

## Abstract

This paper discusses the nature of experimental music, its reception, and suggests a method for its analysis. It is given a definition and its historical development is traced. A continuum is developed along which pieces fall that has at one end pieces conceived in a purely aesthetic way, and at the other end there are pieces for which an underlying conceptual apparatus forms an inextricable compositional element.

The field of analysis is discussed in terms of its history and its place in discussions of music today. It is shown that analysis arose during the era of tonal music as a means of legitimizing members of the classical canon, and thereby tacitly denigrating others. The literature is shown to be united on the idea that analysis today needs to meet music on its own terms and highlight both a piece's individuality and its way place in today's society.

The method for analysis includes some more traditional approaches which are adapted to deal with music which seeks not only to be aesthetically moving, but to further a conceptual goal. New methods and techniques are suggested. A number of common, which should be avoided in discussions of this type of music are outlined.

As a proof of concept three exemplary short analyses are offered. The pieces were chosen as a way of demonstrating the strengths of the methodology suggested. The point of this endeavor is to provide the legitimacy these pieces deserve. If a piece is discussed on its own terms, its craftsmanship can be brought out. Likewise, if a systematic investigation of a piece is executed it will be possible to say why a piece is less than optimal, rather than merely casting it off without much consideration.



# **Towards a Method for the Analysis of Experimental Music**

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Andrew Pfalz

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Towards a Method for Analysis of Experimental Music

by

Andrew Pfalz

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF

DISSERTATION/THESIS:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Edward Jacobs, D. M. A.

COMMITTEE MEMBER:

\_\_\_\_\_  
John O'Brien, D. M. A.

COMMITTEE MEMBER:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Moll, Ph. D.

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT  
OF THEORY, COMPOSITION &  
MUSICOLOGY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas Huener, Ph. D.

DEAN OF THE  
GRADUATE SCHOOL:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul J. Gemperline, Ph. D.

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## Towards A Method for the Analysis of Experimental Music

This paper will discuss a body of music conceived of in (or in reaction to) the cultivated tradition. This body of music tends to feature less common musical approaches such as indeterminacy or some other radical rethinking of traditional musical materials. These works are grouped not because of stylistic resemblances, but by similarly iconoclastic approaches.

### Introduction

It is reasonable to assume that most concertgoers have at some point experienced something like the following. A piece is performed which features some elements which lie outside the mainstream tradition. Some audience member responds grumblingly something to the effect of “my six year old could do that!” Some go as far as to commit their disdain to writing.

An example would be this review of Edgard Varèse’s *Octandre*:

An Octandre is a flower having eight stamens. Mr. Varèse’s *Octandre* was no flower; it was a peach. It cannot be described. It ought not be. Such music must be heard to be appreciated. It shrieked, it grunted, it chortled, it mewed, it barked – and it turned all eight instruments into contortionists. It was not in any key, not even in no key. It was just a ribald outbreak of noise. Some people laughed because they could find no other outlet for their feelings. The thing was not even funny.

(W.J. Henderson, *New York Times*, January 14, 1924)<sup>1</sup>

The author of this review’s disdain is not hard to spot. The dismissive attitude is the most telling part. More effort was put into describing what the piece lacked than what the piece actually sounded like. Most incisively the author says the piece is not even worthy of discussion.

The foundations that this, admittedly superficial, sentiment are based on form the motivations for what is to follow. More specifically, the tendency to dismiss radical new works

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<sup>1</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (New York: Coleman- Ross Company, Inc., 1953), 213.

as trivial, ill-conceived, or otherwise inherently inferior to other, more traditional, works in the same genre serves as the point of departure for this paper.

The debate over what makes art “good” or “bad” has been going for centuries and is likely to continue. One key element in this discussion that is pertinent to this paper is the issue of legitimacy. A piece of art, in any medium or genre, can be legitimized in the eyes of a perceiver in a number of ways. Examples of these would might include the so-called “test of time;” an appraisal of the awards won by the piece in any number of arenas; its monetary success; or a personal value judgment which could range from superficial and highly colored by personal bias to a quasi-objective assessment of the piece in its proper context and in its proper terms based on a thorough understanding of the genre of the piece. A continuum might be constructed that shows at one end a rather superficial and unsubstantial judgment essentially the same as “my six year old could do that” and on the other end a thoughtful analysis which balances solid research methodology, a broad understanding of the topic, and well-informed value judgments. Any number of other points may be noted in between these two extremes.

The problem with judgments that tend towards the superficial is that often these are quickly arrived at and as such are based on a preponderance of presumptions, many or all of which may be irrelevant to the piece being judged. It should also be noted that because a judgment is well grounded does not mean it is a positive assessment. In the same way, superficial praise for a piece may be based on entirely irrelevant assumptions and because of this is not as substantial as it could be.

For established genres, within established art forms such as portraiture in painting, sonnets in poetry, ballet in dance, and sonatas in music, there already exists analytical methodologies designed to legitimize certain bodies of music over others. Sometimes a piece

which is tacitly presumed to be part of a canon is legitimized only by superficial methods. These works are sometimes given statuses as a “good” work, nonetheless. For instance a piece may have stood the “test of time” and so assumed to be of merit because of this. A piece might also be assumed to be a masterpiece by the reputation of the persona attached to the work. Examples might be some like: the assumption that because the music of Guillaume de Machaut is still studied and heard to this day, and because his music is the best preserved among composers working in the same time and place as him, it must be good. These types of assessments have more to do with context or with the genre as a whole than they do with the piece itself, and as such, cannot provide much insight into the piece.

Other pieces have been analyzed in a more scrupulous manner which delves much deeper beyond the surface of the piece in order to demonstrate the level of skill that was required to craft the piece. The insight gained from a well-reasoned discussion of a piece is much greater than if the piece is merely described in general terms. The conclusion that the piece is a work of admirable craftsmanship or is aesthetically pleasing is much more compelling if it can be demonstrated through argument, rather than by assertion. Taking the time to go deeper than a superficial description of a piece is helpful because it can be of use for listener, theorist, performer, and composer alike<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately, regarding works which do not resemble other works already considered among the great masterpieces, one rarely encounters insightful discussions. It is only natural that such works would be met with suspicion. Because unbiased discussion happens so infrequently, superficial understandings of the piece tend to predominate and audience members are left feeling outraged, as if a joke has been played on them. More commonly, bewildered audience

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<sup>2</sup> This is discussed in detail here: Andrew Edgar, “Adorno and Musical Analysis,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57 no. 4 (1999): 443.

members cast works off as drivel without much consideration at all on account of their lack of understanding.

As a means of making access to these less traditional works easier, this paper will suggest a method by which analytical discussions of various levels of sophistication and detail can avoid certain pitfalls which lead to unfounded, harsh assessments. It would be possible that these discussions could also lead eventually to an analysis which would legitimize the piece in the eyes of audience members. If this were to happen, the piece would hopefully gain wider acceptance, or be ultimately judged negatively on solidly argued terms rather than cast aside without thorough consideration.

This paper is divided into four main sections: 1) a discussion of the body of works that will be discussed, namely experimental music, its context, and its unique qualities; 2) a discussion of analysis in order to give more context for the endeavor which will follow; 3) a description of a proposed method for inquiry into pieces of a markedly experimental quality; and 4) a number of case studies wherein the method suggested will be put into action to show its efficacy in dealing with a wide range of pieces.

## **I. Experimental Music**

First and foremost, an unambiguous definition of experimental music must be established. Like most issues relating to experimental music, this is challenging. The beginning of the definition of experimental music given by John Rockwell in the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* is telling in this regard. The first sentence of the definition is as follows:

A diverse set of musical practices that gained momentum in the middle of the 20th century, characterized by its radical opposition to and questioning of institutionalized modes of composition, performance, and aesthetics.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> John Rockwell, "Experimental Music," *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*. (New York: Grove Dictionaries of Music, Inc., 1986), 91.

Although this definition is effective in the sense that it gives a proper orientation to the topic, it is problematic in a certain regard. Describing what experimental music is in negative terms does not help nearly as much as describing what characteristics it does have.<sup>4</sup> The definition goes on to say that experimental music is largely an American phenomenon, which is applied to a wide range of pieces.<sup>5</sup>

It is true that pieces that are described as experimental feature diverse surface-level details. However, these pieces also share significant underlying similarities which will be discussed presently. The definition continues with the following.

[For piece of experimental music] the idea for a piece is often more important than the realization of that piece. ... Although experimental music is related to “conventional” contemporary music, the term is used for a bolder, more individualistic, eccentric, and less highly crafted kind of musical exploration.

Unfortunately, this definition is telling in that it includes an apparently derogatory slant.<sup>6</sup> The point here may well be that the music features indeterminacy, and therefore is literally less crafted. The wording is rather careless, as it implies “poorly crafted” more strongly than “less crafted”. The issue of an experimental piece being well crafted or not is discussed at length in section III below.

Thus, for the sake of clarity and conciseness, experimental music is taken to mean music which:

- is written in or in reaction to the cultivated tradition in America, in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century,
- seeks to further a decidedly anti-elitist agenda that is expressed in a number of ways,
- is inevitably radical in nature as it leaves some aspects of the musical product undecided at the beginning of a performance.

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<sup>4</sup> This is emblematic of a common thread in discussions of experimental music which will be discussed at greater length in section III.

<sup>5</sup> Rockwell, *Grove*, 91.

<sup>6</sup> Rockwell, *Grove*, 91.

