

Presenting the New: Battles around New Music in
New York in the Seventies

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

David Grayson, Adviser

December 2012

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Acknowledgements

One of the best things about reaching the end of this process is the opportunity to publicly thank the people who have helped to make it happen. More than any other individual, thanks must go to my wife, who has had to put up with more of my rambling than anybody, and has graciously given me half of every weekend for the last several years to keep working. Thank you, too, to my adviser, David Grayson, whose steady support in a shifting institutional environment has been invaluable. To the rest of my committee: Sumanth Gopinath, Kelley Harness, and Richard Leppert, for their advice and willingness to jump back in on this project after every life-inflicted gap. Thanks also to my mother and to my kids, for different reasons.

Thanks to the staff at the New York Public Library (the one on 5th Ave. with the lions) for helping me track down the SoHo Weekly News microfilm when it had apparently vanished, and to the professional staff at the New York Public Library for Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, and to the Fales Special Collections staff at Bobst Library at New York University. Special thanks to the much smaller archival operation at the Kitchen, where I was assisted at various times by John Migliore and Samara Davis. Thank you to Richard Wandel at the New York Philharmonic Archive for his help.

The Graduate Research Partnership Program and departmental travel grant programs helped facilitate my travel to New York. Once I got there, I enjoyed the hospitality and company of friends. Thanks to Pijus Virketis and Katherine Kwok, Ashley Nail and Marshall Moseley, and Tomoko Shannon and Michael Ippolito for putting me up and putting up with me around my stints in libraries and archives.

Abstract

The 1970s often vanish between a “long Sixties” and a “long Eighties.” Their historiographic disappearing act disguises the fact that they were a time of substantial change in the United States—culturally, politically, economically...and musically. “Presenting the New” traces the intersection of material circumstances and artistic production in New York, home to most of the Seventies’ trends in new music. Through Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, I conduct a music-sociological examination of the presentation of “new” music in Manhattan. The use of field theory usefully complicates simple Uptown-Downtown narratives by including the “Midtown” institutions of Lincoln Center and examining overlapping constituencies and attempts by agents of all allegiances to expand their geographic and cultural presence.

The paper follows the activities of various figures in New York between 1968 and 1980. Pierre Boulez brought European modernism with him as the new music director of the New York Philharmonic before his eventual, ambivalent departure for IRCAM (and replacement by Zubin Mehta). Charles Wuorinen and Henry Sollberger’s Group for Contemporary Music traded Columbia for the Manhattan School of Music, striving to maintain operations despite shifting support. Steve Reich and Philip Glass moved from presenting process minimalism in SoHo’s lofts and galleries to performing at major venues both “classical” and “rock.” Meredith Monk carved and maintained a particular niche from the intersection of multiple media. The Kitchen—SoHo’s premiere venue for video and performance art—became orderly alongside its neighborhood, growing from impromptu video nights to institutionalized festivals.

Along the way, these artists adjusted their modes of presentation to suit their changing audiences and goals. They also adjusted them to the shape of the field of cultural production, which, like the general social and political field, grew increasingly fragmented over the course of the Seventies. From a largely dualistic battle between adherents of Babbitt and Cage, the struggle to define new music shifted to small, loose associations of composers with myriad aesthetic practices. As the essential questions defining the field of new music multiplied, the definition of “new music” itself changed, losing its distinction from both popular and historical practices.

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CHAPTER ONE:
The War That Nobody Won

The era seems to have accomplished nothing worth remembering, and nothing remains except the stuff of harmless nostalgia—nostalgia nourished by the remoteness and apparent insignificance of those years. This impression could hardly be more wrong.
—Bruce J. Schulman¹

The Seventies were a mess in the United States. For all the cultural tumult of the Sixties, the economy had remained sound. In the next decade, the political and cultural convulsions continued, exacerbated by the ebb and eventual fade of the long postwar economic boom. The Seventies began with U.S. military disasters in Vietnam and ended with Americans held hostage in Tehran. In between, the Steel Belt rusted, a president resigned in scandal, and “stagflation” entered the national vocabulary. The Seventies were hardly a bright moment in the nation’s history.

They were, though, a pivotal one. Activists and politicians in the Sixties had operated under notions of universal citizenship in the context of persistent economic growth. Their fight was for an equitable division of a growing pie, but also for its shape, a battle for “what comes next?” In the Seventies, it became clear that the pie would not grow indefinitely. Politicians and activists were suddenly fighting not for equitable division, but for their own slices. “What comes next?” gained a tacit qualifier: “for us.” And the “us” was no longer the country as a whole.

Few places demonstrate the dissolution of the Sixties’ universal concerns as well as New York City. With its long history of both capitalism and liberalism, the city carried postwar American trends—positive and negative—to excess. New York hit the deepest troughs of the Seventies earlier and harder than the country as a whole, and, under Ed

¹ *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press), xii.

Koch, somewhat anticipated Ronald Reagan and the nation in emerging from them. The struggles within the city in the Seventies were bitter, pitting evolving constituencies against each other first for unsustainable municipal largesse, then for the scraps left under austerity. By the Seventies' end, the resource scramble had drifted into the private sector.

New music in the Seventies underwent similar changes, most of them apparent in the cultural hothouse of New York. In 1969, Richard Kostelanetz could write a two part series titled "Milton Babbitt and John Cage: Parallels and Paradoxes" for *Stereo Review* and frame it as the singular debate in the compositional world, an American inheritance of the earlier generation's "Stravinsky or Schoenberg."² Some version of serialism or some version of indeterminacy seemed poised to become the "next" thing. That sense of a dualistic split was, of course, already being challenged in the Sixties by groups like Fluxus. Over the course of the Seventies, a plethora of styles and procedures sprang into existence, many of them within the confines of Manhattan's "Downtown." Minimalism and performance art proved among the most enduring of these new styles, but neither threatened to become the singular language of new music for the future. Just as important as the dissolution of any stylistic hegemony (even a duopoly) was the increased diversity of presenting organizations. Artists found ways to move beyond inherited models of musical performance and transmission, founding their own institutions and distributing their music without intermediaries. Meanwhile, large institutions like the New York Philharmonic were forced, just as government was, to adapt to circumstances in which their inherited authority was worth less and less.

² Richard Kostelanetz, "Milton Babbitt and John Cage: Parallels and Paradoxes," *Stereo Review*. The first piece, on Babbitt, appears on pages 60-69 of the April 1969 issue. The second, on Cage, appears on pages 61-69 of the May 1969 issue.

So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark—that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.

—Hunter S. Thompson³

What use is periodization? Especially in cases lacking explicit endpoints, the utility of closing a period is questionable—Raoul Duke’s high water marks are never better than metaphorical shorthand. Change seldom obeys the strict turning of the calendar. Even when events precipitate a clear division between one era and the next, the question of a period’s internal unity remains debatable. There is a strong tendency in historiography to seek out the homogeneous, to cement a period *as* a period by identifying commonalities. This is particularly true in the aesthetic field, where narratives of style development vie with biography for pride of place. Taken too far, the tendency to periodize effaces difference either by downplaying the exceptional or raising a few figures to prominence as epitomes.

Fredric Jameson, in “Periodizing the 60s,”⁴ reverses the homogeneity problem with a deft logical twist:

...to those who think that cultural periodization implies some massive kinship and homogeneity or identity within a given period, it may quickly be replied that it is surely only against a certain conception of what is historically dominant or hegemonic that the full value of the exceptional...can be assessed. Here, in any case, the ‘period’ in question is understood not as some omnipresent and uniform shared style or way of thinking and acting, but rather as the sharing of a common objective situation, to which a whole range of varied responses and creative innovations is then possible, but always within that situation’s structural limits.⁵

³ *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 68.

⁴ Fredric Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s,” *Social Text* No.9/10 “The 60’s without Apology” (Spring-Summer 1984):178-209.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

By shifting the burden of an era's definition from surface similarities to structural limits, it is possible to incorporate apparently disparate elements into a coherent whole. The "objective situation" for Jameson is fundamentally an expression of the economic and of the political. In the article quoted above, he defines the Sixties in terms of the end of direct colonial authority, particularly in Africa, and the end of the long postwar economic surge in the West. These concrete changes prompted the variety of aesthetic and social responses he selects to defend both his periodization of the Sixties and the utility of periodization itself.

If the Sixties were defined by the end of colonialism and the ebb of the postwar economic surge, the Seventies are defined by scarcity and governmental pullback. The objective changes defining the Seventies do not align precisely with the 1970s as a decade. The weight one gives to political factors versus economic ones determines which moments are chosen as bookends. The Sixties ended sometime between 1968 and 1974. Politically, there is a strong case for 1968 marking their close. The student movements in France and the United States reached their apogees. In the U.S., the shambles of the Democratic national convention and the victory of Richard Nixon in the presidential election marked the beginning of a rightward political shift that gathered momentum through the subsequent decade. Though the 1968 gold-speculation recession is one economic marker, a more decisive break comes in the recession of 1972-74, heightened by the 1973 oil embargo. Nixon's landslide in 1972 aligns neatly as a political marker for the first date, particularly when combined with the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. Choosing 1974 as the Sixties' endpoint relies on Watergate as a decisive

moment and all but erases the Seventies as a meaningful span of time, effectively making them a kind of “pre-Eighties.”⁶ For his part, Jameson places the end of the Sixties “around 1972-74,” although he notes a “secondary break” around 1967-68.⁷

Picking an end for the Seventies also hinges on a choice between economic versus political factors. The Islamic revolution and subsequent hostage crisis in Iran accelerated Jimmy Carter’s defeat and mark the further ebb of the United States’ ability to act with impunity in world affairs. Ronald Reagan’s ensuing victory in the 1980 presidential election set a new tone for the Eighties. Economically, the waves of decline accompanying the de-industrialization of the U.S. economy do not end until the recession of 1981-82. By Reagan’s re-election in 1984, the economic troubles had faded and the conservative movement had solidified its grip on American political power.

Bruce J. Schulman, whose *The Seventies* is one of the few general works to discuss the era, chooses the earliest and latest dates from the list above, creating a “long Seventies” running from the Sixties’ 1968 implosion to Reagan’s landslide re-election in 1984.⁸ His criteria are largely political; at a fundamental level, his narrative is of the gradual consolidation of conservative, Sun Belt-driven political power at the national level. The length of his periodization also confines the several recessionary waves to the Seventies and shifts the renewed hum of the U.S. economy to the Eighties. His

⁶ Nora Sayres, among others, defines the Sixties as the span from Kennedy’s 1963 assassination to Nixon’s 1974 resignation. [See Nora Sayre, *Sixties Going on Seventies*, Rev. ed., (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1996).] “Starting” the Seventies with 1968 thus creates a similar problem for the Sixties, converting them to a pre-Seventies (or post-Fifties). This conundrum highlights the difficulty in dividing history into a series of wholly discrete periods.

⁷ Jameson, “Periodizing the 60s,” 205-206. He ultimately favors 1973-74 as a more decisive break, marking the end of a “Kondratiev cycle” of changing capitalist technologies.

⁸ Schulman, *The Seventies*.

periodization is undercut, though, by the minimal attention he gives to events after Reagan's election.

I place the Seventies' end with Reagan's 1981 inauguration. The "crisis" of the Seventies ends with Reagan's election, despite the recession of 1981-82. Reagan's first term is a forward-oriented consolidation of the Seventies' changes rather than their continued development. When I speak of "the Seventies," I thus refer to a period stretching roughly from the beginning of the Nixon presidency to the end of Carter's. Politically, these endpoints mark the slow victory of conservatism over the New Deal. For New York City, this period runs from the beginning of John Lindsay's second administration to the end of Ed Koch's first, from the last good year of the postwar boom to a solid recovery from recession and crippling municipal deficits. The periodization also captures SoHo's rapid rise first to artistic prominence, then to economic prominence as real estate prices shot up in 1979-80. The Seventies' historical moment is one of fragmentation and reassembly into a more heterogeneous collection of constituencies, from universal citizenship to coalitions of convenience. The Seventies replaced America's postwar dreams of national utopia with the smaller idylls of an age of limits.

The Sixties did not go gentle into that good night. The throes of 1968 were a dark counterpart to the sunnier wave of 1967's Summer of Love. At Columbia University, students occupied buildings to protest, initially, a proposed building project in Harlem. While that particular protest was eventually turned over to non-student groups, student activists expanded their occupation to other buildings, launched a general strike, and necessitated the intervention of a thousand New York City police officers. Nicholas von

Hoffman wrote in the *Washington Post* that “[university students] are fighting for a part in the decision-making process.”⁹ They refused to be dictated to by their elders. The student activists’ fight, though, was not just for a stronger role in existing systems. Schulman notes that, while “students fought *for* various reforms, they primarily struggled *against* something: the established order.”¹⁰ General discontent with the “establishment” (with all the vagaries implied therein) led, at the Sixties’ end, to violent confrontation. Society would change whether it wanted to or not.

The fight for substantial change in authority took a hard edge at Columbia, but cut most deeply in the struggles surrounding the race for the democratic presidential nomination:

No single event...so vividly showcased the smashed remains of the old consensus—the sense that Americans, however much they might disagree on specifics, shared fundamental values and could solve disputes peaceably—than did the disruptions at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.¹¹

The nomination process had already seen more than its share of tumult. In the wake of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination, Robert Kennedy had emerged as a leading Democratic voice for unity, a powerful representative of Northeastern liberalism capable of opposing the populist, segregationist politics of George C. Wallace. Kennedy was himself assassinated even as he secured the delegates necessary to win the nomination in June of 1968. Kennedy’s death put the party in turmoil, with support split between the comparatively pro-establishment Hubert Humphrey, Eugene McCarthy

⁹ “How Columbia Pulled Down Its Pillars,” *Washington Post*, June 16, 1968. Quoted in Schulman, *The Seventies*, 11.

¹⁰ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 11. Italics added.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

(Kennedy's chief primary rival) and George McGovern, who entered the race only after Kennedy's assassination. The fragmented party and the debate over the Vietnam war drew thousands of protesters to Chicago for the convention. The Chicago police, augmented by National Guardsmen, eventually attacked the protesters in full view of television cameras. Responses to the "Police Riot" further fractured the Democrat's left wing, and Humphrey easily won the nomination, only to lose the election to Richard Nixon a few months later.

The confrontations of 1968 crystallized the cultural tumult of the preceding years. The calls for change in the civil rights and hippie movements, in rock'n'roll and the new folk, became calls for *specific* change. The sense that something had to be done *now* pervaded the year. A new, better order had to be established, one that represented the values of the young and minorities. The "longhairs" were part of this, but many of the radicals still wore ties. There was a sense that the cultural elements of change were subsidiary to the political ones, a sense that though the new leadership would be substantially different than the old, it would share an operational foundation. The new system would remain a system. On the streets of Chicago, the hope for a political solution to social problems went up in a conflagration.

As the ashes from the bonfire scattered to the four winds, the notion of replacing the Establishment with a fresh, benevolent one scattered with them. The Seventies were characterized not so much by calls to collective action as the actions of small collectives. Individuals and community groups became the nexuses of change. Society could come along for the ride or not as it saw fit. Not all of these community actions were peaceful or

isolationist—the mobilization of the gay community in the wake of the Stonewall Riot was hardly a withdrawal to communal living, nor was the Black Panther movement. The emphasis remained, though, on the needs of identity groups rather than on the needs of society.

The shift in emphasis from broad-based societal change to meeting the needs of individuals through community action is part of the same trend that led Tom Wolfe to dub the Seventies “The Me Decade.”¹² While there was a retreat from demanding elimination of the “have-nots” and increasing emphasis on the rights of individuals to become “haves,” the change was not necessarily a retreat from selflessness to selfishness. Many of the Sixties’ ideals—environmental consciousness, social justice, anti-consumerism—remained in one fashion or another. It was the expression of those ideals that changed. If the outside world could not be remade, the inner one could.

The retreat to a community of the like-minded was not limited to the “counterculture.” The Seventies were also the era of the ethnics—the time when hyphens began to go as much with European origins as others. Rather than attempting (grudgingly or enthusiastically) to assimilate, the children of immigrants increasingly identified with the culture of their ancestors. White ethnics’ embrace of cultural distinction was, at least in part, a reaction to the pressures exerted by government policy in affirmative action and, painfully, in school busing. As black Americans embraced African culture(s) and ethnic pride, as Jewish Americans placed new emphasis on their ties with their religion and Israel, white ethnics created their own associations complete with parades and advocacy campaigns.

¹² Wolfe’s was the cover story for the August 23, 1976 issue of *New York* magazine.

The establishment was beyond redemption; the Sixties had shown that. Building independent (sub)cultures became a viable response that answered the question of equality by changing its terms. Schulman correlates the affirmation of white ethnic identities with a move from models of integration toward a model of tolerance and diversity. This plays out most obviously in terms of race and ethnicity, but it is important to note that even in that field, the focus shifted from the political to the cultural. Even the Black Panthers moved from carrying assault rifles to teaching black culture over the Seventies' course. Seizure of political power became secondary to creating and maintaining an independent culture, one that could exist, potentially, alongside the mainstream one, but had no need to: "by the mid-1970s, this militant, exclusionary form of black power [came to] occupy an influential place in American public discourse."¹³ It was an explicitly *insular* idea of power and culture, one that took an intentional step backward from homogeneity.

The new emphasis on cultural identity led to new kinds of insularity. In this, there was a true retreat from the grand crusades of the Sixties. There was less and less reason to associate with those who disagreed with you. Instead of cultivating conversation and cross-pollination of ideas, the new focus on interaction with the like-minded tended to reify identity. As entrepreneurs developed business plans aimed at their communities and advertisers realized the potential of directed marketing, cultural politics became even more entangled in the economics of mass culture. Even the move to take back labels would eventually be colored by economic concerns.

¹³ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 63.

Still, it is a mistake to ascribe cynical or defeatist motivations to these trends. At their root, many of the Seventies' changes were about applied ideals. Ideals whose application had failed on the societal scale could work at the community scale.

Eventually, many hoped, a critical mass of the self-improved would pull society along with it. In the meantime, individuals and communities could create tangible changes in their local environments.

They could also react to injustices. Underlying the mobilization of many groups were the Seventies' waves of recession as the U.S.'s long post-war economic boom shuddered to a halt. The bastions of industry in the Northeast and Midwest saw jobs move south, west, and overseas. OPEC price controls and embargoes led to oil shocks in 1973 and 1979, and the slower price increases between the spikes helped contribute to the inflation sparked by the effective end of the Bretton Woods Accord and the floating of international currencies. Unemployment rose despite government efforts to pump money into the economy; the efforts to save jobs often increased inflation. Inflation stabilized only at the Seventies' end, as the Carter administration's draconian anti-inflation policies spun the economy into a deep recession.

The oil shock of 1973-74 was catalyst for the Seventies' first major recession. The government's attempts to control it led to dramatic intervention in the economic lives of everyday Americans. Fuel was rationed; price controls were put in place, as was a national speed limit of 55 mph. Interest rates were cut to encourage economic growth, but the decreased rates did more to encourage inflation than anything else. Meanwhile, developing nations, becoming more stable after the decolonization of the Sixties, began

to industrialize their resource production. This change hit the U.S. steel industry particularly hard. Combined with the competition from more fuel-efficient Japanese cars, the steel industry's collapse contributed to catastrophic losses in the American automobile industry, leading to massive layoffs in what was to become known as the Rust Belt.

America, for the first time since the Great Depression, seemed to be failing. At the Seventies' opening, Vietnam was dragging on, secretly escalated by Nixon in his first term and ending only with the last, overburdened helicopters pulling away from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon in 1975. OPEC's Oil Embargo demonstrated that the U.S. economy was vulnerable to foreign whims on a fundamental level. Savings seemed useless; the money would be worth less when taken out than when it was put away. "The forced grandeur of the bicentennial celebrations," as Schulman writes of 1976, "barely masked widespread fears of national decline."¹⁴ Jimmy Carter's election proved no antidote to the malaise; his "comprehensive" approaches repeatedly failed to remedy the situation. In New York City, mayors had promised unsustainable levels of government service and hidden the problem with accounting tricks and borrowing. The government, which had been expanding since the New Deal, seemed unable to solve any problems through further expansion.

So it began to shrink. Conservatives attacked entitlement programs that were already going broke under the strain of increased demand and decreased income from taxes. In cities with large, heavily subsidized public works, like New York, the bite was especially keen. Expanded welfare obligations, artificially low public transit costs, tuition

¹⁴ Ibid., 124.

assistance for universities—the volume and variety of New York City’s financial burden led the city to the brink of bankruptcy. Despite laying off police officers while crime rose and trimming other departments through layoff and attrition, New York was unable to secure the loans it needed to pay its bills. City and state officials went to Washington for aid, and were rejected, leading to the infamous *New York Daily News* headline, “Ford to City: Drop Dead.”¹⁵ Though few cities faced the same degree of difficulty, municipal and state governments across the country were also forced to scale back their programs in the face of funding shortfalls. Coupled with this scaling back of direct government spending was a trend toward privatization and, later, toward deregulation. Just as social movements had fragmented into community movements, the government opted to provide solutions via smaller, private enterprises. Private companies, the reasoning went, had more reasons to keep costs under control and were less prone to excesses caused by politics. More and more, the government went from operating institutions to simply funding them.

The interrelated political and economic changes of the Seventies had wide-ranging ramifications for cultural producers. Though the National Endowment for the Arts has the odd distinction of being one of the few programs *expanded* by Richard Nixon, the changes were not entirely benign.¹⁶ Although it remained a trivial percentage of the annual government budget, the sizable increase turned heads. Nixon was not known as a lover of the arts, particularly the “high culture,” intellectual art that had been the typical recipient of NEA largesse. Along with the increased funding came restrictions

¹⁵ Oct. 30, 1975. Though the federal government refused direct subsidies, they did assist in debt restructuring, forcing a variety of cutbacks in public programs. See chapter five.

¹⁶ Nixon increased its annual budget from \$7.7 million in 1969 to \$61 million in 1974. Schulman, *The Seventies*, 27-28.

on how the money was to be spent. More of it was funneled through state and local agencies to support community art and folk art; while the museums and symphonies of the Northeast still received NEA money, they now had to compete with numerous community-oriented organizations.

Increasingly, elite institutions were required to justify their existence through the service they provided to their communities. Government money was directed specifically at educational programs, outreach, and local rather than national orientation. The boards responsible for distributing the money were no longer governed by the same “elites” who ran the major museums and symphonies of the Northeast. Public sculpture and representational art were favored over the avant-garde works produced by “New York artists.”¹⁷ Emphasis was no longer on works’ quality in themselves, but on their ability to contribute to the public good.

As political and economic power shifted south and west, the prestige of the Northeast’s cultural and educational institutions waned. Indeed, antipathy toward “out of touch elites” was a common theme of political campaigns in the Seventies. Intellectuals and their policies had done nothing to fix the economy; the systems they’d created seemed responsible for many of the country’s problems. Practicality and entrepreneurship increased in value as abstract, systemic thinking waned in importance. Nixon’s campaigns thrived on anti-elitism, and even Carter’s 1976 election relied in part on his practical, humble orientation. Lack of pretense became the new pretense.

The Seventies ended in a wave of anti-authority movements just as emphatic as those that capped the Sixties. While that earlier movement pitted itself against *specific*

¹⁷ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 28.

authorities, by the end of the Seventies, populists moved against a generalized authority nearly as mythical as the South glorified by country music. The government could not solve problems, so it did not deserve tax money. Tax revolts began in the late 1970s in California and Massachusetts, where inflation had pushed property values (and property taxes) out of control. Ballot measures forced drastic reductions in tax rates, reductions that seemed justified at a time when that same inflation fueled substantial government surpluses. Surpluses cushioned the initial bite of the tax cuts on state and local governments; large deficits and reductions in services lagged a few years. When those reductions happened, they were largely inflicted on politically “safe” targets—libraries, extracurricular education programs, and the like.

The conservative wave found its figurehead in Ronald Reagan, once dismissed as a wingnut. His stark positions on reducing taxes and government, of reining in entitlement programs, and on reclaiming America’s mastery of international politics resonated with a nation mired in a Carter-sparked recession while Americans were held hostage in Tehran. Moscow looked threatening, invading Afghanistan and prompting even the peaceful Carter to reinstate registration for the draft. Domestically and in foreign policy, Reagan promised dramatic change. Neoconservative intellectuals and the political machinery that had been mobilized to fight everything from taxes to changes in textbooks rallied behind Reagan, allowing him to circumvent what was left of the Republican party’s old guard. Averring that government was the problem, not the solution, he swept into the White House promising to make more for the country by making less of its administration.

His inauguration effectively marks the Seventies' end. Though recession and job losses lingered, Reagan marked the victory of anti-authoritarian sentiment. His victory hinged not just on his paternal affability, but on the ability of the small, agile institutions loosely stitched together by neoconservatives to coax votes and campaign contributions from the disaffected. Reagan's predecessors, even when acting to deregulate and shrink government, still acted with the faith that some form of government *could* be a solution. The new president worked hard to put as many nails as he could into that faith's coffin.

Meanwhile, punk and disco died, their challenges to established values largely subsumed into mass culture shadows of themselves. The blockbuster film replaced the auteurism of Seventies cinema. Hippies became yuppies. Even the great experimental communes broke up as members embraced tangible individual success over small group consciousness. The Seventies ended not with the conflagration of 1968, but in numerous flickering skirmishes, permeated by the sense of an inglorious twilight, a diminution of the U.S. in the world. Reagan's promised "new morning in America" was an ideological antidote to Carter's declared malaise, one that did not come to full effect until his 1984 landslide re-election...but one which glimmered decisively in January 1981.

In New York, the musical bookends are even hazier than the national political ones. There are, though, decisive moments in 1968-69, and again in 1979. The 1968-1969 season marked the end of Leonard Bernstein's tenure as music director of the New York Philharmonic, and the announcement of Pierre Boulez as his successor. Bernstein's departure, though announced years previously, marked a sea change at the Philharmonic. Meanwhile, Philip Glass presented the first concert devoted solely to his music in 1968 at

the Film-Makers Cinametheque as part of a series in which Steve Reich also participated. Meredith Monk presented her breakthrough “Juice” at the Guggenheim Museum in 1969. Charles Wuorinen won the Pulitzer Prize for Music in 1970 and was subsequently denied tenure at Columbia.

1979 saw the New Music New York festival, hosted by The Kitchen intermedia arts center. The festival highlighted the multiple directions new music had taken outside the confines of the Uptown institutions. The festival’s scale also highlighted the progress made by newer, smaller institutions like the Kitchen in becoming presenters. Zubin Mehta took over as full time music director of the New York Philharmonic in the ’78-’79 season. Reich and Glass had become international stars, with Glass premiering his opera *Satyagraha* at the Rotterdam Festival and Reich selling out a Carnegie Hall concert devoted exclusively to his work.

The stylistic diversity in new music in the Seventies resists any impulse toward homogenization. The structural limits of presentation (q.v.) in New York during the Seventies, though, defined a range of practical and aesthetic responses. Crises in government and foundation budgets accompanied the waves of recession, forcing individual artists and institutions to either compete more fiercely for more limited traditional funding sources or to seek new means of financial support. Media—print, radio and television—changed in the Seventies, reflecting developments in demographics and the economics of advertising, as well as extensive deregulation.

In the Seventies, Manhattan was the bastion of new music. Here, in microcosm, the various compositional trends of the era existed in direct competition with each other.

An older generation of American tonalists still lived and worked in the city; among them were Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard, William Schuman as the first director of Lincoln Center, and the Brooklyn-born Aaron Copland (who remained active in the city despite residing somewhat at a remove in Westchester County). At the era's opening, Pierre Boulez was appointed music director of the New York Philharmonic, bringing with him a whole host of expectations and fears built around his reputation as a modernist firebrand. Charles Wuorinen won the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 1970, positioning himself as an up-and-comer in the world of academic composition. Cage and Cunningham still lived and worked in the East Village, and the late stages of Fluxus (as well as its descendants) regularly presented happenings and what was not yet called performance art. At various times, Young, Riley, Reich, and Glass all called New York home. The latter two are particularly associated with the growth of the avant-garde artistic community in SoHo, as is Meredith Monk, whose development from a "dancer-choreographer" to "musician" to a "performance artist" is particularly illuminating.

Just as important as the multiplicity of artistic directions were their interactions. The development of a "Downtown Scene" was contingent on the growth of a like-minded artistic community taking advantage of a blighted urban gap in Manhattan. What made the scene remarkable was the ability of its stars, as the era progressed, to win both audiences and journalistic accolades beyond SoHo's borders. Meanwhile, various Uptown institutions tried to make inroads with the newly-developing community, hoping to tap into a younger audience and expand their financial and cultural cachet. The nature of the new was central in the interactions. The New York Philharmonic was not trying to

push Beethoven on the residents of Greenwich Village, but new works by George Crumb or Jon Deak or Charles Wuorinen. While the works the Downtown artists took to the “prestigious” venues of midtown and Uptown did not cater directly to the tastes of an academic avant-garde, they were clearly new to the usual Uptown audiences, representative of a generational shift and the influence of vernacular styles.

It is not enough to say that the history of the field is the history of the struggle for a monopoly of the imposition of legitimate categories of perception and appreciation; it is in the very struggle that the history of the field is made; it is through struggles that it is temporalized...it is engendered in the fight between those who have already left their mark and are trying to endure, and those who cannot make their own marks in their turn without consigning to the past those who have an interest in stopping time...

—Pierre Bourdieu¹⁸

“New music” is a fraught term, but one whose vagaries are essential to its function in this context. The struggle to define what was “new” (and what was “music”) is writ in works and their presentation alike. The artists making new music in the Seventies employed a range of styles, from serial to conceptual to minimal to neo-Romantic; hanging a definition on musical theoretical criteria would eliminate artists who remained important parts of the musical landscape. “New” was in part an artistic stance, an opposition to the old. It was also a means of “branding” an event—the ones I discuss tend to focus on the novelty of the work in question. “New” could mean “new to the audience,” “new in the history of music,” “new in the composer’s oeuvre,” or a variety of other things, often simultaneously. Tied with the presentation of a work as new is the idea that it stands not only in opposition to the past, but also to the present. The “new” sets a

¹⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Rules of Art*, trans. Susan Emanuel, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 157.

work of art music apart from the music of mass culture, which has no need to identify itself as anything other than simply “music.” “New music” thus engages in two dialectics: the first, with the history of music in the West; the second, with the products of mass culture.

This definition echoes the one implicit in Theodor Adorno’s *Philosophie der Neue Musik*. Adorno, though, takes a harder line in keeping with his historical thinking. For him, as for Schoenberg, meaningful music had to be new, had to break completely from everything that had come before.¹⁹ The separation between the history of art and the history of society is negligible in Adorno’s eyes. History—artistic and otherwise—had accreted into an oppressive mass culture. Music had the possibility, however slim, of shining a light into the nightmare fractures that culture created. That light came only with a complete and total break from the ossified tonality of the bourgeois. More particularly, any tendency toward structure (such as Schoenberg’s development of dodecaphony as a system) diffused the light.

Some of the cracks in musical structure developed from the dissolution of the tonal idiom, of a widely-accepted musical language. “Whoever wants to judge must look the unique questions and antagonisms of the individual work straight in the eye without having any general theory of music or any music history to guide him.”²⁰ The vitiating of tonality left composers in a situation in which they had to choose between an obviously hollow language and constructing something entirely new. To embrace a hollow language was to disappear into objectified society, into mass culture. Insisting on a novel musical

¹⁹ Hullot-Kentor, introduction to Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2006), xxii-xxiii.

²⁰ Adorno, *Philosophy*, 11.

language was an assertion of subjectivity, a means to create a work that truly existed as such. Even then, the effort of creating that new language forces music into a domain of pure spirit (in the Hegelian sense) that is fundamentally irreconcilable with the pressures of contemporary patronage; the work must simultaneously exist as art and as an object of art.

According to Adorno, Schoenberg and the other composers of the Second Viennese School had come closest to engaging with this fundamental fracture. By breaking with the decayed rules of late tonality, free atonality was able to shed light on the compromised subject, to resist simultaneously surrender to the objectification of the individual and retreat into a false subjectivity established by mass culture. Expressionist works like Schoenberg's *Erwartung* and *Die glückliche Hand* exposed troubled individual psyches and social functions divorced from any substantive meaning. The very freedom of this kind of atonality, though, forced a retreat. Unmitigated exposure of the internal was unsustainable; Schoenberg developed principles to help control his materials in a fresh assertion of his subjectivity. This assertion of subjectivity, though, mirrored the broader systematization of subjectivity, the replacement of the purely subjective by the objectified subject. Adorno framed the retreat toward objectifying structure as a historical inevitability, an unavoidable reaction to the dialectical progress of history—musical and otherwise.

Adorno's real venom was reserved for those who, as he saw it, maintained the pretense that unsullied subjectivity was possible in music. Quickly dismissing those who worked unironically with tonal principles, Adorno concentrated on Stravinsky.

Stravinsky, Adorno averred, understood the cracks in the nature of the work and the crush of subjectivity and cynically chose to pretend restoration was possible. By making musical history fungible, turning it into mere exchangeable material, Stravinsky and his followers effaced true subjectivity. Replacing it was a phantom subjectivity, the idea that making a playground of ruins was artistically meaningful. Cleverness stood in for authenticity; the truly new became the merely “new.” The subject is encouraged to enjoy its own objectification, to take solace in asserting mastery over the old.

The *Philosophie der Neue Musik* is certainly, as Robert Hullot-Kentor calls it, “a work that has long been up in arms against the world.”²¹ The specter of fascism looms behind its pages, as does Adorno’s experience in the United States. Its usefulness for this project is in the steps it takes toward recognizing that the work of art—musical or otherwise—has a fundamentally different character in the twentieth century. Adorno’s reliance on the *newness* of music in assessing its truth is echoed variously by other thinkers and composers. Furthermore, he recognizes the cracks that the collapse of tonality created not only in the nature of the work, but in the efforts necessary to create one. As Hullot-Kentor reads the *Philosophie*, there is no way out of the crisis other “than through.”²² Pushing through the crisis as Adorno frames it leads to a dubious place where the composer can, at best, paint phantoms in the ashes of the subject.

It is in discussing late works—Beethoven’s as much as Schoenberg’s—that Adorno moves toward the question that was to become fundamental in the decades following the 1948 publication of the *Philosophie*. The very notion of the work is in these

²¹ Hullot-Kentor, introduction to *Philosophy*, xix.

²² *Ibid.*, xx.

pieces challenged. The composer asserts a freedom that, perhaps, represents some kind of peace with the material. Fragments are made to stand as a whole. Form opens even as it disintegrates. For the generation that followed Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the disintegration of the work became the principle problem. While various dodecaphonic Neo-Classical practices demonstrated the cracks in the foundation of the autonomous work, the events of the Fifties exploded those cracks and left the work entirely in doubt. John Cage and Pierre Boulez, among others, experimented with totalizing systems that removed the composer from the creation of a work. Cage eventually went further, creating “works” whose content varied from performance to performance, and sometimes included the redeployment of older works in an unpredictable manner. His *Imaginary Landscapes No. 2* is for twelve radios, each tuned to different stations over the piece’s duration. The individual radios may play snippets of news, music, or static. The “work” in this case, as in the infamous *4’33”*, is no more a work than a recipe is a cake. Even Adorno’s “false” expression of the subject erodes.

While the composers Adorno discusses can create a meaningful (if fundamentally cracked) work by grappling with the unflinchingly new, an anterior step is necessary once the work has been fully shattered. It is no longer possible to define a work simply by defining the musical “rules” one will follow—the fundamental choice of the Schoenberg-Stravinsky generation. Unlike the late works that demonstrate a certain kind of peace with the material and the freedom of working in fragments, composers after the shattering of the work have no choice but to deal in fragments and splinters, no matter how sharp they might be. The “workness” of the work must be defined, and it is here that we come

at last back to the definition of “new music” as music simultaneously engaging dialectically with mass culture and with the history of music in the West.

The autonomous work of music(al art) is dead, replaced by the contingent work.²³ A piece of new music must define itself both as a work (rather than a product) and as music (rather than noise). In both cases, the position is defined by fiat rather than anything inherent in the piece—it is contingent on the creator’s declaration and situation. Twelve radios become music when you put them on a stage and declare them to be. The event becomes a work when it is positioned as an event rather than a commodified recording or pre-packaged show. The two dialectics are intertwined but not interdependent; a piece can be a musical product or a work of noise. Many of the artists working in the Seventies operated in these peripheral spaces, challenging both extant systems of music production and artistic presentation.

The history of music in the West is the shifting mass against which composers in the Seventies had to define their work as music, even as the press of mass culture forced them to distinguish their efforts from mere production. While Adorno would chastise composers using tonal resources as disingenuously creating a false reclamation of subjectivity, atonal systems had established their own kind of tyranny, albeit one more limited than popularly believed.²⁴ Composers engaged with their musical inheritance in a variety of ways, but to successfully define their work as music, they *had* to engage that

²³ Though she derives it from different sources, Margaret Buskirk explores the contingency of the work in the plastic arts in *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005.) She examines the consequences of readymades, manufacturing, and ephemerality on the conception and uses of art objects, as well as questions of authorship. She draws many of her case studies from the minimalist, conceptualist, and performance artists active in New York during the Sixties and Seventies, some of whom are discussed in Chapter Two.

²⁴ See Joseph Straus, “The Myth of Serial Tyranny in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 83 No. 3 (Autumn 1999): 301-343.

history. Even those who, like George Rochberg, re-embraced tonal resources did so in a context in which the music-ness of a piece could no longer be taken for granted. Some composers found answers in non-Western practice—Reich in Ghanaian drumming and later in Jewish chant, Glass in North Indian music, for example—but they deployed those resources *as* Westerners, in the context of their more direct inheritance. These borrowings provided invigorating resources for an exhausted tradition.

That the tradition required invigoration is a product not only of the direct oppression of artists by mass culture, but the particular form that oppression took in commodifying music. Before the advent of recording, music was transmitted as scores and performances. Creators received income for what Jacques Attali calls the “representation” of their work.²⁵ Consumers paid for access to the performance, a direct exchange of money for the moment. In this phase, the work still existed in that nebulous space between the composer, performer, and audience, the space of reproduction itself. It could, in this case, retain a large degree of autonomy. Large-scale recording of music altered this dynamic. Music became repetition—the mechanical stamping of the record manufacturer, the unending stream of radio broadcasts. Recording allowed a *single* performance to be repeated. It also allowed music to be stockpiled. The exchange was no longer for an experience in the immediate moment; it was for a (potentially) repeatable moment in the abstract future. Since music exists in time, the stockpiling of recordings was, in a sense, the stockpiling of time. Attali argues that the unrelenting press of the “culture of repetition” prevents consumers from ever accessing this stockpiled time.

²⁵ Jacques Attali, *Noise*, trans. Brian Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985). See particularly chapters three and four (“Representing” and “Repeating”).

Recordings become a perpetually unrealized promise of leisure. They thus become the commodity par excellence, and music the ultimate product.

Emphasizing the autonomy of the musical work had, up until the postwar rupture, been a means to resist work's commodification, to prevent art from becoming a mere thing. This was particularly true for new music, since the canonical masterworks had long since become recorded commodities, culture-on-demand. The shift to the contingent artwork meant that creators had to work even harder to distinguish their works from products. The content of the work was no longer sufficient to define it as art, and could no longer take precedent over its context. At best, the two were interdependent; in extreme cases (as in many Fluxus creations) the context became the primary source of definition as a musical work.

Given the importance of context, it no longer makes sense to center a study on individual works, regardless of their artistic importance: "it [a theory of art] must take into account everything which helps distinguish the work as such, not least the discourses of direct or disguised celebration which are among the social conditions of production of the work of art *qua* object of belief."²⁶ Throughout this project, my focus is instead on the field of production, the set of social situations that create the discourse. Broadly considered, that field is the whole of New York City in the Seventies—the situation described above. More specifically, I take the notion of the artistic field from the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Just as the economic and cultural situation of the Seventies created the structural limits that defined the era, the aesthetic and social situation define an artistic field, a field in which "new music" operates according to the principles described above.

²⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 35.

Bourdieu, particularly in *The Rules of Art* and *The Field of Cultural Production*, pushes that argument further: it is not merely the work of the artist-provided context that overcomes the contingency of the work, but rather the complicity of the whole array of producers and audiences in a system that allows such contingency. By choosing to enter the defining debates of new music—whether to applaud a new work or denounce it as a fraud—an individual becomes entangled in the rules that structure those debates, the complete array of history and social interactions that produced the questions. One cannot quibble with Adorno over the merits of Stravinsky without accepting, at some level, that Adorno’s stance is worthy of debate. More importantly, to enter a debate over Adorno’s reading of Schoenberg vis-a-vis Stravinsky is to enter a world of “finite possible choices,” as Bourdieu might write, a world in which one “must take a position.”²⁷ The perceived polarity between Cage and Babbitt was another iteration of this type of demanded question: what is music? what is new? To take a position on these questions is to enter a complex web of interaction, one in which scholars and audiences have as much to contribute as producers.

Fields are sites of struggle for “capital.” (Bourdieu readily labels any kind of resource that can be accumulated as a kind of capital—economic capital, cultural capital, social capital, symbolic capital, etc.) Capital is power. Different forms of capital are, under certain conditions, interchangeable. Possession of capital allows one to take a dominant position in the field; lack of it dooms one to dominated status. The dominant groups struggle to maintain and expand their store of capital. To the degree they are successful, they can determine the possibilities of exchange. For those in dominated

²⁷ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 119.

positions, the struggle is often to shift the field's rules to favor forms of capital the dominated can more easily access. The field is thus a "force field," in which dynamic struggle is the prime constituent element. Dominant and dominated positions persist, though the individuals and groups that fill them may move from one to the other.

The availability of positions in a particular field of cultural production derives from that field's relative autonomy (the degree to which the field determines its own rules) and the field's relation to the broader field of power. The combination of autonomy and relation to power determine, in a general way, the amount of capital available in the given field (of whichever type). Within the field, producers compete to stake out positions according to the structural limits of the situation:

*The space of literary or artistic position-takings...is inseparable from the space of literary or artistic positions defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a field of forces, but it is also a field of struggles tending to transform or conserve this field of forces.*²⁸

Pierre Bourdieu's *The Rules of Art* analyzes the development of artistic autonomy in the field of French literature, its coalescence as a distinct and (partially) independent sphere in the nineteenth century. The exercise is only partly directed at picking out patterns of social meaning in the literature in question; it serves more generally as a practical illustration of the way that social and aesthetic exigencies reflect and are reflected in broader discourses of power. The field is not a flat topography; its dynamism and utility as an analytical vehicle derive from the networks of dominance and subordination between artists, genres, critics, patrons, and various elements of the public:

²⁸ Ibid., 30.

Henceforward it will be a matter of veritable *structural subordination* which acts very unequally on different authors according to their position in the field. It is instituted through two principal mediations: on the one hand, the market, whose sanctions and constraints are exercised on literary enterprises either directly, by means of sales figures, number of tickets sold and so forth, or indirectly, through new positions offered in journalism, publishing, illustration and all forms of industrialized literature; on the other hand, durable links, based on affinities of lifestyle and value systems, and offering especially through the intermediary of the salons, which unite at least a portion of the writers to certain sections of high society, and help to determine the direction of the generosities of state patronage.²⁹

In short, what you write and who you know equally determine the limits of your success, be it “artistic” or “commercial.” Bourdieu places these types of success at two poles in chiasmus. As a producer aligns toward one or the other, the nature of success changes, as does the nature of the work. The work, as a symbolic good, simultaneously has value as merchandise and signification.³⁰ The proportion of these values does not entirely inhere in the work; much of it is defined by the field. Artistic success is defined by the accrual of specific symbolic capital, capital that accrues through a work that successfully defines itself *against* the commercially marketable—in dialectical opposition to mass culture as described above. Symbolic capital also accrues through relation to predecessors. Once the autonomy of the artistic field is established, successive generations of artists define themselves against their predecessors, creating chains of negation—the work exists in dialectic with the field’s history. Commercial success erodes the accrual of symbolic capital; the less selective the audience, the less prestige accrues to the work as a symbolic good.

²⁹ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 49. Italics original.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

Symbolic capital is controlled by and directed toward an elite subset of the population. The growth of a work's symbolic value shrinks the audience "able" to appreciate it. Increasing a work's value as merchandise, while increasing the work's audience, does not separate it from the control of the elite. Both the "artistic" producer and the "commercial" producer are ultimately in a subordinate position to the cultural elite. The differences lie primarily in the type of value that a work accrues and the expected "return" on the elite patron's investment. "Pure art" is directed at accruing (symbolic) capital over a long term; it must create its own demand by simultaneously aligning itself with the elite's expectations and influencing them. The successful work of "pure art" becomes "consecrated," though consecration, too, takes different forms dependent on the segment of the field invoked. "Commercial art" accrues (economic) capital over a shorter term; it responds to an existing demand by matching the expectations of the paying customer, be it the petit-bourgeoisie or labor aristocracy.

In *The Field of Cultural Production*, Bourdieu delineates three primary forms of consecration (or capital accrual):

Thus we find three competing principles of legitimacy. First, there is the specific principle of legitimacy, i.e., the recognition granted by the set of producers who produce for other producers, their competitors, i.e., by the autonomous self-sufficient world of 'art for art's sake', meaning art for artists. Secondly, there is the principle of legitimacy corresponding to 'bourgeois' taste and to the consecration bestowed by dominant fractions of the dominant class and by private tribunals, such as *salons*, or public, state-guaranteed ones, such as academies, which sanction the inseparably ethical and aesthetic (and therefore political) taste of the dominant. Finally, there is the principle of legitimacy which its

advocates call ‘popular’, i.e. the consecration bestowed by the choice of ordinary consumers, the ‘mass audience.’³¹

Invariably, producers take positions that orient them strongly to at least one of these “principles of legitimacy.” In an autonomous field such as new music, the first form of consecration tends to be the most important, with too much accrual of the other types viewed negatively (e.g., the pejorative connotations of “accessible” music). Institutions, too, are established to make the most of these differing forms of capital. While Bourdieu’s example describes three broad types of legitimacy, it should be noted that, just as a field can be divided into subfields, consecration can be limited to certain segments of the population. The mechanisms of consecration vary, too, by subfield; the Academy and Bohemia have different means and ends.

Both, though, relate to the “field of power,” that

...space of relations of forces between agents or between institutions having in common the possession of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural). It is the site of struggles between holders of different powers (or kinds of capital) which, like the symbolic struggles between artists and the ‘bourgeois’ in the nineteenth century, have at stake the transformation or conservation of the relative value of different kinds of capital, which itself determines, at any moment, the forces liable to be engaged in these struggles.³²

The entire artistic field Bourdieu describes, even when it achieves substantial autonomy, occupies a subordinate position in the field of power. Success in the market or success in the salons was still contingent on the approval of those groups dominant in the field of power. Despite the artists’ attempts to create an art purely for art’s sake, external

³¹ Bourdieu, *Field*, 50-51. Italics original.

³² Bourdieu, *Rules*, 215.

sanctions matter. Even when the struggles internal to the field are largely independent “in their principle (meaning in the causes and reasons determining them),” the outcomes of the struggles depend “on the correspondence they have with external clashes (those which unfold at the core of the field of power or the social field as a whole) and the support that one group or another may find there.”³³ Changes in an autonomous field survive best when they align with broader changes in society and the field of power.

Navigating the field is not an either/or proposition, despite the many dualistic structures Bourdieu invokes: “Producers’ strategies distribut[e] themselves between two extremes that are never, in fact, attained—either total and cynical subordination to demand or absolute independence from the market and its exigencies.”³⁴ The routes to success (variously defined) depend largely on staking out positions within the field, on filling the roles the field provides. For those works aspiring to “pure art,” as with those more commercially driven, access to different production apparatuses determine the routes to success. Using extensive evidence (statistical and anecdotal) from the French publishing and gallery networks, Bourdieu illustrates how various presenters create and reinforce specialties, from the “avant-garde” to the “classic,” and how these specialties naturally shift their function within the field alongside generational shifts. Smaller, “prestige” publishers use the economic capital provided by their “classics” (via the use of those texts in the education system) to offset the risk in publishing avant-garde works.

³³ Ibid., 252. See also *Field*, 57: “Without ever being a direct outcome of them, the internal struggles depend on their outcome on the correspondence they may have with the external struggles between classes (or between the fractions of the dominant class) and on the reinforcement which one group or another may derive from them, though homology and the consequent synchronisms.”

³⁴ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 142.

Importantly, the avant-garde works tend to “fit” with the publisher’s existing catalogue through either interpersonal connections or similarities of aesthetic orientation. Vitally, the publishers themselves help define the nature of the works they publish. The content of the text in question provides only part of the text’s meaning (and value) in the field.

Whether oriented toward a “classic” or “avant-garde” sensibility, the work cannot escape the shadow of the *whole* of its production, including not only its creator’s position in the field, but its publishers, its critics, and its audience. An artistic product’s “value” (signification, symbolic, or commercial) exists in the whole of its public and private existence rather than in just the text itself. The field is comprehensive:

This sense of social orientation allows one to move in a hierarchized space where the *places*—galleries, theatres, publishing houses—which mark positions in this space by the same token mark the cultural products that are associated with them...through them a public is designated which...qualifies the product consumed, helping to make it either rare or, on the other hand vulgar.³⁵

The ramifications of place are particularly important for new music, which was seldom experienced as a transferable commodity. Staging events in different spaces was, in some cases, integral to a work’s conception. More often, it was a purposeful attempt to reposition a work, artist, or institution within the field, to gain some of the consecration associated with the venue and the public it designated. Admission prices and advertising factor into this orientation toward a public. The public (including that subset of the field designated as critics) also influences a work’s position in the field: “The discourse on the

³⁵ Ibid., 164-165. Italics original. See also *Field*, 95, in which Bourdieu takes pains to point out that neither agents nor audience operate with “any need for cynical calculation,” instead operating (generally) in homology with the field.

work is not a simple side-effect, designed to encourage its apprehension and appreciation, but a moment which is part of the production of the work, of its meaning and value.”³⁶

The artistic field, then, is a complex network of significant interactions, including interactions with history, which is “immanent to the functioning of the field, and to meet the objective demands it implies as a producer but also as a consumer, one has to possess the whole history of the field.”³⁷ Those interactions do not create a deterministic structure, though they do define a variety of limits and create distinct, comprehensible patterns. These patterns, in turn, help define artists’ choices, which reflect back in to the field to continuously change its shape. Bourdieu provides an elegant metaphor:

This [artistic] universe, anarchic and willfully libertarian in appearance (which it also is, thanks in large part to the social mechanisms that authorize and favour autonomy), is the site of a sort of well-regulated ballet in which individuals and groups dance their own steps, always contrasting themselves with each other, sometimes clashing, sometimes dancing to the same tune, then turning their backs on each other in often explosive situations, and so on...³⁸

It is on the “dance” of New York City’s musical field that I focus, on the personal battles for consecration and authority, on utilization and defiance of tradition, on the attempts to colonize or reclaim artistic and physical spaces. As artists labored to define their work as new music, they responded not only to the exigencies of the artistic field, but to the significant shifts in the field of power that colored the Seventies. Artists remained subordinate to power, and changed along with it, particularly in their stance toward the “general” public. Simultaneously, they took advantage of the shifting field to

³⁶ Ibid., 170.

³⁷ Bourdieu, *Field*, 60.

³⁸ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 113.

create their own institutions, further eroding the centralized authority and leading to the “detente” that effectively ended the war that nobody won.

Artists’ actions within the field are most evident in their works’ presentation. The word’s roots go back to the Latin term for the formal nomination of a priest to a benefice by bringing him before God. That is, more or less, the manner in which I use it here. Presentation is the act of putting “something” before the public. This includes not only the work itself (typically in performance) but the whole assemblage of accompanying activity that create the work’s position in the field. In the *City that Never Sleeps*, that activity was manifold, ranging from posting of handbills to carefully staged public dress rehearsals to formal press releases. While we can draw important information from the works themselves, analyzing the presentation more holistically gives us a better understanding of the works’ relationship to their contemporaries, their predecessors and, sometimes, their successors.

Analyzing presentation is, in part, a way of addressing the contingencies inherent in “new music.” The strategies employed by artists in presenting their work betray the positions they adopt in the dialectics with mass culture and the history of music. Studying presentation ensures that the structural limits of the situation, both historical and aesthetic, can be taken into account. While artists could and did aspire to “pure art,” they could not escape the changes created by the work’s loss of autonomy; the choices they make become more obvious in the practicalities of presentation than in any attempt to ferret meaning directly from a score. Successfully accruing capital in the field of cultural production depended, in part, on presenting works in an advantageous space (literal or

abstract); analyzing the spaces of successful presentations in turn allows us to discern the shape of the field. This process anchors the study of the music in social experience rather than in the typical narratives of style or in individual lives. In short, it helps shift emphasis from the single work or artist to the field as a whole. Bourdieu goes so far as to ascribe the whole of a work's value to the field:

The producer of the *value of the work of art* is not the artist but the field of production as a universe of belief which produces the value of the work of art as a *fetish* by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist. Given that the work of art does not exist as a symbolic object endowed with value unless it is...socially instituted as a work of art...the science of works takes as object not only the material production of the work but also the production of the value of the work or, what amounts to the same thing, of the belief in the value of the work.³⁹

Presentation, especially presentation of new music, lies at the intersection of the material work and belief in its value. It entails a number of practicalities: programming (including works, venue, and time); publicity (including advertising and press coverage); funding (from admission, grants, sponsors, or patrons). Artists do not navigate these practicalities with any single strategy. The options open to any particular artist varied considerably, but in telling ways. Analyzing presentation allows us to assess artists' responses to an era's structural limits—Jameson's "objective situation" aligns with Bourdieu's field. The patterns of response that emerged in Manhattan in the Seventies reinforce the idea of a conflict that ended eventually in detente rather than resolution. The exigencies that had forced some artists to develop new presentation strategies became normal enough that the responses to them became standard. Small institutions developed

³⁹ Ibid., 229. Or, as Bourdieu puts it more aphoristically in *Field*, "The makers and marketers of works of art are adversaries in collusion" (79).

to deal with the complexities of presentation, surviving in a socio-economic environment increasingly hostile to larger ones.

Programming is, perhaps, what comes to mind most immediately as “presentation.” The raw elements of a concert fall under this heading—which works are performed in what order, which venue the event is presented in, the performance time, etc. Though each element is straightforward enough in itself, the potential combinations allow a huge variety of complex events. A concert featuring works by John Cage and Pierre Boulez creates a different set of expectations and effects than one featuring Cage and Morton Feldman. A concert at Carnegie Hall attracts a different audience than one at NYU’s Loeb Student Center. Though the timing of concerts had become somewhat standard, shifts of even an hour could alter the nature of the event. The manner of staging, too, falls into this category; the performers’ spatial relationship to the audience can establish or undercut a hierarchy, and some works explicitly exploit these relationships.

Publicity is the precursor to programming, but also, importantly, its successor. Advertising strategies (including choice of advertising vehicles and the nature of the advertisements themselves) aim for specific constituencies within the field. Advertisements also represent a conscious negotiation on the part of the presenter between representing the event as the presenter believes it to be and what the presenter believes the desired audience will find attractive. Publicity is affected not only by the ability to buy advertisement, but also by access to the press more generally. Previews and reviews, as well as advertisements, reach different constituencies and create different

associations dependent on where they appear. For artists not supported by large, established institutions, gaining access to prestigious publications (such as the *New York Times*) could prove vital to improving their status within the field. Likewise, favorable coverage in smaller media outlets could grant an air of credibility to independent artists that was harder for the established institutions to create.

Money stands behind—and sometimes in front—of most elements of presentation. Artists need to pay their living expenses. Venues have to pay their utility bills and house staff. Performance rights cost money. Advertising costs money. Professional personnel (legal, stage, and otherwise) all cost money. The financing of an event is a vital element of its presentation. It determines limits more thoroughly than geography or artistic merit. Funding can alter presentation in small ways—the inclusion of a sponsor’s logo or name in all print materials, for example—and large ones—funds becoming contingent on the performance of a specific work. While very few events were funded entirely through admission, the ticket price directly impacts the potential audience. “Popular pricing” was an important element of advertising. The publicity of a packed house with cheap seats may be better than the higher income of a half-full one with more expensive tickets. Competition for government grants, corporate sponsorship, and individual patronage became particularly fierce in the shifting economy of the Seventies. Presenters needed to be able to fit their events into the categories the funders created, and either altered or spun the programming and publicity to do so.

Taken together, these elements define not only how a work is put before the public, but why. Presentation is, like all human activity, motivated. Bourdieu calls it

“interested,” drawing on the word’s full range of associations. Analyzing presentation can tell us what the agents in a situation aimed for; continuing to examine the public’s reaction can tell us what they actually got. Changes in presentation—whether strategic choices or response to necessity—help trace deeper shifts in the field. Motivations and allegiances change even within a period as confined as the Seventies. The “war’s” results are best reflected by the changes in presentation that occur between the era’s opening and its ending. Events early in the era still carry tinges of the Sixties flavor and the Seventies’ early struggle for individualized liberation. By the era’s end, events tend to have settled into more predictable patterns, driven by the same entrepreneurial and do-it-yourself ethos that fed the tax rebellion and contraction of government.

Events, rather than works, are my primary analytical subject. As moments of realized presentation, events shape and reflect the shape of the field. They bear the weight of the field’s history, but also move with the energy of the agents involved. An “event” includes not only the happening itself, but also the preparation for and response to that happening. As such, the event can be extended forward and backward in time from the happening to the edges of utility. These boundaries are more practical than logical. Not all the events discussed in subsequent chapters are performances. The appointment or dismissal of an administrator, a general advertising campaign, or the opening of a new venue can all be events, provided they are presented to the public. These non-performance events are just as indicative of the shape of the field as those centered on a performance, and sometimes more so. They are especially useful in illustrating balances of power between constituencies.

While the presentation of a work may be an event's central occurrence, the work itself plays only a partial role in defining the event: One has to be blind not to see that discourse about a work is not mere accompaniment, intended to assist its perception and appreciation, but a stage in the production of the work, of its meaning and value.⁴⁰ The traditional triad of composer-performer-audience, which locates the musical work as the nexus of interaction, breaks down when the work is removed from the center. Discussing events requires acknowledgment of the mutable and multiple roles individuals and institutions play in presentation. The creative forces in an event extend beyond the composer, especially in the Seventies as improvisation and collaboration became routine. The prominence of intermedia arts and collaborative projects necessitates a step backward from the work as the score or recording that has come down to the present day. Events often involve multiple creators, sometimes with competing interests.

Just as the creative elements of an event extend beyond a composer, the responsibility for realizing the event extends beyond the performer. For large-scale productions, realizing the event typically required a professional, specialized staff—music librarians, stage managers, lighting designers, etc. In small-scale productions lacking economic capital, the necessities of presentation often required individuals to play multiple roles for which they may or may not have had formal training. Even on-stage roles often extended beyond individuals' specializations in works, for example, that required instrumentalists to dance or dancers to sing. Many of the events in the following chapters required considerable personnel to realize; where possible, I try to take the breadth of their efforts into consideration.

⁴⁰ Bourdieu, *Field*, 110.

The audience is also assumed to be an *active* participant in the event. The audience is not a purely reactive collection of individuals, nor even a dynamic collection of social groups. It shares in the game of defining the work *as* a work, and of assessing its value. The audience is capable of initiating change and creating meaning for the event in the field. It interacts not only with the other agents under consideration, but with itself. The audience responds to actions, yes, but it also helps define the shape of the field in an active manner. The activities of journalists, particularly in media-heavy New York, influenced all sorts of practical and creative decisions.

Artistic institutions were certainly not original to the Seventies, but they increased in importance as both bastions of tradition and organizing tools of the avant-garde. It is hardly a coincidence that many of the creators under discussion went out of their way to build their own institutions. This was perhaps the most important development in the presentation of the new: that artists sought neither the endorsement of extant institutions nor to work completely outside them, but rather developed their own, often in direct competition. Those institutions developed their own capacities and needs, and were not always mere organizational figureheads.

