo” (ibid, p. 269). Concurrent and contrasting aesthetic differences represent political struggles for symbolic capital in the field of artistic production.

Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire participate in a new music field of production in several ways. Each group separates itself from certain commercial concerns by registering for not-for-profit status under code 501(c)(3) of the American Internal Revenue Service.¹⁰ They solicit donations, organize fundraisers, and articulate a message that promotes innovation and uniqueness. All three groups align themselves with particular ideologies and corresponding institutions that promote their respective views of the musical world. Over time, eighth blackbird and, to a lesser extent, Alarm Will Sound, have secured their economic positions while maintaining an emphasis on symbolic rather than monetary gains. Less established, Yarn/Wire is working toward similar ends.

A wariness of commercial interest manifests in many of my formal interviews with musicians. Interlocutors contrasted their own music with that of their allegedly economically driven counterparts by emphasizing the “unique,” “interesting,” and “really innovative” qualities of new music. Performers do take gigs in “commercial” music markets, studio work, and band tours, but often with the implicit understanding that such performances do not represent the positive qualities of new music described above. Indeed, such jobs provide important economic support to freelance musicians, though individuals tend to perceive these

¹⁰ This is confirmed by the groups’ websites, all of which offer instructions for donors. For Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird, I have also examined the tax returns in which they claim non-profit status (see Chapter 4).

jobs as non-artistic, thus reinforcing the divide between commercial music and art music.

The separation between the “normal” economy and the symbolic economy is complicated, however, by the apparently endangered state of classical music. As I stated above, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird incorporate popular music into their shows and promote a narrative of accessibility and diversity. Nonetheless, groups temper their acceptance of the commercial by choosing repertory that, while apparently “popular,” in fact continues the practice of distinction.

In particular, popular musics operate hierarchically, too. Cultural theorist Simon Frith (1998) has identified principles of distinction, such as those outlined by Bourdieu, at work in the popular domain, in which players circulate forms of symbolic capital through various entertainments and expressions. Mirroring Bourdieu, Frith argues that notions of “high” or “superior” art result from people’s specific choices and preferences within contemporary American and British culture (1998, p. 15).

Additional studies connect popular repertoires with discursive practices of new music ensembles by emphasizing concurrent hierarchical strategies. Sociologist Nick Prior (2008) applies Bourdieu’s field theory to glitch, a form of electronica music. Prior cites Bourdieu’s theories as particularly useful for examining not only the “stylistic boundaries of the work” of art, but also its social circumstances (ibid, p. 303). In 2005, Alarm Will Sound arranged and recorded a collection of music by glitch artist Aphex Twin on their third album *Acoustica: Alarm*

Will Sound Performs Aphex Twin (2005), and has since promoted the album as an example of their broad audience appeal. The appropriation demonstrates at once the porous boundaries of new music practice, and the social similarities found between electronica and art music in general, both of which seem to attract an audience of elite specialists.

Applications of Bourdieu's theories have also demonstrated the broader implications of taste. Oxford economist Douglas Holt (1997) provides a thoughtful outline of Bourdieu's theory, which he applies to a small-scale study of taste differentiation between two contrasting income groups in the United States. He posits that Americans hesitate to criticize heterodox tastes because of the prevailing ideological emphasis on social equality and upward mobility. Yet, Holt observes, despite "Americans' catholic evaluations of others' tastes," gestures toward apparent plurality may still devalue opinions voiced by non-elites (ibid, p. 106). Along such lines, many of my informants, as if attempting to soften the hierarchical implications of their statements, rushed to restrict the severity of opinions they had expressed.

While Bourdieu's field theory has widely informed scholarly understandings of how people employ music to express social position, it also has received substantial criticism. In particular, critics cite its failure to account for individual deviation within, and particular influences on, the field of cultural production. Prior, for example, argues that Bourdieu overlooks technology as a mediating force (2008, p. 312). Further, Georgina Born (1997) finds fault with Bourdieu's concept of

habitus in her ethnography of the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM). Habitus, for Bourdieu (1984), denotes the system of opinions, beliefs, and actions of a specific sociocultural collective. A comparative tool, habitus requires a group of similarly disposed people to demonstrate shared practices and ideologies. Born observes: “While the concept of habitus may elucidate intersubjective and intercultural differences, it has no purchase on differences and incongruities that may exist *within* certain subjectivities. For this reason, it is not a subtle tool for the analysis of *intrasubjective* processes” (emphasis original, 1997, p. 490). Like Born, I am wary of habitus as a tool with which to study small groups and individual difference. Members of new music ensembles rarely see eye to eye on all aspects of performance and taste.

Ultimately I use Bourdieu’s field theory to frame the polyphonic discourse among new music ensembles as part of a general political dynamic in new music culture. Responding to Born’s call for intrasubjective analysis, I apply an additional blend of theories to my analyses of the performances and presentations of each ensemble. Specifically, I combine philosopher Michel Foucault’s theory of ordered bodies and social gaze. With these tools, I demonstrate new music performance as both internally and externally regulated and continually constructed by its various participants. Such an application demonstrates the individual perspectives of my informants and illustrates the practices of new music performance.

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault (1977) examined the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century techniques by which dominant

authorities in western Europe established and maintained social order. Social institutions like the prison, schoolhouse, and factory controlled their respective subjects by directing them toward socially productive tasks. Wardens, teachers, and managers organized time and space to transform the “...moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces into a multiplicity of individual elements—small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments” (ibid, p. 170).

Applied to new music ensembles, the idea of the “gaze” illustrates the way people position themselves within art field hierarchies and how individuals measure accomplishment and prestige against idealized standards. Foucault extended these devices to contemporary bureaucratic authority, a concept summarized by political scientist Peter Dews: “Power in modern societies is portrayed as essentially oriented towards the production of regimented, isolated, and self-policing subjects” (1984, p. 77).

Foucault examined historical uses of the “Panopticon” to illustrate relationships between authority and subjects.¹¹ For Foucault, authority manifested

¹¹ Philosopher Sandra Lee Bartky (1988) has extended the ideas in *Discipline and Punish* to feminist theory. Her application illustrates the ways in which women have shaped their bodies according to the standards of popular magazines and mass culture. Illustrating the misogynist meanings behind many colloquialisms (e.g. “loose women”), she presents a thought-provoking critique of contemporary womanhood. But her conclusions engender universals, a criticism applied to Foucault’s work as well (Sawicki, 1988). In spite of this, Bartky’s application demonstrates a contemporary manifestation of the gaze that serves as inspiration for my own work. Other authors have criticized Foucault’s theories for their masculine slant (Hartsock, 1990) and erasure of the power and responsibility of authors (Taylor, 1997, pp. 51-52). As Georgina Born (1995) and Jana Sawicki

as an ever-present, anonymous watcher intended to create “self-policing subjects.” Designed by cultural theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century, the Panopticon consisted of a watchtower encircled by several levels of single occupancy cubicles that could house anyone who needed watching. Each cell had one window to the outside that provided light and another window facing the tower. While residents were unable to view their immediate neighbors, guards in the tower could see every movement of every tenant at all times. The overall effect aimed to “...induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (ibid, p. 201). Foucault himself wrote of the performative implication of the Panopticon’s gaze: “[Cells] are like so many cages, so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible” (1977, p. 200). In Chapter 3, I apply Foucault’s theories of ordered bodies to the performances and presentations of *Alarm Will Sound*, *eighth blackbird*, and *Yarn/Wire* in order to illustrate how physical movements convey aesthetic difference.

Review of Literature

The relatively sparse scholarly literature on the cultural practice of American classical music examines conservatories, compositional styles, performance practice, and related “areas of activity” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 87). While academics commonly connect aesthetic distinctions with political struggles, such analyses only

(1988) have shown, however, Foucault’s concepts remain useful in studying power in discourse.

limitedly engage musical expression. As the studies discussed below argue, the aesthetic negotiations at work among composers and performers are mediating forces in the production and consumption of contemporary art music. Concepts of musical difficulty, individualism, and survivability emerge as consistent tropes in the literature.

The aesthetics of new music place a high value on individualism and originality. Musicologist Rose Rosengard Subotnik emphasizes the pursuit of these characteristics as common practice for twentieth-century art music composers. Subotnik explains that, “In every case, qualitative superiority is attributed to that conception of music which, at least in theory, gives ideological precedence to the composer’s individuality of expression...” (ibid, p. 247). Reflecting this tenet, Subotnik claims that many people employ the “notion of service to individualized expression” to decide whether musical texts deserve “the designation of art” (ibid).¹² Concern with originality has, however, contributed to a generalized anxiety surrounding audience comprehension.

New music’s discourse addresses these anxieties of audience comprehension and cultural recognition. In order to demonstrate a sociocultural context for new music, Susan McClary (1989) examines the concept of “difficult” music, works whose formal characteristics are considered overtly complex. She illustrates the disdain for commercial musics found in the writings and comments of twentieth-

¹² Thus, for example, Arnold Schoenberg’s development and theoretical treatment of the dodecaphonic system qualifies him as one of the most important composers of the twentieth-century.

century composers Arnold Schoenberg, Milton Babbitt, and Pierre Boulez. McClary further connects their “modernist” positions to an institutionalization of art music in radio stations, sound laboratories, and universities.

The modernist’s “rhetoric of survival” (ibid, p. 62) speaks to concerns regarding art music’s survivability in contemporary society and manifests the anxious disconnect between composers and their audiences. In contrast, postmodern composers such as Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, Steve Reich, and Meredith Monk (ibid, p. 67) oppose the anti-commercialism of their modernist predecessors, exemplifying a particular pattern of negation outlined by Bourdieu (see further discussion, Chapter 2.)

Within a narrow context, this pattern of negation shows an opposition between modernists and postmodernists. In fact, for my informants, an understanding and recognition of this very distinction amounts to insider knowledge of new music practice. However, a larger view illuminates an overlap between these two factions, united in their resistance to a mass culture.

In her ethnography of IRCAM, Georgina Born (1995) demonstrates such conflicting ideologies at play. Born outlines the divide between modernism and postmodernism as illustrating a narrow type of conflict. However, she also exposes their shared rhetoric of survival, crucially problematizing the anti-modernist positions commonly held by postmodernist composers who articulate an egalitarian aesthetic. Musicologist Robert Fink (1998) similarly questions the alleged accessibility promoted by practitioners of a postmodern new music.

The institutionalization of art music has resulted in a general divorce between art musicians and the general public. For Fink, the popular strategies employed by contemporary composers and performers constitute “a tacit admission by university-trained musicians that they and their institutions have lost control of what constitutes ‘art music’” (1998, p. 146). In response to this lost hegemony, younger musicians, such as those in the three ensembles I study here, variously incorporate popular musics in a strategy to reestablish cultural validity.

Even while adopting signs of popular culture, new music ensembles distinguish themselves from it by selecting music at the fringe of the “mainstream.” In so doing, they enact Fink’s assertion that “the embrace of alternative rock/jazz culture” represents “arty composers turning not away from artiness, but *toward* it” (emphasis original, *ibid*). New music’s incorporation of popular music’s signs thus represents a reactionary strategy designed to articulate a pursuit of difference.

For new music ensembles, difference is tantamount to survival. Performative virtuosity emerges as a necessary component of this survival; individual mastery thus represents a critical part of a unique group identity. Several studies have examined these performative domains as tenets of traditional classical music. Henry Kingsbury’s (1988) ethnography of an unnamed American conservatory usefully analyzes an educational setting similar, though not identical, to that experienced by my informants. Describing solo student recitals as a “ritual in the cult of the individual,” Kingsbury illustrates these experiences as enacting a process of self-sacralization. The concert emerges as a testing ground by which a musician

may prove his or her abilities. As I illustrate in Chapters 3 and 4, Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire's respective performative models draw on and react to their conservatory training. They thus mirror the performative aesthetic of Kingsbury's conservatory, where "the continuing efficacy of the recital as a ritual ... requires that some, but not all, succeed" (p. 123).

Difference also manifests in studies that concern classical music culture in general. Bruno Nettl's (1995) ethnographic study of American music colleges addresses the practice of historicizing as significant. Nettl illustrates the variety of musics performed in music schools, but argues that: "If the music school is important as a place in which musics of various societies may meet, then it is also a place of meeting for the musics that comprise the periods of Western music history, providing a place for each but finding ways to keep them separate" (ibid, p. 99). In contrast to the static presentation of western art music, new music practice promotes a more fluid representation of the past, in which "composers are the principal promulgators of change and [practitioners] see change and innovation as the main characteristics of history and the present" (ibid, p. 101). Along these lines, new music contrasts the standardizing practice of classical music because of the contested dynamics of the *avant-garde*.

While contrasting historical views separate classical and new music cultures, both cultures employ similar models of social organization. Kingsbury outlines the patronage system by which conservatory teachers and students operate and exchange prestige. The organization and distribution of power in Kingsbury's

conservatory parallels Georgina Born's analysis of power at IRCAM; this connection demonstrates patronage as a primary *modus operandi* of classical and new music communities.

Extending the findings of the above scholars, my analyses reveal socio-political structures surrounding musical practices in the early twenty-first century United States. In Chapter 2, I draw on the approaches of Fink, McClary, Subotnik, and Born to briefly outline a history of twentieth-century art music, and place eighth blackbird, Alarm Will Sound, and Yarn/Wire within this context. For all three ensembles, an ongoing concern with musical difficulty, individualism, and survivability manifests in interviews, promotional materials, and presentational choices. However, the strategies of each ensemble differ with the groups' aesthetic affiliations. Drawing on Born's treatment of stylistic difference, I consider the ensembles and their activities with regard to aspects of modernism and postmodernism. Overall, I establish Yarn/Wire as highly modernist, and eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound as comparatively postmodern.

While the tensions between modernism and postmodernism inform the aesthetics and politics of all three groups, their behaviors and perspectives show many commonalities. Recognizing this trend, I destabilize the division between modern and postmodern in my analysis of performance practice and social organization in Chapters 3 and 4. Ultimately, I concur with Born's position that, "music as culture remains defined by its primary socioeconomic circuit" (1995, p. 21), a premise in keeping with the theories of Bourdieu.

Conclusions

Through performative gestures, Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire enact new music's polyphonic discourses and practices. Musicians acting as self-policing subjects shape their performative decisions according to varied aesthetic ideologies. By framing the groups within a broader cultural context, I illustrate the interdependence of aesthetic difference and political struggle. My treatments of the ensembles' varied behaviors, including concert dress, stage layout, repertoire, and performance time and venue, as well as their publicity materials and recordings, represent my interpretations of new music culture.

Clifford Geertz observes "Behavior must be attended to and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior—or, more precisely, social action—that cultural forms find articulation" (1973, p. 17). In attending to the behaviors of new music ensembles, I find that performativity, capital, and politics constitute crucial components of new music discourse and represent part of the negotiation for secure positions in the new music field of production. By examining the contexts from which the participants project their ideas, I demonstrate new music as sound, social practice, place, and behavior.

Chapter 2

A Brief History of New Music Practice

As I argued in Chapter 1, American classical music cultures established musical value through the practice of sacralization. Select composers and their works assumed positions of intrinsic superiority as they became canonized in American and European classical culture. Dominant social classes positioned classical music writ large as fundamentally distinctive from contrasting styles (Levine, 1988). The consequences of the separation between “popular” and “art” music continue to manifest to this day in the discourse surrounding new music, and contribute to a wariness toward commercial interest.

The training and education of contemporary classical musicians reflects a historical orientation toward canonization. Instrumentalists, for example, learn repertoires comprising established composers, the overwhelming majority of whom are deceased white men (Nettl, 1995, p. 100). Musicians also often learn excerpts of canonical orchestral works as part of their training for jobs in professional ensembles. In this context, the date of composition for an individual musical work emerges as determinant of its formal characteristics, based on stereotyped understandings of style periods (ibid, p. 98). Thus Bruno Nettl observes that “There is, at least in the teaching of music history in music schools, more emphasis on stability than on change and on the consistency of directions once they are established” (ibid, p. 99). The identification of musical works as emblematic of a particular time encourages a fixed model of compositions and of history. Musical

texts become a primary concern for performers, and composers become the focus of prestige and power.

In contrast to this practice, the overwhelming majority of music performed by Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire draws on twentieth- or twenty-first-century compositions. Generally the composers of these works are living and much of this music has not gained broadly accepted canonical status. At the same time, however, contemporary composers are portrayed as emblematic in style, intelligent, distinguished, and echoing values of the established classical tradition. The composer thus remains a sanctified figure in new music, though his profile is arguably less secure than that of fully canonized and historicized composers.

Concerns with the temporal characteristics of musical works and their authors thus lie at the heart of identity in new music culture. Placing value on “newness,” however, in fact belongs to old practice, as illustrated by the writings and attitudes of composers throughout the twentieth-century.

Groups in my study distinguish themselves by promoting their musical repertoires as unique and by claiming difference from the mainstream. The oppositions expressed among twentieth-century musicians seem to problematize the concept of a general new music practice. However, in spite of contrasting attitudes and actions, new music as a practice operates within certain established parameters.

Bourdieu explains the struggles within intellectual fields as the natural condition of the field of production:

The open conflicts between tendencies and doctrines tend to mask, from the participants themselves, the underlying complicity which they presuppose....

This complicity can be expressed as a consensus within the dissensus [sic] which constitutes the objective unity of the intellectual field (1971, p. 183).

Born has interpreted this conflict as addressing, first, the differences within new music's sociocultural circuits and, second, the contrasts between new music and other types of music. She elaborates on these models of difference as "two basic structures of discourse ... 'A to *not* A' and 'A to B'" (Born, 1995).

We see in new music a sort of double negation that enacts both of the models of difference that Born outlines. Musicians oppose each other based on aesthetic difference (A to not A). Simultaneously, they unite in a common disapproval of commercial or "mainstream" musics (A to B).

In this chapter, I explore several contrasting styles of twentieth-century art music, establishing a basis for my later analysis of the respective performative choices of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire. I discuss how their relationships with art music intersect with their attitudes toward and treatment of popular musics. Alarm Will Sound's and eighth blackbird's cautious acceptance of pop should be understood, not merely as a turn towards populism, but as part of a greater strategy of difference. Yarn/Wire on the other hand, distinguish themselves from popular music and openly scorn commercial interest.