## **A. Experimental Versus “New Music”**

An important distinction must be made regarding the definition of experimental music. For the purposes of this paper, the term does not refer to the entire body of what is colloquially known as “new music.” This term is helpful in its lack of negative or stylistic connotations. It is important to note that the term only describes music chronologically, referring to music since 1945. Experimental music is a subset of “new music” as is avant-garde. This delineation might be eschewed in favor of a continuum which ranges from more traditional music on the one end, avant-garde music in closer to the middle, and experimental music on the other end, with many pieces falling somewhere between experimental and avant-garde. These two bodies of music differ not in type, but in degree.

The genesis of all musical material can be seen as some sort of musical experiment, whether it is improvisation or the creation of some sort of process through which musical material is generated indiscriminately. The question of whether or not the musical experiment happens before the composition of a piece, or during the performance of a piece effectively illustrates the distinction between avant-garde and experimental music. Composition lessons and Master Classes inevitably feature suggestions such as “take the set and find its inversion, then see if that sounds interesting,” “try and find as many ways as possible to reuse this motive,” or “what happens when the register or instrumentation of this passage is changed?” In truth the invention of musical material accounts for a small fraction of the time spent on creating a new piece. The majority of the work that goes into writing a new piece could be likened to the work of an arranger. In that the most time is spent editing, reshaping, refining, polishing the core musical materials which might be as bare as a melody alone in the moment after a musical



value on some conceptual goal (i.e. the understanding of the program, and its intelligibility in the music), its use of predetermined notes and rhythms places value on an aesthetic goal (i.e. sounding pleasing, or moving). Of course the debate over where exactly along this continuum to place *Symphonie Fantastique* is far from new, and the debate rages on. This piece is not alone in this regard. Few if any pieces can be given a definite and fixed place on this continuum. Its usefulness is not in its categorical capacity, but rather it serves as a conceptual apparatus upon which later analytical points will be based.<sup>9</sup>

Others have characterized “experimental music” in a number of different ways. Mauceri for one, characterizes experimental music as “no longer expressive or discursive”.<sup>10</sup> This description serves to support the claim that experimental music lies closer to the conceptual end of the aforementioned continuum, but is not as helpful as it might be because it is unclear how other pieces were ever “discursive.” The sentiment is certainly well taken, and resonates strongly with the experience of an experimental performance. Grant uses semiotics to describe experimental music. She says that experimental music is distinguished by the fact that it “presents” rather than “represents”.<sup>11</sup> This statement is fascinating in its connection of experimental music to the age old aesthetic debate over representation in music. However it offers little in the way of answers to that debate, in fact it complicates the situation significantly by adding “presentation” to the discussion. Grant’s paper is remarkable in its accessibility considering its use of semiotics as a methodology. Her sophisticated arguments are difficult to

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<sup>9</sup> This continuum is reminiscent of Leonard Meyer’s continuum that he created to describe the unifying trends in music of the current era. Joaquim M. Benitez summarizes and criticizes Meyer’s tripartite version of the continuum hypothesized in this paper. Benitez does defend the branch of Meyer’s apparatus which is analogous to the one in this paper. See: Joaquim M. Benitez, “Avant-Garde or Experimental? Classifying Contemporary Music,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 9 (1978): 56.

<sup>10</sup> Mauceri, “Experimental Music,” 198.

<sup>11</sup> Grant, “Semiotics,” 183.

summarize, but constitute evidence for the strength of semiotics as an applicable methodology for future study in experimental music.

## **B. History and Context of Experimental Music**

Significant precedents can be seen both in preceding music and art movements from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and on both sides of the Atlantic. Perhaps the most striking example of the anti-elitist, radical artwork that set the stage for figures like John Cage is the so-called Dadaist art movement.

Dada arose in Paris around 1920 as a reaction to the horrors of World War I<sup>12</sup>. Artists that can be described as Dadaists embraced absurdity through the use of apparently trivial or even obscene materials in their work in order to tear down their own aura as artists.<sup>13</sup> This movement, with its provocative works and manifestoes, set the stage for the more profound conceptual works that would come later. The most famous Dada artist is likely Marcel Duchamp. His infamous piece *L.H.O.O.Q.* in which he put a moustache and a crude pun on the *Mona Lisa* could be seen as emblematic of the anti-elitist attitude in the Dadaist movement. It should be noted, however, that not all music is so provocative that it tries to tear down other art as well as its own prestige. The reputation of experimental music which tends towards irreverence stems largely from a small group of provocative works which are the exception. This negative, irreverent reputation, like the notion that experimental music is inherently poorly crafted is ill-conceived and should be avoided.

Rockwell's entry on experimental music names Henry Cowell, Charles Ives, and Edgard Varèse as the fathers of American experimentalism. Varèse stands apart from the other two as

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<sup>12</sup> John Alford, "The Prophet and the Playboy 'Dada Was Not a Farce,'" *College Art Journal* 11 no. 4 (1952): 269.

<sup>13</sup> Christopher Ballantine, "Towards an Aesthetic of Experimental Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 63 no. 2 (1977): 231.

the only immigrant, and by his closer ties to the European avant-garde.<sup>14</sup> Harry Partch might be added to this list. Partch's rejection of the European canon actually would have made him a more telling example.<sup>15</sup> Regardless, these figures set the stage for John Cage, the most central figure in experimental music. Luigi Russolo, the futurist painter and composer, might also be considered among the forerunners of experimental music because of his incorporation of non-musical sound into his works.<sup>16</sup>

These figures can be grouped together by musical and philosophical tendencies, and especially through their iconoclastic leanings. A telling example of this comes from an anecdote about John Cage's time taking compositions lessons with Arnold Schoenberg. Regarding these lessons he remarked of Cage that "he is not a composer, but an inventor – of genius."<sup>17</sup> Schoenberg's inability to classify what Cage created even as music speaks to the truly radical nature of his ideas.

This reference to inventors is not insignificant. Frank Mauceri, in his article, "From Experimental Music to Musical Experiment," describes in a picturesque way the beginnings of American experimental music as a reinterpretation of the struggling bohemian artist as the rugged American individualist. He goes on to suggest that the innovation and individualism championed by figures like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell helped set the stage for the later figures like Cage.<sup>18</sup>

The founding fathers of experimental music are also noteworthy, with perhaps the exception of Varèse and particularly in the case of Partch, for their lack of institutional

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<sup>14</sup> Rockwell, Grove, 92.

<sup>15</sup> Richard Kassel, "Harry Partch," *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*. (New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 168.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Hegarty, *Noise/Music A History* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2007): 6.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Mauceri, "From Experimental Music to Musical Experiment," *Perspectives of New Music* 35 no.1 (1997): 192.

<sup>18</sup> Mauceri, "Experimental Music," 193.

acceptance. It is no wonder that the work of these figures has been regarded with skepticism; institutional support gives instant, though somewhat superficial legitimacy to even the most controversial of work. Lack of institutional support raises questions as to the legitimacy of the work. One might consider the comparison of these figures with the careers of Leonard Bernstein or Aaron Copland. Both of them were accepted by the institutions and beloved by the wider public.

### **C. Agenda and Biases of Experimental Music**

As stated above a central concern in what will be called experimental music<sup>19</sup> (for the sake of discussion) is a decidedly anti-elitist tendency.<sup>20</sup> This is played out in a multitude of ways, some more direct than others. Musically, this tendency is seen in the aversion to unnecessary complexity and contrivance that aim at superficially acquiring more prestige.<sup>21</sup> New Grove mentions Erik Satie as an early forerunner of experimental music for a number of reasons including his anti-elitist attitude.<sup>22</sup> The simplicity of texture and melody, as well as the humorous character of many of his works might be pointed to as musical demonstrations of this attitude. Satie's famed rejections from the Académie des Beaux-Arts at the hands of Camille Saint-Saëns could be seen as a proto-example of the anti-elitist mentality embodied by later experimental composers.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Experimental music is discussed here less as a style than as an approach to the creation of music. This becomes important when considering popular music that is colloquially called "Experimental" and music written by composers for concerts and not necessarily for monetary gain that is also called "Experimental." Generally the term, when applied to popular music, is vague. This loose use of terms to categorize music is very common. As will be seen later, the emphasis is on approach, not style. As such, it is at least hypothetically possible that a piece may be relevant to this discussion and also be a part of the realm of popular music, in spite of the fact that the context of the piece and the style may differ drastically.

<sup>20</sup> Mauceri, "Experimental Music," 198., Ballantine, "Aesthetic," 228,

<sup>21</sup> It is not insignificant that experimental music began to gain momentum outside of the musical institutions, and at the same time as integral serial.

<sup>22</sup> Griffiths, Paul. "Satie, Erik." *Oxford Companion to Music*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 1614.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Orledge. "Satie, Erik." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Web. 9 Apr. 2014. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40105>>.

Another figure whose works demonstrate on the surface a clear appeal to the masses as opposed to specialists is Fredric Rzewski. For Rzewski, this orientation can be seen as stemming directly from his Socialist political views.<sup>24</sup> His settings of folk songs could be read as an attempt to glorify the music of common people, rather than lay claim to the lineage of Classical music, as well as furthering a political agenda. His work *Les Moutons de Panurge*, exemplifies this concern through its symbolic meaning and its indeterminate construction which makes it literally impossible for the performers to achieve the same type of sophistication of performance they might be able to achieve in another, more traditional, work.<sup>25</sup>

This prohibition of traditionally conceived refinement in performance, through the use of indeterminacy, is the most important way in which the anti-elitist tendency in experimental music can be seen. However it is not the only way. The blurring of the line between the person writing the music, the person hearing the music, and the person hearing the music is another significant way in which the anti-elitist tendency is seen. To put it another way, the role of the composer as the dictator of how musical events should unfold is questioned, and in doing so the elite position of the composer is rejected. Pieces like *In C* by Terry Riley exemplify this blurring of lines by encouraging non-musicians to participate in the performance as well as by ceding the details of the construction of the piece to the performers. It is significant to note that for *In C*, like *Les Moutons de Panurge*, control of the details of the piece is not given to a single performer or to the performers as a group, but is rather beyond the control of any individual. Each

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<sup>24</sup> For more on Rzewski's political agenda see Christian Asplund, "Fredric Rzewski and Spontaneous Political Music," *Perspectives of New Music* 33 (1995).