Particularly in the Downtown collectives, individuals often assumed multiple roles. Artists like Reich and Glass functioned as creators, but also performed in their own ensembles. They developed the organizations that allowed those ensembles and associated production apparatuses to raise the public and private funds necessary to realize performances, as well as to manage both the production and personnel. They interacted with other members of the “scene,” from visual artists like Sol LeWitt to film-

makers like Michael Snow to choreographers like Lucinda Childs. The line between “audience member” and “potential collaborator” was a thin and shifting one. While it is often possible to identify an individual’s primary role in any given event, that identification cannot come at the expense of other roles the individual filled.

It is tempting to position institutions as adversaries to the individual, as inherently conservative or obstructive agents, working to prolong and heighten their existence at the expense of the creators, realizers, and audience. The Sixties and Seventies alike contributed to this notion, enhancing a long-standing American distrust of power. While many institutions did have a strongly conservative bent, a tendency to present works that had already entered what Bourdieu calls the “eternal present of consecrated *culture*,”⁴¹ others explicitly advocated artistic radicalism. In either case, though, institutions aimed always at the accumulation of some kind of capital:

For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecration objects...or persons...and therefore to give value, and to appropriate profits from this operation.⁴²

For this reason, even conservative institutions often worked to incorporate new music into their programming, both as a mark of continued “relevance” and in the search for new works to consecrate. Most importantly, institutions channelized many of the responses to changes in the economies of music presentation.

Indeed, the need to respond to economic exigency helped create institutions.

Small, independent organizations such as the Kitchen and Phill Niblock’s Intermedia Arts

⁴¹ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 156.

⁴² Bourdieu, *Field*, 75.

Center provided venues for the presentation of works that did not fit into the existing sectors of the field. They helped *create* those sectors both by contributing to artistic identity and providing the material support necessary for new artists to establish themselves. As with many of the organizations developed in the Seventies, these small artistic institutions grew out of communal impulses and the desire to create alternatives to the mainstream rather than taking it over. Because they focused on alternatives rather than “victory,” they could not be directly subordinated to established institutions like the New York Philharmonic. Small producers had accrued symbolic capital—the authority to define what was and wasn’t legitimate new music.

The struggle for that capital, though, was continuous throughout the Seventies, even as the terms of debate and the field of new music’s autonomy changed. It is the struggle that defines the system, that illuminates and is illuminated by changes in other fields. Producers and institutions took positions—in alliance and in conflict—in order to obtain the symbolic capital necessary to tilt the field of cultural production in their favor.

The struggle creates the meaning of presentations (and the presented events):

When we speak of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus...but the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or, to put it another way, that the generative, unifying principle of this ‘system’ is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders.⁴³

Over the course of the Seventies, agents carved out new positions, leading to enduring changes and, indeed, altering the mode of both the “prize” and the “permanent conflict.”

⁴³ Ibid., 34.

The conflicts within the field of new music could lead to enduring change because the field of power was shifting along with them. Social, political, and economic changes form the background (and occasionally the foreground) of the changes within the field. While the homologies are not always complete, they are often striking. In this Bourdieu can be brought back around to Jameson and the matter of periods being defined by their structural limits. The war for what comes next was conducted as much on the broader field of power as it was in the new musical subfield—as much in political debates and mass movements as on concert stages and in lofts.

I discuss the prosecution of that conflict in an alternating series of synchronic snapshots and diachronic slow pans. The following chapter is a snapshot of the generational shift at the Seventies' opening. The prominent figures of the Fifties and Sixties—such as Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, and Merce Cunningham—effectively ceded control of new music to younger artists like Pierre Boulez, Philip Glass, and Meredith Monk. These younger artists continued, at least at the Seventies' opening, to fight the battles for artistic prestige (Bourdieu's "consecration") in the same terms the previous generation had: modernism versus experimentalism, independence versus institutions, cooperatives versus patronage. Simultaneously, the field of power saw the displacement of the New Deal by a neoconservative wave.

"Shifting Fronts," the third chapter, tracks the activity of the new generation through the early years of the Seventies (~1971-75). At the Philharmonic, Boulez's aggressive programming of modernist avant-garde composers met harsh criticism and prompted revised, more conciliatory presentation. Meanwhile, Boulez created outreach

programs like the “Rugs” and Prospective Encounters both to entice downtowners to Lincoln Center and to carry his kind of avant-garde music directly to them. Downtown, SoHo solidified as a neighborhood and an artistic enclave, helping to create both audience and identity for Glass, Monk, and the other artists working there. These artists began to move their events from lofts and galleries to dedicated concert spaces, some of their own creation. Charles Wuorinen’s newly-won Pulitzer could not inure him from the conflicting demands of the university as institution and his own desires for independence. He and his Uptown colleagues found themselves increasingly at the field’s periphery, excluded from the Philharmonic and fighting difficult battles for patronage. The nation experienced the first Oil Shock and Watergate, shifting opinions on American dominance and the trustworthiness of its government. Those problems were writ small in New York City, which began a steady spiral toward bankruptcy.

“Fireworks and Fragmentation,” chapter four, is a snapshot of 1975-76, a moment colored by the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations. Events associated with these celebrations, like the “Celebration of Contemporary Music” (hosted jointly by the New York Philharmonic, The Juilliard School, and the Fromm Foundation) sought to claim a place for American music, old and new, in a broader context. Alongside the institutional expressions of new music were major events staged by Downtown artists: Reich’s premiere of *Music for 18 Musicians* at Town Hall, Monk’s multimedia *Quarry*, and, most famously, the debut of the Philip Glass/Robert Wilson collaboration *Einstein on the Beach* to packed houses at the Metropolitan Opera. Such events marked both the penetration of Downtown composers into consecrated venues and the solidification of

SoHo as an arts enclave. Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford competed for the presidency in an election colored more by mounting problems (such as New York City's financial meltdown) than by the grandiosity of the nation's 200th birthday.

Chapter five, "Regrouping" traces new music in New York through the closing years of the Seventies. At the Philharmonic, Pierre Boulez was replaced by Zubin Mehta, a far more conservative conductor; programming began to resemble Bernstein's. While American university composers regained some access to the Philharmonic (particularly those who embraced Neo-Romanticism), they continued to present their work primarily to each other through a handful of elite chamber ensembles. Reich and Glass, trading on their recent successes at home and abroad, played rock clubs like The Bottom Line in addition to their more formal concerts. Meanwhile, Meredith Monk adapted to the changing shape of SoHo by exploring novel forms of presentation (including film). Jimmy Carter and Ed Koch sought to turn the nation and New York City around, settling in to post-New Deal patterns that demanded more accountability and diminished governmental largesse. Anti-tax conservative movements sprung up around the country, laying groundwork for a new era.

Chapter six, "Détente," is a snapshot of the Seventies' end (1979-81). With Reagan on the rise and New York City well on the path to stability, the national mood (and the shape of the field of power) had changed. The new institutions created by various artists had, by this time, established their independence and their economic viability. The Philharmonic had thoroughly retreated from its experiment with avant-gardism, and settled into comfortable, subscriber-friendly programming, leavened with a

handful of contemporary works to maintain artistic credibility. The Downtown artists had gained enough prestige to grant them a permanent foothold in consecrated venues. Most importantly, the various institutions that artists had established demonstrated their viability and independence, facilitating a situation in which artists from many segments of the field could coexist. The variety of coexisting styles is illustrated in an analysis of the Kitchen's New Music New York festival, which showcased many of the artists discussed elsewhere in the thesis.

Chapter seven, "What Was Next, What Was Left" examines the consequences of the Seventies' changes and the staying power of the era's models of presentation. In it, I revisit the broader questions of periodization and presentation addressed in chapter one, arguing that the field's fragmentation in Seventies changed the definition of new music. The conflict for capital also established distinct, enduring patterns of artistic life that remained vital until the ascendancy of information technology and home studios in the late 1990s.

**CHAPTER TWO:
Old Campaign, New Campaigners (1968-1971)**

While the Sixties cast a long shadow over the Seventies, it was deepest at the era's opening, when nobody was quite sure whether the Sixties were over. Hindsight may paint 1968 as a decisive end, but the main actors did not simply vanish as 1969 began, nor did their causes. From Pop Art to protests, from Pollock to the Black Panthers, from Fluxus to the Columbia Riots, from rock and roll to the Summer of Love, the Sixties had been an era of negation, of attempts to overthrow and supplant the established order. The events of 1968 divided Americans without stopping the Sixties' battles. Recession and Nixon's election marked the beginning of a negation of the growth liberalism that had dominated the postwar era. Economic shifts amplified those conservative efforts even as they rocked American optimism and set the stage for the recessionary waves of the Seventies.

In the winter of 1968-69, though, it was easy to see the disruptions as anomalies—the recession had been sparked by foreign speculation, and Nixon had taken advantage of a bitterly-divided Left. More than disrupting the Sixties' struggles, the events of 1968 created a moment of uncertainty. In the early Seventies, a new generation took over the push for change, be it political, social, or aesthetic. The old banners were in the hands of new campaigners; how they carried them defined the early Seventies...before recession and oil shock, before the ebbing of the Vietnam War, before people knew just how different the Seventies would become.

By early 1968, LBJ's attempt to fight a war in Southeast Asia while building the Great Society at home had stretched U.S. political economy to the breaking point.

—Robert Collins¹

Economic expansion had been a constant of the postwar years in the United States. The industrial machine that helped win the Second World War was put to work for civilian purposes. Thousands of veterans entered the university system and then the work force. Eisenhower's interstate system fueled demand for cars and helped facilitate the dispersal of urban populations into suburbs. While there were bumps and miscues (a recession in the early Fifties and the inconclusive Korean War), the U.S. economy and its political influence waxed as it became one of the world's two superpowers.

Even as 1968's protests rumbled the country, even as the presidential primaries began, the country's (and, indeed, the world's) economic foundation was fraying. The gold standard, and the Bretton Woods accords that had, in effect, made U.S. dollars directly equivalent to (and exchangeable for) gold, were at the end of their utility. The U.S. was sending more money abroad (whether through tourism, aid, or military expenditures) than other countries were spending in the U.S. As more and more dollars flowed through the world economy, the artificial connection of the dollar to gold became increasingly difficult to support—there was doubt as to whether there was enough gold available should countries want to exchange their dollars for it. The problem was exacerbated as the Vietnam War and Great Society programs spurred domestic inflation.

President Lyndon Johnson could have addressed the problem, at least in part, through a tax increase—it would have slowed the domestic economy and propped up

¹ Robert M. Collins, "The Economic Crisis of 1968 and Waning of the 'American Century'," *The American Historical Review*, 101, No. 2 (April 1996): 412-413.

government coffers. Political exigencies prevented that, and when speculation in gold began to spread in late 1967 and early 1968, Johnson had few options to tamp it down. Countries were simply unwilling to hold their reserves in dollars when the dollar seemed poised to plummet in relation to gold. As the crisis developed and the international currency system neared collapse, a series of emergency meetings were called among the world's central bankers. The eventual solution was complex, but involved separating the gold currency market from the gold commodity market and creating "paper gold" usable for international exchanges.²

The domestic consequences were substantial: greatest among them was the forced compromise between Johnson and Congress on a tax increase bill. The bill effectively gutted Johnson's Great Society and dramatically curbed non-Vietnam defense expenditures. Lack of funds, as much as the Vietnam War's unpopularity, held to a minimum the reinforcements Westmoreland received in the wake of the Tet Offensive. Most importantly, Robert Collins argues, the limits that the 1968 economic crisis made clear spelled the end of America's *idea* of an "American Century." No longer could government spending expand boundlessly, supported by a boundlessly expanding economy. The reverberations of growth liberalism's end would ring through the Seventies: the era of a fiscal "do what thou wilt" was about to be replaced by an era of "do only what thou must."

Richard Nixon's election evidenced the imminent ascendance of this conservative position, but it was not a decisive victory for conservatism. As Melvin Small writes,

² The solution proved temporary; Nixon would eventually remove the dollar from the gold standard in 1971, sweeping away the last remnants of Bretton Woods. Current floating-currency systems were more or less in place by 1973 (Collins, "Economic Crisis").

“Nixon was fortunate to be running for president at a time when the Democratic Party was coming apart at the seams.”³ Nor was Nixon’s advantage composed solely of the Left’s disarray. The political field was deeply unsettled in the wake of Robert Kennedy’s assassination, Johnson’s withdrawal from the Democratic primary process, and George Wallace’s strong segregationist candidacy. Hubert Humphrey, entering the race late, initially hewed to Johnson’s pro-war line; it was the unpopularity of that position that helped foment the protests at the Chicago Democratic National Convention. Humphrey tried largely to stay aloof from the chaos, which cost him further with young and engaged voters (and volunteers). Back-and-forth about Vietnam colored the campaign, particularly as peace talks in Paris approached and retreated from an armistice. The ultimate breakdown of those talks shortly before the election hampered the momentum Humphrey had built late in the campaign. As election day approached, the race was too close to call. Though Nixon captured a healthy electoral majority, he won the popular vote by only half a million ballots.

Nixon had managed to capitalize on chaos. He concentrated on a “silent center,” a moderate American middle class worried about the country’s identity and future. By promising law and order and hearkening back to the good years of the Eisenhower administration (where he’d served as vice president), Nixon presented himself as a potential bulwark against the changes the silent center feared. Racial resentment over forced busing and federally-imposed integration played a part in Nixon’s success, but the increasing economic turmoil and a more abstract sense that the country was headed in the

³ Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 25.

wrong direction were more important.⁴ Nixon's victory made it clear that desire for change was not exclusive to young radicals and minorities (who, he implied, wanted entirely the wrong kind of change); his election was not simply a "push back" from a conservative middle class. Significant swathes of the American population wanted an antidote to despair, to race riots, to the sense that America might, for the first time since the Great Depression, be *losing*. Though he campaigned on generalities, Nixon convinced a majority of Americans that he could lead them out of uncertainty to a better future.

Uncertainty equally dominated the life of New York City, though it began the Seventies well to the left of the nation. The aftermath of the Columbia riots was still playing out, and direct social action remained prominent. The city grappled with crime waves and a sense of moral decay. John Lindsay, elected as mayor in 1965 while promising dramatic reform, had stumbled through his first term. He submitted to the demands of the municipal unions, continued the disastrous accounting practices that hid operating deficits as capital expenditures, and did little to combat the impression that New York was in the initial stages of a long slide to disaster. Even Lindsay's deft handling of race relations both in the wake of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination and in the tumult surrounding de facto segregation in the city's schools could not salve New Yorkers' growing fear...of the present or future.⁵

As the end of Lindsay's first term approached, Lankevich avers

⁴ The notion that the U.S. was heading toward catastrophe was equally prevalent among the young and the established middle class. See Schulman's *Seventies*, 16-17 and 35-38.

⁵ George Lankevich refers to Lindsay's quasi-heroic "walking the ghetto streets and really caring" as the best evidence of his skill in handling the tensions. *American Metropolis: A History of New York City* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 204.

There was no doubt that New York City...was still strong, but each day its finances worsened, its restive minorities grew more sullen, its institutional fabric weakened, and its resilient spirit eroded just a bit more. A time of testing was approaching when many would question whether New York could survive the 1970s.⁶

He goes on to call 1969 a “watershed in New York history as the last good economic year the city would enjoy for a decade.”⁷ Bolstered in part by Lindsay’s unwillingness to curb the unions and consequent expansion of municipal jobs, New York City enjoyed one of the lowest urban unemployment rates in the country. Manufacturing was still strong, and a variety of building projects were both planned and begun.⁸

Just like Nixon, Lindsay managed to narrowly win re-election in a three-way race that divided the electorate. He promised to lead New York out of its troubles (financial, social, and otherwise) without cutting services. Having already served one term, Lindsay could potentially create continuity and order within municipal government. In an editorial highlighting the potential in Lindsay’s re-election—and noting that his ownership of the city’s success or failure was far more complete than in his first term, the *New York Times* summarized the city’s troubled situation, but also hope for the future:

The cities of the nation are burdened with responsibilities for delivering services. They are, at the same time, bereft of resources, rotting at the core and seething with social tensions...Mayor Lindsay has the opportunity—with skill, with luck and with cooperation—to make city government work. In moving to seize it, he deserves steady support from an expanding coalition of the citizenry.⁹

⁶ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 204.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸ The World Trade Center was among these projects, having been started early in Lindsay’s first term and to be finished in 1970 and 1971.

⁹ Editorial, *New York Times*, November 8, 1969.

That a newly re-elected mayor would require such exhortations for an “expanding coalition” of support makes clear New York’s instability. As the Seventies opened, Mayor Lindsay and his city would have to solve increasingly varied and urgent problems, but in 1969, the depths to which the city would eventually fall were, if not unthinkable, at least easily put out of mind. The mayor had strong connections to the state government and the stream of assistance it could provide. Money still flowed from the banks, and the pillars of authority that the Sixties had shaken seemed to be stabilizing.

In 1968 Manhattan, the field of new music production aligned loosely with the borough’s geography. Uptown, the island’s north end, belonged to the academics of Columbia. The southern part of the island, Downtown (especially the area that would become SoHo), was populated by the young and the avant-garde. Money concentrated in the large institutions of Midtown, particularly in Lincoln Center, home to some of the city’s most prestigious performing arts institutions. Competition between these segments of the field of cultural production characterized the Seventies’ “war for what’s next.” Artists’ associations with the different segments determined the material circumstances and structural limits with which they worked, as well as the way they interacted with each other. (See Figure 2-1.)

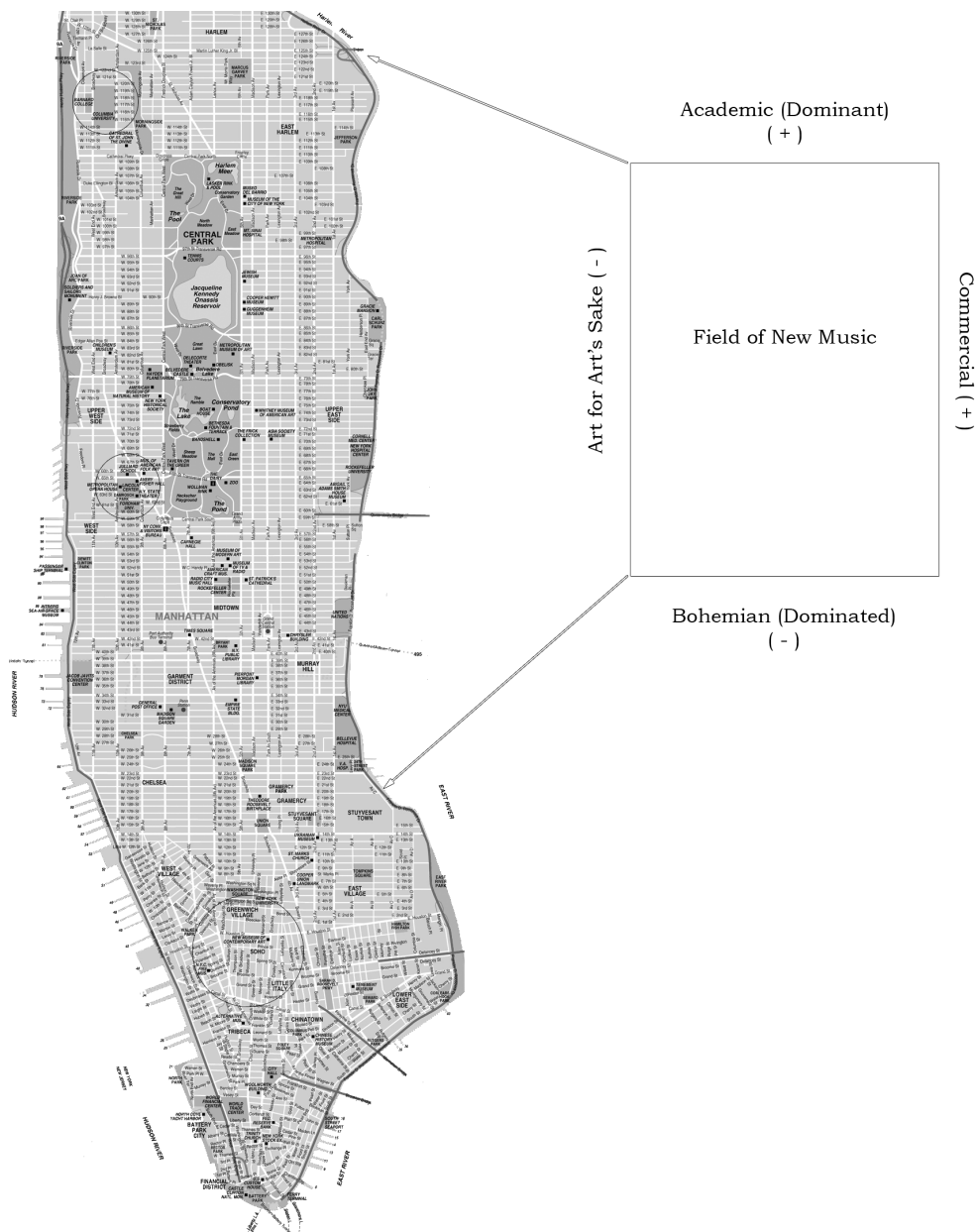


Figure 2-1. A map of Manhattan as cultural field (after Bourdieu). Circled areas (from north to south): Columbia University (Uptown), Lincoln Center (Midtown), SoHo (Downtown). Note that the square shown represents only a particularly restricted subfield of cultural production.

University affiliation, particularly with the Columbia-Princeton “axis” characterized the Uptown avant-garde. The prime figures held professorial positions within those universities. Chamber ensembles such as Charles Wuorinen’s Group for

Contemporary Music presented concerts on campus and at venues associated with university patrons. Their constituency was not merely educated, but musically educated. University affiliation secured a certain amount of economic stability as well as a baseline of symbolic capital. Like the institutions of Lincoln Center, universities could serve as a means of converting money into prestige through public philanthropy. The universities served an important function in maintaining the constant present of consecrated music; the education they provided was the prime determinant of what could stay in the canon. Unlike the midtown institutions, though, uptown institutions and artists were generally part of larger institutions, with far less direct economic pressure on their cultural production.

“Midtown” was, to downtowners, interchangeable with Uptown, included in the broad category of “not us.” While Midtown and Uptown served similar functions in maintaining the body of consecrated cultural products, there were important distinctions in their characteristics. The institutions of Midtown were, first and foremost, cultural producers. Their identity revolved around presenting events at high levels of performance. By the beginning of the Seventies, those events were presented mostly at Lincoln Center.

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts began as an urban renewal project, a clearing out of ethnic tenements surrounding Lincoln Square. John D. Rockefeller the third led fund-raising efforts, and Dwight D. Eisenhower broke ground for the project in 1959. The New York Philharmonic was the first organization to take up residence at the center in September of 1962 at the new Philharmonic Hall. It was joined by the New

York State Theater in 1964 (which also hosts the School of American Ballet), in 1965 by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts and the Metropolitan Opera (although the Metropolitan Opera House did not open until the following year), and finally by Alice Tully Hall and the Juilliard School in 1969. The accretion of institutions to the old square cemented the location as the center of consecrated music-making in New York, and as one of the premiere concentrations in the world. Lincoln Center became the place where the field of power and the field of cultural production aligned, the center for consecrated works of the past and attempts to consecrate works of the present. In the field of new music, the New York Philharmonic that bore that twin responsibility in an especially visible way.

The completion of Lincoln Center helped solidify the alignment of the field of power with the field of cultural production in Manhattan. In it, the efforts of philanthropists and “heirloom” institutions like the Philharmonic and the Met (ones with long histories and prestigious legacies) were concentrated to a single locus of authority. Lincoln Center became a prime vehicle for consecration, even as the consecrated works of the past dominated its events. Education and “public service” were part of the Center’s charter, enshrining the dissemination of the consecrated as a vital part of its mission. Just as importantly, the various institutions housed at Lincoln Center became important vehicles for the wealthy to convert economic capital to cultural capital. Donors were noted in publicity materials and invited to special events. Donating to Lincoln Center or

its member groups could raise individuals' or businesses' profiles, allowing them to accrue prestige in the field of power.¹⁰

More central to Lincoln Center's function in the field than the prestige accompanying donors was the social distinction of *attending* events there. The concentration of heirloom institutions turned Lincoln Center into a kind of high-culture shopping mall. The high-culture consumers were not always wealthy, but they generally were educated. If they could not accrue prestige through donation, they could demonstrate the symbolic capital they had already accrued simply by publicly "consuming" events presented by the heirloom institutions, partaking in the eternal present of the consecrated. The confluence of economic and symbolic capital in Lincoln Center made it as central to Manhattan's performing arts world as it was to the island's geography.

If Lincoln Center was central, Downtown was marginal in just as many senses of the word. "Downtown," in 1968, meant the Villages—Greenwich Village proper on the west side of the island, and its East Village counterpart. The former had long been a haven of poets and authors, recently the haunt of the Beats. The East Village, meanwhile, was centered around Washington Square, originally planned as a parade ground and, by the late 60s, a "drug supermarket."¹¹ It was in the East Village that Warhol had his first and second Factory, where folk singers played in the Square, and where students at New York University mingled with Bohemians and addicts alike. There was little respectable

¹⁰ The conversion between economic and symbolic capital is always fraught and indirect, relying on the established rules of the field. See Bourdieu, *Field*, 75.

¹¹ Eric Homberger, *New York City: A Cultural and Literary Companion* (New York: Interlink Books, 1993), 114.

about either “side” of the Village—its artistic and political legacy was eccentric at best, and for the early decades of the twentieth century, politics and art had gone hand in hand. In the Sixties, the only unity had been in chaos; there was a “scene,” but little in the way of “schools.”¹²

The light industrial district just south of NYU and the East Village had, before Manhattan’s industrialization, been the south village. By 1968, some industry remained, but it was a downtrodden area of run-down building stock and cluttered streets. A 1962 report published by the City Club—“The Wastelands of New York City”—described “Spring, Broome, Mercer and Green Commercial Slum Area No. 1, recommended for clearance and rebuilding. There are no buildings worth saving.”¹³ Robert Moses’ planned Lower Manhattan Expressway would do exactly that: clear the buildings and replace them with a new east-west route from the Holland Tunnel to the Manhattan Bridge. The threat of the expressway and difficulty in accessing transportation infrastructure kept industrial redevelopers out of SoHo, but by 1968, a number of artists had fled the rising rents of the Village proper to squat in or illegally rent the large, vacant buildings.

Despite lying closer to the towers of Manhattan’s southern point and the economic power concentrated therein, “Downtown” had little economic heft, and only slightly more in the field of cultural production. The Village had ready access to Manhattan’s industrial districts, concentrated in SoHo and along the waterfront. Industry (particularly the shipping and textile mills that had been New York’s primary ones) was

¹² For a brief history of the Village, see chapter five of Homberger’s *New York City*.

¹³ Quoted in Ada Louise Huxtable, “Good Buildings Have Friends,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1970. Huxtable’s article, in addition to providing a history of the area, is also an advocacy piece for the preservation of the district’s historic cast-iron facades.

fading even in the Sixties. Vacancies and industrial detritus helped keep property values low. The cheap, run-down building stock attracted individuals who wanted to be part of what New York stood for but couldn't afford the rents of more respectable districts.

Weakness in the field of power combined with a young population and interest in cultural production helped to make the Village a center of New York's "bohemia" and a center of the unconsecrated avant-garde.

Musically, the Downtown of the Sixties developed in the shadow of John Cage's projects of the Fifties. While his contemporaries had worked to negate previous notions of tonality and euphony, Cage had worked strenuously to negate the hierarchy of sound. Any sound, in any setting, could be a musical one. Cage promulgated these ideas in an influential course at the New School for Social Research from the fall of 1956 to the summer of 1960. It was through that course that the next generation of composers embraced what Kyle Gann calls "post-Cagean conceptualism."¹⁴ The radical avant-garde of the post-war years had pushed the artwork to true contingency; the conceptualists embraced that contingency with a furor, challenging every received notion of art that they could. Divisions between performer and audience were reversed or dissolved completely. Performances moved out of theaters and concert halls. In some cases performers took to the streets, in other cases to galleries or lofts. While the academic avant-gardists took their stands on various points of musical language, the conceptualists took their stand on

¹⁴ Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Schirmer, 1997).

the nature of art itself—“the one unforgivable transgression,” according to Bourdieu.¹⁵

Eroding the divisions between performer and audience was a means to attack the distinction between art and everyday life. It was not always clear whether the intent was to aestheticize the everyday or to make the aesthetic the mundane.

At the heart of that conceptualist movement in New York was Fluxus. Organized around the entrepreneurship and ideology of George Maciunas,¹⁶ Fluxus’s membership included several attendees of the Cage course, including George Brecht, Jackson Mac Low, Al Hansen, and Dick Higgins. (It was in Richard Maxfield’s post-1960 continuation of Cage’s course that Maciunas met LaMonte Young, and would eventually become interested in the series of concerts Young organized in Yoko Ono’s loft.)¹⁷ Cage’s radical dissolution of the hierarchy of sound helped inspire Fluxartists’ approach to dissolving other hierarchies. It also, though, put them in the unenviable position of trying to create in a totality that might as well have been a vacuum:

This move was musically emancipatory...but was ultimately as inhibitive as any endgame, especially in its inability to respond to changing social conditions of aurality. It maintained a musical and modernist unity, cordoned off from related sonic/aural fields bearing social and historical resonance, and thereby limited artistic and other perceptual practices.¹⁸

¹⁵ “All attempts to call into question the field of artistic production, the logic of the functions it performs, through the highly sublimated means of discourse or artistic ‘acts’ (e.g. Maciunas or Flynt) are not necessarily bound to be condemned even by the most heterodox guardians of artistic orthodoxy, because in refusing to play the game, to challenge in accordance with the rules, i.e. artistically, their authors call into question not a way of playing the game, but the game itself and the belief which supports it. This is the one unforgivable transgression” (Bourdieu, *Field*, 80-81).

¹⁶ Maciunas would go on to become an important co-op creator and figure of note in SoHo. See chapter three.

¹⁷ Bruce Altshuler, “The Cage Class” in *FluxAttitudes* (Ghent, Belgium: Imschoot on behalf of Hallwalls Gallery, 1991), 17-23.

¹⁸ Douglas Kahn, “The Sound of Fluxus” in *FluxAttitudes*, 43.

Fluxus and Maciunas strove to grapple more directly with social and historical resonances, to liberate people through the elision of art and the everyday. Without recourse to organized sound (which was impossible without implicit hierarchy), however, they turned to activities, to irony and humor. Douglas Kahn argues that “[Fluxus’s] short and ephemeral forms are detritus in the wake of modernist totalizations, a detailing on the margins.”¹⁹ These activities echoed Dada (to the point where an early manifesto of Maciunas’s referred to “Neo-Dadaism”), but embraced their contingency far more than Dadaist works had—the Fluxus artists were, depending on perspective, either gleefully stomping up and down on the remains of the work that Cage had helped shatter, or framing and putting a signature on those fragments for gallery exhibition.

For Maciunas, “Fluxus” stood equally for a style, a philosophy, a kind of cultural production...and a “magazine.” Maciunas organized Fluxus as a collective (in part as a means of promotion), amassing scores, instructions, and readymade art objects into a magazine crated in a special box, branded with the “Fluxus” title.²⁰ Fluxus was explicitly anti-art, aimed at integrating life into what Maciunas called “concrete reality” (as opposed to illusory or aesthetic reality).²¹ As cultural production, it was restricted production (art for art’s sake) that demanded the destruction of restrictions on production.

LaMonte Young, more directly than Cage, provided the gestural vocabulary for what became Fluxus. The proto-Fluxus *An Anthology* of 1961 collected some of Young’s

¹⁹ Ibid., 44.

²⁰ For a history of the magazine, including its development, see Jon Hendricks and Clive Phillpot, *Fluxus: Selections from the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1988), 9-16. The booklet also contains reproductions of letters from Maciunas to LaMonte Young, images of the fluxbooks, and other information about the coalescence of the movement.

²¹ Ibid., 26-27.

“word pieces” from *Compositions 1960*, action-oriented instructions that became typical of Fluxus. Young claims that he and his circle had introduced Maciunas to the avant-garde.²² Young himself had only recently arrived in New York in the fall of 1960, ostensibly to study with John Cage, but as a practical matter, to “solidif[y] the new wave” of the avant-garde.²³ Cultivating a psychedelic image before it was commonplace, Young soon connected with the downtown avant-garde of the West Village: George Maciunas, Jackson MacLow, Yoko Ono, Henry Flynt, and others.²⁴ Young was the founding musical director of the concert series at Yoko Ono’s loft on Chambers Street, “representing,” as Young put it, “one of the beginnings of alternative performance spaces.”²⁵ He took Maciunas to one of these concerts. Maciunas embraced the ideal and soon convinced many of the artists involved to perform at his AG Gallery. Young was thus involved nearly from his arrival in New York with alternative presentation strategies and the cultivation of a “scene,” a community where the distinctions between artists, performers, audiences, and impresarios often blurred.

The performances were oriented very much toward “insiders” of the loft subculture. They could effectively be advertised by word of mouth because there was no great push to present the works to a large audience. The art was created and presented for its own sake, with the regard of perceived and desired peers the primary goal. In Young

²² LaMonte Young, “Why I Withdrew from Fluxus,” in *Fluxus Scores and Instructions: The Transformative Years*, ed. Jon Hendricks, (Roskilde, Denmark: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 52-54. Edward Strickland also addresses Young’s early (and temporary) association with Fluxus in *Minimalism: Origins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 140-142.

²³ Henry A Flynt, Jr. “Mutations of the Vanguard,” in Gino Di Maggio, ed., *Ubi Fluxus Ibi Motus: 1990-1962* (Milan: Nuove Edizione Gabriele Mazzota, 1990). Quoted in Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 49.

²⁴ Potter, *Minimalists*, 49. Edward Strickland also addresses Young’s early (and temporary) association with Fluxus in *Minimalism: Origins*, 140-142.

²⁵ Potter, *Minimalists*, 50.

and Ono's concert series, each artist received two evenings specifically for his or her own work (in contrast to the Fluxus shows, which tended to "[jam] as many names onto one program as possible").²⁶ Because there was so little effort to present many of the works outside of the scene, the loft concert culture made little impact on the field of power and remained marginal in terms of both economic status and artistic or intellectual consecration.

Contradictorily, the exclusivity created by small concerts with limited publicity helped to cultivate allure and a peculiar prestige that owed its existence largely to the lack of any external validation. Within the field of cultural production, the loft events represent what Bourdieu dubs "avant-garde bohemia," an area lacking specific symbolic capital as well as economic capital, albeit one with a high degree of autonomy. There is no established mechanism for these miniature presentations to generate economic capital or consecration; they are off the radar of popular consecrators (such as the newspaper critics), academic consecrators, the general consuming public, and the specialist consumers (the wealthy who consume art as cultural capital). What prestige producers like Young could accrue had as much to do with artistic scandal and a sense of the clandestine as the actual content of the works. To an extent, the presentation of these insider concerts was an attempt to negate the field of power that endorsed the trends and styles the Downtowners also sought to negate in the field of cultural production. It was counter-cultural as much as it was anti-art.

²⁶ LaMonte Young, "Why I Withdrew from Fluxus," 53.

Scandal alone proved unfulfilling for Young. As much as he welcomed Maciunas' entrepreneurship (and occasional material assistance), Young believed that Maciunas and, to some degree, Fluxus, missed the point:

George was a remarkable organizer with boundless energy. He was a great humanitarian and brought me loaves of bread and cans of food when I was starving. Nonetheless, in the hands of Maciunas, the influence of my ideas quickly degenerated into slapstick vaudeville. I always felt that George was the fifth Marx Brother and I loved his humor but it distorted the intention of my works.²⁷

Young's aims were different than Maciunas's, and those differences proved sufficient for Young to withdraw from Fluxus by 1963. His aesthetic and performance practices form an index of the transition between the Sixties and the Seventies. As an up-and-coming avant-gardist associated with Fluxus in the early Sixties, Young had had his fingers in a variety of pots, some of them collectives. When the broad movement proved empty, Young shifted focus, away from action pieces and back toward music (particularly the use of alternative tuning systems). By the dawn of the Seventies, he was engaged in increasingly personal and esoteric practices. While his Fluxus-associated works demonstrated a broad kind of anti-art social consciousness, his moves toward small-group improvisational practice represent a reduced ideal of collective action. By the mid-Seventies, Young would be intimately involved with long-scale works and installations, heavily indebted to and inspired by his musical and spiritual studies with Pandit Pran Nath.

Young was thoroughly entangled with both the aesthetic and cultural negations of the Village scene in the early 1960s, but his time as a full-fledged conceptualist was

²⁷ Ibid.

limited. He retained the mode of presentation and cultural production while moving to more straightforwardly musical projects, though he now placed improvisation at the center of his practice. Through the remainder of the early and middle 1960s, Young cultivated various improvisational ensembles and developed several structuring systems, many based on modes and, eventually, on just intonation. These ensembles, built around a small core of performers and working under the title *The Theatre of Eternal Music*, rehearsed for hours at a time in Young's Tribeca loft.

Composers performing their own works alongside others was, of course, nothing new. It was standard Western practice for centuries before falling somewhat out of favor in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The composer-driven ensembles of the Downtown Sixties, though, were inspired less by Bach leading the orchestra at Cöthen than by rock bands and jazz combos. LaMonte Young, like many of his “outsider” contemporaries, had put in significant stints on the bandstand. Aside from genre, there is little to distinguish a group of like-minded composer-performers in a jazz combo from a group like Young's Theatre. Fellow musicians provided musical (and moral) support and guaranteed performances (without necessarily guaranteeing public presentation).

This “band” model of avant-garde performance was a considerable departure from the standard practices in the academic and traditional concert environments of the Sixties. There, it was typical for a composer to simply hand off a score to an individual or ensemble—an ensemble that would generally present the composer's work alongside works by other composers. While the composer often had at least tangential impact on

the rehearsal and performance process, the remove from direct participation diminished control even as it helped maintain the idea of the composer as a strictly productive (rather than reproductive) artist. The avant-garde composers of the Sixties' Village lacked access to the consecrated ensembles, even if they had had interest in utilizing them. Particularly in the Sixties, Young, Fluxus, and many others worked toward a more communal, less hierarchical process of creation and performance. All members of the ensemble contributed ideas, particularly in those groups driven by structured improvisation.²⁸ The "composer" relinquished control over the material in a more profound manner than in, say, Cage's chance compositions.

The trend was not limited to the American avant-garde, nor even to the unconsecrated, bohemian avant-garde. Karlheinz Stockhausen embraced the personal ensemble in Europe and performed in New York as the Seventies began. The New York Philharmonic had commissioned Stockhausen's *Hymnen—Region III* for performance in as part of the subscription series in February, 1971. While *Region III* was accompanied by the orchestra, Stockhausen's own ensemble (Group Stockhausen) performed in that movement as "soloist," also performing the other three "regions" of the piece. (*Hymnen* was the whole concert, with Stockhausen as conductor.) While Stockhausen's group demonstrated the attractiveness of the band model, his was one where the composer

²⁸ This sometimes led to bitter disagreements later, as one person or another sought to claim sole credit for a group's musical innovations. See, for example, Potter's discussion of Young's Theatre of Eternal Music, in *Minimalists*, 60-61 and 71-73.

dominated, even in improvisation. The leader in this case provided the identity and the artistic content, something that was rarer in the communal environs of the Village.²⁹

In practical terms, the best-known composer of the group generally became the “frontman.” As a frontman, the composer’s role in the process of presentation changed considerably. The composer no longer had to or was able to rely on an outside ensemble’s ability to secure performances—getting his or her music before the public became more exclusively his own job. He could present events consisting exclusively of his group’s music, but had to do the legwork of securing venues, promoting the events, coordinating performers’ schedules, and generally “making things happen.” Business concerns became a much more important part of a composer-frontman’s job, one that helped lead, eventually, to the conversion of ensembles to institutions.

For LaMonte Young, the ensemble-improvisation model developed not into an institution, but into what was more or less a solo act. In 1970, Young and Zazeela began to study with (and often host) the Indian singer Pandit Pran Nath. Under his influence, Young’s work increasingly emphasized voice and drones, maintaining amplification, particularly in the Dream House projects, discussed in the following chapter. Throughout the early Seventies, Young and Zazeela toured both the U.S. and Europe. In their limited time in Manhattan, their work remained centered on their loft and Young’s increasingly long-scale projects. The stage was set for newer arrivals to take the scene.

²⁹ Despite this, Stockhausen drew substantial crowds for his New York appearances in the Seventies. Critics were impressed (and somewhat baffled) with Stockhausen’s pull among the young. See Harold Schonberg, “Stockhausen: Pied Piper Of the Young,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1971 and Peter Heyworth, “Stockhausen: Is He The Way And The Light?,” *New York Times*, Feb 21, 1971. (Both of these articles address Stockhausen’s premiere of *Hymnen* Region III with the Philharmonic.)

While Young had come from the musical world and spent only a brief time in Fluxus' world of artistic negation, Meredith Monk's background was in dance. Her early years on the New York scene were spent in the East Village, often in association with the "Judson Church Group," a loose coalition of artists (performing and otherwise) who presented events at the Judson Memorial Church, and later spawned a touring ensemble. Though the Judson Group lacked a unifying aesthetic, the concept of "intermedia" united its various elements. A looser kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, intermedia performances freely combined music, dance, film, visual art, and drama. This freewheeling artistic foment proved central to Monk's developing aesthetic (and meshed neatly with her multifaceted training in music and dance).

The Judson Memorial Church still stands on Washington Square, within the vague boundaries of NYU's dispersed campus. It remains a bastion of liberal social consciousness as well as a performance space, particularly for poetry.³⁰ In the Sixties, performances were held both in the church proper and in its "gallery." The church had a more or less full-time gallery manager in Jon Hendricks, and it produced its own press releases and posters for the events it hosted.³¹ Among the luminaries working in the loosely-defined "Judson Group" were artists Robert Morris and Robert Rauschenberg (who danced as well), choreographers Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, Steve Paxton and Trisha Brown.

³⁰ In April 2010, for example, the Judson's outdoor bulletin board displayed a running tally of military and civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan.

³¹ Hendricks would later go on to curate important Fluxus exhibitions, including the 1988 retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art.

By 1968, Monk had made a name for herself with her Judson performances, which drifted happily between dance and drama, usually accompanied by music she had created herself or in collaboration. (Reviews would not describe her as a composer for several years.) As with most events staged at the Judson, admission was “by contribution”—the model that worked for everything from rent parties to political actions. The works were presented in the typical Judson manner: with roughly-typed press releases, neatly photocopied (sometimes with photos) fliers on colored 8.5x11” paper, often with a following reception. Distributing fliers—both by hand and by post—was a time-honored tradition, and one that would remain an important form of advertisement in the upcoming era. The press releases helped get performances by the Judson group into the arts listings of neighborhood and citywide papers, but there was no budget to advertise in them. While finding space in the listings was important, the press releases also put arts editors on notice that something was happening. By the Seventies’ opening, performances at the Judson were deemed important enough to send reviewers (often those already involved in the Downtown scene) to many of them. In some cases, the reviewers were not even local, as this review of Monk’s *OVERLOAD/BLUEPRINT* from *Arts Canada* demonstrates:

That Meredith Monk’s new work is not pure dance or pure drama is irrelevant. The freedom and complexity with which she has combined elements of several arts was a measure of her success...She has utilized filmatic and electronic tools with cool efficiency, not as ends in themselves, but as means to her ends which are theatrical and perhaps visionary. Beneath the surface of her new work, she is apsychological as the most strait-laced literalist, but she is not afraid of the irrational imagination, nor of presenting and stimulating those experiences which can be labeled

‘poetic’, but only in the toughest, most non-literary sense of the word.³²

The review highlights the fact that the work going on at Judson utilized tools beyond the traditionally choreographic or dramatic. While Fluxus tended to focus on negating the division between the aesthetic and the everyday—the conversion of art into a kind of anti-art—intermedia artists like those working at Judson negated convention by negating the boundaries between arts. It was not a case of mere dabbling; the artists associated with Judson worked closely with each other across media. The social and artistic relationships fostered in the East Village helped the foment of this “revolution”:

...the one [revolution] we are witnessing today differs significantly from its predecessors in that it has deliberately blurred the lines of demarcation between one art and another. Creative artists everywhere are invading each others’ territory, plucking ideas and techniques from here and there, even from the field of technology, in order to beget new aesthetic experiences.³³

Monk, while not a “core” member of the Judson group, certainly shared this intermedia approach. As the Sixties turned to the Seventies, her works already involved a blend of dance and drama with electronics and film. Monk’s interest in drama and theatricality, in nonexplicit narrative, distinguished her from much of the Judson group. Deborah Jowitt calls her part of a “renegade second generation,” one that was distinct from its elders but still driven by an “objective” performing style, collage, film, and nonstandard spaces.³⁴ Carrying on the work of Fluxus in negating the aestheticized, the Judsonites were nonetheless closely wrapped up in their art forms and concerned with

³² John Perrault, review of OVERLOAD/BLEUPRINT in *Arts Canada* (April 1968): 43. Judson Memorial Church archives at NYU.

³³ Marian Eames, “Exhibition,” *Dance Magazine*, October 1968, 47.

³⁴ Deborah Jowitt, ed., *Meredith Monk* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 4.

communicating through them. Monk distinguished herself early less by the presentation of her works than by their means of conveying content through vague but suggestive narrative, “simultaneously beautiful, emotional, and absurd.”³⁵ By the Sixties’ end, Monk was in the process of carrying the Judson presentation style out of the Judson and into the Seventies.

Though Monk had presented a number of shows at the Judson and around the region, her first major production was *Juice*, a “theatre cantata in three installments.”³⁶ Presented at three different locations over a series of evenings in the fall of 1969, *Juice* was the culmination of Monk’s work in the Sixties, establishing several precedents that continued to be important to her presentation through the Seventies, including an emphasis on place and audience mobility. The first of the three “installments” was presented at the Guggenheim Museum, “the first theatrical event ever to be performed in the actual space of the museum.”³⁷

Securing the Guggenheim was not a simple task:

“So there was a kind of notorious thing involved there, even though that experience had made me miserable. And I don’t know if this always happens, but sometimes, when you *really* know what you want, I don’t whether I would have done anything, but I was really going to get that building. It was like life and death for me at that time. So basically, I went in and talked to his guy Robin Green. And there were many, many obstacles that he had to getting it done, but we both worked on it and it worked out.”³⁸

³⁵ Perrault, review of OVERLOAD/BLUEPRINT.

³⁶ Original program book for *Juice*, Meredith Monk Archive, LPA Mss 2006-001, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

³⁷ Press release, October 1969, Meredith Monk Archive.

³⁸ Monk in interview with William Duckworth in *Talking Music: Conversations with John Cage, Philip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and Five Generations of American Experimental Composers* (New York: Schirmer, 1995), 354.

In addition to convincing the museum's curators to allow the performance, raising the funds necessary to secure the space took considerable effort. In this, Monk leaned on her friends and family. Her father called on his contacts in the business world to provide financial contributions.³⁹ This support was needed not only for the Guggenheim installment, but also for publicity and considerable logistic needs.

The first installment, at the Guggenheim, involved over eighty performers, in addition to the "core" members of Monk's "The House" (Dick Higgins, Susan Larrison, Madelyn Lloyd, Meredith Monk, David Schiller, Daniel Sverdlik, Monica Moseley and Michael Butel). To the entertainment of journalists, Monk's mother was among these eighty performers.⁴⁰ The large ensemble was necessary to completely utilize the Guggenheim's spiraling ramp for "...a pageant...a parade of fabulous beings winding its way up the spiraling ramps; later, wandering up the ramps themselves, [spectators] observed performers as moving gallery exhibits."⁴¹ The subsequent "legs" of the show were staged at the Minor Latham Playhouse at Barnard College and Monk's own loft on Great Jones Street. Each new event was simultaneously a zooming-in and a fragmentation. The eight-legged red-painted, red-garbed figure (Monk, Sverdlik, Higgins, and Lloyd) that had marched up the ramp declaimed personal data from the proscenium stage at the Minor Latham, then fragmented and flattened further to a collection of artifacts and quotidian video clips at Monk's loft. The spatialization of the work, as Mark

³⁹ Undated letter, Meredith Monk Archive.

⁴⁰ Anna Kisselgoff, "Song and Dance to Blend at Guggenheim," November 7, 1969. Nearly a third of the notice is given over to Monk's background, particularly her relationship with her mother (who had sung for commercials).

⁴¹ Jowitt, *Meredith Monk*, 6-7. Anna Kisselgoff's Nov. 8, 1969 review for the *Times*, "Guggenheim Offers A Setting for 'Juice,' Dance by Miss Monk," calls the Monk's "exploitation of the Guggenheim's architectural possibilities for a performing group of 85...nothing short of brilliant."

Berger puts it, “spread and expanded [the journey] on a horizontal plane, literally as well as metaphorically, bringing other levels of reality content to bear on each of the preceding parts.”⁴²

Venue was not incidental to the meaning of the work; the whole of *Juice* was constructed to exploit changes in physical and metaphorical space. Both of these were central to Monk’s large works of the early and middle Seventies. Like some Fluxus pieces, Monk’s work often untethered the audience from its traditional spot surrounding the performer. At times, her works create a perimeter of performance around the audience, or require the audience itself to move among performers as they would among the exhibits in a museum. Various Fluxus works turned the audience into part of the show, but Monk’s manipulation of them was rather different. By pushing them into an active role in *experiencing* the performance, she individualizes the performance itself. As they navigated the ramps at the Guggenheim or the collection of artifacts in Monk’s loft, audience members moved at their own pace, creating independent experiences. The performance space became a central element not just of presentation, but of the work itself. This was especially true of Monk’s pieces of the early Seventies, which relied on the particular spaces of their performance and thus could not tour without extensive modification.

With the content of the works contingent on the mode of their presentation, those works become impossible to *reproduce*, to commodify. The production of the original is closed. No meaningful score can be passed to other performers for presentation at other

⁴² Mark Berger, “A Metaphoric Theater,” orig. published in *Artforum* (May 1973), reprinted in Deborah Jowitt, *Meredith Monk*, 45.

locations. Even the ability of Monk's ensemble to reproduce the works for later presentation requires such recomposition that they remain the same works only in theme and some isolated elements of content. Incorporation of mixed media and mobile audiences made the works impossible to record, closing off another avenue for the acquisition of economic capital. Most every element of Monk's early work sentences her creations to the margins of both the field of cultural production and the field of power.⁴³

Notably, Monk's work at this time was covered exclusively by dance columnists, despite the prominence of music and theater in it. Monk's educational background was in dance, and her works of the Sixties were often described alongside those of Twyla Tharp and Lucinda Childs in strictly choreographic terms. It would be years before "avant-garde dance" became "avant-garde theater" became "avant-garde music," and while the critics reviewing Monk's works would change, that work has never fit comfortably into any single artistic box.⁴⁴ In calling the work a "theatre cantata," Monk challenges the centrality of dance in *Juice*'s presentation and anticipated reception. Movement is subsumed into the theatrical, sound into a musical genre. At the Sixties' end, there was no consecrated space in the field of cultural production for this kind of work. Though it was covered by dance critics, it was not strictly dance, and couldn't really be consecrated as such. The centrality of music and drama in Monk's compositions were still insufficient to push toward consecration in either of those fields. Intermedia as a whole fell between the cracks with respect to both the field of cultural production and the field of power. It

⁴³ One of the marks of Monk's "establishment" by the late 70s was her successful application for an NEA grant to form a junior repertory company to keep her early works in circulation. See chapter seven.

⁴⁴ This later led to fights with the NEA over the proper categorization of Monk's grant applications; see chapter seven.

remained the province of those who produced it and consumed it, with cultural and economic capital accruing only erratically.

The lack of status in either the field of cultural production or power both allowed for and compelled inventive means of production. Within the small community of intermedia artists, bartered favors and services could take the place of monetized exchange. Monk's contract with David Schiller, who managed the subscription series and tickets for *Juice* in addition to his duties as "administrative director for Meredith Monk and The House," was paid only partly in cash. His five dollar hourly wage was split flexibly between cash payments and use of Monk's lofts—both her rehearsal space on Great Jones Street and her portion of a loft on Broadway (used for videotaping). Schiller used these spaces for classes (valued at \$3 an hour) and videotaping sessions (\$7.50 an hour). Monk paid miscellaneous office expenses while Schiller provided office space on La Guardia Place. The arrangement allowed Monk and Schiller to pool resources and expertise without requiring large amounts of monetary income.⁴⁵

As the Sixties turned to the Seventies, Monk and the other intermedia artists of the nascent SoHo arts community operated in a field constrained and shaped by their lack of economic resources and incompatibility with existing lines of artistic descent and influence. Their negations of their predecessors were so thorough as to sever them from those traditions. Musically, they had little in common with the serialists, neoconservatives, or nascent minimalism. While Monk drew on the legacy of the post-Cagean conceptualists, her use of rock, electronics, and tight integration with the theatrical distinguished her. Choreographically, Monk and the Judsonites had moved

⁴⁵ Contract dated Oct. 5, 1969, Meredith Monk Archive.

further away from pure dance than Cunningham. They integrated film without making it central. In sum, they created an island for themselves in the field of cultural production, one without a defined avant-garde position, never mind any form of consecration. While they suffered very real economic and cultural constraints from this ambiguity, they also took considerable advantage of that freedom in developing new means of presentation and production.

The stories of Steve Reich and Philip Glass have, by the Seventies' end, diverged. As the period opened, though, their places in New York's musical field, as well as their artistic interests, can be painted with the same broad strokes. Both were born on the East Coast (Glass in New York, Reich in Baltimore), spent most of their childhood there, and eventually ended up studying, simultaneously, at Juilliard in the late 1950s (though they were not, at that time, close).⁴⁶ Reich left in 1961 for San Francisco, studying with Luciano Berio at Mills College in Oakland and experimenting in various ways with serialism, jazz, and improvisation. Glass went first to Pittsburgh in 1962, as a composer-in-residence for the public school system. He wrote and published a variety of conservative pieces in the vein of Persichetti (one of his teachers at Juilliard), and was on track to "settle into a university or conservatory post and a perhaps unexceptional academic compositional career."⁴⁷ Instead, he moved to Paris to study with Nadia Boulanger from 1964 to 1966.

Reich was the first to return to New York, arriving in 1965 and working myriad small jobs to pay his way. Glass returned to New York after traveling through Europe and

⁴⁶ Potter, *Minimalists*, 155.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 254.

Asia in 1967. Like Reich, he worked a variety of jobs to cover his expenses, everything from plumbing to furniture removal (the legendary Chelsea Light Moving, where Reich also worked for a time). Artistically, each fell into the Downtown “scene,” befriending and receiving logistical help from visual artists. They shared performers and, briefly, played in each others’ ensembles. By 1970, each was thoroughly enmeshed in the social and artistic network of the SoHo/Tribeca neighborhood.

Connections to the world of visual arts—particularly to sculpture and film—proved vital to the advancement of both Reich’s and Glass’s careers. They moved in the same circles as the artists (Glass even worked as Richard Serra’s assistant for two years). Both composers continued to present works in their friends’ lofts through the Seventies. The visual artists, though, provided important assistance in getting the music to broader audiences. Because they shared aesthetic as well as personal affinities, the minimal artists often asked the minimal composers to provide music for exhibition openings and viewings. As Richard Serra commented in a 1973 interview, “We never thought of ourselves as a group, really...but that show [the Anti-Illusion Show, discussed below] amounted to a sudden emergence of a full-blown movement. We didn’t specifically talk to one another about the similarities in our work, but it was something we were all very clear about.”⁴⁸ Reich, too, was quick to assert association without confessing influence or a conscious decision to form a school: “My ideas were very close to those of painters and sculptors in the mid-sixties, but they weren’t derived from them. We all live in the same time and we mirror certain similarities.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ John Rockwell, “Sound of the New Music Is Likened to Art,” *New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1973.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Reich and Glass were, like their colleagues in the visual arts, concerned with a reduction of musical means and music as process, of surfaces and arrangement rather than concealed structures. At the turn of the era, Reich's works built on his earlier experiments with electronics and phasing, in which two identical parts move gradually and increasingly out of synchronization. Glass continued to integrate the "additive process" inspired by his encounters with Indian music through Ravi Shankar: rhythmic units added to an existing string to create variations. Jonathan Bernard argues that this orientation toward process was a means through which both plastic artists and musical minimalists sought to negate their predecessors.⁵⁰ The visual artists sought an alternative to the intensely personal work of the abstract expressionists, which enshrined artistic identity in every stroke, indeed, consisted almost *entirely* of enshrined artistic identity. For Reich and Glass in particular, the musical negation was a double one: first and foremost, against the rigorously dissonant serialism that was permeating important elements of the American academy.⁵¹ The constrained musical means they chose for themselves were also, though, negations of the "Dada-esque" performances of Fluxus and other conceptualist artists.

In part because their work rejected two of the most prominent aesthetics of the historical moment, Reich and Glass had difficulty presenting it. Like Young and Monk, they eventually formed their own ensembles to ensure control of the music and to guarantee its performance. Like those artists, though, they had no real traction within the

⁵⁰ Jonathan Bernard, "The Minimalist Aesthetic in the Plastic Arts and Music," *Perspectives of New Music* 31 No. 1 (Winter 1993).

⁵¹ See, however, Straus's "The Myth of Serial Tyranny" for an important quantitative study of the prominence of the serial technique.

field of power—they lacked the financial means to secure performances on their own, and could not fall back on academic affiliations. Their friendships with aesthetically and personally sympathetic visual artists helped them circumvent this lack, though. Glass and Young both received direct financial support from visual artists.⁵² Just as importantly, the visual artists invited them to present their music alongside the sculptures, paintings, and films in galleries and museums.

One of Reich's important early performances came at the Park Place Gallery, providing music for an exhibition opening of works by Doan Fleming, Charles Ross, and Jerry Foyster. While enthusiastic about the exhibit as a whole, *New York Times* art critic Grace Glueck did not know quite what to make of Reich's input

...in a sort of architectural environment set to sound effects (O.K., music) by Steve Reich. As your eyes are bedazzled by the visual goings-on, your ears are bemused by the taped concert. Mr. Reich's (music), repetitive figures performed on the Melodica... appears to be just as modular as the art. And somehow everything hangs together very well.⁵³

Her reluctance to call Reich's contribution music is representative of the kind of baffled critical response his work received as the Sixties ended, demonstrative of the contingency of the musical work. More usefully, though, her review highlights the aesthetic similarities between the modular art and the taped version of Reich's *Melodica*. On three consecutive evenings a week later, Reich was able to present a program of his own works at the gallery, including the first performances of *Piano Phase*, as well as *Improvisations on a Watermelon, Come Out*, and *Melodica* and "Saxophone Phase" (later known as *Reed Phase*). The audience for these concerts, according to Keith Potter,

⁵² Rockwell, "Likened to Art."

⁵³ Grace Glueck, "The Park Place Puts On a Stunner," *New York Times*, March 11, 1967.

consisted largely of artists and their friends, including Robert Rauschenberg and the newly-returned-to-New York Philip Glass.⁵⁴ The event marked their first contact since their Juilliard days, and the beginning of the close association that would persist for the next few years. They began to play each other's music and share composer-performers between two not-wholly-distinct ensembles:

...this pool of performers—meeting, sometimes, as much as two or three nights a week—had neither fixed membership nor, at first, strongly separate allegiances; as so often happens, all its members initially worked on a more equal footing than subsequently became the case.⁵⁵

Only as Reich and Glass gained prominence did the ensembles shift from this egalitarian collective of composers to “frontman”-driven groups: Steve Reich and Musicians and The Philip Glass Ensemble. The quasi-collective did, though, hold together long enough for Reich and Glass's “breakout” onto the Uptown scene: their participation in the Anti-Illusion Show at the Whitney Museum in May 1969.⁵⁶ This event featured an enormous amount of “process” art and “material” art, from Ricardo Ferrer's “Ice” (a moat of melting ice chunks and dead leaves that “guarded” the museum's entrance) to Barry LaVa's spread of flour. Hilton Kramer noted drily, “It is that kind of show. Materials, you see. And no illusion...none of these procedures should call to mind—by inference or association—the procedures by which a traditional work of

⁵⁴ Potter, *Minimalists*, 196.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵⁶ Reich and Glass also performed in joint programs (though with separate evenings for each composer) at the Guggenheim and at Minneapolis's Walker Art Center in May 1970. (Potter, *Minimalists*, 197).

art is created.”⁵⁷ Process and arrangement, rather than any sense of “technique” informed the exhibition. It was not, many critics agreed, “art.”