As I demonstrate, a disdain of commercialism commonly manifests as a pretentious attitude toward pop, a position historically sanctioned by modernist composers like Milton Babbitt, Pierre Boulez, and Arnold Schoenberg. However, in reacting against the modernist position, other new music artists—such as Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and others—have variously embraced pop musics, in acts meant to suggest stylistic eclecticism and broader connections with contemporary culture. Ultimately, my examination illustrates how aesthetic difference—as exemplified by the modern/postmodern, art/pop divides—represents and articulates political struggle. By earning political capital through aesthetic difference, new music’s historical practice relies upon controversy in order to produce existence, a concept in keeping with Bourdieu’s theories (see Chapter 3).

Serialism and the Institutionalization of Art Music

The attitudes and writings of composer Arnold Schoenberg contributed much to the sacralization of American *avant-garde* music. Born in Austria in 1874, Schoenberg emigrated to the United States in 1933 as a well-established composer and music theorist (Franklin, 2000). In early twentieth-century Europe and America, characteristics of musical tonality had been expanded and manipulated by Schoenberg’s predecessors to such an extent that its operational parameters—dominant function and single tone hierarchy, or tonicization—were called into question. In response, Schoenberg developed a system known as serialism.

With serialism, a composer orders the twelve notes of the western chromatic scale in a row, sounding each tone before beginning again. Four permutations are

generated within a given compositional piece: the original, its retrograde, inversion, and retrograde-inversion (Born, 1995, p. 48). Born has elaborated on the significance of such a rigidly non-tonal system:

Given that tonal harmony is also one of the aesthetic bases of the history of commercial popular music, the absence of tonal reference is a key marker of the way that musical modernism asserts aesthetic difference from popular musics. Moreover, while the earlier period of atonality involved a “free” avoidance of tonality, serialism went much further than this simple negation by advocating a prescriptive, rationalized, and systematic basis for constructing aesthetic difference from tonality (ibid).

Serialism came to signify, perhaps more than any other style, the antagonism toward popular culture. It was, in effect, art music’s A to popular music’s B.

Despite achieving considerable success, Schoenberg maintained a dubious relationship with the public. His experiences with his own post-war popularity were filled with suspicion:

My works were played everywhere and acclaimed in such a manner that I started to doubt the value of my music. This may seem like a joke, but, of course, there is some truth in it. If previously my music had been difficult to understand on account of the peculiarities of my ideas and the way in which I expressed them, how could it happen that now, all of a sudden, everybody could follow my ideas and like them? Either the music or the audience was worthless (1975, p. 51).

The clear duality that Schoenberg saw between his music and his audience contributed to the foundation of a schism between the public and the emerging *avant-garde*.

Many composers in the early and mid twentieth-century mirrored the position of Schoenberg. Analyzing this and similar comments by modernist composers, Susan McClary (1989) has argued that composers in the twentieth-century developed an aesthetic for “difficult” music intended to confound and evade the general public. This strategy was intended to “secure prestige precisely by claiming to renounce all possible social functions and values” (p. 60). As the above comment illustrates, Schoenberg sought abstraction by renouncing the mass audience, and thus articulated a stance consistent with the *avant-garde* ideal: by creating works incomprehensible to laypeople, composers would secure future positions and guarantee their places as master innovators.

Avant-garde composers strove to legitimize their works and the renunciation of the general public by adopting scientific, technologically oriented, and formalist philosophies in their compositional approaches. Born observes that, “This incestuous union of theory and composition was cemented by the postwar academicization [sic] of serialism in elite ... universities” (1995, p. 53). Schoenberg joined the faculty of the University of California at Los Angeles; other composers established laboratories and think tanks for compositional “research.” In 1959, serialist composer Milton Babbitt (b. 1916) helped establish the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center (CPEMC) at Princeton University, and Pierre Boulez (b.

1925), with the enthusiastic help of the French government, created IRCAM in Paris in 1977 (Born, 1995). Italian composer Luciano Berio (1925-2003) similarly created the Studio di Fonologia with RAI in Milan; there he experimented with technology and sound as part of his compositional endeavors (Osmond-Smith, 2004, p. 3).

All three composers became extremely influential in their own right while retaining an opposition to general audiences in terms consistent with Schoenberg's view. For example, in "Who Cares If You Listen?" Babbitt stated:

I dare suggest that the composer would do himself and his music an immediate and eventual service by total, resolute, and voluntary withdrawal from this public world to one of private performance and electronic media, with its very real possibility of complete elimination of the public and social aspects of musical composition. By so doing, the separation between the domains would be defined beyond any possibility of confusion of categories, and the composer would be free to pursue a private life of professional achievement, as opposed to a public life of unprofessional compromise and exhibitionism (1958, p. 126).

Musicologist Joseph Kerman later elaborated on Babbitt's position:

Babbitt at Princeton was pointing out that *avant-garde* music could find its niche after all—though only by retreating from one bastion of middle-class culture, the concert hall, to another, the university. Like pure science, he

argued, musical composition has a claim on the university as a protector of abstract thought (1985, p. 101)

The practices of Babbitt and others helped establish the tradition of elite training practiced by many contemporary composers.¹³

Experimentalism and Indeterminacy

Alternate attitudes and strategies of composition gradually rose to prominence in America and Europe, in part as a reaction to the perspectives endorsed by well-known modernists. American composer Henry Cowell (1897-1965) worked to establish a new music movement in the United States. Like the above-mentioned composers, he gained positions in leading American universities as a composition teacher. Two aspects of Cowell's work warrant consideration here. First, his works frequently employed non-western styles. This practice later became increasingly common among American composers as part of a strategy of difference. Second, Cowell sought a larger audience for new music than did many of his predecessors.

From a formalist perspective, appropriating foreign, exoticized styles allowed composers to "expand their palette" with new sounds. Audiences of classical and new music, comprising social elites, were largely unfamiliar with traditions of distant cultures. Musicologist John Corbett has demonstrated the rhetoric surrounding such actions as loaded with a "set of tropes clustered around

¹³ The vast majority of composers discussed in my thesis have attained advanced degrees in composition and/or theory.

the idea of exploration and discovery” (2000, p. 166). Cowell, for example, described his use of modes and microtonal scales in colonialist terms:

Successful experiments, and the well-known practice of Oriental music, show that these tones are not beyond the capacity of the human ear Sliding tones, based on ever-changing values of pitch instead of steady pitches, are sometimes used in music. Such tones are very frequently used in primitive music, and often in Oriental music (as cited in Corbett, 1996, pp. 18-19).

To be sure, Cowell followed what was in many ways an established practice of lifting folk music for use in art music contexts. But his interest in “eastern” countries and his alignment with experimental musics set a precedent for the appropriation of musics foreign to the concert hall. Such practices manifest to this very day, and many composers continue to treat non-western musics, and, as I show later, popular musics, as primitive sources ripe for mining.

As his appeal to exoticisms demonstrates, Cowell pursued a wider audience for contemporary art music, even while he maintained a typically dubious attitude toward the general public. In 1925, he founded the New Music Society of California, an organization dedicated to performing and promoting “ultra-modern” music in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas (Mead, 1978/1981). Cowell also established *New Music Quarterly*, a journal that presented the works of contemporary composers. The New Music Society regularly championed the music of established *avant-garde* composers such as Schoenberg, Paul Hindemith, and Charles Ives while also premiering new works by younger composers. This pairing of canonized

contemporary works with recently composed music continues in the concerts of new music ensembles today.

Later generations of American composers followed the experimental path established by Cowell. In many ways, their efforts opposed serialist philosophies. Composer and former Schoenberg student John Cage (1912-1992) emerged as the antithesis of the European *avant-garde*. With works such as *4'33"* (1952), *Water Walk* (1959), and *Theater Piece* (1960), Cage explored more theatrical and newly "experimental" avenues (Nyman, 1999). His efforts, as well as those of composers Morton Feldman, La Monte Young, and others, expanded the American art and music movements rooted in concepts of indeterminacy and chance.

Though such efforts opposed the scientific structuralism of serialist composers, philosophical discourse continued to shape the music of experimentalists. As Born has elaborated: "Paradoxically, then, the experimentalists remained theoreticist [sic] and determinist while searching for alternative philosophies—nonscientific and more social and spiritual—to legitimize and prescribe compositional practice" (1995, pp. 56-57).

Non-western philosophy and musics also significantly contributed to the approaches of John Cage. His study of Zen and other eastern philosophies, as well as his application of such philosophies to his works, substantially followed the appropriative practices celebrated by Cowell. As Corbett has illustrated, the attitudes of Cowell and Cage had much in common, though with a crucial difference:

[W]here Cowell later went on to exploit other musics for their exotic

appeal ... Cage saw the use of non-Western music and philosophy as a potential strategy for the disruption of the Western preoccupation with harmony, structure and intentionality (Corbett, 2000, p. 170).

As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, new music persists in appropriating musics from foreign sources, often in terms that mirror either Cowell's interest in exotic appeal or Cage's philosophical positions.

The concerts of Cage, Young, and others ultimately emphasized the performative experience, a practice intended to contrast with the analytic rigor of institutionalized art music. Concerts featuring "live" performance-based technologies and free improvisation—as opposed to the extremely expensive and institutionally subsidized high-tech devices of modernist camps—were common among such artists. Musical organizations, including the influential and dynamic collective Fluxus, explored alternate techniques of musical expression.

Experimentalism and indeterminacy constituted a primary concern for Fluxus artists. Leading figure George Maciunas outlined the group's purpose in a 1963 proclamation titled *Manifesto* (see Figure 1; all figures are in the Appendix).

The *Manifesto* reveals new music's practice of double negation as an essential purpose for Fluxus. The criticism of "professional and commercialized culture" and the militant call to arms ("promote a revolutionary flood") achieves the requisite disdain of the mass public ("bourgeois sickness") and established art music producers. In particular, the challenge to "purge the world of 'Europeanism'"

positions Fluxus in opposition to the modernist works of Schoenberg and the established *avant-garde*. Further, the very name “Fluxus” encouraged concepts of fluidity and mobility, ideas that contrasted the institutionalizing impulses of Schoenberg, Babbitt, and others. Fluxus works generally incorporated playful or destructive actions, and emphasized experience above all else (Nyman, 1999).

Compositions by Fluxus artists were also striking in their facile execution and design. Born notes:

Against the often unperformed and unperformable complex scores and text-centered compositions of the serialists, experimentalists wrote simplistic scores that broke away from traditional music notation: often just a short written description or graphic diagram, aimed at live performance, that was intended to give the performer maximum interpretive play (1995, p. 57).

Indeed, many pieces written by Young, George Brecht (1926-2008), and Takehisa Kosugi (b. 1938), for example, were written as lines of instructions on single notecards.¹⁴ The simplicity of these works laid the foundation for the minimalist movement in the United States.

Minimalism, Postmodernism, and Accepting Popular Music

As indeterminacy established itself in America, new generations of composers sought alternative styles of expression. Following the lead of Young and others, musicians such as Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and John Adams wrote

¹⁴ Young’s work in particular influenced later generations of composers. His focus on small changes over long periods of time, for example in his *Octet for Brass* (1957), helped established minimalist techniques in new music.

works in minimalist styles, openly embraced tonality, and reestablished tonal functions and structures. The repetitive patterns of minimalist works variously mimic popular and non-western forms and have encouraged musicians to promote minimalism as a postmodern style accessible to audiences.

Composers, scholars, performers, and critics often advance connections between art music and other forms somewhat uncritically. For example, Eric Salzman has written that “minimalism has ... roots, not only in non-Western music, but also in rock, in improvisation ... and even in audio technology which facilitates mechanical repetition and variations as well as the projection of detail” (1988, p. 216). While ostensibly true, such statements promote minimalism as a universally acceptable style and contribute to the projection of an egalitarian utopia in which new music takes on populist concerns. Further, these statements embody the concept of the postmodern as I advanced in Chapter 1, in which postmodernism acts as a historical reaction to modernism.

Despite the apparent opposition between the two, postmodernism in new music functions in many ways as an extension of modernism. Born, for instance, identifies claims of musical plurality as essentially rooted in the antipathy between the commercial and non-commercial:

the strategy is [for composers, performers, and works] to “cross over” by referencing taboo aesthetic devices from the “other” side of contemporary music, and to create a provocative tension by remaining firmly grounded in

their respective institutional bases (commercial popular music [versus] subsidized high culture) (1995, p. 21).

Thus, the apparent disparities between modernism and postmodernism tend to mask the similarities of the two ideologies, a concept articulated by Bourdieu at the beginning of this chapter. Both camps enjoy high status in institutions, and both employ related modes of performance. Composers who place value on popular culture still draw heavily on the established performance practices of art music. Concerts featuring postmodern repertoire or popular influences continue to operate according to a formal frame. Ultimately, the economy of prestige continues to circulate symbolic capital and distance players from commercial interests.

With the advent of minimalism, new music communities adopted new narratives, partial truths (see Chapter 1) in which composers selectively distanced themselves from predecessors. Composer Steve Reich (b. 1932) drew heavily on the ideas of Riley and Young, especially their predilection for repeating patterns. His essay “Music as a Gradual Process” outlines his philosophical position:

I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music. To facilitate closely detailed listening a musical process should happen extremely gradually
Though I may have the pleasure of discovering musical processes and composing the musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself. Material may suggest what sort of process it should be run through (content suggests form), and processes may suggest

what sort of material should be run through them (form suggests content). If the shoe fits, wear it (1974, pp. 9-10).

Here, Reich distinguishes himself from both serialists and chance music enthusiasts. By emphasizing “perceptible processes” he calls attention at once to the difficult nature of serialism, and the uncontrollable nature of indeterminacy. The essay also portrays Reich’s music as more accessible than that of previous composers. Indeed, Reich has enjoyed unparalleled popularity for a new music composer. In a later essay, Reich clearly outlines his intent to distinguish himself “from Boulez and others in Europe, and from Cage and others in America” (2002, p. vii).

However, like experimentalists and serialists, Reich maintains a determinist position characteristic of twentieth-century composers and modernism’s scientific stance. Further, he has consistently misrepresented the voices of the people from whom he appropriates musical techniques and sounds. Musicologist Martin Scherzinger has argued that various African musics have exercised a crucial, though largely overlooked, impact on the composer’s style: “Reich’s programmatic statements in ‘Music as a Gradual Process’ and elsewhere can thus conspire to deflect attention from the African models to which his earliest works were deeply beholden” (2005, p. 236).

For both Reich and Glass (b. 1937), non-western musics have manifested not as overt references or imitations, but as structural parameters, allegedly devoid of cultural reference. By emphasizing structural characteristics, composers (and the scholars who support their positions) mask the foreign sources of their works,

sweeping appropriations under the rug, as it were, and focusing attention elsewhere. This behavior stems, I would argue, from the deeply embedded analytical approaches of music theory and the culture of prestige sustained by much historical musicology. The methodologies of post-colonial theory and cultural studies have only recently been applied to twentieth-century art music.¹⁵

Selective narratives play significant roles in shaping the music of minimalist composers such as Philip Glass. Glass has clearly articulated his opposition to his modernist predecessors. He described the scene in 1970's Paris as "a wasteland, dominated by these maniacs, these creeps, who were trying to make everyone write this crazy creepy music" (as cited in Rockwell, 1983, p. 111). Such narratives function as partial truths in new music culture, drawing attention where the composer wants it.

At the same time, however, scholars have connected Glass's music with long-established art music styles. Susan McClary, for example, has linked Glass's piece *Glassworks* (1981) with an allegiance to principles of formal structures, and the semiotic gestures of romantic composers Johannes Brahms and Robert Schumann: "no sooner does a sentimental gesture tug our sleeve than then it becomes somehow decentered.... [T]his ... results from the constant mechanical repetitions that govern the unfolding of the composition" (2000, p. 143). McClary's analysis illustrates how new music can play on the semiotics of established classical music, even while attempting to deconstruct them.

¹⁵ See for example Chapter 2 of Timothy Taylor's (1997) excellent book *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets*.

The partial truths of contemporary narratives are, in part, a consequence of the attitude of double negation characteristic of new music. Composers must distance themselves from their immediate forerunners and simultaneously establish their own connections to a history of great music. Along such lines, John Adams (b. 1947) has criticized Cage, Berio, Boulez, and others for their failure to recognize the significance of American popular music:

[I]n most cases, I felt that the actual music produced by all these new, carefully reasoned methodologies had only the feeblest power to express the spirit of the times. It seemed too specialized to make an impact on cultured society in the way that the great music of the eighteenth century had done, or that jazz and rock music were making on our own (1999, p. 39).

In a gesture typical of postmodern composers, Adams attempts to connect eighteenth-century music with popular music while criticizing his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. And while he apparently embraces popular music as a contemporary vernacular, he seems to conflate high culture (“cultured society”) with mainstream America. Further problematizing such statements, he has celebrated the influence of Schoenberg, whose serial techniques inspired several works, including *Chamber Symphony* (1992) (Adams, 1999).

Later generations of postmodern composers, particularly Jacob Ter Veldhuis (b. 1951), Joan Tower (b. 1938), Michael Daugherty (b. 1954), George Rochberg, and the Bang on a Can collective—David Lang (b. 1957), Michael Gordon (b. 1956), and Julia Wolfe (b. 1958)—have worked to portray themselves as somehow newly

relevant to contemporary audiences, often by adopting signs, both musical and visual, associated with popular culture and youth. Musicologist Robert Fink, for instance, has observed that:

[A]n entire generation of composers (Steve Martland, Elliot Sharp, David Lang, Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, Evan Ziporyn) has been attempting to repackage—and thus redeem—musical modernism by insisting on its solidarity with a particular reading of popular music as anarchic critique of society. Highly amplified ensembles feature horns, guitars, and percussion; the musical language emphasizes aggressive, explicit backbeats, virtuosic rhythmic play, and a deliberately restricted harmonic and melodic palette; the composers dress, talk, and sometimes preen like rock musicians (1998, p. 145)

Bourdieu explained high art's alignment with youth culture as a strategy intended to challenge established practice while simultaneously expressing "indifference to power or money and the 'intellectual' refusal of the 'spirit of seriousness'" (1980, p. 288). Such attitudes and performances can be traced back to the happenings associated with Cage and Fluxus, and contemporary new music scenes enact playful attitudes as a way to attract and maintain mainstream audiences.

