

LABYRINTHUS: HIC HABITAT MUSICA

Ergodic Scores of the postwar *Avant-Garde*

N. Andrew Walsh

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BEFORE COMPLETION.

Success.

But if the little fox, after nearly
completing the crossing,
Gets his tail in the water,
There is nothing that would further.

無攸利
濡其利
小狐汔濟
亨
未濟

Foreword

THE PRESENT STUDY examines a particular phenomenon of the postwar *avant-garde* that we hold to represent a momentous evolution in the arts that has, in the ensuing decades, nevertheless eluded alike the formal description of the theorist, the judicious eye of the historian, the inquiry of the analyst, and the acclamation of fame. It is our judgment, in investigation of its most salient artifacts, that the cause of this neglect—a neglect that has, in the present day, consigned much of its most compelling achievements to the shadows of obscurity—lies in the inexplicability of its aesthetic and theoretical foundations: for the principles of the phenomenon that we here denote as the *ἔργον* in music—of those scores we identify as not possessing the characteristics of a *notated* score, but which are nevertheless understood as “music”—are fundamentally different from those of the music of the common practice as it is conventionally taught in the schools or presented in concerts of the Western classical tradition. Absent a formal description, the scores that so compel the attention of the musician or the admiration of the philosopher remain forever only understood as an *experiment*: as the results of blind searching or improvised play unworthy of a place of honor among the serious and noteworthy accomplishments of the twentieth century. It is the aim of the present study to correct this deficit in our understanding of the arts: to establish the art of “graphic scores” as an aesthetic enterprise worthy of the name.

The *ἔργον* in music, built upon unfamiliar foundations and employing different faculties for its exercise or study, does not submit to description in the familiar terms of musicological discourse: for although it is not here argued to be *superior to* or *an advancement of* the musical arts, to understand the *ἔργον* in music with the same intuitive comprehension that the musician understands the conventional principles of aesthetic expression in the Western arts will require the extension and enlargement of the faculties beyond those taught in normal studies. We submit, as a fundamental principle for the study of the object at hand, that no second-order, textual description of the phenomenon will suffice (although it is necessary) for the understanding we seek: it is necessary, if the diligent student or ambitious musician seeks to command the principles of ergodic scores with the same mastery one might possess over the music of the common practice, that *direct experience* of those principles and the manner of their operation is required.

It is for this reason, that the following study is itself an example of the principles it describes: in its design and the manner of its unfolding as a musicological study, it is conceived to place the *user* of the text into direct experience of ergodic principles. These principles are unfamiliar to the discipline, and intentionally place the user into a reading experience that

is unsafe: contrary to the conventionally written text or dispassionately argued debate, the user of this text will be placed, throughout the course of its exposition, into situations where nontrivial interaction with the text is required, and the potential for failure is tangible. Portions of this text, though they may be printed and bound in a familiar codex format, may be inaccessible, or incomprehensible, without effort on the part of the user. It is unexpected, and perhaps undesirable or frustrating, to have the conventions and privileges to which a reader is accustomed thwarted by the text, thus by an author at a distant remove.

The chapters in Part I, addressing the foundations of the *ἔργον* in music, characterize an ergodic artifact—in the present study a musical score, but the text of the study itself as well—as an *intrigue*: it is a proposition the acceptance of which both entails assumption of the attendant dangers and the success in the undertaking of which rewards the diligent user with attainments not otherwise accessible. We decline, at the threshold of the *labyrinth*, to enumerate the various dangers that lie within: for it is inherent to the undertaking that many of the difficulties and challenges of the text that must be overcome must also be encountered unexpectedly. It is nevertheless prudent, at this early stage of the text, to provide the user with some brief guidance on its use and structure.

User's Guide

The present study investigates a phenomenon of the postwar *avant-garde* that remains imperfectly addressed in the extant literature, lacking in rigorous formal description as well as theoretical foundations. Its artifacts function within a system of aesthetic exchange located outside the familiar dimensions of acoustic “content” or communication of meaning through relations of symbolic reference, and have thus proven resistant to analysis premised on these terms: it is the intent of the present study, to propose an analytical apparatus sufficient to provide description in formal terms, but furthermore to deduce from concrete examples more general statements that might supply the diligent musician not only an adequate description of historical repertoire *post facto*, but furthermore with the necessary means to approach any example of the art secure in their faculties toward its realization, apprised of its hazards, and confident of success in the endeavor.

