REVISITING THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF POSTWAR AVANT-GARDE MUSIC

Edited by
Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet and
Christopher Brent Murray

Revisiting the Historiography of Postwar Avant-Garde Music

This collection of essays delves into the historiographical traditions that have dominated how the stories of European postwar avant-garde music are told, seeking to approach commonplaces of that history writing from new perspectives. The contributors revisit subjects as varied as the impact of long-playing records on the emergence of open works, Messiaen's interest in non-European musical traditions, Xenakis's turn to information theory, Kagel's strategic invention of a new genre, Berio's dependence on funding from American foundations, and the ways in which figures like Boulez, Stockhausen, Pousseur, and Nono constructed their musical ancestries. Leading experts in their respective fields, the volume's authors have sought to rethink the historiography of European experimental music of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s in ways that resituate that small but influential milieu in broader historical and cultural contexts. In doing so, they suggest new directions and insights for students and specialists of twentieth-century music and music historiography.

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1 Introduction

Revisiting the Old Stories of New Music

Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet and
Christopher Brent Murray

Although the subject of this collective project is a particular cultural milieu that can be described as "avant-garde modernist music in postwar Europe," a move toward recognizing the identity and agency of its actors might lead to calling it "music by white, West European males positioning themselves as avant-garde figures in the postwar years." The privilege and carrying power of that positioning has been key to the reception of these composers' music in concert life, in the writing of music histories, and in the imagination of those familiar with it. It is reflected not only by the sort of music that these men wrote, but also by their public remarks, interviews, and writings—in sum, the discourses used to frame or set the tone for seventy years of accrued historiographic tradition.

"Avant-garde" originated as a military term referring to the most advanced column of an army before it was used in an artistic sense by Saint-Simon in the early nineteenth century (Aubert, Milan, and Trubert 2013, i–ii). In the present volume we use "avant-garde" loosely, much in the way that other authors have used "modernist" or "experimental," to refer to comparable tendencies, but with the intention of accenting a common outlook among certain composers active in postwar Western Europe who shared the notion that progress might be achieved in music and that they were leading actors in that change (notably Boulez, Stockhausen, and Xenakis, among others). In addition to their music and discourse, these composers projected their avant-garde aspirations by associating with or eschewing specific teachers, institutions, impresarios, concert series, publishing houses, and financiers.

In many respects then, returning to the histories of these men and their music runs contrary to important new developments in the field of musicology that have sought to deconstruct the white, male canons of prestige that have traditionally occupied the unspoken center of musicological work and disproportionately shaped our ways of engaging with music and music history (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Levitz et al. 2012; Ewell 2020). At present, with the knowledge that the postwar avant-gardes account for such a marginal and infinitesimal part of past and present music and musicking, what is the use, one might ask, of returning to these supposedly major works and figures? Is it sufficient to reason that this milieu was a center of attention and privilege in its own time?

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We would argue that it is still worth revisiting those old stories—those texts and contexts of the European postwar avant-garde—and that doing so can contribute toward a larger "dynamic of historiographical re-configuration" (Delacroix et al. 2010, 20). A frontal approach to deconstructing Eurocentric musicology might involve provincializing so-called Western musical works and practices as an object of study, or it might mean changing approaches altogether by adopting perspectives and methods borrowed from other fields in the human sciences and humanities such as sociology, ethnomusicology, anthropology, and cultural studies (Born 1995, 2010; Radano and Bohlman 2000; Drott 2011; Nooshin 2011; Kutschke and Norton 2013; Kurkela and Mantere 2015; Hennion and Levaux 2021). In these potentially convergent strategies, the deconstructive dynamic comes from *outside* the objects and methods of traditional Eurocentric musicology.

And yet, a different form of reconsideration can be pertinently conducted from "within" by seeking to contextualize and broaden the perspectives of earlier historiographies and their recent critiques. This strategy has become increasingly feasible as the private and working papers of composers active during the postwar period become available to researchers. These archives have the potential to reveal formerly obscured agendas of this (white, male) ecosystem and offer interesting case studies of its conditions and contexts (Attinello, Fox, and Iddon 2007; Delaere 2011; Asimov 2020).