The critics, at least at the *Times*, responded similarly to the concerts Reich and Glass presented as part of the same program:

Musically, Mr. Glass’s instruments were enough alike in timbre to throw all the weight onto the material itself. The music and the films were artistically limited enough to be merely trivial, lacking even the sophistication to raise them into the class of the primitive. And this despite the electronics involved.⁵⁸

Donal Henahan’s response to Reich was slightly more generous:

We have now entered well into a time when composers are in revulsion against the previous esthetic, so that an artist such as Steve Reich carries his celebration of repetition to lengths that we have known previously only at second hand, from Oriental music...it was, if you will, as much fun as watching a pendulum.⁵⁹

Neither critic lent much credence to the idea that repetition could carry an evening of music. Jones called the whole evening one of “immense uneventfulness.” *How Now* and *Two Pages*, the works Glass and his ensemble performed to a tripartite film by Richard Serra, both consist of basic cells subjected to additive processes. In the former, the development is fairly simple, eleven figures repeated in unnotated fashion, articulating a simple retrograde structure.⁶⁰ The latter is a more complex work, with a composed-out score. A basic unit is altered and unfolded through additive processes.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Hilton Kramer, “Art: Melting Ice, Hay, Dog Food, Etc.” *New York Times*, May 24, 1969.

⁵⁸ Robert T. Jones, “3 Films by Serra And Glass’s Music Offered at Whitney,” *New York Times*, May 31, 1969.

⁵⁹ Donal Henahan, “Repetition, Electronically Aided, Dominates Music of Steve Reich,” *New York Times*, May 28, 1969.

⁶⁰ Potter, *Minimalists*, 282.

⁶¹ Potter’s analysis in *Four Musical Minimalists* appears beginning on page 288; it is based in part on an article-length analysis by Wesley York, “Form and Process in *Two Pages* of Philip Glass,” which originally appeared in *Sonus* ½ (Spring 1982): 28-50.

Jones reduces both to “doodles” that “shifted up and down, stuttered, and threatened to fragment.”⁶² Reich’s evening featured *Four Log Drums*, *Pulse Music* (a purely electronic piece performed with a Phase Shifting Pulse Gate), *Pendulum Music*, and a half-hour performance by Paul Zukofsky of *Violin Phase*. *Four Log Drums* uses the Phase Shifting Pulse Gate to distribute rhythm tracks via earphones to four live percussionists, who “play along” to create the audible phasing. *Pendulum Music*, a ten-minute work that was as much performance art as composition, consisted of four performers (in this case, composer James Tenney, sculptors Richard Serra and Bruce Nauman, and film-maker Michael Snow) who each released a dangling microphone to swing over speakers. The shifting and gradually converging patterns of feedback create the work. The concert’s major work, *Violin Phase*, builds a basic unit into a wall of sound through electronic repetition and gradual phase shifts. It is typically performed, as it was at the Whitney, by a single violinist performing against a multitrack recording of himself, although a version for multiple violins exists.⁶³

As with criticisms of the exhibition’s art, attention focused on the unfinished quality of the compositions, the repetition of basic materials without apparent purpose or movement. Like the art works that decayed or changed on their own once installed, the compositions consisted of “musical processes [with] compos[ed] musical material to run through them, once the process is set up and loaded it runs by itself.”⁶⁴ The audibility of the processes, so central to Reich’s thinking (and, to a lesser extent, Glass’s), was not

⁶² Jones, “3 Films.”

⁶³ Detailed discussion can be found in Potter, *Minimalists*, 191-192.

⁶⁴ Steve Reich, “Music as Gradual Process” in *Writings On Music, 1965-2000*, ed. Paul Hillier (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 35.

apparent to the critics. It was, though, audible (or, if not perfectly audible, at least appealing to) the artists and other “insiders” that museum and gallery presentation catered to. Like Young’s loft concerts, the core audience for performances in galleries was sympathetic and often socially connected to the performers. The performances at the Whitney Museum expanded the audience beyond Reich and Glass’s social circle, increasing their profile and sway within their segment of the field of cultural production. The fondness of the artists and their associates could only go so far, however:

“I just wish there were some way the composers could make a better living,” sighs Marian Goodman, who was responsible for Mr. Reich’s records at Multiples [a gallery]. “They simply don’t produce a product you can buy and hang on the wall.”⁶⁵

Ironically, of course, many of the works at the Anti-Illusion show were impossible to “hang on a wall,” too. Still, the fact that music relies on performances allows it to resist commodification somewhat, especially in the case of the avant-garde where recording (never mind commercial exploitation of recordings) was a considerable economic hurdle. Without the ability to translate their works into economic capital, Reich, Glass, and their cohorts were forced to pursue cultural capital—consecration. Whatever consecration their “breakthrough” at the Whitney may have earned them within the narrow range of cultural producers of the avant-garde art world, it did little to earn them consecration from either the “traditional” arbiters of cultural authority (such as the critics at the *New York Times*) or the “academic” arbiters of quality (the Uptown and Midtown academics).

⁶⁵ Rockwell, “Likened to Art.”

As with most of the avant-garde artists of the Sixties, Reich and Glass pursued extreme forms of negation. Historically, they arrived on the New York scene just late enough to see post-Cagean conceptualism as another style to negate. Their own musical training provided them with plenty of incentive to negate inherited styles. Importantly, Reich and Glass rejected *received* structures despite embracing structure as a concept. Neither sought to negate the aesthetic experience. While both worked with film and other temporal arts, neither became specifically engaged in the intermedia movement. Within the field of cultural production, they created art for art's sake, aiming for symbolic capital. Their position, though, was no more consecrated than that of Fluxus or Monk. Without the aid of more mainstream institutions, they could not yet gain a foothold in the eternal present of the consecrated. What they were doing was newer in content than in form—they still composed works to be presented primarily through the ears, works of abstract instrumental or electronic music. While their complete lack of consecration at the Seventies' opening restricted them to a dominated position within the field of power (as evidenced by their strings of odd and thankless jobs), they would eventually turn their more traditional presentational practices to material success. By the Seventies' end, Reich was performing to a sold-out Carnegie Hall and Glass was premiering a much-awaited new opera in Rotterdam.

In the uncertain opening moment of the Seventies, downtown was characterized by marginality. At the opposite end of the island the universities remained comparatively strong, though the 1968 protests had shaken their foundations. Uptown music-making

relied on institutional strength to maintain continuity, but even individuals thoroughly ensconced in the system faced conflict and doubt as the Seventies began.

Few composers have been as tightly tied to a single academic institution as Charles Wuorinen was tied to Columbia University through the 1960s. His father served on Columbia's history faculty for 40 years. Wuorinen completed his undergraduate and graduate degrees there, and moved directly from his position as a graduate assistant to the faculty in 1964. As a student, he collected a variety of prizes for composition, including three Beams prizes (1958, 1959, 1961) and four BMI Student Composer Awards (1959, 1961-63). His combination of performance skills (as pianist and conductor), credentials, and compositional skill made him a prime candidate to take the reins of the academic avant-garde in America, and especially suited to hold sway over the field in his native Manhattan.

While his downtown counterparts had undertaken and ultimately rejected the academic path, Wuorinen sought to advance not merely along it, but to improve the path itself. A fierce rhetorician, his intense focus not only on music but on music's position in American cultural life (especially in the Academy) positioned him as a young lion, ready and willing to provoke conflict with the extant field of power. Aesthetically, Wuorinen sought to build on the achievements of his predecessors (from Schoenberg and Berg to Babbitt and Ussachevsky) without explicitly seeking to negate those achievements. This "evolutionary rather than revolutionary"⁶⁶ approach to music, combined with his strong

⁶⁶ Whatever the origin of this quote, Wuorinen (and his various agents) have adopted it enthusiastically; it appears, for example, in his Naxos biographical pamphlet as well as the official biography on his website (which is in turn adapted from Louis Karchin's entry for the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*).

institutional ties, put Wuorinen in a difficult position vis-a-vis his rhetoric. In most substantive ways, he was a creature of the Academy he wished to change, so tangled up with it (especially with Columbia in the 1960s) that his ability to catalyze change was limited.

Still, Wuorinen's achievements of the Sixties are noteworthy. Along with Harvey Sollberger and others, he helped create something new to the academy: a dedicated, university-sponsored and affiliated new music ensemble, the Group for Contemporary Music. Otto Luening had encouraged Sollberger and Wuorinen to perform their own works, and they founded the ensemble with a modicum of institutional financial support in the spring of 1962. The Group's goals were not only to advocate for the music of its member composers, but also to push for high quality performance of contemporary works by others. The Group was one of very few of its scope to focus so tightly on new music and to push the performance standards higher.⁶⁷

To some extent, the Group brought the same things to the field of cultural production that the Downtown ensembles did, especially control (of material, of presentation, etc.). Unlike those collaboratives (which were particularly loose in the Sixties), the Group from the beginning worked toward a stable membership and strong institutional affiliation. Funding from Columbia and the Alice Ditson Fund meant that the Group could conduct its business in monetary terms, without need for bartered services. Columbia provided a performance "home" in McMillan Academic Theater and access to the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center. While the Group was experimental in

⁶⁷ See Susan Deaver's "The Group for Contemporary Music: 1962-1992" (D.M.A. thesis, Manhattan School of Music, 1993).

its composition, it was never the primary source of performance for the composers involved, and presented events much more in keeping with a traditional chamber ensemble model of “representation”: works by multiple composers presented from a concert hall stage to a seated and passive audience.⁶⁸ It was the institutional support for an explicitly avant-garde ensemble that made the Group unique in the field of cultural production.

That position was as conflicted with regards to the field of power as Wuorinen’s own: the institutional connections that gave the Group its cachet within the field also restricted the range of its cultural production. The members of the Group were often affiliated with Columbia, and thus somewhat beholden to the University beyond its support for the ensemble. Wuorinen, Sollberger, and manager Josef Marx presented a range of music (including early music and works by younger composers), but seldom went beyond the consecrated avenues of academic composition. Within the segment of the field allowed to them by their relationship to the field of power, the organizers of the Group did indeed present a range of music, but were unable to move outside of that sanctioned space.

The Group’s dependence on institutional support was tested when Wuorinen (and, less publicly, Sollberger) were denied tenure in 1971. It was a puzzling move, at least from a distance: Wuorinen had just won one of the ultimate marks of consecration, the Pulitzer Prize for Music (for *Time’s Enconium*), and was an increasingly prominent

⁶⁸ Passivity is relative, of course. The musically educated listeners attending to the nuances of the Group’s performances act differently than, for example, the audience at the Philharmonic’s benefit gala. Downtown performance models engaged hypothetically passive audiences, as well, including some who were prone or stoned.

national figure. The University administration claimed financial exigencies (while more quietly pointing to personality conflicts). With the power he wielded as a Pulitzer winner, Wuorinen struck back in the press, savaging Columbia and its whole relationship to the arts:

I cannot escape the sense that a high-level administrative decision has been made at Columbia to eliminate the arts from the campus... One senses in all this not merely philistinism, but also a real rage at the outspokenness and volatility of artists...⁶⁹

He acknowledges financial realities, but turns them into yet another criticism:

The moment the national economy and a rightward-drifting body politic began to limit the flow of funds into, especially, private universities, more basic and more negative attitudes began to surface... we began to notice a revived tendency to announce that the arts really had no place in the world of scholarship, and that those who practiced them ought to go somewhere else.⁷⁰

The intersection of economic, political, and aesthetic factors created the environment for Wuorinen's dismissal (along with Sollberger and Benjamin Boretz, who had launched *Perspectives of New Music*), but Wuorinen's own conflicting desires for support and independence helped force the issue. In the same article, he rails against the constraints on a university composer:

What the artist needs above all is not to be required to disguise himself as a teacher, scholar, administrator, or janitor in order to be allowed to remain within the institution. It is not that he may not well have pedagogical, scholarly, administrative, or janitorial interests... it is their enforced practice... A composer composes: that is his role, and that is his value in a university. More broadly, an artist is not a scholar: he makes, not regurgitates.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Charles Wuorinen, "Are the Arts Doomed on Campus?," *New York Times*, August 8, 1971.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

While the above demonstrates Wuorinen's personal resentment of the musicologist-dominated committee that denied him tenure, it also highlights his desire to retain the privileges of alignment with the field of power without being constrained by that field. He endeavors to extend his personal case into a broad attack on the beholden status of the artist rather than a purely individual tale of "being done dirt by an institution."⁷² Paul Henry Lang, who had just retired and was thus not a member of the tenure committee, provided a public rejection of Wuorinen's position in the *Times*, opining that "this is an individual case indeed."⁷³ The core of Lang's argument is that a tenured faculty position is contingent not just on artistic ability, but on ability to coexist with colleagues and, most importantly, teach: "No question, this [necessity to compose] is undoubtedly his first duty, but if it is his only role, then why is he in the university? Who is going to do the teaching—the despised regurgitators?"⁷⁴ Lang's counter-allegations (which include extensive criticism of Wuorinen's "arrogance, ruthlessness, and contempt for anything outside his bailiwick") are underpinned by the necessity of the university and its constituent departments to align with the field of power. The university is an institution, and failure to operate within its institutional framework is grounds for removal from the institution.

Bourdieu ascribes such friction between academics and educators in terms of the time lag between "cultural production" and "scholastic consecration." In an autonomous

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Paul Henry Lang, "Music at Columbia Will Endure, Even Without Wuorinen," *New York Times*, August 29, 1971.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

field, creators like Wuorinen feel able to play the charismatic prophet as opposed to the mere explainer.

If the denunciation of professional routine is to some extent consubstantial with prophetic ambition, even to the point of where this may amount to official proof of one's charismatic qualifications, it is none the less true that producers cannot fail to pay attention to the judgments of university institutions.⁷⁵

Wuorinen's problem, of course, was that Columbia was asking him to do be prophet and explainer simultaneously. His piece for the *Times* emphasizes the former, as if it could do away with the latter. Lang was quite right to counter the prophet's claim with the mundane responsibilities a tenured Wuorinen would have to Columbia as institution.

The professor's position is one firmly anchored to the field of power, and requires that the individual play by the rules of that field. As a cultural producer, the professor is limited to that segment of the avant-garde most closely aligned to the field of power (the consecrated avant-garde), one allowing for quick accrual of specific symbolic capital. Wuorinen's noises about artistic independence and the primacy of artistic creation point toward a different position within the field, that of an independent producer. His failure to gain tenure highlights the impossibility of reconciling (at least at the Seventies' opening) independent cultural production with stable institutional support—he could not be both artistic rebel and academic servant. As the fields of power and cultural production shifted with the changing of the era, it became questionable as to whether any individual could sustain the romanticized lifestyle of the independent, individual cultural producer in the field of new music.

⁷⁵ Bourdieu, *Field*, 124.

With the departure of Wuorinen and Sollberger, Columbia had no reason to continue its support for the Group for Contemporary Music. Ironically, the University received a Laurel Leaf Award in 1971 from the American Composers Alliance for its support of new music—through the ensemble that it had just effectively and controversially removed.⁷⁶ Like its leaders, the Group's ability to pursue its aims as a cultural producer was contingent on institutional support and affiliation. While much of its funding had come from government sources, the Group had relied on Columbia for performance space and facilities access. As the Sixties ended, new sources for that support were as uncertain as a new institutional home for the two academic composers who had found the group.

At the Philharmonic, the Sixties belonged to Leonard Bernstein. Since his appointment in 1958, the enormously popular conductor had raised the orchestra's national profile to a level it hadn't known since Toscanini in the golden age of radio. As an American conducting America's foremost orchestra, he captured the public's imagination not only as a conductor, but also as a composer and performer. His background was not limited to the music of the European masters, and he brought a new kind of cool to the Philharmonic. Bernstein managed something rare: he became a celebrity outside the world of high culture. It is not for nothing that Howard Shanet titles his section on Bernstein's tenure at the Philharmonic "Rebirth":

⁷⁶ For a brief discussion and a continuation of the back and forth between Wuorinen and the music department's administration, see Donal Henahan's "Columbia Music Unit Faces Extinction" *New York Times*, May 20, 1971.

Under Leonard Bernstein's directorship the Philharmonic finally began to adapt its habits to the conditions of the postwar world...it made a start toward becoming what it had missed becoming at the several previous opportunities in its life span: a representative of American musical art, and a dispenser of music to a democratic society. Bernstein did not personally invent most of the new steps that were taken...but when Bernstein was not the cause of change, he was often its instrument or its symbol.⁷⁷

Bernstein thrived in the spotlight. He was as much a staple of the Society pages as the Arts sections. He was constantly in the public eye, and the Philharmonic reaped the benefits of his celebrity even as it made the organizational shifts necessary to "adapt its habits" to changing society.

Part and parcel of Bernstein's celebrity was his prominence in orchestral recordings and television broadcasts. While he was music director, the Philharmonic recorded numerous albums and generated substantial revenue simply from the royalties of those albums.⁷⁸ While interest in the Philharmonic's radio broadcasts slipped (CBS ended its broadcast contract in 1963),⁷⁹ the number of recordings in circulation helped keep the Philharmonic's sound in the ears of the American public. More importantly, Bernstein put the orchestra before that public's eye through the increasingly central medium of television. Even before his appointment as full-time music director, he had helped create a set of programs for the "Omnibus" series; during the 1957-58 season, he began to conduct Young People's Concerts on CBS, and later "Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic." These telecasts reached up to 10 million people in the United

⁷⁷ Howard Shanet, *Philharmonic: A History of New York's Orchestra* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 333.

⁷⁸ Columbia Records issued over 200 recordings of the Philharmonic during Bernstein's tenure; royalties provided roughly \$150,000 to \$175,000 to the Philharmonic Society each year. Figures taken from Shanet's *Philharmonic*, 341.

⁷⁹ Shanet, *Philharmonic*, 351.

States alone, and were also distributed to schools and syndicated for foreign television networks.⁸⁰ No American orchestra could match the pull that the Philharmonic had achieved as a cultural producer. The Philharmonic was America's orchestra at home and abroad, as tours with diverse corporate and governmental sponsors took the orchestra around the country and the world.

The idea that the orchestra belonged to a broader public than the high society stalwarts of the subscription series was central to many of the changes implemented at the Philharmonic during the Sixties. In part due to rising consciousness of social divisions, in part due to the philanthropic interests of the rich white men who ran the Society, "outreach" became an increasingly prominent portion of the Philharmonic's mission. The Young People's Concerts, launched in 1924, have already been mentioned; Bernstein made them even more famous. Other educational programs became possible with the building of Lincoln Center, whose constitution provided for "educating the general public."⁸¹ These programs offered discounted student tickets to special concerts, or rewarded outstanding high school seniors with tickets to regular subscription series concerts. In addition to these youth-directed outreach efforts, Andre Kostelanetz began the Promenades programs in 1963, presenting "pleasantly relaxed programs"⁸² including table beverage service during the intermissions. These events broadened the Phil's pull within the cultural field through expanding the space it occupied in the field of power.

The most spectacular outreach events instituted in the Bernstein era, though, were the Parks concerts. Free concerts made possible through grants from the city of New

⁸⁰ Ibid., 340-41.

⁸¹ Ibid., 344.

⁸² Ibid., 337.

York (which paid for the complicated portable stage/shell) and the Joseph Schlitz Brewing company, these events drew hundreds of thousands of people each season—crowds that often equaled or exceeded the number of admissions to the subscription series. Though these represented a pure expenditure for the Society, they greatly expanded the orchestra’s local prominence and put orchestral music in the ears of many who would never make the trip to Lincoln Center in Manhattan (the free concerts were offered in each of New York’s five boroughs). Bernstein was not directly involved in the first season of the Parks, which took place during his sabbatical, but in the second season he conducted Beethoven’s *Eroica* and Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* before an audience numbering at least 75,000, and possibly 90,000.⁸³

The public rise of the orchestra was matched by numerous quieter changes. On the semantic level, Bernstein’s title was quickly changed to “music director” from the older “musical director.” The board of directors shifted in its dynamics; Amyas Ames, a man with “an indomitable zeal for improving the quality of life in the city”⁸⁴ became the board’s president in 1963. George E. Judd, Jr., took over as managing director early in Bernstein’s tenure, soon replaced by Carlos Moseley, who would later become the country’s first full-time orchestral president. The shift in board membership and management—and their “administrative abilities and sense of social responsibility”—⁸⁵put the strength of the institution behind the public changes, enabling Bernstein to work his musical and charismatic magic with the public.

⁸³ Ibid., 336.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 334.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 335.

The orchestra members, too, benefited from the changes during Bernstein's tenure. The union, with Bernstein's support, lobbied for increasingly long contracts, finally securing year-round employment in 1964. Pay and fringe benefits also increased. Their expanded contracts forced and facilitated many of the public changes described above. The average number of concerts per season rose from 131 under Mitropoulos to 192 at the end of Bernstein's directorship.⁸⁶ Year-round contracts necessitated year-round activity. The Parks concerts and many of the other outreach activities were conducted in the summers, outside the subscription season, as were the expanded tours. Increased wages, particularly when employed in non-revenue generating activities, meant securing new funding sources in the form of public, private, and corporate grants.

The material the musicians performed changed, too. Bernstein was a tremendous advocate of American music, both historical and contemporary. Fifteen percent of all Philharmonic performances during the 1960s were of American compositions, up from "the usual 4 or 5 percent that had been typical of the early 1950s."⁸⁷ Bernstein was at the heart of this change; nearly 30% of the works he conducted were American. Most (but not all) of those American composers stayed in the neo-tonal neighborhood. Among the composers he conducted most were Barber, Copland, Diamond, Foss, Harris, Ives, Piston, and Schuman (who, as president of Lincoln Center, was also heavily involved in the Philharmonic's outreach activities). In this, though he advocated passionately for new music, Bernstein was hardly an avant-gardist.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 340.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 347.

By the mid-Sixties, Bernstein's popularity on the road and with the general population was no longer matched by music critics. Harold Schonberg, who had become chief music critic at the New York Times in 1962, was among the harshest, criticizing not only Bernstein's extravagant, full-body conducting style, but also his programming preference for tonal and canonic works. Excitement over the expansion of duties of the orchestra members had waned, and Bernstein's demands were reportedly more and more onerous to the musicians.⁸⁸ Feeling the attacks keenly, and looking toward Vienna, where he had been spectacularly well-received, Bernstein announced in November 1966 that he would not be seeking contract renewal. His tenure would end after the 1968-69 season. The Philharmonic, perhaps sensitive to the harsh reviews Bernstein had received, made no apparent effort to fight the resignation.⁸⁹ Despite the substantial success the Philharmonic was enjoying under Bernstein (this was, after all, the autumn after the wildly successful debut of the Parks concerts), there was little initial concern over the impact of his departure. As Peyser writes:

It was natural for the administration to believe that the orchestra's success at the time was the Philharmonic's own and that Bernstein's contribution was only incidental. By this time Bernstein and the Philharmonic had been so entwined that it was hard to determine exactly where one's achievements ended and the other's began.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ See Joan Peyser, *Bernstein: A Biography*, (New York: Birch Tree Books, 1987), 370-71. While Peyser's Bernstein book (like her earlier book on Boulez) tends toward speculative psychobiography, she includes several anecdotes that highlight the interplay between Bernstein's demands on the Orchestra, critical distaste for his conducting in the New York Press, and the particular attraction of Vienna. Shanet has very little negative to say regarding Bernstein; his discussion of the ups-and-downs of Bernstein's reviews can be found pp. 359-362.

⁸⁹ Peyser, *Bernstein*, 370.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 371.

After the announcement of Bernstein's departure, Schonberg and the *Times* blunted their knives, applauding Bernstein's newly restrained style and questioning his programming choices less often. The remaining seasons of his contract increasingly took the character of a valedictory tour. When, at his final performance, he was awarded the title "laureate conductor," there was a sense that an era was ending (despite Bernstein's continuing presence as guest and tour conductor). In discussing his imminent departure, Schonberg waxed positively generous:

What Bernstein did at the beginning by animal magnetism and a driving necessity to be loved, he now does through craft—without having surrendered any of the magnetism... In the last five years he has proved himself.⁹¹

Bernstein's farewell concert (conducting Mahler's Third Symphony) ended with a string of gifts and speeches (although none from the voluble conductor): a laurel wreath, a boat, a freshly-commissioned prose-poem from Archibald MacLeish.⁹² Honors in hand, he left less than 48 hours later to conduct Beethoven with the Vienna Philharmonic, leaving a looming question: who would come next? Speculation ranged from Istvan Kertesz and Rafael Frúbeck de Burgos to Daniel Barenboim and Zubin Mehta (who essentially disqualified himself with public criticism of the Philharmonic's musicianship). The Philharmonic had already announced that no successor would be chosen immediately after Bernstein's retirement, "contribut[ing] mightily to a changing picture here and abroad. Several mentioned prominently for the post have taken over podiums elsewhere...and the dominoes are still falling."⁹³ The seasons between Bernstein's

⁹¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "At Last, the Patina Of an Old Master," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1969.

⁹² See Donal Henahan, "Bernstein Given a Hero's Farewell," *The New York Times*, May 19, 1969.

⁹³ Donal Henahan, "Bernstein's Heir: List Getting Longer," *The New York Times*, April 29, 1969.

announcement and his departure had become a kind of rolling audition; every guest conductor was sized up as a potential replacement for the maestro.

The surprise replacement, picked after a brief stint guest conducting in the spring of 1969, was Pierre Boulez. Despite having said only a few weeks before being offered the job that he “could not have considered [the position]. The circumstances of directing the New York Philharmonic are such that you are the prisoner of a frame. I am not American enough to be such a prisoner.”⁹⁴ In temperament and taste, Boulez was a painfully stark contrast to Bernstein. As a leader of the post-war European avant-garde, Boulez had railed against his contemporaries and advocated for a new music descended directly from the Second Viennese masters, especially Webern. In vitriolic essays, he derided everything from French musical culture to chance composition to Schoenberg himself. His rhetoric did not win him many friends, but it secured his prominence in intellectual and musical circles alike.

Though he’d made his name as a composer, Boulez’s output had slowed considerably since the middle 1950s. His compositional systems had grown increasingly complex, as had his obligations as music director and conductor. He had begun conducting in Paris, making his first substantial marks as a conductor in performances of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* and Berg’s *Wozzeck* in 1963. He went on to conduct in various parts of continental Europe (including Wagner’s *Parsifal* at Bayreuth) before

⁹⁴ Joan Peyser, “A Fighter From Way Back,” *The New York Times*, March 9, 1969. The Peyser interview also includes a number of Boulez’s pointed criticisms about American musical life and habits.

conducting in London and, eventually, in Cleveland.⁹⁵ Joan Peyser avers that Boulez's turn toward conducting was a tacit acknowledgment that Stockhausen had taken control of the European avant-garde music scene, and that if Boulez couldn't be at the top, he no longer wanted to play the game. Dominique Jameux ascribes it rather to a series of opportunities that arose for Boulez to put his ideas about music into practice. Regardless of the reason, Boulez's prominence as a conductor had increased throughout the Sixties, culminating (to American audiences) with a position as guest conductor and advisor to the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell. It was as a conductor that his appointment to the Philharmonic was praised:

He has come late to the podiums of major symphony orchestras, but in the relatively few years he has been conducting them he has amazed hard-bitten professional musicians by the accuracy of his ear and the strength of his rhythm... With the Boulez appointment, the New York Philharmonic has made a significant and exciting move.⁹⁶

Surprise or not, the appointment seems imaginative and wise. Although he is a controversial figure as a composer, Boulez has nothing but the highest regard from musicians as a conductor... Boulez's appointment has one immediate benefit. It ends all speculation about who would succeed Bernstein. Members of the Times's music department in the past year have been unable to go anywhere without being queried on the subject ad nauseam.⁹⁷

It was presumably the strength of his conducting and reputation as an impeccable technician that led the Philharmonic-Society board to offer Boulez the job. Among American composers, though, the reaction was rather different. Even those working within the consecrated avant-garde (and thus nominally allied to Boulez's position) were

⁹⁵ For a more detailed (if exceedingly complimentary) description of Boulez's development as a conductor, see Dominique Jameux's *Pierre Boulez*, trans. Susan Bradshaw, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1991), chapters nine and ten.

⁹⁶ Harold C. Schonberg, "A Significant Philharmonic Selection," *The New York Times*, 11 June 1969.

⁹⁷ Raymond Ericson, "Ended: A Long Guessing Game," *New York Times*, June 15, 1969.

leery of Boulez's appointment. Leon Kirchner contributed an extensive piece for the Times titled "A Boo for the Boos of Boulez," chiding Boulez's comments about American compositional life and pleading gently for the new music director to "avoid antagonisms and direct our attention to the survival of music rather than contribute to its demise by our monolithic concerns."⁹⁸ American composers bristled at Boulez's appointment, both because he was a Frenchman and because he had repeatedly dismissed the United States as a compositional backwater. Alvin Lucier wrote disparagingly:

How long is the public going to accept the fraud that Boulez is a champion of 'modern' music? He is simply updating the repertoire by a few years—same old museum, same old geography...I demand that the Board...explain to the public why its orchestra is mere cultural accouterment.⁹⁹

The broader public and press were quicker to seize on the contrast of taste and personal style than on the details of Boulez's aesthetic platform. The press painted him with broad strokes of controversy and Europeanism, a stubbornly restrained intellectual with grand designs for American musical life. He became an invader, a crusader for a music culture that was foreign to the Philharmonic itself as much as to the Philharmonic's audience.

The uncertainty about the Philharmonic's future as the Sixties became the Seventies was justified. Under Bernstein, with his celebrity and salesmanship, the Philharmonic had become a potent institutional brand, closely aligned with Bourdieu's field of power at both the aesthetic and economic levels. The substantial sales of recordings and sold-out concerts helped secure the Philharmonic-Society's funding,

⁹⁸ Leon Kirchner, "A Boo for the Boos of Boulez," *New York Times*, June 22, 1969.

⁹⁹ Alvin Lucier, "Fraud?" Letter to the *New York Times*, July 11, 1971.

through both direct revenue and heightened prominence for donors. The Parks concerts demonstrated power and cultural authority. Regardless of the opinions of the critics or the orchestra's members, Bernstein's tenure as music director had been a great success amidst broader society.

As a European avant-gardist, Boulez threatened that success. Though he valued commercial success (and, as later chapters will show, was willing to make artistic compromises toward it), his alignment as a cultural producer was toward intellectual, rather than broadly societal, consecration. That alignment is what put off American composers and fueled the press's anticipation of a controversial tenure. Boulez's own rhetoric and disdain for American music put him at odds with the American intellectual musical subculture—the university composers—even those among it who would have seemed natural sympathizers (e.g., the modernists of the Columbia-Princeton axis).

While the Philharmonic's mission remained unchanged, Boulez's appointment created uncertainty as to how that mission should be achieved. Just as Meredith Monk took up Judson's intermedia and moved it toward the dramatic, as Reich and Glass took up the negations of downtown's arts and bent it toward rigorous structure, as Wuorinen sought simultaneously to keep his institutional support and artistic freedom, Pierre Boulez took charge of a Philharmonic accustomed to success in one sector of the field of cultural production and began to push it toward something different. Meanwhile, the political and economic landscapes were shifting, and the field of power along with them. As the Seventies began, the struggles were not as fresh as the individuals newly risen to

prominence within them. The old campaigns continued, but the new campaigners were carrying them into a decisively different era.

CHAPTER THREE: Shifting Fronts (1972-75)

The early Seventies were, in their own fashion, no less troubled than the late Sixties. Despite the hope that the uncertainty of 1968 would pass quickly, it became increasingly clear that America's social and political landscape was losing stability. The judicial decisions and cultural shifts of the preceding decade began to work themselves out in more concrete terms, and those terms were not easy; nobody was entirely sure what the new American society would look like, with new communities (of all sorts) insisting that their identities be accepted on equal terms. Economically, the nation suffered Oil Shock and recession; politically, the Nixon administration fell into scandal and eventual dissolution. The battle lines of the Sixties were gone. The story of the early Seventies, from their opening up to the U.S. Bicentennial, was one of shifting fronts. The opposition of "us" versus "them" became murkier as new groups clamored to be an "us." This was as true in the arts as in society considered more broadly. With visions of a general utopia evaporating, artists and thinkers crafted smaller, more personal visions of an ideal future.

Increasingly, they created them in the cracks opened by a shifting society. As the great postwar institutions—from manufacturing-based prosperity to beneficent government—crumbled, they left space (sometimes literally) for new communities and ideas to develop. Often, they had to develop out of necessity: the growth of neighborhood associations in New York City, for example, was fueled as much by drastic cuts in municipal services as by the growing sense of community (and often ethnic) identity.¹ The same socio-economic changes that led to arts collectives also energized white

¹ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 221.

ethnics, seniors, and black Americans. The large, heirloom institutions that had long shaped the field of power as well as the field of cultural production began to lose some of their influence. Simultaneously, small collectives (such as those the late Sixties had produced in Manhattan's Downtown) continued to turn to each other for support, sometimes adopting official mantles to compete for funds that the decay of the heirloom institutions had freed. Not all of these groups co-existed peacefully; the growing atmosphere of crisis sparked as much competition as cooperation.

The resignation of President Nixon in 1974 was an earth-shaking event. After the turmoil of the Vietnam War and the hostilities created by the Watergate investigations, the reservoir of trust for government in our country had been drained.

—Donald Rumsfeld²

Richard Nixon was central to the various national crises. An oft-studied study in contradictions, Nixon was “at once liberal and conservative, generous and begrudging, cynical and idealistic, choleric and calm, resentful and forgiving.”³ Though the mix of characteristics was not necessarily conducive to good governance, it was characteristic of a time (1969) when “the perception [was] that the United States was coming apart at the seams.”⁴ America was as divided as Nixon. The recession of ‘68, along with the tumultuous political season, had ended growth liberalism. No longer could the government resolve problems through spending a waxing pool of tax revenue. Racial and political riots were frequent; bombings had become part of an allegedly political discourse. Crime rates and drug use were on the rise, heightening racial tensions. Nixon

² Donald Rumsfeld, “The Ford Presidency: Some Personal Reflections,” in *Gerald Ford and the Politics of Post-Watergate America* Vol 1, ed. Bernard Firestone and Alexej Ugrinsky (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 9.

³ Tom Wicker, *One of Us* (New York: Random House, 1991), 300. Quoted in Melvin Small, *The Presidency of Richard Nixon* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1999), 155.

⁴ Small, *Richard Nixon*, 157.

had campaigned on law and order and had promised, in his inaugural address, to bring the country together. In practice, he was never able to forge a broad version of “us” and was quick to capitalize rhetorically on the threat of “them.”

As Nixon’s administration began, there was no divider of “us” and “them” more severe than the Vietnam War. The conflict had been domestically unpopular since its beginning. The massive Tet Offensive in 1968 had damaged, but not destroyed the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. Nixon took advantage of the military gains to begin a troop draw-down, planning to transition responsibility for the fighting to South Vietnamese forces. He also plied diplomacy regionally, attempting to diminish Soviet and Chinese involvement in the conflict—or at least the possibility of the Vietnam War spreading to encompass major international powers. Despite withdrawing ground troops, Nixon used American air power freely. In the wake of the 1970 bombing and invasion of (previously neutral) Cambodia, renewed waves of protest swept the country (including the one at Kent State that ended in four student deaths). The leak of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 further swung public opinion against the military and the commander-in-chief. Furthermore, the American-trained South Vietnamese forces failed to wage effective war. Vietnam seemed a worse and worse cause for the sacrifice of American lives and treasure.

Unsurprisingly, it became the central issue of the 1972 presidential campaign. George McGovern, running from the left side of the Democratic spectrum, demanded immediate withdrawal. Nixon, for his part, worked at negotiating a peace that would allow such a withdrawal on favorable terms. (Extensive bombing of North Vietnam in the

fall of 1972 was both a part and consequence of this negotiation). It was not until January of 1973 that the Paris Peace Accords were signed. The same election that returned Nixon to office with 49 of 50 states also returned a Democratic Congress, and, despite Nixon's implied threats to resume hostilities if North Vietnam attacked, Congress pushed the United States to complete its withdrawal via the Case-Church Amendment (which prohibited further military activity in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia). While the Paris Accords fell apart, the U.S. Congress prevented newly-ascended President Gerald Ford from intervening through the denial of funds for military activities. Ford's requests for more aid to the South Vietnamese government were rebuffed, and Saigon fell—complete with dramatic images of the helicopter evacuation of the U.S. Embassy—on April 30, 1975.

The OPEC Oil Embargo of 1973 contributed indirectly to Saigon's fall by starving it of fuel for its American-built war machine. The United States' long postwar economic boom, meanwhile, had spurred (and relied on) consumption of all sorts, especially of energy. For decades before the Second World War, the U.S. had been a net energy exporter, but by 1960 it was importing 16.5 percent of its oil, 33 percent by 1973, and nearly 50 percent by 1977.⁵ Nixon became the first president to submit an energy policy to Congress in 1971, but they could not prevent the shortages and price spikes when, in the wake of 1973's Yom Kippur War, the oil-producing nations of the Middle East launched an oil embargo against the U.S.⁶ The embargo helped fuel inflation and

⁵ Daniel Horowitz, ed. *Jimmy Carter and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s: the 'Crisis of Confidence' Speech of July 15, 1979, a Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005), 6.

⁶ For a discussion of the Nixon administration's actions on energy policy, particularly regarding gasoline, see Small, *Richard Nixon*, 201-203.

drove home just how reliant the U.S. had become on nations with which, politically, it had little in common. A war halfway around the world could cause long lines at the gas pump, and there was little the government could do about it.

Part of the government's inability to act quickly to end the oil embargo, of course, was the tangle of Nixon's personal scandal. The actual hotel break-in that eventually snowballed into the broader Watergate scandal occurred before Nixon's landslide reelection in June 1972. Nixon's administration had been quick to deny involvement and just as quick to begin a coverup; the Vietnam War was much more a campaign issue than Nixon's personal scandal. Despite Nixon's thorough presidential victory, the Democrats expanded their Senate majority and held their House majority. These majorities were vital in pushing to expand the investigation and prosecution up the chain from Nixon's aides to the president himself. The slow unfolding of the scandal has been repeatedly recounted and need not be reiterated here. The rhetoric on both sides of the scandal reflected the bitter divisions in the United States. Calls for impeachment grew louder, with the House Judiciary Committee voting in late July 1974 to begin impeachment proceedings. Nixon resigned on August 8, before the Senate could follow suit.

The revelation of criminal activity by the nation's chief executive gave citizens even more cause to distrust government, and, more generally, the established postwar patterns of authority. In a time of crisis, the leaders who might have shown a way forward were losing credibility. The United States, for the first time in a generation, simultaneously lacked a clear national purpose and the prosperity many had come to take for granted.

Gerald Ford succeeded Nixon without ever standing for national election; the Michigan representative had been tapped by Nixon to replace Spiro Agnew (who had resigned in a scandal of his own) as vice president. When Nixon subsequently left the White House, Ford inherited the presidency and all the nation's woes. He had to deal with Nixon's pending indictment, renewed hostilities in Southeast Asia, tensions in the Middle East, and the slate of domestic challenges that Nixon had neglected due to scandal and disinterest. Ford acted quickly—and controversially—to resolve the first problem. Less than a month into his tenure as president, Ford granted Nixon a full and unconditional pardon for any crimes committed while in office. The electorate was furious, suspicious of some secret deal (and Ford paid dearly for his pardon decision in both the subsequent Republican primary and the general election).

Among the more acute domestic crises facing the Ford administration was New York City's financial situation. After that "last good economic year" of 1969, New York City slid deeper and deeper into trouble. The city's budget (and, in some cases, its actual services) had expanded despite the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs. Crime rates were up. The city's industrial foundation shifted and shrank. Fiscal recklessness led to increasingly urgent calls for aid to Albany, and then to Washington. Despite escaping the race riots that hit so many cities after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, New York was becoming a symbol of all that was wrong with urban America. Ford's response to the city and state's pleas for help was tangled in the larger debates about liberal profligacy and conservative responsibility, about which "us" should be paying for "them."

Corruption had, of course, long been a part of New York's government. While the blatant kickbacks and willfully averted gazes had largely faded by the time Lindsay became mayor, an extensive system of favors remained. Mayor Lindsay had worked to improve management, but had little success in reducing the number of departments, sub-departments, and associated paper-pushing. The sprawling bureaucracy allowed plenty of jobs to hand out as political favors, whether directly from the mayor's office or from department heads.⁷ Combined with complicated systems of tax breaks, the scope and depth of legitimate and semi-legitimate government activity created rivers of red ink. For decades, the city of New York had either hidden these through misdesignating operating expenditures as capital ones (which allowed municipal bonds to be issued) or getting doses of direct aid from the New York state government. In the early Seventies, the situation became dire. Even as inflation drove revenues higher, expenditures were increasing faster (largely due to burdens on social services)—a gap that grew at 9% a year.⁸ Among the heaviest fiscal burdens was one unique to New York among major American cities: healthcare. The city government was responsible for 25% of the cost of Medicaid, a growing burden as the city's employment picture dimmed. Lindsay made new commitments, too, like tuition waivers for local students attending CUNY.

By the time Abraham Beame, Lindsay's comptroller, was elected as his successor in 1973, the national economy was floundering, dealing with the theoretically impossible

⁷ "In one of the most blatant examples, Abe Beame gave Bronx Democratic chair Stanley Friedman a midnight appointment for life to the Board of Water Supply. This part-time job came with secretary, limousine, and a salary of \$25,000 per year (the equivalent of \$89,000 in 2009 dollars)." Jonathan Soffer, *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 152. While not as blatant, this pattern carried over even to the Koch administration, which worked far more effectively to trim bureaucracy and distance itself from the old machine politics. The major scandal of Koch's early years involved appointments he had made as concessions during the '77 election.

⁸ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 212.

combination of inflation and unemployment labeled “stagflation.” New York had never really recovered from the 1969/70 recession, leaving it particularly vulnerable.⁹

Accounting practices that Beame and Lindsay had used to disguise operating deficit as capital expenditure had created exorbitant amounts of debt—over \$8 billion.¹⁰ As the debt rose, so did the interest rates on that debt, compounding the problem. The situation grew so dire by February of 1975 that banks asked to examine the city’s books before they would issue bonds. While the banks had, in the past, overlooked irregularities, the uncertain economic climate and sheer volume of debt caused them to halt any further bond issuances.¹¹

Without access to loans, the city government had no choice but to submit to de facto takeover by the state government. The Municipal Assistance Corporation (MAC), founded in June of 1975, became a guarantor of bonds. Colloquially reviled as “Big Mac,” the Municipal Assistance Corporation meddled in municipal affairs and insisted on cuts, but operated largely in tandem with the mayor’s office. Resolving the fiscal crisis required massive adjustment of accounting methods, as well as dramatic cutbacks in the city’s public services, but:

It became increasingly obvious [by fall of ‘75] that the mayor lacked the political will to make harsh political decisions and even seemed to oppose reform. Investors shied away from investing in

⁹ Ibid., 214.

¹⁰ Ibid., 213.

¹¹ The March collapse of the State of New York’s Urban Development Corporation heightened the fears of potential lenders and borrowers alike. Governor Carey had called the collapse “unthinkable” in early February, only a few weeks before the U.D.C. defaulted on bank loans and \$100-million in bond anticipation notes. See Linda Greenhouse, “Governor Orders Inquiry to Save Faltering U.D.C.,” *New York Times*, Feb. 6, 1975. Hearings into the collapse were launched as part of a broader investigation into state finances in the fall—Greenhouse contributed “Hearings to Begin on U.D.C. Collapse,” *New York Times*, October 12, 1975.

more MAC bonds, and it appeared certain that New York would soon default.¹²

Beame and Carey had approached the Ford administration in May hoping for support, but had been rebuffed repeatedly over the summer. The administration worried that propping up New York City would set a dangerous precedent for the nation's other depressed urban centers. Ford and his cabinet refused direct assistance, but left the door open to provide aid if the state and city could demonstrate a viable plan for addressing the problems that caused the budget mess in the first place.¹³ The Beame administration and other city officials were slow to respond to the calls for change (and reluctant to work with the MAC), instead angling to deflect blame for the city's problems to the state and federal authorities that refused to help.

The state's response was to create a new group, the Emergency Financial Control Board (with governor Hugh Carey as chairman), that explicitly took over the city's finances, taking charge of all revenue and distributing all payments. Transit fares were raised. Wages for municipal workers were frozen, and some were laid off. CUNY budgets were slashed. Across the city, the public services that had ballooned during the postwar years suddenly deflated. And even that was not enough. By the fall, the city was running into acute cash shortages.¹⁴ State and municipal leaders went to Washington for

¹² Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 218.

¹³ For a detailed examination of the Ford administration's approach to the New York problem, see Charles J. Orlebeke, "Saving New York: The Ford Administration and the New York City Fiscal Crisis," in *Gerald R. Ford and the Politics of Post-Watergate America*, vol. 2, ed. Bernard J. Firestone and Alexej Ugrinsky (London: Greenwood Press, 1993) 359-386. Short responses from the prominent figures (including Beame and Carey) follow—most of them self-congratulatory.

¹⁴ On October 17 1975, for example, the city's cash needs were nearly \$500 million, while its cash on hand was less than \$50 million. Keeping offices open late and last-minute negotiations with the teachers' pension fund allowed that day's disaster to be averted, but the pattern continued. (See Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 219).

aid, but were again rebuffed. Ford, in a speech at the National Press Club, laid out his reasons for continuing his denial of aid in particularly moralistic and stark language.¹⁵ Only when vice president Nelson Rockefeller, various members of Congress, and international figures such as German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, began to warn of the consequences of a New York default could President Ford wrangle a loan guarantee program. That program eventually gave Beame's successor breathing room to make the necessary reforms, but in 1975, the need for a federal bailout was just one more symptom of New York City's ills.

Part and parcel of the city government's unraveling over the Seventies' opening were industrial shifts and demographic changes. Mayor Lindsay's push for new buildings, while creating many construction jobs, destroyed small industries located at the development sites.¹⁶ New immigrants continued to make New York home, but vanishing industries and job erosion accelerated the migration of middle-class and white families to the suburbs. Corporations relocated their white-collar operations to the suburbs and abandoned their blue-collar facilities. Vacancy rates rose and property rates fell as neighborhoods and former industrial enclaves suffered.¹⁷ Arson for insurance money became a major problem, further pushing people to the suburbs and discouraging economic activity in the city center. In the long term, the shift away from industry toward a service oriented economy would bring property values back up in many of these areas,

¹⁵ This led to the infamous *New York Daily News* headline of Oct. 30, "Ford to City: Drop Dead."

¹⁶ The World Trade Center, for example, was built on land previously occupied by numerous small printing houses.

¹⁷ For a description of the movement of jobs and people to the urban periphery, see Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 209-210.

but in the early Seventies, they represented an opportunity for struggling artists to create their own space on the cheap.

Even after Jane Jacobs and Village activists killed the Lower Manhattan Expressway, the light-industrial district south of Houston Street remained a district of uncertain use. The large, well-lit spaces in SoHo appealed to minimalist plastic artists, whose sculptures were impossible to construct in smaller studios or residences. The legality of actually *living* in those spaces, the soon to be infamous “lofts,” was questionable. For most of the 60s, the New York municipal government simply looked the other way, knowing the spaces were unlikely to be used for their original industrial purpose, but unwilling to alter the law on the chance that industry might come back when the economy improved. This liminal status remained until 1971, when the city council amended zoning laws to allow shared live/work space specifically for artists. Getting certification to live in SoHo generally involved presenting a portfolio to the zoning board.¹⁸ By 1973, the area bounded by Houston, Broadway, Canal and Lafayette had received landmarks designation as the SoHo-Cast Iron Historic District.¹⁹

The grudging official acknowledgment of SoHo as an arts enclave did little to improve the material circumstances of the artists who lived and worked there: the buildings were seldom up to code in terms of plumbing, climate control, or even more fundamental structural elements (walls, floors, etc.) It was in part those shared material

¹⁸ Given the variety of artistic activity in SoHo, getting the board’s approval was not always easy. Richard Kostelanetz describes some of his difficulties in convincing the board that his work with concrete poetry merited a permit in *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists’ Colony* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

¹⁹ Alistair Barr, “SoHo, New York: Mixed Use, Density, and the Power of Myth,” accessed Nov. 3, 2010, <http://www.barrgazetas.com/papers/SoHo.pdf>. (Site no longer available. Article persists at RUDI.net, <http://www.rudi.net/books/9880>.)

circumstances that contributed to the growth of the SoHo community. The certification process involved proving that the space in question could advance the resident's work. For dancers, performance artists, and video artists, this led to performances and workshops in the loft spaces themselves, even for those artists who did not have official certification. Plastic artists hosted gatherings in their own lofts, and others offered lofts as rehearsal spaces for friends whose art involved performance.

The SoHo of the Seventies, especially in the earlier part of that era, aligns neatly with Bourdieu's "bohemian" space in the field of cultural production. The artists working there had little access to consecration of either the financial or academic variety, and seldom had interest in either.

The bohemian lifestyle, which has no doubt made an important contribution...to the invention of the artistic lifestyle, was elaborated as much against the dutiful existence of official painters and sculptors as against the routines of bourgeois life.²⁰

Their work, unlike their analogues in Bourdieu's description of French literature, was seldom about the struggles of the underclass (though much of it was political). The key was that most of their cultural production had little aim beyond their own subsection of it: works were presented to one's peers and occasionally to patrons (be they uptown galleries or grant-giving agencies). The social network of Downtown generally, and of SoHo in particular, was inextricable from its artistic networks.

Even in a sector reliant on individual effort and improvisation, institutions developed. Among the most enduring to come out of SoHo in the Seventies was The Kitchen, founded by Steina and Woody Vasulka in 1971 at the Mercer Art Center. The

²⁰ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 55-56.

Mercer was in what had once been the Broadway Central Hotel, and the Vasulkas obtained permission to host video events and related performances in the space that had once been the hotel's kitchen:

He [Andy Mannik] showed us a great place in a dilapidated building on Mercer Street and we were sold. Problem was, everybody told us, this part of town was a wasteland, nobody would ever show up. Even the names NoHo/SoHo were unknown then. Woody named the place after its previous function, "The Kitchen." We had to clean out ancient wooden iceboxes and utensils from this former bar mitzvah-type reception place at the old Broadway Central Hotel.²¹

The early years of the Kitchen were particularly anarchic. Performances were arranged on a first-come, first-served basis for audiences consisting of fellow artists, friends, and whoever happened to wander in. The Vasulkas thrived in this "polluted cultural territory," and Dimitri Devyatkin, their eventual co-director of video, was intensely affected by it.

The Kitchen showcased video art, music, and performance. It both reflected and stimulated the convergence of art, politics, and technology. Soon it was the #1 place in New York to have tapes screened. Pure video art coexisted with social-issue videos from gay activists, rent strikers, and Chinese immigrants. We welcomed collaboration and original work. Wednesday night open house remained a tradition.²²

The messiness of the Kitchen's situation—material, social, and artistic—was its source of vitality. It was, in 1971, as far removed from alignment with the field of power as it was possible to be. Without responsibilities even to a bohemian avant-garde, the

²¹ Steina Vasulka, "Max's Kansas City," accessed December 18, 2011, <http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/KI.html>.

²² Dimitri Devyatkin, "The House of Horizontal Synch," accessed December 18, 2011, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/essays_devyatkin/K_Devyatkin.html.

artists involved with the Kitchen were free to experiment in ways that would be impossible even a few years later. The performances there, while produced by the culture, were not exactly cultural *products*—they were not able to be bought or sold to even the limited extent that most musical performances could be. The Kitchen was less a presenting institution than an enabling collective. It was not marketing, nurturing, or disseminating products.

Presenting a work at the Kitchen in these early years was a matter of simply arranging it with the Vasulkas, sometimes the night of the performance. They published a monthly calendar and soon cobbled together a program of annual festivals (The Video Festival, the Computer Festival, and the Women’s Video Festival). These were the only “set” events. There was no income to do anything more elaborate. Howard Wise gave them a small grant under the name Electronic Arts Intermix, and they collected a steady trickle of donations through performance:

Some artists insisted on showing for free, but if there was a donation, the artist had a choice to collect it, split it, or leave it to us. Almost everybody let us keep the box, which paid for the monthly calendar and petty cash.²³

The limited income, combined with the Vasulkas’ independence, led to repeated clashes over rent and billing. The Vasulkas sometimes neglected to include the Mercer Arts Center name and iconography in their printed materials and lagged on rent.²⁴ The

²³ Woody and Steina Vasulka, “Early History of The Kitchen,” accessed December 18, 2011, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/Frameset_Documents.html

²⁴ There was a fairly constant back-and-forth beginning around the spring of 1972, when Seymour Kaback, manager of Mercer Arts, closed a critical letter “Do you really want to be in the Mercer Arts Center after July?” (20 April 1972, letter archived online at Woody and Steina Vasulka, early history of The Kitchen, http://www.vasulka.org/Kitchen/Frameset_Documents.html) The Vasulkas managed a compromise involving subletting the premises as possible, and scraped together payments as best they could (including a \$225 fee from Allen Ginsberg). See letter of 28 June and 29 June, 1972, available at the same site.

combination forced first a series of compromises, then the departure of the Kitchen *from* the kitchen to a new location on Wooster Street in 1973.²⁵ The move was made under the aegis of the Haleakala group, a newly-minted nonprofit foundation created to bankroll the project.

The true independence necessitated by the move from the Mercer Art Center prompted enormous changes in the Kitchen's identity and function. It became an institution:

To us it was difficult to become an establishment. We did not want to administer, or have an office, or even a phone. There was a pay phone by the door. Our idea of programming was not to select or curate, but to mediate and accommodate...

...Once a place is well-administered it becomes a victim of its own well-working. It includes or excludes, seeks its hierarchy of qualities and eventually becomes an established idea, not always able to permutate with the needs of time.²⁶

While the Vasulkas' skepticism revolved around their new functions as the institution's leaders (curator, fundraiser, and accountant, among others), Devyatkin lamented the "cleanup" of the "cultural pollution":

The Kitchen's first two years of operation were high spirited and non-commercial. After moving to Wooster Street, things changed. The Kitchen became a prestigious performance and gallery space for music and video performance that was driven more by grants than street-level, social issues. The artists and audience became increasingly white, better-off, non-native New Yorkers, a population not so interested in politics or the lives of common people. Then again, SoHo itself had become a syndrome of artists

²⁵ The tenuousness of the Kitchen's original location was demonstrated when the roof of the old hotel collapsed a few months after the move.

²⁶ Woody and Steina Vasulka, "Early history of The Kitchen,"

pitching projects to foundation executives over expensive lunches.²⁷

Though Devyatkin's assessment is colored by hindsight (SoHo in 1973 was still a few years from significant gentrification and prestige), his criticism recognizes a fundamental change in the Kitchen's identity. What had been an enabling collective was now an institution of cultural production. While the Kitchen had entirely different aesthetic and social allegiances, its role was no longer particularly different from, for example, the Philharmonic-Society or the Whitney Museum. It had its own building to maintain and improve. It had to have a full slate of performers, and its ability to succeed as an institution was, for the first time, based on the quality of those performances. Nebulousness was no longer an option.

This change manifests in presentation. The monthly calendars evolve from hand-lettered filling in of a grid to print-shop productions featuring The Kitchen's own logo. (See figure 3-1.) The Kitchen produces press releases for important performances. It eventually solicits members and functions as a gallery, complete with (for '74-'75 and '75-'76) season catalogs of all the center's performances and exhibitions. Presenting a work at The Kitchen, by the end of 1973, meant staking out a specific place in the field of cultural production.

²⁷ Devyatkin, "Horizontal Synch." The short essay from which this quote is drawn was written in 2002, many years after the events in question.

APRIL 1972						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 APRIL FOOL & EASTER LIGHT SHOW Dennis MacRae & friends
2 PERCEPTION AND CYBERNETICS Seminars organized by Dimitri Devyatkin Every Sunday this month at 8 PM.	3 The beloved son of Dr. Laum & Dr. Lloyd Morrow of Passaic, N.J. AN EVENING OF CHANTING with Charles Morrow	4 A NITE OF BLACK AND WHITE Live TV COMMERICALS by More Gensler 10 CROCK'S GOLF (1967) by Ken Schneider 2022 COCKLES (1971) by Ira Wohl 31 MARY (1967) by Ira Wohl 41 TALES (1970) by Cassius Denech Jill Godinow, Andrea Loomis and Sarah Herdell	5 OPEN HOUSE SCREENING FOR VIDEOTAPES Every Wednesday evening at 8 PM.	6 A VIDEOEVENT BY THE VASULKAS Every Thursday evening at 8 PM.	7 BOB MASON'S STARDRIVE Electronic Jazz-Rock Every Friday evening at 9 PM.	8 SPACE-FIELD ACTIVATED ENVIRONMENTAL ELECTRONIC MUSIC by Liz Phillips
9 PERCEPTION Seminar	10 PERCEPTUAL HYPOTHESIS Dimitri Devyatkin Video Rhys Chatham-Sound	11	12 OPEN HOUSE	13 VIDEOEVENT	14 STARDRIVE	15
16 PERCEPTION Seminar	17 SOUND EVENTS/S Music with Loops & Changes by Charles Madden	18 SKY by Albert M. Fine	19 ALSO An All Afternoon Preview OF FLIGHT IN THE NEGATIVE DIMENSION by Bill Etra OPEN HOUSE at 8 PM.	20 FLIGHT IN THE NEGATIVE DIMENSION Video frequencies generated by Bill Etra at 8 PM.	21 STARDRIVE	22 RETROSPECTIVE OF FIRST TAPE MUSIC COMPOSITIONS by Otto Luening
23 PERCEPTION 30 Seminar	24 MUSIC-THEATRE PIECES, EXERCISES, MEDITATIONS, IMPROVISATIONS with Eric Salzman & Quag	25	26 OPEN HOUSE	27 VIDEOEVENT	28 STARDRIVE	29 ASPARAGUS IN CONSEQUENCE OF BEING SHORT AND RED-HEADED Concert by Jim Burton & friends

ALL EVENTS START AT 8 PM. EXCEPT FRIDAY'S "STARDRIVE" AT 9 PM.
*1st PRIZE, 1972 ANN ARBOR FILM FESTIVAL to Ira Wohl

the kitchen 475-9865
240 Mercer St.