<sup>25</sup> *Les Moutons de Panurge* will be discussed at greater length below.

performer has an equal say in the way the performance of the piece is constructed. In this way a nested aversion to the exaltation of the composer as well as the elite virtuoso can be seen.

#### **D. Characteristics of Experimental Music**

An emphasis on **social interaction** among performers, as well as between performers and audience members is another facet of the anti-elitist agenda in experimental music. In examples like those cited above, the non-traditional performance instructions create a more inclusive experience. This breaking out of the confines of concert etiquette, for open-minded concert goers, can be a moving experience. Christopher Ballantine, in his article “Towards an Aesthetic of Experimental Music,” has rather provocatively suggested that the practice of bringing social interactions to the forefront of the attention of participants can be thought of as an aesthetic goal in itself.<sup>26</sup> Morag Josephine Grant agrees with this sentiment in her article, “Experimental Music Semiotics.”<sup>27</sup> Though perhaps less polemically charged, it is more reasonable to consider social interaction a sort of meta-aesthetical goal. Regardless of the credibility of this particular statement, it is undeniable that broadly speaking, **conceptual goals** are an *inextricable* part of experimental music.

The importance of the rethinking of the relationship between the audience and the artwork can hardly be understated. New Grove takes as an example performances by Pauline Oliveros where there is no significant distinction between the people performing, composing, and witnessing the work.<sup>28</sup> In a typically provocative manner, Ballantine suggests that a difference between the audience of experimental music and that of more traditional music is that the audience is expected to respond *creatively* to experimental pieces. This might be less

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<sup>26</sup> Ballantine, “Aesthetic,” 234.

<sup>27</sup> Morag Josephine Grant, “Experimental Music Semiotics,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 34 (2003): 182.

<sup>28</sup> Rockwell, *Grove*, 92.

provocatively framed as a tendency for experimental music to be *thought provoking* instead of merely pleasing, or rousing. The point is well taken in pieces like those of Oliveros, or Cage's *4'33"* in which the audience plays a much more active role in creating the materials of the piece than the performer. In fact one might go as far as to say that in *4'33"* the roles of audience, composer, and performer are completely conflated into a single egalitarian group.

In less extreme pieces, the relationship between the audience may not be so radically reworked, but the tendency towards anti-elitism might be exhibited in some other way.

Ballantine uses the metaphor of the audience for a movie, or of a sporting event where each member is actively engaged and feels qualified to comment on the performance to describe this type of situation.<sup>29</sup> Pieces like *Les Moutons de Panurge* come close to this ideal of audience engagement in a particularly sophisticated way. The construction of pieces with performance instructions like those of *Les Moutons de Panurge* are frequently seen to draw in audiences, especially non-specialist audiences by giving them some audible process to hold on to. This lessens the feeling of overwhelming incomprehensibility often felt by those unfamiliar with instrumental music. The level of appreciation for music specialist audience members and non-specialist audience members is leveled on the one hand by an avoidance of traditional procedures with which specialists would be familiar, and on the other hand by an explicit appeal to comprehensibility. This leveling of accessibility is another example of the manner in which the tendency towards anti-elitism is at play in experimental music.

In the most general sense **indeterminacy** is the most obvious characteristic of experimental music. If the hypothetical, arbitrary, line were to be drawn distinguishing innovative and experimental music, a good place for it would be directly to the conservative side

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<sup>29</sup> Ballantine, "Aesthetics," 239.

of indeterminacy.<sup>30</sup> It is telling that this most immediate marker of experimental music shows a marked tendency to avoid the idea of the elite, virtuoso composer through a shift of emphasis from permanence to an emphasis on **impermanence**.<sup>31</sup> This fact is most easily seen when one compares on the one hand: the sentiments expressed by Beethoven in the *Heiligenstadt Testament* which presumes the lasting effect of his own music to such an extent, that Beethoven practically likened his own suicide to a crime against humanity; and on the other: pieces which could not be reproduced exactly or perfectly even if great pains were made to do so. An example of the latter would be John Cage's *Imaginary Landscape no. 4 for 12 radios*. This comparison is not meant to imply any judgment on the relative value of Beethoven and Cage, but rather to show in as sharp of relief as possible the implicit statement about elitism that is made by an emphasis on impermanence.

In summary, the most significant characteristics of experimental music are the anti-elitist attitude, and its placement at the far end of the aesthetic-conceptual continuum. This latter point is of vital importance for what is to follow. In a more polemical way, the two ends of the continuum might be separated into entirely distinct paradigms of composition, which nonetheless can be made use of in a single piece, and though only rarely simultaneously.<sup>32</sup> A piece that is simultaneously aesthetically and conceptually substantial draws to mind the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideal of the virtuoso composer. Experimental pieces which accomplish an optimum balance of conceptual integrity and being aesthetically pleasing, where the concept informs the materials

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<sup>30</sup> For Ballantine's discussion of this see: Ballantine, "Aesthetics," 241.

<sup>31</sup> Edgar, "Adorno," 444.

<sup>32</sup> Cornelius Cardew said of this idea, "A composer who hears sounds will try to find a notation for sounds. One who has ideas will find one that expresses his ideas, leaving their interpretation free, in confidence that his ideas have been accurately and concisely notated." Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music Cage and Beyond* (New York: Schirmer books, 1999), 4.

and the materials serve to elucidate the concept while at the same time being aesthetically pleasing or moving, might be categorized as virtuoso experimental pieces.<sup>33</sup>

## II. Analysis

What follows presently is a brief discussion of some concerns about the nature of analysis and its relationship to music. By tracing in general terms the history of analysis, some significant points can be made about the possibility of analysis for experimental music which will be proposed and attempted in the following two sections.

### A. Definitions and History of Analysis

Ian Bent begins his discussion of analysis in the *New Grove Encyclopedia* by defining it as “that part of the study of music that takes as its starting-point the music itself, rather than external factors.”<sup>34</sup> The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* rehashes this general idea and includes, not insignificantly that “analysis sets out to discern and demonstrate the functional coherence of individual works of art, their organic unity.”<sup>35</sup> While these definitions are relatively less problematic than those cited above for experimental music, a full understanding of their implications requires an understanding of the process by which analysis took on its current form.

In his landmark article “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” Joseph Kerman provides a history of analysis from its origins to the present day. The details of which are not pertinent to the discussion here, but some of the main points, and especially the conclusions he draws from his discussion of history are. He begins by discussing Eduard Hanslick, a 19<sup>th</sup> century musician and critic who wrote “On the Musically Beautiful,” a central

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<sup>33</sup> Examples of which will be offered below.

<sup>34</sup> Ian Bent and Anthony Pople, “Analysis,” *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. (New York: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2001), 526.

<sup>35</sup> This summary comes from Edgar, “Adorno,” 439.

book which espoused a rather extreme **formalist** view of music. The most often quoted passage from this book is his aphorism describing the content of music which he defines as “tonally moving forms.”<sup>36</sup> The significance of this statement for the following eras of analysis should not be underestimated. The tension between formalist and less formalist views of music occupies a central role in the discussion of analysis today.<sup>37</sup>

This tension comes from the tendency for analysis to restrict conversations of music to only the music itself, or to put it more bluntly only the notes and rhythms. In “Beyond Analysis” Edward T. Cone explains the need in analysis to deal with at least some elements which must be deemed extra-musical.<sup>38</sup> Cone suggests a broadening of analysis which he calls “critical listening.”<sup>39</sup> Kerman’s purpose for writing is largely along these same lines. What he proposes is an emphasis on criticism rather than analysis, choosing to distinguish semantically two branches of the same field and in doing so highlighting the aversion to all discussion of extra-musical elements in analysis as it is commonly understood.

To put it in a different way, Kerman and Cone both see analysis as limited by what Roger Sessions has called a “fetish of objectivity.”<sup>40</sup> Because of this extreme formalist approach Kerman thinks several analysts have offered questionable analyses which fail to elucidate some of the most significant elements of pieces.<sup>41</sup> The perceived need for objectivity has led theorists towards increasingly complex and quasi-scientific or quasi-mathematical apparatuses which

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<sup>36</sup>Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1986), 29.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Edgar in “Adorno and Musical Analysis” traces the hereditary line further back; pointing out that Immanuel Kant and Johann Friedrich Herbart were synthesized by Hanslick in “On the Musically Beautiful.”

<sup>38</sup> Edgar, “Adorno,” 441.

<sup>39</sup> Edgar, “Adorno,” 441.

