Sets and the City: Serial Analysis, Parisian Reception, and Pierre Boulez's *Structures 1a*

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In April 1952, subscribers to the latest edition of the Paris-based journal *La Revue musicale* could, for the first time, have read the following declaration, separated from the main text by asterisks:

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> Affirmons, à notre tour, que tout musicien qui n'a pas ressenti—nous ne dissons pas compris, mais bien ressenti—la nécessité de la langage dodécaphonique est INUTILE. Car son toute œuvre se place à deçà des nécessités de son époque. (Boulez 1952d:119)[1]

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The statement has since come to caricature our experience of high musical modernism. Its uncompromising tone has ensured the author's place in a narrowly defined historiography that continues to see him as the defender of a universal ("*tout* musicien"; "son *toute* oeuvre") and abstract ("la *langage* dodécaphonique") musical system. The author, of course, was the then still relatively unknown Pierre Boulez, writing here in his early article "Éventuellement...".[2] His ambition was to "link rhythmic to serial structures through a common organization which will also embrace the other characteristics of sound: dynamics, mode of attack, timbre; and then to expand this morphology into an integrated rhetoric" (Boulez 1991:115).

In an analysis of the pre-compositional sketch material from his own recent *Structures 1a* for two pianos (1952), Boulez went on to describe what such a "useful" (that is to say, not "USELESS") serial music might be like. His was an exclusive musical system, presented in terms borrowed from contemporary mathematical, acoustic, and linguistic research. For Boulez, as for Milton Babbitt across the Atlantic, neither the creative act nor the language used to describe it ("I have a horror of discussing what is so smugly called the problem of aesthetics . . . I prefer to return to my lined paper," 1991:54) should be contingent on the composer's intuition or the taste his audiences.[3] Boulez wanted to avoid the received national and historical models that he criticized so sharply in the thinking of René Leibowitz, his re-

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cently estranged teacher, and in the other post-war Schoenbergians in Paris—those he denounced in "Éventuellement..." as "champions of clarity, elegance and refinement: such eminently *French* qualities (they love mixing Descartes and *haute couture*)" (1991:112). For Boulez, the system demonstrated in *Structures 1a* was something above the flux of Parisian intellectual and political fashion.

Boulez's commentary has been influential, and unsurprisingly so: it has given us reassuring points of analytical entry into a repertoire that even over fifty years later remains very difficult to listen to, perform, and write about.[4] But we tend not, in fact, to *listen* to *Structures 1a*—still less perform it—as much as we *read* it; more precisely, as we read it in the pages of "Éventuellement...". As Boulez's readers we do not even have to understand the complex theory that Boulez presents, only, in some existential sense, "truly experience" the need for it. As suggested by his choice of the verb *ressentir* (literally "to re-feel," in the sense of interiorizing a given idea or set of values), Boulez's recommended serial experience demands first of all a leap of faith, an unshakable belief in the authoritative "royal we" so typical of this kind of French polemical rhetoric.[5] (With all its implications for his own accession, Boulez had declared literally and figuratively "Schoenberg is Dead" in print only three months before).

Discourse about *Structures 1a* has concentrated on characterizing the *pre*-compositional processes that Boulez himself described, often to the point where a theoretical knowledge passes for a *post*-compositional experience of the music itself or a critical engagement with its cultural-historical contexts. In his 1958 analysis of the work in *Die Reihe*, the principal journal of the so-called "Darmstadt School," György Ligeti even dispensed with the need for music examples, taking it for granted that "[its] anatomy is revealed of its own accord, so it can be analyzed as a textbook example" (1958:36). On Karlheinz Stockhausen's advice he focused instead on the work's sketches and on Boulez's "Éventuellement..." analysis. As an analyst Ligeti had only to access this material in order to "let it 'be itself,' so to speak" (41), to reveal "the beauty in the erection of pure structures" (62). Paul Griffiths has more recently suggested that the piece is "a kit of serial forms that have almost invented themselves" (1995:36).

For older and, as described below, some "new" musicologists alike, "useful" serial music is analyzable music and "useful musicians" those, like Ligeti, who know how to analyze it. There can be few other repertoires that are so thoroughly disciplinary in this sense. We have formulated analytical strategies that legitimate Boulez's unitary model and prove the supposed universalism and aesthetic self-sufficiency that his statement in "Éventuellement..." promised. In doing so, [we] have reached closure for serial music.[6] We have

marked out what Richard Taruskin has characterized as "a *cordon sanitaire*, a decontaminated space" within which we experience it "in a cultural and historical vacuum" (2000:368), shutting out questions about what this music might mean on the *outside* of the analytical boundary.

None of this would be of very great concern if Boulez's passionate, frenzied and often very beautiful early music actually sounded like the rational system presented in "Éventuellement...". But it does not. The American composer George Perle has put the problem well in one of his several critiques of Allen Forte's *The Structure of Atonal Music* (1973):

> My critique of the Forte system does not begin with an objective and reasoned appraisal of it, and I think it would be worthless if it did. My critique begins with the subjective, intuitive and spontaneous response of one who has spent a lifetime listening to music, composing it, playing it and thinking about it, and then finds himself confronted with ways of talking about and analyzing music that have nothing whatever to do with what I would call this "common sense" experience. (1990:151)

If we are honest as serial listeners, Perle is probably not alone here in feeling some disparity between his own "common sense" experience of serial music and the sort of formal approaches of much serial analysis—although as a composer interested in twelve-note organization he may have more at stake.

Not Being Useless to the Needs of Your Time

Let us return to Paris in the spring of 1952 to consider more appropriate (more useful?) terms that might begin to bridge the gap between our own experience as listeners and the more conventional disciplinary responses to it. "Éventuellement..." and *Structures 1a* were produced in a city balanced precariously between the Liberation and the early Cold War, a Paris that *heard* nascent serial music not as the neat disciplinary utopia of Forte-style pitch-class set analysis, but as a deeply contemporary and political reaction to these times. Post-war Paris itself was a defining influence on the development of Boulez's early thinking.

In the final line of his statement in "Éventuellement...", Boulez emphasized this crucial aspect of his serial experience, more often put into shadow by the famous capital letters in the previous sentence. It begs an obvious question, rarely asked, one that challenges our still-fervent modernist faith in Boulez's stated compositional processes: why should non-serial musicians have been judged so emphatically "USELESS"? Because, Boulez wrote, "their entire work brings them up short of *the needs of their time*" (1991:113).

Later he again directly attached the need for a serial language to the wider concerns of his age: "*At a time of transformation and reorganization* . . . we assume our responsibilities unflinchingly. No sham emotionalism is going to prevent *our practical working-out of the feeling, the felt necessity, of our time*" (115, emphasis added).

Unless we agree with Georgina Born, among many, who holds that Boulez's "formalism, linked to an absence of critical concern with social and political dimensions of culture" did indeed mean to enforce a Bourdieu-like "necessary alienation from the public" (1995:64),[7] then we must ask whether *Structures 1a* can be other than that which a modernist reading of "Éventuellement..." suggests. Can serial music be something different from serial analysis? The circumstances surrounding the publication of the article and the very public première of the work it profiled raise questions about Boulez's place in an analytical discourse that continues to protect him from such contexts. What were these "needs of his time" and why should serialism have been the medium—emphatically the only medium—through which they might be experienced, on paper and, crucially, in performance? Moreover, what did such an ambition for usefulness mean, both for him and for his listeners, at a time and place in European history in which to be useful as a creative individual was, for the intellectual left at least, to be used?