Steina + Woody Vasulka - directors
Rhys Chatham - music director
Dimitri Devyatkin - co-ordinator
these programs are supported by a grant from the New York State

Exhibitions	Events
<p>Lynda Benglis Polaroids and Color Videotapes: "TOP" "WHEELS UNDERWHEELS" "MERCURY POLAROID" + working title Approximately one hour in length, beginning on the hour. Videotapes courtesy Sausalito/Chromalab Paper and Film, Inc.</p> <p>Ralph Hocking Sherry Miller Steina Vasulka Woody Vasulka INSTALLATIONS OF VIDEO, PHOTOGRAPHY, EQUIPMENT, ETC.</p>	<p>November</p> <p>5 • Ira Schneider • VIDEO, VIDEOS AND VIDEOS + video album, an information collage of American terrain and culture, 1975.</p> <p>10 • Hans Bredner VIDEO AND FILM WORKS 1972-75</p> <p>13 • Carl Paler Works, music and a flow of photographic images merge to produce a new art form.</p> <p>Video by the Vasulkas • VIDEOS OF EXPERIMENTAL VIDEO: I & II • Videotape: "TWO VIDEOS" with Jackie Curtis, Cindy Berlin, Eric Berman, Marie Montez, Ekaterina Sobchanskaya, Ilva Pina, "FELLSHIP" with Jim Herdell, Videos of Best Moments, Ten Years After, Jetton Hill, "TWO OBJECTS", "MILES DAVID" etc.</p> <p>• VIDEO WORKS FROM 1969-1972 • FIDELITY VIDEO: Organizational Models of Electronic Image - by Woody Vasulka • SOUND IMAGE - IMAGE SOUND • VETRA VIDEO • CONFERENCE PUSION ON THE COMMERCIAL ARTS: Dealing with legal issues, rights, ownership and funding in the media related arts.</p> <p>28 • Frederic Rzewski "MUSICIAN AND FIGHT" (Premiere) composed and performed by Rzewski. Performed on the Bessendorfer Imperial courtesy Kishal International, Inc.</p> <p>30 • Charlemagne Palestine Sustaining pianos (title to be announced). Performed on the Bessendorfer Imperial courtesy Kishal International, Inc.</p>

The Kitchen/484 Broome St./New York 925-3615

These events are made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency, the Martha Bates Rockefeller Fund For Music, Inc., and the New York State Council on the Arts.

Robert Dineen, Director
Michael Dineen, Administrative Assistant
Carole Schindler, Video Program Director
Doreen Lisk, Music Program Director
Sheily Johnson, Technical Assistant

Figure 3-1 Monthly Calendars from the Kitchen (April 1972 and November 1975). The earliest Kitchen calendars fill in the grid layout of the 1972 sample by hand rather than print. (The Kitchen Archives)

Bob Stearns, the new director, strove to keep that position as close to the original freewheeling “accommodation” as possible. The Kitchen remained, through much of the Seventies, a place for experimental video installations and the downtown avant-garde. With its own location, it mingled the functions of gallery and performance venue, presenting both extended and one-off events. Attempts were made to archive material with the intention of having much of it available to the public. These functions were not especially compatible with simply being a site of Attalian collaboration. A more unified identity was necessary to secure funding and to effectively advocate for The Kitchen as an institution as well as for the events it presented.

Among the important performances to take place in the early years at The Kitchen’s new site was an installation of La Monte Young’s Dream House project in 1974. This installation was the apogee of Young’s prominence in Seventies’ New York: it received both a preview and a review from the *New York Times* and attracted crowds that surrounded the block. The performance came near the end of a phase of extensive touring, which had raised Young’s national and international profile. The ‘74 installation, though, was also Young’s last major splash in the Seventies, a rare public coup at a time when his interests were increasingly personal and mystical.

The Dream House projects themselves were an extension of Young’s concept of “eternal music”—large installations where, given sufficient resources, harmonies could be sustained indefinitely.²⁸ The first Dream House opened in Munich in July of 1969,

²⁸ Indeed, the early Dream Houses featured live performers. This quickly proved too expensive to maintain.

followed by others in the United States and Europe. They were essentially controlled spaces featuring Marian Zazeela's slowly shifting light patterns and:

Frequencies tuned to the harmonic series, generated by electronically produced sine waves creating continuous chordal drones of periodic composite waveforms, [as] the entire aural material of these installations; yet, by moving around the space, the listener is able to experience not only different relationships among the frequencies emphasised by the audible standing wave patterns, but also the combination tones brought about by the interaction of the harmonically related sine wave frequencies themselves, including the phenomenon known as acoustical beats.²⁹

The harmonic content for the Dream Houses was typically drawn from other pieces (some of which were performed live during the events), including *The Tortoise Droning Selected Pitches from The Holy Numbers for The Two Black Tigers, The Green Tiger and The Hermit*. The “audience” has much greater control of its experience than in a typical musical presentation; the work becomes a kind of sculpture experienced in time, with the specific sonic image determined by position and focus. While this increases the audience's agency, it diminishes the work's coherence as a cultural product. The plastic artists and patrons who had supported Reich and Glass lamented the inability of musical works to be bought and sold—commodified. The Dream Houses exacerbated the situation through their irreducibility to a unitary experience.

In this they directly challenged other conceptions of the avant-garde, to the point that Tom Johnson, writing outside his “home” of the *Village Voice*, averred: “Those who feel that the term ‘avant-garde’ is still appropriate for works by Boulez or Carter or Schuller or Crumb are probably in for a rude awakening if they attend any of the

²⁹ Potter, *Minimalists*, 77.

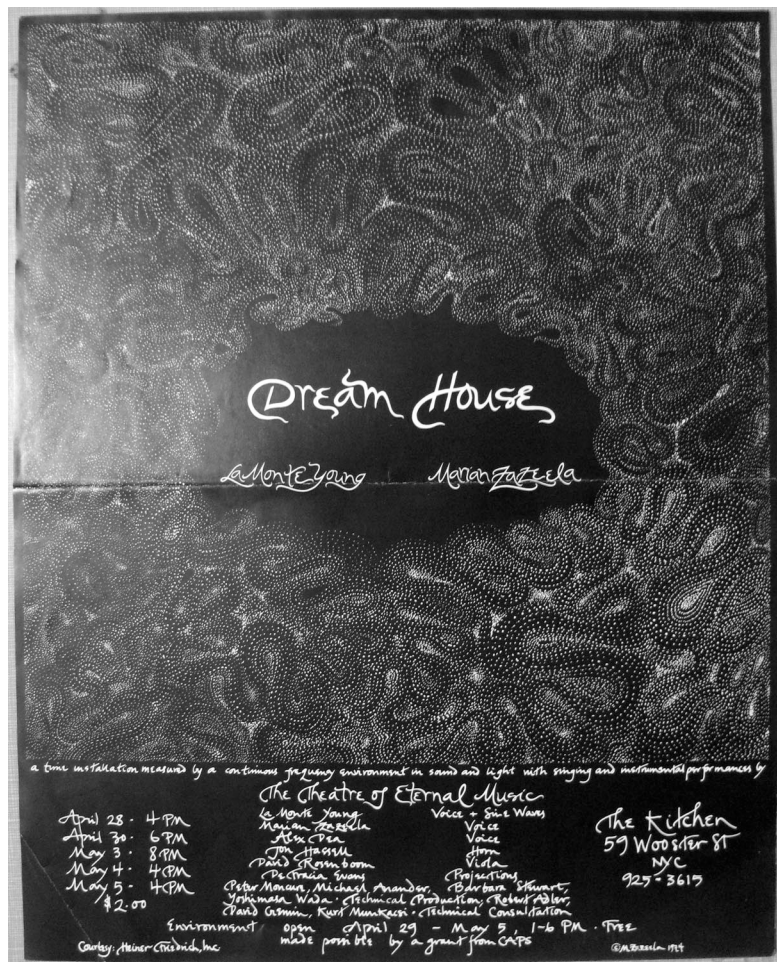


Figure 3-2 Poster for the 1974 Kitchen installation of Young’s *Dream House*. (The Kitchen Archive.)

performances”³⁰ Those works, for all their different approaches to musical content, remained rigidly performative—the composer put a score in front of the performers, the performers put the sound in front of the audience. Young had, of course, long challenged the assumptions of that model of presentation, but the Dream Houses in general, and the 1974 installation in particular, highlighted the seriousness with which those challenges

³⁰ Tom Johnson. “In Their ‘Dream House,’ Music Becomes a Means of Meditation,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1974. Johnson also wrote a pair of pieces for the *Village Voice*, July 25 and August 1, 1974, that chronicle his encounters with Young leading up to the Dream House installation at The Kitchen.

continued. The Kitchen and the Theatre of Eternal Music publicized the event with a large, glossy poster, a noticeable change from its usual monochrome, lightweight fliers. (See Figure 3-2.) The acknowledgment of the event by the *New York Times* is further evidence of the power of Young's project, belated recognition though it might be.

The Dream Houses, though, were more than simple challenges to older models of presentation. They were markers of the intensely personal turn that both Young's musical practice and the broader "counterculture" had taken. Painted with an admittedly broad brush, the social movements of the Sixties had aimed at thoroughgoing societal change. That was nearly as true in aesthetic culture: Young's involvement with Fluxus had been part of an attempt to simultaneously alter the definitions of art and the everyday. When he dissolved the first Theatre of Eternal Music in the mid-60s, Young was already letting go of many of those ambitions. By 1970, when he and Zazeela officially became disciples of the Hindustani master singer Pandit Pran Nath, his quest was for personal, spiritual growth:

The influence of Pran Nath has, inevitably, been at least as much spiritual as musical. Indian theory and practice foster close connections between the two, which emerge in Pran Nath's teaching, for instance, in the form of analogies between tuning one's voice and drawing closer to the deity.... One significant influence of Pran Nath on Young's own music, however, has been the organically evolving form of improvisation to be found in the Kirana style of which his guru was a leading practitioner.³¹

Nath lived with the Youngs for much of the fifteen years following his arrival in the States. Their interest in "Oriental" philosophy was not new and was hardly unique to them—various gurus were active in many parts of the United States in the Seventies—but

³¹ Potter, *Minimalists*, 79-80.

it did mark an important turn away from FLUXUS's attempts to blur the lines between art and the everyday. The goal, instead, became personal transcendence through a kind of mystical aesthetic experience. Young himself said:

“In order for one to tune his own nervous system to vibrate harmoniously with the frequencies of the environment, it is necessary to experiences the frequencies for a long period of time...[the work] can produce particularly meditative and exalted psychological states.”³²

In reviewing the performances at The Kitchen, John Rockwell seems to have felt something of the intended affect:

For all the acoustical and scientific terminology in the program notes, this is overtly mystical music. If you are at all susceptible to such experiences, the sound will seem to fill up every crevice of the room, and the intensity of the experience will make any nostalgia for such older Western musical expectations as shape, contrast and climax seem blissfully irrelevant.³³

Johnson was more blasé in his demurral of attending the final day of the installation:

I guess in the bottom of my soul I'm just not a true believer. I'm an admirer all right. I can appreciate Young's dedication and influence and talent. I can even say, with complete honesty, that I think he is one of the most vital forces in new music today. But I can't get myself over to the concert.³⁴

The Dream House projects, then, aim at a kind of consecration distinct from the ambitions of a Boulez or a Crumb, a “consecration” having much less to do with the specialized sense of endorsement the term carries in this paper than with the more typical spiritual usage. The place of such work in the field of cultural production is an odd one: it resists commodification as either a reproducible product or “pure art,” though it certainly

³² Johnson, “In Their ‘Dream House.’”

³³ John Rockwell, “La Monte Young Plays at Kitchen,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1974.

³⁴ Tom Johnson, “A LaMonte Young Diary, April 1974,” 1 August 1974. Collected in *The Voice of New Music*, electronic edition, 83.

qualifies as the latter. Rather than engage directly in a fight for the future of the avant-garde, Young's works of the Seventies mark a strategic withdrawal from that conflict in the interest of pursuing different, mystic-aesthetic goals. These mystic-aesthetic goals align neatly with countercultural politics, but less neatly with the aesthetic politics of the Downtown scene. Despite this (or perhaps because of it), Young's work, at least for a brief time in the spring of '74, captured the attention of Uptown and Downtown alike.

It is partly a retrospective illusion, but Meredith Monk remains one of the most prominent artists to emerge from downtown in the Seventies and still be particularly associated with it.³⁵ The intermedia nature of her work explains part of this association, but the actual manner and location of her artistic presentation do, too. While other artists gradually traded lofts for galleries for concert halls, Monk continued to perform in her own loft and at various other sites downtown. Unlike Reich and Glass or even, to a degree, Young, Monk's place in the field of cultural production remained tightly bound up with the bohemian subcategory and its subordination to the field of power. Even as she collected accolades and a degree of financial security, Monk made few compromises to her cultural production.

1971's *Vessel* was, in many respects, a spiritual successor to *Juice*. Like Monk's breakthrough work, *Vessel* was presented across three different sites, though the movement from spectacular to intimate is reversed. The initial segment, "Open House," was presented at Monk's loft; the second, "Handmade Mountain," a short bus ride later at

³⁵ This despite the fact that most of the other downtown figures discussed continued to live in SoHo or its vicinity for decades after they became famous.

the Performing Garage (a former SoHo truck garage converted into a theater space); and the third, “Existent Lot,” on another night in a parking lot near St. Alphonsus Church. *Vessel*’s narrative is built loosely on the story of Joan of Arc, and invokes “medieval” forms such as tapestries (“a medieval kind of two-dimensional perception”)³⁶ and pageants. Brooks McNamara calls it “a performance form in which voice, movement, costumes, lights, film, objects and environments are blended together into an artistic whole, with all elements working together and none taking precedence over the others.”³⁷ It is, then, a new iteration of the “theater cantata” label Monk used for *Juice*; she calls *Vessel* an “opera epic.”

It is, though, an epic tightly woven into its surroundings, from the highly personal space of Monk’s loft, through the bus ride to the more intimate Performing Garage, all the way out to the empty parking lot:

“I was very determined to do this piece in New York City. That was very important to me, somehow. And I feel that the section in my house in some ways is the most like New York City. Because you’re so aware of the traffic that’s going by, and the sirens.”

“I called *Vessel* an epic because of the sense of journeying in the whole piece. Not only did I want the content of *Vessel* to be a journey, but the point of having the audience move from one place to another in one evening is that the audience is also on an epic, you know, they are literally going through the motions of traveling.”³⁸

“I was trying to find an outdoor space that had a specific New York ambience...one level of *Vessel* has to do with people opening up their eyes to New York. The park just doesn’t have anything to do with New York ambience, at least on our level. Our economic

³⁶ Brooks McNamara, “Vessel: The Scenography of Meredith Monk. An Interview,” *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 16 No. 1 (Mar. 1972), 98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

level, our life style, has most to do with complex interior spaces, and bleak outdoor spaces.”³⁹

The array of spaces and themes proved so thick that the two most thorough reviews (both appearing in the Nov. 4, 1971 *Village Voice*) had to devote considerable ink to description, and both still claimed incompleteness.⁴⁰ The three episodes were linked by the recurrence of items, costumes, and characters in altered guises; Monk explicitly associates these modified returns with musical composition.⁴¹ *Vessel* was, in effect, a kind of environmental intermedia, mingling mime, theatrical speech, dance, and music with specific places.

Monk had worked with spaces before, particularly in *Juice*, but their tight integration into *Vessel*'s conception was a new development. From the use of her living space to the bus ride and commandeered parking lot, Monk had far greater control of her audience's position and attention than in the typical concert work or stage dance. (This, too, was a shift from *Juice*, in which several elements of the performance behaved more like museum exhibitions or Young's installations.) None of *Vessel*'s sites were originally designed for performance. The presentation retained some of the more traditional trappings—a lengthy typescript program crediting the very large cast, for example—but the trappings were mere accoutrement to the event. The presentation across multiple sites (including travel) was inseparable from what was being presented.

³⁹ Ibid., 100.

⁴⁰ Deborah Jowitt's review ("the bushes are not to be trusted") appears on pages 35-36 of the *Voice*; Arthur Sainer's ("In the merry monk of october"), on pages 57 and 77. Marcia B. Siegel's review, "Virgin Vessel," originally appeared in the 14 November 1971 issue of the *Boston Herald Traveller*, and is reprinted in Jowitt, *Meredith Monk*.

⁴¹ See McNamara, "Scenography," 96-98.

The fact that none of *Vessel*'s sites were outside the SoHo orbit limited its impact on the broader field. Despite developing many of the ideas Monk first presented in the widely-covered *Juice*, *Vessel* failed to receive a review in the *New York Times*. The publicity for that earlier work seems to have stemmed largely from its use of the Guggenheim and its spiral gallery. Without the credibility of that institution (or the scandal of staging a paint-soaked avant-garde dance pageant on its ramps), *Vessel* was forced to remain a downtown event. The "local" press covered it enthusiastically, but that coverage only reinforces the ghetto-ization of downtown artists in the first years of the Seventies.

By 1973, that was beginning to change. The *Times* had hired John Rockwell to cover popular music; he covered downtown performances of all sorts, too. The *Village Voice*'s Tom Johnson was sympathetic to Downtown styles and made occasional guest appearances on the Arts pages of the *Times*. Monk's reputation continued to develop, in part through successful tours of England and Germany. Those tours had made it clear that works integrated into singular environments were less than ideal for traveling or even marketing (though Monk did re-work *Vessel* for England's Great Georges festival.) Monk's next major work, *Education of the Girlchild*, was not so tied to specific performance locations. It is her most frequently revived work, and one she was able to take on tour several times.

In *Education*, Monk eschewed environmental intermedia and allusions to the medieval in favor of a more personal kind of myth-making. The work remains highly

allusive, but the collected references aim at something like dream-allegory. Kathy

Duncan called it

a piece one gapes at as Americans do when visiting European cathedrals—unacquainted with meanings, transfixed by pure visual and aural experience...the music consists of stretches of driving, harmonic rhythms on organ or piano. Monk undulates and wails in a controlled, warm voice, with a prodigious number of colorations.⁴²

At the *Times*, Don McDonagh, in a positive review, called *Education* a “translat[ion of] reminiscence into imaginative movement tableaux, dramatic incident and song.”⁴³ The bulk of his review describes the two-part structure of the work, along with some of his favorite tableaux. Broadly, the work is the aging and reverse-aging of a girl to an old woman and back, accompanied by archetypal familial figures—the companions, danced by other members of the House. The series of tableaux is accompanied by Monk’s wordless singing and spare, repetitive chordal keyboard accompaniment. This mode of dance-music-theater perpetuated the intermedia ideals of the Judson Group, blending a “wide variety of design, movement, and musical elements.”⁴⁴ Without resorting to direct representation (or even, in this case, intelligible language), Monk created an identifiable narrative.

In many respects, *Education of the Girlchild* is the most traditional of Monk’s works yet discussed: it is presented on a stage, with a set, without any museum exhibition elements, translocations, or purposeful displacement of the audience as audience. It was promoted the same way Monk’s other works were: press release, fliers, word-of-mouth. It

⁴² Kathy Duncan, “Education of the Girlchild,” *SoHo Weekly News*, Nov. 15, 1973.

⁴³ Don McDonagh, “The Dance: Meredith Monk Work Full of Imagination,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1973.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

was not staged Uptown, or even in Midtown. (It was, in fact, first staged in the building on Wooster Street that was soon to house The Kitchen.) Despite the location, *Education* attracted more attention from the “uptown” publications—Don McDonagh and Anna Kisselgoff reviewed it for the *New York Times*, as did Nancy Goldner for the *Christian Science Monitor*.⁴⁵ Critical attention to Monk had been growing since *Vessel*, and continued to do so throughout the Seventies. Part of that hinged on Monk’s growing reputation as a composer. Before 1972, reviews treated her almost exclusively as a choreographer and theater artist. Rockwell referred to her as a musician in 1972, and Tom Johnson reviewed *Education* for the *Village Voice* in his capacity as a music critic (while Deborah Jowitt reviewed it under dance and Michael Smith under theatre). Monk’s occasional sojourns uptown for musical performances (a “raw recital” at the Whitney and *Our Lady of Late* presented at Town Hall) helped raise her profile. Her shift towards more “portable” kinds of theater works no doubt contributed, too.

The reception of *Education of the Girlchild* highlights Monk’s increasing integration of music, theatre, and dance in her *works*, but also in her artistic persona. By finding success without fitting neatly into any of the pre-defined critical categories, Monk was able to gain simultaneous attention from multiple critics—the pattern of sending dance, theatre, and music critics to Monk’s major premieres persisted throughout the Seventies. The polyvalence of her productions muddied her relationship to bureaucratic entities (eventually endangering her NEA funding), but it also allowed her to solicit support as a dancer, a singer, a choreographer, a composer, and a theater artist. Like

⁴⁵ McDonagh on June 16, 1973; Kisselgoff on Nov. 11, 1973; Goldner on Nov. 14, 1973.

SoHo itself through the first years of the Seventies, Monk enjoyed the freedom and faced the challenges of existing outside the avenues of cultural production extant in the field.

As many of her downtown contemporaries trended toward mainstream presentation, Monk persisted in small-scale cultural production, reliant on government aid, in-kind assistance, and constrained production costs. Beyond the consecration concomitant with government grants, Monk neither received nor sought acknowledgment from the arbiters of esteem: her works were covered in both large and small papers, but were presented almost exclusively Downtown. Simple, photocopied posters and fliers remained Monk's primary means of publicity; her programs were similarly typewriter-and-copy productions. Many of her newly small-scale and site-general works were presented in her own SoHo loft on Great Jones Street. While this legitimated her residence in the artists' district, it also meant that her lifestyle and personal identity were tightly wound up with her artistic identity and role as a cultural producer. Unlike the Uptown producers, who tended to gain consecration through the works they produced (e.g., Wuorinen's Pulitzer for *Time's Enconium*), Monk and her Downtown cohort gained recognition increasingly through a kind of individual branding. In this, they were much more like performers in popular music. The works may have made the band's initial reputation, but after a certain point, the band's reputation made the works'.

Steve Reich and Philip Glass, too, were based near SoHo—Reich in a loft on Duane Street (in Tribeca), Glass first on 23rd Street near 9th Avenue, then moving into the East Village near Second Avenue and Fourth Street (only a few blocks northeast of

SoHo proper).⁴⁶ While they continued to occupy similar space in the early Seventies' field of cultural production, differing aesthetic trajectories became increasingly apparent through the era's first half. In concrete terms, each continued to rely on financial and logistical support from the (plastic) arts community, developed his own ensemble, and parlayed growing European support into increased stature in the United States. Responses from the field of power varied as critics selected (or were selected) to cover the Downtown scene in lieu of the usual mid and uptown events.

Aesthetically, both Reich and Glass began to move beyond the strictly-structured minimalism of the late Sixties, trading aurally obvious processes for less prominent ones of varying complexity. Increased interest in sonic quality, particularly timbre and harmony, led them to expand and modify their batteries of instruments and to amplify them. In their major works of the early Seventies, Reich and Glass both experimented with added (human) voices in a texture of substantial amplification. Their reaction to those experiments shaped their major mid-Seventies works (Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* and Glass's *Einstein on the Beach*), which in turn set them on differing paths to broader consecration.

Early on, though, they continued to occupy similar stylistic and professional territory. Reich, Glass, and the various players who served in and between their ensembles undertook a tour of Germany, France, and England in 1971. They found it "expedient" to combine their visits despite their fraying personal relationship.⁴⁷ In

⁴⁶ Potter, *Minimalists*, 170, 261.

⁴⁷ Potter, *Minimalists*, 198. For a brief (but detailed) discussion of personnel, see p. 218-219 of Strickland's *Minimalism: Origins*. The works included were Glass's *Music with Changing Parts*, *Music in Fifths*, *Music*

London, performances were in their “usual” environs—the Institute of Contemporary Arts, while in Paris and Germany the groups performed in more traditional spaces, like Paris’s Théâtre de la Musique. In London, the concerts strengthened Reich’s connection to the British composer Michael Nyman, who became one of his major European advocates. The Paris concerts were facilitated by the record company Shandar, which would later release a record of Reich’s *Four Organs* and *Phase Patterns*, as well as Glass’s *Two Pages* and *Music in Contrary Motion*.

European tours had little direct impact on the composers’ reputations in New York, but the tours provided necessary financial support for performances. Though Reich and Glass struggled to meet material obligations at home, in Europe they could make reasonable livings as performer-composers. Disentangling the American from the European is a challenge; their reputations in Europe were due in part to their American-ness. Initially, the domestic press paid little attention to the composers’ European endeavors. What was important was that the Europeans paid the bills.

Between the Anti-Illusion show and this European tour, Reich had studied drumming in Ghana and would soon study Balinese gamelan with native teachers in Seattle and Berkeley, California. While these non-Western musics had a profound effect on the composer, he was careful to draw on their structure rather than their mere sonic affect—he did not add more metallophones to his ensemble, nor did he write for West African drums. In a special to the *New York Times* in 1973, Reich advocated for the study of non-Western music, not as exotic sounds or as some primitive source of renewing the

in Similar Motion, and Reich’s *Piano Phase*, *Pendulum Music*, *Four Organs*, and *Phase Patterns*. Reich and Glass were by this time no longer performing in the other’s pieces.

jaded West, but as a means of illuminating comparison.⁴⁸ Studying non-Western music, as a performer and a composer, offered new opportunities for structural thinking while throwing the “defaults” of the Western tradition into relief. The *sound* of the music is much less important: “Instead of imitation, the influence of non-Western musical structures on the thinking of a Western composer is likely to produce something genuinely new.”⁴⁹ Simply copying textures or was less important than figuring out what made the music work: “Reich was committed to learning as much as possible about [non-Western music’s] structure and essence...as a composer, rather than an ethnomusicologist, he was concerned to retain his Western individuality and not get too involved.”⁵⁰

Reich’s comments are an important counterpoint to a persistent trend in early reception of minimalist works: casual comparison to “Oriental” music. (Comparisons to African music were far less common, even in Reich’s strictly percussive works.) Given the prevalence of both generically “Oriental” and specifically East and South Asian ideas in the Seventies counterculture, the comparisons are not particularly surprising. Reviews through the early Seventies persistently mention “the overt ethnic influences on their work”.⁵¹

Steve Reich carries his celebration of repetition to lengths that we have known previously only at second hand, from Oriental music.⁵²

⁴⁸ Steve Reich, “A Composer Looks East,” *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1973.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Potter, *Minimalists*, 206.

⁵¹ John Rockwell, “There’s Nothing Quite Like the Sound of Glass,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1974.

⁵² Henahan, “Repetition.”

[Reich, Terry Riley and Glass] all compose harmonically static, repetitive, Eastern-influenced, meditative music...⁵³

This [*Drumming*] is a score with direct and obvious antecedents in both African drumming and Indonesian gamelan.⁵⁴

Mr. Glass also belongs to the neo-primitive school, along with such kindred spirits as Steve Reich and Terry Riley.⁵⁵

The fact that the “trance music” label was applied nearly as often as “minimal(ist) music” suggests the closeness of the association between music such as Reich’s and Glass’s with broader countercultural trends. It was also a musical shorthand for “repetitive” and “unsophisticated,” a means of contrasting minimalist downtown composition to the established complexities of uptown and midtown. The “Oriental” label allowed critics and presenters to push Reich and Glass further from the consecrated segments of the field of cultural production—to drive home that they were a “them,” not an “us.” The same division could be leveraged the opposite direction, positively emphasizing the energy and distinctness of the downtown sound. (This is particularly true in Rockwell’s mostly positive reviews of Reich and Glass.)

Reich achieved a measure of recognition from “serious” musicians before Glass did. While many older critics continued to deride his work, younger ones endorsed and even advocated for it. Reich won the rare privilege of performance as part of the 1971 opening season of Boulez’s “Prospective Encounters” series with the New York Philharmonic—one of the few Downtown composers to appear on the series at any point during its run.⁵⁶ His *Four Organs* was performed by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in

⁵³ John Rockwell, “Music: Reich Meditations” *New York Times*, May 19, 1973.

⁵⁴ John Rockwell, “Reich’s ‘Drumming’ is Tonal Tapestry,” *New York Times*, Dec. 18, 1973.

⁵⁵ Peter G. Davis, “3 Pieces by Glass Probe The Sonic Possibilities,” *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1970.

⁵⁶ Unlike many of the works performed in this series, Reich’s music was played by his own ensemble.

the same year. It had premiered at the Guggenheim in 1970 with Reich and Glass covering two of the four parts. In 1973 its performance at Carnegie Hall was a cause for scandal. Reich's growing reputation would eventually secure a premiere of *Music for 18 Musicians* at Town Hall.

The attention from "establishment" critics was not always complimentary, of course. Harold Schonberg continued the line that had been established in the reviews of the late Sixties, reluctant to even call Reich's work music:

There is really nothing to "understand" in this music [*Four Organs*]. There is nothing much to like, nothing much to dislike. Basically it is an exercise in acoustics.⁵⁷

The scandalous work was not especially representative of Reich's newer directions. Consisting of a single chord distributed among four electric organs, moving in and out of phase with maracas providing the pulse, it fits more neatly with the works of the late Sixties than the early Seventies. *Drumming* was more indicative of his new directions, growing directly out of his five weeks in Ghana. It incorporated voices in addition to pitched percussion, and was Reich's longest work to date, lasting up to 90 minutes. Pitch movement is an important element of the work's structure, as is "the sheer sonic impact of timbre and texture."⁵⁸ These concerns point to the new directions in Reich's work: not merely refinement of his rhythmic thinking, but also concern with sound as such. Audible processes become less important than the whole of what is audible.

⁵⁷ Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: A Concert Fuss," *New York Times*, Jan. 20, 1973. The review goes on to describe the vociferous, mostly negative reaction to the performance, drily noting "At least there was some excitement in the hall, which is more than can be said when most avant-garde music is being played."

⁵⁸ Potter, *Minimalists*, 212.

Recordings played a prominent part in the growth of Reich's reputation through the early 1970s. In 1969, Columbia Records released *Steve Reich: Live/Electronic*, consisting of *It's Gonna Rain* and *Violin Phase*. Shandar released an LP of *Four Organs* and *Phase Patterns* in 1971; a new recording of the former work was also released by Angel in 1973.⁵⁹ Through Rudolph Werner, Reich scored his major coup: a three-disc set of *Drumming*, *Six Pianos*, and *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* on Deutsche Grammophon in 1974.⁶⁰ Despite the lack of published scores and performances by groups other than Reich's ensemble, these recordings (along with the performances by "consecrated" groups discussed below) kept Reich's music visible to the press and general public.

Musically, the important works of this period were the three later released by Deutsche Grammophon: *Drumming*, *Six Pianos*, and *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ*. The latter two were completed in 1973 for premiere at the John Weber Gallery, though both were listed as "works in progress." The John Weber Gallery, opened in 1971 on West Broadway in what came to be known as the "art building"—it also housed the Sonnabend and Castelli galleries—was characteristic of SoHo's arts entrepreneurship. Weber had returned to New York in the late Sixties from Los Angeles, and brought his extensive client list (including European contacts) with him. He was an early enthusiast for Fluxus and the Italian Arte Povera movement. His first exhibition in the new gallery featured Sol LeWitt. Active in the "scene," Weber maintained close

⁵⁹ John Rockwell reviews this recording favorably, noting that it "represents a fine insight into one of the most intriguing directions of present-day music." from "Records: Roiling Work," *New York Times*, October 31, 1973.

⁶⁰ Potter, *Minimalists*, 209.

relationships with his artists despite shoestring finances.⁶¹ The concert series at the Gallery (four evenings in May) built on Reich's connections with the plastic arts community. The performance of his new works also marked the growing distinction within the "minimalist" group—"they [Reich, Riley, and Glass] are gradually growing apart, and Mr. Reich's concerts amounted to a stronger-than-ever declaration of independence."⁶²

Just as the aesthetic distinctions between the minimalists grew, so too, did distinctions in their relationships to the field of cultural production and—especially—the field of power. Through the early Seventies, Reich's works were not published, and nobody outside his own ensemble performed them. The ensemble continued to perform primarily in galleries and various "downtown" spaces, though access to "serious" halls began to increase. Reich's structural refinements and increasing use of modal palettes may have grown organically out of his studies, but they effectively nudged him towards a reconciliation with the field of power and the "endorsed" modes of musical expression. The ramifications of these changes were slow to play out, but by moving away from the austerity of process minimalism, Reich began to produce music more in-line with the field of power. By the mid-Seventies, institutional endorsement of Reich's music became less hesitant; his access to consecrated record labels and halls increased, and he was less confined to the cradle of SoHo.

⁶¹ For Weber's recollections of his SoHo years, as well as his general thoughts about the atmosphere of the Seventies and the subsequent changes to the art world, see his 2006 interview with James McElhinney for the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art. Transcript available at <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-john-weber-13562> (accessed 7 November 2011).

⁶² Rockwell, "Reich Meditations."

John Rockwell provides an illuminating portrait of Glass's place in the field in the following quotation, taken from the opening of a feature story on Glass in the run-up to the 1974 premiere of the complete *Music in 12 Parts*:

But it was what was happening outside [Donald Judd's loft] on Wooster Street that was extraordinary. Glass plays his music loud, and the sound of it easily penetrated through the large plate-glass windows that circle the loft. The whole immediate vicinity of that dark and deserted light-industrial neighborhood was filled with Glass's dynamically unvarying harmonically static, rhythmically infectious blend of fast-moving figures from the organs and consoling sustained notes from the winds. Silhouetted in a window several stories up across the street, a jazz saxophonist improvised an unheard accompaniment, looking like some historical postcard of a nineteen-fifties Greenwich Village bohemia. Down below on the street itself, a happy pack of New York urchins—the kind proper people might regard nervously at night—kept up their own jerky, ecstatic dance for the entire hour that Glass and his musicians played. Passersby—including Douglas Dunn and Sara Rudner, the dancers—sat in stoops and listened. It was one of those moments that made one especially happy to be living in New York.⁶³

The series of images highlights important elements of Glass's "place" in New York at the cusp of his emergence from Downtown. As at the Seventies' opening, Glass is performing in a loft—and again, one belonging to a plastic artist. The audience is not just the handful of "insiders," but also passersby and, in some sense, the whole desolation of Seventies SoHo. The concert is not aimed at the broader public, but the sheer volume is enough to push it out into the local environment. Rockwell deftly ties the "scene" to the scene and to the history of bohemian art in lower Manhattan. Glass has made it with

⁶³ Rockwell, "The Sound of Glass."

the downtown crowd, and belongs to it. That crowd has moved into SoHo to conduct its personal, social, and artistic life...and those remain intensely interwoven. Rockwell is, himself, an insider—he knows people well enough to identify Dunn and Rudner at sight, and place them into the appropriate niche. Yet Rockwell’s piece appeared in the *New York Times*, a bastion of the establishment. Glass—and the Downtown crowd to which he belonged—was on its way up.

Glass was not about to abandon his downtown roots, but the big 1974 premiere of *Music in 12 Parts* set the stage for the breakthrough of *Einstein on the Beach* and set in motion Glass’s rise towards broader fame. Glass’s increasing prominence in the early Seventies had less to do with hesitant institutional endorsement than with good luck and salesmanship. Operating, like Reich, out of SoHo, Glass regularly presented unadvertised concerts on Sunday afternoons at his loft.⁶⁴ “Consecrated” performances were largely limited before the breakthrough performance of *Music in Twelve Parts* at Town Hall in June 1974. Rather than work with record companies (as Reich had), Glass formed his own—Chatham Square Productions—in collaboration with gallery owner Klaus Kertess.⁶⁵ The company released only two albums, but the recordings made under its aegis helped solidify Glass’s reputation within the SoHo arts community.

While Reich’s European associates were largely British and German, Glass proved particularly successful in France. He had studied there with Boulanger and been active as a musical contributor for avant-garde theater productions. Michel Guy, who later became France’s Secretary of State for Culture, invited Glass’s ensemble to play at

⁶⁴ Potter, *Minimalists*, 303.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

the Festival d'Automne in 1973, and eventually commissioned the work that would become *Einstein on the Beach*.⁶⁶ In addition to the side-effects of building a European reputation, the Ensemble's summer tours of Europe helped Glass reach a vital benchmark: twenty weeks of employment for his ensemble members.

If you do twenty concerts a year, you can then qualify as an employer who can take out unemployment insurance for his employees. What I could then offer my players was twenty weeks when I would pay them, and twenty-six weeks when they could get the money down at the unemployment office. The beautiful part of this was that I didn't need grants. I didn't need the approval of any other composer at all.⁶⁷

The European concerts would generate enough income to cover a significant part of those twenty weeks of wages, allowing Glass to keep his ensemble financially viable (if not especially lucrative or stable—he was still taking odd jobs into the late Seventies).

The early Seventies were not a prolific period for Glass. Aside from *Einstein*, which was not completed until 1975, Glass composed only two enduring works: *Music with Changing Parts* (1970) and *Music in Twelve Parts* (1974). These two works marked the new directions in Glass's aesthetic that led to *Einstein on the Beach*. Importantly, they were both designed for a “purely concert context.”⁶⁸ While much of his later work would aim toward opera or film, these works of the early Seventies are the culmination of Glass's works composed solely for the ear. With *Music in Changing Parts*, Glass had increased his focus on “sonic impact, and the concomitant concern with texture and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 304. For more on the genesis of *Einstein* and Guy's initial encounter with Glass, see chapter four.

⁶⁷ Philip Glass in an interview with William Duckworth, *Talking Music*, 336

⁶⁸ Potter, *Minimalists*, 307.

psycho-acoustics.”⁶⁹ In *Music in Twelve Parts*, concern with texture and sonic impact were married to experiments with rhythm and structure.

Music in Twelve Parts, though not complete until 1974, developed part by part through the early 1970s. “By [1970] some new music for the Philip Glass Ensemble was needed, and needed badly.”⁷⁰ Each newly-completed movement provided a fresh concert piece. Performances of these eventually made their way out of Glass’s loft: “...the avant-garde composer has been making an effort of late to broaden his audience beyond the ‘in’ crowd that attends concerts of new music in this city.”⁷¹ By 1973, he was performing at Max’s Kansas City (a rock club) and presenting his own series of parks concerts. Like the Philharmonic’s far more famous series, Glass presented concerts in each of the city’s five boroughs under the aegis of the New York State Council for the Arts. John Rockwell highlighted the events as evidence of “the general appeal of the sort of music Mr. Glass plays and about the openness of non-specialized audiences in this city.”⁷² While Reich looked toward consecrated venues and Monk deepened her ties to SoHo, Glass aggressively promoted his own work by arranging performances of this type for his ensemble.

While *Music in 12 Parts* was, in many senses, “concert music,” it was not presented traditionally. Much of the music’s impact (including the interaction of layers to produce overtones and special effects) relied on amplifying the sound to what Potter calls

⁶⁹ Ibid., 323.

⁷⁰ Tim Page, “Music in 12 Parts” in *Writings on Glass: Essays, Interviews, Criticism*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Schirmer, 1997), 96.

⁷¹ John Rockwell, “Philip Glass Works To Broaden Scope Beyond ‘In’ Crowd,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1973.

⁷² Ibid.

“dynamic levels common in rock music.”⁷³ At the center of this was Kurt Munkacsi, the Philip Glass Ensemble’s sound technician (and counted as a full member of the group). Technology was thus a vital component of the Ensemble’s sound, but the electronics in question were not the computers and synthesizers of the Columbia-Princeton labs. Instead, the technical apparatus was that of the rock show: big speakers and powerful amplifiers. The technology was not deployed to create new sounds, but to make the existing sounds newer. The electronics meant that the Philip Glass Ensemble required plenty of technical support in staging performances, but the support that was more common in rock venues. This limited the available performance spaces, and meant extra work would be required to set up presentations in traditionally acoustic venues.

Music in 12 Parts was not performed in its entirety until the summer of 1974, when it was “premiered” at Town Hall. Town Hall had been owned until 1970 by NYU, falling into “sad estate, abandoned by the great names in music who had once made it a mecca for the finest in recitals and chamber music”... a far cry from the prestigious venue it once had been.⁷⁴ Jerrold Ross took it over and immediately set out to present quality music (including jazz) at affordable ticket prices. His changes attracted immediate attention, and by 1974, Town Hall had again become respectable—although it still lacked the consecrated luster of Lincoln Center. It was therefore an ideal place for Glass to step from downtown into a broader limelight.

The last three of the twelve parts were not performed until this event, but the others had never been strung completely together. The individual parts trace Glass’

⁷³ Potter, *Minimalists*, 307.

⁷⁴ Allen Hughes, “Again It’s Town Hall Tonight—Maybe Every Night,” *New York Times*, Aug. 22, 1971.

increasing valuation of sound over the pure structure of his early minimalist works, what Glass called an aural description of “a vocabulary of techniques which have [appeared] and are appearing in my music.”⁷⁵ As in Reich’s *Music for 18 Musicians* (discussed in the following chapter), *Music in 12 Parts* articulates a structure based *around* tonality, but not in any functional sense.⁷⁶ Also like Reich’s work, the attention to sonic impact, psychoacoustics, and structures (rather than pure processes) marks it as a transition between “early” or “pure” minimalism and a “post-minimalist” style.

Rockwell called it “an end and a beginning,” recognizing that it was simultaneously the culmination of three years of work and “indications...of new avenues [Glass] plan[ned] to explore.”⁷⁷ The marathon performance lasted six hours, including two fifteen-minute intermissions and a 90-minute dinner break. The duration echoed that of recent works by Glass’s soon-to-be collaborator, Robert Wilson. The audience, “about 700,” was reportedly enthusiastic despite the concert’s length.⁷⁸ Tom Johnson enthused about the content and the presentation, admiring the audio work of Munkacsi and the massed electronic organs. The hours-long concert was joyous:

One of the pleasures of Glass’s music is his joyous optimistic tone. No gnashing dissonances, no eerie sounds, no melancholy moments, no downs. It just keeps chugging away toward some ultimate high. I’m not sure that’s necessarily a good thing, as most of the music which has lasted in our culture is music which contains liberal doses of the bitter along with the sweet. But I’m certainly not complaining. A little musical optimism is a refreshing

⁷⁵ Glass, unpaginated typescript for *Music in 12 Parts*, quoted in Potter, *Minimalists*, 312.

⁷⁶ For Potter’s analysis, see *Minimalists*, 313-323. He focuses particularly on parts five, eleven, and twelve.

⁷⁷ John Rockwell, “Philip Glass Work, in 12 Parts, Is Long (Four Hours) and Ambitious Piece,” *The New York Times*, June 3, 1974.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

contrast to the dark expressionistic shadows of Schoenberg, Berg, and Bartok, which still hang over so much contemporary music.⁷⁹

As with Rockwell's piece on Glass performing in Donald Judd's loft (which was written only a few weeks earlier), Johnson's emphasizes the cumulative effect of the music. Though both also write intelligently about musical content, they feel compelled to discuss the atmosphere created by volume and repetition. Like Reich, Glass had moved from process to effect over the early Seventies. Glass, though, worked big, in terms of both duration and volume. It was perhaps his affinity for rock-concert style presentation (and the influence of the aesthetics of loudness on the musical content) that set Glass and his ensemble on the road to popular success. He, like Reich, moved towards partial reconciliation with the field of power, but he was much quicker to embrace success that didn't rely on consecration. While the French label Shandar released a disc of *Two Pages* and *Music in Contrary Motion* in 1975, it was the release of the first two parts of *Music in 12 Parts* on the Virgin subsidiary Caroline that first pushed Glass toward commercial success. The Seventies would end before Glass's career became economically self-sustaining, but by their mid-point, he was poised for a big break.

When the history of Pierre Boulez's work as music director of the New York Philharmonic is written, it will surely dwell extensively on his splendid accomplishments in the Prospective Encounters, Informal Evenings, Rug Concerts and other such manifestations in which he appears as teacher, evangelist and general good friend of contemporary music and musicians and alert music lovers.

—Allen Hughes⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Tom Johnson, "Philip Glass in 12 Parts," *Village Voice*, 13 June 1974. Collected in *The Voice of New Music*, electronic edition, 79.

⁸⁰ Allen Hughes, "Music: Boulez Lecture," *New York Times*, May 5, 1974.

Boulez had, in some sense, *gotten* his break when he took the Philharmonic job.

The early years of his tenure were characterized by his efforts to educate the “us” of the Philharmonic’s audience, to convince subscribers and non-subscribers alike that new music was not just for some pretentious “them.” While downtown artists sought symbolic capital for their works, Boulez strove to leverage the accumulated capital of the Philharmonic to change the shape of New York’s cultural field (and, by extension, America’s). His efforts were quicker to create controversy than converts, though critical reception of his first season of programming was generally positive.

Raymond Ericson’s treatment of Boulez’s season-announcement press conference in January of 1971 was muted and limited largely to facts. It highlighted Boulez’s choice to focus on Liszt works that had fallen out of the repertory, Alban Berg as a “link” between new and old, and the extensions of programming Boulez planned.⁸¹ Harold Schonberg, by contrast, took a nearly gossipy approach in reviewing the announcement. He hand-waved the Berg, noting that “none of this music is unfamiliar.” The Liszt, though, proved rather more surprising:

But Liszt! That is a different story. It is surprising to find such an avowed anti-romantic as Pierre Boulez interested in Liszt, the most romantic of all the romantics. One would have thought the lamb would eat the wolf, the Cardinal would get married, Wall Street would rebound, America would make peace with Hanoi, before Boulez would lie in the same bed with Franz Liszt.⁸²

Schonberg happened to be a big fan of Liszt, and spends the rest of the column praising the composer before congratulating the Philharmonic for programming so many of the infrequently heard works. As fond as Schonberg was of the Liszt (and as dismissive of

⁸¹ Raymond Ericson, “Boulez Outlines Orchestra Plans,” *New York Times*, Jan. 28, 1971.

⁸² Harold C. Schonberg, “Hsst! Have You Heard About Liszt?” *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1971.

the “newness” of Berg), by May there were already critical rumblings from the subscription base. Before he’d ever lifted his baton officially as music director, Boulez was stirring controversy with his programming. Schonberg and the other critics, though, were ready to stand by him at this early moment:

[Boulez], the former hero of the avant-garde, is not coming in like a wild man, determined to saturate the Philharmonic with programs with his kind of music. On the contrary, he is setting out as though he does not want to antagonize his audience. Those who are nervous about him are merely fleeing from a ghost.⁸³

Boulez’s programming of truly new music, that first season, was limited to non-subscription events. Though all of Berg’s works (save the full operas) were presented, they were already nearly half a century old. The *idea* of Boulez as a wild man of the avant-garde likely had as much to do with the flood of critical letters that arrived at both the Philharmonic and the newspapers, what Harold Schonberg described as a “ground swell of resentment about the programming.”⁸⁴ The heavy doses of Alban Berg and obscure Liszt works had hardly won over the fairly conservative subscription base. For his second season, Boulez announced a program that, theoretically, was more amenable to traditional tastes: it “featured” Haydn and Stravinsky. As with Liszt, though, the Haydn works chosen were ones seldom performed, and Stravinsky was just as easy for skeptical audiences to pigeonhole as “new music” as Berg. If any of the skeptics feared a “slippery slope,” it never materialized—Boulez’s later seasons featured early and late

⁸³ Harold C. Schonberg “Off-Season Bet on Boulez,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1971. Schonberg continued to defend Boulez’s programming (and express bafflement at the complaints it provoked) in “The Philharmonic: From Rut to Ruckus” *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1971 and “The Music Season: Imprint of Boulez,” *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1971.

⁸⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, “It’s Fun for Boulez—But...” *New York Times*, April 9, 1972.

Romantics, Ives, Schubert, and Mahler, hardly a murderer's row of dissonance-loving modernists.

Two enduring tropes emerged early in critical response to Boulez: coolness and didacticism. The former trope owes at least part of its existence to Boulez's stylistic contrast with Bernstein. Bernstein's hyperbolic, emotive conducting was a far cry from Boulez's restrained, baton-free gestures. There were more directly musical aspects of Boulez's coolness, however: he emphasized precision in rhythm and intonation and built his performances around musical structures rather than emotional contours. In the twentieth-century repertoire he embraced, this cool clarity served Boulez well and won acclaim. When he turned the same clinical eye to Mozart or Haydn, the critics happily laid into his lack of musical sympathy.

Boulez's didacticism was inseparable from his musical values. In his conducting, he elucidated structures within a score; in his programming he sought to elucidate the patterns of historical change in music. Work by work, he hoped to lead American audiences (and the British ones who attended his concerts with the BBC Orchestra) into an understanding of contemporary works:

Part of the trouble [with audiences] is that the standard classics of the first part of the 20th century are still not established in programs as they ought to be. Once people have more chance to hear Webern and Schoenberg, I think they will accept Stockhausen's early music. We must move forward step by step.⁸⁵

By programming mini-festivals and organizing seasons around specific composers (and more particularly their less-often-heard works), Boulez sought to outline

⁸⁵ From an interview with Peter Heyworth, "What Is Boulez Up To With the Philharmonic," *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1971.

those steps for audiences. The problems with presenting contemporary music had more to do with who was listening than the technical conceits of the composers, though Boulez was often happy to embrace those as well. His own compositions were dauntingly technical, but he did not believe that they could change concert life on their own:

Today I think we are in a period when the composer alone cannot break through to really new music. Without new resources, he is locked in a ghetto he cannot break out of. There is also a need for a new approach to concert life that will bring it into touch with what composers are doing today. Look at Wagner: he didn't only compose, he built a model opera house and created the conditions in which his own music could be performed. What I want to do is to create models of concert life...but if I don't, I fear nobody will—that's what's so distressing.⁸⁶

The programming of the subscription series was a central part of Boulez's program, but it was not the only part. Boulez's initiation of the Prospective Encounters and Informal Evenings were just as important to educating and expanding audiences for the Philharmonic. The former, especially, reflected Boulez's approach to presenting the avant-garde. His most ambitious outreach project, the Encounters formed a stark contrast to the high culture beneficence of Bernstein and Moseley's Parks concerts. The Encounters, like Boulez's other outreach programs, focused on smaller audiences and favored scholasticism over spectacle. The Prospective Encounters were designed explicitly to extend the Philharmonic's reach into "downtown"—the full title of the series was "Prospective Encounters in Greenwich Village 7-12." Staged in student centers and theaters (problems with fire marshals and host institutions caused consistent relocation of the series), the Encounters were more akin to a relaxed lecture recital than a formal concert.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

The process of presentation was vital to Boulez's approach to advocating for the new. In regard to a similar series of events staged in London, Boulez emphasized the need for that relaxed atmosphere and the importance of the performing space:

First of all, [Festival Hall]'s too big. And then, I think it's too formal. You see, I think we must get the right kind of atmosphere. I don't want these concerts to be events you go to just to admire the performances. The musicians and myself will be dressed like the audience, so that we are all visibly part of it. I want to create a feeling that we are all—audiences, players and myself taking part in an act of exploration.⁸⁷

Presenting the new, for Boulez, meant more than just presenting new works. He encouraged audiences, performers, and composers to embrace a new kind of presentation. The seating was unreserved, “in nonstandard concert patterns.”⁸⁸ The “7-12” refers to the hours of the event; performances of the works took place primarily between 8 and 10, preceded and followed by discussion between the conductor, the composers, and the audience. The Encounters featured avant-garde chamber music performed mostly by members of the Philharmonic, though some composers supplied their own performers.

For the Philharmonic, the Prospective Encounters were as much experiment as outreach. Their presentation reflects this experimental approach. “These events will attempt to find at least temporary solutions to the controversial matter of how best to present music which seems to belong to the future but which in reality is part of the present.”⁸⁹ The series received its own mailer, although printed and mailed at a fraction

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ “Philharmonic Lists Two Concert Innovations,” *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1971.

⁸⁹ Press release dated Jan. 22, 1971, New York Philharmonic Archives

NEW YORK PIERRE BOULEZ
Music Director,
PHILHARMONIC

at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center

THIS AFT. 2:00
TOM'W EVE. 8:30, TUES. EVE. 7:30

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conductor

GLUCK "Iphigenie en
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TONIGHT 8:00
**PROSPECTIVE
ENCOUNTER**
in the Great Hall, Cooper Union,
7th St. and 3rd Ave.

PIERRE BOULEZ
DONALD HARRIS Ludus II
DRUCKMAN Valentine
for Solo
Bass, Jon Deak, bass
SCHOENBERG Serenade
Op. 24 Richard Frisch,
baritone

All Seats \$3 at door prior to concert tonight

Figure 3-3 New York Philharmonic Display Ad (*The New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1975).

of the rate of the subscription series.⁹⁰ The Encounters, when scheduled, were advertised alongside the subscription concerts. (See Figure 3-3.) Beyond this limited print media program, the Encounters were “advertised” solely through word of mouth. (This was not particularly out of place in the village, where concerts and other events relied on word-of-mouth and, sometimes, posters, as advertisement.) More importantly, the series’ association with the Philharmonic led to free publicity through press coverage, particularly in the *Times*. The expense to the Society was negligible in comparison to their general operations. There was no need to pay famous soloists, no need to rehearse the orchestra, and only minimal logistical costs. The \$2.50 ticket price was designed to

⁹⁰ 11,500 copies of the 1974-75 Prospective Encounters mailer were printed. For the Ives mini-festival the same season, 25,000 flyers were printed. By comparison, the Philharmonic printed 500,000 copies of the subscription series brochure for the 1975-1976 season. (Numbers drawn from notes at the New York Philharmonic Archive.)

draw audiences in, not generate revenue. If the series flopped, the losses would be minimal. If it succeeded, the Philharmonic could feather its cap with a bit of new music credibility while perhaps appeasing the domestic composers infuriated by Boulez's hire.

The first Prospective Encounter featured post-serialists: Mario Davidovsky's *Synchronisms No. 6* and Charles Wuorinen's *Politics of Harmony*. Harold Schonberg found little to admire in either work ("Neither... was especially interesting"), but the fact that the *Times* sent its senior music critic to attend the event speaks to the curiosity the Encounters had provoked.⁹¹ While subsequent Encounters were reviewed by the junior critics (Raymond Ericson, Allen Hughes, and Donal Henahan), they *were* all reviewed. They continued, too, to draw capacity crowds. For all their prominence—especially early in the series—the Encounters were only marginally tied to the Philharmonic's core programming and identity.

The Encounters did not confine themselves entirely to domestic composers. Ligeti's music was performed, as were a few (decidedly out of place) artifacts of the Second Viennese School. Still, Americans dominated the programming, in no small part because they were most likely to be available to participate in the discussion surrounding the performances. Composers included Milton Babbitt, Earle Brown, George Crumb, Jacob Druckman, David Del Tredici, Peter Lieberson, Donald Martino, and Edgard Varese, among others.⁹² As with the subscription series, Boulez managed to farm out the works he disliked to guest conductors (though he conducted several of the seasons entirely on his own). Moreover, he managed to almost completely omit the Village

⁹¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "Music: A New Series at Philharmonic," *New York Times*, October 3, 1971.

⁹² For a full list of Prospective Encounters programs, see Appendix One.

“locals”—the various minimalists and conceptualists working “downtown”—with the exception of a first season concert conducted by Michael Gielen that included Reich’s *Phase Patterns* and Rzewski’s *Requiem*. It was a curious situation: Boulez worked hard to bring “new music” to the Village, but the new music he brought was primarily in academic styles the local artists had explicitly rejected.

The friction of the different “news” highlights the improbability of Boulez’s broader project in New York. The Encounters were just one of the changes he introduced to Philharmonic operations—most of them involving chamber music, explanation via lecture, or some combination thereof. For the Philharmonic (and, on some levels, for Boulez), the Encounters were an experimental series that pushed the Philharmonic’s presence into new territory and might, perhaps, lure in future subscribers. On the level of *outreach*, however, the Encounters reflected the approach that earned Boulez the label “intellectual.” The mixture of lecture, performance, and discussion resembled nothing so much as the university classroom; didacticism was central element to the series. The Encounters and their related programs coaxed forth special vivacity from Boulez, in marked contrast to his time on the podium in Philharmonic Hall:

Even though they are on a limited scale—two informal evenings, four prospective encounters this season—the series has been extremely well received. On these occasions, Boulez is at his very best—intelligent, relaxed, good humored and, for once, obviously relishing what he is doing and obviously having a good time himself. The contrast between his demeanor at these fests and his sobriety at the regular subscription concerts is undeniable. There is no doubt in anybody’s mind where he would rather be. But his

contract with the Philharmonic calls for at least 14 weeks of subscription concerts aside from the special events...⁹³

The didactic elements of Boulez's outreach reflect a deeper schism between his work as a composer and aesthete and the life of the Philharmonic-Society as an institution. In all of Boulez's outreach efforts, but most especially in the Encounters, the goal was the negation of accreted cultural history ("taste") in favor of an intellectual aesthetic to teach a new taste. The rationalistic approach to music and musicking proposed an alternative power structure: rather than assert the strength of the existing system by displaying its beneficence, Boulez strove to articulate a system driven by the aesthetic negations of the past. Essentially, his idea of reaching out was to replace the "cultural" with the "intellectual"—to replace accreted history with scientific progress.

In terms deployed by Bourdieu, Boulez's sympathies in the field of cultural production lie with the restricted production of the avant-garde, heavily weighted towards an intellectual notion of consecration—a specific form of cultural capital reliant on the symbolic value of the works themselves. He therefore increases the importance of the small-scale: chamber music, lecture recitals, scholarly lectures on Friday afternoons. In relation to the broader field of power, this is an "autonomous" position. It is a subfield of art for art's sake. In this, he differed from his downtown contemporaries primarily through his concern with an intellectual or aesthetic consecration. Both Boulez and the downtowners sought to *create* demand for their work.

The Philharmonic as an institution, though, lies in the subfield of large-scale production. The works on which it bases its programming are consecrated not through

⁹³ Stephen E. Rubin, "Boulez at the Philharmonic: The Iceberg Conducteth," *New York Times*, March 25, 1973.

any specifically intellectual criteria, but by the weight of history and the passage into canon. Its cultural capital is tied less to the value of specific works, but to the value of its complete repertoire—this is why specific composers are mentioned in the PSAs for the Parks concerts even when the pieces are not the “warhorses” of easy classical. The move away from specific symbolic capital allows easier conversion of the broader cultural capital to economic capital. As an institution, the Philharmonic responds to *pre-existing* demand, from society ladies to corporate donors. The core of its programming (in both the subscription series and the Parks) were works already made “classics” by history. It leveraged these, along with its brand, to make the Parks a success.

The Parks’ model of transmission prefigured the consecration of the works performed even as it reinforced that consecration. Rather than stating a case for consecration, as Boulez did in the Encounters, the Parks concerts assumed the works were already consecrated. Moreover, the consecration involved in the Parks performances is that of Bourdieu’s respectable, heirloom publishers—these were, by and large, works hallowed by tradition and the (fickle) judgment of history. The performance of consecrated works in the consecrated manner reinforced the Philharmonic’s alignment with the field of power. It asserted the “culture” of the elite, the kind that forms the basis of cultural capital. By staging the Parks in an accessible space, heavily advertising them, and integrating them with the full heft of the Philharmonic-Society as an institution, the Philharmonic asserts its place as a repository of cultural capital and a suitable vehicle for converting economic capital into that cultural capital—it reinforces the suitability of the Philharmonic as a recipient for personal, corporate, and government largesse. The music

is a thoroughly cultural commodity. While the outreach is a gesture from “on high,” and a significant expenditure of resources, the goal of the outreach is not to directly replenish the pool of subscribers. The Parks are too indiscriminate in their accessibility. They are more an assertion of position than an invitation to share in that position.

Boulez was a reluctant participant in the Parks. This was due in part to scheduling concerns—for much of the early Seventies he simultaneously directed the Philharmonic and the BBBC Orchestra—and partly due to his own artistic inclinations. The Parks concerts were public spectacles, lending themselves to the kinds of ebullient Romantic works that Boulez abhorred. He managed to avoid conducting any until the summer of 1974, when he conducted a program of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger* overture, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 2 in D Major Op. 36, and Stravinsky’s *Petruchka*. He was hardly in his comfort zone, but it hardly mattered. As Allen Hughes remarked, “an uninstructed, blindfolded listener would have had no way of knowing that he was hearing one of the great orchestras led by one of the world’s great conductors.”⁹⁴ There was simply too much atmospheric noise and distortion caused by the amplification for the finer points of the music to emerge. The Parks thus ran against Boulez’s every artistic inclination, no matter how much popularity they gained the Philharmonic.