It is necessary, in reflections upon an object of study, to present examples of the object itself: and as the locus of the aesthetic exchange we here denote as *ergodic* transpires noematically, the noematic process is induced by the text in the course of its reading. The user of the text is confronted with the essential features of the ergodic exchange, enumerated in §2.2, comprising *aporia*, *participation*, and a relationship between the participants characterized as the *Intrigant* and *Intriguée*. We describe these features in detail in the following sections, but it is nevertheless desirable to state here, as a hazard for which the reader should be prepared, that traversal of the text necessarily will encounter sections requiring nontrivial effort to read, and that some of which nevertheless will remain inaccessible. This descends logically

from the principle of participation: the user is obliged to make decisions in the traversal and production of the text that entail manifest consequences for the use of the text itself, one of which is its own accessibility. The relationship between the participants is consequently not of the form of conventional rhetoric, by which an author determines the form and content of a text passively received by a reader, but an explicitly less-hierarchical relationship that transpires between the one presenting the intrigue—the Intrigant—and the participants who assume the intrigue—the *Intriguée*, who may also be multiple and include the Intrigant—in which the terms of the intrigue are in the form of a proposition, to be accepted or not, but the choice in doing so remaining a shared, participatory one.

We decline to enumerate the various means by which the text induces these experiences, or otherwise deviates from the conventions of scholarly discourse: for it is likewise a feature of the ergodic exchange, that the features by which it transpires are unknowable in advance. This destabilizing effect, in which the user is confronted with unfamiliar situations for which the familiar counsels of habit or tradition are unable to provide guidance, is necessarily a part of the expansion of the faculties in æsthetic play: the philosopher of æsthetics describes this phenomenon as the unleashing of “force,” the corollary to the known faculties that the user employs in negotiating familiar interactions by practiced, commonly understood means.¹ It is sufficient to describe the general plan of the present study only in its outline to provide a sense of the underlying logic governing its construction.

The theoretical foundations of the *ἔργον* in music, as they rest on different premises than those that govern the music of the common practice, serve both as the identifier of its most salient artifacts and the prescriptive outline of the means of analysis: it is thus necessary and salutary to establish these foundations concretely and succinctly, both in their enumeration and in the argumentation that justifies them. Once established, this apparatus implicitly identifies the most prominent agents of its history, and provides a means of analyzing its exemplary artifacts. These parallel courses of investigation—history and analysis—proceed through several “stations,” which are arranged in the latter case according to the sequence of decision lines of the final hexagram, “Not Yet Complete,” of the YĪJĪNG, itself an example of the *ἔργον* in literature. We decline to assert definitively, whether the decisions of the oracular text preceding each analytical chapter bear any thematic relationship to the object of immediate inquiry. The historical chapters are neither chronological in their ordering in the text, nor in the order in which they were originally written, nor entirely according to the ordering of the associated analytical chapters. It is unnecessary at this point to enumerate or describe the individual chapters, as the diligent user of this text may readily discover this from the Table of Contents.

We provide finally one admonition regarding the use of the text: as will become readily apparent, one analytical chapter has been encrypted, and will need to be decrypted and

¹ See Christof Menke, *Force: A Fundamental Concept of Aesthetic Anthropology*, trans. Gerrit Jackson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

subsequently deciphered, before it can be read. The deciphering table is provided, along with information instructing the interested user in the means of both processes, in Appendix B; but for the first part of the process a supplementary code-book will be required for completion. This book has been printed only in limited numbers, and is otherwise available only on loan from the author. Without it, that chapter will remain inaccessible.

Names of individuals from societies in which the family name precedes the given one—among which are Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; but also Hungarian and others—are rendered in the text in their traditional order; excepted are those individuals who adopted or are commonly known by the opposite name order, for whatever reason. This distinction will be indicated by rendering the family name in all-caps per common practice. Japanese long vowels are rendered with a macron when transliterating Japanese terms, names, or locations, but not in rendering English translations (such as “Tokyo Bay,” which is an English-language place-name); Chinese transliterations follow the pinyin system without exception, even in cases—such as the YIJING, which is usually rendered “I Ching” according to the now-obsolete Wade-Giles system—for which a different transliteration standard is more common. Such variance of transliteration will be noted in the first instance in the text. Diacriticals of all types are preserved in their native language, but omitted in cases where a common English spelling exists. Chinese text uses traditional characters without exception.