The arts listings of the April 26, 1952 weekend edition of the left-wing newspaper *Combât* carried the following short announcement for a forthcoming concert:

> "Structures" pour deux pianos (Pierre Boulez). Pierre Boulez et Olivier Messiaen (1er audition)." (Anon. 1952:14)

The details of the première are the stuff of conspiracy theory. It took place on May 7, 1952 as part of *L'Oeuvre du vingtième siècle*, an arts festival staged by the "Congrés pour la Liberté de la Culture" and funded covertly by the CIA. The American use of front-organizations in the arts during the early Cold War has been well known since the *New York Times*' exposé in 1966 (Wicker 1966) and has in recent years received increased scholarly attention (Stonor Saunders 1999; Wellens 2002; Carroll 2002, 2003). American intelligence had become concerned about the spread of Communism in post-war France, where slow economic growth, hampered by a succession of harsh winters and provisional governments, had left the country vulnerable to ideological coöption. By mounting arts festivals, overseen by the composer, musicologist, and impresario Nicholas Nabokov, American propagandists hoped to engage the support of the influential but undecided

left-wing Parisian intellectuals. They wanted to demonstrate political links between, on one side, the curtailment of civil liberties under Communism and the prescriptions of socialist realist art, and on the other, the freedom of Western liberal democracy and the *laissez-faire* of its cultural life. "The real fear for the Soviet government," wrote Nabokov in 1948, "is the state of mind which may grow within a closed body of specialists . . . This state of mind is *creative individualism*—which is still tied on many ways to the Western European tradition. It may lead to *political individualism*" (quoted in Wellens 2002:31).

The programming of the festival was accordingly broad—*Structures 1a* was performed at a three-week long fringe chamber series along side works by composers as stylistically and aesthetically "individual" as Vaughan Williams, Constant Lambert, Virgil Thomson, and Henri Dutillieux—although the event as a whole was dominated by the neo-classical Stravinsky, hailed, in Nabokov's memorable assessment of *Symphony in C*, as a reminder to audiences of "the meaning of *homo sapiens*" (quoted in Carroll 2003:13).[8] The Schoenberg School was represented to lesser extent—most importantly in the belated French première of *Wozzeck*.[9] But the festival was more a retrospective of earlier modernisms than it was a showcase for the younger generation. Certainly the presence of a cutting-edge modernist like Boulez in a festival of such partisan and, at the time, well-known politics is surprising, especially given Nabokov's own conservative taste and the publication of Boulez's analysis in "Éventuellement" the same month. But the timing was no coincidence. The issue of *La Revue musicale* that carried "Éventuellement..." was also produced "sous les auspices du Congrés pour la Liberté de la Culture," as the front cover advertised, as an introduction to the music performed at the festival. Boulez's statement of musical modernism was guest edited by Nabokov himself. Before considering how this audience might have experienced Boulez's music as it was performed to them at the festival, it would be well to examine more critically the related context of its commentary.

Re-Reading "Éventuellement..."

Until 1952, Boulez had published in journals of narrow and specialist readership, primarily in *Contrepoints* and *Polyphonie* (1948a; 1948b; 1949; 1951). As Dominique Jameux argues, these articles were written is such a way "as to exclude the uninitiated" (1991:34) in their discussion of recent compositional developments (in particular the debate provoked by Leibowitz's interest in Schoenberg and Messiaen's experiments in rhythm). We would expect this trend to have continued for the publication of

"Éventuellement...", Boulez's most technically demanding (and, Jameux would say, most exclusive) piece to date. Indeed, Robert Piencikowski argues for article's inclusion as the apogee of what he defines as Boulez's first publication "stage" (1948–53), "the period in which the idea of generalizing the series takes shape, crystallizing in the study called 'Éventuellement...'" (1991:xviii).

Had Boulez's initial version of the article been published in *La Revue musicale*—written originally in response to a request from Henry Cowell for an abstract of his current research—we might well be tempted to agree with Piencikowski's categorization.[10] But there are some interesting differences between the two. The earlier piece is more concise (just over four pages), omitting the extensive prefatory remarks and conclusions of "Éventuellement..." and getting to the technical theorizing within a few introductory lines. While the analyses are sometimes less involved than in the later version, the transposition tables used for *Structures 1a* are presented with all the interval vectors given, where in "Éventuellement..." only three completed permutations are printed both horizontally and vertically,[11] the remaining values blocked out as if to suggest that the transpositional detail itself was not as important as knowing the series had indeed been transposed. This is serial theory "experienced" rather than "understood."

The Cowell version also offers a fuller graph of transpositions represented as displaced sounds within a given frequency band. ("Mathematicians call it modulo," Boulez reminds us helpfully in "'Éventuellement..." [1991:118].)[11] By contrast, "Éventuellement..." itself has more musical examples and although Boulez makes few concessions to the non-specialist, the article eases us in through a polemical introduction that establishes its Parisian context, then takes us step-by-step through the basic principles and application of serial ordering, finally concluding with a defense of his analyses against charges of intellectualism set in surprisingly poetic terms:

> It is the need to pin down what one wants to express that directs the evolution of technique; this technique reinforces the imagination . . . and in this way, in an endless play of mirrors, creativity pursues its course; a living and lived organization, allowing every discovery, enriched by every new experience . . . Is a conclusion necessary? Once more the unexpected: "The heart, an intestine which replaces everything." (1991:139–40).

The readers of Cowell's American journals would doubtless have been familiar with the scientific meta-language of many contemporary writings on serial research, not least with those of Babbitt. Certainly Boulez supplied an abstract whose exclusively theoretical approach would seem to suggest a degree of assumed technical knowledge on their part. But writing in 1952

in *La Revue musicale*, Boulez faced a different sort of reader, one more used to articles of very general, even popular, interest (recent issues had included pieces on film music, jazz in Paris, Francis Poulenc, Jean Cocteau, and Erik Satie) and certainly with little curiosity for the latest international developments in the effort to generalize the series. That the journal appealed to such a large and non-specialist readership doubtless explains the Congress's interest.

But there are aspects of "Éventuellement..." that are not so comfortably explained by a difference of publication medium and a concession to a lay readership. Despite their apparently opposing aesthetic positions—differences Mark Carroll emphasizes by polarizing *Structures 1a* and Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* (Carroll 2002, 2003)—Boulez and Nabokov can be seen, at least between the covers of *La Revue musicale*, as having shared a conviction that musicians had a special responsibility to be useful as spokesmen of their age. As Nabokov wrote:

> During this coming arts festival, dedicated to *l'Œuvre du XXe siècle*, we will not hear any scores that do not owe their qualities, their very soul, to the fact that they are the music and the art of men who know the value of liberty... And those who live today know this value of their times better because they have seen it... If a music festival has a purpose and a virtue, it must be to combat hopelessness and discouragement... Totalitarian ideologies... cannot diminish one inch the master-works that speak for themselves—and for the civilisation that gave them birth. (1952:8)[12]

By contrast, the prescriptions of "provincial" socialist realist dogma made "one despair of the human race and of artistic progress" (Nabokov 1952:8).[13] Boulez stopped short of employing such explicitly political terms in "Éventuellement...". But given its explicit context, readers of this issue of *La Revue musicale* would almost certainly have read Boulez's universalist language as part of the same case for a broad Western liberalism over the restrictions of Soviet communism. Nabokov, like Boulez in his italicized snub at the "French" Schoenbergians, was concerned not so much with the politics of national identity after the war, but with the wider challenge of "knowing better the value... of their times" (Nabokov 1952:8); what Boulez called not being "USELESS" to "the needs of his times."