Despite the differing ideologies of Boulez and his employing institution, the initial critical response (and feeling among the Board) was positive enough to merit a prompt renewal of Boulez’s contract in November of 1972. His initial three-year contract ran through the 73-74 season; the extension would keep him at the philharmonic through

⁹⁴ Allen Hughes, “Boulez’s Turn in Park With Philharmonic,” *New York Times*, August 1, 1974.

the 1976-77 season. Though there was some grumbling from the subscription base, Carlos Moseley was confident in the foundation Boulez had established with the Philharmonic:

There are signs in all directions that Mr. Boulez has already won a very solid public, and this public is growing surely and swiftly. We firmly believe that the additional years with Mr. Boulez will be a memorable time in Philharmonic history.⁹⁵

Boulez had, of course, also won a number of detractors and skeptics. The Prospective Encounters had failed to reconcile Boulez and American composers. His continued avoidance of repertory standards turned off the more conservative elements of the Philharmonic's subscription base. (His cool demeanor hardly helped.) More importantly, Boulez had not won over many of the orchestra's members. The Philharmonic had a reputation for making conductors' lives difficult, but Boulez seemed to provoke more thorough disdain than usual. This was partly due to his programming, but more particularly about Boulez's nondramatic conducting style—the same thing that alienated subscribers:

Once the initial shock [of Boulez's programming] wore off, people began to digest the fact that it is not the food on Boulez's unusual musical menu that is making their stomachs churn, but rather the manner in which the chief chef cooks it. Particularly with the more traditional fare, they are finding that both the meat and the potatoes are served either cold or underdone.⁹⁶

The orchestra members called him “The Twentieth Century Limited” and the “Iceberg.” His intellectual approach—especially to standard repertory—antagonized many of the players. They were, though, hesitant to voice their complaints publicly. In

⁹⁵ “Philharmonic signs 2d Boulez Contract,” *New York Times*, Nov. 8, 1972.

⁹⁶ Rubin, “Iceberg.”

the early Seventies, Boulez held directorship of both the Philharmonic and B.B.C.

Symphony, lending him particular power to alter musical careers in two of the world's most important cities. Allowed to comment anonymously, his critics within the ensemble were much more pointed:

“I have never seen an orchestra in this state. If it wasn't for the fact that a member of my family has to work in New York, I would leave.”

“Boulez is just bad; he just doesn't communicate.”

“He's absolutely no musician. To me, he can interpret nothing. We always sound like we're playing the same pieces.”⁹⁷

Boulez's defenders praised him just as emphatically. What was clear was that Boulez left little room for a middle ground. Defenders and critics tended to assign opposite values to the same characteristics: clarity became coldness, attention to detail became tyranny of perfectionism, intellectualism became lifelessness. It was hard to remain ambivalent.

While many of the Philharmonic players remained cool to Boulez's coolness, it was not their primary motivation when they went on strike in the fall of 1973. Though the players had won major concessions under Bernstein and Moseley in the late 60s, the Chicago Symphony had just negotiated a substantial raise of \$60 per week—this put them \$50 per week ahead of the Philharmonic's current minimum salary.⁹⁸ Moseley, who was well-respected by the Philharmonic players, was on leave due to illness (he'd suffered a pair of heart attacks within the space of a month). This left negotiations in the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ The fall was a particularly unquiet one for labor relations in music, with musicians at the New York City Ballet and New York City Opera also going on strike.

hands of Amyas Ames, long-time chair of the Philharmonic-Society's board and a man little-loved by the musicians. Salary was the primary sticking point, but the musicians raised deeper questions about the Philharmonic-Society's management of funds, particularly regarding the use of the newly-renamed Avery Fisher Hall. They cited potential conflicts of interest introduced by Ames' dual chairmanship of the Philharmonic and Lincoln Center and the murkiness surrounding the particulars of Mr. Fisher's confidential donation.⁹⁹

The conflict over musicians' pay and benefits highlights some of the Philharmonic's uniquely institutional challenges regarding the presentation of music, new or otherwise. An orchestra is, in many ways, an industrial ensemble, reliant on division of labor and interchangeability of parts. Similarly, orchestra management handled a multi-million dollar budget and complex relationships with donors, landlords, and the broader orchestral "industry."¹⁰⁰ Both management and the musicians embraced conventional labor versus capital rhetoric and positions despite the dissimilarities between the culture industry and manufacturing or service industries.¹⁰¹ Unlike manufacturing, the Philharmonic could not count on demand for its products to recoup the losses (concrete and abstract) incurred in a long strike—music, particularly the rarefied, symbolic capital purveyed by orchestras, was a luxury. Moreover, the financial underpinnings of the

⁹⁹ Donal Henahan, "Why Philharmonic Strike Drags On," *New York Times*, October 24, 1973.

¹⁰⁰ The Philharmonic-Society was, in fact, at the forefront of most national conversations about orchestral management, government support, hosting meetings of various orchestral societies and lobbying hard for both state and federal monetary support.

¹⁰¹ Harris Green derides both sides for this stance in "... While the Philharmonic pickets sound their own note of protest," *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1973. Though he ultimately embraces an idealized vision of music-making (calling it a "labor of love for an ideal it would be a capital offense to ever treat wholly in terms of dollars and cents"), Green does point out many of the dissimilarities between musical labor disputes and those in the field of industry.

Philharmonic depended as much on donations and special legal status as ticket sales. The web of institutional ties and obligations was a necessary encumbrance, one that denied Boulez and the Philharmonic the kind of flexibility that downtown presenters enjoyed.

The strike concluded November 29, when a tentative agreement was reached with a graduated pay increase (a \$50 per week raise introduced gradually over the three years of the contract), increased pension, and adjustments to seating and rehearsal practices.¹⁰² The musicians had not been wholly idle during their strike, staging a benefit concert in New York and also touring Spain and Portugal. Boulez had agreed to conduct the benefit concert, but backed out under pressure from the Philharmonic Board. The Philharmonic saved \$35,000 in payments not made to players and soloists, and the 73-74 season went on relatively seamlessly.

Among the more public bumps that year were reports that Boulez was leaving the orchestra. In January of 1974, Boulez publicly contradicted a report in the Paris weekly *L'Express* that he planned to leave the Philharmonic when his second contract expired in 1977. Boulez called the incident a confusion and a misrepresentation—he had just resigned his post as director of the BBC Orchestra. He had, however, also just accepted an invitation to be come the director of Paris' newly-established Institute for Research and Coordination of Acoustics and Music (IRCAM). His demurral was hardly emphatic, though: “No, I have not closed the door to the Philharmonic. I could not, because it has not been opened yet...I am only now at the end of my first contract, and I have not discussed anything beyond 1977 with the Philharmonic.”¹⁰³ Protestations aside, the brief

¹⁰² Emanuel Perlmutter, “Agreement Reached in Orchestra Strike,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1973.

¹⁰³ “Boulez Says Story on Quitting Errs,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1974.

controversy highlighted Boulez's changing approach to his obligations. He had already stopped accepting invitations to guest-conduct.¹⁰⁴ By resigning his BBC post and accepting the directorship of IRCAM, Boulez made it clear that he was interested in reducing his conducting obligations to expand his work in composition and research.

But he was not yet done at the Philharmonic. Between the Parks and the Encounters were the "Rug concerts," implemented by Boulez in 1973 in imitation of a similar series he'd presented in London. Unlike the Parks or encounters, the Rugs brought people to Lincoln Center, the locus of institutional music-making in Manhattan. Aimed at the same young audience as the Encounters (and with the same "popular pricing"), their main feature was the reorganization of the performing space. They were advertised as "The New York Philharmonic and Pierre Boulez in a New Kind of Musical Event" on a strikingly extended flyer. (See Figure 3-4.) The seats were removed from the floor of Avery Fisher Hall, replaced by the titular rugs (actual seats were available in the mezzanine). The Philharmonic split its membership to form a pair of chamber orchestras, which decreased the commitment required by the players during the time between the subscription series' end and the annual summer mix of touring and Parks concerts.

Splitting the orchestra also altered the available repertoire, encouraging further departure from the orchestral canon. The smaller orchestra of the Rugs was especially suited to the early orchestral repertoire and contemporary music: the second concert of the first season included Webern's Five Movements for String Orchestra, Op. 5; Crumb's *Ancient Voices of Children*, Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 BWV1046, and

¹⁰⁴ Rubin, "Iceberg."



Figure 3-4 Detail from Rug Concerts Flyer. The top third of the 1973 Rugs flyer. New York Philharmonic Archives.

Haydn’s “La Passione” Symphony No. 49 in f minor.¹⁰⁵ This mix of old and newer works played to Boulez’s strengths as a conductor—the clarity and precision he brought to the podium suited the repertoire well. They also sparked audience curiosity; these were seldom works that existed in major recordings. In most regards, the Rugs were an extension of Boulez’s approach to programming the subscription series, mixing the old and new works while steadfastly avoiding anything resembling a “warhorse.”

The concerts were eagerly received, particularly by the predominantly young audiences:

¹⁰⁵ For a full description of the first season’s programming (as well as an exploration of its aim at young audiences), see Donal Henahan’s “So Lie Down and Face the Music,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1973.

Downstairs, however, was the audience Mr. Boulez has been looking for ever since he became music director of the Philharmonic: young, alert, enthusiastic, quietly attentive.¹⁰⁶

The cheering, predominantly youthful audience that greeted the first of the New York Philharmonic's "Rug Concerts" on Tuesday night was not an isolated phenomenon. Wednesday night's listeners, crowded on the carpeted orchestra floor and stage of the Philharmonic Hall...responded clamorously to each of the four works in the program. In particular, they gave standing ovations to Pierre Boulez...¹⁰⁷

The success continued into the second season:

[They] turned out to be not quite a wall-to-wall success (a Schoenberg commemorative program was lightly attended). But otherwise even Pierre Boulez, who concocted the idea, must have been startled by the audience's size and passionate enthusiasm. No wonder it has been decided to expand the bargain-priced event next season to two weeks.¹⁰⁸

The second Rugs season occasionally included the full Philharmonic (which was necessary for such works as Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and Berg's *Wozzeck Suite*). Even with the expanded ensemble, the Rugs concerts demonstrated Boulez's interest in developing new avenues of presentation. The informal seating arrangement, like that of the Encounters, eroded the divisions—that Boulez believed artificial—between audience and ensemble. With the orchestra out of tie-and-tails, literally taken off its pedestal, it was much closer to the audience's level than in any of the Philharmonic's other programming. The ticket prices were low (beginning in the first season at \$3 for the unreserved admission to the rugged area, \$2.50-3.50 for reserved seating—roughly half the price for a single concert ticket during the season). It was this combination of factors

¹⁰⁶ Donal Henahan, "At 'Rug Concert,' a Standing Ovation," *New York Times*, June 14, 1973.

¹⁰⁷ Raymond Ericson, "20th-Century Works Performed At Philharmonic 'Rug Concert'," *New York Times*, June 16, 1973.

¹⁰⁸ Donal Henahan, "Music: Success on Rugs," *New York Times*, June 18, 1974.

that drew the young, enthusiastic audiences that represented a wholly different segment of the field from the Philharmonic's subscription base. And it was the young audience that encourage the Philharmonic to expand the program (with critics reporting that it might be extended even into the times of year normally reserved for subscription events).¹⁰⁹

The Rugs received a higher degree of institutional support than Boulez's other experiments. This was due, no doubt, to the location of the concerts in the orchestra's home hall. If the Parks were subscription series concerts writ large, the Rugs were subscription series concerts writ small—smaller ensembles, shorter programs, an injection of informality and youthfulness into the staid confines of Lincoln Center. The series was Boulez's most successful experiment with the Philharmonic. It attracted corporate sponsorship from Exxon. (See Figure 3-5.) The reviews, while not always as enthusiastic about the music as the audiences, were generally positive.

The Rugs were a success by every measure, but they were a short-lived one. Yet another batch of renovations to "fix" the acoustics of Philharmonic Hall eliminated the ability to remove the seats. There were plans to hold similar concerts in Lincoln Center Plaza, but these never panned out, particularly since Boulez was, by 1975, already planning his exit from the Philharmonic. Material circumstances, as much as the lack of institutional will, had ended Boulez's most successful experiment after only three years.

While the Rugs had had the potential to expand the Philharmonic's audience, Boulez's early years with the institution forced a re-examination of its existing subscription base. With the Encounters, the Informal Evenings, and the Rugs, Pierre

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, the June 14 Henahan piece quoted above.



Figure 3-5 Cover of “Rugs” Promotional Booklet. Original in red, white and blue, 1975. New York Philharmonic Archives.

Boulez took the Philharmonic out of its way to redefine its “us” at the peril of antagonizing the existing “us”—from subscribers to donors to members of the orchestra itself. It was not at risk from “them;” it was at risk of *becoming* “them.” While downtowners and, to some extent, the Group for Contemporary Music, could define themselves *against* heirloom institutions like the Philharmonic, the Philharmonic, already aligned with the field of power, could not so neatly align itself as *against* its more flexible counterparts. More importantly, it could only even attempt to do so by jeopardizing its position within the field of power.

That position, when Boulez took over, was comparatively secure. The economic troubles that grew through the Seventies reduced the amount of money available for the Philharmonic and for orchestras more generally, but even by the Seventies’ midpoint, the Philharmonic could argue for more donations or attention from a position of strength. It

bore the whole weight of its history. As much as that may have reduced flexibility, it was also an attractive point for potential benefactors: the Philharmonic's institutionality made it a natural resting place for largesse. They were thus not competing against Downtown, but rather against their own potentialities. Because it could not define itself oppositionally in the way that others could, the Philharmonic had more difficulty negotiating the balance between its role as a cultural producer and its role as an instrument of the field of power. The conflict between Boulez's stress on didacticism and the institution's emphasis on cultural consecration destabilized the Philharmonic's place in the field without ever managing to either threaten it or—all Boulez's efforts included—to extend it.

Much nearer Manhattan's north end, Charles Wuorinen, Harvey Sollberger, and their Group for Contemporary Music had relocated to the Manhattan School of Music. The conservatory environment proved, at least initially, a pleasant change from Columbia. The school's orientation towards performance meshed well with Wuorinen's limited interest in the classroom. The conservatory also provided a ready pool of interested and talented young performers to serve the Group as audience and occasional auxiliaries. While the Group had opened many of its Columbia concerts with early music, after moving to the Manhattan School, that practice ended. In its stead, concerts often featured ensembles of conservatory students.

The Group was able to maintain several of its key patrons after the move, including the Alison M. Ditson Fund and the New York State Council on the Arts. The

latter funded nearly half of the Group's 1972-73 operating costs.¹¹⁰ The Manhattan School provided in-kind support, printing programs and publicity materials, as well as a performance venue and associated services (ushers, guards, etc.)—the School also provided a part-time bookkeeper. The shift away from Columbia encouraged the ensemble to professionalize; it began keeping annual reports, with Nicolas Roussakis serving as Executive Director. By the 1973-74 season, the Group had created a new logo and continued to cultivate its identity as a musical “brand.”

The reception of that brand by the field was variable. Wuorinen in particular continued to advocate for an aggressively anti-traditional new music. In response to Pierre Boulez's lengthy “To Awaken Curiosity in Our Music,” Wuorinen suggested that the solution to the public's disinterest in new music was to get rid of the old orchestra and all its props (including state and federal funds) and replace it with an orchestra capable of “genuinely representative performance of the [new] works.”¹¹¹ While both men took the position that the public could be educated into appreciation of new music, Wuorinen in particular seemed convinced that bad performances of avant-garde works were a central cause for the public's lack of appreciation. (The fact that Boulez remained reluctant to perform works by Wuorinen and other American composers at the Philharmonic no doubt plays some role in Wuorinen's combative stance, too.)

Despite the differences of opinion within the segment of the field Boulez and Wuorinen shared, it was easy for outside critics to lump them together as bastions of intellectual conservatism. Tom Johnson and John Rockwell, while consistently praising

¹¹⁰ Deaver DMA Thesis, 63.

¹¹¹ See Pierre Boulez, “To Awaken Curiosity in Our Music,” *New York Times*, Aug. 6, 1972. Wuorinen's response, “The Bulk of Hostility to New Music Would Pass If...” appears on Sept. 10, 1972.

performances and expressing hope that the Group for Contemporary Music might become more than an academic showcase, were also quick to characterize it as a stuffy purveyor of dull modernism—Rockwell, for example, called it a “bastion of uptown musical academicism.”¹¹² The more conservatively oriented critics, like the *Times*’ Donal Henahan or, even more so, Harold Schonberg, were prone to level similar criticisms at the Group’s performances, though the position they had staked in the field was one more aligned with the field of power and the cultural commodities of the canon.

What becomes clear in this critical discourse is that, for better or worse, Wuorinen, Sollberger, and the Group were increasingly characterized as quintessentially Uptown. For Downtown insiders like Johnson and Rockwell, Wuorinen and company were easy whipping boys, composers who had missed out on the Downtowner’s revolution and continued to march down the road to creative poverty and cultural ossification. For the conservative midtowners, the GCM, like the Downtowners, represented a nonsensical departure from expressive power and music that was moving and *likable*. As the Seventies continued, these positions, particularly that of the downtown critics, stiffened.

By the time the 75-76 season rolled around, with its array of events for the U.S. Bicentennial and the fragile hopes of a nation looking for something positive, the field of cultural production had already begun its shift away from distinct, unified oppositions. Institutions like The Kitchen and the Group for Contemporary Music, despite dramatically different aesthetic and social positions, had begun to demonstrate the

¹¹² John Rockwell, “Concert; Karajan in an Ordinary Reading of Beethoven 20th-Century Music,” *New York Times*, November 13, 1974.

possibilities of existence independent from the more traditional loci of consecration (such as the Philharmonic). Those heirloom institutions, too, were changing, forced to pursue more outreach in an effort to appeal to both the consuming public and patrons (private and governmental alike). Though considerable power gaps remained, none of these constituencies could credibly claim to be the “us” against which “they” struggled. The fronts had shifted and fragmented, with the events presented around America’s Bicentennial moment providing an exceptional snapshot of the things that had passed, and the things yet to come.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
Fireworks and Fragmentation (1976)**

Let's recognize that all the conditions are present for [necessary evolution] to happen, the principal one being the uncertainty that exists at the heart of most of our current societies.

—Pierre Boulez, 1976¹

The United States' Bicentennial proved to be, most of all, an excuse for brave faces. There was a belief that the troubles of the early Seventies—Oil Shock, Watergate, Vietnam, and stagflation—had been an anomaly, and that the displays of power, national identity, and hope surrounding the Bicentennial would set the stage for a return to U.S. supremacy. That belief never quite managed to separate itself from the fears of changing social and economic values. By the Seventies' end, the combination of hope and fear that characterized the Bicentennial had ushered in a new wave of political conservatism. In 1976, though, the hope was fragile. The fireworks and pageants, the tall ships and parades, represent a kind of held breath, a certainty that change was coming, but uncertainty as to that change's direction.

In the U.S. in 1976, celebrations revolving around the bicentennial camouflaged an increasingly fragmented social field. Identity politics were on the rise. The embrace of small communities encouraged by the counterculture and, in some cases, by political necessity (such as the sudden withdrawal of city services in parts of NYC) completed the collapse of the broader movements of the Sixties. Without Vietnam and Nixon to unite it, the left had difficulty mustering force. The right, meanwhile, was only beginning to coalesce around anti-tax and anti-government sentiment as the “Rockefeller Republicans”—the Northeastern industrial establishment—lost its grip on the party. The field of power wobbled. The cracks created during the changes of the early Seventies had

¹ Celebration of Contemporary Music program book, New York Philharmonic Archive.

been filled in or ignored; none had become so large, though, to truly upset the balance of power.

In the field of cultural production, artists responded to this fragmentation of the social field as individuals. At the Sixties' end, "schools" and "movements" were the dominant categories of aesthetic organization. By '76, the meaning of labels like "minimalist" or "intermedia" had become too general for them to serve as rallying cries or anything more than convenient shorthand. The producers focused increasingly on their own institutions and agendas—from the Philharmonic's conservative subscription series to the coup of *Einstein on the Beach* at the Met. The agents weren't anonymous anymore; there was no longer a need to repeatedly explain their identities in journalistic coverage (or in publicity). They fought skirmishes for access to specific parts of the field of cultural production and seldom tilted at the windmill of "what comes next."

That argument was left to an increasingly fragmented American social field. As Gerald Ford finished out Nixon's second term, economic troubles continued to plague the country. Battles for money and industry increasingly pitted the old powers of the Northeast against the rising strength of the south and west. As government resources tightened, states in the Northeast and Midwest began to protest the balance of payments—the difference between taxes sent to the government and revenue received. The "Frostbelt" states paid in more than they got out; the excess went to states in the South and West in the form of direct aid, military contracts, and payments to migratory retirees. New York governor Hugh Carey was at the forefront of efforts to redress this

imbalance, forming the Coalition of Northeastern Governors in 1976.² Sunbelt leaders quickly formed their own groups to push back. Some politicians made conciliatory noises, but the sense of regional antagonism persisted.

By 1976, many of the Northeastern states, especially New York, were passing through waves of financial crises stemming from the intersection of generous government programs with recession-eroded tax bases. The southern states, by and large, opted for laissez-faire conservatism, minimizing both taxes and government programs (all while milking lucrative Federal contracts). The South was a cheaper place to do business, with modern amenities (and no worries, yet, about the resultant sprawl). The ascendance of the South tilted the political landscape as much as the economic one. Two hundred years after the nation's founding, the United States was again in the midst of a regional conflict for its identity and its future.

Questions of identity stretched beyond regional character and into the country's neighborhoods. The politics of personal identity were coming to the fore in '76. Postwar liberalism—the kind that culminated in the Civil Rights Movement—had been based on the sublimation of identity in favor of unity. There were certainly elements of assimilationism in this approach, but it helped to create broad political constituencies. Johnson's Great Society was perhaps its purest manifestation. Richard Nixon's rise coincided with and relied upon the splintering of liberal universalism. His "Southern Strategy" was based on exploiting differences within the Democratic coalition. Those same differences showed in the tumult surrounding the '68 DNC.

By 1976, liberal universalism was effectively dead. This profoundly altered the field of power:

² Schulman, *Seventies*, 107.

The demise of liberal universalism and the celebration of diversity exacerbated the political crises of the 1970s. Politics always revolved around citizenship—around defining the “we,” marking out an “us” against a “them.” Everyone desires good schools, good housing, roads, and health care for “us”; few wish to spend their hard-earned dollars on “them.”³

Citizenship, with the rights and obligations it suggests, broke. The age of the hyphenated American was dawning. The Black Panther Party increasingly focused on electoral politics. Senior citizens founded the Gray Panthers to advocate for their own issues. White ethnics pushed for control of their own neighborhoods, and were particularly emphatic in their protests of the forced busing that was supposed to integrate society. Post-Stonewall and pre-AIDS, the gay community lived more and more openly.⁴ “Us” increasingly meant smaller, more homogeneous groups, ones that could pit themselves against an expanding variety of “them.” Against this backdrop of fragmentation, nobody was quite sure whether there could be a single America anymore.

The presidential election of 1976 reflected that national uncertainty. Watergate was still a fresh stain on the office. Gerald Ford, who had become president only through the procedural mandates of the 25th Amendment, was making his first attempt at a national campaign. Furthermore, he bore the burden of his decision to pardon Nixon, to move toward detente with the Soviets, and allowing Saigon to fall in 1975. He faced a strong primary challenge from California governor Ronald Reagan and the conservative wing of the Republican party. Though Reagan won 23 states in the primaries, Ford eventually secured the Republican nomination. In the process of wrapping it up, Ford

³ Ibid., 76.

⁴ For an outsider’s account of mid-Seventies gay living in New York, see Jonathan Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen, the Bronx is Burning: 1977, Baseball, Politics, and the Battle for the Soul of a City* (New York: Picador, 2006), 126-129.

jettisoned New Yorker Nelson Rockefeller as his vice presidential nominee in favor of Kansan Bob Dole. Ford couldn't afford to lean on the credentials of a Northeasterner; Dole added heft to the ticket in the vital southern states.

On the Democratic side of the ticket, Jimmy Carter's earnest, measured appeals hardly sparked mass enthusiasm. Carter showed well in early primaries and caucuses, prompting most other candidates to drop out of the race by April. (Mo Udall of Arizona and Jerry Brown of California finished a distant second and third in delegate totals.) With a vulnerable Republican candidate, the Democrats reorganized around Carter. While the far left wing of the party was not sold on him, he still managed to swing a Hunter S. Thompson *Rolling Stone* cover story, "Jimmy Carter & The Great Leap of Faith: An Endorsement, with Fear and Loathing."⁵ By the time of the convention in New York, the official party line was one of unity for a Carter-Walter Mondale ticket. Writing nearly 30 years later, Bruce Schulman assessed Carter's appeal thus:

Jimmy Carter seemed to feed into and feed off the national psyche in 1976. In that dismal year, when the forced grandeur of the bicentennial barely masked widespread fears of national decline, Carter's modesty and wholesomeness spoke to a national yearning for simpler, quieter times.⁶

That quieter time was, perhaps, illusory, but the fears of decline were real and deepened societal fractures. The longstanding Democratic constituency, the "New Deal coalition," merged working class whites, ethnic minorities, and educated urbanites, and rural Southerners. Economic pressures were driving the groups apart—working class whites blamed minorities, immigrants, and government itself for the loss of their jobs and economic security; ethnic minorities, despite a certain amount of progress in race

⁵ *Rolling Stone* Issue 214, June 3, 1976.

⁶ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 124.

relations, wanted more promises of assistance and equality; educated urbanites were fleeing urban centers for the suburbs, often citing crime and “urban decay” (which invariably wore a brown face); rural Southerners were feeling confident in their regional ascendancy under laissez-faire (Republican) governance. The elements of the coalition all wanted different things from government, and though Carter promised to hear them out, he did not promise to meet all of their needs. Instead, his campaign emphasized his overt religiosity and Southern roots to appeal to rural and middle America.

Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, political columnists for the *Village Voice*, were not impressed. They labeled Carter a representative of the “right-center” along with Reagan and Jerry Brown.⁷ Carter’s politics were those of business against labor, the evangelical Christianity he promulgated alternately evidence of insincerity or hickdom. Unabashed in their leftism, Cockburn and Ridgeway claimed that “Carterism” celebrated everything from “walking” to “glossolalia” to “unidentified flying object. Secular or spiritual.”⁸ Just as angry with the Democratic establishment, they spared no vitriol for Carter and the party that fell professionally in behind him:

Perhaps apathy will explode into ecstasy and the Democratic convention in Madison Square Garden will find due vigor and meaning as an evocation of the old Nuremberg rallies. Next week’s gathering will not, after all, be so much a political convention as a ceremony of consecration in the old German manner held beneath the beneficent gaze of Almighty God. All the same, the throngs winding their way toward New York to adore, endorse, and seek favors will have to be welded into a fighting crusade to help the Leader over the last few furlongs into the White House itself.⁹

⁷ “The ‘Right Center’ and the Shape of Things to Come,” *Village Voice*, March 10, 1976, 19.

⁸ Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, “A Guide to Carter’s New Age of Virtue (Just a Sip of the Zeitgeist)”, *Village Voice*, July 12, 1976. The piece was the cover story.

⁹ *Ibid.*

That ecstasy did not appear, of course. Carter was nominated in New York City, host to a 1976 Democratic Convention far removed from the rancor and tumult of 1968.

The August convention followed July Bicentennial celebrations that featured an “image indelibly imprinted in the American memory”: the tall ships filling New York Harbor and the Hudson River.¹⁰ While the splendor of that parade was not entirely in keeping with the economic tenor of the moment, it is indicative of the way that New Yorkers had, by the middle Seventies, embraced their history as part of the city’s identity. Preservation of historic homes and districts helped spark civic pride and created a small but growing counterweight to the white flight that had been emptying the city’s boroughs. Block associations helped fill the gaps left by drastic cutbacks in municipal spending, but were often tangled up with ethnic identity. Pride in ethnic history became one more way of embracing a fragmented diversity.

It was also a bulwark against New York City’s substantial economic problems. While Abraham Beame (himself a Jew descended from Polish immigrants) had helped bring the DNC to New York, it was one of his very few accomplishments as mayor. (One of the others was choosing to back Hugh Carey for the governorship—as Governor, Carey produced a string of bailouts for the city.) The fiscal debacles of 1974 and 1975 continued into the Bicentennial, with Beame nearly shut out of any real decision making, “a tragic figure who played a pathetic role in the great New York fiscal crisis.”¹¹ With the city under the control of the Emergency Financial Control Board, Beame was little more than a figurehead, one often in open and impotent conflict with the state and national powers trying to save New York City from bankruptcy. When he vowed to run for re-

¹⁰ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 221.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 212.

election despite his failures, Hugh Carey and the Democratic party quickly abandoned him, all but guaranteeing that the 1977 election would see a new mayor for New York City.

The new mayor would oversee a city whose geography was becoming as fractured as its electorate. Deindustrialization and the flight of middle class whites to the suburbs had left large swathes of New York real estate vacant. The Five Boroughs were increasingly home to poor minorities who contributed little in the way of tax revenue while drawing substantially on the city's services. The stagnation in social mobility intensified competition among New York's different ethnic groups for shrinking resources. Optimism that blacks and whites could integrate deteriorated in the face of these pressures—along with outer-borough housing stocks: disinvestment and manipulation by banks and real estate agents encouraged white flight to the suburbs. New York City in the 1970s, especially in the outer boroughs, became a checkerboard of ethnic enclaves, fraught with explosive racial and class tensions.¹²

Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant was emblematic of the problem—white families had begun moving to the suburbs in the Fifties, replaced largely by black families drawn by jobs at the Brooklyn Navy Yards. As the Navy Yards contracted (and eventually closed in 1966), many of those recent arrivals became unemployed. By 1965, the neighborhood was “the heart of the largest ghetto in America.”¹³ Neighboring Bushwick had a stronger local economy, and held on longer as a middle-class enclave. But, like other New York neighborhoods, it had to receive and house urban poor displaced by housing developments in still-poorer neighborhoods. Soon Bushwick and Bed-Stuy alike

¹² Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 107.

¹³ Department of Housing and Urban Development report, quoted in Mahler. *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 206.

were warrens of arson-for-profit, devastating already depressed housing stock.¹⁴ No amount of patriotic cheering could reconcile the growing disparities in New York and the nation as a whole.

The Bicentennial celebrations of the nation had to deal with these competing ideas of America and American-ness. Two hundred years of “a more perfect union” meant dramatically different things in Harlem and Houston, in SoHo and Sacramento. In a city as ethnically, socially, and economically diverse as New York, these questions were especially pressing. New York was an immigrant city, the most urban of urban centers. Those iconic tall ships represented not only the nations of the world, but communities within the city. What would their place be in America’s next century? Tall ships and fireworks showed the hope that crisis could be turned to opportunity, but grim economic numbers and an increasingly fragmented cityscape held inescapable the fear that crisis would simply be crisis.

At the New York Philharmonic, the situation was not as gloomy, though change was just as clearly in the orchestra’s immediate future. Pierre Boulez and the Philharmonic-Society had tacitly agreed that his contract would not be renewed. Boulez busied himself with the development of IRCAM. In his programming at the Philharmonic, he mirrored the shifting national mood through an increasingly pointed retreat from the modernist works of his early seasons. The programming became more fragmentary, specific series directed to tighter subsets of the audience. Gone was the underlying assumption that programming enough early modern masterworks would lead the Philharmonic’s constituency inevitably to new masterworks of the avant-garde.

¹⁴ There were four thousand fires in Bushwick between 1975 and September of 1977. (Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 211)

Boulez had never been entirely committed to the Philharmonic. The first half of his tenure had been split with the BBC Orchestra, the second increasingly dominated by his work in setting up IRCAM. He had made it clear to the Board not long after his 1973 contract renewal that he would not seek a further one. On February 25, 1976, the Philharmonic announced that Zubin Mehta would be replacing him as music director beginning with the 1978-79 season:

Pierre Boulez, Music Director of the New York Philharmonic through the 1976-77 season, announced some time ago that he would not be available to the Philharmonic beyond the expiration of his present contract in May, 1977 since he has become Director of the Institut de Recherche et de Coordination Acoustique/Musique in France, a major new musical research center created especially for him by the French government.¹⁵

Boulez's distance from the orchestra waxed even as the avant-garde programming waned. He took no part in the Bicentennial Tour (which was conducted primarily by Bernstein) nor in the 1976 Parks Concerts (also dominated by Bernstein). The 1975-76 subscription season brochure splits attention between Boulez and Lincoln Center itself:

A great Music Director and the Magnificence of Lincoln Center 'Far and away the most interesting and creative music director in the world.' That's what the New York Times said on October 14 about Pierre Boulez, Music Director of the Philharmonic. The 1975-76 season is another tribute to his creativity and, for 13 weeks during the season, Mr. Boulez will also bring his unique abilities to the podium. Every subscriber will have an opportunity to see and hear him[...]The center of musical arts in the music capital of the world...that's Lincoln Center.¹⁶

¹⁵ Press release dated February 25, 1976, New York Philharmonic Archives.

¹⁶ New York Philharmonic Archives. The *Times* quote is from a glowing review of the final concert of the Ives "mini-festival" by Allen Hughes: "Probably, most of the applause was for Mr. Boulez, whose unorthodox notions about what a symphony orchestra should do make him far and away the most interesting and creative music director in the world." ("Ives Symphony No. 4 Is Eloquent End to Philharmonic Festival," October 14, 1974).



Figure 4-1 New York Philharmonic Subscription Renewal Brochure '76-'77 (interior). The cover features an image of the newly-(re)remodeled Avery Fisher Hall. New York Philharmonic Archives.

The brochure for the following season focused even more on the facilities, particularly the re-re-modeling of Avery Fisher Hall (again to improve acoustics). Despite his title, Boulez was treated as one of numerous conductors in the '76-'77 season promotional materials. (See Figure 4-1.) In its publicity materials, the Philharmonic was clearly trying to capitalize on Boulez's new music reputation without capitalizing on new music itself. Boulez's presence alone allowed the Philharmonic to claim prominence in the field of new music and enhance its institutional profile. The Philharmonic did not need the avant-garde to secure its position in the field of cultural production; it did,

though, need new music activity to assert its continued relevance in that field.

Performance of only previously consecrated works would lead to the slow atrophy of the Philharmonic's position. Its role as a consecrator was use-it-or-lose-it.

Despite this, the place of the avant-garde in the Philharmonic's programming *had* atrophied since Boulez's aggressively-programmed first season. The music of the Second Viennese School and other early twentieth-century masters that had colored his early years with the Philharmonic had largely disappeared. Boulez opened the '75-'76 season with a program of Brahms, Mozart, Stravinsky, and Copland (the last included in honor of his 75th birthday). German Romantics featured prominently, with plenty of Mahler and even selections from *Götterdämmerung*. While "new music" remained on the programs, it was isolated (and, as usual, new works by American composers most often fell to American guest conductors). Boulez conducted Schoenberg only once (in March), and only at the end of the season did Webern appear, with *Passacaglia Op. 1* and *Five Movements for String Orchestra Op. 5*—these short pieces were balanced precariously against Mahler's *Symphony No. 7*. (Bernstein followed the next week with a program of Schuman, Ives, Copland, and Gershwin, while Kostelanetz closed the season with a program of show tunes). Boulez had softened his position on "difficult" programming, perhaps realizing that he could not simply educate Americans into appreciation, or perhaps pragmatically deciding it was worth playing along with Carlos Moseley and the Philharmonic Board.¹⁷ The fact that he would soon have his own avant-garde playground in Paris no doubt played a part as well.

¹⁷ For an example of Boulez's pragmatism and willingness to play along (especially with Moseley), see Peyser's anecdote regarding his appearance on the Dick Cavett show (*Boulez*, 213-214).

Boulez's contributions to the Philharmonic's outreach programs were diminishing, but not yet vanished. The Prospective Encounters series continued, although with only three concerts (which was actually an increase from the two concerts of the previous season and all subsequent ones). It was included in the subscription brochure, but (along with the Young People's Concerts and the Promenades) was given only a "watch for these other exciting Philharmonic events!"—the Encounters had previously received a promotional paragraph of their own.¹⁸ The Informal Evenings had ended with the 1973-74 season. Only the Rugs continued with much institutional enthusiasm, and despite innovative presentation, those were hardly showcases for new music.

The Encounters were no longer remarkable. New York's field of new music was shifting—competition for attention increased as various downtown artists presented outside their home spaces—and the novelty of New York Philharmonic personnel performing "in Greenwich Village" had worn off. The programming retained its curious mix of serialists, conceptualists, and those in between. In the 75-76 season, the Encounters featured one evening of works by Lucia Dlugoczewski, Donald Martino, and Harrison Birtwistle, all relatively formal composers, and a second program of music by Jon Deak (a Philharmonic bassist with extensive downtown connections), Earle Brown, and George Rochberg. The mixture of styles could hardly advocate for any unified position in the field. Critics reacted to the potpourri with heavily descriptive reviews, praising individual pieces and performances while occasionally commenting on the diversity of works.¹⁹

¹⁸ 1975-76 New Subscription Brochure, New York Philharmonic Archives.

¹⁹ See Raymond Ericson, "Boulez Leads a Premiere" *New York Times*, Dec. 7, 1975 and Allen Hughes, "Concert: Philharmonic," *New York Times*, May 16, 1976.

The potpourri, of course, was part of the Encounters' purpose. Unlike Boulez's efforts with the Informal Evenings and subscription programming, the Encounters were meant to expose "nontraditional" audiences to a variety of works and styles, to encourage dialogue rather than to teach specific ways of listening. That Boulez was hardly sympathetic to all the works he conducted was beside the point (though by the '75-'76 season he was no longer assigning Encounters to other conductors). The historical artifacts of the early seasons were long gone, but there was little inclusion of the downtown contingent; Reich's appearance in 1971 remained exceptional. The Encounters' mixture of styles failed to keep pace with the fragmentation of the field. As presenters, Boulez and the Philharmonic continued to operate from their position of heirloom institution, selecting works to consecrate primarily from allied cultural producers.

While this was clear to some extent in the slow shift away from the avant-garde in normal Philharmonic programming, a more self-conscious effort to present the new is apparent in the Celebration of Contemporary Music in the spring of 1976. In some respects, the Celebration was the culmination of Boulez's "didactic" outreach programming, though it would be a mistake to grant him sole credit (or blame) for the event's presentation and content, as it was presented along with the Juilliard School and the Fromm Foundation for Music. The festival was a tangle of material constraints and competing obligations. Juilliard, as an educational institution, had aims distinct from those of the Philharmonic-Society as a presenting institution. Both, though, occupied a

similar space in relation to the field of power; they were in the business of consecrating works and ensuring their continued presentation.²⁰

The Bicentennial moment added special heft to the task of consecration. Across the country, institutions moved to present not just specific events, but *America*. The United States became the subject or subtext of countless festivals, from parades to tall ships to theatrical and musical performance. It was a moment to take stock, to answer the question, “What is America?” or, more often, “What is American?” 1975’s celebrations of Copland’s seventy-fifth birthday had both foreshadowed and limited answers to that question. The Philharmonic, along with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Philadelphia Orchestra, had already commissioned new orchestral pieces from John Cage, Elliott Carter, David de Tredici, Morton Subotnik and Leslie Bassett.²¹ Composers were being commissioned right and left to create new American works for the Bicentennial, to the point that Paul Fromm wryly noted “We even read that some of our more illustrious composers have had to decline Bicentennial commissions.”²²

The Celebration set out, from the start, to take a different tack, though the Philharmonic’s own press release called the Celebration “a joint recognition of the Bicentennial of the United States.”²³ Juilliard and the Philharmonic-Society, while thoroughly American institutions, were purveyors of a largely European tradition and

²⁰ The various press releases regarding retirements and new hires of Philharmonic members quickly demonstrate the close ties of the two organizations. Juilliard alumni dominate new hires through the Seventies, and make up a significant number of the retiring and departing players, too. Philharmonic members often taught at Juilliard, too.

²¹ The Philharmonic premiered Cage’s *Renga with Apartment House 1776* on 4 November 1976 as part of the subscription series with Boulez conducting.

²² Celebration of Contemporary Music program book, New York Philharmonic Archives.

²³ Press release dated Dec. 1, 1975, New York Philharmonic Archives.

repertoire.²⁴ Both institutions had committed to new music, but new music largely compatible with those inherited European ideas and ideals. Those European traditions were the ones aligned with the field of power—with subscribers, with donors, with cultural capital. For all its planners' focus on the contemporary, they made little effort to refute or even skew that alignment.

In its nascent form, the festival was planned to “utilize [Juilliard’s] various orchestras and ensembles throughout the School.” Peter Mennin cites Boulez, Elliott Carter, and Milton Babbitt as his initial co-conspirators in 1973, soon joined by “the indefatigable” Paul Fromm, whose Fromm Music Foundation contributed funds to secure a matching grant from the National Endowment for the Arts that would allow the Philharmonic to participate as a full partner.²⁵ Fromm removes Babbitt and Carter from the list, instead including Walter Anderson and Philharmonic president Carlos Moseley.²⁶ The various organizers represented differing traditions, but all had strong institutional ties. The initial goal was simply to present a contemporary music festival. It was only “happily” (as Mennin puts it) that the eventual dates fell into the Bicentennial.²⁷

The initial impulse of the Celebration put the emphasis on “contemporary” rather than “American.” As a new music festival, then, the Celebration could not embrace a sentimental or jingoistic Americana. The program instead included a variety of European works alongside the domestic ones, a decision the organizers felt compelled to defend.

Negotiating the programming required acknowledgment of the recent past (Mennin

²⁴ Consider that the Juilliard composition faculty included, in 1976, Roger Sessions, Vincent Persichetti, David Diamond, and Elliott Carter. Similarly, the majority of Philharmonic personnel were American (many were Juilliard alumni). Despite this, their repertoire was little removed from the common practice canon.

²⁵ Celebration program book.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

credits the Celebration's omission of Schoenberg, Ives, and Copland to major surveys and retrospectives of the previous two seasons), as well as the more distant—much of the music had, acknowledged Fromm, “been in existence for quite a while.” The festival thus offered “neither the glamor of premieres nor the rather narrow patriotic sentiment we might generate if we were to present programs billed as American music by Americans for Americans.”²⁸

Fromm summarizes the composite approach to programming the festival:

Each of us expressed it in a different way, but essentially we [the planners] were in agreement: rather than invite composers to write music celebrating the independence of the Republic, the Republic might celebrate the independence achieved by music in America in the last forty years.²⁹

Both Fromm and Mennin position the Celebration of Contemporary Music as an expression of new music in (and as) history. For Mennin, the festival is a periodic survey, one whose moment is particularly apt, coming as it does at the most recent of several “crises of musical history, when established procedures were challenged on many levels.”³⁰ While neither Mennin nor Fromm suggests that the Celebration is a complete answer to the perceived historical crisis, both argue that it is an important chance to state a position on new music's place in the broader historical catalog.

For Fromm, that position had clearly to do with independence from Europe. Only since around the 1930s, he argues, had there been legitimately American composition. The development of “native” styles, Americana and beyond, finally freed America's

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

music culture from the dominance of the European masters.³¹ By including both older works and European works on the festival program, the presenters made a case for that independence:

We decided that, by juxtaposing American compositions with music from other countries, we could suggest both the international character and the international stature of our music.³²

Like so many other Bicentennial events, the Celebration thus became a proclamation of American know-how and importance, even as the country floundered on the international stage. The presenting institutions had plenty of reason to proclaim that importance; endorsing American composers alongside their European contemporaries reinforced the institutions' authority as important cultural arbiters. The weight of consecrated European masters could remain, but re-fitted into the moment as mere context for American mastery. And the institutions did not have to sacrifice allegiance to either.

Implicit in Fromm's position and explicit in Mennin's (his contribution is titled "In Celebration of Quality") is the connection between consecration and individual genius. The masterwork is the marker; the work transcends its moment and, to an extent, its author. Stylistic and technical allegiances ("ever-changing fads") are made secondary to individual "convictions...ignoring what is currently promoted by one group or another."³³ Individual convictions are the shibboleth for musical consecration: "The quality of individuality is an inevitable pre-condition for music of lasting value."³⁴

Combined, Mennin's position and Fromm's place changes in musical technique in the

³¹ Among other things, Fromm points out that the U.S. Centennial was celebrated musically by commissioning a march from Richard Wagner.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

hands of transcendent individuals, who then collectively shape music history broadly enough to inflect international relationships. New music, they argue, is the product of this struggle of individuals against convention and against each other, and history itself chooses the “winners.”

Despite recourse to history as the most important consecrator, though, Fromm and Mennin (along with the other organizers of the Celebration) position themselves as transhistorical arbiters. Their position as presenters allows them to identify trends and patterns in new music...and they then, through presentational choices, shape those patterns and trends. While glorifying individual composers, the presenting institutions, aligned with the field of power, shape those composers’ options and careers. Mennin might argue that “individuality” is the hallmark of musical value, but he places himself and his cohort as the identifiers of that individuality. Their view of individuality, colored by Romantic notions of genius and modernist notions of progress, confines them largely to works that already exist within their “segment” of the field of cultural production—they *cannot* go far afield to find works that consciously resist their narrative of individual, historical consecration.

Pierre Boulez, meanwhile, found himself advocating aggressive changes in presentation while in uncomfortably close alignment with the field of power. By 1976, he keenly understood the limitations that relationship imposed, particularly as he laid the groundwork for his departure from the Philharmonic and the establishment of IRCAM.³⁵ His contribution to the Celebration’s program book is a meditation on the limits and future of the major musical institution, framed as a narrative of individual confrontation

³⁵ The Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique had been proposed by French president Georges Pompidou in 1970, with Boulez invited to establish the institution. The project took seven years to mature, opening in 1977. Boulez served as its director until 1992.

and societal progress. He advocates the renovation of the concert, for dramatic renovation of presentation itself, but his approach, like so much of his thought, emanates from authority (both individual and institutional).

The cleave between new music and the general concert-going public was nothing new, but Boulez describes it in terms not far removed from Bourdieu's:

...most people surrender to the delights of a gradually acquired convention, which no one dreams of enlarging, much less going beyond....People then want to ignore everything contemporary, and even of the recent past, stubbornly locking themselves up in the illusion of a golden age whose prestige and comfort are bitterly missed—comfort and prestige being, in any case, exclusively retrospective illusions.³⁶

Listeners desire only to hear music that has already been consecrated, that has acquired its prestige through education. “Interpreters” (carrying forward Stravinskian notions of the performer as a transparent vehicle) are no better than the people who sit on the other side of the footlights; they are equally limited by their experience and the weight of the consecrated—the magnetic push-pull of the field of power. Musical institutions must therefore *also* align themselves with the field of power, for their audiences and members are habitually enmeshed in its values.³⁷ The fragmentation of the field of new music in the Seventies amplified the challenge of consecrating new works. By 1976, Boulez had already tried (and failed) to consecrate avant-garde works from the Second Viennese School through aggressively programming them at the Philharmonic. The outreach of the Prospective Encounters and Informal Evenings had done little to consolidate New York's

³⁶ Pierre Boulez, “What's New,” Celebration program book.

³⁷ Earlier in the essay, Boulez compares the situation of the large musical institution to both independent theater and, more tellingly, to the plastic arts, where “the interest that can be aroused by financial speculation on the finished product greatly facilitates the transaction.” No such speculation is available for works of new music, nor can the “atmosphere of freedom of the theatrical group” be matched at a larger scale.

new music community. Their failure to draw in new audiences, perhaps, led Boulez to continue:

The worst response [to the limited possibilities for new music] would be...to create *ad hoc* an experimental ghetto that would parody the ordinary pattern of musical distribution while at the same time restricting its compass to a reliable and already convinced audience.³⁸

Presenting a concert of new music, even at NYU's student center, was of little import if it drew the same, already-committed audience. (This notion relates, too, to Boulez's constant disparagement of American university composers, whose music has so often been performed only for each other.) While such concerts might sustain a small number of groups, others would necessarily be excluded simply because they lacked access to benefactors. The greater danger, though, was moral: the experimental ghetto would circumscribe new music, depriving its practitioners of their ability to meaningfully interact with society:

Our musical society (using the term in its proper sense), just like the kings of former times, very readily accepts the idea of having its clowns. They can play this exceptional role and have their freedom of expression—with the significant provision that their relations be defined by a silent but strict code. One cannot imagine the clown's assuming the power of the king!³⁹

In response to the threat of circumscription, Boulez calls for “confrontation.” This confrontation, and the decidedly individual nature of it, forms the core of his platform. Aesthetically, of course, Boulez's rhetoric of progress and research are thoroughly modernist. The composer is an aesthetic researcher rather than an artist. In “What's New,” though, Boulez invokes the Romantic ideal of an individual standing against society, forcing change in outdated convention in the name of new ideals. The individual

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

must “transform the rules of that game...the conventions of a permanent swindle.” It requires a heroic effort to change the institutions, to *force* realignment of the field of cultural production with the field of power.

The friction in Boulez’s platform becomes clear, though, as he describes the nature of that confrontation. The institution, he argues, has forced new music to the periphery. The individual, through confrontation, can force new music out of that periphery...not by tearing down the institutions, nor by sidestepping them (as Attali’s “composing” would), but by changing and co-opting them. Institutional inertia is the enemy, but simply “adjusting” the institution would be insufficient:

It is surely possible to integrate today’s music—contemporary creation—into a musical life that would not be excessively compartmentalized. But in order to do that effectively, we must rethink in its very depths the whole musical institution, not only in its functioning—a relatively simple task—but in its definition, a job that is much harder.⁴⁰

Boulez clings to institutional authority even as he decries the problems that very authority has created. For him, the problem lies in the institutions rather than in institutionality. Boulez wants to maintain the power to consecrate while somehow escaping the problems of consecration. A radical reimagining of the institution could, perhaps, address the problems Boulez sees with available modes of presentation. It would not, though, address the structural problems of the institution’s relationship to the field of power. Boulez wants the institution and the musical field to be “at once diversified and unified...performance, research [composition] experimentation, animation, education—such are the different activities that should radiate from a principal center.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

By insisting that a principal center be maintained, Boulez (clearly thinking of the nascent IRCAM as he goes on describing his ideal institution) would simply expand the “ghetto” of which he was so leery. While he deftly addresses the practical problems of the current orchestral institution, the practical problems of creating this new multivalent one are hand waved: “Obviously there is no room in this short article to describe or detail the procedures that might inaugurate or hasten this evolution.”⁴² IRCAM, of course, received much of its funding directly from the French government. In the context of the American field, no such largesse presented itself, but the fact remains that the kind of large, flexible umbrella institution Boulez imagines must receive its funding from somewhere. This ultimately requires a congenial alignment with the field of power, which leads back around to consecration and the institutional inertia that prompted the essay in the first place. Avant-garde music, as long as it operates as restricted cultural production, cannot escape its dominated position in the field...and to move away from restricted production is to abandon Boulez’s (and others’) musical purpose.

The idea of a transformed, transcendent institution is compromised by Boulez’s modernist-romantic fixation on individuals as the sine qua non of change:

Musical history, like all history, is made *of* individuals and *by* individuals. It glorifies them quite as much as it crushes them—moving in the direction of a future absolute, even if it passes through our present uncertainty. We may as well try, obstinately, not to be crushed *for nothing!*⁴³

As individual agents operate within the field (either of power or cultural production), they certainly change it. The question is whether or not they have the capacity to change it in ways that circumvent the field’s rules, whether navigating

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. Boulez’s italics.

through the field of power via cultural production can alter either field's currents. And what place in Boulez's hypothetical institution has the individual? While it would offer more options and flexibility of role, the new institution would remain a container, one beholden to its source of authority (the field of power). This tension between individual and institution—between producer and presenter—was a constant of Boulez's tenure at the Philharmonic. The inability to practically reconcile the two led him ultimately back to France, even as the Philharmonic's institutional weight gradually swallowed the programs he'd introduced.

While many of Boulez's pet programs emphasized chamber music, orchestral fare dominated the Celebration of Contemporary Music. The Philharmonic presented three programs, and the Juilliard Orchestra two more. Along with these, the Juilliard String Quartet played one concert (dominated by Shostakovitch's fourteenth and Carter's third quartets), and the "Juilliard Ensemble"—an umbrella label for a number of student groups—gave a single concert of mixed chamber music. The preponderance of orchestral music was predictable, given the events' sponsorship, but it inherently narrowed the range of the Celebration's works. The orchestra, as discussed earlier, cannot help but be an instrument of power. The weight of the orchestral institution (bemoaned variously by Boulez, Mennin, and Fromm alike) limited its ability to engage in experiments. It owed its existence to the field of power.

It was in part the lack of access to that power that so rankled Wuorinen and his peers. Avant-garde orchestral works took (and still take) more rehearsal time than orchestras usually have available. Writing an orchestral piece without a performance already arranged (or a commission) was an exercise in futility. Chamber groups,

particularly dedicated ones like the Group for Contemporary Music, were able to be more flexible with their rehearsal time, and thus with both their repertoire and relation to the field of power. Steve Reich, in expanding his own ensemble to tackle the increased scale of *Music for 18 Musicians*, moved *toward* alignment with the field of power without necessarily accruing the same kind of largely academic consecration that drove the Group for Contemporary Music.

Wuorinen's own *Arabia Felix* was one of only four American mixed chamber pieces programmed for the festival. (The others were Wallingford Riegger's "Music for Brass Choir," Cage's *Score "40 Drawings by Thoreau,"* Lucia Dlugoszewski's *Space is a Diamond*.) The chamber concert itself generated little attention, in part because the mixed chamber works were left to students of the "Juilliard Ensemble." Along with the American pieces, the ensemble gave the American premiere of Berio's *Calmo* (a three-minute memorial for Bruno Maderna), along with Aribert Reimann's "Inane." The concert itself was midweek filler, presented with little fanfare on a Wednesday evening well-removed from the pairs of Friday-Saturday orchestral offerings.⁴⁴ This neatly reinforces the conundrum that many composers encountered: writing for chamber ensembles (especially of acquaintances) was a surer road to performance, but the performances themselves were often pushed to the margins of the field of new music. The shape of the field made any kind of broad success with chamber music difficult. What remained to it was consecration in its own ghettos—particularly the academy.

The Juilliard Orchestra fared somewhat better, headlining the Celebration's first Saturday with a concert of Roy Harris (*Symphony 1933*), Barbara Kolb (*Trobar Clus*),

⁴⁴ Raymond Ericson's brief review calls the program "oddly assorted" and ends with a snipe at the Cage piece: "It should also have been called 'Inane.'" ("Juilliard Players Perform 'Inane,' Poetic Soliloquy," *New York Times*, March 12, 1976.)

Carl Ruggles (*Organum*), and Edgard Varese (*Nocturnal*, heavily edited by Chou Wenchung). The Saturday group was Juilliard's "Theater Orchestra," its "second-line orchestra," according to John Rockwell, who called the ensemble's performance "exemplary" without finding much to compliment in the works performed.⁴⁵ Despite the festival organizers' aim to place American works alongside European ones, the Juilliard Theater Orchestra performed only American compositions. The same was true the following Tuesday when Sixten Ehrling led the Juilliard Orchestra in a trio of new works:

The overall intent of the Celebration of Contemporary Music, a nine-day festival currently making the Juilliard School ring with new and newish sounds, is to impress upon us the international stature of American works by placing them side by side with pieces from other countries...but such hybrid programming is not being rigidly followed in this inaugural festival, possibly on the grounds that any good rule is worth breaking.⁴⁶

The works in question were Crumb's *Variazioni* for Large Orchestra, Ulysses Kay's Quintet Concerto, and William Schuman's Symphony No. 7—all American works, with Crumb's the oldest (from 1959). Eschewing mixed programming pushes the festival closer to the purely Bicentennial celebration the organizers made so much noise about avoiding. It also, though, highlights the complications inherent in any presentation involving competing interests and organizations. The division of the festival's works had as much to do with conductors' inclinations and programmers' associations as with the curatorial aims of the festival at large. In the Juilliard Orchestra concert, for instance,

All three pieces employed large instrumental forces and took a somewhat similar approach to composition, which might be called midcentury eclecticism. The result was to give the concert a certain

⁴⁵ John Rockwell, "Juilliard Theater Orchestra Performs," *New York Times*, March 8, 1976.

⁴⁶ Donal Henahan, "Ehrling Leads 3 U.S. Works at Juilliard," *New York Times*, March 11, 1976.

sameness of texture and weight that the inclusion of a piece in some markedly different style might have relieved.⁴⁷

“Midcentury eclecticism” is hardly a style to attract Boulez. In selecting the Philharmonic’s contributions to the program, he steadfastly avoided such. It was left to the Juilliard contingent to take on the pieces furthest from serially-derived practice. As suitable as tonal and quasi-tonal works were for general Philharmonic presentation (and keeping in mind the surge in German late Romanticism in Boulez’s late-tenure programming), they had little place in Boulez’s view of the “new.” Whether the lack was in “individuality” or “mastery” is less important than the fact that such a divide existed in the first place.

The Philharmonic itself contributed three concerts: two with the full ensemble and the festival finale for a smaller chamber orchestra. The first of the full orchestra concerts, which opened the festival, consisted of three works that had appeared on the subscription series (Roger Sessions’ *Symphony No. 3*, Jacob Druckman’s *Lamia*, and Bruno Maderna’s *Quadrivium*). Regardless of the works’ merit, there was a practical element to programming pieces the orchestra already had under its fingers, particularly given their technical difficulty. The Philharmonic’s second concert featured the New York premieres of Easley Blackwood’s 1970 *Piano Concerto* and Peter Maxwell Davies’ 1973 *Stone Litanies*, preceded by Gunther Schuller’s “Gala Music (Concerto for Orchestra). Harold Schonberg, focusing on the two premieres, noted “vestiges of serial technique, but...also a definite neo-Romanticism.”⁴⁸ This, then, is where Boulez is willing to meet the moment: at a place where serialism lingers but can be eclipsed by eclectic gesture. He

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Harold C. Schonberg, “Music: A Premiere Night,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1976.

was also willing to borrow some of his presentational innovations from the Rugs: the musicians performed in street clothes.

The chamber orchestra concert that constituted the finale was as consistent in tone as the Juilliard Orchestra's under Ehrling. While that concert emphasized "midcentury eclecticism," the Boulez-led effort was much more modernist in tone, featuring Peter Lieberson's Cello Concerto, Carter's Double Concerto, Babbitt's "Correspondences," Xenakis's "Aurora," and Earle Brown's "Centering" (which also featured in a Prospective Encounter a few weeks later). While Allen Hughes dismissed the Xenakis as "vapid," he was unsure about the close proximity of the other works despite their "substance and integrity:"

...the acceptable four were all nervous and disjunct in manner and did not contrast sufficiently to make individual impressions they might have if heard separately...As it was, one left the concert with unidentified dots and jots of sound hurling through the memory at random.⁴⁹

There is something of the usual criticism of irregular, atonal music in Hughes' remarks, but that they're applied to the programming of the concert rather than the individual pieces is important. While the concert represents its organizers aesthetic alliances, it must also function as a presentation in its own right. As with the Juilliard concert, too much consistency in aesthetic position diminished the quality of the presentation—at least for the critics. The conundrum is that to advance the organizers' aesthetic agenda, the works presented must consistently match it. Variety (particularly in any form drawn from opposing sectors of the field of cultural production) threatens to undercut the festival's success in that regard, even as it potentially expands the potential audience and amplifies critical pleasure.

⁴⁹ Allen Hughes, "Boulez Leads Chamber Unit of Philharmonic," *New York Times*, March 15, 1976.

As with any event framed as a survey of contemporary music, reviewers quibbled with the presenters' choices and the agenda behind them. "When you have awaited an event for a long time," wrote Jamake Hightower, "you're bound to complain about its shortcomings when it finally takes place, no matter how happy you are with its overall achievements."⁵⁰ Hightower lamented the "very large dose" from the Princeton delegation, the lack of West Coast composers, and the inattention the more "chaotic" experimentalists of Europe (e.g., Stockhausen or Berio). He also, importantly, pointed out that the festival was "highly ingrown," featuring university composers, didactic program notes, and no effort to create a "common ground for making contact with the largest possible public." The impression was "contemporary music as a hothouse creation for an elite." There was no effort, then, to extend the reach of the festival beyond its own narrow slice of the field of cultural production. Given the self-conscious emphasis on consecration in the organizers' essays, this is hardly a surprise.