<sup>40</sup>Roger Sessions, *Questions About Music*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 138.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Kerman, “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out,” *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980), 323.

many authors have criticized as leading the discussion further from the experience of music, rather than closer to it.<sup>42</sup>

## **B. The Historical Role of Analysis as a Legitim�er**

Kerman astutely points out in his article that analysis arose primarily as a means of legitimizing what analysts saw as the great masterpieces of the Germanic tradition.<sup>43</sup> He points out that this was accomplished largely through the elucidation of **organic unity**.<sup>44</sup> In his article “On the Analysis of Recent Music,” Robert P. Morgan agrees with all of the authors cited above that analysis is in a sort of crisis, but he frames the issue in a slightly different way. He points out that music of the Common Practice Period got its justification from its relationship to the tonal system, and so, analysis of these works got their legitimacy from discussion of how the various elements in a piece related to the larger tonal system, and so the musical tradition.<sup>45</sup> The fall of the tonal system is thus a pivotal moment in the history of analysis. It is the first time when the legitimacy of the German canon is threatened, namely by the Second Viennese School. It is important to note the explicit polemical goal of early analysis like the kind conducted by Donald Tovey and Heinrich Schenker was to demonstrate the genius of the great German composers, at the expense of other music, which was tacitly deemed inferior.<sup>46</sup> The endeavor to demonstrate **organic unity**, or thematic transformation or developing variation for that matter, is valuable because it belies a more central concern: legitimizing the Classical music tradition through an at

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<sup>42</sup> It is worth noting that the justification of analysis by basing ideas on math or science is hardly new. Though the strength of the analysis of Heinrich Schenker lies more in the middleground than the background, his entire theory can be seen as ultimately relying on the overtone series as a quasi-mystical conceptual underpinning. See Kerman, “Analysis,” 317.

<sup>43</sup> Edgar, “Adorno,” 439.

<sup>44</sup> Edgar, “Adorno,” 440.

<sup>45</sup> Robert P. Morgan, “On the Analysis of Recent Music,” *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 36.

<sup>46</sup> Kerman, “Analysis,” 325.

least quasi-objective methodology. While not all analysts were furthering this singular polemical goal, it should be noted that it does form the foundation of analysis as a field.

### C. The New Role of Analysis

There is no shortage of articles aimed at pointing out the crisis which faces analysis in recent decades. Theodor Adorno's comments on the situation will be discussed presently on account of his authority, and the status of his discussion as emblematic of the rest of the literature. One invaluable observation that Adorno offers is that in the current era, analysis must meet a piece on the piece's terms.<sup>47</sup> This is a reversal of older ideas on analysis which sought to show a piece's legitimacy primarily by placing it in the context of the larger historical and stylistic trajectory.<sup>48</sup> Adorno, like Kerman argues for the discussion of the exceptional elements of a piece, rather than the dismissal of those same elements.<sup>49</sup> Adorno offers the example of serial pieces which he says practically contain their own analyses.<sup>50</sup> Framing the issue differently, Adorno likens musical analysis to Freud's ideas of psychoanalysis. He says that an analyst's job is to bring underlying musical significance to the attention of the reader, like the psychoanalyst might bring subconscious ideas to the forefront of the patients thinking in order to elucidate the underlying cause of a behavior.<sup>51</sup>

To take one step further Adorno's ideas of gearing analysis toward the particularities of the piece rather than solely on its connection to the larger tradition, Robert Morgan, in his article

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<sup>47</sup> Edgar, "Adorno," 445.

<sup>48</sup> For a more thorough discussion see Morgan, "Recent," 36.

<sup>49</sup> Edgar, "Adorno," 445. Though Kerman and Edgar both point out Schenker as an example of the tendency to smooth over musical anomalies. Kerman takes particular issue with Schenker's analysis of Schubert's *Dichterliebe* in "How we got into Analysis and How to Get Out," arguing these features are precisely what should be the focus of a discussion, rather than what should be avoided. See Kerman, "Analysis," 325.

<sup>50</sup> Edgar, "Adorno," 445. Cone too suggests a piece should suggest its own method for analysis (see Edgar, "Adorno," 446.) The point here is to show as clearly as possible a trend of dissatisfaction in with analysis in the literature.

<sup>51</sup> Like any similarly picturesque metaphor, the applicability is limited, but still makes the point in an effective way.

“On the Analysis of Recent Music,” traces the history of music in the following way. He says the practice in tonal music of constantly pushing the limits of the system could be likened to a self-destructive tendency. After the collapse of tonality, music had to be constructed according to a new system. At first serialism and neo-classicism were clung to as a means of giving legitimacy to music which was exploring uncharted territory.<sup>52</sup> However as time went on, the tendency shifted from unified, agreed upon systems, to each piece creating its own system of coherence and justification. Morgan includes a telling quote from Morton Feldman: “The work (...) rhapsodizes its own construction, exalts the intricacies of the structure through which it has acquired existence.”<sup>53</sup>

Here the connection to experimental music becomes the most clear. What the authors all seem to be working towards is an increased emphasis on discussion of music which goes beyond descriptions of, for instance, organic unity, or tonal centers, to a deeper, more thought-provoking discussion which includes in some capacity a discussion of the *meaning* of the piece. One might ask the question has this type of discussion been proliferated since these writings? It has been noted that there is a decided shift, at least in the field of musicology away from purely analytical methodologies towards approaches which make more meaningful use of hermeneutics.

If there are still a large number of institutions which cling to the older tradition of pure analysis, it is not hard to understand their hesitance to move towards the types of discussions called for by the writers cited above. Georgia Born in her definition of experimental music in New Grove has gone as far as to say that it forms the centerpiece of post-modernism as expressed in music.<sup>54</sup> The implication here is that the shift in emphasis away from purely

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<sup>52</sup> Morgan, “Recent,” 38.

<sup>53</sup> Morgan, “Recent,” 39.

<sup>54</sup> Grove experimental music.

aesthetic goals is so significant that these pieces cannot even be considered part of the “modern era” any more. While this is a rather dramatic framing of the situation, the sentiment is undeniable. On a more practical level, both Mauceri and Ballantine have pointed out that experimental music is not just challenging to the musical establishment, but also to musicians and audience members. Most significantly, experimental music is threatening to the analysts themselves.<sup>55</sup>

### III. Methodology

Having sketched out thus far a picture of what exactly experimental music is, and what some of the major issues facing analysis today are, a methodology can now be constructed. This methodology will seek to avoid the problems outlined in section II regarding analysis, and is tailored to specifically deal with experimental music, the unique concerns of which have been outlined in section I. The explicit goal of the construction of this methodology will be to create a framework which can be used to aid in the analysis of experimental pieces. The framework is constructed in a way that aims to produce as much insight into the piece and its meaning through a careful examination of the materials of the piece and the conceptual apparatus used to construct the piece, its context. It should be noted from the outset that an exclusive look at the musical surface of the piece will not be particularly helpful for this body of work. As the underlying impetus for this endeavor, this concept should be born in mind at all times. Were a typical formalist analysis fruitful in yielding insight into an experimental piece, this entire paper would be rendered useless.

It would be helpful at this point to recall a previously discussed topic from the first section above: the **aesthetic-conceptual continuum** which ranges from at the one end pieces

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<sup>55</sup> Mauceri “Experimental,” 190. and Ballantine, “Aesthetic,” 226.

that aim at an aesthetic goal completely, through pieces which balance aesthetic goals and conceptual goals, and at the opposite extreme pieces which sacrifice aesthetic goals in favor of conceptual goals. This will be of vital importance for the following discussion. The more general topics discussed below will be applicable to a wide range of pieces which fall at different places along the aforementioned continuum. The more specific topics to be discussed will be increasingly more applicable as one moves towards the conceptual end of the continuum. After this methodology is established pieces that fall at various points along the continuum will be chosen as case studies in order to show the methodology's efficacy in different capacities.

### **A. Traditional Analytical Approaches Adapted**

There are of course many time-honored non-formalist approaches to thinking about music which will prove just as fruitful for experimental music as they do for any other kind of music. Roger Sessions has outlined several of these approaches in a chapter concerning criteria from his book "Questions About Music." What follows is a brief recounting of his criteria which he asserts are necessary for a piece of music to be good, as well as a look at some of his more abstract ideas about how analysis should be approached. His ideas would seem to have a broad range of applicability, especially when considered loosely. An effort will be made to show how many of these ideas can be applied in slightly different ways for pieces at opposite ends of the aesthetic-conceptual continuum. These concerns outlined by Sessions form a solid basis on which the more complex ideas to follow can be built.

Sessions' first criterion for a piece of music to be good is summed up by the term **craft**.<sup>56</sup> This term like many on his list is loaded. This problem comes from a necessary degree of subjectivity which comes from judging a piece as well crafted or not. The debate over the

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<sup>56</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 144.

possibility of objective judgments of taste has been going since at least the time of Kant, and will continue to be debated long into the future. It is not practical nor entirely pertinent to try to offer a full account of this debate here. As Sessions' criteria are being offered more as a starting point, the careless inclusion of such a loaded term without careful handling and consideration into a scholarly discussion of a piece is to be avoided. Contrarily, personal consideration of these issues before a discussion is started often leads to a more fully formed and well-articulated point. In other words, these loaded terms are helpful for personal consideration, but less helpful in writing. This is because they are phrased in an objectionable way.

That being said, the term craft, along with all its connotations and problems, can be seen to be applicable to pieces at the aesthetic end of the continuum in a rather straightforward way. This type of approach is far from uncommon in discussing music. If an experimental piece uses some sort of process to generate material which is stylistically awkward or unpleasant, a framing of the issue in terms of craft can be useful. It is infinitely more productive to say that, for instance a musical product is poorly crafted based on demonstrable reasons, than to say that it appears to be easily reproducible by a child, for instance. However, if a piece lies, or seems to lie very close to the conceptual extreme of the continuum, it should also be born in mind that the piece's conceptual apparatus may well be finely crafted.<sup>57</sup> In this case, a negative judgment of the piece based solely on its aesthetic qualities could be unjustifiable logically, as this misrepresents the intentions of the creator. This relates closely to one of the points of focus to be suggested below.