As a result of continuous processes that began in the previous century, the early twentieth century witnessed a steady increase in composers writing about their music and creative processes, a trend that went hand in hand with the growing intellectual prestige granted to composers and the ever-greater individuation of their musical styles (Duchesneau, Dufour, and Benoit-Otis 2013). The demand for discourse from composers was heightened further by the ecosystem of the postwar avant-garde, which Georgina Born (1995, 42) has described as being particularly marked by "theoreticism," in which "theoretical texts take on the ambiguous role of exegesis and criticism, of proselytizing and publicity, or both expounding and legitimizing practice." Composers often took to explaining their "musical language" by relating their techniques to their aesthetic goals. An evident early example of this is found in Olivier Messiaen's *Technique de mon langage musical* (1944), the impulses of which are echoed in the projects of his students, such as Xenakis's *Musiques formelles* (1963) and Boulez's *Penser la musique aujourd'hui* (1963). These texts, which often began as auto-analyses, also contained elements of genealogy, with composers claiming their own artistic and spiritual ancestries, describing the evolution of recent music in real time and professing their allegiances or allergy to recent trends, often with an eye on directly controlling the reception of their own work. Describing one's "musical language" ultimately involved taking, defending, and sometimes promoting a historiographic position. In writing about their purposefully innovative musical styles, composers coined new terms to describe their techniques and affirm their singularity. These custom-built neologisms—"stochastic music," "moment form," "instrumental theater," "symmetrical permutations," and so forth—were made to ring with the authority of mathematics, science, or philosophy. They were

both creative patents and shibboleths with the power to immediately evoke the names of distinct composers for those in the know.

These conditions mean that the historiography of this period (the present volume focuses on the 1950s to the 1970s) was largely woven from the auto-historiographies of individual composers, excluding the strands of those who did not or could not speak or who were not mentioned by others. However, those auto-historiographical sources were marked by the intense interactions of their authors, for one text or work was quite often written in implicit or explicit dialectical reaction to another. A veritable vulgate of the postwar avant-garde took form as these texts were further relayed and amplified by music writers, journalists, and musicologists that included figures like Rossana Dalmonte, Célestin Deliège, Maurice Fleuret, Antoine Goléa, Paul Griffiths, Heinz-Klaus Metzger, Claude Rostand, and Claude Samuel, among others.

The tendency to frame the history of this period in terms of individual composers (something the present volume does not avoid) has often given the impression, in histories, of a sum or juxtaposition of singularities, and this in spite of the many common traits that created a shared cultural milieu in which those singularities can be profitably situated. In terms of its values, the Western European postwar avant-garde could, in many ways, be compared to the political and economic elites of the same period. The importance of "progress" was accompanied by a fascination with technique and technology, by increased collaboration with scientific experts, and by an attachment to "high" (difficult) cultural references from Greek philosophers to Mallarmé. Two types of absences are also particularly marked: that of popular genres (then booming thanks to the popularity of seven-inch singles and transistor radios) and of women.

Although often present and educated in the same elite institutions as their male counterparts, with rare exceptions (like Cathy Berberian, Betsy Jolas, Elisabeth Lutyens, Daphne Oram, and Éliane Radigue, among others), the women of Europe's postwar avant-garde music scene were found in the supporting roles of interpreter, assistant, or communicator (Michèle Henry, Monika Lichtenfeld, Yvonne Loriod, Marcelle Mercenier, and Marion Rothärmel, to give a few examples). The overwhelmingly masculine nature of this milieu is reflected in the programs of the Domaine Musical, which programmed works by only two women (Betsy Jolas in 1966, 1968, 1969, and 1971; Leni Alexander in 1971), largely after Gilbert Amy took over its direction in 1967 (Aguila 1991, Vol. 2, 514–524). In the image of Mary Gabriel's *Ninth Street Women: Lee Krasner, Elaine de Kooning, Grace Hartigan, Joan Mitchell, and Helen Frankenthaler: Five Painters and the Movement that Changed Modern Art* (2017), a serious, large-scale study devoted to the "hidden figures" of this milieu is desperately needed, and we regret that these considerations did not find a greater place in this volume. In the case of the compositions of Yvonne Loriod and Yvette Grimaud, for instance, early inquiries (Hill and Simeone 2005; Dingle 2013) ought soon to be supplemented by new projects in development by Imke Misch, Peter Asimov, and others thanks, in part, to the abundant resources of the newly opened Messiaen-Loriod collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

Although growth in archives of twentieth-century composers, such as those of the BnF and the Sacher Foundation, has made working with the sketches of twentieth- and even twenty-first-century composers a common musicological pursuit, it is worth remembering that, in a not-so-distant past, it was common to encounter pronouncements that it was "too soon" to use composers' sketches and archives for music-historical work (Deliège 2003, 24). In the late twentieth century, the abundance of existing "official" discourse on postwar works emanating from composers and their faithful mouthpieces often made work on archival sources seem superfluous, particularly when the literally *authoritative* status of those public discourses meant that alternative readings and critical distance could be taken as an affront to the still-living or the recently dead. To be clear, we do not mean to argue that such "official discourses" should be rejected, but that they need be approached with the same critical scrutiny as any other form of source.