As Fink's above comment suggests, new music ensembles incorporate signs of rock music as part of a pursuit of difference. The extremely influential Kronos Quartet has led the way, as noted by musicologist Timothy Taylor: "The Kronos

Quartet (David Harrington, first violin; John Sherba, second violin; Hank Dutt, viola, [Jeffrey Zeigler], cello) is one of the most visible and groundbreaking chamber groups of the last twenty years” (1997, p. 53). Their eclectic repertoire draws on established composers like George Crumb (b. 1929) and rock musicians such as Jimmy Hendrix (1942-1970). The group regularly employs staging and lighting effects that have contributed to the sense of cachet found in many new music concerts.

Yet, in spite of such actions, Taylor notes:

While they sport mod haircuts and clothes and make occasional forays into musics unusual for string quartets, most of what they play fits well within the mainstream of contemporary composition, even though most string quartets don't specialize in contemporary musics. It might be fair to say that Kronos's position in contemporary culture is its willingness to present itself as a new kind of string quartet, which may or may not help them find a new audience for difficult contemporary music (ibid).

Indeed, as I show in Chapter 3, the same could be said of Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird. Similarly, the Bang on a Can All-Stars—the resident ensemble for the Bang on a Can collective—dresses in sneakers and blue jeans and employs a diverse instrumentation consisting of bass, percussion, cello, piano, clarinet, and electric guitar (see Figure 2).

Fink argues that such heterogeneous practices among new music ensembles and contemporary composers reflects a sense of lost hegemony:

Really, [the] embrace of alternative rock/jazz culture is arty composers turning not away from artiness, but toward it. It is a tacit admission by university-trained musicians that they and their institutions have lost control of what constitutes “art music” (1998, p. 146).

The significance of Fink’s observation cannot be overstated. Without invoking McClary’s rhetoric of survival, Fink extends the anxious disconnect found between modernists and their audiences to the broader new music community. However, in Fink’s example, composers and performers *want* to connect with broader audiences, if only on terms considered acceptable by the practitioners of difficult music. Further, it suggests that the diverse and seemingly liberal presentations and performances of new music ensembles, including eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound, stem in part from a desire to preserve an art music culture.

Just as musical styles and performance practices ostensibly align postmodern composers and performers with populist concerns, practitioners have created collectives and organizations, what I would call “anti-institutions,” from which to codify and promote art music to the broader American culture. Consortiums such as Bang on a Can have established themselves as the embodied political opposite of IRCAM and CPEMC. Such practices illustrate the internal opposition of new music’s field (A to *not* A) as well as the desire to create centers from which to project particular aesthetics onto a broader public (A to B) in terms that agree with Born’s model. In Chapters 3 and 4, I further demonstrate how Yarn/Wire, Alarm Will Sound, and eighth blackbird function according to these parameters.

The divide between modernism and postmodernism outlines the extreme poles between which Yarn/Wire, Alarm Will Sound, and eighth blackbird operate. Performance practice—comprising repertoire, clothing, physical arrangement and visual presentation—constitutes a political statement through which ensembles align themselves with particular camps of the new music field of production. As I show in Chapter 3, both Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird enthusiastically embrace exuberant behavior and hip looks associated with popular musics and youth culture. These characteristics contribute to narratives in which the ensembles portray themselves as connected to contemporary society. In contrast, Yarn/Wire employs more formal styles of clothing, and maintains the rigid formality of art music performance. However, though these differences constitute important articulations of identity, many aspects of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics and social organization have much in common.

Chapter 3

(Dis)Ordered Bodies: Performance, Difference, and Time

Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire all work diligently to establish themselves in the new music network of production. They perform elaborate concerts, promote events, create websites, and commission works. However, the strategies and results of their respective choices differ significantly. Ultimately, their contrasting practices function to establish each group as apparently unique and to articulate the ensembles' respective aesthetics.

Such dissimilarities constitute crucial points of inquiry, as Bourdieu has noted:

distinctive signs produce existence in a world in which the only way to *be* is to be *different* As the newcomers come into existence ... they necessarily push back into the past the consecrated producers with whom they are compared, “dating” their products and the taste of those who remain attached to them (emphasis original, 1980, p. 289).

Bourdieu further links the production of difference to the movement of time: “To introduce difference is to produce time” (ibid). The concept of divergent aesthetics as a metaphor of time emerges in new music communities in temporal terms, as identifiers like “*avant-garde*” or “new music” attest.

In this chapter, I examine the contrasting performative strategies, as marked by distinctive temporal signs, of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire. As Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have aligned themselves with recognized

postmodern aesthetics and composers, the younger Yarn/Wire has embraced older modernist ideologies as part of a general strategy of difference. By identifying the younger group as modernist (rather than *postmodern*), I problematize determinist or evolutionary perspectives of music history. Further, my examination of temporal identifications among Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire illustrates how the groups articulate distinct aesthetics through physical performance.

In analyzing the ensembles' performance practices, I draw on the theories of Michel Foucault, many of which I established in Chapter 1. First, I frame new music and classical music practice within a broad rhetoric of survival. In particular, I describe the Bang on a Can Marathon that I attended during my fieldwork in New York City in order provide a "thick description" of the rhetoric of survival in new music culture (Geertz, 1973). Second, I examine general performance practices for classical music, with special attention to the dynamics of power articulated therein. Next, I illustrate how Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have endeavored to reinvigorate certain aspects of this performance tradition. Finally, I show how Yarn/Wire has implicitly rejected many of the changes proposed by the two older groups, distinguishing itself by maintaining an allegiance to past tradition.

People involved in new and classical musics have debated the impact and significance of the performative norms discussed below. Many take issue with what they perceive to be an outdated and unattractive tradition. Discussions in person and on blogs cover classical music's popularity (or lack thereof), and explore related factors, ranging from whether musicians should wear formal clothes, to how the size

of audiences has decreased. Music critic Greg Sandow, for example, in a lengthy post titled “Myths,” examined the decline of classical music audiences:

The percent of income classical music institutions make from ticket sales has been declining for nearly a century, and maybe for longer. In 1937, when there was a major study [,] ... orchestras made from 70% to 90% of their income from ticket sales. It's been declining ever since—and not, by the way, simply because of the vast expansion in orchestra seasons made possible in the '60's by Ford Foundation funding, which went along with a nice bump in musicians' salaries. The decline in the percentage of income coming from ticket sales had begun before that, and continued afterward [C]learly there's long-term financial pressure on classical music institutions, which leads to repeated crises (2008, n.p.).

Sandow's use of the term “crises” reflects deeply felt concerns over the state of the art in contemporary America. And, as I established in Chapter 1, a rhetoric of survival is deeply rooted in new music culture; concerns of survivability are common in classical music writ large as well, not just its vanguard. Authors such as Joseph Horowitz¹⁶ (2005), Norman Lebrecht (1997, 2007), and Alex Ross (2007) for example, have debated classical music's continuity and relevance. Horowitz posits that sacralization has caused a perceived decline in the popularity of classical music; contrarily, Lebrecht accuses the recording industry and superstar performers of acting as the primary agents of destruction. Alex Ross, in his recent book, points to

¹⁶ For comments on Horowitz and on the broader issue, see Richard Taruskin's (2007) review “The Musical Mystique” in *The New Republic*.

multi-cultural adaptations of classical music as demonstrative of increasing popularity. Interestingly, these specific debates often use empirical “data” to discuss a cultural issue; every failed orchestra, record sale, and well or poorly attended concert feeds the hopes and fears of those wishing to take a side.

In this climate of tentative survival, new music communities have framed events in terms that promote and celebrate audience interest. As part of my fieldwork in New York City, I encountered an example of these principles in action while attending the 2008 Bang on a Can Marathon at the Winter Garden of the World Financial Center. My interest in the event encompassed a desire to watch Alarm Will Sound’s performance and to study the broader new music community. The Marathon exhibited the connections between performative gestures and audience attraction that I discuss later in this chapter.

Held annually since 1987, the Bang on a Can Marathon has served to promote new music to as wide an audience as possible. Characteristics of the concert illustrate this fact. The concept of a marathon of new music endeavors to display the enormous range of musics created and performed in the new music community. Many musical groups who would never normally perform on the same concert find themselves lining up one after another in a display of pluralistic utopia that is common in new music (see further below, and in Corbett, 2000).

Further, the composition of the audience, venue choice, and physical arrangement of the event I attended framed the musical activity as an act accessible by a broad public. Indeed, I spoke with people who were extremely familiar with

new music culture, and with people who hadn't the slightest awareness of any of the music presented. Compared with every other new music concert I had attended, it was an impressively diverse audience. With regard to the venue, the Winter Garden is essentially an indoor atrium located in the middle of a mall. At one end of the area, a huge white screen used for colorful projections loomed over the large stage (see Figure 3). Rows of chairs and benches rested below a grid of tall palm trees, behind which climbed two large staircases. Two balconies on either side overlooked the concert.

The general feel was one of communal celebration and advocacy. The twelve-hour concert (6PM to 6AM) exhibited and promoted a range of music spanning from modernist new music to more pop oriented acts. In between performances, members of Bang on a Can would speak to the audience, celebrating the size of the crowd, and drawing special attention to such details of attendance as the hour grew progressively later. The Marathon also served as a financial fundraiser for Bang on a Can, and audiences were regularly encouraged to browse the recordings and t-shirts sold at tables located throughout the atrium.

Musical performances included solo acts and ensemble performances, often presented in styles discussed later in this chapter. T-shirts, jeans and cocktail dress were standard fare for the performers on stage, and some performers moved liberally across the stage as they performed. At one point, Alarm Will Sound violinist Caleb Burhans performed his solo work "No." The piece called for Caleb to sing into an electronic effects pad that he used to loop samples of his voice over his live

singing. When Caleb began, he sang so softly that the noise from the audience covered up his voice. Gradually, however, as he continued and increased his dynamic, the audience fell silent, eventually achieving a hushed and attentive stillness. Behind him colors shifted on the white screen, and, as in a cathedral, the atmosphere became reverent and somber in spite of the large crowd. At the conclusion of his performance, a brief silence hung in the air until the audience burst into applause. The beauty of his singing and the shared experience of watching his performance instilled in me a sense of community I have only rarely experience as an audience member of a new music concert.

The physical arrangement of the audience struck me as a general expression of the Marathon's performative frame. As I walked through the crowd and spoke with individuals and groups, I noticed that people sat according to their interest in and familiarity with the music and its associated communities (see Figure 3). A clear path running through the seats under the palm trees allowed patrons of the mall to wander in and out of the crowd. In front, a few rows of chairs were reserved for critics and media representatives.

Main characteristics of the classical performance ritual, e.g. a strict maintenance of audience silence, dissipated once I moved out from under the trees. When asked why her group sat in the left balcony overlooking the seats and audience, one young woman explained, "We wanted to talk." Another group on the steps stated that they could not find four seats together in the palm trees. People sitting in the seats under the palm trees generally came alone or in very small

groups, and had a greater familiarity with the music and those performing it. I spoke with several people sitting on the steps who had never listened to new music before, and who seemed confused by the event's presentation, which had more in common with a rock concert than a classical performance. When I asked them if they liked the music they were hearing, many responded firmly in the negative. This contrasted with the opinions of people sitting under the trees, most of whom expressed sincere interest in the music performed.

I realized that the Marathon was more than a presentation of a particular work or group; rather, it constituted a demonstration of what a new music concert is. It was an exhibition of a show. The Marathon sought to promote new music as a concept to a broader audience, an idea articulated by the program for the marathon:

If this is your first Bang on a Can Marathon—welcome! If you have been here before—welcome back! Whoever you are, we are very happy you are here. The truth is, we are very happy that WE [sic] are here—back under the palm trees in the beautiful Winter Garden, relaxing, listening to all these powerful and strange new sounds. ...

The Marathon is dedicated to presenting music at its freshest, to hearing composers who ask questions about where they are from and where they are going. This is music that crosses boundaries, that has no easy place to rest—these are composers who push the limits of what they have inherited.

Tuning systems our tempered scales cannot hope to contain, personal technologies blown up on an epic scale, world music that the world traditions

themselves cannot explain, indie pop that's more indie than pop. The marathon exists so that these kinds of boundaries can be safely crossed. We are ecstatic you are here to cross them with us (Gordon, Lang, & Wolfe, 2008, n.p.).

As the above introduction illustrates, the presenters sought to display new music in the rock-oriented styles described by Fink in Chapter 2.¹⁷ They portrayed the unusual combinations of art, world and popular music in terms that echo the colonialist rhetoric of past generations of composers such as Cowell and Reich (see Chapter 2).

In every sense, the Marathon sought to “produce belief” in new music, to borrow Bourdieu’s phrase. A presumption that audiences had contrasting perceptions of new music pervaded the concert. In my opinion, the concert sought to create difference from the high art stereotypes associated with art music in general (see Chapter 1). To better analyze the sociocultural implications of this and other new music concerts, I decided to apply a theoretical frame that connected physical actions with political ramifications.

Foucault’s (1977) theories of social order usefully illustrate the dynamics of power as articulated through bodily motion (see Chapter 1). A key principle in manipulating the power of bodies is order: through rigorous training and specialization, people may be employed in the execution of complex tasks. Foucault writes:

¹⁷ See Chapter 2, pages 46-49.

[The disciplinary power] seeks to bind [forces] together in such a way as to multiply and use them. Instead of bending all its subjects into a single uniform mass, it separates, analyses, differentiates ... to the point of necessary and sufficient single units. It “trains” the moving, confused, useless multitudes of bodies and forces [them] into a multiplicity of individual elements—small, separate cells, organic autonomies, genetic identities and continuities, combinatory segments (p. 170).

Discipline emerges as the necessary tool of order. In contemporary society, individuals become “self-policing subjects” who consciously monitor their own behavior in accordance with acknowledged norms (Dews, 1984, p. 188).

Classical music’s performative norms operate according to parameters quite similar to those described by Foucault. Performers must discipline their wills and bodies to conform to regimented practice schedules. They specialize in one or perhaps two instruments, and devote many hours of study and repetition to their mastery. For example, in his treatise on horn performance, pedagogue Philip Farkas describes the importance of practice:

When one decides to master a wind instrument, he dedicates a large part of his life to that instrument; he devotes many hours as the instrument’s slave before becoming its master. Even then the master must always be a partial slave (1956, p. 46).

Farkas’s use of the terms master and slave demonstrates a perception of dedication to music that transcends all other concerns. While the language Farkas employs

may seem dated, his book continues to inform contemporary practice, and is still read by many horn players in the United States.

The music of classical institutions is often organized and publicized according to a rigid hierarchy of power. Lawrence Levine has illustrated that “one important result of sacralization was to call into question the ... practice of mixing musical genres” (1988, p. 134). Thus, contemporary symphony orchestras promote concerts according to the repertoire presented; canonized works are featured in Masterworks or Classical Series while pieces considered to have less serious meaning may be performed as part of a Pops series. Along such lines, the Nashville Symphony Orchestra programs music by Beethoven, Stravinsky, and other canonized composers as part of its SunTrust Classical Series while their Pops Series features selections by popular musicians such as Ray Charles (Lynch, 2009). Musics understood as contrasting in social significance are thus segregated, both in execution and in promotion.

Physical arrangements of performers illustrate the importance of discipline in classical music. Orchestras order themselves according to both instrument and rank (see Figure 4). Political theorist Jacques Attali has interpreted the modern orchestra as a metaphor for social power. He writes:

The constitution of the orchestra and its organization are also figures of power in the industrial economy. The musicians—who are anonymous and hierarchically ranked, and in general salaried, productive workers—execute an external algorithm, a “score” which does what its name implies: it

allocates their parts. Some among them have a certain degree of freedom, a certain number of escape routes from anonymity. They are the image of programmed labor in our society. Each of them produces only a part of the whole, having no value in itself (1985, p. 66).

Attali thus places discipline within the sociomusical activities of the orchestra.

The power and physical placement of the conductor further demonstrates the authoritarian nature of classical music. The conductor holds ultimate artistic power in an orchestra. He or she (typically he)¹⁸ decides tempos, interprets dynamics, and bears overall responsibility for the orchestra's performances. Indeed, even in the absence of a conductor, performers often arrange themselves as if one were present (see Figure 5).

Classical music concerts typically operate according to a fixed etiquette and take place in certain venues. The modern concert hall best symbolizes the context of classical music performance. Along such lines, Levine has described American opera houses and symphony halls as conceived of as "oas[es] of culture" dedicated to the presentation of the highest art (1988, p. 202). Performance venues for classical music usually seek to reinforce the purported prestige of the music presented. Many orchestras are associated with designated concert halls, and the

¹⁸ Women conductors have become increasingly common, as literature on the subject discusses, and as I have observed in my own experience. But the overwhelming majority of conductors in American orchestras continue to be men. See William Osborne (1999), Mary Brown Hinely (1984), and Susan Davenny Wyner (2000).

wealthiest groups have large and complex centers dedicated to their symphonic organization (Small, 1998).

In examining the significance of the modern concert hall, musicologist Christopher Small has found that such spaces emphasize acoustic, rather than visual, aspects. Every effort is made to protect the sanctity of the music presented by creating an uninterrupted auditory experience:

All other considerations are subordinated to the projection and reception of the sounds. In particular, care is taken so that listeners will not be disturbed by the presence of others as they listen. For this purpose the auditorium floor is raked to give uninterrupted sightlines, the audience is fixed in the seats and knows it is to keep still and quiet; the program booklet politely asks us to suppress our coughing, and nobody enters or leaves during a performance (1998, pp. 26-27).

