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Introduction

Musical Borrowing and Quotation in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Pwyll ap Siôn and Lauren Redhead

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# **Musical Borrowing and Quotation in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries**

## **Introduction: Musical Borrowing and Quotation in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries**

Pwyll ap Siôn and Lauren Redhead

How has quotation been used in the music of the past quarter century or so, and what has been its purpose? Can parallels be drawn between the motivations and interests of present-day composers, performers and musicians working in often widely divergent areas? What have been the effects of quotation on our understanding of contemporary music and how have critics and audiences responded to it? This special issue attempts to address these questions and engages with some of the most important concepts to have arisen in relation to musical quotation. It will set out to do this by taking a closer look at a number of recent styles, idioms, movements and practices, ranging from postmodernist appropriations of Mahler, via minimalism and postminimalism to contemporary music, opera, rock and hip-hop. Each article approaches quotation in today's music from a different angle, offering theoretical perspectives, historical overviews, cultural critiques or analytical insights in order to question and challenge the often held belief that quotation has gone hand-in-hand with a perceived lack of creative endeavour or is somehow indicative of artistic mediocrity. On the contrary, some of the most exciting and innovative music composed during the last few decades have harnessed the principles of borrowing and quotation to very creative and imaginative ends.

While certain genres and styles covered in this issue appear at times to inhabit common grounds, a general consensus of approach, or share related aims and objectives, it is <sup>1</sup>

perhaps the startling diversity of approaches that stands out as one of the most significant legacies bestowed upon the recent *fin-de-siècle* by musical quotation and borrowing. These manifold approaches are reflected in artistic practice, as demonstrated here, for example, in the differing attitudes of composers to the challenge presented by the Berlin Philharmonic in 2011 of taking Gustav Mahler's First Symphony as their starting point, examined and contextualised in Jeremy Barham's article, or the range of sampling techniques that have evolved in tandem with hip-hop music from the 1980s onwards, as shown in Justin Williams's thorough survey of the movement. But they are also reflected in the range of theoretical approaches adopted by the essays contained in this volume. Barham links Jean Baudrillard's critique of media saturation or Nicolas Bourriaud's more recent thoughts on 'cultural creolisation' and the 'altermodern' with social mediation and DJ remixing, while Lauren Redhead takes the concept of psychogeography as a starting point for the comparison of works by two contemporary composers who have applied quotation in both postmodern and postminimal contexts: Bernhard Lang and Chico Mello. Williams advances a detailed taxonomy of hip-hop by referring to allosonic and autosonic quotations, or textually signalled and unsignalled forms of intertextuality, while Maarten Beirens's study of speech-based compositions in Steve Reich, Brian Eno and David Byrne assesses the effects of such textual distortion on audience perception, finally offering up some aesthetic and philosophical reflections by drawing on Roland Barthes's 'grain of the voice' and Jacques Derrida's notion of the animated body as described in his *Speech and Phenomena*. Ap Siôn applies yet another theoretical framework—George Lipsitz's 'families of resemblance'—to two case studies featuring the music of Lera Auerbach and Michael Nyman, in order to show how more recent forms of quotation can create an in-between state, where texts seemingly announce their own independence despite being dependent on a range of intertexts. Music's social context is considered in certain articles while others adopt a more thoroughgoing theoretical approach. Quotation is also addressed in the transmission of performance in order to offer a more relevant contemporary framework for its discussion within current and contemporary musical

practices. The academic community has thus far largely neglected many of the composers or musical styles discussed in this issue, such as Chico Mello and Lera Auerbach. It is hoped that the articles contained herein will at least provide an impetus for further studies of these composers—and many others—whose work have been informed and directed by quotation, borrowing, appropriation or sampling.

The idea of drawing together some of the main themes contained in this issue was first discussed at the Seventh International Conference on Music Since 1900, held at Lancaster University between 28–31 July 2011, where a themed session followed by a roundtable discussion on ‘Musical Borrowing in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries’ included papers by three of this issue’s five contributors and prompted much discussion and debate from the conference delegates who attended this session. The present issue is also designed as a companion piece to an earlier themed issue published by *Contemporary Music Review*, called ‘Recycling and Innovation in Contemporary Music’, edited by Lisa Colton and Martin Iddon (29/3, 2010). While ‘Recycling and Innovation in Contemporary Music’ concentrates for the main part on addressing the many personal, political, religious or aesthetic reasons that have prompted composers to look to the past in their music, ‘Musical Borrowing and Quotation in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries’ aims to examine the many musical reactions and responses to such practices, unpacking various conceptual and theoretical mechanisms that come into play in one’s reception towards—and perception of—this music, while at the same time bringing the subject up to date by looking at a number of very recent examples. Taken together, it is hoped that the articles contained in this special issue will provide the basis for a ‘poetics of perception’ of musical quotation in contemporary music, fuelling further thought, discussion and debate in this area in future papers and publications.