The argument might even be made that there is no time like the present for pursuing the study of the postwar avant-gardes. The works and figures in question have become sufficiently distant to allow for greater objectivity, yet they remain recent enough for a certain familiarity with the archive that will not come as naturally to later generations. This is both an intellectual familiarity—an understanding of references, tone, and loaded turns of phrase—as well as a physical familiarity, an understanding of the "materiality" of the archive so aptly described by Arlette Farge (1989, 72–75) that implicates the texture, appearance, and organization of sources. For the authors of this volume, all born in the second half of the twentieth century, the archives still speak in a relatively familiar voice that may not be as audible to future generations.

Many of the researchers who have contributed to the present volume are also active in the field of genetic criticism, and they study the creative processes of twentieth-century composers. Having observed that interpreting the sketches of the postwar avant-garde often goes hand in hand with studying the development of composers' theoretical discourses, Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet organized two study days at the Université de Lorraine to question the notion of a "critical historiography" of the postwar avant-garde, inviting her colleagues to reflect on how the historiographies of the avant-garde have taken form and interacted. The exchanges at these events showed that historiographies of postwar avant-garde music could indeed be fruitfully reconsidered from the perspectives of sketch studies (Barthel-Calvet 2011) and led to the development of several chapters in this volume. Although some authors trace the genesis of composers' writings through notes and drafts to the editorial process and their public reception in different editions, versions, and translations, they do so not in pursuit of a critical edition but with an eye on composers' intellectual processes. This involves studying the ways composers take (or refuse to take) a position in the musical culture of their time (experimental or otherwise), the ancestries that they claim or reject, the ways they observe themselves compose, and so forth. The sources used here—agendas and diaries, notes, drafts, and scripts (such as those for the radio broadcasts of the Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk's *Nachtprogramm* mentioned in the contributions of both Pascal Decroupet and Jean-François Trubert)—are

also those of sketch studies. They give greater depth to the context and maturation of the composer-author's thought process than the final published documents alone, which were often the object of last-minute and circumstantial alterations (as observed in Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet's study of Xenakis's writings of the 1950s).

Having access to archival sources and, in particular, composer archives, also makes it possible to understand the conditions in which works were commissioned, produced, and circulated; the archives can reveal particular contexts and networks, be they economic (as observed in the chapter by Tiffany Kuo), journalistic (see the chapter by Jean-François Trubert), or religious (see the chapter by Christopher Brent Murray). Here again, the methods used, the cross-references and comparisons between different sources, and the reconstruction of historical chronologies is coherent with and complementary to projects of genetic criticism and the study of creative processes.

To close these general observations, we would offer a proviso: the chapters of this book grew from the expertise and interests of their individual authors; they constitute a collective contribution to the larger project of rethinking the European postwar avant-garde but do not pretend to offer a systematic or complete overview of any one question or method. These chapters generally result from a "bottom up," source-driven process that tends to begin by taking interest in the materials relating to a particular field or figure. In turn, the content and structure of those sources often suggested the direction and tone of the research presented here.

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This volume is organized around two groups of chapters, one focusing on the texts of avant-garde composers, the other on the contexts of their activity. These are framed by two contributions dealing with broader historiographical concerns.