Harold Schonberg, at the *Times*, was less circumspect than Hightower. After noting that Juilliard was better known as a "virtuoso-producing plant" than as a center of avant-garde activity, he declares that the programming is a "reflection of the tastes of Boulez and Fromm." The problem with these tastes is not that they are too new, rather:

It is apparent that this Celebration of Contemporary Music celebrates the past much more than the present. Overwhelmingly, the composers are middle-aged, elderly or deceased. The younger composers whose music does get performed—Crumb, Davies and Druckman, to mention three—are known quantities. [The Celebration] is aimed much more at where music has been...there is something parochial about the whole thing.⁵¹

⁵⁰ "Celebrating Contemporary Music," *SoHo Weekly News*, March 25, 1976.

⁵¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "This 'Modern' Music Is Out of Touch With Today," *New York Times*, Feb. 29, 1976.

Schonberg had never enthused about the modernist avant-garde; the following criticisms of “completely dissonant, mathematically-oriented music” were old hat by 1976. Still, it is worth noting that the characteristics of the festival programming he most decries are the same ones cited as strengths by the festival organizers. What to Fromm, Boulez, and Mennin seemed clear connections between the past and the present, between the U.S. and Europe were to Schonberg evidence of narrow-mindedness and the “equivalent of incest in music.”⁵² Like Hightower, Schonberg recognizes that the Celebration stakes out a particularly small space in the field of cultural production. While Hightower would have liked to see more “chaotic” music—works that fit more neatly with the production values of “downtown”—Schonberg wants the festival to involve the “many important living composers writ[ing] in a more or less traditional manner.” As is the case in so many of Schonberg’s reviews, he advocates consecration in a traditional language, a conservative place in the field that eschews the avant-garde in favor of close alignment with the broader field of power.

For its part, the *Village Voice* had little to say about the Celebration. Tom Johnson mentioned it in the March 8 issue’s “Voice Choices” with the following:

The Juilliard School and the New York Philharmonic are squeezing 20 events into eight days, exclusively devoted to contemporary music. Notable freebies include the Juilliard Orchestra playing Ruggles, Kolb, Varese, and Harris Saturday night, and Crumb, Kay, Trythall, and Schuman Tuesday night. Friday through March 13, 67th Street and Broadway.⁵³

Though Leighton Kerner was providing extensive coverage of the more traditional performances by 1976, neither he nor Johnson (whose allegiances as a composer-critic were as closely tied to the Downtown avant-garde as Schonberg’s were

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Village Voice*, March 8, 1976.

to old guard Midtown) reviewed a single festival event. The following week, Johnson instead covered a performance by Lukas Foss and the Brooklyn Philharmonia of Ives' "The Unanswered Question" while Kerner wrote a piece on music as poetry.

There is no simple explanation for the fact that the *SoHo Weekly News* covered the Celebration while the *Voice* did not. Both occupied similar spaces in the field. In theory, the *SHWN* was even more "downtown" than the *Voice*. (Although the fact that much of the *SHWN*'s editorial staff resided outside the neighborhood's confines may have skewed its allegiances.) Hightower occupied a similar role to Kerner; both tended to cover traditional works in traditional venues, including those new works from portions of the field associated with Lincoln Center or the universities. It is worth noting, again, that the field (even as rigidly as Bourdieu often describes it) represents an *array of choices*. Only against the homogenized can the unusual emerge.

The Group for Contemporary Music, in a sense, took as its continuing mission the project that underlay the Celebration. Though the composers they favored varied stylistically, Wuorinen, Sollberger, and the Group sought quality contemporary and nearly-contemporary works to present, emphasizing high performance standards. Internally, the Group continued its slow development. Sollberger was more and more prominent as both an individual composer-performer and as an artistic director. Nicolas Roussakis officially became the Group's executive director with the 1975-76 season (after having been "administrator" for several years).⁵⁴ The addition of an executive director freed Wuorinen and Sollberger to concentrate on performances; it's also representative of the general increase in institutionalization that so many cultural

⁵⁴ Susan Deaver Thesis, 84.

producers engaged in by the mid-Seventies. Though it remained tightly associated with the Manhattan School of Music, the GCM renewed its push to get off campus. Sollberger presented “Explorations of the Contemporary Flute,” accompanied by various Group members, in March of 1976 at Alice Tully Hall. The presentation merited a feature piece by Joan Peyser for the *Times*.⁵⁵

Peyser, perhaps speaking only relatively, called it “the first downtown performance for the Group, one of the earliest ensembles in the United States devoted to 20th-century music.” While the bulk of the article focuses on Sollberger’s work with avant-garde flute techniques, it touches on points related to composition, performance, and education. Peyser allows Sollberger to speak on the “uniformity” and “homogeneity” encouraged in flute studios, the reliance on a small canon of consecrated works as the basis of a complete style. Sollberger extends that style and encourages his students to do the same; it echoes directly in his activities with the Group:

Why is Sollberger abandoning the Manhattan School tomorrow night in favor of Lincoln Center, the “Establishment” complex he has always professed to abhor? “The key word is extension,” he says, “I believe in extension as a flutist, as a composer, and in the geographical-social sense as well.”⁵⁶

The Group also facilitated a recital by Paul Zukofsky, the brilliant young violinist who performed avant-garde works both Uptown and Downtown.⁵⁷ The recital was in the Manhattan School’s Hubbard Recital Hall, featuring Wuorinen at the piano in works by Stravinsky, Sessions, and Cage. Two neo-classical Stravinsky pieces bookended the

⁵⁵ Joan Peyser, “New Sounds From an Old Instrument,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1976.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ He had, among other things, performed Reich’s *Violin Phase* and was the violin soloist on the first record of Glass’s *Einstein on the Beach*.

recital: *Suite Italienne* and *Duo Concertant*. The middle pair of works demonstrate Zukofsky's breadth and suggest the stylistic scope the Group embraced:

The Sessions [Sonata for Solo Violin (1953)] marked that composer's shift over to serialism, and is an uncompromising, utterly individual and ultimately fascinating study; the Cage [Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard (1950)] is lucid, simple, unforced and simply Oriental. Mr. Zukofsky offered virtuosic brilliance for the former, soft placidity for the latter and complete empathy for both.⁵⁸

The solo recital, like so much of the work of both Uptown and Downtown presenters, is a form that requires little in the way of institutional support. Just as a chamber ensemble has little more essential overhead than a rock band, a solo recital has no more essential overhead than, say, a singer-songwriter. The space these presentations occupy in the field is determined by their content and their institutional allegiances. The Group for Contemporary Music retained its earlier institutional allegiances—to the Manhattan School of Music, to the Alice M. Ditson Foundation—but its own institutional role was beginning to change. Though it continued to present its own performances, projects like the Zukofsky recital indicate that it was also establishing itself as a presenter in its own right, leveraging its connections to assist in the consecration of new works and new performers. That it was simultaneously bringing performers to its home (Zukofsky) and extending its own activities to places like Alice Tully Hall indicates that the Group for Contemporary Music worked to expand its place in the field.

Despite these efforts at expansion, the Group remained stubbornly tied to its older practices. The vast majority of its funding still came from grants—less than 1% of its annual budget for the 1976-77 season was financed by subscriptions and at-the-door

⁵⁸ John Rockwell, "Zukofsky Is Effective in Recital of Contemporary Violin Music," *New York Times*, April 14, 1976. Rockwell also notes that Wuorinen's accompaniment was "of a far livelier and more sensitive sort than usual."

donations. Cuts by the New York State Council on the Arts were counterbalanced by continued NEA support and the enduring backing of Alice M. Ditson fund (which continued to provide substantial support despite the Group's departure from Columbia University).⁵⁹ These backers often had competing qualifications: the federal grant stipulated that admission could not be charged, while the NYSCA funds were distributed to groups that could demonstrate concrete support (i.e., ticket sales) from the public.

The Group for Contemporary Music remained firmly ensconced at the Manhattan School, where its educational role was cemented not only by its own performances, but by Sollberger's direction of the school's new music ensemble. It also remained an important ally of the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Studio, presenting works composed there. The financial support provided by academic institutions was less important than the combination of cachet and access to venues. The Manhattan School of Music gave the Group a "home" that had little in common with the rotating use of SoHo loft spaces or the dedicated structures of Lincoln Center.

The ensemble continued to balance its repertoire between older works and new ones, what Wuorinen called "a mixture of 20th-century classics; composers we happened to like, and young ones who needed exposure."⁶⁰ As the Group itself became somewhat consecrated (and its founders advanced toward middle age), the cachet it offered to those younger composers increased. The Group was becoming an institution. Older works, though, remained a staple of the Group's season, as did pieces by the composers who led it (Roussakis, Sollberger, and Wuorinen). Reconciling the insiders and the outsiders was

⁵⁹ Donal Henahan, "The Grand Old Teen-agers Of Contemporary Music," *New York Times*, Feb. 13, 1977. Only \$300 of the \$40,000 budget came from subscriptions.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

more than an aesthetic challenge; the programming of concerts influenced grant givers, audiences, and the press.

And it had to be done in a fragmented environment, one that gave Wuorinen no incentive to retreat from his high culture rants. He continued to maintain the hope (even as Boulez did) that making society “sensible to the importance of high art” could “transform everything.”⁶¹ (Despite this shared faith in the power of high culture, Wuorinen had little love for Boulez or for the nascent IRCAM, calling it “authoritarian.”) The Group’s efforts at extension—sponsoring the Zukofsky recital and presenting Sollberger at Alice Tully—aimed to increase sensibility to its kind of cultural production. It did not, ultimately, accomplish much. The field of cultural production continued to be dominated by commodified works, and even within the subfield of art for art’s sake, the rigorous quest had a rearguard character:

While they await the transformation, however, the Group’s leaders plan to do what they can and what they must to preserve standards. “Composers of the past wrote in a homogeneous society,” Wuorinen said, “and we do not have that. But we have freedom, which is not so bad.”⁶²

Working exclusively with “avant-garde” music placed the Group in an odd position regarding “standards.” They could not rely on consecration through enduring history—not for all of their repertoire (although this certainly applies to their performances of Stravinsky and Schoenberg’s generation). By necessity, they had to engage continuously in the kind of selection that the organizers of the Celebration of Contemporary Music did. This was their freedom, but it also left them increasingly unanchored as the field fragmented around them. They operated under the same guiding

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

principles as the Celebration—monadic masterworks created by individual masters were central—but in a chamber music setting that permitted more flexibility than any orchestra.

While Boulez tried to advance the orchestra into an imagined future and the GCM embraced the flexibility of chamber music, Steve Reich was taking hesitant steps towards the larger ensemble. What had begun as *Music for 24 Musicians* had been pared down to *Music for 18 Musicians*, a work occupying a mixed position in the relation between the field of cultural production and the field of power. It is far larger than the chamber musics that allow the “atmosphere of freedom” Boulez associates with experimental theater, but not so large as to necessitate the weight of an institution like the Philharmonic-Society. The work’s importance as a historical marker of presentation hinges on its character as, effectively, a piece for chamber orchestra.

As a label, “chamber music” is painfully vague, applying equally to everything from a solo piano recital to a stage-devouring percussion octet. The functional necessities of presenting chamber music are not far removed from those for a rock band: a space for the players and a space for the audience. Commodifying the presentation requires more substantial support: an admission apparatus, legal considerations (such as fire safety codes), amplification and lighting, et cetera. What distinguishes a performance of Philip Glass at Alice Tully Hall from one at The Bottom Line—what distinguishes “chamber music” from “club music”—is associated with that presentation’s support and *its* relation to the field of power.

This was just as true in the era before commodified recordings. The small groups that provided entertainment for aristocrats differed in function and station from town

bands or dance musicians, but not always in form or composition. Later, when chamber music was as much a recreational status display for the bourgeoisie as a vehicle for composition, it occupied a curious middle ground between professional and amateur. Chamber music was characteristic of the field of power and closely tied to its values, but resistant to both the commodified work of the professional and the consecrated space of art for art's sake. Its manner of presentation determined its function; that manner of presentation was determined not by any mandates of chamber music as a "form" but instead by the choices of the bourgeois performers.

Compare this to the orchestra. As Boulez notes, the orchestra has a historical legacy as well as a strictly logistic one. Instrumentation varies from work to work, increasing over the orchestra's development, but it fundamentally involves some substantial quantity of string instruments, supported by varying numbers of winds and percussion. The size of the ensemble requires more space than any old "chamber." High quality string instruments are particularly expensive, representing substantial investments by the individual players that must be offset, to some degree, by their salaries. This carries through the whole orchestra. There is thus a historical mandate for the expense of fielding this ensemble of accrued material and human capital.

Precisely *because* the ensemble is so expensive, it has a historical legacy that aligns it closely with the field of power. The modern orchestra grew from town bands and court ensembles—direct displays of power. As much as presenting institutions may aspire to make the orchestra a vehicle of art for art's sake, as a cultural producer the orchestra always has to maintain some kind of connection to the field of power. History and economics mandate it. This is a large part of the reason that Boulez's imagined new

institution bears so little resemblance to an orchestra. Subsuming the orchestra's function into a far larger, more flexible institution is one way to overcome the specifics of its alignment to power.

Music for 18 Musicians represents an alternative, carrying “downtown” values of cultural production in a vehicle more closely associated with the consecrated productions of Uptown. A trick of historical regression explains part of the change; Reich reduced the ensemble to proportions more closely resembling an eighteenth-century orchestra than a twentieth-century one. The resemblance to an eighteenth-century orchestra is primarily in that reduction of size—the instrumentation is not string-dominated. The core of the ensemble remains Reich's favored pitched percussion (three marimbas, two xylophones, a vibraphone sans motor, four pianos). To this he adds four women's voices and, for the first time since the early sixties, “regular orchestral instruments” (a violin, a cello, and two clarinets doubling bass clarinet).⁶³ Potter calls this “a significant step toward working with the conventional...forces of the Western classical tradition.”⁶⁴ It is, though, only a step. *Music for 18 Musicians* is intended to be performed without a conductor, instead relying on aural cues from the vibraphonist for coordination; this is in keeping with Reich's interest in early music.⁶⁵

Beyond the practical necessities of presenting *Music for 18 Musicians*, the larger group and extended time frame required an increase in structural means. For Reich, this meant unprecedented interest in an ambiguous kind of harmony. No single working out of phase variations could sustain *Music* for its 55-minute duration. The voices and non-percussion instruments allowed sustained tones that had fallen outside the scope of most

⁶³ Potter, *Minimalists*, 231.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Potter notes that Reich originally intended the cello part to be played by a viola da gamba. (*Ibid.*)

of Reich's recent work. Combined with the richer harmonic vocabulary and "breath-pulses," the sustained tones created allow for textural variability and an ebb-and-flow that echoes the audible processes of Reich's more austere minimalist compositions without sharing those works' mechanical qualities. Phasing became organic. The organic quality of *Music for 18 Musicians* also owes something to Reich's renewed interest in verticality.

Structurally, *Music for 18 Musicians* is built on a cycle of eleven chords. These are performed in succession by the ensemble at the work's opening and conclusion; the interior of the work consists of a series of small pieces, each in its turn built on one of those chords. Reich compares this to the way "a single note in a cantus firmus, or chant melody of a 12th century Organum by Perotin might be stretched out for several minutes."⁶⁶ While each section of the work stays more or less in its "home" chordal space, Reich treated the harmonies, particularly the bass lines, freely. As with the breath-pulses, this allows the work to hint at structure without necessarily embracing it; the harmonic movement never quite becomes functional.⁶⁷ The balance was a delicate one, particularly in the longer subsections of the work where a single chord was pushed to the edges of its sustainability. The harmonic structure is audible, but without the sense of *process* that characterizes Reich's work of the early Seventies. He acknowledges this himself:

What I was really concerned with in *Music for Eighteen Musicians* was making beautiful music above everything else...I wasn't as concerned with filling the structure as I was ten years ago. On the other hand, although the overall sound of my music has been

⁶⁶ Steve Reich, performance notes to *Music for 18 Musicians*.

⁶⁷ See Potter, *Minimalists*, 233-236. Potter's analysis in turn draws on that by K. Robert Schwartz in "Music as Gradual Process Part II," *Perspectives of New Music* Vol. 20 No. 1/2 (Autumn 1981): 225-286. Schwarz's discussion of *Music for 18 Musicians* begins on 244.

getting richer, it has done so without abandoning the idea that it has to have structure.⁶⁸

Reich's ensemble premiered the work at Town Hall on April 24, 1976, but an early version of the work was performed at The Kitchen in May of 1975 as "Work in Progress for 21 Musicians and Singers." (The number of players was eventually reduced through doubling.) This early version sparked critical interest more for the changes in Reich's musical language than for the quality of the work itself. Joan LaBarbara wrote in the *SoHo Weekly News*:

In this latest work Reich's writing has expanded in several directions. Coloristically, there is a lushness in the scoring which is adventurous for Reich, combining the reedy qualities of the strings, clarinets and voice, the rich warmth of pianos and the timbral mixture of wood and metal from the bar-percussion instruments. Harmonically, there is more movement than in any of his previous work. Technically a high degree of skill is still required of all the performers, but because of more rapid changes and part entrances their attention can and must be directed outward to the whole sound (as opposed to the inward focus necessary to play the same repeating over a much longer period of time as in earlier works)...The color expansion and variety in part-writing shows a tendency towards orchestral writing and, in fact, this new work could be considered a chamber orchestra piece.⁶⁹

Only with the premiere of the completed work would *Music for 18 Musicians* be recognized as an important composition in its own right, and even that realization was gradual. In the run-up to the premiere, it was just the next big Reich work, one that solidified many of the gradual changes in his style since the Seventies' opening.

Though the work would later appear on John Rockwell's decade-summing list of important works, the *New York Times* did not send any critics to its premiere. (The weekend of the 24th, Rockwell covered events at The Kitchen.) The omission is

⁶⁸ Michael Nyman, "Steve Reich," *Music and Musicians* 25/5, Jan. 1977, quoted in Schwarz, "Steve Reich," 245.

⁶⁹ Joan LaBarbara, "Polyphonic Patterns," *SoHo Weekly News*, May 29, 1975.

particularly puzzling given that the *Times* had covered most of Reich's major concerts for several years. The performance of the working version in 1975 had been covered by the downtown weeklies, and Rockwell mentioned it as a noteworthy upcoming event in a piece covering the relationship between minimalism and progressive rock.⁷⁰ Two weeks later he enthusiastically reviewed "Mr. Reich's most grandiose assemblage of forces yet" in that Kitchen performance.⁷¹ The omission could hardly have been excused by too much coverage of Reich—no reviews of his concerts or recordings appear in the *Times* for months on either side of the Town Hall premiere. It is perhaps a sign of the multitude of "downtown" events happening that spring that neither Rockwell nor the *Times* could fit *Music for 18 Musicians* into its scheduled coverage.

Tom Johnson used the premiere of *Music for 18 Musicians* to ask "Exactly How Good is Steve Reich?"⁷² While Johnson called the performance "sharp," "precise," and "a good composition," he notes that no symphony orchestra could have afforded the rehearsal time that created such precision. He "suspect[s] that the work would hold up well under repeated hearings." But Johnson's respect for the piece never quite becomes admiration, and he feels compelled to "add some additional thoughts, some of which would apply to Philip Glass as well." At root, he questions whether Reich's success—including the internationally available recordings of most of his mature music—ought to win him the mantle of "main representative of the new classical American music." In part, his concern is for other avant-garde styles and composers he deems equally good. The core of his concern runs deeper:

⁷⁰ John Rockwell, "In Progressive Rock, The Classical Touch," *New York Times*, May 9, 1975.

⁷¹ "Steve Reich Gives 'Work in Progress' At Kitchen Concert," *New York Times*, May 23, 1975.

⁷² *Village Voice*, 10 May 1976.

And what about performer freedom? In a way, I think that is what bothers me most. Ever since those first indeterminate works in the early 1950s, one of the main precepts of the American avant-garde has been a concern for the individual, and a dislike for the regimented performing discipline that we inherited from Europe. There's something very American about that, and it seems like an important value...it seems that we should have learned to appreciate watching people make music without giving up their personal freedom. Reich grew out of all that, but somewhere along the line he gave it up.⁷³

Though Johnson's place in the field is different, he here expresses concerns quite in tune with those of Fromm and Mennin: what makes great (American) music? If performer freedom is a defining characteristic of the American avant-garde, what does it mean for Reich to move away from it? Does he become more European by embracing the same rigid chain of composer to performer to audience at the heart of the Celebration's curation? The introduction of vertical interest moved the sound closer to the traditions of the field of power; the relationship between composer and performer also moves that direction.

And the scope of the work heightens the challenge of fitting it neatly into "downtown." The size of the ensemble led Rockwell to suggest that Reich would next compose an orchestral work.⁷⁴ Reich pushed the boundaries of what could be presented casually; 18 players and the necessary array of percussion instruments could not be squeezed onto a small stage or one end of a loft. Like Monk's *Quarry* (discussed below), *Music for 18 Musicians* required a new degree of professional support. Though the piece is clearly a product of downtown, it could not be presented using the most-thoroughly "downtown" techniques. Presenting it required Reich to skew away from bohemian cultural production toward closer alignment with the field of power. The expansion of his

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Rockwell, "Steve Reich Gives 'Work in Progress.'"

forces and increasing “orchestraness” of his technique—from harmony to colorization—were leading Reich toward a kind of academic consecration far faster than his former associate Glass.

Along with this movement toward something resembling the traditional came a concomitant movement toward professionalized presentation. Reich (and Glass) had long kept a tight grip on their scores, relying on the performance of their works to sustain their touring ensembles.⁷⁵ With *Music for 18 Musicians*, Reich had composed a piece beyond the typical means of his group. While it would be years before Reich began composing orchestral works on commission, *Music for 18 Musicians* was an important step away from ensemble-driven music-making toward the production of scores as commodities. It also marks Reich’s increasing importance specifically as a *composer* rather than a performing artist. It is perhaps something of this move toward hierarchy that troubled Johnson, particularly in a work that was otherwise moving away from rigid minimalist processes.

It does, though, fit the historical moment. By the middle Seventies, collectivism had waned. As citizenship had become a question of identity, there was a deep questioning of who would be allowed to speak for whom—this played out in the ‘76 presidential campaign and would prove central to the New York mayoral race the following year. Though Reich eschews a conductor in *Music for 18 Musicians*, he has clearly placed himself and his compositional work at the core of the piece. It is not the highwire-walk of *Drumming*, nor the maraca-driven inevitability of *Four Organs*. Processes, which had been as central to Reich as chance had been to Cage or serial

⁷⁵ Reich wouldn’t sign with a publisher until 1979, when Universal Edition published a few of his early works; it was not until 1983 that he signed with Boosey & Hawkes and began to publish in earnest. See chapter six.

techniques to Babbitt, were pushed into the background. In their place, the compositional ego emerges, that same quality so beloved of Fromm and Mennin. It is not the ensemble that speaks in *Music for 18 Musicians*, it is the composer.

Meredith Monk, meanwhile, continued her collectivist endeavors and embraced fragmentation. She presented *Quarry*, a work comparable to *Vessel* in terms of performing forces (if not breadth of venue) at La Mama Experimental Theater for a three-week run in April 1976 (and a second run at Brooklyn Academy of Music in December); a film version of the same was released in early 1977. Though clearly built around images of fascism and horror drawn from World War II, *Quarry* also grappled with the uncertainty of the current moment, with what labels meant and how government could abuse them. Beneath that level of political allegory, *Quarry* balanced a non-rationalistic individual against a fragmented landscape of images.⁷⁶

The work took shape over two years, the third of Monk's large-scale projects (following *Juice* and *Vessel*). While working on it, Monk created a number of smaller pieces, most notably the "travelogue" series with The House member and frequent collaborator Ping Chong. The creation of *Quarry* also overlapped with the creation and presentation of *Education of the Girlchild*. With *Quarry*, Monk sought a way to combine the strengths of the large works and the intimate ones:

⁷⁶ *Quarry* began as a piece about the Civil War for the bicentennial: "The project for which The House is requesting assistance is a new work to be premiered in February of 75 as part of the celebration of The American Bicentennial. The piece is an exploration of the American Civil War (and by association the phenomena of war) and the period 1860-1870 in America. The piece will include speech, song, movement, visual elements, and tabloid." (From an NEA grant application dated 27 November 1974, Meredith Monk Archive.)

“‘Vessel’ and ‘Juice’ were gigantic landscapes. ‘Girlchild’ grew out of the characters in it. In ‘Quarry’ I’ve melded the character thing and the landscape thing together—if it works.”⁷⁷

Monk achieves this balance by positioning a sick young girl (Monk) at the center of a large space, surrounded immediately by developed characters (the other artists of *The House*) and more distantly by indistinct masses (a chorus of 30).⁷⁸ In its original presentation at La Mama’s annex, the audience was seated in bleachers on the two long sides of the room, football style. Monk’s character became the hub of a large wheel, a character about which landscapes could coalesce and dissolve. The intimate and the global combine to express an individual’s necessarily incomplete understanding of the Second World War:

QUARRY, an opera written, composed, choreographed and directed by Meredith Monk was two years in the making. Its ‘subject’ is World War II treated from an American child’s point of view. It presents the fantasies, memories, dreams, fears, obsessions, imaginations of *that* war (the last world-wide phenomenon of that scale) and by association, all war. QUARRY is an acknowledgment of the horror of that time by the generation of children and young adults who lived through it [inserted by hand: “from far away”] only in their minds. It is war as seen through the unconscious and the innocence of a child. We do not pretend to be presenting realism. We as Americans cannot know what it is like to have hardship, death and destruction on our soil. We present QUARRY as our war memorial, as our consciousness and compassion for the countries that suffered that event and also for the countries that suffer it now and will suffer it in the future. For us, QUARRY is an acknowledgment of our European roots, of our Jewish roots, of our Oriental and African roots and of our world citizenship.

⁷⁷ Quoted in John Rockwell’s “Meredith Monk’s Tapestry of Music and Dance,” *New York Times*, March 28, 1976.

⁷⁸ Interestingly, Monk had originally hoped to have an actual child play this part, and take for herself the Dictator (eventually played by Ping Chong). “Vocally no one else could do it.” she says in a 1976 interview. (Liza Bear, “Meredith Monk: Invocation/Evocation,” originally published in *Avalanche*, no. 13 (Summer 1976), reprinted in Jowitt, *Meredith Monk*, 86-87.

QUARRY is not a documentary. It is a musical mass or requiem. The structure is musical as well as dramatic. The sounds and the images are woven together to form one tapestry.⁷⁹

The commingling of the individual and the global is at *Quarry*'s heart. Without a linear narrative, symbol and fantasy become the expressive vehicles (to the dismay or delight of the different critics). Signe Hammer, writing in December of 1976, argues that "*Quarry* works...because Monk understands the interplay between internal and external reality."⁸⁰ Jowitt claims that: "Nothing seems to cause anything else, but events gather power from other events until a small snowball has acquired the force of an avalanche."⁸¹

These fragments are individually small—a radio announcement, the speeches of various stereotypical dictators, travelers in Hasidic garb crossing the stage, a fleet of stylized clouds and bombers on sticks—but fill up the space. Throughout, Monk's child character remains in and around the centrally-positioned bed, as much nexus as active subject. The child does not, perhaps cannot, organize the fragments into a hierarchical or linear whole. The audience can use the child as a focal point, but not as a filter; she has no narrative subjectivity. Instead, the audience must largely sort for itself the parade of dancers, singers, music, and film. Arrayed as it was on either side of a long space, the audience had particularly free rein to direct its gaze.

Monk, in interviews, repeatedly mentions the balance between the portrait and the landscape. The child's illness is part of that:

"I thought of the child in *Quarry* more as a microcosm for the disease of the world: the sick child; you don't know whether she's very ill, or diseased, or slightly uncomfortable, or pocked... Then

⁷⁹ Original program notes for *Quarry*, Meredith Monk Archive.

⁸⁰ "Against Alienation: A Postlinear Theater Struggles to Connect." Originally published in *Village Voice*, December 20, 1976, in reference to the run at Brooklyn Academy of Music. Reprinted in Jowitt, *Meredith Monk*, 68-72.

⁸¹ Deborah Jowitt, "Underwater All Islands Connect," *Village Voice*, April 26, 1976.

there's the malaise of the world, so you get an interplay between those two worlds within the same space."⁸²

Interplay is the key, and what keeps the child from being a guide to *Quarry's* fragmented content. The child and the world alike are sick; there is no certainty as to whether the disease is terminal or simply an extreme case of ennui. The relationship between the child and the world is one of resemblance rather than hierarchy. Monk allows neither to take a privileged position. This ambiguity balances the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the whirling fragments, leaving them in uneasy orbit.

The magnitude and complexity of the work added to the usual troubles in assigning reviewers to a major Monk work. The *Village Voice* dispatched three critics: Deborah Jowitt for dance, Arthur Sainer for theater, and Tom Johnson for music. Robb Baker, who wrote equally about music and culture, and Marcia B. Siegel, a dance critic, reviewed the piece for the *SoHo Weekly News*. The *New York Times* also sent only two: John Rockwell offered a preview as music critic, and Clive Barnes reviewed it as theater, musing:

I found myself knowing what I was doing there but unsure which one of me was doing it. This mild bout of schizophrenia was triggered by my inability to decide whether I was there in my capacity of drama critic or dance critic. . . . Well, at least, it isn't an opera. Beyond that it [is] difficult to be more definite.⁸³

The patterns of critical response were indicative of individual allegiances: Jowitt and Johnson, both heavily involved with "Downtown" performing arts, approached the work favorably:

Of all the pieces Meredith Monk has dreamed up and that she and The House have performed ("realized," her word, is better),

⁸² Liza Bear interview, reprinted in Jowitt's *Meredith Monk*, 88.

⁸³ Clive Barnes, "The Stage: Is It a Play? Is It a Dance?" *New York Times*, April 7, 1976.

Quarry is the richest—in part, the mining of the holocaust by an American Jew, sheltered in body, but besieged in spirit.⁸⁴

We [Johnson and his friend] agreed that most of the ambiguity had been carefully laid out, that Monk was completely in control of what she was doing, and, in short, that she had made no mistakes.⁸⁵

Baker called it an “absolute masterpiece,” and Siegel called Monk’s theater techniques “almost faultless.”⁸⁶ The theater critics, though, tended towards more circumspection, with Sainer calling it “overproduced,” and Barnes writing:

The difficulty, at least for this observer, in watching her work is almost the reverse side of the coin of her virtues. There seems to be a certain dramatic aimlessness to it. Nothing happens, not even at a profound psychic level. There are actions without resolution, evocation without poetry and movement without thrust...[Monk’s] artistic functioning appears to be too pretentious for its own good.⁸⁷

Rockwell, in his preview, responds similarly, averring that there is “sometimes so much [private imagery] that Miss Monk can be justly accused of overloading her audiences with incomprehensible symbolism.”⁸⁸

Rockwell, to be clear, is speaking of Monk’s work more generally. But his reaction, and Barnes’, highlight the difficulty in balancing fragmentary, often private symbols against dramatic and narrative cohesion. It is not a coincidence that the theater critics tend to have the most averse reactions to this element of *Quarry* (Douglas Watt gave an especially scathing review of the “nonsense” in the *New York Daily News*); the interchangeability of “theater” and “drama” in their job descriptions highlights the tendency toward coherent narrative in their oeuvre. For the music and dance critics, unity

⁸⁴ Deborah Jowitt, “Underwater All Islands.”

⁸⁵ Tom Johnson, “Meredith Monk Doesn’t Make Mistakes,” *Village Voice*, May 3, 1976.

⁸⁶ Robb Baker, “Nightmare Vision In the Spring of the Dragon,” *Soho Weekly News*, April 15, 1976. And: Marcia B. Siegel, “The Storm Is In the Eye,” *Soho Weekly News*, April 22, 1976.

⁸⁷ Clive Barnes, “The Stage: Is It a Play? Is It a Dance?”

⁸⁸ Rockwell, “Meredith Monk’s Tapestry.”

could more easily come in different forms. Tom Johnson credits *Quarry*'s cohesiveness to "Monk's evolution as a composer," arguing that "Monk is [now] listening to everything in her work, just as she has always looked at everything."⁸⁹ Siegel, a dance critic, saw progress from the other direction: "[Monk] is also beginning to infuse the staging of individual movement of her performers with the emotional energy that has become so highly developed in her music."⁹⁰ In both dance and music, attention to motion and detail can create form without the need for narrative or, necessarily, for the linear cohesion and direction Barnes missed.

The lack of narrative structure cements *Quarry*, like most of Monk's work, distinctly in the "art for art's sake" segment of the field of cultural production. Compounded by the intermedia aspect of the piece, the nonlinearity of *Quarry* bars the work from easy commodification or alignment with the field of power. Despite this, *Quarry*'s presentation involved several departures from Monk's standard practice. There was a degree of professionalization. Previous choruses had been recruited from friends and acquaintances; for *Quarry* Monk auditioned some 175 performers to find the 30 singer-dancers that eventually joined The House on stage. Unlike *Vessel* or, to some extent, *JUICE*, *Quarry* was presented at a space designed and dedicated for performance. La Mama Experimental Annex was not Alice Tully Hall or the Met, but it was much closer to a kind of "mainstream new" than Monk's favored lofts and abandoned spaces. It came with a built-in promotional apparatus and, to Monk's annoyance, fairly high ticket prices.⁹¹ At five dollars for general admission (three for student rush), tickets for *Quarry* at La Mama were a far cry from the pay-what-you-will loft concerts, in the same price

⁸⁹ Johnson, "Monk Doesn't Make Mistakes."

⁹⁰ Siegel, "The Storm."

⁹¹ See the Liza Bear interview reprinted in Jowitt's *Meredith Monk*, 89.

range as the Philharmonic’s Rugs concerts (and more expensive than the \$4 Prospective Encounters of the same year). As an “official” experimental theater company with its own space, La Mama had substantial overhead. Founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961, La Mama had grown from a simple off-off-Broadway to an important presenter of avant-garde works. Located some ten blocks north of SoHo on East 9th Street, it was still very much a part of “Downtown,” and hosted a variety of experimental performances.

The higher profile venue brought slicker publicity materials—large posters on heavy stock, as well as a comparatively broad advertising campaign that included the *New York Times* (see figure 4-2). La Mama handled publicity, including press releases.⁹² Later ads for *Quarry* (and several that ran in downtown publications with lower advertising rates) were neatly printed with photographs—a far cry from the hand-drawn photocopies that advertised *Vessel*. As an institution, La Mama stuck thoroughly to the “experimental” element of its name; there is no evidence that La Mama imposed or even

La Mama ETC
 OPENS April 6-18 at 7:30 P.M.
 Special Benefit Performance, Tonight at 7:30
QUARRY
 an opera conceived and directed by
MEREDITH MONK
 with THE HOUSE and 30 additional performers
 music by Meredith Monk
 lighting by Beverly Emmons

All Tickets: \$5 TDF Dance Vouchers Accepted
 La Mama Annex — 66 E. 4th St.
 for info. & res. call: 475-7710 or 475-7908

Figure 4-2 *Quarry* display ad. *New York Times*, April 4, 1976

⁹² Meredith Monk Archive.

suggested any creative limits for Monk. Still, it was an institution. While small works and workshops continued in Monk's SoHo loft, *Quarry* marked the end of The House's presentation of large-scale works entirely on its own.

Quarry also has the unique distinction of being released as a film less than a year after the work's stage performance. Amram Nowak made the film, originally, for the Jerome Robbins Film Archive of the New York Public Library's Dance Collection. Though it was not intended for theatrical release, Monk liked it well enough to allow its distribution.⁹³ It was shot with two cameras at the Lepercq Space of the Brooklyn Academy of Music during the December 1976 run. As it had at La Mama, *Quarry* took up most of the space, and the similar seating arrangement presented similar problems for filming. The spacious hub-and-fragments arrangement that allowed the live audience incredible freedom to direct their attention made imposing the monadic gaze of the camera a fantastically difficult artistic act. Combine this with the simultaneity of important events in disparate parts of the space, and the situation becomes even more difficult.

Nowak solved this problem by arranging the individually scattered scenes sequentially. This worked well until the final procession, "doomed to be an anti-climax. 'Requiem' may have been forceful in the theater, but it can't even get going [on film]."⁹⁴ Mindy Aloff, like the theater critics, notes that images are high stylized, and that dances do not define space "in an organized way." What organizes the film, though, is Monk's score, "the best part of the whole...those portions of Nowak's film which fly toward the

⁹³ Mindy Aloff, "Film Translations of Meredith Monk's Work," *Millennium Film Journal* No. 10/11 (Fall/Winter 1981/82), 102.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

visceral center of the sound are quite splendid.”⁹⁵ Aloff finds the structure opaque, but believes that “the structure of *Quarry* is as close as we come to its meaning, to the story it seems to be dying to tell, and never fully does.”⁹⁶

Film, then, exaggerated the strengths and weaknesses of the staged version of *Quarry*. Linearity had to be imposed through the camera’s monadic viewpoint. The images retained their isolated meaning, but film emphasized the fragmentary rather than the gradually accumulating. Jowitt’s snowballs could never become her avalanche. The music had to hold the structure together without access to space. Jack Anderson, writing for the *Times*, called filming the work a “risk.” Unlike the critics of the live performances, who spoke eloquently of the *difficulty* of assembling *Quarry*’s fragments, Anderson writes that “unlike the child, we can piece the fragments together.”⁹⁷ Film, by imposing a unitary point of view, necessarily organizes the fragments. The experience of the film loses many of the qualities of the theatrical experience, inescapably inflecting the work’s meaning. The manner of presentation imbues the filmed *Quarry* with qualities impossible for its theatrical origin.

Quarry won an Obie in 1976. Negative reviews were isolated, if vitriolic. The film version extended *Quarry*’s moment in the eyes and ears of the new arts crowd; the work was revived in 1985, and eventually featured at the Spoleto Festival (in 2003). In 1976, though, it was yet another coming out party for Meredith Monk, her move from the radically experimental stages of Judson and SoHo to the somewhat more institutionalized

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. She goes on to opine that, with the exception of Ping Chong, “no one in The House can act.”

⁹⁷ Jack Anderson, “Movie: Miss Monk Films Her 1976 Dance, ‘Quarry,’” *New York Times*, December 19, 1978. While his short review comes across as somewhat negative, Anderson was disturbed enough by the “disastrous cuts” as it went to press that he sent a copy of the original version and an apologetic note to Monk. Both are available in the Meredith Monk Archive.

halls of La Mama ETC. While *Quarry* represents an organic growth of Monk's aesthetic, the way that she places an individual variously as the hub and victim of symbolic fragments is particularly appropriate for the mid-Seventies. That she presented the work in two separate runs in institutional venues suggests both her rising stature within the downtown subfield of cultural production and her increasing comfort with institutions. Neither, though, would lead to consecration of her work or submissive alignment with the field of power.

*He asked me, "Who are these people? I've never seen them here before."
I remember replying very candidly, "Well, you'd better find out who they are, because if this place expects to be running in twenty-five years, that's your audience out there."
Pretty outspoken of me, I admit. But, then, we were having a pretty good night.
—Philip Glass⁹⁸*

Something far more unusual than the Celebration of Contemporary music happened in November at one of the Lincoln Center institutions *not* involved in it. On a "dark night"—a Sunday with no regular programming involved—a packed Metropolitan Opera House raised curtain for one of the most important premieres of the Seventies. Robert Wilson and Philip Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* was not entirely new; segments of the work entered the Philip Glass Ensemble's repertoire as early as May 1975 as the semi-independent work *Another Look at Harmony*.⁹⁹ Partial previews were performed in New York in April 1976 before in preparation for its first major run at France's Avignon Festival. When *Einstein* returned to New York in the fall, Glass's "pretty good night" understated the whirlwind of critical and popular attention surrounding the Met performances.

⁹⁸ Philip Glass, *Music by Philip Glass*, ed. Robert T. Jones (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1987), 53.

⁹⁹ For a review, see John Rockwell, "Music: Glass's Newest," *New York Times*, May 8, 1975.

When the work made its full American premiere, though, it was covered primarily as a new work by Wilson, with music by Glass. Wilson's avant-garde theater carried the headlines because he'd developed more cachet; his hours-long theater performances had garnered plenty of attention even in New York's saturated avant-garde theater world. He and Glass "shared a community of support...and worked mainly in the same neighborhood of New York, the as yet unfashionable SoHo. [They] were bound to meet."¹⁰⁰ *The Life and Times of Josef Stalin* established the initial connection between the two; Glass and a friend crashed the cast party. Glass and Wilson's encounter at the party led to a series of weekly lunches and, eventually, to *Einstein on the Beach*.

Einstein took shape only gradually; there was debate about the subject of the work, its dimensions, its texts. Wilson and Glass eventually settled on Einstein and the broad strokes of the work, but it was not until the opportunity of a French premiere emerged that the production process began in earnest

At four and a half hours, *Einstein* was considerably shorter than *Stalin*, but shared that work's emphasis on association and allusion in an environment of minute movements. Glass's music helped provide dramaturgical shape to Wilson's static sets and the dances of small movements choreographed by Andy de Groat and Lucinda Childs. Harmonic movement, Glass confesses, had entered into his musical language; ten years after the fact he remained unapologetic about it: "It is surely no coincidence that it was at the moment that I was embarking upon a major shift in my music to large-scale theater works that I began to develop a new, more expressive language for myself."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Glass, *Music*, 27.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

“Expressive” is a relative term; *Einstein on the Beach* still relies on the motoric eighth notes that characterize so much of Glass’s work up to this point. For *Einstein*, though, Glass began to use harmony as an additional structural factor. His *Another Look at Harmony* became the basis for *Einstein*’s knee plays. Tonal centers revolving loosely around C Major provide the foundation for the work, articulating a tonality that, “especially when experienced in the theatre, exhibits a surprisingly conventional approach to matters such as proportion and climax.”¹⁰² Bass lines ground tonalities, enhanced by the relative independence of the vocalists from the keyboard patterns. The overall effect of the increased harmonic interest was to give shape to the drama.¹⁰³

Shape was essential; *Einstein* is a sprawling work, nearly five hours long, with a full chorus and dancers in addition to Glass’s usual ensemble of amplified keyboards. The libretto is a multiplicity of sung and spoken texts by multiple authors, including cast members Lucinda Childs and Samuel M. Johnson, though the bulk of the text was created by Christopher Knowles. Solfege syllables and numbers compose the chorus’s text. Though it was not as “true” an opera as Glass’s later works, it was similarly what Potter is comfortable calling a “Gesamtkunstwerk.”¹⁰⁴ For Glass as composer, the expansion of forces to include choruses (and later an aria for Joan LaBarbara) went hand-in-glove with his increasing interest in harmony, and echoed Reich’s similar movement in *Music for 18 Musicians*.

Einstein was far more “proper” an opera than Monk’s *Quarry*, despite its lack of traditional arias and narrative. Both works used collages of images and sound to deal with

¹⁰² Potter, *Minimalists*, 327.

¹⁰³ For a more detailed analysis of the work, see Potter, *Minimalists*, 323-339. Glass discusses the harmonic and rhythmic structure of the piece in several locations, including *Music by Philip Glass*, 57-62 and “Notes: Einstein on the Beach” in *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 2 (Winter 1978), 63-70.

¹⁰⁴ Potter, *Minimalists*, 324.

horrors of the Second World War, but the center of *Einstein* was less an actual individual (a la Monk's child) than an abstraction. *Einstein* is built of fragments and surfaces. These revolve around an imagined center—"I like Einstein as a character, because everybody knows who he is."¹⁰⁵ That assumed Einstein forms the void at the work's core. It is left up to the audience, individually and collectively, to "complete" the work.¹⁰⁶ This completion does not necessarily come through interpretation; the audience assembles the surfaces into structure, minimally guided by the work's content:

If the space evoked in *Einstein* was dream-like, one important difference must be noted. Wilson's images, unlike those of dreams, are not open to interpretation. Dream-images are the *mediated* representations of dream-thoughts; hence, their interpretability. Wilson's images are, on the contrary, immediate, presentational, resistant to analysis.¹⁰⁷

The audience and the dramatic subject are fragmented, subsumed by a purely artistic structure that glorified fragments without connecting them to anything central—there's no person there. Signe Hammer opposed *Einstein* to *Quarry* purely on that level:

Beautiful, static sets—objects—form a backdrop to the rigid, compulsively repetitive movements of the performers—dancers whose paths never cross, who never deviate from their diagonals. *Einstein* is profoundly violent in the rigid formalism of its disconnection. . . . *Quarry* works in the opposite direction because Monk understands the interplay between internal and external reality.¹⁰⁸

Einstein's formalism played out not only in its aesthetic, but also in the necessities of presentation. While *Quarry* relied on props and costumes, *Einstein* relied on technology: those (massive) static sets, complex lighting systems, tons (literally) of sound equipment. The fragments were not merely contained by the space, they *became* the

¹⁰⁵ Robert Wilson quoted in Glass, *Music*, 33.

¹⁰⁶ Glass saw this characteristic as one of central importance, and linked it back to his experience with the work of Samuel Becket. See *Music by Philip Glass*, 34-37.

¹⁰⁷ Craig Owens, "'Einstein on the Beach': The Primacy of Metaphor," *October*, Vol. 4 (Autumn 1977), 24.

¹⁰⁸ Hammer, "Against Alienation."

space. This apparatus required a kind of careful management that far surpassed the organizational means of any of the downtown collectives. As with Monk's *Quarry*, the scope of the theatrical project required a degree of professionalization unprecedented in the work of Glass or Wilson. Despite this, the project was not the sort that would win initial backing from an institution accustomed to working at *Einstein*'s scale: "From the very beginning, we knew we would have to do it ourselves."¹⁰⁹

Unlike Monk's *The House*, Glass—and particularly Wilson—had personal institutions well removed from the collective ideal. Administering the presentation of the work (in the broad sense of putting it before the public) could be assigned to one or the other:

We each had our own organizations, Bob's Byrd Hoffman Foundation on Spring Street and my Aurora Music Foundation, which was run by Performing Artservices, a not-for-profit arts administration service begun some years before... besides working for their other clients, they organized my concert tours... [and] had worked with Bob before, which made it easier to coordinate our plans. In the end, we decided to use Bob's organization for the overall running of *Einstein*, since he had rehearsal space on Spring Street ready for use, plus important contacts in Europe, where the work was destined to premiere.¹¹⁰

While Wilson's foundation became *Einstein*'s primary institutional support, the production would not have been realized without Performing Artservices. Artservices had, in many respects "made" SoHo for performing artists. Mimi Johnson began the company in Paris, opening an office in New York that soon became the company's primary operation. Merce Cunningham was their first major client; through him they eventually expanded to include a wide slice of performers:

¹⁰⁹ Glass, *Music*, 31.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 40

Their client list reads like a downtown who's who: composer/musicians John Cage and Philip Glass; directors Joseph Chaikin, Richard Foreman, and Stuart Sherman, dancer choreographers Lucinda Childs, Douglas Dunn, and David Gordon; and theater companies like Mabou Mines and the Talking Band. The Dance Umbrella, now a standard part of New York's modern dance calendar, began as a showplace for Artservices performers. . . . Not only has the firm given a diverse group of artists a sense of cohesion, it has managed to successfully sell avant-garde.¹¹¹

Performing Artservices provided critical support in arranging the tours (both domestic and international) that allowed their clients to support their art. They became a clearinghouse for both tour contacts and financial support. Among the practices they mastered was the compound booking that eventually facilitated *Einstein's* tour: getting one organization to commission a work, another to sponsor a performance, a third to pay travel expense, a fourth to do a radio broadcast, et cetera. They helped polish grant proposals (while themselves relying on NEA and New York State Council for the Arts grants). For Glass, they had provided a vital contact:

One day, [Glass] got a call from Mimi. Michel Guy, the director of the Festival d'Automne in Paris, had been sent to Artservices by Benedicte Pesle. Mimi was taking Guy to visit various artists. Could they drop by Phil's rehearsal?

"I said sure, and then, because I wasn't used to people coming to rehearsals, forgot about it. At the time, we were practicing in Dickie Landry's Chatham Square loft, which was this black box with exactly one light bulb in it. I'd call rehearsal for eight people, people would drift in and eat dinner until nine, then we'd sit down and play until about midnight. Mimi came in with Michel Guy. I said hello, have some dinner, and they went off somewhere in the room, which was so dark I couldn't see them. And I forgot about them again. Then, when we were finished practicing, they suddenly emerged out of the darkness and this Frenchman said, "Do you want to come to Paris this summer?" I said "Sure."¹¹²

¹¹¹ Terry Curtis Fox, "Voice Vanguard '79: Performing Artsevices" *Village Voice*, Dec. 18, 1979.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Guy went on to become French culture minister in addition to director of the Festival d'Automne. He had a direct hand in the commissioning of *Einstein* and getting it the European foothold it needed.

But before it could go to Europe, it had to be cast and rehearsed. Open auditions were advertised in the *Village Voice*; far more people attended than either Glass or Wilson had anticipated:

To our complete dismay, nearly 120 people showed up, and it took Bob, Andy [de Groat, the choreographer] and me over three days to see everybody... Each person had to sing for me, do a movement exercise for Andy, and perform an acting or theater piece for Bob.¹¹³

Among those called back was composer and *Village Voice* music critic Tom Johnson. His ensuing article doesn't include anything about movement or acting, but extensively details the challenge of reading and tracking music based so completely on repetition of small units. Glass offered him a job, even. He recounted his experience for the paper, concluding:

The rehearsal atmosphere seemed quite pleasant, the money would be adequate, and the months in Europe wouldn't be hard to take. But then I started thinking about how I'd have to do the four sequences of the three-note pattern four times and the eight sequences of the four-note pattern two times, and about how it would all have to be memorized, and I realized that I'd probably never be able to muster up the kind of dedication the task would require. I guess I'm not *that* fond of counting. But I'm glad that someone is doing it.¹¹⁴

Once the cast was selected, rehearsals began. For the singers, this entailed hours of the rote number-and-solfege singing explained by Johnson:

Very simply, we began at the beginning, memorizing a small amount of music. The next day we reviewed the previous day's

¹¹³ Glass, *Music*, 42.

¹¹⁴ "Philip Glass Writes an 'Opera' for Ordinary Voices," *Village Voice*, January 26, 1976.

work and added a new section. We continued this way, each day beginning with a review of the accumulated learned material and adding new material at the end. Ultimately, we were able to do full run-throughs of the entire work by memory...during the musical rehearsals, I began to use solfege syllables and numbers as an aid to memorizing. This eventually became the vocal text of the piece.¹¹⁵

This approach was particularly “Downtown” in its ethos. Oral transmission of the material sidestepped the kind of independent masterwork, reified as a score, that Mennin and Fromm praised for their *Celebration*. And though the process was highly collaborative, there was little in it to suggest the scientific cooperative Boulez imagined for IRCAM. The kind of *performing* professionalism required for *Einstein* was one of intense dedication to a shared aesthetic (and cultural) ideal—the participants had to fill similar positions in the field of cultural production to those of Glass and Wilson.

As cultural producers, Glass, Wilson, and their performers had to occupy that “Downtown” space. As noted above, though, the institutional support necessary to pull off such a major undertaking was not something they could find entirely in their own segment of the field. The friction between the communal cooperative of performing artists and the necessities of touring a production costing nearly a million dollars is much of what makes *Einstein* such a curiosity and a particularly apt example of changing presentation in the mid-Seventies. It was covered with equal enthusiasm by the *Times* and the *Village Voice*, remarkable for its sets and lighting as well as its music, a wholly American work that relied on cachet gathered in Europe to secure its domestic premiere.

The work previewed in an unstaged version in early March of 1976 at the Video Exchange Theater in lower Manhattan; excerpts of the music were presented by Glass’s

¹¹⁵ Glass, *Music*, 43-44.

ensemble at the Kitchen later that month. Rockwell's discussion of the "opera" is enthusiastically intent.

It is easy to say that 'Einstein on the Beach' is a major work—certainly the interest in the run-throughs aroused in the Manhattan avant-garde community was higher than the finished work of most artists.¹¹⁶

All of this preparation costs money—an enormous amount by avant-garde standards—and part of the reason for the invitational run-throughs last week was to attract additional financial support.¹¹⁷

Even with *Einstein*'s creation and rehearsal complete, there were still substantial questions about the financial realities of its presentation. The production was, that spring, estimated to coast around \$700,000. Half of that had been raised, most of it directly attributable to European commitments for Avignon, Venice, and Paris. Less than \$100,000 had been raised from domestic donors, with little more than that pledged. Though Wilson and his foundation managed the scramble to keep people paid and the production progressing, the friction between downtown aesthetics and midtown production values would be an ongoing issue.

It was Michel Guy who had arranged for *Einstein*'s premiere at the Avignon Festival and a two week run at Paris' Autumn Festival. While the show was a darling of critics, the decision of Guy and the culture ministry to commission Americans was questioned, particularly at a time when the Ministry's budget was stressed by the construction of the Centre Beaubourg (eventual neighbor to IRCAM).¹¹⁸ The Avignon

¹¹⁶ John Rockwell, "'Einstein,' New Wilson Opera, Taking Shape" *New York Times*, March 8, 1976.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ See "Avignon Festival" by Lenora Champagne, *Performing Arts Journal* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Autumn, 1977): 84-86. The article, while focusing on the '77 festival, discusses Avignon's role as a "marketplace," an "event where cultural products can be bought and sold." For a more general history of the festival's origin

Festival had its roots in post-war leftist idealism, an event meant both to provide culture to the masses and diminish Paris's stranglehold on French cultural life. There was some worry that Guy was turning Avignon into a mere preview of Paris' Autumn Festival. Though ostensibly in the middle of this French tug-of-war, Wilson and Glass were largely able to ignore it. The Avignon performance generated instant critical buzz that Wilson, Glass, and the work's organizers were able to parlay into a subsequent two-month European tour.¹¹⁹

Among the Americans who saw *Einstein* in Europe were Gilbert Helmsley and Jane Herman, a lighting designer with a penchant for production management and the coordinator of special events at the Metropolitan Opera, respectively. They saw the work in Hamburg in October, and expressed interest in bringing *Einstein* to a Sunday night at the Met. Despite Glass and Wilson's skepticism, the planning continued. Glass calls it a "long shot" and insists that he was unsure it was going to happen until they actually arrived at the building.¹²⁰ Glass's account downplays the role of Kathleen Norris, the manager for the project. Norris had been laying the groundwork for months before Helmsley and Herman made the trip to Germany. Norris had contacted Herman at the Met before the full European tour began, seeking contacts to facilitate a U.S. tour. It was in the process of explaining the work that Herman, Norris, and Helmsley began to believe

and gradual metamorphosis into a home for the avant-garde, see Philippa Wehle, "A History of the Avignon Festival," *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring 1984): 52-61.

¹¹⁹ For an extensive description of the Avignon performance, see Susan Flakes, "Robert Wilson's 'Einstein on the Beach'" in *The Drama Review: TDR* 20, No. 4 (Dec. 1976): 69-82. The tour was initially to include a performance at the Shiraz Festival in Iran, but the Shah's invitation ultimately caused too much political trouble with existing backers for Wilson and Glass to accept it. See a brief discussion in the latter part of David Sargent's "The Met Will Dance to a Mysterious Tune," *Village Voice*, November 22, 1976.

¹²⁰ Glass, *Music*, 51.

it would be viable to stage it on one of the Met's dark nights. The trip to Hamburg was intended to calm the apprehensive Glass and Wilson.¹²¹

The logistical challenge was responsible for a considerable quantity of that skepticism. While the space was available for performance, the demands of the Met's usual schedule could not be avoided. There was no extra time available to raise or strike the production's elaborate stage machinery, lighting, and sound equipment. The crew (provided by the Met) had to accomplish this in extremely tight time frames, starting at midnight after Saturday's opera was struck and working right on through for a 6:30 p.m. curtain on Sunday.

It meant hanging the whole show in one night and early morning, and this alone took two days in a normal theater. The lights would have to be set at the same time, and the stagehands who would be running the show would begin to learn their moves barely ten hours before show time.¹²²

The Met production eventually required two stage managers and numerous maps and charts to coordinate not only the stagehands, but the performers who would have little more chance to familiarize themselves with *Einstein*'s latest venue. Glass recounts what he saw: the hanging and the testing. As fast as the crews were at this, Helmsley had gone out of his way to plan every detail of setting *Einstein*. He'd arranged for early load-in (on the Friday before the performance). This allowed the crews to construct some of the more complicated apparatus (like the space ship) before striking *Lohengrin* on Saturday night. The load-in itself was precisely choreographed to both obey union rules (electricians could only move electrical gear, carpenters could only move carpentry, et cetera) and to get every ounce of the ten tons of set into an advantageous spot. Helmsley

¹²¹ See "Mounting Einstein" by Ross Wetzsteon, *Village Voice*, Dec. 6, 1976.

¹²² Glass, *Music*, 51.

had also spent weeks creating diagrams of how the sets would be built and moved during the show. An incredible amount of preparation made the nearly magical speed of set-up possible.¹²³

Along with this, of course, went the whole apparatus of the Met: ushers, box office... even janitorial staff. *Einstein*, despite its downtown roots, had intruded into midtown and managed, for a brief span, to co-opt the Metropolitan Opera's position in the field of cultural production. Leveraging that institutional power was possible mostly through the artistic capital the work had accrued in Europe. (The enthusiastic response of the downtown press to the set-less spring previews might have encouraged November's audiences, but had little impact on the presenters at Lincoln Center, who had seen little of Glass or Wilson's work before beginning the process of presenting it.) American presenters still took cues about what was important from their European counterparts; consider the fraught discussion of influence in the Celebration's program book.

John Rockwell reviewed the work's "triumphant" Avignon performance, though he gets halfway through the review before Glass's name is even mentioned: "Mr. Glass's music may not make 'Einstein' an opera in any conventional sense."¹²⁴ After praising the intricacy of the performance, from the sets to the movement to the music, Rockwell avers that "mostly, this is a true collaboration, with sound for the first time equaling the other arts in a Wilson Gesamtkunstwerk." The collaboration is in part responsible for logistical changes in Wilson's work: the necessity that performers sing, dance, and act drastically reduced cast size and led to a "tighter, more professional group than any Mr. Wilson has

¹²³ Wetzsteon, "Mounting Einstein."

¹²⁴ John Rockwell, "Robert Wilson's Five-Hour Operatic Dream," *New York Times*, Aug. 1, 1976.

previously worked with.” Rockwell’s whole review revolves thus around Wilson, comparing *Einstein* (favorably) to his previous works. While not all reviews involved such a retrospective look at Wilson’s oeuvre, Rockwell’s is typical in its placement of the theater artist at the center and Glass at the periphery (along with de Groat and Childs).

Regardless of which creator was the star, the work took New York’s music world by storm. Spring previews had turned on much of the downtown crowd to *Einstein*; both Glass and Wilson had significant name recognition with a segment of the population that usually had little to do with Lincoln Center. Buzz had also filtered back from the four-month European tour. The November shows sold out quickly enough that even Glass had trouble getting tickets for family members.¹²⁵ The reports from Europe had indeed been building excitement for the work. *The Village Voice* and the *Times* each devoted two feature articles and an additional review to *Einstein*; it was covered in *The New Yorker* and in other nationally circulating papers.

While the critics’ reactions differs somewhat, Mel Gussow at the *Times* and David Sargent at the *Voice* provide strangely parallel commentary on the work:

If there are any regular subscribers in the audience Sunday night at the Metropolitan Opera House, they will probably feel a sense of dislocation, perhaps even enchantment.¹²⁶

It’s hardly an opera in the way that regular Metropolitan Opera subscribers—many of whom have reportedly bought tickets for November 21—are used to the term. . . the Met is co-producing the two performances, partly out of a genuine belief in *Einstein*’s value, no doubt, but also partly to fill the house on the dark Sunday nights and partly to enliven its staid image. One suspects that at

¹²⁵ Glass, *Music*, 52.