But what did being useful as a musician mean in the context of the festival? At least part of the answer, as suggested in quite different ways by both Nabokov and Boulez, was concerned with the performance of new music. Nabokov stressed that the criteria for inclusion in the festival was "to enter into communication with the public, perhaps through new ways of expression and original techniques" (1952:5). Compositional usefulness—

in so far as Nabokov and the Congress was concerned—meant attracting an audience for "the works of their time":

> To lead twentieth-century audiences towards twentieth-century music—there's a task, and perhaps the most urgent, which falls now to musicians, to organizers, to educators. Many are conscious of this task. Thus Hindemith has tried, not without success, to bring together music lovers and the works of their time: taking into account the new conditions of musical life in his aesthetic as a composer. (Nabokov 1952:8)[14]

Boulez's early serial music could not, of course, be described as functional in the sense of Hindemith's Weimar-period *Gebrauchsmusik,* and Nabokov's reading of Hindemith's music as "humanist," somehow transcendent of the national politics of its aesthetic foundations, is not without its problems.[15] Nevertheless, Nabokov's concern to promote new works had much in common with Boulez's, both in "Éventuellement..." and indeed, throughout his career as a composer, conductor and cultural spokesman for contemporary music up to the present day. Prefacing his analysis in that article, Boulez admitted crucially that "all these possibilities [of serial encoding] might well be regarded as pure theory," but went on to stress his concern for "deploying such virtuosity in performable works... As we shall see, the time cannot be far off when such speculations will *gain practical recognition*" (1991:119; emphasis added).

Boulez's article certainly emerges as a defense of serialism against its conservative critics like Nabokov. But it is not a case made only on the ostensibly value-neutral theoretical premises of the main body of analysis. Indeed, it was Boulez's Parisian contemporaries like Leibowitz—"falsely doctrinaire, absurdly conservative... enthroned like fat idiots to the greater glory of the avant-garde" (Boulez 1991:111)—that he accused of the very charges of "frantic arithmetical masturbation" in "some shadowy semi-secret society" that he himself would be asked to counter in the next decades (112). Nabokov's own 1948 critique of Leibowitz in the Congress's journal, *Partisan Review,* written in reply to Leibowitz's critique of Stravinsky in an article entitled "Two Composers: A Letter from Hollywood" was written in terms that could well have come from Boulez himself: "[Schoenberg] created a strange kind of fetish, a hermetic cult, mechanistic in its technique and depressingly dull to the uninitiated listener" (Nabokov 1948:580).

As I argue below, Boulez's own alternative in these early years was far from that of Leibowitz's Viennese School salon evenings in Paris, modeled on Schoenberg's *Verein für musikalische Privataufführungen.* It may be stretching the point to suggest that "Éventuellement..." could be read as Boulez's case for aesthetic inclusion in the festival's plan. Certainly its portentous

title, with the loaded "...", fits well, positioned at the end of an issue in which the articles are connected by a concern for the performance of new works and by the language and aspirations of universal humanism, whatever the politics of individual authors might have been. And although Boulez and Nabokov disagreed over the aesthetic worth of serial music, Boulez's inclusion in the journal suggests that they were presented as having had basic principles, if not necessarily politics, in common.

Boulez's political sympathies at the time are unclear and a thorough survey is beyond the scope of this paper.[16] When pressed today to side with either of the power blocs, he says tentatively that the Americans were less prescriptive; "the better option" (2003). And yet he has also described himself as "very Leninistic," continuing, "I'm all for the efficiency of the revolution, by going to the important organizations to change the sense of them and to convince them of my existence" (quoted in Carroll 2003:192). So too, as Carroll implies, Boulez's relationship with the outspoken conductor Roger Désormière, barred from the Congress's festival for his Communist Party membership, challenges his claimed independence of real-world political affairs (Carroll 2003:35). And it may be that his gradual revising-out in 1950, 1958, and 1965 of the revolutionary textual associations in his original 1948 setting of poems from René Char's *Le Soleil des eaux* (first conducted by Désormière in 1950) might suggest an early interest in expressing through serial music socio-political ideas that may have been controversial in Cold War Paris.[17]

The political context of issue 212 of *La Revue musicale* gives us a problematized base for "reading" the *Structures 1a* presented in "Éventuellement...", one that leaves Boulez's intentions in publishing the article and his own personal politics open to question. "Éventuellement..." emerges not just as a statement of abstract theoretical process (in so far as purportedly abstract theoretical languages are invariably invoked in response to sectarian pressures, perhaps without its practitioners realizing it); it can also be read as a compelling response to the American politics of the festival, even as Boulez was ostensibly distancing himself from the extra-musical compromises he attacked in Leibowitz's teaching. But to look for musical meaning here is, perhaps, to risk reinscribing the assumption made by much formal serial analysis about the closed relationship of serial music to its various commentaries, be they theoretical, aesthetic, or political.[18] *Structures 1a* aspired, in Boulez's words, to "practical recognition" under the aegis of the festival. As such a "performable work," therefore, a wider network for understanding it might be found in the contemporary reception of its first performance. Before going on to discuss what how this audience responded to the piece, I second Paul Attinello's recent suggestion about con-

sidering meaning in this repertoire:

> it would be useful for readers to go and hear the pieces I cite—even those who know them well—in order to remind them of the sensual impact of their experience of sound, rather than of score, abstract memory, or theoretical construct. (Attinello 2004:156)

Listening in on the Première of *Structures 1a*

Areas of the Paris press certainly invested the work with very different political meanings than did Boulez or Nabokov. Far from interpreting it as an aesthetically *dis*united and yet apparently "universal" freedom, many turned blind eyes to the compromising American associations of the festival and heard it instead as a way of protecting French cultural-political identity from appropriation by the super powers. Many intellectuals of the disaffected left, including Albert Camus and, in the early 1950s at least, Jean-Paul Sartre, felt frustrated at being pulled into a power struggle in which they, and France, wanted no part. As founding editor of the newspaper *Combât*, originally a clandestine *Resistance* publication and one of the leading political dailies in post-war France, Camus wrote a series of articles under the umbrella title "Neither Victims Nor Executioners," which drew an early comparison between Nazism and Stalinism. Memories of the Nazi occupation were still fresh, and with the trials of Petain, Laval, and other officials in the late 1940s, the full extent and consequence of Vichy-French collaboration was only beginning to be understood.[19] Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs are rich and graphic sources of Parisian reactions to revelations brought daily by newspapers and the first American newsreels of the camps at Birkenau and Auschwitz. She wrote:

> I had been living in a prison; now the world was restored to me. A ravaged world. Immediately after the Liberation, the Gestapo's torture chambers were discovered, mass graves unearthed... The brutal revelation of the past thrust me back into horror; one's new delight in life gave way to shame at having survived . . . Victory was a costly commodity. (1965:10)

Later, she reflected, "the war was over; but it remained on our hands like a great, unwanted corpse, and there was no place on earth to bury it" (30).