The formality of the performative event is thus articulated by bodily motion before the musical work, *per se*, begins. Performers walk onstage to the applause of audience members. Once performers have acknowledged the audience, usually with a bow, they take their positions in preparation of the upcoming performance. Musicians rarely move out of their seats during the performance of a given work. A modest amount of motion is typical, though I have heard audience members complain about performers who move too much. Overtly physical displays are considered in poor taste because of commonly held beliefs in the inherently intellectual or spiritual nature of the music presented. At the conclusion of an entire

piece (a sanctified atmosphere is preserved throughout and in between its individual movements), the audience applauds and performers bow in thanks.

Criticizing such conventions, musicologist Suzanne Cusick has emphasized the classical music tradition's lack of attention to the bodies that produce music:

We locate musical meaning in the audible communication of one creating mind to a co-creator, one whose highly attentive listening is in effect a shared tenancy of the composer's subject position. We end by ignoring the fact that these practices of the mind are nonpractices without the bodily practices they call for—about which it has become unthinkable to think (1994, p. 16).

The physical process that creates the sounds we hear becomes mere background to our intellectual processes, despite the central role of the body in the creation, transmission, and understanding of such sounds.

Issues of musical repertoire, performance costume, physical arrangement and movement entail the primary aspects of the traditional presentation of classical music. Overall, the practice is highly formalized, follows strict parameters, and thereby constitutes a modernist art form. While breaks in these customs have occurred with increasing frequency, the general frames remain intact. As I show in the next section, however, *Alarm Will Sound* and *eight blackbird's* performances incorporate a variety of devices that challenge established norms.

Breaking the Mold: The Postmodern Performances of Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird

Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have endeavored to revitalize the new music scene in terms that betray their postmodern orientations. In a sense, these two groups have thus attempted to become *disordered* bodies. Both groups portray their efforts as intended to attract a broader audience than new music has historically enjoyed. In Chapter 2, and in the above example of the Bang on a Can Marathon, I demonstrated such *modus operandi* as typical of postmodern composers and performers engaged in a strategy of difference. Ultimately, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird follow the supreme law of the new music network of production: difference produces existence. By drawing on an eclectic range of repertoire, dressing in hip fashions, and incorporating elaborate choreography, the groups have established a significant distance between themselves and classical music's cultural norms.

In our discussions of performance practice, group members told me that they saw most new music concerts as lackluster and poorly performed. As part of their mission of difference, eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound aimed to bring a higher level of performance to new music. In my conversation with eighth blackbird, for example, flutist Tim Munro and I had the following exchange:

JP: What do you think are some of the things that have contributed to eighth blackbird's success?

TM: I think from the word go just an absolute commitment to really ... playing the crap out of something. To approaching a piece of new music as if it were a string quartet preparing a Haydn quartet, you know, that level of understanding and empathy and detail. And empathy is actually a really big point, you know, trying to take the piece on as a wonderful piece of music that has an interpretation (T. Munro, July 24th, 2008).

Tim's reference to a Haydn quartet demonstrates how deeply rooted classical models remain in the ideology of new music ensembles, even as practitioners articulate distinction from traditional practice. Tim spoke with the assumption that a string quartet *would* devote a great deal of time and effort to perfecting their performance, thus maintaining an attitude of sacralization toward western art music and its assumptions, and expressing his own allegiance to such paradigms. His explanation clearly values mastery and virtuosity, elements of the traditional canon of classical music values.

Tim also stated that he felt that the level of performance among new music ensembles had risen drastically in the past twenty years and that a high level of polish has become the norm. Along such lines, he has since expressed to me on several occasions his belief that performing new music with a high level of precision and feeling will help eighth blackbird facilitate a connection between abstract art music and contemporary audiences; he sees virtuosity as a method for effective public communication. In my opinion, this inherent assumption that musical works appeal to audiences universally conflicts with the group's popular appeal. Concepts

of universality pervade Tim's perspective and, as I will later show, the perspectives of others.

Alarm Will Sound's managing director Gavin Chuck more overtly criticized standard models of performance. He described the rationale for the ensemble's performance practice:

[T]o be sort of the invisible performer who just like plays, "Just the notes, Man" kind of thing, we knew that that's not what we wanted ... the culture around concert music, especially specifically in concert, it had this weird ethos to it, which was almost like the composer [and] the performers needed to be invisible, you know wear *all* black (shaking head, laughing), sit behind the stands, the black stands ... I mean it just strikes me as remarkable that of all the performing arts, it seems to me, music is the only one where the musicians are trained in a way that when they're on stage they're not necessarily performing (G. Chuck, Personal Communication, May 29, 2008).

Chuck's comments illustrate a disdain for the homogeneous presentation of performers, and, more broadly, for the accepted norms of performance in classical music culture. Nonetheless, Alarm Will Sound has employed virtuosic performances as a way to reach out to modern audiences, a characteristic rooted in their conservatory education.

For eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound, repertoire prominently expresses their postmodern aesthetics. As I mentioned above, concerts of classical music generally follow accepted parameters of etiquette, performativity, and

programming. In contrast, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird present diverse repertoire in terms that mirror the Bang on a Can Marathon described above.

Groups employ selective narratives in which their musical selections appear as groundbreaking and celebratory of a musical plurality. In this sense, they challenge tradition while maintaining a connection to it.

Just as postmodern composers celebrate their connections, however vague, to popular and non-western musics, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird present their combinations of pop and art as simultaneously provocative and accessible. Both groups frequently boast of the blurred lines between art and pop, *avant-garde* and mainstream, and modern and postmodern. For example, eighth blackbird's members describe their group as "indie classical," and audience friendly. Similarly, when I asked Alarm Will Sound's artistic director Alan Pierson if he considered the group a part of the classical community, he responded:

We all play that [classical] music too; many of us do orchestra work.

Definitely we're part of that community, but there are people in the group who play in rock bands, and there are people who play in jazz groups. A lot of people in the group do experimental work. I think what makes us feel different from people in the conventional symphony orchestra world is that many of them [orchestra musicians] don't have that kind of broad outlook and that kind of eclecticism (A. Pierson, Personal Communication, December 4th, 2007).

Pierson's response outlines two major, potentially contradictory, points that frequently typify the image created by the group. First, Alarm Will Sound's members consider themselves part of the classical community. Second, the members distinguish themselves from the classical tradition by participating in non-classical music groups. After stating, "Definitely we're part of that community" Pierson immediately qualifies this characterization by citing Alarm Will Sound's member's participation in "rock bands," "jazz groups," and "experimental groups" as non-classical signifiers. This qualification highlights the ambiguities essential to the group's self-constructed identity.

At the heart of claims about blurred lines lies an assumption of universal appeal. Audiences will like this music, if only they can be exposed to it; by breaking with certain aspects of the classical performative tradition and presenting themselves as (dis)ordered, the performers will connect with contemporary patrons. In Alarm Will Sound's online promotional video, Alan explains: "The music that we program ... is music that we think will have a major impact on people, whatever the kind of background they bring to it, because that's the kind of impact that it's had on us" (Alarm Will Sound, 2008). Alan's comment illustrates the underlying assumption that the performer's specialized experience will equate to the response of the general populace.

Alarm Will Sound's members presume that the audience's awareness of the distance between the institutionalized avant-garde and popular music in general will help shape the audience's experience. As I showed in Chapter 2, contemporary

composers of art music have enthusiastically celebrated affiliations with pop styles, even while maintaining a crucial distance from the most commercial popular styles (e.g. Brittany Spears, Kelly Clarkson, or The Jonas Brothers). Similarly, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have never played music by the most famous pop musicians (such as those just mentioned). Thus, difference from mainstream remains a primary marker by which groups choose music for concerts, even as they claim to be appealing to popular tastes.

eighth blackbird has embraced a broad range of repertoire in their concerts, frequently programming works that incorporate allusions to popular music. For example, in a 2008 concert titled *strange imaginary remix*, the group performed with DJ and former Alarm Will Sound member Dennis DeSantis. The program featured selections from their album *strange imaginary animals* (2006) and an arrangement of the Radiohead song “Dollars and Cents.” As part of the live performance, DeSantis sampled the live ensemble and layered clips and other sounds over the music of the group. In an audience talkback session after the concert, Tim Munro connected the music for the concert, despite its apparently eclectic character, with the tradition of art music in general: “All of the music that you heard tonight is part of the Western Classical music tradition in one way or another. I mean with Radiohead, these guys are deeply influenced by a lot of classical music” (Modlin Center for the Arts, 2008). Tim’s assertion claims the supremacy of classical music as an all-embracing style. It also bears a striking resemblance to composer John Adams’s selective inclusion of

popular musics as part of a broader effort to expand classical music's values (see Chapter 2).

Other eighth blackbird concerts have featured the music of prominent minimalist composers such as Steve Reich. At Cincinnati Conservatory's summer composer workshop, Music'08, the group performed two commissions, *Double Sextet* by Reich and *singing in the dead of night* with individual movements by the Bang on a Can composers David Lang, Michael Gordon, and Julia Wolfe. The latter work draws its movement titles directly from the lyrics of the Beatles' 1968 song "Blackbird." The piece thus connects the new music ensemble to the iconic popular song, itself inspired, according to Paul McCartney, by the fifth movement of Johann Sebastian Bach's *Suite in E Minor for Lute*.¹⁹ Connections to popular music thus participate in a deeply rooted strategy of audience appeal, even, again, as such "popular" musics are framed as tied to the classical tradition.

While identifying with tenets of postmodernism, eighth blackbird has also performed the music of modernist composers and the established *avant-garde*. Indeed, Arnold Schoenberg's seminal *Pierrot lunaire* (scored for female vocalist, flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano) serves as a sort of template for the instrumentation of eighth blackbird, with the substitution of percussion for female vocalist. The ensemble has performed Schoenberg's *Pierrot* several times, and plans additional performances for the summer and fall of 2009 (eighth blackbird, 2008).

¹⁹ In concert, McCartney has frequently told the story of how he and George Harrison would play the Bach Suite at parties as a way to pick up girls. Over time, the opening gesture for the piece became the beginning of "Blackbird."

Further, the group has recorded a piece by George Perle (1915-2009), a well known modernist composer who wrote in a style described as a “twelve-tone modal system” (Chase, 1987, p. 587). While these selections diverge from the above-cited minimalists’ compositions and popular musics, they reflect eighth blackbird’s intent to promote eclectic programming, appeal to wider audiences, and maintain connections to the *avant-garde*. eighth blackbird effectively preserves ties to art music’s network of prestige by programming such works.

Alarm Will Sound has likewise mixed popular styles with *avant-garde* aesthetics. Repertoire tied to canonized *avant-garde* composers serves to bolster Alarm Will Sound’s position as a dominant producer. Bourdieu states “the more consecrated [a player] is, the more strongly he consecrates the work [or worker]” (1980, p. 263). Composers like Karlheinz Stockhausen and György Ligeti, both part of Alarm Will Sound’s concert repertory, connect the ensemble to twentieth-century high art. Meanwhile, fringe pop musics act as foils, providing narrow associations with art music, yet remaining sufficiently distanced from mainstream commercial interests.

Alarm Will Sound’s genre-mixing projects have included a 2003 concert in New York City, in which the ensemble’s live performances of particular compositions were immediately followed by DeSantis’s electronic remixes of these performances (see concert program, Figure 6). This concert, like the above-cited eighth blackbird performance that featured DeSantis, evoked the power of the DJ to create a “living communal experience,” and allowed Alarm Will Sound to connect

abstract art music to a physically oriented, popular musical tradition: the dance hall (Thornton, 1995, p. 65).

Alarm Will Sound's 2007 concert *Arrhythmia*, which comprised music by The Shaggs, Aphex Twin, and Mochipet, also counts among the group's eclectic projects. Such works appeared alongside those of Conlon Noncarrow, Josquin des Prez, Ligeti, and John Adams, (see Figure 7). The latter group consists of composers well-known in art music, while Aphex Twin and The Shaggs come from the fringes of the popular realm. Alarm Will Sound's concert of early 2009, titled *1969*, similarly juxtaposed music by the Beatles with works by Luciano Berio and Leonard Bernstein.

For their third album, *Acoustica: Alarm Will Sound Performs Aphex Twin* (2005), the ensemble recorded the music of electronica artist Aphex Twin. The recording features eleven of Aphex Twin's original electronic compositions, all arranged for the acoustic ensemble by members of Alarm Will Sound. *Acoustica* has garnered enthusiastic critical acclaim, and the group regularly performs the arrangements in their concerts. For Alarm Will Sound, these activities support a narrative in which the ensemble's concerts manifest as innovative and groundbreaking. In a review for *Splendidmagazine.com*, music critic George Zahora described the album as "fascinating, maddening, scary, thrilling, menacing, sexy, brilliant work, destined to occupy your CD player like the world's savviest squatter" (2005, n.p.). Along similar lines, *All About Jazz* critic John Kelman reviewed the arrangements, stating, "The result is an album that demonstrates just how far creative minds can go in sourcing material and providing a bold new outlook"

(2005, n.p.). Audience members at the 2008 Bang on a Can Marathon similarly spoke highly of Alarm Will Sound's work. Pamela Z, herself a successful musician who also performed at the Marathon, told me how much she loved what Alarm Will Sound was doing with electronic music and praised the group for their virtuosity. She marveled that, even though the drum parts in much electronica are designed to be unplayable by humans, Alarm Will Sound had nonetheless accomplished an effective rendition (P. Z, Personal Communication, May 31st, 2008).

The impetus for these arrangements comes from the ensemble's desire to present a provocative mixture of musics uncharacteristic of conservatory-trained musicians. Alarm Will Sound artistic director Alan Pierson (2005) described the motivation for *Acoustica* in an interview for PopMatters.com:

You tended to see ... a real separation between what [classical musicians] played and what they would go home and listen to. Especially people working in contemporary music. They would play Boulez and go home and listen to the Beatles. Part of what we wanted to do ... is to not have that divide, to bring together all the music you love in a comfortable, coherent way, and not reject certain things as being too populist or not *avant-garde* enough (n.p.).

Certainly, music of the Beatles and Aphex Twin don't regularly appear in classrooms or concert halls at conservatories like the Eastman School of Music, where Alarm Will Sound's members met. Nevertheless, the sociocultural distance between the conservatory and electronica is smaller than Alan's comments may suggest.

Sociologist Nick Prior's study of glitch, the form of electronica music practiced by Aphex Twin, reveals at work in electronica music political and aesthetic distinctions that parallel those of art music:

glitch's protagonists comprise a culturally-privileged faction of specialists. Encounters with musicians suggest high participation rates amongst graduates with humanities, music technology or sound design degrees, committed to innovation and autonomy (2008, p. 308).

The audience for glitch has much in common with that of new music, which comprises composers, performers, and highly educated elites.

Disparate perceptions of Aphex Twin demonstrate the importance of the sociocultural context in framing musical meaning. While Prior positions Aphex Twin as a dominant and familiar player in Glitch communities, Alarm Will Sound's audiences perceive *Acoustica* as edgy and foreign to new music scenes. From the new music perspective, Aphex Twin's music emerges as a form of symbolic capital for Alarm Will Sound that secures the group's name and thus their position in the field of production.

Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have also adopted visually oriented presentations that mark their members as hip and relevant. In concert, groups wear a broad range of clothing styles and conspicuously avoid tuxedos and formal gowns. Publicity photos often show members in strikingly casual, playful, or even aloof poses. Such photographs often contain mixed messages similar to those found in repertoire choices, referencing the classical tradition while also emphasizing

newness and individuality. For example, Alarm Will Sound's website displays a collage in which members stand apart from one another, wearing varied clothing, including suits, t-shirts, jeans, and cocktail dresses, in mostly shades of grey, white, and black (see Figure 8). Each member dresses in unique clothing that differentiates him or her from the rest of the group, yet the collective element figures prominently. No single member dominates the shot. Several members hold their respective instruments, such as flute, violin, horn, cello, and trombone; the choice to feature these specific instruments in the photo—as opposed to guitars or percussion instruments that the ensemble also uses—represents a conscious decision to maintain an iconographic representation of classical music.

Other aspects of the picture foster a rebellious, disordered image. Clarinetist Bill Kalinkos, standing off-center, throws burning pages of music toward the viewer, and some members' instruments emit flames. The fire destroys only the printed music and not the instruments or individuals holding them. By burning printed music, the group presents a defiant attitude and a virtuosic and transcendent level of musicianship. Alarm Will Sound tells the viewer that they perform with such ferocity, or fire, that they burn through the written pages of music. The other members stare into the camera, unperturbed by the pyrotechnic display occurring around them. An acceptance of these acts as uninteresting demonstrates that Alarm Will Sound's members play with fire, so to speak, all the time.

eighth blackbird's photos invoke a more playful attitude than normally associated with new music and the *avant-garde*. Pictures show the ensemble in

friendly social gatherings enjoying a drink, or casually enjoying each other's company (see Figure 9). Another picture shows Lisa Kaplan posed at the front of the group while dancing (Figure 10). Again, members wear jeans, t-shirts, and sports coats, attire consistent with the group's usual concert dress. Finally, in a third picture, the group poses on a fire escape outside a building as percussionist Matthew Duvall leaps wildly in the air, his red sneakers displayed prominently (Figure 11). In the pictures, members frequently look at each other rather than at the camera, as if they are more interested in having fun than doing a photo shoot. In all the photos, the musicians make uninhibited physical gestures uncharacteristic of classical music groups. The liveliness of their publicity photos articulates the physicality of their performances.

Finally, both groups have made a name for themselves by incorporating elaborate choreography into their performances. In this sense, Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird perform as disordered bodies, particularly as compared with the stillness of classical convention. For many of their concerts, the groups memorize their music and pre-plan corresponding movements, either on their own, or with the help of a movement coach. The job of Alarm Will Sound member Nigel Maister, for example, entails planning the movement performed in concerts.

For eighth blackbird, choreography became a part of their performances almost by chance. While studying at the Oberlin Conservatory, the group began to explore their performative space after memorizing a piece (N. Photinos, Personal Communication, July 4th 2008). Once they had moved away from the music stands,

they set about experimenting with different setups on stage, and eventually started moving during performances. Other classical music ensembles such as the Canadian Brass Quintet have employed performative choreography, but to my knowledge no other new music groups regularly add staging to pieces whose scores do not specifically call for it.