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<sup>57</sup> The issue of whether a finely crafted process for generating experimental music will necessarily generate aesthetically pleasing music is a philosophical can of worms that will remain closed for the time being.

The next criterion that Sessions offers is summed up by the term **novelty**.<sup>58</sup> The gist of this criterion is easy enough to understand without much explanation, though it is noteworthy that this particular criterion is more apt for pieces of the current era than for pieces of earlier eras, as discussed above. As many of the authors cited above has said, it is important that a piece in the current era exhibit its own internal coherence, or in other words, to create its own system by which it is constructed and according to which it should be judged. For a piece closer to the conceptual end of the continuum, novelty is still important but in a different capacity. An experimental piece would be of low quality if it held to a rigorous system, but a system that yields banal, trite, or (more significantly) materials which might have also been constructed by more traditional means in a more efficient and higher quality manner. To put it another way, if the results of conceptual experiment in a piece are no more moving or desirable than the results that would occur if the same individual chose notes willingly based on intuitive methods, the conceptual apparatus would interfere with the reception of the piece more than it would aid it.

The next two criteria that Sessions offers are best described at the same time. They are **character** and **boldness**.<sup>59</sup> These terms in their open-endedness might be conflated to a single term, but it would likely be no less open-ended. They are more effective when defined in the negative, rather than trying to navigate their meandering implications. An exceptionally bland piece might contain such a wide variety of materials that the main musical idea is difficult to pick out. Alternatively, a piece that lacks character or boldness might have an aspect that is so vague or trite that it lends the piece a trifling quality. At the conceptual end of the continuum, these criteria come into much sharper focus. La Monte Young's *Composition 1960 #7* which consists of a sustained perfect fifth poses a particularly interesting relationship with this pair of

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<sup>58</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 145.

<sup>59</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 145.

criteria. It could be suggested that this piece explores perception by minimizing surface level details. It could also be suggested that this piece explores the social interactions of an audience and a performer or composer who is proposing a farce. In either case, one might wonder if a more viable end-result might have come from a different, less extreme choice of materials. At any rate, the piece is certainly not lacking in character or boldness at the aesthetic end of the continuum. One would likely not forget a performance of this piece with great ease. While there are certainly a number of possibilities for conceptual goals of this piece, a bolder conceptual goal might be more obvious from the piece.

Sessions' next criterion is **substance**.<sup>60</sup> This, like some the points above, yields more interesting ideas when applied to pieces on the conceptual end of the continuum. One might take the example of a Bach prelude, which takes as its conceptual apparatus the question: what if an entire movement were spun out of a very limited number of motives? The substance of the piece would be the various answers to that question. For a piece with a more radical conceptual underpinning the substance of the piece would be the answers to the questions that form the underpinning of that piece. The difference is that the questions being posed are more radical. Here the point is made more clearly in the negative: an insubstantial experimental piece would provide neither clear questions *nor* answers.

**Inevitability**, Sessions' next criterion<sup>61</sup> seems roughly analogous to an appeal to the so-called "musical logic."<sup>62</sup> If a musical event seems to be "inevitable" the implication is that it makes such perfect "musical sense" that it is almost impossible to consider any other music event occurring in its place. This point in an unadapted form yields little insight for pieces which

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<sup>60</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 146.

<sup>61</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 146.

<sup>62</sup> For a more thorough discussion of musical logic see Morgan, "Recent," 39.

are not attempting to accomplish aesthetic goals, because an attempt is being made instead to accomplish a conceptual goal. This is because pieces seeking to further a conceptual goal are concerned with just that, not whether or not the piece makes “musical sense.” However if the term were changed **comprehensibility**, the applicability of this term increases greatly for the more conceptual end of the continuum. The extent to which the experiment being carried out, in whatever its form, is clearly perceivable by the audience is a vital concern for experimental music. This concern encompasses Sessions’ final criteria: **a lack of contrived aspect and consistency**.<sup>63</sup> There is a delicate balance that must be striven for in the creation of works which seek to accomplish a conceptual goal. This balance is between on the one hand a musical product which reflects in some intelligible way the process of achieving that goal, and on the other hand, being so entirely predictable, or (in an equally problematic way) being executed so literally that the result sounds contrived. The criteria might be summed up in the following ways.

<b>Criterion of Sessions</b>	<b>Adapted version for experimental music</b>
Craft	Degree to which the conceptual apparatus is finely crafted, as opposed to the aesthetic product
Novelty	Degree to which the conceptual apparatus better serves the piece than intuitively produced material
Character/boldness	Degree to which a conceptual apparatus is understandable as such at all
Substance	Degree to which the conceptual apparatus bears the structural weight it is given
Inevitability	Degree to which a conceptual apparatus of a piece is comprehensible to the listener
Not contrived	Degree to which a conceptual apparatus yields elegant, as opposed to awkward, musical results
Consistency	Degree of obedience to a conceptual apparatus

## **B. What Analysis of Experimental Music Should Avoid**

Moving from Sessions’ criteria to less objectionable points of focus, it will be helpful to begin with a list of pitfalls which should be avoided. These pitfalls form some of the most common reasons why otherwise insightful discussions become derailed. First, as with any analysis, a **lack of context** is to be avoided. This point will be discussed at length below in a case

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<sup>63</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 147.

study. While this was probably always the case, many of the authors cited above have made strong cases for an increased importance being placed on this consideration for pieces of the current era.<sup>64</sup>

**Superficial, Picturesque** descriptions of pieces are generally to be avoided if serious, insightful discussion is desired. One only need consider the “resounding silence” descriptions of *4’33”* to find evidence of this problem. Attempts at poetic waxing on the provocative nature of experimental pieces may yield more pleasant reading than ham-fisted descriptions of the actual artistic product. The fact that *4’33”* is not silent *at all* is just one example of the clumsiness that can come from this approach. The result is often a waste of the readers’ time, as its merit lies more in the sound of the words than the meaning that is conveyed. In a not-unrelated way, needless anecdotal or **philosophical tangents** should be avoided, as a rule.<sup>65</sup>

Sessions also warns against undue credence being placed on the comments of the composer on his or her own music should be avoided.<sup>66 67</sup> While most composers could answer most questions about their own music, what is said by these figures will most likely be polemically charged and aimed at a specific outcome. The so-called **Intentional Fallacy** is a

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<sup>64</sup> Morgan, “Recent,” 35. For instance.

<sup>65</sup> A paper dealing with experimental music would be amiss to not at least mention the issue of ontology. To make a point as clearly as possible, this issue is being both literally and figuratively marginalized. As with other philosophical debates mentioned above, the question of “what constitutes a work of art?” or “what makes an authentic performance?” have been posed innumerable times and it is far beyond the scope of this paper to offer a definitive answer to any of these or any other related ontological questions. The reason this issue should be avoided so vigorously, if insightful discussion on a piece is the desired, is that these questions are all philosophical cans of worms, which when opened only give insight into the music in the most abstract terms. As in lengthy philosophical conversations, papers can carry on for pages about ontology and not give insight into a piece of music at all. The question of “is this even music?” is often a thinly veiled assertion that the piece is so insignificant that it does not even deserve to be discussed. While that may be the case, exhaustive discussion of this question does not evaluate the quality of a piece as well as a well-argued discussion like the kind proposed by this methodology. If the goal is to tear down a piece, doing so with a solid framework for judgment is much more convincing and efficient than trying to chip away at the philosophical status of a piece. To avoid wasting any more time than is absolutely necessary, this discussion will avoid any other unnecessary reference to this issue as it is ill-advised in the first place.

<sup>66</sup> Sessions, *Questions*, 133.

<sup>67</sup> Sessions also more provocatively advises against the exaltation of composers in general. See Sessions, *Questions*, 129.

related concept to keep in mind. The term was coined by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley in their book on literary criticism *The Verbal Icon*.<sup>68</sup>

A final bit of advice comes from Andrew Edgar: excessive **relativism** is undesirable in any authoritative discussion of a piece.<sup>69</sup> In discussing a body of work which is largely underrepresented in the literature, a thought provoking well-reasoned discussion is more desirable than one that fails to say much of anything for fear of offering any opinion. Sessions summed up the issue astutely by saying that **disinterestedness** is more important than objectivity.<sup>70</sup>

<b>Approaches to avoid</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Lack of context	Pieces are a part of their time, now as much as ever. A piece's connection to cultural and artistic context is invaluable.
Superficiality	A concept should not be described superficially for the sake of brevity. It should be given its due consideration and discussion.
Philosophical tangents	The distinction between a philosophical discussion making use of a piece as an example, and a discussion of a piece's philosophical underpinnings should be maintained vigorously.
Intentional Fallacy	The person's statements about his or her own works are not necessarily completely trustworthy or lacking in problematic aspects.
Excessive relativism	A well-formed subjective discussion of a piece is more helpful than the avoidance of any discussion for fear of lack of objectivity.

### **C. Points of Focus**

The following is a list of bolded aphorisms which form the structural points of the methodology being proposed. Their usefulness is comparable to Sessions' criteria, except that they are framed in a way which is more amenable to scholarly discourse, than to normal conversation.

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<sup>68</sup>William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, *The verbal icon; studies in the meaning of poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954)

<sup>69</sup>Edgar, "Adorno," 448.