Considering the implications of the Marshall Plan (1947) and faced with new political compromises in the early 1950s, many did not want to be boxed into another either/or decision. They heard the restorative neotonalism representative of both American and Soviet ideology as dangerous. It brought to mind the values of a time that, far from having been the

age of innocence that Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* was meant nostalgically to recall, had witnessed two world wars and threatened a third—only this time on a previously unthinkable scale.

The most remarkable press account of the première is a front-page review by the dramatist and critic Guy Dumur, carried in the May 14 edition of *Combât*. Dumur began by pointing out what he saw as the irony of the Congress's programming of *The Rite of Spring*, premiered in the same theatre thirty-nine years earlier almost to the day. Conservative newspaper editors all too forgetful of its shock value, he complained, now embraced the work and Stravinsky himself was "wildly acclaimed"[20] as the naturalized French doyen of a Parisian society that not so long before had considered him as unacceptably radical. "One can only imagine [Stravinsky's] memories coming back to him," Dumur reflected, "how did he now find this country that for so long was his own, before the war . . . cut him off from France and Europe?"[21] For Dumur it was the negative public reaction to Stravinsky's modernity, to his "youth and strength" (1952:1), that had made him so important in 1913. By 1952, he lamented , Stravinsky had lost his edge and his strategic role in the American politics of the festival had reduced even the previously sensational Paris ballets to the level of American propaganda.

By contrast, twelve-note music was still considered unconventional enough to have been under-represented at the festival. As Dumur wrote, "one would have hoped . . . for a more important place for the dodecaphonic school whose works—those by Berg, Schoenberg and Webern, as well as those of the younger composers—are still too ignored by the French public" (1).[22] For Dumur it was now Boulez's music, symbolically enough performed the evening before Stravinsky's in the same theater, that had come to embody the scandal and spirit of this peculiarly French sort of avant-garde. "On the evening before [*Rite*]," he wrote, "it was essential to have heard a work for two pianos from the most original of the young French composers, Pierre Boulez, performing his *Structures* with Olivier Messiaen, whose students had booed Stravinsky's most recent works before the war, judging them too academic" (1).[23]

Structures 1a was heard as a rallying cry not only for musical revolution, but also for socio-political change. Even the conservative newspaper *Le Figaro* appreciated the cultural-political force of Boulez's generation—"the troops of shock dodecaphonists" (*les troupes de choc dodécaphonistes*) as it dubbed them in its short review of the première printed two days later (Baignères 1952:6). Linking serialism and political radicalism (to recall Boulez's words, "the dodecaphonic language" with "the needs of [the composer's] time") Dumur went further in *Combât*, suggesting that Boulez was indeed using music directly to subvert the pre-war values that Nabokov

and the Congress sought to reaffirm: "Thus go the times. Thus goes the old Europe. Since it's this [the old Europe] that it's all about" (1952:3).[24]

For the undecided left, concerned as they were to secure French identity independent of the overtures of the superpowers, the music's *rappel à l'ordre*, its self-conscious aural subversion, was the whole point. Dumur concluded:

> In normal times, in ordinary circumstances, this music festival would only have interested the musicologists, Conservatoire students and snobs who are the regular audiences at these concerts. Neither *Humanité*, nor *Combât*, nor *Le Figaro* would have taken part in the affair. The malaise today comes from elsewhere.[25]

As if to emphasize *Combât*'s conviction that the French were indeed living though extraordinary times ("a time of reorganization and transformation," to recall Boulez's words), times in which few could afford to ignore the message of this music, Dumur's review shared the front page with two other articles that reflected the unsettled political climate of the time: one on the division of post-war Germany and the other calling for France to defend its autonomy in cultural terms, as in international relations: "Culture française en péril . . . de l'influence grandissante des U.S.A." (1).

But beyond its context in the festival and place in *Combât*'s own self-evident political agenda, what was it about Boulez's music itself that encouraged newspaper editors to relate it so directly to contemporary political concerns? Mark Carroll has recently applied Sartre's model for socially committed *art engagé* to argue that in subjugating himself in a system of abstract signs, leaving compositional decisions to be settled by pre-compositional processes, Boulez raised music to a level that could resist anything real—in Sartrean terms, anything of "existence"—to offer a glimpse of the utopian (Carroll 2002; 2003). Sartre's long preface to Leibowitz's *L'Artiste et sa conscience* (1951) disagreed with the book's conclusion that Schoenberg had achieved such musical-political engagement in his cantata *The Survivor from Warsaw* (1947). For Sartre, Leibowtiz's Schoenberg was too interested in signifying. The true and unique political potential of music, he argued, lay in its transcendence from the contingencies of physical existence. In his 1938 novel *La Nausée*, the character Antoine Roquetin reflects "what summits would I not reach if my own life were the subject of a melody" (1968:60). Later he is drawn to the example of transcendence offered by a record—Sophie Tucker's 1911 hit *Some of These Days*—that he hears in a café: "the voice, deep and husky, suddenly appears and the world vanishes" (149). In his critique of Leibowitz's argument, Sartre envisaged contemporary music in similar terms:

> Is it so impossible that an artist will emerge today, and without any . . . interest in signifying, still have enough passion...that he will transform even this world? . . . and if the musician has shared in the rage and hopes of the oppressed, is it possible that he might be transported beyond himself by so much hope and so much rage that he could sing today of this voice of the future? And if this were so, could one still speak of "extra-aesthetic" concerns? . . . Would the raw material of music be distinct from its treatment". (1951:35–36)

Carroll's Sartrean Boulez did not hold up a mirror up to his first audience to reflect their own world back at them as Adorno's and Leibowitz's Schoenberg had done—in Hanns Eisler's words, forcing them to "think about the chaos and ugliness of the world" (1978:75). Rather, he challenged their underlying codes and practices to clear space for a new and brave vision of what it could be like.

But there is a problem with this reading, one that overlooks the importance of the work's performance reception. Were Sartre's raging "oppressed"—arguably those in post-War Paris who stood to gain most from such an experience—really intellectually and aurally equipped to identify "the needs of their time" in what Carroll calls "the recesses of . . . serial abstraction" (2003:142)? Were they able to hear Ligeti's abstract "beauty in the erection of pure structures" (Ligeti 1958:42) in *Structures 1a* and define such structures as serial? And assuming for a moment that they were indeed subscribers to *La Revue musicale* and could reconcile the American political context to follow Boulez's analysis of the piece like a program note, what would such a definition have meant? Moreover, why should they have put their efforts into Boulez's music at all, since in Sartre's argument Sophie Tucker's song offers an easier-listening version of existential transcendence? Carroll argues that this first audience sought to understand the implications of the music rather than react against it. His is certainly a very welcome approach to thinking about meaning in this music, one that freely admits to suggesting what this work might have meant for a hypothetical audience that understood its socio-musical consequence (2003:141–42). But the opposed responses of the conservative Nabokov and the radical Dumur were not provoked by an underlying order buried deep inside an analytically exposed and rational compositional process. It came instead from the sound of the music as it was performed to them.