There remain a few other dangers in the text, but we leave it as an exercise for the reader to discover and overcome them.

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2 See Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese women artists in New York* (Rutgers University Press, 2005).

notes and sources for much of the related research. The MoMA Archive in Queens, New York, and Dedalus Fellow Naomi Kuromiya who arranged for viewing appointments on very short notice, was instrumental in examining some of the early materials in the New York *avant-garde*. Alan Akers and Gregory MacAyeal of the McCormick Library at Northwestern University Libraries provided materials from Ono's *9 Concert Pieces for John Cage*. Lastly, Prof. SEN Uesaki of Keio University Art Center in Tokyō, archivist of the Sōgetsu Center, provided supplementary archival materials from Ono's performances in Japan following her return there in the early 1960s, as well as an early version of her essay, "The Word of a Fabricator." Also relevant to the study of the early Fluxus movement was the work of La Monte Young, whose materials were held at the time in the archives of the MELA Foundation, in Young's Dream House in Tribeca, New York: Rob Ward, curator of the Dream House, was instrumental both in obtaining some access to those materials, as well as entrusting the author to oversee the Dream House for many long periods during the New York residency, providing a direct, first-hand encounter with that installation.

For the study of John Cage, several sources were of great value: the Archives West of the University of Washington and the archives of the Cornish School, both in Seattle, provided materials on Cage's early biography and relating to his encounters with Mark Tobey and other figures of the *avant-garde* in Seattle of 1940. Mark Tobey, one of the signal figures in Cage's early development as a composer, spent much of his time immediately prior to his encounter with Cage in Seattle at Dartington Hall, Devonshire, England, and on a tour of China and Japan—an early insinuation of the traditional arts of the Far East into those of the American *avant-garde*, less thoroughly studied in Cage's biographies—; and the Devon Archives were greatly helpful in providing copies of Tobey's papers, both from his time at Dartington Hall and during this signal event in his own artistic development. For Cage's subsequent work in New York, and for providing access to many of the New York contacts, Jonathan Hiam—Curator, American Music Collection and The Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts—was generous both of his time and his expertise. Laura Kuhn, of the John Cage Trust, provided supplementary materials from the holdings of the John Cage Trust including archival ephemera from performances of VARIATIONS III, as well as counsel on subsequent materials and sources.

The Fluxus movement was represented in Europe primarily through the work of Ben Patterson, bassist, who remained active around Wiesbaden—the city of the first FluxFest in Germany in 1962—and provided valuable insights on Fluxus in the United States and Europe over the course of several e-mail exchanges before his death. The *avant-garde* in Germany was more substantially carried by the new-music institutions surrounding Cologne, and research into these events was undertaken with the advice and support of Gisela Gronemeyer-Oehlschlägel, who hosted the author during several research visits to the city, and provided source materials for many particulars of its history. Additionally, Mary Bauermeister graciously received the author for a visit in her home, and gave personal recollections of her time with Karl-

heinz Stockhausen in the early 1960s. A former student of Stockhausen's, Michael von Biel, presently lives in Tübingen, and likewise told of his experiences in the chaotic artists' *milieu* of the Kölner Kurse für Neue Musik in which he took part. Additional materials relating to these courses was provided by the archives of the City of Cologne, which house the records of the Rheinische Musikschule. Amy C. Beal, who interviewed Gisela Gronemeyer and Uli Oehlschlägel regarding the underground scene in Cologne of the early 1970s, also provided her notes and transcripts from those sessions. Max Nyffeler and Walter Zimmermann, both also active in Cologne at the time, provided interviews and materials from their own collections. The Stockhausen Stiftung Archive very generously provided access to the original scores and sketches for PLUS MINUS, as well as some of Stockhausen's notebooks from the time. Ingo Ahmels provided extensive personal recollections of the work of Hans Otte and Radio Bremen, and Dr. Werner Grünzweig, Director of the Music Archives of the Akademie der Künste Berlin, was solicitous in providing access to the archive of Johannes Fritsch, instrumental in the study of the Feedback Studio in 1970. Cornelius Schwehr and Ming Tsao were both extremely helpful in providing access to manuscripts and drafts of their respective versions of PLUS MINUS.