For both groups, choreography serves to enhance the musical performance, achieve ideas inherent in abstract music, and assist in reaching a wider audience. eighth blackbird cellist Nick Photinos told me that the ensemble's performative approach has, in general, enhanced its reputation. Nick perceives staging as a technique intended to encourage accessibility:

I feel like there's a lot of ways to convey information and mood and feeling.

You can bring these other elements to bear on this piece of art and use these other methods to help convey what you feel (N. Photinos, Personal

Communication, July 4th, 2008).

Tim Munro has further expressed that choreography preserves and in fact benefits the integrity of abstract music (T. Munro, Personal Communication, July 28th, 2008).

Thus, just as their publicity photos include overtly physical displays, eighth blackbird's concerts draw on and embrace physicality to connect with their audiences.

In concert, eighth blackbird's performances seek to express the dual message of audience appeal and high art performance. During my fieldwork at Music'08, I saw the ensemble perform the above-mentioned composition *singing in the dead of*

night. The work comprises largely interchangeable sections, repeated and recycled as if in response Reich's aesthetic manifesto "Music as a Gradual Process" (see Chapter 2). Composers, stage directors and the ensemble collaborated to create choreography and costuming for the piece. It entailed challenging stagings and movements for the ensemble, requiring lengthy rehearsals and extensive memorization.

Performative gestures in *singing in the dead of night* enacted both populist appeal and high art expression. For the second movement, "the light of the dark," performers alternately moved around the stage and gathered together, like friends hanging out in an informal jam session. At the climax, Tim Munro violently scraped the inside of the piano as Mathew Duvall executed aggressive accordion glissandi. After a final sustained scrape, the performers resumed their original parts, though at a *sotto voce* dynamic.

The ensemble's treatment of the piano in this example reflects the instrument's history as a virtuosic icon and symbol of domestic life. Musicologist Richard Leppert has argued that in the Victorian context:

[The piano's] sonorities, whether only potential or realized through performance, served as the aesthetic metaphor simultaneously connecting and justifying the connection between public and private life ... between men and women in their social relations and between bourgeois desire and erotic capacity, on the one hand, and their sublimation on the other (1992, p. 115).

Leppert's metaphor is provocatively highlighted in the eighth blackbird performance. By using the piano as a center of socialization and the object of blows, with people performing in both traditional styles and extended techniques, the performers of "singing in the dead of night" reach across the divide between domestic privacy and public exhibition. eighth blackbird incorporates such conspicuous gestures in attempts to reach a wider audience, thus substantiating the legitimacy of new art music within contemporary American society.

Inspired by eighth blackbird, Alarm Will Sound began to perform with choreography similarly. Alan explained why the ensemble employs blocking in concerts:

I think we felt that something that was keeping classical music in general, and maybe contemporary music in particular, from reaching an audience was ... that in music it's kind of accepted that performing equals *just* what comes out of your instrument... We started from the idea that to help get this music across and to reach people that we wanted to make concerts that were really conceived theatrically (A. Pierson, Personal Communication, December 4, 2007).

Interestingly, Alan does not cite the difficulty of the music presented as a determiner of accessibility, but rather the nature of the performance itself. Gavin too has emphasized the need for performers to embody the music and sees staging as a way to highlight the efforts of performers:

[S]o you often see people in symphony orchestras when they're not playing, they're just kind of hanging out, they're just staring off into space. But you never see [that] with a dancer, they start dancing in the wings before they go [on stage] (G. Chuck, Personal Communication, May 31, 2008).

Further, Gavin hopes to emphasize the social aspect of the repertoire, abstract and difficult as it may be:

I mean, this thing [the idea of difficult music], that was supposed to be all controlling and kind of abstract, outside of the people and the bodies playing it, I just don't think that's an attitude that flies for us. And I hear myself saying that, and you know, maybe fifteen years ago, I would disagree with myself right now, but my experience with *Alarm Will Sound* has shown me that it really is, as a performing art about the music itself, *and* about the musicians, *and* about the audience, *and* about the ideas, *and* about the history of the pieces and the ideas that it engages or can engage and connections that you can make (emphasis original, *ibid*).

Notably, this statement contradicts a fundamental point of *avant-garde* aesthetics: social disconnect (see for example, Schoenberg's statement about his popular reception in Chapter 2). Gavin seeks to connect complex and academic music with people by creating a visceral, performative experience. Both Gavin and Alan thus deliberately contrast their actions with established practice and identify these distinctions as essential to their respective ensemble's character, and even to the

essence of music making itself. In this sense, they exemplify Bourdieu's premise that difference produces existence.

Alarm Will Sound's online video of a performance at the Miller Theater in New York City on January 20, 2007 provides an example of the group's incorporation of theatrical elements into their performances (Alarm Will Sound, 2008). Nigel created choreography for the ensemble to execute as part of its performance of the modernist work *Intégrales* (1925) by Edgar Varèse. Both conductor and players begin the piece misplaced with respect to classical music's performative convention: performers perform throughout the hall, with Alan conducting from the center of the audience. The musicians gradually move toward the front of the stage as the piece progresses, often walking among the audience as they play. As the piece reaches a final climax, the performers stand together for the first time. In a sense, the choreography enacts the goal of Alarm Will Sound's performative style: people begin in unrelated spaces, and through music, they come together. By using choreography to provide a narrative for absolute music—that is, music said to exist without external reference—the group hopes to reach a wide audience. This apparent contradiction illustrates the postmodern nature of Alarm Will Sound's aesthetics.

As products of conservatory training, eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound enact a "cult of the individual" in which their skills and roles as performers are at stake (Kingsbury, 1988). As ethnomusicologist Henry Kingsbury illustrated: "The continuing efficacy of the recital as a ritual ... requires that some, but not all,

succeed” (ibid, p. 123). Alarm Will Sound’s and eighth blackbird’s numerous recordings (five each), positive press reviews, university residencies, and prestigious associations prove their abilities to perform at a high level and make a name for themselves. Each group also earns a substantial income, and has been able to convert their symbolic capital into real capital (a topic I explore further in the next chapter).

Yarn/Wire in the Concert Hall

Yarn/Wire stands in sharp contrast to the first two groups. They are younger, less financially successful, and significantly less well known. At the time of completing this thesis (August 2009), they have no commercial recordings and perform less frequently than eighth blackbird or Alarm Will Sound. As younger players, their efforts to establish themselves often emerge as antithetical to those of dominant players.

Yarn/Wire, however, also performs the “cult of the individual” and employs strategies with which to distinguish themselves. As with Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird, Yarn/Wire’s members met while studying music in an American conservatory setting. The young quartet promotes its own particular narrative on its website:

Yarn/Wire is currently the only active new music ensemble in the United States dedicated to expanding the body of works written for two pianists and two percussionists. Influenced by its members' diverse experiences in classical music, *avant-garde* theatre, and experimental popular music, the

quartet champions both acoustic and electro-acoustic works that often challenge existing trends in musical aesthetics. Yarn/Wire's primary mission is thus to present contemporary music performances which reflect an historical perspective while seeking to expand the current musical canon. In order to realize its goal, Yarn/Wire will develop an annual concert series featuring performances in New York City, the greater United States, and abroad. Newly commissioned works form the centerpiece of this vision, and Yarn/Wire aims to forge connections with the younger generation of composers from around the world (Yarn/Wire, 2008).

The group's status as a novice producer is reflected in this statement. They present themselves as ambitious and speak in terms of their future activity more than their present activity, reflecting their position as younger producers. Aesthetically, Yarn/Wire mirrors the attitudes of musical modernism, outlined by ethnomusicologist Georgina Born as perceiving "music as vanguard, autonomous, necessarily difficult, and antagonistic to the debased musics of the 'mass' marketplace" (1997, p. 482).²⁰

Further, the group's statement illustrates a focus on musical works, rather than people. Their mission is to foster pieces for piano and percussion and to expand the *canon* of this type of repertoire, not the *audience* for the repertoire. To

²⁰ Russell Greenberg, percussionist for Yarn/Wire, takes issue with my categorization of the ensemble as modernist, preferring the term experimentalist. However, as I discussed in Chapter 1, terminology is malleable and often a sociopolitical statement more than a straightforward matter of fact. Within the context of this study, I feel that the ensemble agrees with the definition of modernism set forth in Chapter 1 and explored in Chapter 2.

be sure, members have told me that they want to build an audience for the group, but this idea is not reflected in their website.

Aesthetically, the group aligns itself not with minimalist composers and popular musics, but with high modernist styles such as spectralism and algorithmic composition. Yarn/Wire also draws on less established composers, who are generally much younger than those featured by eighth blackbird or Alarm Will Sound. Expressing disdain for the media's failure to highlight modernist music, one member told me, "We're really excited about what's going on at IRCAM," (R. Greenberg, Personal Communication, April 17th, 2008) the Paris based institution associated with total serialism and, more recently, spectralism (Born, 1995).

The dissimilarities between eighth blackbird and Alarm Will Sound on the one hand, and Yarn/Wire on the other, represent crucially distinct approaches to the pursuit of difference. When I asked Yarn/Wire about their choice of clothing in performance and publicity materials, members began by telling me what other ensembles wore, and spoke with disdain about groups and performers in blue jeans. Yarn/Wire articulated a desire to look "professional" rather than hip or relevant (D. Schlosberg, Personal Communication, April 17th, 2008). In performance, their dress is formal, traditional, and business appropriate (see Figure 12). The visual elements presented serve to elevate the performers and illustrate the specialized nature of their performances.

The group's performative strategies further reflect their modernist aesthetics. When I attended Yarn/Wire's April 6th, 2008 concert at the University of

Tennessee, they arranged themselves as shown in Figure 13. In an email, Yarn/Wire percussionist Russell Greenberg told me that practical considerations dictate the stage setup employed by the group:

With so much percussion gear involved, and huge pianos, if we're not careful, the concerts can turn into demonstrations of setting up and breaking down gear instead of music! Really, the rep determines our setup for concerts" (R. Greenberg, Personal Communication, July 27th, 2009).

But for me, Yarn/Wire's arrangement seems insular and pensive when compared with Alarm Will Sound's or eighth blackbird's roving exploration of space. They focus on themselves and on their written parts. In fact, Yarn/Wire orders itself in a fashion similar to the standard arrangement of classical musicians with one crucial difference: they allow no space for a conductor. By cutting out such space, the group partly separates itself from the classical tradition. With their backs to the audience, members also physically disconnect from spectators, as if disinterested in the reactions of those watching.

Yarn/Wire's choice of repertoire also illustrates a comparatively modernist position. They recently performed composer David Bithell's (b. 1976) *Whistle from Above* (2007)

for two percussionists, robotic instruments, staging, lighting, and computer sound. Though the piece ostensibly has much in common with *singing in the dead of night* (e.g. a substantial theatrical element), the contrasts between the two works prove striking. While the production of *singing in the dead of night* incorporated many

people in a collaborative process, the score for *Whistle from Above* provides Bithell's own detailed instructions and encourages a relative autonomy between the composer and the performer (see Figure 14).²¹ Like Yarn/Wire's standard performance arrangement, the theatrical elements the ensemble executes in this piece provide a comparatively limited view of the action. In concert, the stage is dark and musicians are frequently hidden in a manner reminiscent of Gavin's comment about invisible performers. The overall effect is one of abstraction, intellectualism, and solemnity.

Conclusion

As I stated at the outset of this chapter, contrasting signs produce existence in the new music field of production. Many interlocutors describe their musical practice in similar terms. For example, Indiana University composition professor Claude Baker, speaking independently of Bourdieu's theories, outlined corresponding trends among his composition students that paralleled the aesthetics of Yarn/Wire.

Describing composers Steve Reich and David Lang, Baker stated:

They've come of age. They are the people that everybody else looks too, and they're the people [against] whom younger students are rebelling. ...[S]ome of our students now ... say "I don't like Reich and that stuff." They're looking to Europe. They're looking to the spectralists. They're going as far afield as

²¹ To be sure, the score is not a fixed text and requires considerable interpretation. Yarn/Wire worked with Bithell for some time to develop the specifics of the choreography employed in *Whistle from Above* (R. Greenberg, Personal Communication, July 27th, 2009).

[Helmut] Lachenmann to try and get something else (C. Baker, Personal Communication, July 17th, 2008).

Thus, the reactive strategies of new music's players illustrate not only a productive model, but a consumptive one as well. Musicians must acknowledge others in order to create a new position. They consume a musical past to make a musical future.

eight blackbird and Alarm Will Sound have worked to secure their respective positions in the new music field of production. In so doing, they have aligned themselves with established postmodern composers, while also embracing particular popular styles and a less formal presentation than that associated with classical tradition. Their performative models articulate at once the desire to be different and the aspiration to attract new audiences.

Yarn/Wire, in contrast, has embraced musical modernism. Their performances express social distance and favor intellectualism. As the younger group, Yarn/Wire and its ideology crucially problematize perspectives of musical "progress" that place modernism as prior to postmodernism.

The comparison of Alarm Will Sound's and eight blackbird's disordered bodies on the one hand, with Yarn/Wire's formal dress and strict staging on the other, illustrates how all three groups articulate their aesthetics through physical gesture and visual presentation. Aesthetic difference thus becomes tantamount to political struggle in the field of new music.

Chapter 4

It's not about the money: Patronage and Socioeconomic Structure

When I asked musicians how much income they made from performing in their respective ensembles, one of the most frequent responses I heard was, "It's not about the money." Again and again my informants told me that payment in new music performance was low and that, if money were their object, they would have quit long ago.

Reflecting these opinions, most of the musicians in Alarm Will Sound and Yarn/Wire have jobs outside of their gigs in the ensembles, and often work as freelance musicians or hold positions in universities. Only eighth blackbird's members earn their income entirely from their activities in the ensemble, and members still depend on the group's university residencies for much of their income. However, in spite of low salaries, many musicians I interviewed seemed to accept their state of affairs. For many ensemble members, the pleasure derived from an ensemble's activities was very fulfilling and offset, to an extent, the low wages they earned.

Such views address a fundamental concept held by many of my interlocutors: playing music should, and often does, constitute an idealistic activity, but ultimately musicians must face the realities of building an audience and making money. Musicians perceived and maintained a separation between symbolic economies of music and performance and "real" economies of commerce and money. Thus, for

many musicians, a tension exists between their desire to make music and their ability to make a living.

In order to maintain the commercial autonomy of art, artists circulate symbolic capital, defined by Bourdieu as “economic or political capital that is disavowed ... hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits” (1980, p. 262). As a result, even though groups circulate primarily symbolic capital as part of their stance against commercial interests, they endeavor to convert symbolic capital into real capital. In so doing, musicians hope to support in real financial terms their ideals of performance and sociability. Crucially, groups can only collect capital by employing methods that preserve the illusory divide between commercial economies and economies of prestige; in other words, they must avoid the risk of becoming “sell outs.”

The separation of symbolic and real economies dates back to the nineteenth century, when art music in America gained sacred status. Lawrence Levine has argued that: “The process of sacralization endowed the music it focused upon with unique aesthetic and spiritual properties that rendered it inviolate, exclusive and eternal” (1988, p. 132). Echoes of this perspective carry into the present. As I argued in Chapter 3, classical music’s contemporary performance ritual continues to effect a rarified air, and all three ensembles draw on this ritual, even when they seemingly challenge some of its underlying assumptions. They depend upon the belief in symbolic capital, a currency that often manifests through the sacredness of

the music presented, the prestige of the composers who wrote it, and their own performative skills.

Artists in new music separate themselves from the commercial economy through a variety of strategies. While cautiously embracing popular musics, Alarm Will Sound's and eighth blackbird's socioeconomic structures reject the commercial relationships of the popular sphere. Yarn/Wire, despite its differing, modernist aesthetics, operates socioeconomically in much the same way. Musicians make distinctions between commercial musics and art musics because they see music not so much as a job, but rather as a calling and source of personal fulfillment. In this sense, art music cannot be measured and sold as a commodity; instead, the musicians themselves must support music through their dedication and innovative presentations.

In this chapter, I explore the socioeconomic organization of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire. All three groups participate in patronage systems that generate both symbolic and real capital. A comparison of the socioeconomic organizations of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire reveals the former two ensembles as dominant producers, and the latter as a novice producer. Further, I demonstrate that "real" money, and the methods by which groups obtain it, serves to distance the groups from commercial interests. Finally, I argue that symbolic capital and real capital prove closely connected through their interdependence on similar structures, institutions, and figures.

Symbolic Capital

Sociologically, patronage circulates symbolic capital, often in the form of talent or prestige, from teacher to student, composer to ensemble, and audience to performer. Here, I use the term “patronage” to indicate a legacy of prestige (Kingsbury, 1988). Economically, patronage allows musicians to gain real capital from government sources, institutions, and donors, while simultaneously allowing them to maintain distance from ostensibly commercial categories.

Patronage systems play a major role in the social organization of classical musicians. In his ethnography of a conservatory, Henry Kingsbury described this social organization of teachers and students as a patron-client system. Along such lines, faculty are said to have studied with famous and revered masters. Thus music schools:

present each faculty member as the individual conservator of a distinct and distinguished musical heritage. The implicit message is that if one studies with a particular teacher, then one steps into a particular line of musical descent (1988, pp. 45-46).

Students, for their part, reciprocate symbolic capital by gaining jobs in noteworthy institutions. In fact, in the conservatory context, “one of the criteria for evaluating faculty is the number and success of students of the various teachers” (ibid, p. 41). Students organize themselves according to their teachers and frequently socialize in similar circles, thus creating their own social and professional networks, systems of value, and capital.

Educational institutions themselves also circulate symbolic capital. The more prestigious the reputation of a conservatory, the more talented and highly regarded are its teachers and students. Many of my informants viewed attendance at a prominent school as a key factor in obtaining jobs in music, explaining that connections made in college enhance the ability to secure good positions later. One example of this comes, not from my fieldwork, per se, but from my high school education. I vividly remember a conductor from the “President’s Own” United States Marine Band explaining that a student from the Julliard School of Music would be exempted from the audition process and automatically admitted to the group on the basis of his credential; this practice indicates one way in which patronage systems can facilitate the conversion of symbolic capital into real capital.