Detailed accounts of the première can tell us more about these reactions. As suggested by Dumur (although oddly not mentioned by him), *Structures 1a* provoked a scandal of the sort perhaps unique to European audiences. Claude Baignères' report in *Le Figaro*—a keen right-wing supporter of Nabokov's neoclassical Stravinsky programs—headlined

"'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle" Premier concert de musique de chambre...premier incident":

> Pierre Boulez's *Structures*, played on two pianos by Olivier Messiaen and the composer himself, made the public restless—their patience has its legitimate limits! Having shown with some irony her surprise at such childishly hermetic music, a lady in the audience was borne down upon by the dodecaphonic shock troops who lead a violent punitive strike against her, necessitating the intervention of a policeman. (Baignères 1952:6).[26]

Everett Helm's account in the July 1952 *Musical America* was more even-handed:

> If one could not sense the basic mathematical formula and was not aware of the musical science in possession of the performers, he might have thought that they were playing the piano for the first time . . . About half way through, a woman in an orchestra seat, unable to contain herself any longer timidly cried "Bravo!" Instantly a husky youth in the back row leaped over several rows of seats and bore down menacingly upon the frightened woman. A section of the audience rose to its feet, and a policeman apprehended the youth, who received a blow from the woman's bag as he was being led out. The audience commented upon the incident excitedly, while the two performers, unperturbed, continued their counting and hammering. (1952:20)

What was the woman in the orchestra seat reacting to? Was it the sight of Messiaen, himself a well-known musical figure, and his young protégé playing together? Was it perhaps more than a coincidence that, as Dumur noted, the première took place at the Comédie des Champs Elysées, the setting in 1913 for the most infamous Parisian *succès de scandal* of all? Was this how, denied Stravinsky's cultural-capital-affirming codes, she was expected—and expected herself—to behave in such a place, thereby aligning herself with a distinguished tradition of Parisian concert hecklers including Leibowitz and Boulez himself in this same venue only a few years earlier?[27] She, like the other listeners discussed, was reacting fundamentally to the sound of the music she heard—to what Paul Attinello has called its "sonic violence" (2004:154)—and to the experience of being there at that particular time in that particular city. For her, the music found meaning in its performance and in her very physical reaction to it. When I asked Boulez in a recent interview about the incident he remarked with a smile "but of course she shouted out, this was what one did!" (Boulez 2003).

Seeing and being seen (and hearing and being heard, of course) were important aspects of what it meant to be avant-garde in Paris at this time, both for artists and for their publics. In this Parisian sense, avant-garde

implied not a denial of access, but an invitation to engage with society in contexts that were specifically public.[28] Intellectual and personal disputes—between Boulez and Leibowitz, Boulez and Messiaen, Nabokov and Leibowitz, Sartre and Camus—took place openly in the press. Such publicness explains in part why Sartre and Beauvoir worked in literary rather than conventional philosophical forms and why, as philosophers, they needed to be visible, writing at the café tables of Saint Germain-des-près. According to Beauvoir, Sartre even had a telephone line installed at Les Deux Magots. Beauvoir wrote in her memoirs of the public response to their work:

> A week never passed without the newspapers discussing us... In the streets, photographers fired away at us, and strangers rushed up to speak to us. At the Flore, people stared at us and whispered. When Sartre gave his lectures, so many people turned up that they couldn't all get into the lecture hall, there was a frenzied crush and some women fainted. (1965:38–39)

The implications of such a public reception context challenge the function of *Structures 1a* in a discourse that defends it as meaningless in any context outside of itself (or outside a modernist reading of "Éventuellement..."). Boulez emerges less as an icon of musical abstraction, at odds with real world concerns, than as a contemporary thinker understood by the intellectual left, at least, as having been actively engaged with them.

For Anglo-Americans, thinking within a tradition in which, to borrow from Hans Werner Henze's assessment of serial music, the intellectual has long been "a thing apart from life, better kept that way" (1982:49), the notion of Boulez's early serial avant-garde as such a public and interdisciplinary phenomenon is a paradox. Indeed, in a strictly modernist definition it makes no sense that *Structures 1a* should be performed at all, let alone have been premiered at an event of such known political consequence. The avant-garde aesthetic that defines Boulez at this stage of his career was very different from that of Darmstadt, IRCAM, and certain areas of the American university scene where Boulez's music would be "institutionalized," to borrow from Georgina Born, in an aesthetic of the new that sought to preserve the autonomy of the art work against the values of a society from which it had sought to alienate itself.[29] Yes, Boulez's early music was subversive, anti-bourgeois — the qualities so admired by Dumur in his review. But crucially, the challenge was perceived as coming from within the social orders that it meant to critique, hence the heckler's reaction to Boulez's aural subversion of the bourgeois values that Dumur saw as having been enshrined at the Comédie des Champs Elysées.

Re-Hearing *Structures 1a*

Helm's account of Boulez's *succès de scandale* focuses the attempts that have been made to distinguish between the two emerging methodological responses to this music—what Fred Lerdhal has called "compositional" and "listening grammars" (1988:231). The woman with the handbag behaved according to her own aural response, or "common sense," as Perle would say; like many since, the young man—a student of the Conservatoire, as *Le Figaro* noted—put his faith in the exegesis of "Éventuellement..."—in, as Helm reported, "the musical science in possession of the performers." Where she heard indeterminacy and chaos, following a "listening grammar," he looked to Boulez's "compositional grammar" and found order. Ligeti, too, in his article discussed above, countered the accusation of intellectualism in his analysis by suggesting that certain hierarchical features of the row are indeed aurally perceptible, notably the "homogeneity of the intervallic structure" (1958:37).[30]

We return here to Perle's methodological problem discussed at the beginning of this paper: *Structures 1a* just does not sound in performance like the archetype of integral serialism proposed in Boulez's formal analysis. In his critique of what Born calls the "cognitive opacity" (1995:318) of serial music, Lerdahl argues "it is of course possible to organize the combinations and sequences of individual rows on a hierarchical basis... But these higher-level hierarchies are extremely difficult to cognize in a hierarchical fashion" (1988:253). If we are honest with ourselves, can we really hear the kind of deep compositional-structural rationale we read in "Éventuellement..."?

According to Boulez, the answer is no, even given his encouraging advice in a letter to Cage to suggest to the pianist David Tudor (with whom Boulez gave the New York première of the work in November 1952) to "have some aspirin at the ready—I am doing the same—for *Structures* is not easy to listen to" (Nattiez 2002:229).[31] In closing "Éventuellement..." he anticipated the difficulties experienced in listening to his music, suggesting that "I mean no paradox when I say that the more complex the formal means, the less they are perceived intellectually by the listener" (1991:139). As if to reassure any remaining Doubting Thomases he went on:

> Even when one has analyzed a complex structure, it is a fact of experience that the best-made, and therefore least ostentatious, forms recombine when one hears them and once again defy the analytical spirit by submerging it. One cannot say so much of works that are consciously simple, and whose schematic design one perceives—in this case very much intellectually—precisely because it is predictable. (1991:139)

Complex forms are indeed present in the music, he says, but it is a quality of the work's value in performance—measured in the oddly functional terms "best-made, and therefore least ostentatious"; terms, moreover, that could just as well have been Nabokov's own—that prevents us from hearing them. If we do perceive the structural details of a work, as Ligeti tells us he can, then the work has failed.