In "Recent Histories of Twentieth-Century Music and the Historiographical Tradition," Martin Kaltenecker seeks to show how traditional categories of history writing can inform our understanding of how the history of avant-garde music was written and continues to be written. Kaltenecker begins with Wilhelm Windelband's opposition of nomothetic and idiographic approaches to writing history. In nomothetic histories, overarching laws or principles (such as progress or innovation) are used to define what material is retained and how that material is arranged in larger structures. Idiographic histories seek to restitute the historical past in greater depth and detail. The laws of the nomothetic approach are comparable, in turn, to the ways in which affect, structure, and dramatic pacing combine to create different historical "plots," as Paul Veyne described them (1984), or narrative models that are comparable to literary genres, in the terms of Hayden White (1975). From these general perspectives on history writing, Kaltenecker studies a range of histories of twentieth-century music published since the 1960s. He focuses especially on the strategies of Richard Taruskin's

Music in the Late Twentieth Century, noting that its tendency to dismantle the prestige of the avant-garde constitutes an extreme form of nomothetic history, one diametrically opposed, in terms of plot and motivations, to the equally nomothetic work of Célestin Deliège in *Cinquante ans de modernité musicale : De Darmstadt à l'IRCAM.* In contrast, most recent histories (the work of Beate Kutschke, Eric Drott, Christopher Williams, among others) have tended to privilege an idiographic method in which the "thickness" of a chosen period is described in all its variety and is sometimes enriched using complementary methods borrowed from sociology, gender studies, and other disciplines. These observations lead Kaltenecker to call for future historians of new music to consider "constellations" combining the study of different composition techniques, listening habits, and creative research and focusing on the notion of sound, an approach that offers potential for moving beyond the dichotomy of nomothetic plots and idiographic juxtapositions. Kaltenecker's particular attention to sound suggests aspects of the chapter by Pascal Decroupet that closes the volume. Here Decroupet proposes the idea of a "sonal history" of twentieth-century music, a decidedly nomothetic project in which the unifying plot is the importance of sound that is found in different currents of experimental music, which have traditionally been approached as separate aesthetic traditions.

1.1 On the Texts of the Avant-Garde

The two following contributions study the texts of avant-garde composers and the contexts of their writing with the larger purpose of reexamining how these texts have impacted the writing of music history. In "Continuity in the Creative Auto-Genealogies of Boulez, Stockhausen, Pousseur, and Nono," Pascal Decroupet opens with the observation that histories of the postwar avant-garde and its discourses have long been structured by an unquestioned "canon of polarizations" that remains impervious to our ever-deeper knowledge of the period's works from an analytical perspective. Seeking, in part, to rectify this situation, Decroupet proposes a close reading of "auto-genealogical" texts by four self-designated spearheads of the serial avant-garde, aligning his analysis with an account of their contemporaneous musical projects. In doing so, he demonstrates both the continuities and the positive relationship with history found in the writings of Boulez, Stockhausen, Pousseur, and Nono, quite in contrast to the often-trafficked image of a post-1945 tabula rasa. These men place earlier composers in the "historical plot" leading to their own careers and present themselves as the ever-culminating present of past historical developments in the public discussion of their newest music and ideas.

It is worth noting how carefully Decroupet chooses the terms he uses to speak about these men and their writings, as it can serve as a reminder of their role in shaping the language that we currently use to speak about their music. For example, this milieu generally spoke of music's "dimensions" in reference to pitch, rhythm, timbre, and so forth until, importantly, "dimensions" became the measurable and mathematical "parameters" introduced under the influential pen

of Stockhausen (who himself was influenced by the physicist and acoustician Werner Meyer-Eppler). As Decroupet observes, the notion and need, not just for novelty, but also for what was considered *progress* drove the development of the music and discourse under discussion. Refining or adjusting language was an important way not only to affirm discursive originality, but also to mark a conceptual step forward.

Pursuing the etymological microhistory of these artistic "copyrights" that were so essential for survival, audibility, and success in the avant-garde milieu is also a goal of the following chapter. In "Inventing a Genre: Mauricio Kagel and Instrumental Theater," Jean-François Trubert returns to the concept of "instrumental theater" that is so often associated with Kagel's work, retracing the beginnings of the composer's European career and showing how the expression gradually entered the lexicon of radio and press accounts of new music to make Kagel the father of an emerging musical genre. Studying this process from a sociopolitical angle, Trubert demonstrates how laying claim to the invention of a genre allowed Kagel to assume a larger role in the "Cologne scene," a milieu then completely dominated by the figure of Stockhausen and visited by John Cage, both of whom were developing theatrical approaches to music during the same period. Two "hidden figures" are of key importance in this story, the journalists, music writers, and proponents of the avant-garde Marion Rothärmel and Monika Lichtenfeld. Together, they offer just one example of the women active at the heart of European avant-garde music and its development during the period when its public face was so overwhelmingly male.