The biographies of Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn Wire’s respective members further illustrate the importance of patronage systems (Alarm Will Sound, 2006; eighth blackbird, 2008; Yarn/Wire, 2008). The members of all three groups studied music in prominent, mostly American conservatories and gained a certain symbolic capital simply by attending these institutions. Yarn/Wire’s members met while students at the State University of New York (SUNY), Stony Brook; Alarm Will Sound’s members assembled at the Eastman Conservatory of Music in Rochester, New York; eighth blackbird studied together at Oberlin Conservatory in Ohio, and later at Cincinnati Conservatory and Northwestern University’s Bienen School of Music in Evanston, Illinois. All of these schools have been favorably recognized, both in the US and abroad, for their music

programs; correspondingly, the schools promote the prestige of their teachers and students. They require auditions for entry and their curricula include rigorous juries that evaluate students according to their ability to perform specific musical skills (Bishop, 2008; Eastman School of Music, 2009; Northwestern University, 2008; Oberlin University, 2009).

Explicit examples of the patronage system manifest in the individual online biographies of ensemble members. Alarm Will Sound keyboardist and composer John Orfe, for example, lists his teachers, performances of his compositions, experiences as a performing pianist, and the awards he has earned in order to emphasize the social recognition his musical activities have garnered (see Figure 15). To exemplify his achievements, he associates himself with the Tanglewood Music Festival and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, both celebrated art music institutions. Cellist Nick Photinos and violinist Matt Albert of eighth blackbird have similarly styled biographies that list past teachers and performances (see Figures 16 and 17). In particular, Matt's profile lists the names of the prominent universities where he studied. Finally, Yarn/Wire pianist Daniel Schlosberg briefly describes his musical accomplishments, emphasizing, like John Orfe, his work at Tanglewood (see Figure 18).

Patronage systems manifest between composers and performers too, with performers in effect "patronizing" the music written by composers by agreeing to perform, and in some cases even champion, the composers' works. In turn, established composers may bestow significant symbolic capital upon ensembles.

Along such lines, *New York Times* music critic Alan Kozinn wrote: “You can measure a new-music [sic] group’s success by the composers it commissions” (n.p. 2008).

Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have both developed close working relationships with high profile composers. For example, Alarm Will Sound has made three recordings of Steve Reich’s music, and his name figures prominently on all of the album covers (see Figures 19 and 20). The group has also commissioned and premiered music by celebrated contemporary composer John Adams. Affiliations between well-known composers and ensembles lend the ensemble recognition and contribute to record sales and critical appreciation. The assumption is that prominent composers would only choose to work with excellent musicians.

Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird’s arrangements of various electronic musics mark them as patrons of certain fringe popular musics (see Chapter 3), a characteristic that increases their appeal with non-classical audiences. As I established in Chapter 3, these arrangements have been received by audiences and critics with high levels of enthusiasm and have garnered substantial prestige for the groups.

eighth blackbird has also worked closely with Reich and the Bang on a Can composers. Reich has even attended several of the ensemble’s concerts, a situation that audience members at the Music’08 concert (a workshop discussed in Chapter 3) described as exhilarating. One woman told me: “I think his presence adds a lot of excitement. It informs the way the piece is received. It’s like ‘Oh wow, they’re playing a *new* piece and the composer’s here, and it’s Steve Reich! It’s awesome!’”

(Anonymous, Personal Communication, July 5th, 2008). The group's recordings feature other prominent composers such as Milton Babbitt student Frederic Rzewski (b. 1938), and in Fall 2009, they will premiere a new piece by Guggenheim Foundation winner Jennifer Higdon (b. 1962).

Conversely, ensembles may transfer symbolic capital to a composer, as when a noted group performs a piece by a less established composer. For example, at the Music'07 Summer Composer Workshop at Cincinnati Conservatory, eighth blackbird chose a work by young composer Jeremy Sment and one by another student composer. Jeremy spoke very highly of his collaboration with the ensemble:

They were really cool, really nice. They really made me feel like an equal, even though it's pretty clear that I'm not an equal For example there was a passage [in my piece] for one shot shakers and they actually went out and got caxixi shakers ... they actually got a lot of the ethnic percussion [I asked for] (J. Sment, Personal Communication, July 18th, 2008).

Jeremy had been advised by teachers to avoid writing for "ethnic" percussion because of the relative scarcity of these instruments and their infrequent use. eighth blackbird had already given Jeremy a valuable opportunity by performing his piece, but their efforts to secure the specific instruments he called for demonstrated the ensemble's dedication to his work and their symbolic and economic investment in him as a composer.

As the above excerpt demonstrates, Jeremy recognized eighth blackbird as a superior, more recognized player in the new music field. In particular, eighth

blackbird here represents Bourdieu's idea of the art trader who finds new artists. A trader "consecrates a product which he has 'discovered' ... and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work" (1980, p. 263). The power of a given player's endorsement rests on the recognition he or she in turn has achieved from other, more powerful players. In other words, eighth blackbird can only give as much prestige as they have received from more powerful critics, composers, and performers.

According to this standard, eighth blackbird constitutes a highly consecrated group. As their online biography states, they have been critically praised for "performances [that] are the picture of polish and precision" (eighth blackbird, 2008). In a review of one of their concerts, music critic for the *Los Angeles Times* Mark Swed stated: "Tuesday's was a really good, rocking, rollicking performance" (Swed, 2008). A great many of the new music musicians I interviewed knew of eighth blackbird and thought very highly of the group.

By selecting and publicly performing Jeremy's piece—in effect "patronizing" his music—eighth blackbird imbues his work with significant symbolic capital. In turn, Jeremy reinforces his belief in the capital he has received by describing eighth blackbird as "one of most prominent and prestigious" groups in America. The weight of Jeremy's accomplishment draws upon the prestige of eighth blackbird.

The spaces that groups patronize also carry symbolic capital. Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird almost always perform in formal concert halls, such as Zankel Auditorium at Carnegie Hall, or Columbia University's Miller Theater. In

spite of the ensembles' emphasis on comparatively disordered performance practices, their venue choices illustrate that they target their performances toward audiences that patronize formal spaces. Further, these prominent locations are more likely to be attended by important critics and thus stand to enhance the prestige of the groups and contribute to their public profiles.

Yarn/Wire has garnered comparatively little symbolic capital. To my knowledge, the group has developed no relationships with composers who enjoy the high profile of Reich, Adams, or Lang. Rather, members perform works by younger composers whose styles align with the group's modernist aesthetics. As the youngest of the three groups, Yarn/Wire has had the least amount of time to make a name or develop connections to prominent composers. The group usually performs at lower profile locations such as the Tenri Cultural Institute in New York City. Indeed, (as of June 2009) the ensemble's concerts have never been reviewed by critics, thus preventing them from garnering important notice by recognized arbiters of taste.

“Real” Capital

Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire convert symbolic capital into real capital by employing strategies that allow them to earn money without appearing overtly commercial. All three ensembles have respectively filed as 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations by describing themselves as public charities. This status provides a legal mechanism that allows groups to exchange symbolic capital for real capital. By facilitating the groups' tax exemptions, the state acts as

the groups' largest and perhaps most important patron. Within the tax-exempt category, the ensembles' varying fundraising abilities and successes illustrate how Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird, as compared with Yarn/Wire, are dominant players with regard to financial status and assets.

According to the Internal Revenue Service's guide for tax-exempt entities, an organization must publicly register as "charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, [or] preventing cruelty to children or animals" (IRS, 2008). In acquiring non-profit status, the ensembles thus aim to serve a public interest and portray themselves as meeting a social need.

When asked why they needed non-profit status, people in new music communities often replied that the commercial market would not support the music they create and perform. In a lengthy blog discussion among several musicians, bloggers connected non-profit status with musical focus along genre lines. For example, performer and arts consultant Ian David Moss wrote:

I don't know of any musical ensembles organized as 501(c)(3)s that play exclusively popular music. However, there are plenty of nonprofit organizations (presenters, especially) that program pop music. Not J-Lo or Madonna, necessarily, but certainly not free jazz either. I mean, just in NYC, you have the River-to-River Festival, Celebrate Brooklyn, Central Park Summerstage, etc. programming people like Jill Scott, Isaac Hayes, Yo La

Tengo, Wyclef, etc. It's "smart" pop but pop nonetheless (Sheridan, 2008, n.p.).

Ian's term "smart pop" illustrates a pervasive attitude in new music culture: good music has a message that transcends monetary value and an exclusively commercial market.

New music ensembles need symbolic capital to earn real capital and to present such worthy musics to audiences. By establishing and maintaining categories such as "non-profit," artists uphold the illusory divide between commercial and symbolic economies. This distinction is crucial to their self-perception as artists, but it also poses significant challenges.

Non-profit status requires ensembles to earn money in certain acceptable ways. Groups make money by converting their symbolic capital into real capital and potentially even support themselves as employees of non-profits, though eighth blackbird is the only group of the three whose members make a living entirely as members of an ensemble. While Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird make comparable amounts of money from performance (between \$140,000 and \$180,000 for 2006), the former's larger membership (nineteen compared to seven) requires that each individual earn less per concert. Further, eighth blackbird as an ensemble earns three lines of income, one from performances, one from its residency at the University of Chicago, and a third from a residency at the University of Richmond (T. Munro, Personal Communication, July 24th, 2008). According to tax returns for 2006, Alarm Will Sound made their income exclusively from concerts, a situation

that Gavin Chuck and Alarm Will Sound violist John Richards has described as problematic because of the lack of year to year security in performance. (G. Chuck, Personal Communication, May 31, 2008, J. Richards, Personal Communication, January 5, 2009).

Non-profit status also enables the groups to collect donations and apply for grants. eighth blackbird, for example, collected over \$40,000 in 2007 in the form of grants. Similarly, Gavin hopes to raise additional funds from charitable contributions and Alarm Will Sound members have employed a variety of strategies to do so.

Alarm Will Sound's recently created board of directors illustrates how symbolic capital and composer patronage can facilitate the acquisition of real capital. The board consists of several well-known figures in new music and includes: David Lang; Steve Reich; Peggy Monastra, director of promotions for G. Schirmer publishing company; David Undercofler, former president of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra and dean of the Eastman School of music; and David Baldini, a philanthropist who also works with Bang on a Can. The board provides Alarm Will Sound with contacts from whom to solicit donations and helps the ensemble form strategies for raising money.

Finally, both Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have developed professional relationships that allow them to promote their respective organizations. Both groups employ managers in charge of organizing schedules, booking gigs, and fulfilling a number of other administrative tasks. eighth blackbird

further contracts with professional agencies for booking (Opus 3 Artists), and publicity and press (21C Media Group). While such jobs originally fell to the performing members, they were gradually outsourced as the two ensemble grew increasingly busy with gigs and other responsibilities, and gained greater prestige.

In contrast, Yarn/Wire's paucity of financial resources, coupled with their lighter performance schedule and lack of connections with powerful players, signals the ensemble's status as a novice player in the new music field of production. Having earned little financial capital from its artistic efforts, Yarn/Wire has no artistic representation or board of directors, though members have expressed an intention to create a "donor base" and the group solicits donations on its website. Yarn/Wire has joined Fractured Atlas, an organization that provides health insurance and other services to non-profits (Yarn/Wire, 2008). As I stated in Chapter 3, they perform only four to five times a year, as compared with the other two groups' dozens of annual performances. Further, Yarn/Wire member Russell Greenberg emphasized the significance of Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird's financial accomplishments, stating that he also aspires to achieve such a high level of financial success:

We know many players in Alarm Will Sound, and really respect and love what they do. The programming is interesting and innovative, and they perform really well. What's more amazing, perhaps, is that Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird managed to make performing new music a huge part of

their careers. That sort of sustainability is really the dream and goal of any group (R. Greenberg, Personal Communication, July 27th, 2009)

His statement illustrates at once the difficulty of making a living in new music performance, as well as the burning desire to do so.

Ensembles may also gain real capital through their associations with educational institutions. Alarm Will Sound and eighth blackbird have both secured residencies with American colleges and universities over the past several years. Alarm Will Sound has had residencies at schools such as Dickinson College; eighth blackbird serves as artist-in-residence at the University of Chicago and the University of Richmond. These residencies are paid positions in which the ensemble performs concerts and teaches lessons, master classes, and lectures for a pre-determined length of time. Residencies consequently provide income as well as legitimacy.

Artistic residencies further diversify and invigorate the network of prestige by bringing an ensemble into intimate contact with students and musicians. For example, the Music'07 festival at Cincinnati Conservatory employed alumni ensemble eighth blackbird as artist-in-residence. Held annually, the festival acts as a sort of miniature conservatory; the workshop selects student composers and performers from a pool of applicants, offering those selected enrollment in lessons, classes and courses with master teachers, and concerts of both student and master participants. Student composers with finished (or nearly finished) musical pieces pair up with student performers and rehearse the music under the supervision of a

master performer, usually an artist-in-residence. eighth blackbird's student affiliation with the Cincinnati Conservatory thus translated to later employment, exemplifying a patronage relationship common to the art music world, as discussed above.

The symbolic and real capital provided by academic or other formal institutions constitute an important ambition for musicians. Residencies supply ensembles with crucial sources of income, as in the case of eighth blackbird. At the same time, however, musicians often harbor reservations over institutional affiliations. Tim Munro thus expressed sincere anxiety regarding the group's dependence on college residencies:

Classical music is a money losing operation, unlike many other different types of artistic expression. It just can't sustain itself. So, for example ... two thirds of my income comes directly out of universities [and] residencies and the rest of the money comes out of grants. We cannot exist in the marketplace. Without the institutionalization of classical music, we could not exist (T. Munro, Personal Communication, July 24th, 2008).

While somewhat uncomfortable with this situation, Tim admitted that he saw no alternative to this state of affairs. His perspective mirrors Bourdieu's recognition that even successful artists view their positions within the field of production skeptically and will quickly point out the precariousness of their reliance on artistic goods for economic gain (1980, pp. 261-262).

Other musicians struggle to choose between the symbolic capital provided by one musical institution and the financial support offered by another. I have known many musicians who have chosen to study at a school for its symbolic capital, in spite of financial considerations (though they might have lamented their decisions later as they watched their college loans mount). On the other hand, some make the opposite choice. A friend of mine, Sarah, studied composition and piano performance at her undergraduate institution and later applied to several schools of music for her Master's degree. After gaining acceptance to both the University of Southern California and the Julliard School of Music, Sarah decided to attend the former because it offered better financial assistance, along with a strong composition program. However, her mother, Beth, was disappointed in Sarah's decision to decline the admissions offer from the highly prestigious Julliard. Beth (who has never studied music formally) saw Sarah's opportunity to study at the famous school as more important than the practical considerations that Sarah weighted in her decision. Sarah acknowledged that Julliard would provide her with a network of contacts, including well-known and respected piano teachers. Ultimately, however, the financial burden of studying at Julliard and living in New York City, coupled with her interest in composition, compelled Sarah's decision in favor of USC.

The disparity between the perspectives of Sarah and Beth illustrates the complex relationship between symbolic and real capital. Symbolic capital does not necessarily overrule practical concerns for classically trained musicians. Ultimately,

the relationship between symbolic capital and real capital is complicated and interdependent. Thus, the relationship between symbolic capital and real capital fluctuates depending on the particular context of a situation.

Conclusion

Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and Yarn/Wire all participate in socioeconomic systems of patronage. In so doing, groups circulate symbolic capital that they variously hope to transform into real capital. Devices such as non-profit legal status and university residencies provide methods of obtaining financial support that do not violate the sociocultural conventions of new music's field of production. Such approved conversions financially support the ideals of performance and sociability held by musicians. Despite the common claim from which this chapter takes its title, it can be and often is about the money.

However, while financial concerns represent important points of inquiry in new music, the social aspects of group dynamics figure prominently in the rationale for creating and playing with an ensemble. During my fieldwork, I saw groups engage in elaborate social activities as they shared inside jokes and stories of their lives during rehearsals. Indeed, in the course of Alarm Will Sound's rehearsal for the Bang on a Can Marathon such activities could become infectively disruptive, and I found myself laughing with members I barely knew as the rehearsal progressed. Several times, Gavin Chuck exhorted the group to keep quiet and encouraged them to stay on task. eighth blackbird and Yarn/Wire's rehearsals were less rowdy, but

still contained a fair amount of joviality, both during the actual rehearsal and after, as members talked and fraternized.

Social aspects of the ensembles' activities enable individuals to maintain social networks established over the years. In interviews, musicians repeatedly described how music was more than a daily job for them, and they spoke with disdain of experiences in which playing wasn't fun. For instance, Courtney Orlando, violinist for Alarm Will Sound, described her lack of interest in classical orchestras:

My teachers in high school ... played in the Allentown Symphony and the Reading Symphony and it just didn't seem like they were having that much fun, like violin had become a job to them and I didn't want that because violin, to me, was a fun thing (Personal Communication, July 24th, 2008).

Courtney later told me that playing in Alarm Will Sound constituted one of the most personally fulfilling activities of her life. Many members of eighth blackbird and Yarn/Wire shared this sentiment about their respective ensembles, even as they reflected on the difficulty of financially sustaining the activities of the group. In this way, members articulated their desire to combine their personal and professional lives within the sociomusical domain. Ultimately, then it wasn't about the money.

Chapter 5

Reflections and Conclusions

Many of my perspectives on classical and new music have changed while writing this thesis. When I first began research for this project a year and a half ago, I hoped to find people interested in saving classical music in general and in promoting new music to contemporary audiences specifically. I found many people who espoused this goal, and many who shared my concerns and interest. I discovered and increasingly became part of an avid community of bloggers and musicians frequently debating topics such as survivability and accessibility in art music. And many of the musicians in Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, and even Yarn/Wire described their desires to connect with a broader audience.