<sup>70</sup>Sessions, *Questions*, 141.

The first question that should be asked in an analysis of an experimental work is **where does the locus of artistic activity lie?** This might be phrased differently as the advice to always assess a piece using its proper criteria. Take for example a hypothetical piece which was composed to explore the viability of favoring slow, gradual change through a strict process. Criticizing this piece based on its lack of variety, or a limited range of materials would be inappropriate, because musical materials of this nature were categorically avoided in the construction of the piece. This hypothetical judgment would be misapplying a critical approach which would be perfectly reasonable for a piece for which the materials had been arrived at through intuitive means, or deliberations based on judgments of taste.

The next question which is related to the first is **where along the aesthetic-conceptual continuum does the piece fall?** In the hypothetical piece just described, the locus of artistic activity seems to be closer to the conceptual end of the continuum because the more standard or traditional musical materials are eschewed in favor of less immediately satisfying ones. This sacrifice cannot be ignored. The void left by the removal of immediately gratifying musical materials is filled by a much more substantial conceptual goal than might otherwise be present. Open-minded listeners can appreciate the conceptual goal of many minimal pieces which play out according to a strict process and receive as much enjoyment as they would from an aesthetically moving piece.<sup>71</sup>

Another closely related point of focus to the previous two is to **discuss only what is present in the piece as opposed to what is absent.** A critique of the hypothetical piece for its lack of memorable melody or spontaneous character, for instance, is logically unsound. Pieces of

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<sup>71</sup> Almost every single writing cited above agrees with this sentiment at least in some capacity during the course of their respective arguments. For example, Morgan, "Recent," 39., Sessions, *Questions*, 126., Adorno as paraphrased by Edgar, "Adorno," 448., Cone as paraphrased by Edgar, "Adorno," 446., and Mauceri, "Experimental," 200.

John Cage are frequently approached in this unfortunate way. Discussions of his more radical works emphasize what control was ceded to the performer over what choices were actually made and to what artistic end these choices were aimed. When a complex conceptual goal is aimed for, there is sometimes a good reason to avoid use of certain kinds of materials. As a partner to the previous point of focus the following question might be offered: **how do the materials of the piece help or hinder the artistic aims of the piece?** A more sophisticated understanding of a piece's artistic goals often makes it easier to overlook the piece's aesthetic ugliness. This is true at both extremes of the conceptual continuum. The text painting of a word like "pain" with a tritone on the one end could be seen as analogous to the choice of materials that are radical in some fashion on the other end because they are the only materials that appropriately suit a conceptual goal.<sup>72</sup>

The tendency to look for a **singular irreducible meaning** in a piece of experimental music is as inadvisable as it is in any piece of tonal music from the Classical canon. The practice of attempting to summarize a hermeneutical exegesis of a piece by the use of the formulation "this piece is about \_\_\_\_\_" should always be regarded with skepticism. Any work which could be accurately summed up in such a narrow way would likely be of poor quality. The multiplicity of reactions and associations conjured by any kind of art forms a central part of what makes the experience of art enjoyable and satisfying. If any type of artist was seeking to communicate a singular, unambiguous, clearly communicable point, he or she would be well advised to consider prose instead of some artistic form of expression, as this is neither the strength nor the point of art. It should be noted that while experimental music places more emphasis on the

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<sup>72</sup> An example might be found in Alvin Lucier's use of recorded speech as opposed to recorded music in *I am sitting in a room*. The distortion of the speech is more easily perceived than the distortion of musical sounds by the same means.

communication of a conceptual idea, than on the elicitation of a response through aesthetic means, this does not imply that the ideas contained therein are somehow easier to describe or sum up than those presented in works of other persuasions. On the contrary, in order to bear the weight of increased structural significance, the concept necessarily needs to become substantial. This is a practical consideration, based on the premise that more often, an audience will consider the ideas present in a work which favors conceptual meaning over aesthetic goals, than would be absolutely necessary in a work which is substantial enough aesthetically to be enjoyed without much attention being paid to extra-musical considerations.

Finally a general stylistic point might be addressed about analysis in order to show the significance of the discussion of analysis above. **An unduly formalist approach should be avoided.** After asking the first two questions posed in this methodology, the relative appropriateness of a formalist approach will be self-evident. To discuss the notes and rhythms of a performance of a piece which was constructed in a way that maximizes variability from performance to performance is of severely limited significance. This is due to the fact that it tells only about the particular performance, and not about the piece as an artistic entity. If a work were created to accomplish a conceptual goal which took indeterminacy as an inextricable aspect, an explicit statement about the importance of the notes heard in performance is made. To place emphasis on the notes alone without any contextualization of the notes within the conceptual content of the piece would do the piece an injustice. This would be subjecting the piece to criticism which is irrelevant. This contrasts sharply with the views espoused by Hanslick, Herbart, Schenker and others that the only part of music that should be discussed is the musical artifact itself.<sup>73</sup> A summary of the above points of focus can be found below.

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<sup>73</sup> The tendency to emphasize the necessity to discuss a piece's context in the current era as well as a piece's relation to its cultural and historical context are almost unanimous in the literature.

<b>Points of focus</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Where does the locus of artistic activity lie?	Identify whether or not it seems like a conceptual goal is being attempted in a piece. Ask if an aesthetically pleasing result seems to have been sought.
Where along the aesthetic-conceptual continuum does the piece lie?	Consider how much emphasis was placed on the aesthetic product and how much emphasis was placed on the conceptual apparatus underlying the piece.
Discuss only what is present.	Only rarely does the discussion of what a piece lacks yield any useful insight into the piece.
How do materials help or hinder the perceived aims of the piece?	Ask whether or not other materials would have served the piece better.
Allow meanings to be multifaceted when appropriate	If a piece seems to emphasize questions over answers, a conclusive answer regarding the meaning of the piece might not be necessary.
Balance formalist approaches with extra-musical considerations	Considerations of the particular biases of a piece which seeks a conceptual goal often affects the efficacy of strictly formal approaches.

#### **IV. Case studies**

What follows is an attempt to synthesize the ideas of at least three authors who have been cited above. As described above, Roger Sessions in the chapter from his book “Questions About Music” offers a list of criteria by which recent music can be judged as good or bad. In both Joseph Kerman’s article “How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out” and Robert P. Morgan’s article “On the Analysis of Recent Music” there are a number of short discussions of pieces which are used as examples how the ideas described earlier in the articles. Having already made use of the first author’s ideas, what follows uses the other two ideas. A number of pieces will be discussed in order to demonstrate how the points of focus outlined above do in fact yield more insight into the pieces than more traditional forms of analysis might. These discussions are not intended to be exhaustive. The pieces were chosen as examples of pieces which benefit significantly from each of these points of focus. This is not to imply that all parts of the methodology suggested above are equally applicable all of the time to every piece. It is intended as a method for when other methods prove unhelpful as will be seen.

## A. Arvo Pärt *Missa Syllabica*

The first piece chosen is by far the least radical of the pieces to be discussed. At this point the aforementioned arbitrary delineation between avant-garde and experimental ceases to be of use. Were the line to be referenced in spite of its limited helpfulness, this piece would be well to the conservative, more aesthetically oriented side of the line. Pärt's work is notable for its completely unique and remarkably strict contrapuntal procedures. A large body of devotional, predominately vocal works have been written by Pärt with explicit use made of his so-called *tintinnabuli* technique. In this technique a melodic line is constructed from a rigorous procedure which is adapted only to suit the particular text, often based on considerations of language.<sup>74</sup> It will be helpful to focus only on the *Kyrie* of this mass setting. The melodic line for the words "kyrie eleison" is constructed such that the final syllable of each word rests on a tonic, which is d in this piece. The preceding syllable lead in descending stepwise motion to this note. Thus the notes for the three syllables of the word "kyrie" are f, e, and d. The process is held to strictly for the word "eleison" as well: having four syllables the notes for that word are g, f, e, and d.<sup>75</sup>

In the strict *tintinnabuli* works, an additional line is added to the melodic line which can be constructed in a fixed number of ways. All of the pitches in this second line, henceforth "tintinnabuli voice" are drawn from the notes of the tonic triad. In various pieces the process through which the chord members were chosen varies. However these notes are always chosen according to a strict process. In the piece at hand the closest chord member to the melody note in the first voice is chosen regardless of the interval created, with unisons being prohibited. There is an alternation between the closest chord member from the tonic triad *below*, the melody note and the closest chord member *above*, beginning with the closest chord member *below*. The

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<sup>74</sup> Paul Hillier, *Arvo Pärt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 164.

<sup>75</sup> Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 94 – 108.

*tintinnabuli* voice that accompanies the notes for the word “*kyrie*” (f-e-d) uses d, f, and a. For “*eleison*” the pattern is continued beginning with the closest chord member *above* yielding a, d, f, and a (in a lower octave).<sup>76</sup> In a manner which is reminiscent of the *solus tenor* in Medieval polyphony, the two voices combine to create new melodies which are much more varied than either of the two constituent parts would suggest.

Actual music:

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Actual music', shows two voices in a single octave. The lyrics 'Kyrie eleison' are written below the notes. The bottom staff, labeled 'Resultant melodies', shows the same musical passage but with the voice crossings separated so that the highest note is always in the upper part and the lowest notes are in the lower part.

The example above shows the original music on the first line. The second line shows the same passage if the voice crossings are separated among the two voices so that the highest note is always in the upper part and the lowest notes in the lower part.