1.2 On the Contexts of the Avant-Garde

The second group of chapters shifts focus from composers' texts to the larger contexts in which the development of European experimental music unfolded. This move allows us to relativize composers' affirmations of singularity and autonomy and to set their works and practices in the social, economic, intellectual, and technological environments that permitted them to develop. Because these works and the discourses they generated were rooted in specific cultural, social, political, and scientific contexts, studying elements of those contexts, such as scientific manuals, foundation reports, record sleeves, and missionary propaganda, can stimulate new dialogue between the music and the texts of the avant-garde and broader societal trends. New sociological and cultural perspectives hold promise to bring avant-garde discourse into diversified and resonating "circles of truth," to borrow the term from Ricœur's reflections on truth and history (2007). Ultimately, we should seek not only to juxtapose these approaches, but to hybridize and accumulate them as needed, allowing information to act reciprocally, neutralizing commonly received ideas that continue to be circulated without critical inquiry.

Christopher Brent Murray's chapter "The Songs of Koma Pio and Hele Marsiale in Olivier Messiaen's *Île de feu* Etudes" explores the exoticist primitivism at the heart of Messiaen's *Quatre études de rythme*, that inescapable landmark in histories of the postwar avant-garde. In seeking to understand reasons

for the dedication of the *Île de feu* etudes to Papua, Murray retraces the history of Messiaen's remarks on the works, then uses newly available sketch materials to identify the authors of the Papuan songs that form the main themes of the two *Île de feu* studies. Murray then turns to the cultural origins of those songs, describing how and why they were transcribed by Catholic missionaries proselytizing among the Fuyuge people in Papua in the 1930s. This shift from Messiaen's creative processes to their larger historical and cultural context adopts a global historical perspective. In the words of Sebastian Conrad, the "core concerns" of such perspectives "are with mobility and exchange, with processes that transcend borders and boundaries. [Global history] takes the interconnected world as its point of departure, and the circulation and exchange of things, people, ideas, and institutions are among its key subjects" (2016, 5). Drawing on the history of Catholic missionary activity in Papua and the work of anthropologist Eric Hirsch, Murray gives names, faces, and a cultural context to Messiaen's source material and reveals the degree to which his studies are burdened with cultural clichés and misunderstandings.

Although earlier scholarship has underlined the importance of American universities in funding the careers of experimental composers over the course of the twentieth century, sometimes in connection to the cultural-political context of Cold War musical policies and the role of charitable foundations in funding projects of American cultural diplomacy (Berghahn 2001, Taruskin 2010, 103–173; Fossler-Lussier 2015; Barthel-Calvet 2018, 2020), relatively few projects focus specifically on the importance of charitable foundations in the career development of individual composers in the United States itself. In "A New Patronage Model in Postwar America: Luciano Berio, Philanthropy, and the Economics of Culture," Tiffany Kuo considers Luciano Berio's artistic development from the original perspective of economics, notably focusing on the changing landscape of arts funding in postwar America. In doing so, she continues the larger discussion of how avant-garde composers have tended to make a living since the Second World War. Kuo's work illustrates the central importance of the Rockefeller Foundation to Berio's American career and discusses the counterpoint between Berio's politics, foundation policies, and the development of "new music" programs on American campuses. (The Rockefeller Foundation also appears in Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet's chapter, as a source of funding for the research of the influential Abraham Moles.) Kuo shows how charitable foundations, a by-product of the capitalist economy of the United States, were not necessarily aligned with conservative aesthetic orientations and were even willing to fund politically oriented avant-garde art. By analyzing the mechanisms of foundation support in tandem with Berio's interactions with prestigious institutions of higher education, such as the Juilliard School and Harvard University, Kuo reveals strategies that allowed new music to reach broader audiences by mixing the draw of popular music with elements of intellectual elitism.

As mentioned above, reliance on and fascination for the tools and language of math, science, and technology were important new traits of the postwar avant-garde musical scene. Science and technology offered composers the allure of

"experts in new music" as well as models, tools, and contexts for composing. The origins and reality of this "technical" context are the focus of the chapters by Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet and Jonathan Goldman.