While I had found the types of communities, musicians, and discussions I had sought, I increasingly began to question the elitist nature of new music practice and the neocolonialist rhetoric of its strategies. My training as an ethnomusicologist encouraged me to examine the cultural representation and western confrontations of “the other.” With these concepts in mind, I found myself frequently disturbed by what I perceived to be insensitivity to such issues.

As I became increasingly disillusioned with classical and new music, I found discomfort in interactions with, and statements advanced by, many of my friends, colleagues, and informants. I continue struggle to distinguish between the “field” and my personal life (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), and I can no longer listen to new music without consciously reflecting on the culture’s potential exploitation of

others, including popular and non-western musicians. Indeed, even as I wrote this conclusion, I spoke with a friend in the doctoral composition program at Indiana University whose attitudes toward cultural appropriation troubled me. Prior to writing this thesis I would have debated with him moral questions surrounding of the use of non-western music and the ramifications of such activities. This time, however, I chose to let the issue pass because I knew the discussion would result in endless exchanges over what constituted appropriation, and that his indoctrination in classical music would prevent him from sympathizing with my perspective.

In the course of my work on this project, I also began to question the accepted institutionalization of classical music. In my experience, “music” as an undergraduate college major typically addresses a comparatively narrow range of cultures and includes only certain peoples (and times, genres, contexts, social classes, etc.). Only in my graduate education did I become aware of the wealth of musical practices in the world and the inadequacy of my prior knowledge. Moreover, I came to see that, before my graduate work, I had perceived music in terms that echoed the opinions of my informants: I shunned commercial music and exoticized musics that I understood as foreign. I also believed in the intrinsic superiority of difficult music.

In hindsight, I find the preconceptions I once held disconcerting, especially when I consider that I earned an undergraduate degree in music education. Whose music was I preparing to teach, and to whom? The answers that my curriculum presumed were “the greatest music ever written” and “to everybody,” respectively.

Such universalist beliefs seem to fuel many people's rationalization for teaching, performing, listening to, and otherwise consuming art music. Indeed, art music historically has been exempted from cultural studies precisely because of its status as an objectified collection of masterworks.

I have thus come to see and even appreciate western art music as a cultural practice. A long time practitioner of classical music and product of patronage systems, I understand and relate to the style in a very personal and even fulfilling way. But I can no longer support the presentation of art music as appealing to all people, regardless of their cultural background.

Further, through my study of Bourdieu's theories, I realized that academic culture operates according to parameters that mirror those of artistic culture. Difference certainly helps produce existence in academic cultures, though straying too far from the norm can result in exclusion. We too seek institutional patronage and circulate symbolic capital, such as degrees, awards, fellowships, and recognition by prominent publishers and societies. Similar modes of institutionalization, as well as the frequent education of art musicians in colleges and universities, underscore and enhance the similarities between new music and academic cultures.

Conclusions

Ethnography has only recently been employed as a methodology for the study of art music. In my research for this project, I found only a handful of publications on art music that used ethnography as a primary tool. Further ethnographic studies could engage more fully issues of gender in art music, a topic that has been addressed in

Born's (1995) study of IRCAM, but lacking in other studies cited in my project.

Other potentially usefully avenues of research would examine the role of technologies in art music performance, which I did not fully address here.

Ultimately, new music performs social and cultural values, often contested and regularly renegotiated. The comparison of the three different ensembles I studied demonstrates at once the plurality of opinions and practices of musicians in new music and the general characteristics of the field of production.

eighth blackbird has endeavored to invigorate the new music scene by positioning themselves as postmodern musicians, even while maintaining crucial connections to classical music's traditional socioeconomic systems of patronage. The group has garnered numerous positive reviews, commissioned music by established composers, and made a well recognized name for themselves in new music's field of production. As the oldest of the three ensembles, eighth blackbird has had the longest time to convert their symbolic capital into real capital. As a result, members make a living as performers within the ensemble. They incorporate choreography as a tool for expressing the abstract ideas in art music. Their repertoire draws on a range of styles, including standard modernist works like Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire*, minimalist compositions by Steve Reich, and arrangements of music by Radiohead. In concerts, members wear hip styles of clothing; they portray themselves in publicity photos as physically active, fun, and approachable.

Alarm Will Sound has also secured a prominent position in the field. Influenced by eighth blackbird, Alarm Will Sound has employed staging and other theatrical devices in many of their concerts. The group performs a similarly broad range of styles, drawing on both minimalist, postmodern composers like Reich and John Adams, as well as music by the established *avant-garde* such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and György Ligeti. Finally, Alarm Will Sound has arranged music by Aphex Twin, John Lennon, and The Shaggs in an effort to reach a larger audience than that traditionally enjoyed by new music performers. Such selections from the fringes of popular music betray Alarm Will Sound's disdain of overtly commercial musics. While not as financially successful as eighth blackbird, Alarm Will Sound has received many positive reviews, and their newly established board of directors has begun to help the group grow economically.

Operating within related parameters of musical prestige, Yarn/Wire's strategies contrast with those of the other two groups. The piano and percussion quartet openly embraces older modernist aesthetics, and shuns postmodern musics. Yarn/Wire performs in a comparatively ordered fashion, and dresses more formally than Alarm Will Sound or eighth blackbird. By identifying with contrasting aesthetics, Yarn/Wire illustrates Bourdieu's concept of the newcomer whose strategies to accrue recognition necessarily oppose those of older, more established producers. Notably here, Yarn/Wire accomplishes this position by paradoxically championing the older aesthetic. As the youngest group, Yarn/Wire has had limited time to garner significant symbolic capital. Further, at the time of this thesis's

completion, members have earned little, if any, money from their activities in the group. Their low profile may also stem from their modernist aesthetics, which all too often seem to alienate rather than attract audiences.

Finally, though the details of each group's tactics differ, their general characteristics have much in common. As students of music conservatories, they participate in the cult of the individual and promote themselves as innovative and talented ensembles. The groups all scorn commercial interests, as demonstrated by their non-profit legal status, their cautious avoidance of broadly popular music, and their participation in socioeconomic systems of patronage.

My study emphasizes performance as a critical topic of consideration in understanding difference. Musicians employ their bodies to articulate their aesthetic ideologies and to distinguish themselves from one another. The significance of such differences represents crucial points of interest in examining new music practice.

As I argued in Chapter 1, few studies have addressed performance in western art music in general, and none have thoroughly examined the political ramifications of new music performance. Similarly, the relationships between symbolic capital and real capital in contemporary classical music culture have largely been ignored. By approaching new music ethnographically, I contribute to the scholarship on art music performance.

Through examining new music as a cultural practice, I illustrate and expand on several points raised in the scholarly literature. First, I demonstrate the reality

and pervasiveness of McClary's "rhetoric of survival" in new music culture.

Concerns with survivability permeate new music and strongly contributed to the initial motivation for my own research. Second, I problematize the modern/postmodern divide and suggest that the separation of the two constitutes a political strategy rather simply a musical style or temporal truth. Indeed, younger musicians can be more modernist than older ones. As I showed in Chapters 2 and 3, postmodern composers and musicians employ certain styles of popular music in an effort to make unique names for themselves, and to present their products as relevant.

Ultimately, I complicate the presentation of classical music as a specific style. In particular, I argue that musical style cannot be defined merely by its point of origin or formal characteristics, but must be understood in terms of its cultural context and the manner of its presentation. The dynamics of performance and the history of practice reveal new music's "cultural constructedness" (McClary, 2000, p. 7).

My study connects musicians' aesthetic choices and beliefs with their political struggles for recognition and financial success. Their interdependence illustrates the human side of art music, a style all too often presented and studied in rarified terms.

Bibliography

- Adams, J. (1999). *Essays before an earbox*. On *The John Adams earbox* [CD]. New York: Nonesuch.
- Alarm Will Sound. (2006). About section. Retrieved December 11, 2008, from www.alarmwillsound.com
- . (2008). Promotional Video [video]. New York: Alarm Will Sound.
- Aphex Twin, & Alarm Will Sound. (2005). *Acoustica: Alarm Will Sound performs Aphex Twin* [sound recording]. Brooklyn, NY: Cantaloupe Music.
- Attali, J. (1985). *Noise: the political economy of music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Babbitt, M. (1958). Who cares if you listen? (The composer as specialist). *High Fidelity Magazine*, 8(2), 38-40.
- Bartky, S. L. (1988). Foucault, femininity, and the modernization of patriarchal power. In I. Diamond & L. Quinby (Eds.), *Feminism & Foucault: Reflections on resistance* (pp. 61-86). Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Bishop, M. (2008). Degree programs of SUNY Stony Brook. Retrieved July 29, 2009, from <http://naples.cc.sunysb.edu/CAS/music.nsf/pages/gdegree#DMA>
- Bithell, D. (Artist). (2007). *Whistle from above* [Musical Score].
- Born, G. (1995). *Rationalizing culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the institutionalization of the musical avant-garde*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- . (1997). Modernist discourse, psychic forms, and agency: Aesthetic subjectivities at IRCAM. *Cultural Anthropology*, 12(4), 480-501.

- Bourdieu, P. (1971). Intellectual field and creative project. In M. F. D. Young (Ed.), *Knowledge and control: New directions for the sociology of education* (pp. 161-185). London: Collier Macmillan.
- . (1980). The production of belief: Contribution to an economy of symbolic goods. *Media, Culture, and Society*, 2(3), 261-293.
- . (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- . (1990). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Chase, G. (1987). *America's music, from the pilgrims to the present* (Rev. 3rd ed.). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (1986). *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Corbett, J. (2000). Experimental oriental: New music and other others In G. Born & D. Hesmondalgh (Eds.), *Western music and its others*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Cowell, H., & Nicholls, D. (1996). *New musical resources*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Cusick, S. G. (1994). Feminist Theory, Music Theory, and the Mind/Body Problem. *Perspectives of New Music*, 32(1), 8-27.
- Dews, P. (1984). Power and subjectivity in Foucault. *New Left Review*, 1(144), 72-95.
- Eastman School of Music. (2009). Application process. Retrieved July 29, 2009, from http://www.esm.rochester.edu/apply/audition_day.php

- eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>
- eighth blackbird (Musical group), Higdon, J., Fitzell, G., Mackey, S., Gordon, D. M., & DeSantis, D. (2006). *strange imaginary animals* [sound recording]. Chicago: Cedille.
- Farkas, P. (1956). *The art of French horn playing: A treatise on the problems and techniques of French horn playing*. Chicago: C. F. Summy.
- Feld, S. (1990). *Sound and sentiment: Birds, weeping, poetics, and song in Kaluli expression*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Fink, R. (1998). Elvis everywhere: Musicology and popular music studies at the twilight of the canon. *American Music*, 16(2), 135-179.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York: Pantheon Books.
- . (1980). Power and Strategies. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Fox, A. A. (2004). *Real country: music and language in working-class culture*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Franklin, P. (2000). Modernism, deception, and musical others: Los Angeles circa 1940. In G. Born & D. Hesmondalgh (Eds.), *Western music and its others*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Frith, S. (1998). *Performing rites: On the value of popular music*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Gay, L. C., Jr. (1998). Acting up, talking tech: New York rock musicians and their metaphors of technology. *Ethnomusicology*, 42(1), 81-98.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Goehr, L. (2007). *The imaginary museum of musical works: An essay in the philosophy of music*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gordon, M., Lang, D., & Wolfe, J. (2008). Note from the directors (Program ed.). New York: Bang on a Can.
- Grout, D. J., Palisca, C. V., & Burkholder, J. P. (2006). *A history of western music*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Hartsock, N. (1990). Foucault on power: A theory for women? In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism*. New York: Routledge.
- Hinely, M. B. (1984). The uphill climb of women in American music: Performers and teachers. *Music Educators Journal*, 70(8), 31-35.
- Holt, D. B. (1997). Distinction in America? Recovering Bourdieu's theory of tastes from its critics. *Poetics*, 25(2-3), 93-120.
- Horowitz, J. (2005). *Classical music in America: A history of its rise and fall*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Kelman, J. (2005). Acoustica: Alarm Will Sound performs Aphex Twin [Electronic Version]. *All About Jazz*, from <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=20185>
- Kerman, J. (1985). *Musicology*. London: Fontana.

- Kingsbury, H. (1988). *Music, talent, and performance: A conservatory cultural system*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- . (1991). Sociological factors in musicological poetics. *Ethnomusicology*, 35(2), 195-219.
- Kisliuk, M. (1997). (Un)Doing fieldwork: sharing songs, sharing lives. In T. J. Cooley & G. F. Barz (Eds.), *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kowalski, M. (1982). The exhaustion of western art music. *Perspectives of New Music*, 21(1/2), 1-14.
- Kozinn, A. (2008). A Night of Collaboration and Energetic Activity [Electronic Version]. *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/19/arts/music/19eigh.html? r=1>
- Lebrecht, N. (1997). *Who killed classical music?: Maestros, managers, and corporate politics*. NY: Birch Lane Press.
- . (2007). *The life and death of classical music: Featuring the 100 best and 20 worst recordings ever made*. Norwell, MA: Anchor.
- Leppert, R. (1992). Sexual identity, death, and the family piano. *19th-Century Music*, 16(2), 105-128.
- Levine, L. W. (1988). *Highbrow/lowbrow: The emergence of cultural hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Lynch. (2009). Concerts and Tickets. *Nashville Symphony Orchestra* Retrieved May 29, 2009, from <http://www.nashvillesymphony.org/main.taf?p=1,1,3,1,4,3&PerfNo=794>
- Massar, C. (2007). eighth blackbird: strange imaginary animals, *Bloomberg Muse*.
- McClary, S. (1989). Terminal prestige: The case of avant-garde music composition. *Cultural Critique*, 12(1), 57-81.
- . (2000). *Conventional wisdom: The content of musical form*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mead, R. H. (1978/1981). *Henry Cowell's new music, 1925-1936: the society, the music editions, and the recordings*. Unpublished revision of doctoral dissertation, City University of New York, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Modlin Center for the Arts. (2008). eighth blackbird talkback session [Electronic Version]. *Modlin Center Podcasts* Podcast retrieved from <http://modlin.richmond.edu/podcast/index.php/year/2008>
- Nettl, B. (1995). *Heartland excursions: ethnomusicological reflections on schools of music*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Northwestern University. (2008). School of music admissions. Retrieved July 29, 2009, from <http://www.music.northwestern.edu/admission/index.html>
- Nyman, M. (1999). *Experimental music: Cage and beyond* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Oberlin University. (2009). Conservatory of music admissions. Retrieved July 29, 2009, from <http://new.oberlin.edu/conservatory/admissions/auditions/>

- Osborne, W. (1999). Symphony orchestras and artist-prophets: Cultural isomorphism and the allocation of power in music. *Leonardo Music Journal*, 9, 69-75.
- Osmond-Smith, D. (2004). The tenth oscillator: The work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966. *Tempo*, 58(227), 2-13.
- Pasler, J. (2009). Postmodernism [Electronic Version]. *Grove Music Online*. Oxford Music Online. Retrieved July 29, 2009, from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.lib.utk.edu:90/subscriber/article/grove/music/40721?q=postmodernism&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>
- Prior, N. (2008). Putting a glitch in the field: Bourdieu, actor network theory and contemporary music. *Cultural Sociology*, 2(3), 301-319.
- Reich, S. (1974). *Writings about music*. New York: New York University Press.
- Reich, S., & Hillier, P. (2002). *Writings on music, 1965-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rockwell, J. (1983). *All American music: Composition in the late twentieth century* (1st ed.). New York: Knopf.
- Ross, A. (2007). *The rest is noise: Listening to the twentieth century*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Salzman, E. (1988). *Twentieth-century music: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

- Sadow, G. (2008). Myths [Electronic Version]. *Sadow: Greg Sadow on the future of classical music*. Retrieved May 24, 2009, from <http://www.artsjournal.com/sadow/2008/10/myths.html>
- Sawicki, J. (1988). Feminism and the power of discourse. In J. Arac (Ed.), *After Foucault: Humanistic knowledge, postmodern challenges*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Scherzinger, M. (2005). Curious intersections, uncommon magic: Steve Reich's *It's gonna rain*. *Current musicology*, 79 & 80(1 & 2), 207-244.
- Schoenberg, A. (1975). *Style and idea: Selected writings of Arnold Schoenberg* (L. Black, Trans.). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Sheridan, M. (2008). Hey, can boy bands be 501(c)3? [Electronic Version]. *Mind the Gap*. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from <http://www.artsjournal.com/gap/2008/10/hey-can-boy-bands-be-501c3s.html>
- Small, C. (1998). *Musicking: The meanings of performing and listening*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
- Subotnik, R. R. (1991). *Developing variations: Style and ideology in Western music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Swed, M. (2008). eighth blackbird plays at the Orange County Performing Arts Center [Electronic Version]. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved June 2, 2009, from <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/news/arts/la-et-blackbird17apr17,1,7946280.story>

- Taruskin, R. (2007). The musical mystique, defending classical music against its devotees. *The New Republic*.
- Taylor, T. D. (1997). *Global pop: World music, world markets*. New York: Routledge.
- Thornton, S. (1995). *Club cultures: Music, media and subcultural capital*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Turino, T. (1983). The Charango and the "Sirena": Music, magic, and the power of love. *Latin American Music Review*, 4(1), 81-119.
- Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the field: On writing ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, W. (1992). *The rise of musical classics in eighteenth-century England: A study in canon, ritual, and ideology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wyner, S. D. (2000). Rebuilding a life: Susan Davenny Wyner replays her transformation from singer to conductor. *The Women's Review of Books*, 18(3), 15-16.
- Yarn/Wire. (2008). About section. Retrieved June 5th, 2009, from http://www.yarnwire.org/yw_about.html
- Zahora, G. (2005). Acoustica: Alarm Will Sound performs Aphex Twin [Electronic Version]. *Spedid Magazine*, from <http://www.splendidmagazine.com/review.html?reviewid=1119415253335>
[358](#)
- Zemp, H., & Malkus, V. (1979). Aspects of 'Are'are musical theory. *Ethnomusicology*, 23(1), 5-48.