McClary turns Boulez's logic against him, suggesting that *Structures 1a* failed as a sonic experiment because the music is just too discontinuous to be aurally understood. Its claimed total control of compositional parameters sounds like aleatoricism. Listening to Boulez and Cage side-by-side, she concludes in her *Conventional Wisdom* that

> to the ear the works of John Cage may not sound all that different from those rigorously ordered by means of combinatorial sets. Yet this is why Cage posed such a threat, for he presented the possibility that underneath the discontinuous surface there lurks... nothing at all. The container that had held the subject (even if we only knew that on faith) was now demonstrated to have no walls; moreover, its uncanny resemblance to those vessels we had taken to have depth also called them retrospectively into question. (2000:136).

Such an argument is problematic, not least because it both advances a critique that, as Georgina Born points out in her discussion of Lerdhal's psychoacoustic work, presumes certain universals of human perception (1995:318) and because it oversimplifies the nuance in the debate about indeterminacy in Boulez's early music and about his relationship to Cage.

For its first listeners, *Structures 1a* was an unknown. It set out to destabilize any remaining cognitive footholds of harmonic and rhythmic expectation, its aural strangeness urging listeners to rationalize it and to give it narrative form. But where Dumur attached his own leftist agenda to his hearing of the work, McClary uncritically accepts Boulez's ordered compositional system as her narrative of the work, shifting to a different perceptive "grammar"—essentially that of tonal music—to analyze the aural result. As M. J. Grant argues, mapping a predetermined compositional system onto the sound of the music—rational process onto irrational outcome—tends to muddy comprehension (2001:219). McClary's conclusion, like Ligeti's and Carroll's, hinges on a listening aesthetic that takes for granted our ability to hear structural (that is, compositional) development of the complexity of that in *Structures 1a.* Moreover, assumes that Boulez the theorist and Boulez the composer (not to mention Boulez the performer) were necessarily thinking along the same lines. Following with her tonally-trained ears the logic, if not the literal analysis, of "Éventuellement..." she cannot

but find Boulez's music wanting. Ironically, her argument functions comfortably within the model she set out to deconstruct.

But when we hear *Structures 1a* as a work whose ambition was to achieve "practical recognition" in a public context, the paradox that troubles McClary as between determinacy and indeterminacy—between Perle's "common sense" and Forte's analysis—becomes evidence not of the failure of this music, but of its success. As Grant argues, chance was a crucial aspect of Boulez's music, even at the time of the supposed total control of *Structures 1a* (2001: 131,154–56).[32] Our hearing of chaos in an apparently controlled musical space may be just the point: it is attack and dynamic—the most performance-contingent and, as Ligeti concedes, most compromising of the ostensibly compositional parameters that Boulez defines—that most obviously neutralize the forward-moving functions of pitch and rhythm. To recall Boulez's statement from the beginning of "Éventuellement...", it is these parameters that most effectively "expand [serial organization] into an integrated rhetoric." As Grant argues, if we "take into account that the 'rational' procedures of serialism were first employed to create an 'irrational', unforeseeable music... it follows that the method of pitch and duration ordering in *Structures 1a* is effectively irrational...[Serial technique] was a method of dissolving particular ties, so that others could come to the fore; its constraint was, not so paradoxically, its freedom" (154–56).

Rather than being understood as the apogee of Boulez's total serial phase (if, indeed, we can still say such a phase existed), *Structures 1a* might therefore be more usefully heard as anticipating a period of composition from the mid-1950s in which he was increasingly concerned with the role of the performer in the creative process.[33] In his 1955 article "A la limite du pays fertile (Paul Klee)"—according to Boulez the original and rejected title for *Structures 1a*[34]—he made clear his interest in "an imprecision that goes beyond the limits of notation":

> What the machine can do is at once much and little compared to the performer: measurable precision as against an imprecision that is impossible to note exactly...It is, above all, this irreducible margin of error which interests me, rather than the possibility of a definitive performance not subject to the fantasy or everyday inspiration of a human being. The disappearance of the performer would be nothing to get worked up about, if some part of the 'miraculous' in music did not go with him. Would this freedom so much desired by the composer in relation to his material get the better of him?...We may spare the nostalgia and avatars of a new 'total art work'. (1991:161)

In the Third Piano Sonata (1955–57) Boulez exercised such a level of performer freedom. The pianist—Boulez himself in the première at Darmstadt

in September 1957—is presented with more fragments of simultaneously sounding material on the page than is possible to play in one performance, and so must choose a particular sequence. Quite in keeping with the language invoked to describe *Structures 1a*, the performer is the "operator" of a set of choices that Boulez selected at the compositional stage (Boulez 1991:143–54). In this work and in more proto-typical form in the parameters of dynamic and attack in *Structures 1a*, Boulez empowered the performer as part of this creative process. He explored a level of compositional imprecision that could only be realized, only really make sense, under the conditions of controlled freedom of a performance. The apparent automatism of the compositional procedures revealed in "Éventuellement..." is not restrictive and opposed to the discontinuous aural effect that the lady with handbag so objected to, as McClary suggests. Rather, such discontinuity suggests Boulez's acknowledgement in 1952 of the limits of complex pre-compositional ordering in a work perhaps more suited for performance and listening than for Ligeti's "textbook example" analysis.

Making Serialism Dangerous Again

Exiled in Paris in the 1930s, Walter Benjamin wrote of the "dream city" imagined by Paul Ernest le Rattier, a *flâneur* and author of the utopian prose work *Paris n'existe pas* (1857): "[He] evokes a dream Paris", Benjamin suggested, "which he calls "false Paris"—as distinguished from the real one: "the purer Paris,... the truer Paris,... the Paris that doesn't exist" (1999:137). The post-war "Paris that doesn't exist" has taken many forms: in Vincente Minelli's *An American in Paris* (1951) Gene Kelly dances his way through a city unrecognizable as that which Beauvoir describes. And Audrey Hepburn in *Funny Face* (1957) falls in love with a dashing, roll-neck-sweatered philosopher who is far from the figure cut by Sartre himself. There is a similar reassuring nostalgia about Nabokov's post-war Paris that echoed with the neoclassicism of the pre-war salons doubtless known to Benjamin himself.

The "Paris that doesn't exist," the "dream Paris," is a placeless and timeless version of the city, constructed by the needs and critical agendas of those who dream it up. The Paris of much serial discourse is one other "dream city," a place similarly constructed by critical agendas. For its various institutional and political reasons, our discipline has so often sought to shield the young Boulez and his music from the extra-musical scandals and political complexities of the "real" time and place in which both developed. (As Benjamin continues, quoting Rattier, "The false Paris has the good taste to recognize that nothing is more useless or more immoral than a riot" [1999:138].) We know serial music as a totally controlled, "pure" music not

so much because Boulez suggests that we do, or because it autonomously demands that conclusion, but because in music such a condition is, to borrow again from Taruskin, "precisely what is necessary to clear space for such utopian visions of rational order as modern analysts propose" (1997:374). As Gary Tomlinson has debated in the pages of this journal, it is indeed "the act of close reading itself that carries with it the ideological charge of modernism" (1994:22).

The Paris première of *Structures 1a* represents a special moment of serial reception in which the sonic impact in performance of apparently abstract serial systems was understood independently of the utopian visions of our discipline. But what can Boulez's music mean today, if this historical moment and its underlying definition of the Parisian avant garde are so contextually contingent? Writing the year before Boulez's première, the realist in Sartre had foreseen the redundancy of even his own model of socio-musical *engagement*: "It is certain that modern music is shattering forms, breaking away from conventions, carving its own road, but to whom exactly does it speak of liberation? . . . [T]o a stale and genteel listener whose ears are blocked by an idealist aesthetic" (quoted in Carroll 2002:135).