Because the two voices in this piece are sung in the same octave, rather pungent dissonances occur frequently, which are followed sometimes by intervals from the tonic triad. However, because the process is strictly observed, stepwise resolution of dissonance almost never occurs in both voices. Oblique resolutions occur sometimes, but leaping away from dissonances happens just as frequently. Another byproduct of the strict observance of process in this piece is a unique weighting of the various possible intervals available from the diatonic set being used. These intervals are also used in an order which is not reminiscent of other styles of contrapuntal writing. One might note the frequent tendency in other movements from the *Missa*

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<sup>76</sup> Hillier, *Arvo Pärt*, 107.

*Syllabica* to end with cadences which step from a relatively consonant interval to one that is considerably more dissonant. The point here is that the strict observance of process in this piece, and the intricate working out of the process which is used to generate the piece yield an product that is aesthetically satisfying and features sufficient variety.

This piece was chosen because it can be justified by a number of Sessions' criteria as well as some of the points of focus outlined above. While it would be beyond this scope of this discussion, each of Sessions' criteria can be seen in action in this and many of Pärt's works. In addition to their impressive contrapuntal sophistication, and commendable economy of means, they show high levels of craft, novelty, character, boldness, substance, consistency, inevitability and still manage to avoid sounding contrived. As suggested above, the question of **where along the aesthetic-conceptual continuum this piece lies** should be addressed first. Pärt's music is constructed in a way that achieves a very aesthetically pleasing result. However because of the rigor with which the process is carried out, a discussion of the piece without reference to the process used to carry out the piece would be lacking.

The inextricability of the process from Pärt's strict *tintinnabuli* works, place them in a much closer than the conceptual end of the continuum than a listening without knowledge of this process might suggest. Dahlhaus' discussion of poetic music is called to mind.<sup>77</sup> Part of what makes this work poetic as opposed to merely pleasing is the tension that arises between the musical artifact which appears freely composed, and the knowledge of the limitations imposed upon the piece by the process. The **locus of artistic activity** could thus be said to lie partly in the creation of an aesthetically pleasing work, but also partly in the creation of a work with a poetic or symbolic significance. This significance arises from the apparent struggle that was made to

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<sup>77</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth-Century Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 142.

create an aesthetically moving work with a high degree of variation while at the same time making use of a process which seems rather limiting and antiseptic. This forms the piece's conceptual goal.

The way that the **materials** chosen, lines constructed of stepwise motion, and arpeggiations of a single triad, greatly **helps rather than hinders** the piece's conceptual goal. The economy of means brings the sophistication and elegance of the process to the forefront of the listener's experience. The fact that the process can be adapted without "breaking the rules" to create a great variety of works is evidence of this elegance. The processes of integral serialism are in some way analogous, but the complexity these processes preclude the listener from hearing the process in the music. In short the balance between means and ends is what makes Pärt's works so captivating.<sup>78</sup>

### **B. Fredric Rzewski *Les Moutons de Panurge***

This work falls considerably closer to the **conceptual end of the aesthetic-conceptual continuum** than *Missa Syllabica*. The score, consists of a single melody of 65 notes (which are numbered) to be played by any number of musicians playing melody instruments and any number of non-musicians playing anything. The following performance instructions are included:

Read from left to right, playing the notes as follows: 1, 1-2, 1-2-3, 1-2-3-4, etc. When you have reached note 65, play the whole melody once again and then begin subtracting notes from the beginning: 2 through 65, 3 through 65, 4 through

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<sup>78</sup> Another point of focus might be addressed shortly here. In reference to the *tintinnabuli* style Pärt is often quoted as describing the style in abstruse terms. Though evocative, his definition of the style is completely unhelpful in understanding the process in technical terms. Thus, many authors are guilty of placing **undue credence on the composer's words**. This point will be developed more fully below during the discussion of Cage. Geoff Smith astutely points out in a reference to an interview with Pärt that he is often painted as a "pious pontiff" and that he is not really given full credit for his work because of this quasi-mystical air that is bestowed upon him by unscrupulous journalism. This is no doubt due at least partially to quotes like the one mentioned above being offered instead of an actual description of the *tintinnabuli* technique. Geoff Smith, "An Interview with Arvo Pärt: Sources of Invention," *The Musical Times* 140 (1999), 19.

65... 62-63-64-65, 63-64-65, 64-65-, 65. Hold the last note until everybody has reached it, then begin an improvisation using any instruments.

In the melody above, never stop or falter, always play loud, Stay together as long as you can, but if you get lost. Do not try to find your way back to the fold. Continue to follow the rules strictly.

The fact that the various iterations of the melody are not written out for the players seems to suggest a somewhat subversive attempt to encourage the players to become unsynchronized. A significant amount of pre-compositional thought has been aimed at this unpredictable creation of a canon during the performance. The melody itself is constructed of irregular groupings of eighth and quarter notes. The rhythm of the melody and the choice of pitches will be shown to **help rather than hinder** the conceptual goal of the piece.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 etc.

First seven iterations of process

The image contains three staves of musical notation. The top staff shows a melody in G minor (one flat) with a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, the numbers '1 2 3 4 5 6 7 etc.' are written, indicating the sequence of notes. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The middle staff shows the first seven iterations of this melody, where each iteration is a quarter note or eighth note behind the previous one, creating a staggered effect. The bottom staff is labeled 'First seven iterations of process' and shows the same staggered sequence of notes.

The example above shows the original melody and the actual musical product if the instructions are followed for the first seven iterations of the process.

The process which is set up for this piece is such that when a player becomes unsynchronized with the rest of the group, they will likely be only a quarter note or eighth note behind or ahead of the other musicians. While not impossible, it would be highly unlikely for the musicians to be able to maintain a separation of a half note triplet, for example. This is due to the

rhythm of the melody itself. When any kind of rhythmic variation occurs most if not all of the quarter notes will be filled in with eighth notes in a hoquet fashion. The audibility of this occurrence is thus maximized. This is because of the significantly different musical result of a melody which balances eighth notes and quarter notes with one of consistent eighth notes.

The pitches of the melody are chosen in a way that despite the possibility of an unpredicted canon being created, an arch for the piece will most likely be retained. The gradual progression from synchronized to unsynchronized rhythms will give the piece an increasingly chaotic, or at least complex sound. The piece ending with free improvisation on a chaotic ending would seem undesirable musically. The a-flat in the beginning of the melody is replaced with a-natural at the end. There is a trifold repetition of a single motive which amounts to an ornamented arpeggiation of an f-major triad. This gives the piece an f-minor sound at the opening, a more ambiguous sound in the middle, and an f-major sound at the end. This is because the process dictates that after the process has been carried out for a certain number of iterations, the a-flat will no longer be heard. As the process nears completion the range and variety of pitches is reduced which creates a character which is distinctive from the rest of the piece. In spite of the unpredictability of the notes that will actually be played in performance, a closing character is still created.

While some attempt has been made at sculpting a piece which will be viable aesthetically, it is hard to deny that what makes a performance of this piece so gripping is that the audience, if the process has been explained, can hear and often looks forward to hearing this process unfold. It would seem only logical to conclude that a judgment of this piece based solely on the musical product would be too superficial and probably unsound. An appreciation of the

construction of the process which produced the piece is necessary for an understanding of the piece that goes deeper than superficiality.

The decidedly **anti-elitist agenda** is evidenced in many elements of this work. An example might be the way in which control held by the composer, nor the performers, as they cannot accurately predict how the canon will be created, but also because they are instructed improvise and so cannot know what other performers will do. The inclusion of non-musicians as stipulated in the score, in combination with the egalitarian spreading of control speak to the sophistication of the process which is hidden behind a layer of what appears at first glance to a lack of concern, or craftsmanship on the part of the composer.

The story from which the name of the piece is derived also speaks to the conceptual agenda of the piece. The story by Francois Rebelais, a 16<sup>th</sup> century author describes a situation in which a man, Panurge, needed to throw one of his sheep overboard as he was taking them across a river. When he does this the rest of his sheep follow as herd. And he watches as they all jump overboard one by one following the one he threw.<sup>79</sup> While knowledge of this story is not necessary for the enjoyment of the piece, it certainly lessens the impression that the piece was haphazardly thrown together. The obvious tendency is to metaphorically liken the dramatic unfolding of the process to the irony of the story. This increase in enjoyment which is gained through an understanding of the process being used in the piece and the knowledge of the story from which the name of the piece was drawn constitutes a strong argument against a **strictly formalist approach** to analysis. Clearly the content of this piece cannot be reduced to only Hanslick's *tonally moving forms*, a negative assessment of this piece based on its indeterminacy,

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<sup>79</sup> Lehman, Mark L. "Guide to Records: Rzewski - "Pocket Symphony"; "Les Moutons De Panurge"; "Coming Together"." *American Record Guide* 09 2005: 148. [ProQuest](#). 8 Apr. 2014 .

and implicit lack of control over its tonally moving forms, would necessarily have to be deemed naïve.

### C. John Cage 4'33"

As a means of throwing the ideas presented above into as sharp of relief as possible, and at the same time subjecting them to a vigorous scrutiny, a discussion of Cage's infamous 4'33" follows. This piece ironically forms the centerpieces of arguments for and against experimental music. The same can be said about Cage as an art-historical figure. The intention of this particular case study will place less emphasis on the justification of the piece, than on its value as an example of the applicability of the remaining unsupported points of focus from the methodology outlined above. Considering this piece from an aesthetic position without a healthy dose of skepticism is almost impossible. This is especially true when one considers that there is almost no way for the composer or performer to predict the outcome of the piece. However, the tendency to reduce the meaning of the piece to an aphorism analogous to "this piece is about silence" is equally if not more misguided. Cage in no unclear terms expressed his view, which is in no way provocative or unreasonable, that the piece is full of sounds.<sup>80</sup> The point of focus that is helpful in addressing this concern from above is to **only discuss what is present in a work, as opposed to what is not**. Discussing only the lack of traditional musical material, i.e. tonally moving forms, may lead to a marginally thought-provoking conversation, but barely addresses the piece as it exists.<sup>81</sup> The lack of notes allows for the intended focus of the work to be observed

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<sup>80</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 70.