¹²⁶ Mel Gussow, “‘Einstein’=Met x Avant-Garde2,” *New York Times*, November 19, 1976.

least some of the people in the audience Sunday night will be extremely disconcerted. It will probably do them good..¹²⁷

Both critics discuss the technical requirements of the work and the necessity of multi-talented professionals. Gussow waxes particularly enthusiastic about the list of materials involved in the production (“trucks carrying two 50-foot sealed containers of machinery and scenery, including 1000 tons of sound equipment, 59 hanging pieces, the steam engine and spaceship”). The other feature in the *Voice*, Ross Wetzsteon’s “Mounting Einstein,” provides an even more detailed look at the complicated technical work that made the production at the Met possible.¹²⁸ The fascination with the work had as much to do with the literal and metaphorical production machinery as with *Einstein*’s aesthetic content.

Clive Barnes and Gussow’s reviews in the *Times* are effusive. Barnes calls’ Glass’s music “almost more monotonous than Bach’s...and, more importantly, at times almost as interesting.” After consistently defending the beautiful boredom of the work, Barnes closes:

Congratulations to all. Special congratulations to the audience, to Lucinda Childs and Sheryl L. Sutton, who, in a way, if such a way existed, might have been thought to have had the leading roles, to the choreographer, Andrew deGroat, and to Gilbert Helmsley who was the production coordinator and who had so much production to coordinate. ‘Einstein on the Beach’ is being repeated next Sunday. You will never forget it, even if you hate it. Which is a most rare attribute to a work of art. Nowadays.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Sargent, “The Met Will Dance.” Sargent goes on to discuss similarities to Wagner’s approach and the necessary changes in the meaning of “opera” in the latter 20th Century.

¹²⁸ Wetzsteon, “Mounting Einstein.”

¹²⁹ Clive Barnes, “‘Einstein on the Beach’ Transforms Boredom Into Memorable Theater,” *New York Times*, Nov. 23, 1976.

Deborah Jowitt at the *Voice* calls the work “superbly conceived and organized,” praising the various dance movements and the strength of the “dream-like” images.¹³⁰ Martin Gottfried of the *New York Post* called the work a “dream circus” and noted, bemusedly, that Wilson had gotten it co-produced by “the Metropolitan Opera House, a bastion of conservatism...He may well be as inspired a confidence man as a showman, but the two have traditionally gone hand in hand.” Gottfried saw the work as “experiential rather than intellectual,” and greatly enhanced by Glass’s “real” and “innovative” music.¹³¹

In his more thorough, reflective feature, the *Voice*’s David Sargent notes the difficulties in praising a collaboration—including the way that Wilson’s reputation overshadows the contributions of others. (He ascribes part of the blame to the fact that it was Wilson’s Byrd Hoffman Foundation that provided the bulk of the institutional support.) Wilson was clearly the headliner in most of *Einstein*’s reception, even for those like Rockwell who were primarily music critics. Sargent also writes convincingly of the limits of *Einstein*’s in the historical moment (again echoing Gussow, who writes of *Einstein* going “back into its 50-foot sealed containers, surviving only in the memory of its audiences”):

What *Einstein* needs is an impresario of imagination and energy who believes in it and will spread it to its potential audience. Wagner’s works were disseminated through Europe late in the 19th century by a passionate, flamboyant impresario named Angelo Neumann, and Wilson and Glass need a Neumann now. There is a demonstrable hunger for a spectacular musical theatre of a sort heretofore unimagined by most theatergoers...If people go wild for a few laser effects and the odd smoke bomb, some of them would surely seek out *Einstein* if they only knew it existed. It’s like two

¹³⁰ Deborah Jowitt, “What is E=MC2 to a Dreamer?” *Village Voice*, Dec. 20, 1976.

¹³¹ Martin Gottfried, “Robert Wilson’s ‘On the Beach’ is Awash With Visual Events,” *New York Post*, November 23, 1976.

strangers reaching out in the darkness, with neither quite knowing the other is there.¹³²

Sargent's imagined impresario never materialized. Despite the sold-out shows and the critical approbation, *Einstein on the Beach* did not find financial backers for further shows at the Met, never mind a national tour. Glass and Wilson turned to other projects and returned to their old routines:

My life did not seem to be dramatically changed by the *Einstein* experience. I returned to making my living by driving a taxi, as I had during most of the 1970s, and I vividly remember the moment, shortly after the Met adventure, when a well dressed woman got into my cab...and said "Young man, do you realize you have the same name as a very famous composer?"¹³³

More importantly, Glass and Wilson faced the material consequences of presenting a downtown work requiring midtown economic backing. Though they'd cobbled together an array of prominent donors and grants to make the initial production happen, the very success of *Einstein* led operational costs to outpace income:

The arithmetic isn't hard to explain. Over the period of twelve months that our company (numbering almost 40 at times) was together, we spent about \$900,000 on salaries, travel, living costs, equipment expense, administration and so on—actually a very modest amount for the number of people, time worked, distances traveled. The trouble was that the income for the work from commissions and performance fees amounted to only \$810,000, leaving a deficit of \$90,000. At the Met, for example, *Einstein on the Beach* lost \$10,000 each performance in a sold-out house...we had actually been offered the chance to extend *Einstein* to other dark nights at the Met that winter, but no one was willing to pick up the nightly deficit. The Met had its own season to worry about and, understandably, wasn't eager to subsidize a production that was neither originated by them nor even a part of their regular season.¹³⁴

¹³² Sargent, "The Met Will Dance."

¹³³ Glass, *Music*, 53.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

After scrambling for well over a year to obtain the initial financing necessary to get the production rolling, Glass and Wilson were now faced with the unenviable task of trying to raise money for a piece that had already been performed. While it opened doors for commissions, all the “spare money” from those commissions went to the Einstein debt.¹³⁵ Glass sold his original score. Wilson sold original drawings. Their friends in the plastic arts (including Richard Serra and Sol LeWitt) auctioned off works in benefits. For all the work’s success in the field of cultural production, it had not gained its creators corresponding economic capital. Glass and Wilson again had to lean on their downtown friends and patrons.

Despite the immediate financial problems left in *Einstein*’s wake, the hybrid work helped change the shape of New York’s avant-garde music scene. *Quarry* successfully brought Monk’s intermedia dance-theater into a professionalized space and eventually to film. *Music for 18 Musicians* successfully moved Reich from his austere process pieces toward more traditional concert pieces. Neither, though, could match *Einstein on the Beach* for making the old guard stand up and take notice. The reviews were wildly enthusiastic, and nearly all emphasized the point that the work was performed *at the Met*. The literal space of Lincoln Center came to stand for a cultural space that, at the Seventies’ opening, the downtowners would not have dreamed of occupying. Now, though...now they had *arrived*.

Vitality, they had done so by borrowing the forms of the more established artists and institutions. The content of their works (particularly for Reich and Glass) bent toward established forms and practices. They leveraged institutions to secure performances in consecrated spaces. They employed professional management and pushed for publicity.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 55.

The fact that the New York press was paying attention was encouraging. With *Einstein*, the national press paid attention, too. The metaphorical fireworks surrounding the Met performances were every bit as vivid as the literal ones that had exploded on the Bicentennial.

They were, though, equally limited to symbolism. Just as the success of *Einstein* provided little immediate material benefit to its presenters, the flash and fireworks of the Bicentennial did little to change the United States' material circumstances. Jimmy Carter's election removed the last remnants of Nixon's disgrace, but his single term in office would not coincide with a miraculous turnaround in America's fortunes. Changes in the global balance of power and the domestic economy would continue to push society's fragmentation. As the Seventies trailed off toward the Eighties, though, some of those changes were turned to the U.S.'s advantage. Time and slowly improving fortunes smoothed the sharp edges of social fragments. So, too, in the field of cultural production, did individuals and institutions settle into the territory they'd claimed or cling to what they had left.

CHAPTER FIVE: Regrouping (1977-79)

The Bicentennial put a glad face on an unstable situation. The last years of the Seventies saw that instability begin to ebb. The shape of things to come emerged slowly as organizations and institutions regrouped. Some took new shapes, others reverted to older ones. Nationally, the Carter presidency highlighted the conflicts of a changing society as rampant inflation altered the economy. In the Five Boroughs, the mayoral election of '77 (and the blackout riots that colored it) marked a turning point for New York City, the death throes of its postwar boom and the beginning of the climb away from municipal bankruptcy. In the field of cultural production, the major players in Manhattan produced little new work, but consolidated their earlier gains or corrected course to better navigate the changed field of power.

The Sixties had been a heyday for big ideas, including “big” government. From Kennedy’s “New Frontiers” to Johnson’s “Great Society,” government had intervened in large swathes of American social and economic life. Its ability to do so had stemmed largely from the long postwar economic swell; growth in the economy allowed growth in government spending. Efforts toward social change had likewise been broad and inclusionist, founded on the idea that the United States were, in fact, united. The economic foundations of big government and the social foundations of broad activism both began to erode in 1968, and continued a slow dissolution that was nearly complete by the Bicentennial.

In the late Seventies, the shape of things to come began to emerge in earnest. Vietnam, Watergate, and the 1973 Oil Shock had accelerated erosion of faith in government. Government’s role slowly shifted away from solving problems on its own to

hiring problems out. Public-private partnerships flourished; direct government regulation of industry declined (from airlines to energy prices). Inflation spurred innovation in the financial industry. Consumer credit and individual investment in the markets became alternatives to letting money lie fallow in bank accounts that couldn't hope to keep pace with inflation. Easy access to credit spurred debt-fueled consumption and further strengthened corporate interests. Primacy in the field of power shifted from government expertise to trust in the market.

Jimmy Carter was, depending on perspective, either unintentional architect or hapless victim of that tilting of the field of power. His single term in the presidency played out among the last of the New Deal liberals and the first waves of the anti-tax, anti-government conservatives. Without a true legislative coalition, he was unable to push for many of the substantial changes he wanted. On top of this, Carter was inaugurated during a recession begun in the waning stages of the Ford presidency. His responses to that recession, the latter OPEC oil shock, and runaway inflation set a seesawing course that tended to trade one economic problem for another. Further, these policy decisions seldom entirely solved the initial problem. His presidency would end in a recession that his own anti-inflation policies had created.

Famously walking in his inaugural parade, Carter quickly established the pattern for his public conduct: humble, earnest, driven by practicality. He eschewed bombast in favor of simplicity. He wore his moral commitments on the sleeve of his infamous cardigans, and was openly intent on "comprehensive" solutions to American dilemmas.¹

¹ Erwin C. Hargrove summarizes historical perspectives on Carter, including his leadership style and penchant for comprehensive solutions in "The Carter Presidency in Historical Perspective," in *The Presidency and Domestic Policies of Jimmy Carter*, ed. Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Alexej Ugrinsky, (London: Greenwood Press, 1994), 17-28.

His blend of moralism and practicality was perhaps ill-suited for a time when the country needed inspiration and boldness:

Jimmy Carter entered the White House during a major crisis in American economic life, amid the disintegration of the long, sweet summer of postwar prosperity...during the 1970s [that] bubble burst. Economic growth and productivity slowed. A new term, *stagflation*, entered the lexicon, signifying a virtually inconceivable combination of galloping inflation with anemic growth and tenacious unemployment.²

Neo-Keynesian fiscal theory had little explanation for simultaneously high inflation and unemployment; orthodoxy suggested one would counter the other.

Consensus among economists was disintegrating even as Carter needed their advice.³

Monetarists, led by Milton Friedman, clamored that government's responsibilities were limited to inflation control; neo-Keynesians believed that controlling unemployment was necessary before inflation could be addressed. With challenges on both fronts, Carter's options were limited. Indeed, part of the inflation problem was a direct result of Carter's effort to stimulate the economy to "combat the Ford recession and relieve unemployment."⁴ Carter's stimulus had largely been built around small tax reductions and increased spending on public service jobs and public works. (The tax cuts were not high enough for the conservatives; the spending increases were not high enough for congressional Democrats.) He managed an increase in the minimum wage. While the direct inflationary effect of his policies is not entirely clear, Carter had established an early pattern of handouts. These skewed expectations and undercut his later calls for restraint.

² Bruce J. Schulman, "Slouching Toward the Supply Side" in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Hugh Davis Graham, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 52-53.

³ W. Carl Biven, "Economic Advice in the Carter Administration" in Rosenbaum and Ugrinsky, *Presidency and Domestic Policies*, 612.

⁴ Schulman, "Slouching Toward the Supply Side," 53.

Inflation ramped up late in 1977, and would come to dominate Carter's policy-making decisions while restricting his ability to pursue his own policy agenda. Despite a wide range of options and ideas, Carter was unable to convince his advisers (or Congress) to pursue serious anti-inflation measures. Mostly through inability to embrace anything more emphatic (Schulman calls the policies "tepid"), Carter and Congress moved to curtail inflation only moderately, afraid of sending the economy back into recession. The inflationary spiral continued (spurred in part by OPEC price increases), and Carter was forced in the fall of 1978 to take a much harder line. He replaced his chief of the Federal Reserve with Paul Volcker, who immediately called for extreme measures. Volcker pushed interest rates up, stalling the economy and eventually provoking a recession that scuttled Carter's re-election hopes as thoroughly as it quashed inflation.

The fumbling on the economic front highlights the difficulty the administration (along with government and the rest of the country) had adjusting to an "age of limits." The country could no longer do everything for everyone at home or abroad. Carter's embrace of limits-oriented policy—and more importantly, its place in his rhetoric—endeared him to neither his political allies nor the general public. While Carter began his presidency aiming to get the country out of the "Ford Recession," as well as reforming welfare and establishing a national healthcare system, the country's economic and political difficulties put him increasingly on the defensive. The latter phases of his presidency, the ones for which he is most remembered, are colored by exhortations for Americans to do more with less—less energy, less spending, less government. This

fundamentally conservative position failed to endear him to Democrats, though he lagged behind the increasingly anti-government Republicans.⁵

Even in his inaugural address, Carter points to the challenge of limited means:

We have learned that *more* is not necessarily *better*, that even our great nation has its recognized limits, and that we can neither answer all questions nor solve all problems. We cannot afford to do everything, nor can we afford to lack boldness as we meet the future. So, together, in a spirit of individual sacrifice for the common good, we must simply do our best.⁶

As inflation spiraled upward, spurred by OPEC price increases, Carter's calls for restraint became more urgent. In July of 1979, he delivered what quickly became known as the "Malaise Speech," a primetime address to the nation that aimed at the energy crisis but treated more broadly the general sense of a break between the government and the people...and among the people themselves.

So, I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy. I do not mean our political and civil liberties. They will endure. And I do not refer to the outward strength of America, a nation that is at peace tonight everywhere in the world, with unmatched economic power and military might. The threat is nearly invisible in ordinary ways. It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our Nation. The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.⁷

Limits had been encountered, Carter argued, but not embraced or combated. In the face of internal and external challenges, Americans had stumbled into denial and despair. The problems were not economic, nor were they political, nor were they social:

⁵ For discussion of Carter as a centrist, see William E. Leuchtenberg's "Jimmy Carter and the Post-New Deal Presidency" in Fink and Graham, *The Carter Presidency*.

⁶ Carter inaugural address, January 20, 1977.

⁷ Jimmy Carter, Address to the Nation, July 15, 1979.

the real problems with the United States were moral. Americans wanted too much, wasted too much—particularly energy. Carter’s proposed solution was shared sacrifice and renewed commitment to personal action. Austerity would clear space for growth. Americans hardly wanted to hear that the remedy for recent losses was giving things up, nor did they respond well to the implications that the situation was at least partly their responsibility. While some lauded the President’s seriousness and realism (and his approval ratings briefly surged), his moral exhortations never properly caught on.

The field of power was shifting in ways that made an intentional turn toward austerity unlikely. Inflation and consumer credit encouraged the American public to buy with today’s borrowed dollars what would be more expensive with tomorrow’s earned ones. Lines at gas stations made people angry at the government rather than inclining them to conserve. Carter’s own embrace of limits helped facilitate the nation’s turn toward smaller government, as did his encouragement of the private sector and community action as prime problem-solving agents. When inflation became truly dire in 1978-1979, Carter had few options but to use the Federal Reserve (under its new head, Paul Volcker) to reduce the money supply. Interest rates soared and the economy stopped in its tracks. By the time the election rolled around in 1980, the country was deep in recession and New Deal solutions had fallen completely out of the field.

New York City, as the Seventies waned, was engaged in its own struggle with New Deal legacies and a shifting field of power. The years of fiscal brinksmanship combined with white flight and concentrations of urban poverty to upset the political landscape. Abraham Beame, the incumbent mayor, insisted on running for re-election,

but that re-election was far from assured. The Democratic machine of Tammany Hall had been crumbling for decades; while Beame was one of its last products, he could not count on it for support. Sitting Secretary of State Mario Cuomo would later enter the race at Governor Hugh Carey's request. Village radical Bella Abzug was running from the far left after abandoning her congressional seat. And among the unknowns was another village activist, Ed Koch, an unlikely candidate.

The city they would compete to lead had myriad problems. Its finances continued to lie in ruins despite unprecedented interventions by the state and national governments. By 1977, the extreme budget cuts those outside entities had demanded in return for their loans and loan guarantees were recoloring New York. Subway fares were up. Tuition subsidies for CUNY were down. Demands on social services continued to grow even as tax revenues declined with the departure of middle class families. With recession and increasingly poor neighborhoods, the city's healthcare obligations were uncontrollable. Thousands of police officers had been laid off (many taking to the streets in protests to hand tourists leaflets about "Fear City"). Crime rates remained high, driving many New York residents to the suburbs. Arson for insurance or simple mischief blackened swathes of many poor neighborhoods, driving even more residents away. The top-down urban renewal strategies of the Sixties continued to meet resistance from neighborhoods; increasingly, there was not enough money to carry them through anyway. Resources were shifted away from failing neighborhoods to try and preserve what was left.

In July of 1977, the city hit its nadir with the Blackout Riots. On the evening of the 13th, lightning knocked out high-voltage lines running into the city from Westchester County. More power was brought in from north, but those lines were soon operating

beyond capacity. Emergency generators within the city could not be remotely started (though they were designed to) because they were down for maintenance, because the remote ignition systems were offline, and because the operators normally on-hand to start them manually had gone home for the day. When Consolidated Edison failed to bring the burdens on the system down by blacking out portions of the city, the whole system collapsed, leaving New York City completely in darkness.⁸

The ensuing riots hit the poorest parts of the city hardest. Whole streets of shop fronts were shattered and looted. The police quickly ran out of room to hold all the looters they arrested, and resorted to using storage spaces and complicated arrangements of handcuffs—problems exacerbated by the lack of support staff (which, like so many other things, had been slashed during budget battles). Looters bombarded officers with bricks and bullets, and gave firemen trying to stop fresh cases of arson the same treatment. All five boroughs were affected simultaneously, though many more affluent neighborhoods escaped any significant damage. Something north of \$300 million of damage had been done in the 25 hours the power had been out; nearly 4000 prisoners were eventually arraigned.⁹

In 1969, Norman Mailer...wrote an essay for The New York Times Magazine headlined "CAN NEW YORK SURVIVE?" In July 1977, the question no longer sounded rhetorical.
—Jonathan Mahler¹⁰

New York had become a symbol for all that was wrong with urban America—the poverty, the corruption, an inept government that constantly looked for outside help to solve its own problems. The destruction caused by the blackout riots validated that

⁸ For a more detailed account of the run-up to the blackout, see Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 175-186.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 224.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.

symbolism. Sympathy (never mind more tangible support) was slow to arrive. President Carter refused to offer disaster assistance or even to visit the city. (It particularly galled New Yorkers that the president had provided federal disaster status for Georgia shrimp farmers hit by inclement weather but refused to issue similar assistance to the nation's foremost city.) The uproar over the riots did spur him to form an Urban Policy Research Group, but that contentious body took nearly a year to submit its conflicting suggestions for action.¹¹ Carter's October tour of the South Bronx (which was especially blighted by arson, but not as acutely traumatized by the riots as other parts of the city), led ultimately only to a small amount of loan guarantees. Faced with an acute crisis not entirely of its own making, New York was left to sort out the mess on its own.

It was Ed Koch who best capitalized on that mess and the anger it provoked in New York's electorate. Koch promised to advocate capital punishment and decried both incumbent mayor Beame and governor Carey for refusing to call in the National Guard to restore order. It was a strange turn for a man who'd made his name as a West Village leftist, but it helped Koch climb in the polls and eventually to land a spot in a democratic primary runoff against Mario Cuomo. Abzug had gone too far left; Beame was crippled by the fiscal crisis he'd helped oversee (and a strategically-timed SEC report detailing the city government's failures). Koch prevailed in the bitterly contested runoff and, in November, won the general election to ascend to New York's mayorship.¹²

¹¹ Urban crises in the late 1970s were hardly limited to New York. There was real skepticism that urban centers would survive. For information on Carter's urban policy, the UPRG, and the South Bronx's resonance with Carter's inclinations, see "Carter's Urban Policy Crisis" by Thomas J. Sugrue in *The Carter Presidency: Policy Choices in the Post-New Deal Era*, ed. Gary M. Fink and Hugh Davis Graham.

¹² The election in general is chronicled in Mahler's *Ladies and Gentlemen, The Bronx is Burning*. For a more detailed analysis of Koch's campaign and the underlying consistencies in his political positions, see Jonathan Soffer, *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City*, particularly chapters 8-10.

Koch took over a city with substantial social and financial problems, a city whose infrastructure and neighborhoods were disintegrating in ways that many of the country's experts believed to be irreparable. He would also be addressing the city's difficulties from an initially weak position; the Emergency Financial Control Board and Municipal Assistance Corporation had eroded the authority of a mayor's office already challenged by strong municipal agencies. Koch had to consolidate his own power while navigating what Jonathan Soffer called the "pothole paradox:"

While financial and labor elites worried about selling bonds and balancing the budget, most residents experienced the crisis in terms of their ethnic loyalties and the rising levels of crime and refuse in a city that had laid off thousands of police and nearly all its street cleaners.¹³

Fixing New York City was going to take money, and lots of it. When Koch moved in to Gracie Mansion, though, nobody was really sure exactly how *much* money it would take. Beame had campaigned with an estimated deficit of \$110 million, then raised the estimate to over \$240 million after he lost.¹⁴ Neither of these figures, though, acknowledged the pervasive funding of operating expenses under the guise of capital investment (which could be financed with bonds). Koch's administration immediately worked to implement Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP), which pushed the actual budget deficit to nearly \$500 million. It was this number that Koch took to Congress. As a representative of Manhattan's West Side, Koch had served on the Banking & Finance Committee, as well as the Appropriations Committee. He applied his connections and knowledge of Congressional channels to secure, after much fighting to clean up the budget and secure allies, nearly two billion dollars' worth of long term loan

¹³ Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 149.

guarantees. The city's cards were finally all on the table, and Koch had managed to arrange them neatly enough to suggest ways to play them.

The loan guarantees (again, accompanied by Koch's aggressive lobbying) helped ease the worries of private investors, particularly the big banks who had been so reluctant to lay out loans in the depths of the financial crisis. They also helped Koch to create subsidies and supports for private enterprise. Koch fostered an intensely pro-business environment that eventually helped make New York City—especially Manhattan—as much the poster child for Eighties corporate excess as it had been for Seventies' urban blight. Business investment in turn contributed to the city's tax revenue, which further dented the budget gaps. The city continued to retire short-term debt, and by 1979, was once again able to secure loans from the banks.¹⁵

City encouragement of private industry (largely through tax abatements) went hand in hand with Koch's attempts to encourage reclamation of the city's blighted neighborhoods. He called for "urban pioneers" to move back into the city from the suburbs (or from other parts of the country). These urban pioneers would largely be white professionals; Koch was encouraging gentrification (although that word was still relatively rare in the U.S. in the late Seventies). Middle and upper class professionals, like businesses, generated direct tax revenue, but also contributed their leisure dollars to New York's increasingly service-oriented economy:

New York [was emerging] as an information economy and as a world city that functioned as a node within the global economy. The old working-class New York of Koch's youth—the New York of small unionized industry, of social democratic aspiration—was never coming back, and its demise could not be resisted... Only

¹⁵ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 224-225.

the reinvention of the city within the context of the new neo-liberal global economy could save it.¹⁶

At the neighborhood level, reinvention often involved the replacement of affordable housing with the kind of housing that would attract Koch's "urban pioneers." Tenements were torn down or converted directly to high-end apartments and condominiums. The city facilitated this with tax abatements for the developers.

Koch gave priority to the interests of revenue providers, not service consumers, and appealed for people with capital—a category that, in 1977, mostly meant white people—to come to New York to rehabilitate and rebuild the city's housing stock, create jobs, and make it economically viable again.¹⁷

While Koch also made some efforts to continue affordable housing programs, the city lost most of its single-occupancy-room hotels, depriving many of its poor residents of housing. To renew blighted neighborhoods like the South Bronx (whose Charlotte Street had provided Carter with a photo-op in the wake of the '77 riots), Koch encouraged grassroots housing activism. Community groups dedicated themselves to reclaiming or restoring dilapidated housing stock, and got money from the city to do so. The new, wealthier residents encouraged the expansion of specialized services (restaurants, boutiques, jewelers, and the like). The influx of people and money further encouraged developers (and some individuals) to speculate, buying up dilapidated buildings to repair and sell to young urban professionals. The New York real estate business was getting back on its feet in a particularly lucrative way.

Still, much of the balancing of the city's books was done via austerity:

Koch did not highlight [cuts to] the antipoverty programs [in his inaugural address] because of their fiscal significance, either—they represented only \$35 to \$40 million in a budget of over \$4 billion,

¹⁶ Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 256.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 146-7.

and most of the funding was federal. Yet he moved quickly to prioritize gentrification and agency reform, generating lawsuits and even a recall effort by black leaders who had run the old system.¹⁸

Capital funds went only to the most critical projects. Layoffs of municipal employees slowed, but removing positions through attrition continued. Koch pushed the various city agencies to increase their productivity; part of the city's capital investment went to long-overdue computerization of record-keeping. Garbage trucks went from three-man crews to two, and had their routes extended. Koch allowed the municipal unions small wage increases (some of which they had been promised earlier, more of which were necessary to keep pace with inflation), but worked hard to keep the agencies in which the union members were employed shrinking.

In their efforts to shrink government, Koch and Carter were both conservative by Democratic standards. Neither embraced the Great Society liberalism of Lyndon Johnson. Neither sought to reinvigorate the idea of universal citizenship that had fragmented through the first half of the decade. Both had to couple their campaign talk of grand ideas with promises of pragmatism and the ability to make "hard decisions" (which invariably meant telling constituents they would be losing something). Carter and Koch also had to build shifting coalitions that involved the increasingly frustrated white middle class. That both were elected in the mid-Seventies suggests the broad swings away from postwar liberalism were then complete. Benevolent big government was no longer politically tenable at the local or national level.

While similar circumstances propelled Koch and Carter to victory, their paths once in office diverged. Carter pushed for comprehensive solutions, for rational compromises after careful study. Koch was far more confrontational and direct,

¹⁸ Ibid., 169.

preferring to solve problems by cajoling the relevant parties into a workable compromise. Koch was far more willing to engage in—and sometimes relished—deal-making. He was a lawyer who had pushed his way up into politics from stumping on soapboxes; Koch knew the game. Carter's training was as an engineer, not a lawyer, and he had difficulties relating to the "Washington insiders" he'd railed against on the campaign. Particularly in relation to old guard Congressional Democrats, Carter was regarded as a foreigner. Koch, on the other hand, was pure New York City (a fact that crippled his later run for governor).

Koch, too, had an advantage over Carter in that New York City had hit rock bottom. While the various national crises pitted different regions and constituencies against one another, New York's diverse political interests all realized that *something* had to change. For years the city's books had been under the oversight and, later, direct control of outsiders. Ed Koch managed to get them back into the mayor's hands. He leveraged strong election results to get agencies in line. (He was also able to take advantage of the fact that many of the public employee unions were major shareholders of municipal bonds.) While he stomped a number of toes along the way (particularly in the black community), Koch was able to make a virtue of necessity. Koch's mixture of liberal and conservative ideas, coupled with his budget successes and New York's reviving economy, were enough to win him *both* the Republican and Democratic nominations when he ran for re-election in 1981.

Carter's policies, taken broadly, were not so different from Koch's. Both were fiscal moderates with a strong liberal streak. They aimed for balanced budgets and trusted to private industry more than to unions and government agencies. Both were accused of

balancing budgets on the backs of the poor and encouraging the rich to get richer. What Carter lacked was a ready supply of scapegoats. He was not especially responsible for the economic problems he inherited, but it was difficult to blame Congress or the markets for their existence. Nor was Carter inclined to do so. His notion of personal responsibility combined with the tendency of the public to disproportionately blame or credit the president for the state of the nation left him holding the bag. Carter faced much stiffer opposition in Congress than Koch faced in New York's historically weak city council or collection of agency heads.

The greater contrast between Carter and Koch in their efforts to regroup from the Seventies' nadir was in demeanor. When national crises grew acute, Carter took to the airwaves to impugn Americans' selfishness and urge them to virtue and purpose. When municipal crises grew acute, Koch took to the airwaves—or more often, the streets—to yell encouragement. When transit workers went on strike in 1981, Koch stood at the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge with a bullhorn, encouraging the drivers and pedestrians alike to come on in. Koch was smug and sarcastic where Carter was aloof and serious. Broadly, Carter worked on solutions to present to the people while Koch worked on people to present the solutions.

Carter and Koch both responded to a tilting field of power. The cracks that had formed in the New Deal Coalition in 1968 had deepened to fissures. As it fragmented, people, dollars, and political power shifted from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West—the Sun Belt. Individual and corporate interests rose to the political forefront. In the last few years of the Seventies, the shifting field began to stabilize into a shape that favored those interests over the Postwar powers. In New York, the challenge of the rising

Sun Belt was indirect, and Ed Koch would successfully navigate it through most of the next decade. Nationally, Carter's responses to crises in the shifting field proved less successful. Faced with competing constituencies, Carter tried to take a middle road; the pallid results of that path doomed his re-election campaign.

Nationally and in New York, the effort to regroup from the Seventies' problems bore little fruit until the early Eighties. Still, the groundwork laid by Carter and Koch pointed the way to the future: more reliance on private industry or private-public partnerships, reduced government, securing political victory through shifting coalitions of small constituencies. The Big Government Sixties were dead; the Big Money Eighties were on their way, and everybody was scrambling to stake out their positions in the stabilizing field of power.

Pierre Boulez's imminent departure offered the New York Philharmonic a chance to address its position in that changing field. The Philharmonic was in flux; Boulez had already committed to IRCAM. Zubin Mehta was announced as his replacement in late February 1976. In the summer of that year, Avery Fisher Hall (formerly Philharmonic Hall) underwent a massive renovation to address acoustic problems that had plagued it throughout the Philharmonic's Lincoln Center tenure. Surrounded by changes in leadership and facilities, the orchestra's membership questioned its own identity, as did the city they played for. Whatever the Philharmonic had become under Boulez, it was increasingly clear that it would not remain that way for long.

But before Boulez departed, there was the matter of Avery Fisher Hall. When the orchestra moved to Lincoln Center from Carnegie Hall in 1962, critics had expressed

concern about the acoustics. A serious attempt to “correct” them was made in 1969 through removal of the hall’s “clouds” (which had been fruitlessly adjusted several times over). The renovations of 1976 kept only the outer shell of the hall; it was otherwise rebuilt from seats to ceiling. Among the most vehement critics of the hall’s acoustics was Harold Schonberg of the *Times*. Schonberg’s opinion of the hall’s acoustics vacillated wildly between its 1962 opening (when he deemed it “inconsistent”) and its gutting in 1976.¹⁹ Generally, he noted some small improvement after the minor corrections (cloud movements, seat alterations), called the hall “redeemed” after the major resurfacing of 1969, and renewed his criticism of the acoustics whenever some new change was proposed. Independent of all the changes, another critic noted: “And the acoustics? They have stayed about the same, or just about as rigged against the musicians as they were when the hall first opened.”²⁰

As the ‘75-’76 season closed, Schonberg, with a certain Schadenfreude, pointed out that:

The following day in will come the wreckers. Thus ends one of the shorter eras in New York musical history. It was just over 14 years ago that Philharmonic Hall was opened...but the opening concert revealed what had been whispered around town: Philharmonic Hall was an unsuccessful acoustic installation. So now, after 14 years and several attempts at acoustic repair...Fisher Hall...is going to be disemboweled.²¹

“Disemboweling” the hall was an extreme step, but one the Philharmonic Board believed necessary in the face of continued critical disdain (much of it from Schonberg himself).

The changed hall allowed them to advertise, in their season subscription brochure, “New

¹⁹ Joseph Roddy traces these swings of opinion in a somewhat satirical piece, “Lincoln Center Psyches the Times,” *Village Voice*, March 15, 1976.

²⁰ Roddy, “Lincoln Center.”

²¹ Harold C. Schonberg, “The Philharmonic Ends an Era in Fisher Hall,” *New York Times*, May 9, 1976.

Sight, New Sound, New Season.” The renovated hall was pushed with more color and less emphasis on headshots. The new hall became the centerpiece of their advertising, with new seating arrangements and improved sightlines as well as the new acoustics.

With Boulez’s departure imminent and Mehta’s arrival still two seasons away, focusing on facilities was a natural choice. There was little aggressive or innovative in Boulez’s programming for his last season. The conservative Schonberg called it a set of “good, solid programs with just enough contemporary music to make the natives restless but not so much that they will revolt. Boulez has always been canny that way.”²² The season itself featured plenty of Mahler, Bartok, and Ravel—the edgiest elements of the season’s programming were the six bicentennial works commissioned in consortium with Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia (including David Del Tredici’s *Final Alice*). Traditional repertoire dominated the programming.

When the last echoes of Berlioz’s *Damnation of Faust* faded in May of 1977, Boulez’s tenure as the Philharmonic’s music director faded with them. Over his years with the orchestra, he had fostered a grudging respect for his strengths but failed to win over the critics, the audiences, or the majority of the orchestra members. Schonberg offered the following summation:

Boulez was a didact. Inspiration meant little to him. He was a very private man, and that extended to his music-making. Often his concerts were disconcerting. There was no evidence that most music *meant* anything to him. There was no joy, no feeling of personality. That flopping right-hand beat from the wrist did not inspire the orchestra to any great flights of imagination or nuance. Going to one of his concerts was like taking a pill. It was good for you, but not an event you looked forward to with great anticipation.²³

²² Ibid.

²³ Harold Schonberg, “Summing Up The Boulez Era,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1977.

Schonberg quotes musicians criticizing his lack of skill as a *performer*, as a conductor who communicated with audience members and the players. Raymond Ericson, writing specifically of the Prospective Encounters that played so well to Boulez's strengths, concluded:

Whether the music was liked by the audience or not seemed to be beside the point. There was a willingness to explore and consider together contemporary ideas in composition, and the stimulation thus generated was in itself valuable.²⁴

At the *Village Voice*, Leighton Kerner was more succinct and more overtly negative:

“They blew it. The New York Philharmonic blew it. The audiences blew it. And Pierre Boulez blew it.”²⁵ Boulez's tenure with the Philharmonic had seen some small innovations in programming that the Philharmonic had refused to embrace and didn't look to maintain. (He called the upcoming post-Boulez “Rugs” “feeble.”) Boulez's conducting, though, had been erratic, particularly in regard to the core repertoire. With Boulez as music director, the Philharmonic had had—and missed—an opportunity to move the opera into the present. In the wake of Boulez's final concert, Kerner wrote, “it's as if Boulez's six years here never happened.”²⁶

Didactic as a programmer and cool as a conductor, Boulez never overcame the modernist reputation with which he arrived. Nor, really, did he entirely live up to it. His programming innovations—the Rugs, the Informal Evenings, the Prospective Encounters—failed to endure. He'd already phased out themed series programming and mini-festivals by the end of his tenure, along with the Informal Evenings. There was a short-lived effort to continue the Encounters under the leadership of Gunther Schuller,

²⁴ Raymond Ericson, “Boulez as Modern As Ever,” *New York Times*, May 15, 1977.

²⁵ Leighton Kerner, “Boulez, The Philharmonic, and What Might Have Been,” *Village Voice*, May 30, 1977.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

but it lasted only a single season. The demise of these programs was certainly due, in part, to the fact that the audiences (especially the subscription base) simply did not like them. More importantly, though, the displeasure Boulez provoked in subscribers (and the musicians and administrators) had as much to do with the fundamentally different position he attempted to stake out in the field. As a pragmatist, Boulez was willing to do what it took to get audiences in the seats (or on the rugs), aligning himself with the Phil as an institution and the field of power, but as a musician—and this becomes clearest in his personal “outreach” projects—he strove to establish a position within the anti-institutional consecrated avant-garde. Too often, the latter position overrode the former. The “good” became the “good for you.” It was an untenable balance, and there was relief on all sides when Boulez traded the Philharmonic for IRCAM, a new pharmacy that would spare Schonberg and New York Boulez’s modernist “pills.”

“I conducted David Del Tredici’s ‘Final Alice’ in New York, and there were people who had never been to a Philharmonic concert. This work made a sensational success with the public, and it is in my personal opinion totally without merit—parlaying the major-sixth chord into a 58-minute work, not counting a seven-minute cut. If you have popular appeal—‘vulgar’ in the original Latin sense—then your work is accepted. And that’s bad.”

—Erich Leinsdorf²⁷

Erich Leinsdorf’s opinion of *Final Alice* was, as his statement suggests, hardly universal. Del Tredici’s work for amplified soprano and large orchestra had been one of the slew of commissions centered on the U.S. Bicentennial, premiered in the fall of 1976 by the Chicago Symphony. Raymond Ericson, reviewing the New York premiere for the *Times*, wrote that:

²⁷ Quoted in John Rockwell, “All I’ve Given Up Are the Non-Musical: Erich Leinsdorf Pauses to Reflect,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1980.

It was an immediate success [in Chicago]. It is apparently a success in New York, too. The audience's reception at yesterday afternoon's concert was most favorable for a new work. This listener, despite reservations, found the work quite marvelous and madly suited to its subject matter.²⁸

The subject matter, like so much work in the mid-to-late Seventies, looked backwards, in this case to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It is the latest in a series of works inspired by Carroll's *Alice* books, and takes for its dramatic subject Alice's trial before the Queen of Hearts. Phyllis Bryn-Julson sang the solo soprano part. Leinsdorf conducted an orchestra augmented by [information on orchestration]. It is hardly surprising that Boulez, in his last season with the Philharmonic, left the work to a guest conductor. In style and tone, *Final Alice* had more connection to Mehta's affinity for Mahler and the late Romantics:

Musically, it is generally tonal... The piece is more Mahlerian than anything else, partly because of its dimensions, partly because of its mixture of so many elements, including the popular. There are highly dissonant passages, and tone rows can be found in the writing, but these are used relatively briefly for dramatic and coloristic purposes. The musical ideas are quite simple, but they are treated in such complex rhythmic and instrumental ways, that the effect is rich and brilliant.²⁹

Brilliant or no, Ericson found the work somewhat too long and far too loud. Between amplification and tessitura, Bryn-Julson's words were not always clear. Textual clarity, though, was not precisely the point. Del Tredici's work focused on emotion and affect rather than clarity (of any of the various sorts endorsed by different segments of the new music field). Harold Schonberg identified this trend in a piece from the same week in March of 1977:

²⁸ Raymond Ericson, "Concert: 'Alice': Del Tredici's Exciting Work Conducted by Leinsdorf," *New York Times*, March 26, 1977.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Instead of laying out music by the yard, with a concentration on a stringent, objective, dispassionate working-out of material, composers suddenly are waking up to the fact that the job of a creator is to state a personal message, to reflect an emotion through his own psyche. Which is what Romanticism is all about. Romanticism is concerned with a personal vision, with the ego, with unabashed sentiment (not sentimentality, though undisciplined composers can wallow in that).³⁰

For Schonberg—who had never sympathized with the serialists nor with the various downtown schools— this return to affect, to an ideal of individual connection and emotional evocation, was a positive development in music, one that led him to predict the next decade would be “a happier time.” Schonberg also lauded more programming of “minor Romantics” (which, in 1977, apparently included Liszt). His loose definition of “Neo-Romantic” among new composers took in George Crumb, Peter Maxwell Davies, and Dominick Argento, and seemed to focus as much on melody as on harmonic elements. His favorite example, though, was George Rochberg. Rochberg’s personal story—particularly his turn away from strict serialism after the death of his son— presented a compelling case on its own. Schonberg chose to focus on the music, writing of Rochberg’s violin concerto:

Rochberg had composed a concerto that looked back to, believe it or not, Brahms. It was largely tonal and had one lyric, haunting movement that still rings in the memory. It was romantic, really romantic, but this was no slavish Romanticism. It was a modern Romanticism, a neo-Romanticism, if you will, in which Brahmsian post-Romanticism was filtered through a contemporary mind, emerging as something new. ...[it] is a looking-back to the Romantic ideal, but an evocation that is expressed in modern terms.³¹

³⁰ Harold C. Schonberg, “Neo-Romantic Music Warms a Public Chilled By the Avant-Garde,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1977.

³¹ *Ibid.*

The return to older ideals without returning to older means was not unique to music. The new conservative movement, for all its updated organizing tactics and rhetoric, framed itself as a return to American values. Schonberg doesn't make the political leap (though Donal Henahan had in a 1976 piece relating neo-Romantic Tanglewood performances to the concurrent G.O.P convention).³² He instead relates it to a return to representation in the visual arts. More importantly, Schonberg ties the renewed interest in Romantic ideals to, if not renewed *hope*, a diminishing of Cold War fears of nuclear annihilation (and perhaps an ebb of the societal anxieties that had colored the late Sixties and early Seventies): "Nostalgia was part of the package... we all had been concerned about the Bomb and a possible end to humanity, but that scare seems to have faded away."³³

Critical response to Rochberg in the Seventies emphasized his connection to the Western tradition, especially in contrast to the alleged breaks with it that had occurred in the post-War years:

George Rochberg is a composer who has been snuggling up to the past with considerable success in the last decade, trying to avoid the romance that most of his contemporaries have been carrying on with doctrinaire Serialism and other styles that stress the break between this century and the previous ones.

No musical style, in fact, is alien to Mr. Rochberg, which gives his work unusual interest... we are used to being shocked or bored, but not to being puzzled enjoyably by music that wants to be part of the Western tradition and is not afraid to show it.³⁴

There is something a bit disingenuous in this kind of criticism, something that pretends the Western tradition is a necessarily tonal and lyrical one, or that the negations of the

³² Donal Henahan, "Critic's Notebook: G.O.P. And Tanglewood in Tune," *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 1976.

³³ Schonberg, "Neo-Romantic Music."

³⁴ Donal Henahan, "Recital: Tazaki Piano Does Rochberg Proud," *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1976.

past had not laid the ground for more contemporary attempts at negation. More importantly, Seventies discussions of the neo-Romantic tend to ignore the line of composers—especially Americans—who had continued to work in fairly consonant, tonal styles (such as Bernstein or Copland or Rorem). They also ignore the tonal elements of minimalist music.

This disingenuous ignoring of certain composers has its roots in newness, both literal newness (in the age of the works) and in generational newness. What made composers like Del Tredici and Rochberg stand out was that they did not belong to the older artistic generation of American consonant composers, whatever their age.³⁵ Though Rochberg, born in 1918, belonged to Bernstein's generation, his artistic choices allied him with younger composers. For his part, Del Tredici (born 1937) was only a little younger than the minimalist pioneers. That they helped bear the banner of this neo-Romantic style meant that they could be “new” in the same way that those minimalists could be new.

Taking a position in favor of older (and previous discredited) styles is just as much a position-taking in the cultural field as inventing a new position from scratch. It is that position-taking that the critics recognize in their commentary, and what encourages them to appropriately append “neo” to “Romanticism.” As such, the neo-Romantics enter into the field of new music on the same terms as the modernists, the minimalists, and the post-Cagean conceptualists.

In *New York's* field, though, the neo-Romantics were foreigners. Del Tredici, Rochberg, and other neo-Romantics were employed in the Northeast, but not in New York itself (though Del Tredici joined the faculty of City College at CUNY in 1984).

³⁵ For more on the notion of artistic generations, see Bourdieu, *Field*, 52-53.

Their proximity to New York's musical ferment gave them access to its performers and venues, but they were not full participants in any of the local scenes. The midtown establishment formed their most natural allies, but neo-Romanticism gained no special hold among those creating within that section of the field until the Eighties, when several of its major proponents (including Del Tredici) took faculty positions in New York proper.

Still, Schonberg and Henahan (if not Leinsdorf) felt the neo-Romantic impulse keenly. In the atmosphere of the late Seventies, an ideal of moderated individual expression in a traditional framework began to prevail. It colored Koch's move from Village liberal to greater Manhattan moderate. Ronald Reagan would soon capitalize on the mood to win the presidential election. And the Philharmonic echoed a return to Romantic ideals in the selection of Zubin Mehta as the new music director.

Mehta's name had been prominent during the 1969 speculation regarding Bernstein's replacement. He had, though, said one too many inflammatory things about the Philharmonic and its players (saying that "they step over conductors" and that the job was one he'd wish on an enemy). The list of candidates to replace Boulez was shorter (and less heavily speculated upon) than the list to replace Bernstein before him. The Philharmonic's offer to Mehta was somewhat less of a surprise than the conductor's willingness to accept it; he'd been comfortably ensconced in Los Angeles for a decade and a half. Only a few months before the offer, Mehta had reiterated his desire to stay in

Los Angeles.³⁶ Still, he said, “when I was finally offered the New York position, I suddenly felt a great exultation and excitement. This was what I was looking for.”³⁷

Philharmonic president Carlos Moseley succinctly summed up the new hire’s appeal to the Board:

“There are many reasons for the choice. Mehta is a damn good conductor. He has shown that he can remain with an orchestra—he was in Los Angeles for 14 good years. The Los Angeles Philharmonic prospered well under him. He represents fine quality, a dramatic personality, leadership and audience appeal.”³⁸

The promise of stability and audience appeal, qualities distinctly lacking in the Boulez years, was vital to a Philharmonic looking to rebuild its brand as much as its facilities.

While it would be an overstatement to call the New York critics’ response to Mehta’s hire “exultation,” there was certainly excitement. Mehta had star power, and he had it through a virtuoso’s charisma rather than the Boulez’s fame as an enfant terrible of the avant-garde. It was, one critic wrote,

...difficult to think of two more different images than those of Pierre Boulez and Zubin Mehta, the present and future music directors of the New York Philharmonic. Mr. Boulez seems cool, austere and rigorous; Mr. Mehta is more in the Leonard Bernstein mold—dashing, vigorous, glamorous.³⁹

Stephen Rubin called him a “charismatic maestro [with] matinee idol glamour.”⁴⁰

Schonberg noted that “He is exotic in looks and has a strong personality that is especially attractive to women.”⁴¹ (The introductory features on Mehta universally mentioned his

³⁶ Boulez, of course, had stated that he wouldn’t take the Philharmonic job if it was offered *while* negotiating for that job.

³⁷ “Imperious on Podium,” *New York Times*, February 26, 1976. The uncredited article incorrectly features Mehta in its byline.

³⁸ Quoted in “Philharmonic Picks Mehta as Conductor” by Harold C. Schonberg, *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1976.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Stephen E. Rubin, “From Mehta With Chutzpah and Love,” *NYT*, 5 Sept. 1976, p. 61.

⁴¹ Schonberg, “Philharmonic Picks Mehta.”

Indian Parsi descent and striking physiognomy.) Though Mehta resisted the label of “glamorous,” he could hardly help being so in comparison to Boulez. The Philharmonic needed some glamour back. Boulez’s earnest, dry academicism had failed to take root in New York’s imagination...and more importantly, it had not captured the loyalty of the orchestra’s players:

“When we heard that Mehta was coming in, there was a sigh of relief. We want a leader, an inspiration from the podium. From Boulez we never got it. He’s not a performer. He can’t communicate. Nothing *happens*.”⁴²

Mehta’s charisma would facilitate not just the connection to the audience, but also, it was hoped, an improvement in the orchestra’s performance. In terms of his actual conduct on the podium, Mehta employed neither Boulez’s minute gestures nor Bernstein’s full-body sweeps. Schonberg, in an early assessment of Mehta as guest conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, called Mehta’s approach “midway between that of Leonard Bernstein and Pierre Boulez. He has some of Bernstein’s temperament, some of the Boulez analytic structuralism, but of course he also was very much his own man.”⁴³ While he couldn’t help the repeated comparisons to his predecessors, it was clear that Mehta could move the Philharmonic forward without being inclined to push on in either of those worthies’ directions.

That included repertoire. Boulez had constantly been chided for his lack of enthusiasm (and, sometimes, ability) in conducting the traditional symphonic repertoire. Particularly in his years at the Philharmonic (which, it should be noted, were quite early in his career as a conductor), Boulez’s strengths began and ended with the music of the present and recent past. Mehta did not have the same close association with a particular

⁴² Anonymous Philharmonic member, quoted in Harold C. Schonberg’s “Summing Up The Boulez Era.”

⁴³ Harold C. Schonberg, “Mehta Leads Philadelphians,” *New York Times*, March 30, 1976.

repertoire, and, given his more formal training as a conductor and longer experience with the job, was confident with the bulk of what he'd be expected to conduct at the Philharmonic. (This, indeed, was one of the particular challenges of leading that orchestra: the Philharmonic performed in various capacities year round, presenting a multitude of different programs with an enormous number of different works.) Mehta could be what Schonberg described in a desirable conductor, one “who knows the entire repertory and who also has at least one outstanding specialty.”⁴⁴

For Mehta, the “outstanding specialty” was the music of the post-Romantics—particularly Bruckner, Mahler, and Richard Strauss. In this he was closer to Bernstein than Boulez. More importantly, he was closer to the affinities of the Philharmonic’s subscription base. The emotional vocabulary of those works had become, for many conservative listeners, the emotional vocabulary of music itself. Mehta was not about to foist the vagaries of Webern on Philharmonic audiences. His musical interests, like his charisma, would help pull subscribers back to the Philharmonic.⁴⁵ He was not a proselytizer for new music, nor an arch-conservative who refused to perform it. Because he was not a composer, Mehta had less incentive to pick sides in aesthetic debates.⁴⁶ He would have more wiggle-room in programming works by American composers, many of whom had detested Boulez. Mehta would not be arriving at the Philharmonic with an agenda beyond leading a world-class orchestra in a world city.

⁴⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, “A New Maestro For the Philharmonic,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1976.

⁴⁵ It should be noted that, despite Boulez’s reputation for alienating his audiences, the Philharmonic’s subscription series remained 97-99% sold out during his tenure. The actual attendance varied considerably, though.

⁴⁶ Though he had a reputation for not being especially friendly to new music, Mehta averred that the only things he couldn’t stand were “neo-baroque or neo-modern—all this after-the-war stuff...the whole school of pupils of Boulanger and Hindemith who write music that looks classical and sounds like it’s got wrong notes in it.” (Rubin, “From Mehta With Chutzpah and Love.”)

Mehta also promised the Philharmonic more time than Boulez ever had. While he was the de facto head of the Israeli philharmonic, Mehta was willing to give the Philharmonic 16 weeks during the season plus additional weeks for tours and special events (like the Parks concerts). This was a marked change. Boulez had never connected with New Yorkers or the Philharmonic “men” in part because he had never convinced them that the Philharmonic was his most important job. He had sometimes committed as few as twelve weeks, and did not exceed 14 during the season; his participation in events outside the subscription season was minimal. This lack of participation let Bernstein’s shadow linger (Bernstein conducted many of the tours and several sets of Parks concerts). The lack of participation also meant that Boulez was simply not in front of as much of New York’s general public as his predecessor—middlebrow outreach efforts were not among his priorities. Mehta’s commitment to the Philharmonic and to New York made him a much better candidate to be the Phil’s “face,” a fact Schonberg noted with pleasure:

Another reason for the choice was the amount of time Mr. Mehta is willing to give to New York. His three-year contract calls for a minimum of 16 weeks each season with the Philharmonic, and he may be active as much as 22 weeks. The Philharmonic calls this a “substantial” amount of time. Most conductors of Mr. Mehta’s reputation have commitments everywhere, and are loath to tie themselves up with one orchestra.⁴⁷

Mehta’s willingness to commit was not an illusion; he went on to become the Philharmonic’s longest serving music director. The success of his long relationship with the Philharmonic would not have been possible without his abilities at the podium, “imperious” or not. But it was the shape of the field that made Mehta such an appealing hire. Donal Henahan hit the mark in a review of one of Mehta’s “guest” stints early in the 1977-78 season:

⁴⁷ Schonberg, “Philharmonic Picks Mehta.”

It was apparent from Thursday night's subscription concert that in Mr. Mehta the Philharmonic has a conductor determined to bring a rather traditional kind of musical excitement back to Avery Fisher Hall.⁴⁸

A "rather traditional kind of musical excitement" was exactly what the Philharmonic needed. Mehta's combination of charisma, artistic sympathies, and commitment to the orchestra made him an ideal candidate to realign the Philharmonic's perceived priorities. Under Boulez, those priorities had drifted. The Frenchman had tried to make of the Philharmonic a presenter of art for art's sake, of cultural production bent wholly toward aesthetic ends. That conflicted with the Philharmonic's established role as a consecrating institution, one whose role in the field of cultural production was to present the consecrated works of the eternal present. Rather like Jimmy Carter, Mehta could appeal to an alienated fan base that suspected the Philharmonic might be heading in the wrong direction. Under Mehta, the Philharmonic could be at peace with a role that embraced history and accrued cultural capital in a way that it never with Boulez. Mehta's hire was, within the more rarefied air of the Philharmonic's board and subscriber base, every bit as populist as Carter's and Koch's campaigns for elected office. To regroup in the changed landscape of the late Seventies, the Philharmonic chose a leader who could return it to its roots and established function.

Mehta, though, was under contract with Los Angeles until the end of the '77-'78 season. That year became an interregnum the Philharmonic promoted with the slogan "a tradition of greatness." "A brilliant season of guest conductors and soloists" would carry

⁴⁸ Donal Henahan, "Mehta Excites the Philharmonic," *New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1977. Henahan was not otherwise especially enthusiastic about the concert, criticizing Mehta's penchant for focusing on "blockbusting theatrical moments" rather than proportion and development.

on the tradition for a directorless season⁴⁹. Music director designate Mehta and Laureate Conductor Leonard Bernstein received pride of place, with Bernstein dominating the photo spread. (See figure 5-1.) Schonberg called it “A Galaxy of Guests,” and found little in the programming to pin down as a theme. Wagner was presented in “surprising” amounts. Much of the “new music” allotment for the season was given over to commissioning projects designated for the orchestra’s leading players (works by Michael Colgrass, Corigliano, Andrew Imbrie, and Persichetti). Soloists in general were more prominent than they had been under Boulez: Emanuel Ax made his Philharmonic debut with Mozart’s D-minor Piano Concerto (No. 20, K466); James Levine conducted



Figure 5-1 New York Philharmonic Subscription Renewal Brochure, '77-'78 (Interior). New York Philharmonic Archives.

⁴⁹ 1977-78 subscription series mailer, New York Philharmonic Archives.

Mozart's A-Major concerto (No. 23, K488) from the keyboard; other guest pianists included Martha Argerich, Clifford Curzon, Christoph Eschenbach, Rudolf Firkušny, Alicia de Larrocha, Murray Perahia, and Andre Watts. Igor Oistrakh, Wanda Wilkomirska, Itzhak Perlman and Henrik Szeryng performed as guest violinists. The guests—conductors and soloists alike—had to carry the season on the basis of their names, concert to concert.

The Philharmonic made some effort, even in this unsettled atmosphere, to continue Boulez's more successful outreach efforts. Gunther Schuller took over the Prospective Encounters, presenting them in February and May at Cooper Union. Schuller altered the program somewhat, trading Boulez's practice of question-and-answer between audience and composers for a more intimate discussion of general issues of new music after each concert. He also made an effort to present more works from outside New York—"I wanted to get away from the better-known composers and also to give New Yorkers a chance to hear works from other parts of the country. You can get rather incestuous here, you know, because of the tight circle of composers who are performed."⁵⁰ Schuller subsequently mixed works by west coast composers (like U.C. Berkeley professors Edwin Dugger and Olly Wilson) with pieces by Europeans (Sweden's Anders Eliasson and Frenchman Tristan Murail) and a few jazz-influenced domestic selections (including his own work and a piece by Charles Mingus).

The change in leadership of the Encounters did little to change their reception. The common trope of praising the performances rather than the works is clear in the *Times*' reviews of the two '78 Encounters. Some pieces were "little more than

⁵⁰ Quoted in Raymond Ericson, "New Encounters of the Schuller Kind," *New York Times*, Feb 3, 1978.

exercises,”⁵¹ Schuller lacked Boulez’s avant-garde credentials as both programmer and conductor. Perhaps most importantly, he lacked the close association with the Philharmonic itself that Boulez had had. The fact that the Philharmonic employed him during the unsettled season for a variety of purposes (including conducting a Young Person’s Concert) did little to disguise his lack of ownership of the series. It was hardly a surprise when the experiment with altered curatorship of the Encounters ended after that single year.

The Rugs, such a resounding public relations success, were attempted only once after Avery Fisher had been gutted and rebuilt. The altered construction and seating prevented the usual realignment of orchestra and audience, and beginning with the ‘77-’78 season, the Rugs were replaced by “Music in May,” a similar “popular pricing” event (which, in 1978, meant \$3-5 tickets). Outside of the pricing and the division of the orchestra into two 50-member chamber groups to lighten the workload, there was little distinctive about Music in May. They were traditional concerts with conservative programming:

The return to a more traditional style of concert is probably all to the good, however. The “Rugs” were a product, somewhat delayed, of the relaxed 1960’s, and might seem a trifle outmoded nowadays.⁵²

The Philharmonic had replaced something “outmoded” with something even older—the same concert traditions that had characterized the vast majority of its presentations for decades. Little surprise, then, that the hall for the opening event was

⁵¹ Raymond Ericson, discussing the works by Eliasson, Wilson, and David Stock. “Schuller Conducts Philharmonic In Several Contemporary Pieces,” *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1978.

⁵² Donal Henahan, “Concert: ‘Music in May’ Opener,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1978.

“only about two-thirds filled, in spite of a top ticket price of \$5.”⁵³ What had been an event designed to appeal to young audiences had lost its distinctive elements.

While Mehta didn't leap at the chance to take over Boulez's pet projects, he did agree to be part of the Parks concerts following the “interregnum” season, conducting along with Andre Kostelanetz and Sarah Caldwell. Mehta conducted two programs, one of Wagner's “Rienzi” Overture, Ravel's *La Valse*, and Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4; the other comprised Mahler's Symphony No. 4 and a suite from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*. What Boulez had so thoroughly eschewed, Mehta embraced, conducting five of the eleven summer concerts.

The distinction from Boulez extended to subscription series programming when Mehta officially took over as music director in the fall of 1978. He featured more soloists and more Romantic works, more of the orchestral canon and less of the music the Philharmonic's publicity department had once called “more challenging.” Mehta, arms outstretched, dominated the season calendar, his name in the same font and size as the Philharmonic's own, above the request to “subscribe now to America's longest-running musical hit.”⁵⁴ (See Figure 5-2.) It was the hits that the Philharmonic featured in Mehta's opening season. Mehta's first official concert as music director was as much a statement as Boulez's had been, though with much different content: a Beethoven overture (Leonore), Barber's Essay No. 3 (Op. 47), and, as centerpiece, Mahler's “Titan” Symphony No. 1 in D-Major. Though the subsequent concerts of the opening run included Webern and Varese, these were short works; the longer pieces on the concerts

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Subscription series mailer, New York Philharmonic Archive.