Like Dumur's conservative Parisian audiences who found social distinction in Nabokov's programming of *The Rite of Spring*, we have become a discipline of "genteel listeners" to Boulez's early music (if, indeed, we really listen to it at all). Deaf to anything outside the reassuringly rational processes we read in the analysis of "Éventuellement...", we find comfort in the kind of idealism that was anathema to Sartre and to so many of his left-wing contemporaries present at the première in 1952. Even Sartre himself succumbed to his own prophecy. Remarking in her diary after attending one of Boulez's Domaine musical concerts in 1956, Beauvoir admitted that "we couldn't make head nor tail of it . . . we didn't know where to clap, but that didn't seem to bother anyone . . . Sartre felt quite piqued at finding himself out of things" (1965:455). In 1989, McClary more critically suggested the same. "By retreating from the public ear, avant-garde music has in some important sense silenced itself. Only to the tiny, dwindling community that shares its modernist definitions of the economy of prestige does the phenomenon make the slightest sense" (66).

To deny this music the cultural-political and aesthetic contexts she is rightly so keen to restore to other musics is to mishear it. Serial music like *Structures 1a,* she concludes, "retreated from the public ear." But I would like to suggest that it is perhaps through an emphasis on the public ear—the listening and performance space that resonated with so many of the needs and possibilities of Boulez's post-war Paris—that we might readmit its sensual impact and begin to make more sense of its paradoxes and chal-

lenges. If we are to experience the high modern repertoire differently, we need first of all to listen to it. Having listened, we should behave more like the Parisian lady with the handbag: we should be more critically vocal, both literally and, as Arnold Whittall has recently suggested (2004:82), in the methodological sense of Carolyn Abbate's "voice," examining our responses to the music, its commentaries, and the theoretical premises of our own discipline in terms that acknowledge the connectedness of each. There was, of course, no single "real Paris" (hence the need for so many inverted commas), but a network of competing discourses that reconnect in this way to evoke a complex historical period that is all the more "real" for its confusion, disorder and riots.[35] Abbate urges us to make music dangerous again—and as the Parisian reactions to Boulez's music attest, serial music sounds perhaps more dangerous than most: "[Music] brings an ambiguous comfort. Far from being a refuge from worldly questions of meaning, it is the beast in the closet; seemingly without any discursive sense, it cries out the problems inherent in critical reading" (Abbate 1991:xv).

In his editorial "Rethinking the Century" in the final 1999 issue of *Musical Quarterly*, Leon Botstein reflected on millennial anxiety and how we had defined the cultural paradigm shifts of the last century:

> Simply because the year 2000 will come and go does not entitle us to consider the twentieth century—if it constitutes a coherent era—to have come to an end... A decisive turn of events may yet take place that in retrospect will serve as the proper demarcation between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. Let us hope that the break is not as violent and catastrophic as World War I. (145)

Botstein could not have anticipated the tragic irony of his words, read now in the new century that, from his desk in the old, must have seemed somehow beyond the uncertainties of the era whose needs had shaped Boulez's generation. Neither could he have guessed at how close to the beginning of the literal new century the "decisive turn of events" might be. As we continue to adjust to a world post-September 11, an era of new uncertainties and new needs, the time indeed seems right for us to quit the refuge of serial analysis to rethink as a discipline how musicians of the early Cold War responded to the forced revelations of their time. Boulez's call to his readers in 1952 for musicians to not be "USELESS" can rarely have appeared so contemporary or more necessary.

Notes

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1. "Let us state, in our turn, that any musician who has not experienced—I do not say understood, but truly experienced—the necessity of dodecaphonic language is USELESS. For his entire work brings him up short of the needs of his time" (Boulez 1952d:115). Translated by Stephen Walsh (Boulez 1991). For reasons of context, this extract has been quoted in its original French. Hereafter English translations are given in the main text. Unless otherwise indicated, page references to Boulez's early writings refer to the current English translations by Stephen Walsh, collected in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship* (Boulez 1991). The original French citations are given in the reference list under Boulez, Pierre.

2. Translated in the current English version as "Possibly..." See Boulez (1991:111–40).

3. See Brody (1993) for a discussion of Babbitt's scientific meta-language.

4. It is no coincidence that the other work most commonly used as an introduction to serial processes is Messiaen's proto-serial *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités* (1949), whose first edition also included an analytical guide by its composer.

5. The language of faith has been important in Boulez scholarship. For Boulez, at a private salon performance conducted by Leibowitz in 1945, listening to Schoenberg for the first time was "a revelation...that marked [him] for life." Messiaen remembers Boulez's "conversion of immense passion" to twelve-note methods (Peyser 1977:31); Peter Heyworth says that Schoenberg "came to [Boulez] as a revelation" (Heyworth [1973] 1986:10). Describing what he calls Boulez's "vision of history" Jean-Jacques Nattiez proposes "we might say that Boulez needed only a very short time (somewhere between 1945 and 1950) *to receive the revelation* of what the evolution of twentieth-century music meant" (1990:21; emphasis added).

6. Susan McClary puts the situation in the following terms, although, as discussed later in this paper, she arrives at a pessimistic conclusion about meaning in this music: "Beneath these surfaces that seem to attest radical decentering, the serialists found a way of ensuring the continued presence of centered subjectivity. In pieces by Boulez or Babbitt, we know (because we are told, because we know how to analyze scores) that an idiosyncratic but rigorously integrated subject controls the events, however incoherent they may sound. Thus the urgency of set theory and analysis" (2000:136).

7. Paul Griffiths, among many, suggests the same: "to Boulez it might have appeared that abstention from politics was necessary in order for him to bring about the musical revolution" (1995:7).

8. Nabokov's assessment can be found in a letter to Robert Craft dated March 22, 1946. See Carroll (2003:13).

9. See Carroll (2003: 177–85) for full details of the festival program.

10. Boulez's abstract was published in *Musical Quarterly* (Boulez 1952a) as "Transformation: Arts, Communication, Environment" (Boulez 1952b). See Boulez's letters to John Cage in Nattiez (2002:176;177–82).

11. See example 3 in "Éventuellement..." (Boulez 1952d:117).

12. "Si une exposition de la musique a un sens et un vertu, c'est de contrebattre désespoir et découragement. ..Les idéologues totalitaires... ne peuvent diminuer d'un pouce les chefs-d'œuvres qui parlent pour eux-mêmes – et pour la civilisation dont ils sont nés" (Nabokov

1952:8).

13. "...des textes serviles, le style le plus plat, et des lignes de conduite 'racistes' et des esthétiques 'progressistes' manifestent imaginées pour faire désespérer de la race humaine et du progrès artistique" (Nabokov 1952:8).

14. "D'entraîner les auditoires du XXe siècle vers les musiques du XXe siècle—c'est là une tâche, et peut-être la plus urgente, qui incombe maintenant aux musiciens, aux organisateurs, aux éducateurs. Beaucoup sont conscients de cette tâche. Ainsi Hindemith a tenté, non sans succès, de rapprocher les amateurs de musique des œuvres de leurs temps: en tenant compte dans son esthétique de compositeurs des nouvelles conditions de la vie musicale" (Nabokov 1952:8).