Appendix

Manifesto:

2. To affect, or bring to a certain state, by subjecting to, or treating with, a flux. "Fluxed into another world." *South.*
 3. *Med.* To cause a discharge from, as in purging.

flux (flŭks), *n.* [OF., fr. L. *fluxus*, fr. *fluere*, *fluxum*, to flow. See **FLUENT**; cf. **FLUSH**, *n.* (of cards).] **1. Med.**
a A flowing or fluid discharge from the bowels or other part: esp., an excessive and morbid discharge; as, the bloody *flux*, or dysentery. **b** The matter thus discharged.

Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, "intellectual", professional & commercialized culture, **PURGE** the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art, mathematical art, — **PURGE THE WORLD OF "EUROPANISM"!**

- 2.** Act of flowing: a continuous moving on or passing by, as of a flowing stream; a continuing succession of changes.
3. A stream; copious flow; flood; outflow.
4. The setting in of the tide toward the shore. Cf. **REFLUX**.
5. State of being liquid through heat; fusion. *Rare.*

PROMOTE A REVOLUTIONARY FLOOD AND TIDE IN ART,
 Promote living art, anti-art, promote **NON ART REALITY** to be fully grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals.

7. Chem. & Metal. **a** Any substance or mixture used to promote fusion, e.g. the fusion of metals or minerals. Common metallurgical fluxes are silica and silicates (acidic), lime and lime-stone (basic), and fluorite (neutral). **b** Any substance applied to surfaces to be joined by soldering or welding, just prior to or during the operation, to clean and free them from oxide, thus promoting their union, as to in-

FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.

Figure 1. "Manifesto" by George Maciunas.

Source: Armstrong, E., & Rothfuss, J. (Eds.). (1993). *In the spirit of Fluxus: published on the occasion of the exhibition.* Minneapolis: Walker Art Center.



Figure 2. The Bang on a Can All Stars with guest violinist Owen Pallett.

Source: Photo by author, taken May 31, 2008 in New York City at the Bang on a Can Marathon.



Figure 3. Audience arrangement at the 2008 Bang on a Can Marathon.

Source: Photo by author, taken May 31, 2008 in New York City at the Bang on a Can Marathon.

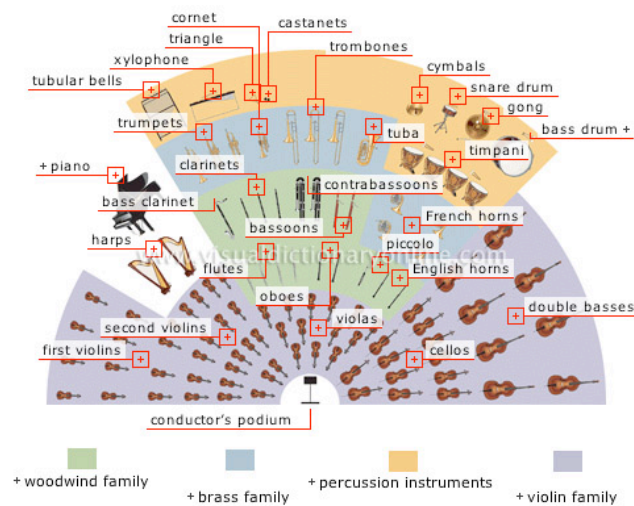


Figure 4. Standard arrangement for a modern symphony orchestra

Source: Merriam-Webster Visual Dictionary. (2009). Symphony orchestra: OA International.



Figure 5. Typical arrangement of classical musicians. Classical musicians frequently arrange themselves as if a conductor was present, as shown here.

Photo courtesy of Southeastern Louisiana University Office of Public Information

Source: Lyric String Quartet. (2009). The Lyric and Graduate String Quartets perform Mendelssohn's Octet [Electronic Version]. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/depts/mus/ensembles/orchestra/chamber/

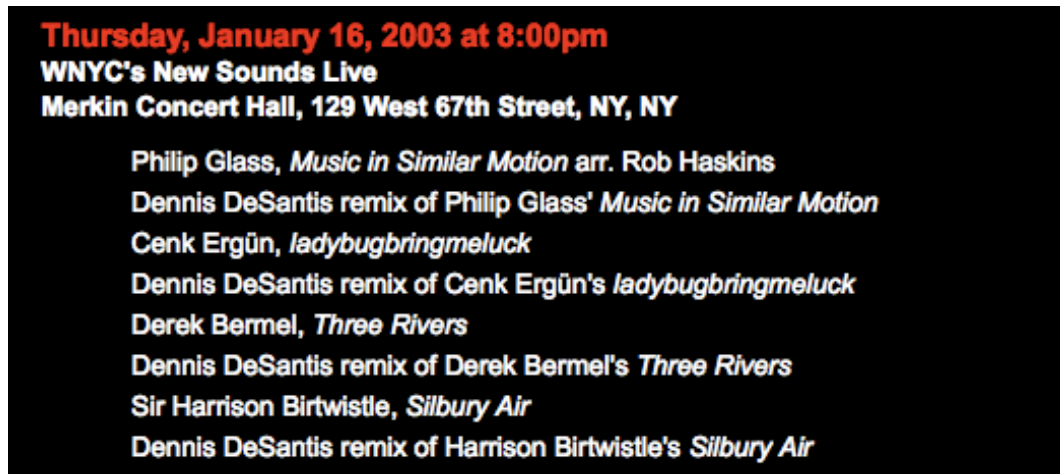


Figure 6. Program of Alarm Will Sound's concert with Dennis DeSantis

Source: Alarm Will Sound. (2003). Event section. Retrieved June 3, 2009, from <http://alarmwillsound.com/events/0203.html>



STANFORD LIVELY ARTS
program // November 30, 2007

ALARM WILL SOUND

November 30, 2007 / Friday / 8:00 pm
Dinkelspiel Auditorium

★ **POST-PERFORMANCE PANEL DISCUSSION:**
Please join us for a free discussion with composer John Adams following the performance.

ARTISTS

Jessica Johnson, *flute*
Elisabeth Stimpert, *clarinet*
Michael Harley, *bassoon*
Matthew Marks, *horn*
Jason Price, *trumpet*
Michael Clayville, *trombone*
Payton MacDonald, *percussion*
Chris Froh, *percussion*
John Orfe, *keyboards*
Caleb Burhans, *violin*
Courtney Orlando, *violin*
John Pickford Richards, *viola*
Stefan Freund, *cello*
Miles Brown, *bass*

Alan Pierson, *artistic director and conductor*
Gavin Chuck, *managing director*
Nigel Maister, *staging director*
Kate Sheeran, *personnel manager*
Dave Polato, *production manager*

PROGRAM

Conlon Nancarrow
(arr. Gavin Chuck)

György Ligeti

Josquin (arr. Payton MacDonald)

Aphex Twin (arr. Ken Thomson)

The Shaggs (arr. Gavin Chuck)

Harrison Birtwistle

Nancarrow (arr. Yvar Mikhashoff)

Johannes Ciconia
(arr. Gavin Chuck)

Mochipet (arr. Stefan Freund)

John Adams

Player Piano Study 2A

Chamber Concerto (third movement)

Agnus Dei II from *Missa L'homme armé super voces musicales*

Gwely Mernans

Philosophy of the World

Carmen Arcadiae Mechanicae Perpetuum

(INTERMISSION)

Player Piano Study 6

Le Ray Au Soleil

Dessert Search 4 Techno Baklava

Son of Chamber Symphony (World Premiere)

Co-commissioned by Stanford Lively Arts in honor of the Bonnie Addario Lung Cancer Foundation and Lung Cancer Awareness Month with generous support from Van and Eddi Van Auken, and Carnegie Hall and San Francisco Ballet.

Please be considerate of others and turn off all phones, pagers, and watch alarms, and unwrap all lozenges prior to the performance. Photography and recording of any kind is not permitted. Thank you.

We gratefully acknowledge the support of Van and Eddi Van Auken.

LIVELY ARTS MAGAZINE

25

Figure 7. Alarm Will Sound's program from 2007 Arrhythmia concert.

Source: Lively Arts Magazine. (2007). Alarm Will Sound [concert program]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.



Figure 8. Alarm Will Sound publicity photograph.

Source: Alarm Will Sound. (2006). Home page. Retrieved December 11, 2008, from www.alarmwillsound.com



Figure 9. eighth blackbird publicity photograph.

Source: eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>



Figure 10. eighth blackbird publicity photograph.

Source: eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>



Figure 11. eighth blackbird publicity photograph.

Source: eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>



Figure 12. Yarn/Wire publicity photograph.

Source: Yarn/Wire. (2008). About section. Retrieved June 5, 2009, from http://www.yarnwire.org/yw_about.html



Figure 13. Yarn/Wire's standard performance arrangement.

Source: Brendan Connelly. (2008). Quartet #1. Retrieved March 3, 2009, from <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#/photo.php?pid=1424447&id=7253042906&ref=mf>

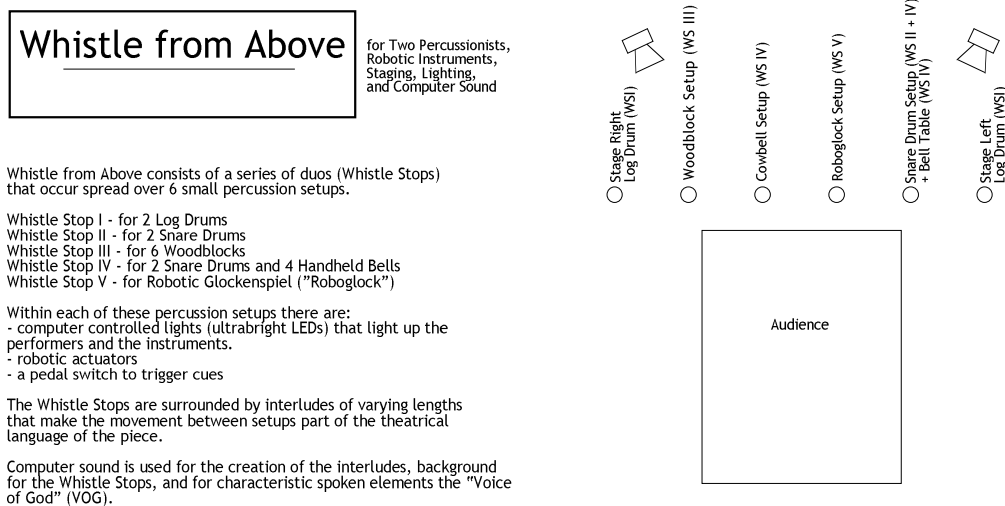


Figure 14. Second page of the score from David Bithell's *Whistle from Above*.

Source: Bithell, D. (2007). *Whistle from Above* [Musical Score].

John Orfe
 keyboards, composer
johnorfe@alarmwillsound.com

As a composer, pianist, and student, my principal teachers have included Ezra Laderman, Joseph Schwantner, and Martin Bresnick. My works have been performed in Russia, Canada, Germany, and throughout the US, and my percussion trio *Dragon* has received performances by nearly thirty different ensembles. I've been fortunate to receive four Standard ASCAP awards, a Tanglewood Fellowship, and first prizes in competitions held by BMI, the Music Teachers National Association, the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts, the National Federation for Advancement in the Arts, the National Association of Composers, USA, and New Music Delaware. My piano playing remains very important to me. I've premiered over fifty works and performed in the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the former Orchestra Hall (now Symphony Center) in Chicago, Mandel Hall in Minneapolis, and at universities on the East Coast and the Midwest. My mentors are Alan Feinberg and Emilio del Rosario.



Figure 15. John Orfe's online biography from Alarm Will Sound's website.

Source: Alarm Will Sound. (2006). Member section. Retrieved December 11, 2008, from <http://alarmwillsound.com/about/members.html>

nicholas photinos, cello

In addition to serving as cellist of the internationally renowned new music ensemble eighth blackbird, **Nicholas Photinos** has performed recitals throughout California and the Midwest and has appeared with orchestras in California and Ohio, including the world premiere of the Cello Concerto in D Minor by Grace Vamos. He has toured with Björk as part of the Icelandic String Octet and performed as a member of the Canton and Columbus Symphony Orchestras. His interest in jazz had led him to perform with several jazz artists, including Chicago violinist Zach Brock and vocalist Grazyna Auguscik. His principal teachers include Hans Jorgen-Jensen, Lee Fiser, Andor Toth, Jr., Irene Sharp and Grace Vamos. Nicholas Photinos is a graduate of Northwestern University, the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. His interests include reading, cooking, cycling, and beer brewing.

Figure 16. Nicholas Photinos's online biography from eighth blackbird's website.

Source: eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>

matt albert, violin & viola

Matt Albert was born and raised in Winchester, Virginia. He holds degrees from **Oberlin College and Conservatory** (B.Mus. violin and B.A. English), the **Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music** (A.D. chamber music), and **Northwestern University School of Music** (M.M. violin). As a soloist he performed the Berg *Violin Concerto* with Bruce Hangen and the Oberlin Orchestra and the Weill *Violin Concerto* with Barbara Schubert and the University of Chicago New Music Ensemble. His principal teachers include Kenneth Sarch, Gregory Fulkerson, Kurt Sassmannshaus, and Almita Vamos. For five years he taught students aged 5 to 50 at the **Lake Forest Symphony Music School**, and he has performed throughout the Chicago area with the **Chicago Sinfonietta** and **CUBE** new music ensemble. Matt appeared as the onstage Gypsy Violinist in *Light Opera Works'* (Evanston, Illinois) production of *Countess Maritza* and as the Fiddler in their production of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Each fall, he strives to divide his time equally between his two passions: eighth blackbird and fantasy football.

Figure 17. Matt Abert's online biography from eighth blackbird's website.

Source: eighth blackbird. (2008). About section. Retrieved December 1, 2008, from <http://www.eighthblackbird.com/about>



Figure 18. Daniel Schlosberg's online biography from Yarn/Wire's website.

Source: Yarn/Wire. (2008). About section. Retrieved June 5th, 2009, from http://www.yarnwire.org/yw_about.html

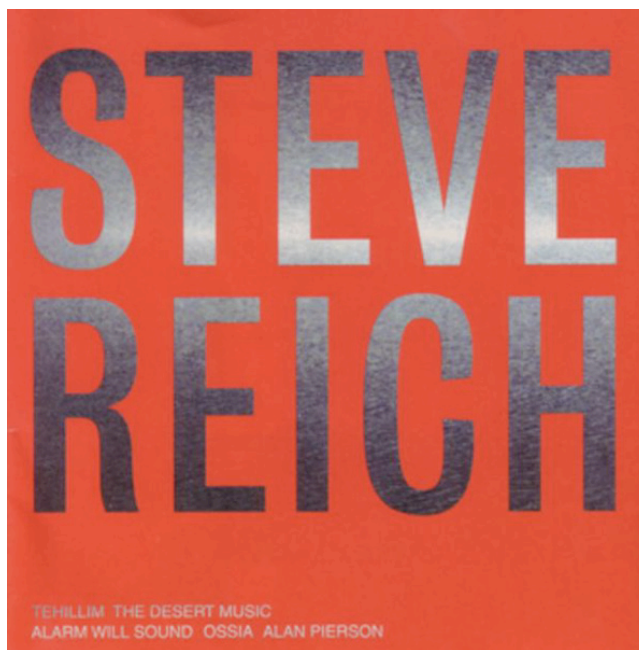


Figure 19. Cover of Alarm Will Sound's second album.

Source: Reich, S., Alarm Will Sound (Musical group), Ossia (Musical group), Williams, W. C., & Pierson, A. (2002). Tehillim The desert music [sound recording]. New York, NY: Cantaloupe.

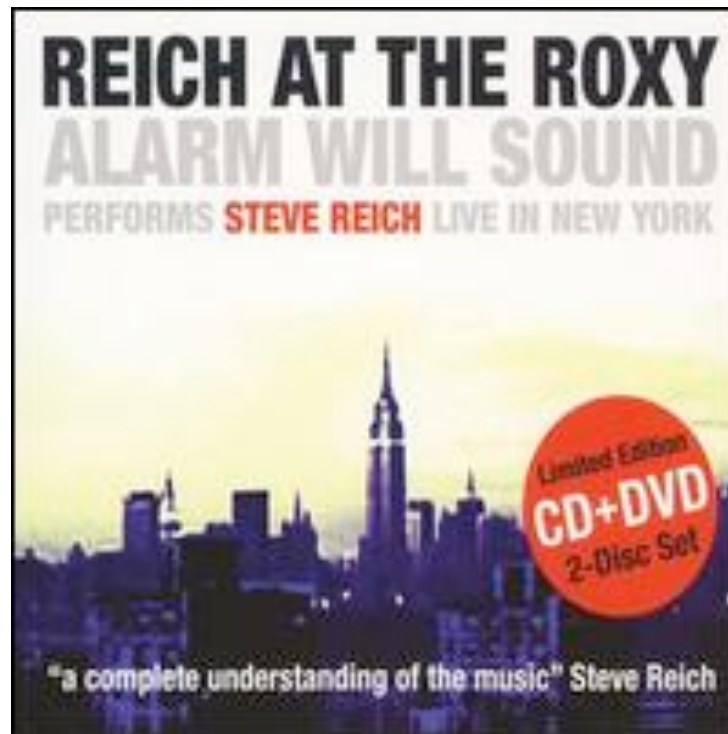


Figure 20. Cover of Alarm Will Sound's fourth album.

Source: Reich, S., Roberts, M., Alarm Will Sound (Musical group), & Sweetspot Productions. (2006). Reich at the Roxy: Alarm Will Sound performs Steve Reich live [videorecording]. London: Sweetspot Productions.

Vita

John Phippen earned a Bachelor's in Music Education from Tennessee Tech University, where he was a conducting student of Dan Allcott. After graduating he enrolled in the Master's program in Musicology at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and was awarded a teaching assistantship in ear training. His research interests include cultural theory, music and technology, and the ethnographic study of contemporary art music. Currently, John holds a four-year fellowship and teaching assistantship as a Ph.D. student in Musicology at the University of Western Ontario. His girlfriend, Abby, also studies at Western, and they hope to be dog owners by 2011.