Roman Haubenstock-Ramati's first concerts in Donaueschingen, and the exhibition he presented there in 1959, are poorly documented; but the archives of Universal Edition, and the Donaueschinger Musiktage both retained some ephemera from the event, and Südwestfunk in Baden-Baden, underwriters of the festival, retain several archives of documentary material, including photographs of the rehearsals, performances, and exhibition. Katja Kaiser, archivist at Universal Edition, provided copies of correspondence and other materials related to the exhibition, and was helpful in providing additional information from Haubenstock-Ramati's time as an editor for UE's new-music division. Sabine Franz, of ensemble recherche in Freiburg, provided contacts in Vienna for the Ariadne Galerie; Jakob Ullman, Gerhard Brunner, and Carol Morgan all provided extensive information regarding Haubenstock-Ramati's work and music. Beat Furrer and Uli Fussenegger both provided extensive materials and testaments of their numerous performances of Haubenstock-Ramati's scores, and the archives of ORF and the Semper Depot provided additional materials from the performance of KONSTELLATIONEN in 2010. Heidy Zimmermann and the staff of the Paul-Sacher-Stiftung in Basel were generous and solicitous in providing access to the archival holdings of Haubenstock-Ramati's sketches, scores, and personal correspondence.

Most interesting for the curious student of the postwar *avant-garde* were the Tübinger Musiktage, which serve as an analogue to the Donaueschinger Musiktage: comparable in esteem and prestige, forgotten by everyone. Udo Rauch, Archivist of the City of Tübingen, generously assisted in researching the city's holdings of this consequential but obscure festival. Likewise, the work of Werner Meyer-Eppeler, instrumental in the development of Information Theory in Germany, has passed into neglect; but his papers, in the archives of the Akademie der Künste in Berlin, are a valuable source of information on the early development of electronic

music and the theoretical underpinnings of the Information Age; Petra Gunder was greatly solicitous of her time and expertise in researching the archive's holdings.

The Center for Creative and Performing Arts at the State University of New York at Buffalo was a signal institution in the American *avant-garde*, and the records of its various activities are housed in the diverse archive holdings of the city. John Bewley, PhD, archivist and Associate Librarian at the University at Buffalo Music Library was greatly helpful in retrieving information surrounding Maryanne Amacher's two large-scale projects in Buffalo during her residency. The Buffalo Historical Society was very helpful in providing materials and contacts for research into the early history of the city, the 1903 Pan-American Exposition, and of the Albright-Knox Gallery. Julia Logothetis, daughter of the composer, provided many contacts and personal anecdotes to illuminate the life and work of her father, as well as insights into the commissioning and broadcast of *ΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΕΙΣ* by Saarländischer Rundfunk.

Countless younger performers and composers have provided insights into their own work with graphic scores, providing the interested student of the *ἐργαδός* in music with a living repertoire and invigorating a previously neglected practice as an ongoing and vital art form. Theresa Sauer has continued the work of John Cage, compiling and presenting a broad survey of the present state of the art.³

The preparation of the text in Part VIII was aided by the salutary and rigorous counsels of Bruce Schneier, developer of the Solitaire Cipher and expert in cryptography. Michael Brunnbauer, programmer, provided the essential programming expertise to prepare the text.

Early drafts of the present study were prepared with the aid and counsel of Sarah Kristen Williams, who undertook the challenge of reading the text in its preliminary form and greatly assisted in its improvement.

Professor Dr. Andreas Meyer and Dr. Paul Attinello, advisers over the course of the present study, recommended many improvements to the text in both its form and content, refining the arguments and clarifying the insights deduced from them, and assisted in preparing it for submission to the Staatliche Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart, which institution provided the author with the existential foundation upon which these investigations were carried out. The Institut für Musikwissenschaft und Musikpädagogik and the Fakultät I der Staatlichen Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart generously provided financing for the printing of the first edition.

Lastly and most meaningfully, the work of the present study over its many years of research and reflection would not have been possible without the support of family and friends; and most of all Yiran Zhao (趙怡然): who more than any other kept the author steadfast and upright on the path of his own *labyrinth* until he reached the heart of it and finally, at long last, found his way home again.

We have forearmed the user with means sufficient to traverse the text.

3 See Theresa Sauer, *Notations 21*, 1st ed., ed. Buzz Poole (New York, NY: Mark Batty Publishers, 2009).