15. Nabokov treats Bartók in a similar way. National folk music becomes the music of everyman, its non-Westerness "othered" to the point that it envoices a universal human experience. See Nabokov (1952:8).

16. Boulez is notoriously silent on political matters, stressing his concern for the revolution of musical, rather than explicitly political, institutions. Doubtless referring to his Conservatoire classmate Serge Nigg, Boulez has put the situation as he remembers it facing young composers: "Very early on, differences began to appear among us, stemming from the fact that some refused, in the name of humanism and the need to communicated with others, to advance further into territory where they might risk not being understood—an ideology that filled me with horror, and that appeared to me above all to serve as a screen for conformity" (Boulez 1990:7). He remembers attempts by Jean-Paul Sartre, Leibowitz and others to find a middle ground between socio-political responsibility and a commitment to artistic development (known in France as engagement) as not only ill-advised, but also embarrassing (Boulez 2003). Yet aspects of his own musical background were fundamentally connected to these ways of thinking. Often overlooked in accounts of Boulez's contemporary dispute with Leibowitz is the influence of Leibowitz's involvement with the Sartre circle after the war and the explicitly anti-Communist (although that is not to say pro-American) politics behind his reading of the Schoenberg School. It may be that Nabokov's decision to program a work by Boulez over Leibowitz himself was a point of personal politics, particularly given their disagreement over Leibowitz's Stravinsky article in *Partisan Review*.

17. Certainly Boulez's critique of what we might call Nigg's "socialist serialism" becomes all the more defensive for such political associations.

18. As Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh argue: "paradoxically, the very treatment of these contexts as explanatory factors in understanding musical texts can reinforce the tendency to privilege the text itself. What is lost here is any sense of the dialectical relationship between acts of musical communication on the one hand and political, economic and cultural power-relations on the other" (2000:5).

19. See especially Beevor and Cooper (1994).

20. "follement acclamé" (Dumur 1952:1)

21. "...l'on se perd à imaginer comment les souvenirs revenaient en lui ; comment il avait retrouvé ce pays qui lui avait été si longtemps le sien, avant que la guerre...l'avait définitivement arraché à la France et à l'Europe" (Dumur 1952:1).

22. "Et l'on aurait souhaité, entre autres choses, qu'une place plus importante fût accordée à l'école dodécaphoniste dont les œuvres, tant de Berg, de Schoenberg ou de Webern, que des jeunes compositeurs, sont encore trop ignorées du public français" (Dumur 1952:1). There is an irony, of course, in Dumur's case for the more prominent inclusion of twelve-note

music. As Clement Greenberg and the New York Intellectuals group argued at the time, radical art of this kind was subversive only so long as it was critically distanced from bourgeois acceptance. See especially Broddy (1993).

23. "La veille, il avait tenu à entendre l'œuvre pour deux pianos du plus original des jeunes compositeurs français, Pierre Boulez, qui interprétait ses *Structures* avec Olivier Messiaen dont les élèves avaient sifflé, au lendemain de la guerre, des œuvres récentes de Strawinsky, jugées par eux trop académiques" (Dumur 1952:1).

24. "Ainsi va le temps. Ainsi va la veille Europe. Puisque c'est d'elle qu'il s'agit" (Dumur 1952:3). The resonances with Boulez's own later modernist declaration are striking: "I believe that a civilisation which tends towards conservatism is a declining civilization because it is afraid to go forward and ascribes more importance to its memories than to its future. Strong, expanding civilizations have no memory: they reject, they forget the past. They feel strong enough to be destructive because they know they can replace what has been destroyed. . . . The French Revolution decapitated statues in churches; one may regret this now, but it was proof of a civilization on the march. When people will even collect the least knickerbocker-button from the eighteenth century that is something I personally find profoundly distasteful" (Boulez 1976:33).

25. "En temps normal, en des circonstances ordinaires, ce festival de musique n'aurait intéressé que les musicologues, les élèves du Conservatoire et les snobs, qui sont les habituels auditeurs des concerts. Ni *l'Humanité*, ni *Combât*, ni *Le Figaro* n'auraient pris partie dans l'affaire. Le malaise vient d'ailleurs" (Dumur 1952:3)

26. "*Les Structures* de Pierre Boulez, interprétées à deux pianos par Olivier Messiaen et l'auteur, avaient mis en fuite le public dont la patience à toute de même des limites légitimes. Une spectatrice ayant prématurément manifesté avec quelque ironie sa surprise devant une musique aussi puérilement hermétique, les troupes de choc dodécaphonistes les dirigèrent contre elle une violente expédition punitive qui nécessita l'intervention rapide de la garde municipale" (Baignères 1952:6).

27. See Jameux (1991:15) and Peyser (1976:33).

28. So much was the avant garde part of public life that in 1952 *Elle* magazine even devoted its April issue to the pressing question of what the style-conscious Parisienne should wear to the Congress' music festival the following month, although she would doubtless have been more likely to attend the more main-line Stravinsky concerts than Boulez's première.

29. Even today, Boulez enjoys an authority and presence in cultural-political life in Continental Europe that jars with what British and American scholars expect of their avant garde icons. Disciplinary reaction to his momentary arrest in Switzerland on suspicion of international terrorism following the September 11 attacks is a startling case-in-point. See Parsons (2003:161–62).

30. In prime form, the frequency of the interval vector 11, lack of 8 and all intervals below 6, the placing of 6 at the end of the row and symmetrically placed 7s; the lack of intervals below 7 in inversion.

31. "Dis bonjour à David Tudor . . . qu'il se prepare quelque cahets d'asprine – j'en fais autant de mon côté- car les "Structures" ne sont vraiment pas commodes.' (Letter to Cage dated '2 Sept. [1952]', crossed out and corrected by Boulez to '2 Nov.', No. 42 in Nattiez [2002:229]).

32. As Boulez wrote to Cage at about the time he composed *Structures 1a*, "I believe chance should be extremely controlled: by using tables in general, or series of tables, I believe that it would be possible to direct the phenomenon of the automatism of chance, whether written

down or not . . . For after all, in the interpolation and interferences of different series, there is already quite enough of the unknown." ("Je crois que . . . le hazard doit être très contrôlé: en se servant des tableaux en général, ou des séries de tableaux je crois qu'on peut arriver à diriger le phénomène de l'automatisme du hazard, écrit ou non . . . Car finalement dans les interpolations et les interférences des différentes séries, il y a déjà suffisament d'inconnu.") (Letter to Cage dated "postérieure au 28 novembre 1951", No. 36 in Nattiez [2002:193].) Piencikowski sums up the issue well: "if Cage meant to provide time spans within which each sound event is free to occur in coexistence with its environment, Boulez meant to define a functional space through the sound objects destined to evolve within it" (2002:52).

33. It was also during this time that he began conducting and founded the Domaine musical concert series.

34. See Boulez (1975:69–70).

35. The city described in sources by Sartre, Beauvoir, Dumur and others was no less a narrative coloured by critical and political agendas as was serialism. Any historical contextualization necessitates an understanding of the interconnectedness of the different versions. The crucial point in contextualizing musical meaning, suggests Lawrence Kramer, is accordingly "to uphold the semantic end, but in terms that incorporate the autonomous one; to acknowledge the historical, ideological, functional importance of the experience of autonomy in the context of a view in which the primary term is contingency. I want to take autonomy seriously by finding its indispensable place in the network of indispensably contingent practices" (2002:5)

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