In "Iannis Xenakis and the Men of Information Theory," Anne-Sylvie Barthel-Calvet suggests that we reconsider Xenakis's claims for singularity in the light of the scientific circles in which he turned. In particular, she focuses on how Xenakis's theory of musical stochastics was progressively formed and implemented during a period when the composer was in close contact with leading figures of information theory—notably Werner Meyer-Eppler, Abraham Moles, and Gerold Ungeheuer—both at Pierre Schaeffer's electroacoustic studio in Paris and at events organized in Gravesano (Switzerland) by Hermann Scherchen. Through their lectures, seminars, writings (notably in the *Gravesaner Blätter*), and correspondence with the composer, these men of information theory offered intellectual stimulation to Xenakis as he forged works in tandem with the reflections of his theoretical essays of that period.

Xenakis so trusted their expertise that he even used a passing reference to a theory of Dennis Gabor received in a letter from Ungeheuer in his "Elements of Stochastic Music." Although only a footnote, this mention was enough to inspire disciplinary debates among specialists of electroacoustic music regarding Xenakis's granular conception of sound. Xenakis's relationship with this circle of physicists and acousticians is an emblematic example of how scientists became important references, authority figures, and models for composers and, conversely, of how composers could legitimize the claims of universal pertinence made in the fields of information theory and cybernetics.

In his study on the historiographies of recent music, Martin Kaltenecker points to "a tendency to consider the listening experience as a completion of the work" among other trends in new music written since the 1980s. But what if that trend had roots in an earlier technological development? Jonathan Goldman's "Open Works on Record: An Unsung Mediation" suggests as much, discussing the impact of developing recording technology on the ontology of musical works and, notably, interrogating the potential implications of the simultaneous emergence of long-playing high-fidelity records and explorations of open-form and indeterminate works on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1950s and 1960s. Noting that many avant-garde composers were also very involved in the recording industry, either through record production (in the case of Earle Brown) or through the composition of electroacoustic music, Goldman places the avant-garde's interest in mobile works in a larger context that includes social networks, cultural practices, and technological innovation. In doing so, he points out previously unsuspected developments of Mark Katz's "phonograph effect" on the production and reception practice of the period's mobile or indeterminate works—often obliterated by the actors themselves.

In a postlude to the ideas under consideration in the previous chapters, Pascal Decroupet proposes a "sonal theory" of Western classical music from Varèse to Grisey in which he looks past individual pronunciamentos and other music-historical categories to focus on the common thread of "sound composition" and

the way it both results from and creates a new form of listening. In many ways, Decroupet's reflections join the observations made by Kaltenecker earlier in the volume. Both authors, for example, speak of "zooming in on sound." Of particular interest here is Kaltenecker's affirmation:

> Composing no longer means confronting what Adorno called musical *material* bearing the marks (and even stigmata) of History, as it often did in the past, but rather dealing with the microphysics of sound. Composers obviously haven't abandoned polyphonic techniques or complex calculations, but they are more likely to draw their inspiration from, to foreground and comment upon links with the beautiful and the natural, with the infinite riches of sound material, music itself being understood as a smaller part of a larger sound world. A musical work can now be legitimized and accepted even when its essential purpose is merely to confront, expand, and zoom in on sounds, an approach from which composers draw and deduce their formal processes.

Decroupet's examples emphasize convergences between the avant-gardes of Europe and the Americas and suggest an approach for reconsidering the aesthetic rivalries that, as Björn Heile has also pointed out, are exaggerated in certain histories (Heile 2004). The musical polemics and skirmishes that followed one of the greatest armed conflicts in the history of mankind subsequently turned the field of composition into one of victories and defeats of legitimacy and, conversely, of delegitimization (remember the musicians Boulez deemed "USELESS"). The postwar avant-garde relied on the art of polemic, in the original sense of the term. Its discourses sometimes employed moral arguments in favor of the aesthetic choice to espouse radical modernist techniques, and they can be read as denunciations of cultural practices associated with fascist or Nazi (or Stalinist) totalitarianisms (Carroll 2006; Fosler-Lussier 2007). Heeding the cries of tabula rasa, of the need to build a new world with new moral and aesthetic values, many historical actors of the postwar avant-garde would legitimize historic and aesthetic periodizations of music based on politico-military models. However, if we pay less attention to such discourses and more—as Pascal Decroupet suggests—to the new interest of composers in sound, lines of convergence emerge between musics that seem otherwise separated by time, aesthetic creeds, or claimed ancestries. These connections suggest a certain unity in compositional practice across the twentieth century, which will perhaps seem completely obvious in a distant or not-so-distant future.

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