<sup>81</sup> Waxing philosophical over the nature of 4'33" as a piece of music or performance art also barely addresses the piece. The discussion of the **ontological question** is a commendable pursuit, and is of the utmost importance for the philosophy of art. However, the explicit purpose of this paper is to aid in the discussion of pieces, not the nature of art, as such a discussion of whether or not 4'33" is a piece of music at all is beyond the scope of this paper. The point here is to draw a distinction between a philosophical paper about the nature of music which makes reference to 4'33" because of the issues it raises on the one hand, and other the other a paper that takes as its primary goal an exegesis of the work on its own terms. In the latter case, the **ontological question** might be of limited relevance, but tendency to become tangentially diverted should be consistently and vigorously avoided.

more clearly though. Thus, the **materials chosen help, rather than hinder the conceptual goal** which is striven for in this piece. Criticism of the materials chosen is thus an extremely questionable pursuit, as the inclusion of musical sounds would prohibit the audience from perceiving the conceptual goal of the piece. If Cage wanted to draw the attention of the audience to non-musical sounds, keeping the audience from hearing them would be a very poor means of doing so.

It should be noted that at least some performances of *4'33"* the performer will open the piano to mark the end of one of the three movements on the piece. Before beginning the next movement, all three of which are without notes, the performer will again close the piano. One possible reason for the inclusion of this detail to the performance would seem to be to keep the audience's attention or to lessen the possibility of the audience storming out. The experience of watching a performer sit motionless on stage for the duration of the piece is likely very maddening. That would be much more maddening than watching a performer carry out some arcane ritual, which (often aided by stopwatches in performance) seems to be unnecessarily detailed for the result which comes from it: musical silence, rather than actual perceived silence. There is in this choice, a slight pandering on the part of Cage to the audience. While this point does not offer a profound insight into the piece, it forms a strong argument for considering the constituent elements of the piece over the lacking elements of the piece. The latter practice most likely leads to consternation, and eventual rejection of the validity of the piece, while the former suggests more angles to consider the piece with.

The issue of placing **undue credence on the composer's own writing** is an immanent concern with Cage. As a prolific writer on music, an abundance of pithy aphorisms are tossed about somewhat haphazardly in casual discourse on Cage and his work. The problem with this

practice is that these quotes are almost always divorced from their context and cause profound impediments to the understanding of Cage's work. Often these quotes are chosen for their rhetorical pungency rather than their relevance to a discussion. Richard Kostelanetz has gone as far as to say "the history of misunderstanding Cage's music is almost as long and as rich as the development of his compositional art."<sup>82</sup>

To note only a single example, one might consider the quote of Cage wherein he describes his music as devoid of meaning, and exploring a "purposeless play of sound."<sup>83</sup> This rather provocative assertion throws a monumental wrench into the gears of experimental music. Were this purposelessness emblematic of experimental music broadly, then this paper could be considered a waste of time even larger than the aforementioned wrench. Upon further consideration, the characteristically provocative and polemical aphorism is not completely without relevance. In considering *4'33"* aesthetically, one does find a free play of sounds. Aesthetically this free play is indeed purposeless, and moreover, meaningless. This assertion is based on the premise of Hanslick, that the meaning in (aesthetically oriented, rather than conceptually oriented) music is derived from the arranging of sounds. Hence, unorganized sounds are inherently meaningless and purposeless.<sup>84</sup> However, the conceptual goal of the piece certainly does have a rather complex and multifaceted meaning. Following with the point of focus outlined above, there will be no attempt made to name a **single irreducible meaning** for the piece. One might speculate as to whether Cage was being purposefully self-deprecating to

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<sup>82</sup> Richard Kostelanetz, *John Cage (ex)plain(ed)* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 49.

<sup>83</sup> John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 12.

<sup>84</sup> In addition to Cage's wryness noted above, his humor should also be considered. Cage at one point is known to have said the choice of four minutes and thirty three seconds as a duration for this piece was chosen because this corresponded to the standard length of a record of Muzack. Cage, with apparent sarcasm implied the point of this piece was not to further a conceptual goal but rather to give people a break from incessant Muzack in public.

highlight the tendency to disregard his work based on its aesthetic shortcomings in spite of its conceptual innovation.

Finally the careful consideration of **context** surrounding the creation of a work will be argued for with reference to *4'33"*. Mention was made above to one of the most basic means through which a piece obtains justification: having a demonstrable connection to a musical tradition. Experimental works sometimes take on a trivial aspect when not viewed with the same kind of attention to context. The reason for this is that an individual could come up with a half-baked idea for a piece which lacks musical sounds, and the resulting performances could be remembered for their shock value rather than for their artistic value. In the context of Cage's oeuvre however, *4'33"* is preceded by a number of pieces which explore similar territory. Aesthetic meaninglessness was broached in the *Sonatas and Interludes* for prepared piano in which complex formal designs were created into which sounds were placed in order to realize the form, rather than to convey the content. This makes an ironic, rather than explicit argument against judgments of taste. Extended periods which lack musical sound are found in these pieces as well. *Music of Changes* had also broached the idea of indeterminacy before *4'33"*. *Imaginary Landscape no. 4* also made use of indeterminate, non-musical sounds. The bringing together of all of these elements demonstrates at least a fair amount of consideration on Cage's part, and can form something of an argument against the perceived triviality of the piece.

More significantly, it should be noted that a close friend of Cage's, Robert Rauschenberg, had created a series of paintings which were entirely white. These so-called "white canvas paintings" form a very telling precedent for *4'33"*. As mentioned before, the tendency to discuss what a piece lacks often leads to misunderstanding. Rauschenberg's paintings were intended to draw the viewer's attention to various elements of the experience of going to a gallery, which are

culturally marginalized or overlooked for the sake of aesthetic appreciation. The viewer of these works will likely notice brush strokes, inconsistencies, lighting, and shadows on the canvas only because the canvas lacks an image. The resonances with *4'33* are inescapable. The “lack of sounds” or “lack of image” is revealed to be in actuality “lack of musical sounds” or “lack of painterly images”. When viewed in this light, the argument for *4'33* as a concerted effort to make a conceptual point, rather than a snide, or irreverent ploy for attention is strengthened considerably. Whether the piece goes down as a masterpiece or not remains to be decided. The point is that a judgment based on consideration according to some of the points of focus outlined above can provide a well-reasoned approval or rejection of the piece whereas a biased dismissal of it is much less credible.

## **Conclusion**

Were the agenda of this endeavor to be summed up in two ideas they would be 1) to argue for the practice of always approaching discussions of pieces in the most appropriate terms possible, and 2) to point out the existence of a continuum of artistic output where there are any number of balances that can be struck between aesthetic goals and conceptual ones. If no other goal is accomplished it is hoped that a strong argument against the denigration of works based on qualities which not only were not intended as the focus of the work, but actually might have impeded the artistic goal of the work, had they been changed in any way.

In this paper analysis and experimental music were put into their proper contexts. Experimental music was shown to have its own set of stylistic qualities, biases, agenda and unique concerns. Most important among these concerns are an **anti-elitist tendency** and a concern with furthering a **conceptual goal**. As a result of these two primary concerns, it has been seen that musical choices are made which are less than aesthetically pleasing. This forms the

most significant distinction between the music being discussed here and other bodies of music. From a more traditional standpoint, the question of why aesthetic goals would ever be eschewed is perplexing. As a way of answering this question a shift of emphasis by the composer away from aesthetic considerations towards more conceptual extra-musical considerations. While this shift certainly requires a profound readjustment of critical and analytical criteria, it should not be viewed as a paradigm shift. A piece need not place the same value on conceptual or aesthetic goals at every point in its duration. Likewise, a composer's output need not show at all times the same concerns. Thus a **aesthetic-conceptual continuum** was constructed to show the various points at which pieces and composers could be at any time.

While the two ends of the continuum are not mutually exclusive, there is an extent to which they behave in a way that is inversely proportional. In order to achieve greater control over one end of the continuum, the composer must cede some degree of control over the other end. If the example of strict minimalism were taken, a composer cannot simply change the materials generated by a process if the integrity of the conceptual end of the process is to be maintained. In this way, control over the aesthetic end of the continuum is ceded to the conceptual end. If a process is not followed strictly for the sake of including some musical material that is more aesthetically pleasing, control over the conceptual end of the continuum is ceded to the aesthetic end. This is because the integrity of the conceptual apparatus was lessened by this break in pattern.

Analysis was shown to have been developed with one of its main goals, whether explicitly stated or not, to legitimize the music being analyzed. Because the methods developed to legitimize the German canon are no longer relevant to the music of today, the need for new techniques and approaches to analysis is evident. A range of different suggestions were offered

with specific attention being paid to those techniques which would yield the most insight into pieces that show an experimental bent. These suggestions on how to attempt analysis with experimental pieces are no different than the older approaches to analysis in that part of the reason is to legitimize works that are either marginalized or ignored. I hope that this approach can aid in sifting out the lesser works from those that are more substantial, which is not easy to do without a systematized approach such as the one presented here.

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