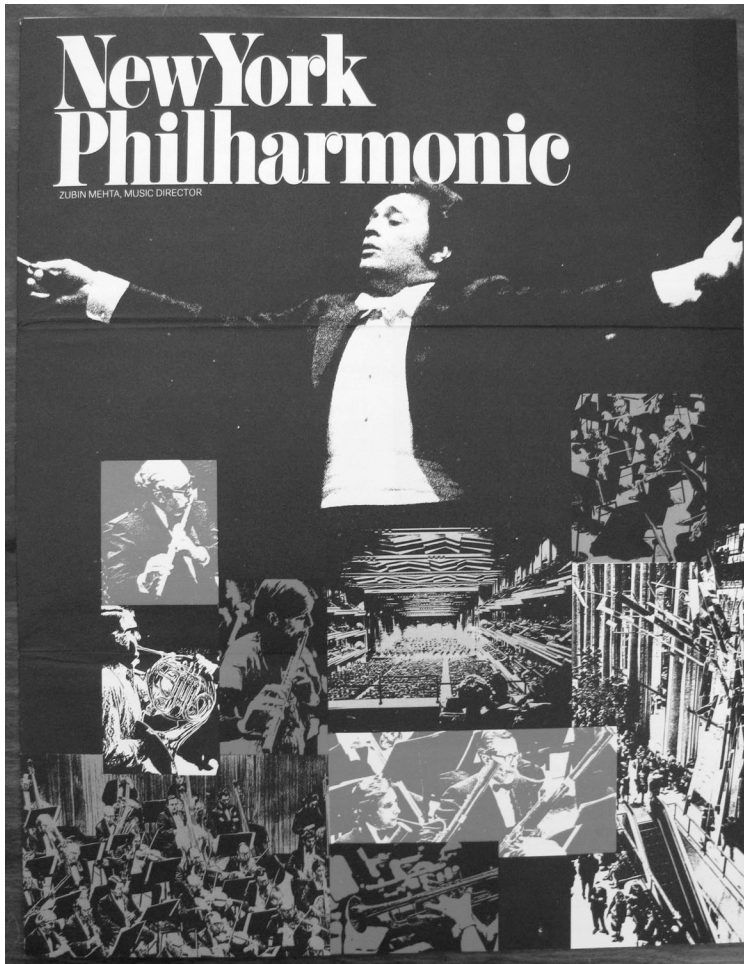


Figure 5-2 New York Philharmonic Subscription Mailer '78-'79 (cover). New York Philharmonic Archives.

were older ones, with substantial doses of Beethoven along with a Vladimir Horowitz performance of Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30. Schubert's works were prominent in Mehta's concerts, explicitly in celebration of the sesquicentennial of the composer's death. Mehta's closing run featured three of his symphonies, along with Bartok, and Tchaikovsky, Saint-Saëns, Stravinsky (*Petruchka*), Bernstein's "Chichester Psalms," and a pair of Mozart piano concertos (K271 and K491, with Alfred Brendel as soloist). It was not *precisely* "favorite classics," but it was certainly programming heavy on the "hits."

At the end of the 1977-78 season, Carlos Moseley retired. He had been not only the Philharmonic's first full-time president, but the first full-time president of a major American orchestra, moving into that position in 1970 after nine years of service as managing director. The grand postwar expansion of the Philharmonic's activities and ambitions had taken place under Moseley; he'd been an instrumental part of moving from a 36-week season to a full 52 weeks of employment for the orchestra's members, as well as a dramatic expansion of the Philharmonic's outreach programs. He was the creator of the Parks concerts, some of the most successful classical music events in modern history. He had been instrumental in the selection of Mehta, and though he retired from his salaried position, he remained vice chairman of the Philharmonic Society's board of directors.⁵⁵ With his background in administration and public relations, Moseley helped push the Philharmonic to be sustainable as an institution in a changing society.

The whole set of changes on which the Philharmonic embarked post-Boulez moved toward tradition, from the selection of Mehta to the quiet disappearance of avant-garde-oriented outreach programming. Boulez had tried to incorporate didactic elements into the Philharmonic's work. When he'd been hired in 1969, a sense lingered that the world was about to change dramatically. By the time the Philharmonic selected Mehta as his replacement, the scope of possibilities had diminished. The Philharmonic could not change itself into the kind of institution where the aggressively avant-garde could hold pride of place. The movement into the Mehta era was an acknowledgment of that. Mehta was a diligent employee, a charismatic musician who was willing to do yeoman's work

⁵⁵ Moseley would later succeed the venerable Amyas Ames as chairman of the Philharmonic-Society's board.

on his employer's behalf. And, at the beginning, he seemed a perfect remedy to the "ice man" Boulez.

In programming and in outreach, the Philharmonic embraced its place as a repository of the consecrated. While new music continued to play a role in its various concert series (including the subscription series), it was included mostly to provide credibility, to acknowledge that New York was one of the most extraordinary places for composition in the world. There was no real effort, though, to *promote* that new music, to sell it on its own merits. As art, it could not exist for its own sake. New music contributed to the Philharmonic only as an element of its credibility, something to help maintain its primacy in the field. As a presenter, the Philharmonic returned in the waning years of the Seventies to a wholehearted embrace of music as cultural capital, becoming a dealer in the consecrated. Like so many other elements of society, it recognized the changes in the field of power and made the necessary adjustments to ensure its survival.

To a city already casting about for ways to shore up its eroding tax base, SoHo's artistic community was looking more and more like an economic boom.

—Jonathan Mahler⁵⁶

By 1977 the law that stipulated that all loft dwellers be certified artists was being blatantly ignored. New Yorkers with no connection to the local artistic community save for a shared taste for arched windows, exposed brick, and lots of cheap square footage were moving to the neighborhood. At the same time, a number of SoHo's once-struggling artists were getting famous, and the dealers who bought and sold their work were getting rich.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 170-171.

The Philharmonic was in a position to adjust purposefully to the changing field of power. In SoHo, there were no equivalent organizations to guide the community through the changes of the late Seventies. Instead of adjusting to change, SoHo had change inflicted upon it. Commodification—of art, of government services, of community management—intruded on the bohemian space of downtown just as surely as it did in the rest of the city and country. To a degree, SoHo was a victim of its own success. Artists had reclaimed the old industrial space and made it attractive. As that attraction spread, so did the pool of people interested in turning a profit on it.

Outside interest in SoHo was not entirely new; Richard Kostelanetz talks about the “B&T crowd” (people who came to SoHo via bridge and tunnel) invading SoHo on the weekends even in the early Seventies. They came for the galleries, as cultural tourists, or simply for novelty’s sake. (Convenient parking helped, too.)⁵⁸ As the Seventies wore on, though, the B&T crowd was no longer simply a Saturday afternoon phenomenon. Galleries catering to the outsiders replaced the cooperatives and informal spaces the artists had self-organized. Some of the more successful artists retreated SoHo’s lofts in favor of even larger spaces.⁵⁹ While galleries had been a part of SoHo for years, the later 1970s saw simultaneously an expansion of their number and dilution of their close association with artists:

By 1977 or so, it became clear that cheap space available in SoHo permitted a proliferation of retail art galleries, compared to 57th Street or the Upper East Side... The 1978 SoHo guidebook claimed that the neighborhood had 85 galleries with a new one

⁵⁸ Richard Kostelanetz, *SoHo: The Rise and Fall of an Artists’ Colony*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 32.

⁵⁹ Donald Judd traded his six-story corner building for a pair of airplane hangars in West Texas (Kostelanetz, *SoHo*, 139.).

opening every month (and older ones closing nearly as often, needless to say.)”⁶⁰

Of those 85, only seventeen were co-ops. While the co-ops were obviously closely tied to their artist-members, the proliferation of galleries pushed more works into a distinctly commercial context, supplanting the relationship between individual artists and collectors. For their part, the owners of the new galleries could capitalize on the neighborhood’s reputation as well as its talent pool.

Commercial businesses filtered in, too. For some, the appearance of the Dean & DeLuca gourmet market in September of 1977 was the death knell for artists’ SoHo:

In later years the proud pioneers who had settled—or resettled anyway—this urban frontier would point darkly to the day, identifying it as the tipping point, the moment when their beloved neighborhood made the irreversible transition from scruffy artists’ colony to theme park for the taste-fetishizing upwardly mobile.⁶¹

The new commercial enterprises were usually owned by entrepreneurs who, like their target customers, lived outside of SoHo. Some of the money lingered in the local artists’ hands, but much of it sped out of the neighborhood as quickly as it came in. This was, fundamentally, the conquest of the field of power over a space in the field of cultural production. While works of art themselves remained somewhat difficult to commodify, SoHo itself became a symbolic good:

When limos began to appear parked outside stores other than the galleries, I began to think that the principal product of SoHo might not be art but something else—the accouterments of conspicuous high-class taste, not only in food but eventually in clothing and furniture.⁶²

⁶⁰ Kostelanetz, *SoHo*, 64.

⁶¹ Mahler, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 171. Kostelanetz also notes the store’s arrival as a sign of change in *SoHo*, 33. He also, though, notes that some SoHo artists helped make ends meet by selling “home-cooked specialty foods” to the store (70).

⁶² Kostelanetz, *SoHo*, 34.

Twenty-five years later, SoHo would be nearly completely taken over by boutiques, tiny galleries, and chain stores. In the late Seventies, this change was only beginning to gain momentum.⁶³ It hinged in large part on the success of the local artists both in their chosen mediums and in their creation of a community. Their success as artists raised their individual profiles, drawing attention from sectors of the field of cultural production more closely aligned to the field of power. The artist's congregation in a physical space tied their cultural production to that space in a way that, by the late Seventies, had become independent of the cultural products, and therefore a potential commodity in its own right. The chic of the neighborhood increasingly dominated its perception, redefining what had been an industrial blight into a zone of increasing commerce and, by 1979, soaring real estate values.

Similarly, the ascendant downtown artists of the early Seventies were becoming, by 1977, touchstones in their own right. The names of Reich, Glass, and Monk began to appear in reviews that had no direct connection to them or their works. Within the field of avant-garde cultural production, those names had come to stand as symbols for certain styles and practices. Ten years earlier, their presentations had relied on a kind of cooperative ethos, with shifting leadership and spotlights. Though the communality of production had diminished, former members of the artists' ensembles continued to benefit from the association. Avant-garde insiders had understood the networks of association even in the early years, but as the Seventies turned toward their close, the most prominent members of the downtown scene became "ins" to their peers.

⁶³ For a sample of local worries and hopes for government intervention, see Pieter Freiberg's "Loft Decisions Due This Spring," *SoHo Weekly News*, April 19, 1979. Among the concerns he voices are the double threats of landlords unwilling to obtain certificates of occupancy and rapidly rising rents.

Of the three, Meredith Monk was the only one to produce much new work between 1977 and 1979. The new works she presented, though, were small ones: *Venice/Milan* (the *Travelogues*, which continued the earlier *Paris* and *Chacon*), the *Plateau* series, and select performances of music sans dance. The *Travelogues* were presented with longtime collaborator Ping Chong and members of The House, while the *Plateau* series was more compact. She performed selections at her loft on Great Jones Street, though the full works were performed at St. Mark's in the Bowery as part of various dance series there. There was nothing to rival the scale of *JUICE*, *Vessel*, or *Quarry* (though the release of the film version of the last work occurred in this span). The largest (and best-covered) Monk presentation of the late Seventies was her revival of *Education of the Girlchild* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in February of 1979.

As with so many of Monk's works, the *Times* took a battery approach to covering the revival: dance critics Anna Kisselgoff, and Jack Anderson (who also reviewed theater), and music critic John Rockwell provided previews of the revival (though none reviewed the performances).⁶⁴ Despite the fact that *Education* had been performed in 1975 and 1976 after its 1973 premiere, and that Monk's other large works had drawn plenty of critical attention (even from the *Times*), all three critics felt compelled to reintroduce Monk and the piece. As Rockwell put it, "she may still be something of a mystery to the more general audiences attracted to the Brooklyn performances." Too, the appearance of Monk before a more general audience provided the critics an opportunity to size up her accomplishments. Anderson focused on her deftness with images both aural and visual, describing choice moments of earlier works like *Vessel* and *JUICE*.

⁶⁴ Jack Anderson, "Monk's Inimitable Images," *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 1979. Anna Kisselgoff, "Meredith Monk Dances 'Opera Epics'," *New York Times*, Feb. 10, 1979. John Rockwell, "BAM Bristles With Talent," *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 1979.

Kisselgoff discusses her philosophical twists on familiar events. Rockwell's piece deals with the BAM series more generally, but he calls Monk "a theater-person on the order of Robert Wilson."

The comparison to Robert Wilson highlights the way the field had shifted in just a few short years. Recall that the coverage of *Einstein on the Beach* tended to credit Wilson as the primary creative force and assign Philip Glass a subsidiary role ("a Robert Wilson production with music by Philip Glass"), no matter how thoroughly the critics went on to complement that subsidiary music. Wilson was a big name. Monk's *Quarry* may have prompted comparisons to Wilson's work, but there was no effort to equate their respective statures. By 1979, Wilson's reputation had permeated avant-garde theater. Essentially, Rockwell argues that Monk can function equally well as a touchstone of quality and imagination.

Monk could do so even in the context of a revival. Fallow creative periods, of course, follow fecund ones. And Monk's lack of large-scale premieres did not mean that she was not developing new work. She was, though, developing it at a smaller scale and coupling it with already complete pieces. In the arts as in the country more generally, the late Seventies were a period of consolidation, of regrouping. The prominent successes of SoHo were able to consolidate around their higher profile within the field of cultural production to (at least partially) stabilize their economic situations. Part of that consolidation involved the performance of their extant works. In Monk's case, the revival of *Education of the Girlchild* provided the opportunity for the critical community to solidify its take on her reputation and place in the field.

Both artistically and professionally, Steve Reich was positioned to undertake a similar project of consolidation and reassessment. *Music for 18 Musicians* had marked a substantial shift in his style and interest. It was, depending on the critic, either the last of his minimalist works or the first of those that some call “maximalist.” The introduction of audible triadic harmonies (even if sparsely voiced) in the context of a chamber orchestra had irrevocably moved him beyond the strict processes of the late 1960s. In 1978, he traveled to Israel to study Jewish cantillation. The musical ideas this study inspired, though, did not manifest in finished pieces until 1981’s *Tehilim*. In the interim, he produced a few commissioned works, some of which premiered with other ensembles and none of which premiered in New York.

Reich began 1977 with a four-night retrospective of his works at the Kitchen in May. Though he was still perceived as a newcomer within the broader field of new music production, Reich had been a leader of the downtown scene for nearly a decade by this time. John Rockwell called it “a little surprising” that Reich was mounting a retrospective, but with “more than a decade of mature work behind him...its evolution tells a lot about where his music has gone.”⁶⁵ A retrospective wasn’t entirely out of place. Given the stylistic “culmination” of *Music for 18 Musicians*, a backward look was warranted. The series ignored his earliest tape works (*Come Out* and *It’s Gonna Rain*), taking instead as its starting point 1967’s *Violin Phase*, which appeared on two of the four of the programs. The other “bracketing” work was *Music for 18 Musicians*, also appearing on two of the four programs.⁶⁶ As a group, the presented works neatly

⁶⁵ John Rockwell, “Pop: Reich In Review,” *New York Times*, May 18, 1977.

⁶⁶ None of the programs were identical. The other works presented at some point during the series, in order of composition, were: *Pendulum Music* (1968), *Four Organs* (1970), *Phase Patterns* (1970), *Drumming*

encapsulated Reich's development from process-oriented minimalism to a freer musical idiom less reluctant to use traditional ideas.

The retrospective served several purposes. It was a benefit for the Kitchen; Reich was a substantial draw. It allowed Reich and his ensemble to perform in New York both music they'd previously prepared and were preparing for performance in Europe. It also allowed Reich to solidify his profile as a composer-performer. With the exception of a single tape piece (*My Name Is*), Reich and his ensemble performed everything he had composed in the last decade, presenting it as a coherent body of work. With four nights over which to spread the pieces, Reich could move away from programming the older pieces simply as "filler" alongside whichever work was his most recent premiere. In practice, he balanced the large works against the small ones in the first two concerts, filled the third with shorter pieces, and the finale with a trio of the longer works (*Four Organs*; *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ*; and *Music for 18 Musicians*). The programming of the finale, in particular, highlights Reich's changing approach to musical and harmonic structure. Closing with the most recent work neatly capped the series.

Rockwell discusses some of the consequences of the turn toward past-oriented presentation in January of 1978, reviewing Reich's return to the Whitney:

Mr. Reich has spent a lot of energy in recent years in expanding his performing group and touring sufficiently to support it. The result has been the creation of a really first-class ensemble of 18 musicians...But—unless Mr. Reich is saving up for the near future—it seems to have cut down on his production of new scores. Part of the problems is that in his most recent work, *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976), Mr. Reich is clearly tending toward symphonic scores...but most modern symphony orchestras would have neither

(1971), *Clapping Music* (1972), *Six Pianos* (1973), and *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973).

the money the time nor the patience to play one of Mr. Reich's pieces.⁶⁷

The Whitney performance (part of the museum's "Composers' Showcase" series) drew a large crowd. While it featured a new version of *Music for Pieces of Wood* (adapted for metal instruments), there was no other new music. The performance once again ended with *Music for 18 Musicians* (Rockwell continued to praise the piece, though he had by this time reviewed performances including it no fewer than three times). The cultivation of a large performing ensemble did indeed occupy a significant portion of Reich's time, as did taking it on tour. The conventional avenue of publication was not yet open to the composer, in part because of his idiosyncratic scoring and lack of works for conventional orchestra. Presenting Steve Reich and *Musicians* had become as important to Reich's livelihood as presenting new work by Steve Reich, composer.

Reich's growing profile (aided by increasing press coverage at home, as well as further distribution of recordings he'd made a few years earlier) eventually opened another avenue for economic success: commissions. These initially came from Europe—*Music for a Large Ensemble* was commissioned for the Holland Festival and premiered in Utrecht in June of 1979. Reich's players formed the core of the premiere group, supplemented by members of the Netherlands Wind Ensemble. As part of the same festival, Reich and the Netherlands Wind Ensemble premiered *Octet* (later recomposed as *Eight Lines*). Reich had toured Europe for years; commissions tied to a festival not only provided him with personal income, they helped facilitate 1979's tour for the *Musicians*. The remaining commission of the 1970s—*Variations for Winds, Strings and*

⁶⁷ John Rockwell, "Reich's Ensemble and His Music," *New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1978.

Keyboards—was created for the San Francisco Symphony and marked Reich’s first foray into a traditionally-scored work.⁶⁸

The commissions represent the increasingly delicate balance Reich had to maintain between his roles as composer and presenter. Strictly as a composer, commissions could potentially provide a stable economic position. Commissions, though, could not always include his own group (as the Holland Festival did). Presenting concerts and tours of *Steve Reich and Musicians*, on the other hand, reduced Reich’s compositional time and options (he could hardly write a full orchestra piece for his chamber group). Moving toward a composer’s more traditional role in the field moved Reich away from the “band” model of presentation on which he’d built his career.

Reich added to that burden—while simultaneously cementing his own place as a presenter—when his foundation undertook the presentation of concerts of other composers’ music. The concerts, while looking “like a Reich concert” in terms of instruments and “young men in white shirts everywhere,” presented music that was stylistically and geographically diverse.⁶⁹ They featured Michael Byron, Peter Garland, the Brits Tim Souster and Michael Nyman, and Californians John Adams, Paul Dresher, and Ingram Marshall. Though broadly “minimal” in style, the composers and works on the Reich Foundation concerts demonstrated the diversity of approaches that could operate under that rubric. More importantly, the concerts established Reich and his foundation as *promoters* of that more-broadly-defined minimalism. He was able to parlay his position in the field as a cultural producer into an expanded role as an impresario. The

⁶⁸ It premiered in San Francisco in May of 1980, after a February preview performance at Carnegie Hall.

⁶⁹ John Rockwell, “Reich Without Reich,” *New York Times*, Jan. 18, 1979. For a review of the second concert, see “Concert: San Francisco Composers” *New York Times*, Jan. 19, 1979. Tom Johnson reviews all three concerts in “How They Do It in London and California,” *Village Voice*, Feb. 5, 1979.

role of impresario, though, was contingent on his continuing cultural production for both aesthetic and commercial reasons: if he failed to keep producing new works, he would cease to be relevant within the avant-garde field. Production of new works and presentation of old ones were also necessary to keep the Foundation afloat financially; the concerts were not profit-making ventures.

While Reich moved haltingly toward a position as an avant-garde patriarch, embracing art-for-art's-sake presentation models, Philip Glass more purposefully aimed to extend his brand into the "classical" world without sacrificing his more popular sensibilities. *Einstein on the Beach* had given Glass a foothold in traditional halls—spaces still neither adapted nor amenable to his heavily amplified keyboard ensemble. While Reich was balancing the needs of his large ensemble against his compositional time, Glass was balancing performing with attempts to repay the Einstein debt. While Glass could generate some revenue with Ensemble performances, the success of *Einstein* opened the door to both commissions and recording opportunities, both more directly remunerative than presenting performances.

After *Einstein*, one of the Ensemble's first presentations came as part of the "In Performance at the Diplomat" series. These concerts were staged in the Grand Ballroom of the Diplomat Hotel, across the street from Town Hall, and were organized by Performing Artservices. The Glass Ensemble performed a Sunday matinee, but also performed at the opening night Gala (along with Meredith Monk and many other artists); this gala was a benefit for Performing Artservices itself and featured tickets ranging from \$10 to \$100. At the matinee, Glass offered one of the first live performances of pieces

from *North Star*, the album he'd recently released on Virgin Records.⁷⁰ The album (and the label on which it had been released) “attracted the attention of the pop world, which finds kinships between Mr. Glass’s pulsating, hypnotic music and the farther-out forms of ‘space rock.’”⁷¹

Throughout the late Seventies, Glass attempted to occupy multiple distinct spaces in the field of cultural production. On the one hand, he remained a downtowner, the most visible member of the minimalist avant-garde and a quintessentially bohemian cultural producer. On another, the success of *Einstein* had opened doors in the more conservative sectors of the new musical field more closely aligned with the field of power; Glass would soon play at Carnegie Hall (see below). Simultaneously, he worked to present his music outside the art-for-art’s-sake segment of the field through albums released on popular music labels and performances at rock clubs. (The fact that his ensemble’s technical apparatus and volume matched rock bands’ was a mixed blessing as it moved between these different kinds of venue.) The scope of his public profile allowed Glass to navigate multiple presentations without compromising his cultural production. More than any of his SoHo peers, Glass managed to play his reputation into commercial success.

Just as the coverage of *Einstein* persistently mentioned the venue, Carnegie Hall was a central character in coverage of the Philip Glass Ensemble’s June 1, 1978, concert. The prominence of the venue, as much as the prominence of the artist, prompted the *Times* to give the performance a full preview. Robert Palmer set the tone for the subsequent reviews:

⁷⁰ Rockwell was unconvinced the record excerpts worked particularly well without the overdubbing used on the album. See “Concert: Philip Glass Ensemble,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1977.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

No longer is the music underground. Just as Mr. Glass has methodically expanded his compositional vocabulary...he has methodically expanded his audience. A Carnegie Hall concert now seems almost necessary.⁷²

The expansion of the audience did not always lead to converts. The actual content of the Carnegie performance drew mixed reviews. *Another Look at Harmony Part IV*, in particular, provoked a lukewarm response, due in part to its unamplified choral setting and attempt to deal in plainly triadic harmonies. John Piccarella, another critic at the *Voice*, was not especially sympathetic to Glass's rise. Of the June 1, 1978 concert, he wrote:

Philip Glass received critical recognition downtown and then in Europe before achieving the status required for such a [Carnegie Hall] performance. But as Glass has worked his way up to this prestigious concert setting, his music has become less avant-garde...

His new work does not provide the electric hypnosis which the people who came uptown to fill Carnegie Hall expect; nor will its slow unfolding of old rules electrify the people who ordinarily listen to their music there.⁷³

Rockwell found that the unamplified chorus for *Harmony* left the sound "almost flimsy" and found it disconcerting.⁷⁴ Both Piccarella and Rockwell found the excerpts from *Einstein* that closed the concert to be much stronger, and seemed to sigh in relief when the amplification and familiar riffs returned. Though he had moved beyond the austerity of his early minimalist works, his core audience still preferred the complexity of the *Einstein* score to the simpler and more overtly harmonic pieces that followed it.

This was just as true a year later when the Ensemble performed at The Bottom Line in March of 1979. Again, the critics couldn't resist discussing the role of the venue:

⁷² Robert Palmer, "Philip Glass Comes to Carnegie Hall—At Last," *New York Times*, May 28, 1978.

⁷³ John Piccarella, "Philip Glass in Familiar Territory," *Village Voice*, June 12, 1978.

⁷⁴ John Rockwell, "Music: Philip Glass," *New York Times*, June 2, 1978.

Philip Glass completed his own kind of hat trick Wednesday, when he opened a two-night run at the Bottom Line. In so doing, he became the first composer one can recall who performed his music—to standing ovations, besides—at such diverse locations as Town Hall, Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Opera and, now, New York’s leading rock-club showcase.⁷⁵

As in the Carnegie concert, selections from *Einstein* formed the show’s finale.

The preceding program included short excerpts from *North Star* and “Dance No. 3 for Lucinda Childs” (a preview of a collaborative work also involving the sculptor Sol LeWitt). The non-*Einstein* pieces seemed, to Rockwell, “simplistic.” Still, the synergies of the highly-technological Ensemble with a rock club were hard to overlook. Rockwell noted that the group didn’t “look incongruous” and that it had “been together longer and with greater spirit than many a rock band.” His highest praise was reserved for sound engineer Kurt Munkacsi’s integration of the Ensemble’s gear with the house equipment into a “superb sound system” that produced “the best performances [of the *Einstein* music] of the many this writer has heard.”

The Glass Ensemble’s mode of presentation was perfectly compatible with the Bottom Line as a venue. Writers had compared Glass’s music to rock before, with its electric organs and amplification. By 1979, though, the intrusion into (progressive) rock’s segment of the field of production was more thorough. Glass had fans in David Bowie and Brian Eno. His music had been released by a progressive rock label. That Glass was a natural fit for an avant-garde-oriented rock club demonstrated his increasing ability to straddle different sectors of the field.

Still, the Bottom Line *was* exceptionally friendly to avant-garde classical music. As natural as the fit may have been for the Philip Glass Ensemble, that group was not the

⁷⁵ John Rockwell, “Cabaret: Philip Glass,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1979.

only one to perform at the Bottom Line in the spring of 1979. Steve Reich and Musicians performed later in March. Rockwell suggested that Reich's presence at the club so soon after Glass's suggested that a "*genuine* fusion of styles and sensibilities may be taking place."⁷⁶ This was an exciting prospect for Rockwell, given that his critical interests included pop and rock as much as the downtown avant-garde. The Reich performance included *Clapping Music*; *Drumming*; *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ*; and concluded with *Music for 18 Musicians* (which had recently been released by ECM under Warner Bros. distribution). While Reich's group didn't rely on the extensive amplification and electronics of Glass, it was still a group (and repertoire) that produced sheets of sound, a wash of shifting timbres and harmonies not far removed from progressive rock.

In December, though, the Bottom Line put on a decidedly different concert series, partially supported by Nonesuch Records. It included Aaron Copland, Speculum Musicae, and the Boston Camerata. Copland performed with Paul Jacobs, who happened to share a manager with Steve Reich and Speculum Musicae. Their performance included thoroughly classical pieces by Debussy, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, and a world premiere Frederic Rzewski's "Riverside." Copland performed *Danzon Cubano* with Jacobs as piano four-hands. While he was concerned with playing piano in public, he was not concerned about the venue: "I'm looking forward to it. I hear the crowd at the Bottom Line is bright and young."⁷⁷

Reich and Glass had opened doors at the club, and connections with Reich had ultimately allowed Nonesuch to pull in the more consecrated performers for their

⁷⁶ John Rockwell, "Rock: Steve Reich," *New York Times*, March 20, 1979.

⁷⁷ Quoted in John Rockwell, "Aaron Copland Will Join Paul Jacobs at Bottom Line," *New York Times*, December 15, 1979.

December series. The “scene” was increasingly multifaceted and overlapping. At the Seventies’ opening, no amount of personal connection would have pulled uptowners to perform at a downtown rock club. The Bottom Line was in a property owned by NYU, just a few blocks north of SoHo in Greenwich Village.⁷⁸ The surrounding area was hardly aligned with the field of power. Unlike the Philharmonic’s *Prospective Encounters*, some of which took place at NYU’s Loeb Student Center, the Nonesuch series at the Bottom Line heavily involved the presenting venue. It was a cooperative effort rather than a “missionary” one, and it highlights “downtown’s” increasing interest in uptown’s consecration and cultural authority.

That was just as true at The Kitchen. Robert Stearns, the Kitchen’s director, left the organization in 1978. By that time, it had thoroughly grown into its Broome Street space, boasting substantial funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts, and individual donors. These were hardly complete protection against financial crisis, but they helped cement the Kitchen’s reputation both in and out of SoHo as a center for the new. The Kitchen’s programs expanded with its staff (up to six full time members by 1977): the music and video series continued to deepen, and dance was added in 1977. It also remained one of the few dedicated venues to support intermedia performances, both aesthetically and technologically. Professionalizing its presentation moved the Kitchen naturally away from the bohemian space of cultural production (a development that Dmitri Devyatkin had noted with the initial move out of the Mercer Arts Center). The paradox of institutionalizing the avant-garde was a knotty one that critics tended to acknowledge without condemning:

⁷⁸ The club closed in 2004 in a dispute over back rent. As of late 2011, the owners continue to look for a new site for the Bottom Line.

It is fashionable these days to decry the “edifice complex”—to denounce Lincoln Center and to advocate instead a more informal, community-oriented kind of art. The Kitchen epitomizes what is best about the extraordinary artistic community that thrives in the midst of our biggest city. Yet at the same time, it is itself an “edifice,” in that it’s larger and more firmly established than the alternative loft spaces that otherwise house this sort of work. If that’s a paradox, it’s a productive one.⁷⁹

The increasing consecration of SoHo and its most prominent artists was especially visible in June of 1978, when the Kitchen hosted a benefit concert. The performers included all of the prominent downtowners discussed above: Glass, Reich, and Monk all presented works, along with the filmmaker Robert Ashley and, representing a younger, poppier generation, Laurie Anderson. Collectively, the artists held enough weight in the field of cultural production not only to merit high ticket prices, but to convince patrons to purchase them at those high prices.⁸⁰ As Tom Johnson put it,

The Kitchen has grown up. Many still seem to regard this vital avant-garde center as a slightly glorified loft, which is sort of the way it began seven years ago. But its May 20 benefit concert was more like a function at an established museum of new video and music, which is sort of what it has become. The Kitchen new music program is now far better funded, far better staffed, and far more active than the older contemporary music organizations...such as the Group for Contemporary Music, and the atmosphere has changed a lot.⁸¹

Johnson goes on to complement the professionalism of the staff (including tuxedos on the male staff members) and new director Mary MacArthur. He proceeds to treat the performances of the five presenters in terms that balance specific treatment of the performed works with his more general impressions of their output. He had not, he notes, written much about Glass, Monk, or Reich in recent years, having found the initial

⁷⁹ John Rockwell, “Something’s Always Cooking in The Kitchen,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1977.

⁸⁰ Tickets were \$10 for the general public, \$8 for members.

⁸¹ Tom Johnson, “The Kitchen Grows Up,” *Village Voice*, June 5, 1978.

development of their music more exciting than their continued presentation of it. The Kitchen's benefit provided him opportunity to "update [his] impressions." Glass, the simplicity of some of his more recent works aside, conveyed a "sheer joy and sensuality." In *Fourth Series Part I*, a solo organ piece, that exuberance was coupled with more complex musical ideas than Johnson had recently seen from Glass. Monk (who performed selections from *Songs from the Hill* and *Tableau*) has "grown" her music and married the wordless singing more closely to the theatrical movements. Reich's performance of a selection from *Drumming* displayed the usual rhythmic imagination and exceptional performances from his fellow percussionists. In short, Johnson's impressions of the artists have not shifted much from their early incarnations. Collectively (along with Ashley's somewhat obscure text-based works), Reich and Monk and Glass tied their own brand to the Kitchen's and to SoHo. They had all moved beyond lofts and fit neatly into a professionalized world.

Of Laurie Anderson's "far more accessible" work, Johnson concluded: "It didn't quite seem to belong in the sophisticated context of an established museum of new video and music, though I suspect it would have seemed acceptable and perhaps genuinely entertaining in, well, in a slightly glorified loft."⁸² Bohemian cultural production still existed (though, excepting Glass, Anderson would go on to much broader success than any of her co-performers that night), but it was no longer the core of the Kitchen's repertoire.

Nor was it any longer the core of SoHo's cultural production. By the Seventies' end, SoHo's physical, social, and artistic spaces were all shifting away from bohemian ideals. Locally-owned shops were closing or moving to Tribeca (as LaMonte Young did)

⁸² Ibid.

or Chelsea (as the Kitchen eventually would). Incoming residents were looking for a hip neighborhood rather than cheap space for their artistic work. The city's interest in enforcing artist-in-residence requirements waned considerably as developers and their tax revenues went to work. The products coming out of SoHo reflected the changing shape of the field, too: increasingly they came from jewelry, clothing, or furniture boutiques rather than galleries. SoHo became a market for commodities rather than cultural artifacts. Cultural cachet became a draw for consumers.

The Philharmonic had moved in a similar direction with the hire of Zubin Mehta. Mehta promised to work hard on the institution's behalf. More importantly, his programming goals were believed to be in line with the existing subscription base. Boulez's reputation for hard-nosed avant-gardism (not entirely warranted by the time of his departure) was replaced with charismatic romanticism, an enthusiasm for Mahler and his contemporaries. Mehta was easy to like, and far more marketable to an audience whose interest in the symphony had more to do with already-acquired symbolic capital than consecrating the avant-garde.

These changes paralleled the broader shifts in the field of power. Private industry gained ground at the expense of government. The market replaced expertise as a decision-making guide. Carter and Koch both found political success by bucking the Democratic party line in favor of a message targeted at specific segments of the (middle class) populace. Revitalizing New York City was a matter of selling it—to Congress, to creditors, but also to developers and the young professionals who helped restore neighborhoods through gentrification. Carter's eventual failure was predicated largely on his inability to balance the small picture against the big one—voting consumers did not

want “comprehensive” solutions, they wanted solutions that worked for them. Quickly. The fractures of the field introduced in 1968 had become fissures by the mid-Seventies, and by 1979, the edges of those fissures had smoothed to produce the islands of interest that went on to dominate U.S. politics, consumer culture, and, eventually, the field of cultural production.

CHAPTER SIX: Détente (1979)

Years ending in nine possess an odd power. They tacitly call for summation, for an evaluation of the decade that's ending and the prospects for the one about to begin. As 1979 turned toward 1980, there were more things to shut away than to celebrate: Watergate, Vietnam, urban riots, stagflation, the rusting of the Steel Belt...the Seventies had not been kind to the United States. The problems were not over, either—the Iranian Revolution threatened regional instability (and further increases in oil prices) and involved the taking of a substantial number of American hostages. Across the country, the “tax revolt” that had taken root in California and Massachusetts was gaining traction, furthering calls for small government and propelling a new style of conservative candidate into office. One of those, Ronald Reagan, promised change with the simple question “are you better off now than you were four years ago?” Many Americans could not answer “yes” to that question, but they hoped fervently for change.

Despite an increasingly combative political picture, the field of power and the field of cultural production were, by the Seventies' end, stabilizing. Identity politics had destroyed the notion of universal citizenship and allowed politicians and marketers alike to build highly-targeted “brands.” The New Deal was in shambles; Carter had cut back its programs and started the trend of deregulation that Reagan would enthusiastically continue. In the field of cultural production, the fragmentation of the avant-garde was complete—though it had never been monolithic, there was no longer any sense that a single musical language could become the dominant style of new music. Minimalists and conceptualists, serialists and neo-tonalists, all operated within the segments of the field they had carved out for themselves over the preceding decade. None of the parties

abandoned the conflict of styles and presentation, but that conflict was for a share of the audience rather than for an imagined future of music.

The Seventies ended with a newly-organized conservative political bloc flexing its muscle. A younger generation of conservatives had been working throughout the Seventies to organize single-issue groups (anti-abortion groups, anti-tax groups, school textbook groups, etc.) into a mobile, responsive conservative machine. National organizations like the Heritage Foundation and the National Conservative Political Action Committee provided organizational resources to local groups. In the process, they tapped those local groups to form comprehensive databases of conservative voters who could be direct-mailed to stir sentiment for state and national policy. Simultaneously, “neoconservative” intellectuals such as Irving Kristol worked to weave the various conservative positions into a coherent platform that would not alienate the American middle.

The new conservative establishment gained traction in the “tax revolts” of the late Seventies. Inflation had driven up property values, which in turn drove up property tax assessments. Rising property tax burdens were especially hard on the middle class, whose real income had barely budged since the late Sixties. The revenue from the rising taxes pushed government coffers thoroughly into surplus. The combination of individual hardship and government windfalls made the case for cutting taxes an easy one. In Massachusetts and California, anti-tax groups pushed through ballot measures that curtailed both taxation and spending.¹ Government had become something to be reined

¹ The California measure (Proposition 13) also made it difficult for the state government to raise taxes in the future, a problem it continues to grapple with 30 years later.

in, an entity whose excesses needed to be controlled. The sentiment was not entirely novel, but the tax revolts helped popularize it, laying groundwork for the swell of support for Reagan and Republican legislative candidates in 1980.

The same inflation that fueled the tax revolt proved a difficult beast for Jimmy Carter's administration to tame. Through much of his presidency, he had tried to manage inflation while still pursuing a multifaceted domestic agenda. By 1979, with inflation hitting an annual rate of 11.3 percent, fueled in part by OPEC price increases, Carter was forced to discard his side projects and devote his full attention to the inflation problem.² His appointment of Paul Volcker to chair the Federal Reserve Board in the fall of 1979 set off a chain of events that led simultaneously to controlling inflation and to an election-year recession. Volcker pushed interest rates to 15% and contracted the monetary supply. Carter's proposed 1980 budget failed to balance, spooking financial markets. Inflation reached 18% in February of 1980. Carter's calls for personal financial discipline worked "beyond expectations," contracting consumer spending and throwing the budget further into deficit as tax revenues decreased.³

Events halfway around the world did just as much harm to the Carter presidency. Shah Reza Pahlavi of Iran was heir to a monarchy that had been reinstated by the CIA in 1953, and had continued to receive U.S. support both as a bulwark against the Soviet Union and to promote regional stability. The Carter administration had supported the Shah's government, but not met all of the Shah's requests, particularly for arms sales and military aid. In September 1978, opposition forces in Iran called a general strike; the Shah responded with martial law. Full-fledged revolution followed, with the Shah

² Schulman, *Seventies*, 134. See also his "Slouching Toward the Supply Side" in *The Carter Presidency*, ed. Fink and Graham.

³ Schulman, "Slouching Toward the Supply Side," 61-62.

departing in January 1979 and an Islamic Republic declared in April.⁴ On November 4, 1979—one year before the U.S. presidential election—student revolutionaries seized control of the U.S. embassy in Tehran, beginning a 444-day hostage crisis. The seizure of an embassy was bad enough; Carter also authorized a failed rescue attempt that cost the lives of eight service members. His inability to resolve the Iranian hostage became emblematic of a host of “timid” foreign policies, another tacit acknowledgment of a fading America.

With Carter reeling domestically and internationally, his opponents on both sides of the political spectrum attacked. Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy challenged Carter for the Democratic nomination, and was rebuffed only with difficulty.⁵ Ronald Reagan, who had nearly captured the Republicans’ nomination from Ford in 1976, easily won the 1980 nomination, and cemented his support by selecting his top rival (George H.W. Bush) as running mate. Though regarded for years as an extremist (particularly as an anti-communist), the former actor and California governor was able to present his ideology as a viable alternative to Carter’s perceived diffidence.

The tax revolt (and the attitudes toward government it had helped cement in the American consciousness) blunted Americans’ perception of Reagan as an extremist. Reagan was able to present himself as a contrast to Carter on all fronts: confident and encouraging, he insisted that the government do less rather than asking voters to make do with less. He promised balanced budgets and a strong national defense (while downplaying or disregarding the fiscal incompatibility of those goals). Reagan averred

⁴ For a brief discussion of Carter’s handling of Iran, see William Stueck’s “Placing Jimmy Carter’s Foreign Policy” in *The Carter Presidency*, 244-256. His discussion of Iran is on p. 255-257.

⁵ Carter won 24 of 34 primaries going into the convention, and held 60% of the delegates, but Kennedy refused to concede, resulting in a convention that nearly matched 1968’s for contentiousness, if not for violence.

that his promised tax reductions would create enough economic growth not only to reduce deficits, but to create surpluses. He placed his hopes for economic recovery on a private industry freed from restrictions. The free market would take care of the rest. In this, his prescriptions for the country were not so different from Ed Koch's prescriptions for New York City: cut programs and encourage corporate growth through business-friendly policies. Koch, in fact, all but endorsed Reagan during the general election. Reagan reciprocated Koch's admiration, and helped him win Republican cross-endorsement on the mayoral ticket in 1981.

Though the race was close for much of its duration, Reagan decisively "won" the second (and final) debate; he asked the electorate:

"Are you better off now than you were four years ago? Is it easier for you to go and buy things in the stores than it was four years ago? Is there more or less unemployment in the country than there was four years ago? Is America as respected throughout the world as it was? Do you feel that our security is as safe, that we're as strong as we were four years ago? And if you answer all of those questions yes, why then, I think your choice is very obvious as to whom you will vote for. If you don't agree, if you don't think that this course that we've been on for the last four years is what you would like to see us follow for the next four, then I could suggest another choice that you have."⁶

"Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" was, for most Americans, easily answered in the negative. Reagan's rhetorical questions aimed directly at the fears and realities of American decline at home and abroad. Carter may have been dealt a bad hand politically and economically, but he had achieved few successes with which to rebut Reagan's criticisms. Carter's dour pragmatism held no attraction in the face of Reagan's avuncular optimism. Reagan won 60% of the popular vote and carried 44 of 50 states.

⁶ "Commission on Presidential Debates: October 28, 1980 Debate Transcript," <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-28-1980-debate-transcript>. Accessed June 2012.

Ed Koch's version of Reagan's question was much more succinct: "How'm I doin'?" By 1980, he had reason to expect positive answers. Koch had sold most New Yorkers on austerity. Just as importantly, he had sold the national government on the credibility and credit-worthiness of the municipal government. Most short-term debt had been refinanced, and the city was beginning to once again issue municipal bonds to address long-neglected capital spending on infrastructure. Services had been slashed, and Koch's popularity had suffered among the poor and minority voters who had helped propel him into office.⁷ Manufacturing—long the lifeline to those poor immigrants and minorities—had permanently wilted. Austerity and reform simultaneously reduced welfare rolls. But tourism revenues were up—a fact helped by the city once again hosting the Democratic National Convention in 1980—and a successful shift toward a service-oriented and internationally-focused economic base was in progress. In the midst of these mixed consequences of recovery-through-austerity, the mood in New York waxed hopeful: "The city's life signs were again highly positive. Citizens' attitudes, too, reflected fundamental changes. They accepted that a future New York would be smaller and have fewer schools, hospitals, and corporations than in the past."⁸

The city's municipal unions were not so quick to change their attitude. They had been among the biggest beneficiaries of New York's pre-crisis largesse, benefiting from generous labor policies (ranging from extra time off to options for early retirement with

⁷ See, for example, the closing of Sydenham Hospital in Harlem. Financially, the closure made sense—there were many empty hospital beds in the city, and the Health and Hospitals Corporation suffered from poor management. The closure of a historically important black hospital, however, was a political disaster that thoroughly damaged Koch's credibility with New York's African-Americans. See Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 190-203.

⁸ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 225.

most of one's pension intact). They had accordingly been among the hardest hit by the city's fiscal crisis: they had had wages frozen or raises held below inflation, had faced massive layoffs, and been made into political punching bags. The unions had also, though, been key players in getting New York through the depths of the crisis. Particularly in the cash-strapped trough of 1975, union pension fund investments had kept the city from going bankrupt long enough to secure federal assistance.

Union contracts were up for re-negotiation in 1980, with the Transport Workers Union (TWU)'s contracts first on the calendar. The TWU technically negotiated with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), but its contract would set the tone for those unions that negotiated directly with the city. The TWU also had a strong tradition of militancy, having won a strike in 1966 and forced the Lindsay administration into repeated concessions. Koch wanted to keep wage increases low to avoid setting precedent for the other unions. The TWU, with New York on firmer financial footing, wanted wage increases that would catch up with inflation and more. Both sides seemed to expect a strike, and prepared accordingly.

For Koch, that meant not only overseeing the planning of transportation workarounds (reversing lanes at river crossings, encouraging carpools and bikes, etc.), but also laying out the terms of the debate for the city. He announced that he would pursue the fullest penalties available under the law—public employees were forbidden to strike by the Taylor Law—fines for workers of two days' pay for every day spent on strike, as well as contempt fines for the union itself. Those fines were often waived as part of settlements, but Koch promised that they would not be this time. (This had the intended side effect of cowing those unions whose contracts would be negotiated later.)

When the strike began, Koch took an active role in encouraging New Yorkers to stay strong and try and keep up business as usual. He traveled to the city's bridges every rush hour, and kept up a constant schedule of appearances. The MTA eventually granted larger concessions on wages than Koch wanted, but the tone was set: the other unions settled for wage increases in line with Koch's budget.⁹

Koch's response to the transit strike demonstrated two important elements of New York's changed field of power: first, that the unions (and by extension, workers) would have a diminished role in decision-making; second, that the mayor would personally fight to secure his place atop the city's hierarchy. Increased hierarchization was also an element in Koch's massive reshuffling of the mayor's office in 1979, in which he reduced the number of deputy mayors and placed the remaining ones *between* himself and the commissioners he had originally promised would report directly to him. That more streamlined institution helped Koch "win" the labor disputes of 1980 both by freeing him from some of the day-to-day work he had done earlier in his administration and by providing him with a steady flow of information and service. After the changes, there was less room in the Koch administration for senior officials to get in each others' way, enhancing the mayor's ability to stay on message.

There was also less room for minorities. Herman Badillo, an opponent of Koch's in the 1977 election who had taken a role in the administration overseeing urban development projects, had already left. With him went Koch's connection to New York's Puerto Rican community. Haskell Ward, an African-American (though one who had never had easy relations with New York's black political establishment), was a casualty of the reorganization. Nat Leventhal and Robert Wagner, Jr., became the two new deputy

⁹ Information drawn from Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 208-219.

mayors—both white men.¹⁰ Racial elements can also be read into the transit strike, which pitted black and Hispanic workers against the white-dominated MTA and City Hall. Jonathan Soffer characterizes this, along with Koch’s “flirtations” with the Republican party in 1980, as evidence of Koch shifting his coalition from minority voters toward Jews, Italians, and the Irish.¹¹

The shift in Koch’s coalition was a consequence, too, of his approach to renewing New York’s economy and real estate market. To get New York City back on its economic feet had taken tax revenue, and tax revenue came from economic activity. Koch’s program of tax abatements and office construction (discussed in the previous chapter) had, by 1980, paid off literally and figuratively. Businesses had come back to New York, although they weren’t the manufacturing giants that had helped make the city. They were instead service industries, information industries. And they required skilled workers. Koch had called for “urban pioneers” in his inaugural address, and urban pioneers had answered. By 1980, the city’s population stabilized. Gentrification of places like the Upper West Side and Park Slope added revenue to the city’s coffers. Real estate moguls were able to make substantial sums of money redeveloping properties for a new, mostly affluent class of white citizens working in the city’s reviving economy:

Clearly, something more than jobs was pulling the information elite back to urban life. Tastes were changing, especially among ambitious young people, who were graduating from college only to find their suburban hometowns immensely stultifying. Commuting to the city was difficult, because home ownership was expensive. Sensing a market, city real estate agents did their best to sell people on returning to New York, reversing their tactics of just a

¹⁰ Wagner was the son of John Lindsay’s predecessor in the mayor’s office. Leventhal went on to become president of Lincoln Center in the mid-80s.

¹¹ Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 223.

decade before, when they had despoiled and disinvested in city neighborhoods to push people to the suburbs. ...the factor that was perhaps most important, and least explicable, was the growing perception that city living was fashionable again.¹²

Redeveloping urban neighborhoods often meant displacing existing residents...existing residents who were often poor or members of minority groups. The “life signs” pulsing through New York City were leaving many behind, even as the new, information-and-service economy took hold. As the Seventies ended, Koch presided over a city on its way up. Friendly with the new president, and endorsed by both major parties for his 1981 re-election, Ed Koch and his shifting coalition had won. He had plenty of company in his victory: white ethnics and big business, real estate developers and the hospitality industry. The losers were left to pick up the pieces and try to make do.

SoHo felt the influx of young urban professionals just as keenly as the Upper West Side or Park Slope. Kostelanetz’s “B&T crowd” had largely taken over the district by the Seventies’ end. Boutiques replaced galleries (though many galleries persisted through the 80s). Markets had been replaced by chain stores. The increase in businesses diminished the availability of performance and gallery space:

In the early 70s, other public spaces and many private lofts in the old cast-iron facade SoHo buildings served as places for performers to present their works. Fewer of these spaces are available now, posing a problem as the quantity of performers grows and as the existing places become more institutionalized.¹³

Increased demand and diminished supply drove up rents, driving away tenants away from SoHo just as rising rents had driven them out of Greenwich Village a decade earlier. Also

¹² Ibid., 258.

¹³ Charles Ward, “Very wide umbrella for ‘New Music, New York,’” *The Houston Chronicle*, July 24, 1979.

driving the first wave of artists out of SoHo? A second wave of artists. By the summer of 1979, Michael Sahl could complain in *EAR Magazine* of

the lost souls of SoHo are those who prepared themselves, with all the traditional diligence, for a career in classical music, easel painting, etcetera, and found there was nowhere to go with their skills, that history had apparently left them high and dry, and that the high culture was bleached of its meaning and relevance till [sic] it became an endless procession of rerecordings of Vivaldi Concerti, and traveling exhibitions of the Pieta of Michelangelo. Bitter at being swindled by their teachers, their skillful fingers fruitless, what should they do?¹⁴

While part of a larger diatribe regarding the complicity of commercial and high art (“like a nark and a big dealer”), Sahl’s words reflect the entrance of a new generation of SoHo artists, ones who moved to the neighborhood not because of social ties to pioneers (as much of the first generation had done) but because of the neighborhood’s reputation and a vague dissatisfaction with the “respectable” occupations of their bourgeois upbringing. SoHo had become a fashionable place to be a starving artist.

This meant it could be *sold* as a place to be (or see) starving artists. For about a decade, SoHo had managed the improbable, subsisting as Richard Kostelanetz’s “artists’ colony.” By ‘79, Kostelanetz was ready to sketch the district’s obituary (though a new round of obituaries for the scene would crop up in the late 80s). By the close of the Seventies a transition had been made from artists’ enclave to enclave for the “artsy.” Even today, the independent boutiques that line Spring Street thrive on original, artful displays and craft-built pieces; there is still some attempt to preserve the inspired flavor of the SoHo renaissance. It is the flavor, though, that is being sold. Whether as a site for disenchanting children of the bourgeoisie or for trendsetting boutiques to sell those

¹⁴ Michael Sahl, “Jeremiads for SoHo,” *EAR Magazine* 5, No. 2 (Summer 1979), 2.

children gewgaws, SoHo's identity was increasingly "creative," complete with the air quotes. It was a brand. It could sell. Even if the long time residents did not consciously sell out, New York's speculators were quite happy to sell SoHo out from underneath them.

SoHo, as a "pure" bohemian space of cultural production, was over. The field of power took advantage of the cultural cachet the artists had brought to the neighborhood to commodify it. In some cases, the artists profited materially (particularly those who had managed to own their buildings rather than rent). In others, the material changes to the neighborhood proved insurmountable. Galleries moved to Chelsea or Tribeca. Some artists followed them; others—especially the sculptors who made best use of the large spaces—simply left the city altogether. 1979's SoHo was just as much in transition as 1968's, moving away from being an arts district for art's sake and becoming an arts district for commerce's sake.

Neither Steve Reich nor Philip Glass were among those who physically abandoned Downtown (though neither had lived in SoHo proper). Like their erstwhile neighborhood, though, both had to adapt to their successes. Reich and Glass had both accepted commissions since their mid-Seventies triumphs. By the Seventies' end, those commissions were affecting their cultural production in significant ways.

For most of the Seventies, Reich and Glass had operated in the essentially bohemian downtown segment of the field of cultural production. Their mode of presentation had revolved around performances. Even in the case of *Einstein on the Beach*, the work was built as a performance rather than an artifact. The cultural

production was art for art's sake—it was not aimed at a “mass” audience, nor was it primarily intended to be consumed in recorded form. The ensemble model was an essential part of this mode of production; Reich's and Glass's groups helped (to varying degrees) to create the sound and to realize the performances. The “works,” such as they were, did not exist independently of their ensemble realizations.

By 1979, both Reich and Glass had taken opportunities to broaden their mode of production through emphasis on works rather than performances. Commissions formed the core of this shift. Mid-Seventies had attracted the attention of domestic and international institutions. For their own reasons, those institutions wished to utilize Reich and Glass, to draw on some of the symbolic capital the composers had accrued. In return, they offered economic capital. (In less formal terms, they paid to borrow some of the composers' cachet.) While the exchange of one kind of capital is worth noting, the consequences of the exchange for the music and its presentation are more important.

Commissioning necessitates a commodification of the work; it has to have a degree of fungibility to be the central element in the exchange. For producers like Reich and Glass, who had worked as presenters rather than as creators of artifacts, this meant an increased emphasis on scores as the cultural goods. Though part of *Einstein on the Beach* had grown from a French commission, the work itself was conceived and constructed as a performance—the principal creators were involved directly in disseminating the work to the (other) performers, displacing the score and script as the central source of material. As the composers accepted more traditional commissions, they assumed a more traditional role in the presentation process. Rather than being intimately involved in the works' development through rehearsal of their own ensembles, they dispatched their

scores to performers and conductors in other parts of the world. The mediation of the performers, so central to consecrated art music, increased the “composerness” of Reich and Glass.

Philip Glass’s *Satyagraha* is a case in point. As Glass tells it, Hans de Roo of the Netherlands Opera, after seeing *Einstein* in Amsterdam, asked Glass if he’d like to write a “real opera.”

I remember answering that I’d like that very much, but what did he mean by “a real opera?”

His response was very clear: “It should be for my orchestra, chorus and soloists, people trained and practiced in the singing of traditional operas.”¹⁵

While Glass remained ambivalent about the term “opera,” he *was* interested in continuing to work in music theater. (Given his history of writing music for Mabou Mines stage productions, this is not particularly surprising.) The 1976 conversation with de Roo, much like Glass’s earlier encounter with Michel Guy, led to a European commission for a new work. Much of the legwork of organizing backers in the Netherlands was accomplished by Margaret Wood, who had left Performing Art Services to found her own agency. This time, though, the commission (and prestige) centered on Glass. The composer quickly proposed a project based on Gandhi—a deeply personal subject given Glass’s interest in India. De Roo and the European backers approved of the subject matter in 1977, leaving Glass to assemble a production team. Robert Wilson was busy with other projects, so Glass went to other friends: writer Constance de Jong (a “SoHo friend”), designer Robert Israel (with whom Glass “had many SoHo friends in

¹⁵ Glass, *Music*, 87.

common”) and Richard Riddell for lighting. They did not, initially, have a director. David Poutney became the director fairly late in the process, after the music was completed.¹⁶

Glass’s shifting practice as a cultural producer is evident in that music. He composed the instrumental parts for a traditional orchestra omitting brass and percussion in favor of an expanded wind section, and including an electric organ to support the tripled wind parts (despite three players to a part, there were portions of the score where staggered breathing was insufficient to create continuity). Because the key scenes of Gandhi’s life treated in the opera took place in public, there are expansive amounts of choral writing (requiring considerable rehearsal time). Glass confesses that the vocal writing for the soloists was treated “conservatively” (musically, at least—the singers still had to deal with Sanskrit and the opera’s unconventional scoring). This had to do in part with his own caution as a composer; he had little experience with operatic solos. More important, at least according to Glass, were the practical concerns of creating a work that would endure beyond its initial run. The prominence of ensemble singing (using multiple soloists) allowed the opera to be successful without a need for famous soloists (who would be “reluctan[t] to invest time in learning a role that ultimately would attract fewer

¹⁶ Glass’s account of the opera’s commissioning, collection of personnel, and creation can be found on p. 87-111 of *Music by Philip Glass*. As is often the case in Glass’s own accounts, difficulties are glossed over and emphasis is placed on the importance of the subject matter and his team’s treatment of it. A less retrospective account can be found in *EAR Magazine* beginning with Vol. 5 No. 1, (April/May 1979). The editors ran a series of articles by the work’s creators. (The New York Public Library, unfortunately, holds only the first issue of the series, with an explanation of the libretto by Constance de Jong): “Editor’s Note: This is the first installment of a projected series of articles, interviews, and presentation of materials relating the inception, production and ultimate performance of a new opera, SATYAGRAHA by Philip Glass. Our plan is to afford the readers of *EAR* an unusual vantage point through which to observe at close proximity the various stages in the development of what we believe may prove to be a major work of this generation which will take its place alongside its noblest predecessors. This sequence of installments will exclusively appear in *EAR Magazine* throughout the forthcoming year. May we urge you to follow closely with us the subsequent issues in this unique exposure of the work of Philip Glass, composer; Constance DeJong, librettist; and Robert Israel, designer.”

paying engagements than yet another *La Boheme* or *Rigoletto*.”)¹⁷ An ensemble opera would be more “attractive” to opera producers. There were enough unconventional elements to the score that adding virtuoso solo parts might be one discouragement too many.

Though full of Glass’s characteristic arpeggios and streaming eighth notes, *Satyagraha* makes far more concessions toward de Roo’s vague “real opera” than the composer’s previous theatrical outings. There is meaningful text (albeit in Sanskrit). Triads abound. Potter notes that Glass’s expanded means gave him an “opportunity to explore further links with more popular musical forms already established”:

Each scene [of *Satyagraha*] is constructed on a ‘chaconne’ bass with harmonic elaborations above it. In the arrival of the chord progression, Glass had forced some rapprochement with functional harmony... In *Satyagraha*, opera singers are required to sing words with quite clear meaning for both character development and plot, even if the text is in Sanskrit...¹⁸

The work is not a *traditional* opera. Nobody will mistake it for *Rigoletto*. It is, though, decisively an opera. *Einstein*, with its amplified ensemble, emphasis on dance and lighting, and the scope of Wilson’s direction, had far less to do with any operatic antecedents. It had been scratch-built, managed by a handful of people from start to finish. With *Einstein*, the performance had been the product. Its creators had assembled, rehearsed, and performed it without the notion of it being fungible. It was craft-built in the manner of “downtown” productions (although a much larger scale). In *Satyagraha*, Glass and his collaborators set out to create an opera that could go from company to company, with interchangeable soloists, choruses, and instrumentalists. It was a work that could exist independent of its creators—a commodity.

¹⁷ Glass, *Music*, 115.

¹⁸ Potter, *Minimalists*, 339.

Like Glass, Reich had received commissions from Europe.¹⁹ His extensive touring with *Music for 18 Musicians* had left him little time to compose in the late 70s, but by 1979 he was leaving the fallow period behind him. In December 1979, he completed *Variations for Winds, Strings, and Keyboards* for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Like Glass's *Satyagraha*, it incorporates chaconne-like structures as part of a continuing reconciliation with the structural power of harmonic motion. More importantly, it resembles *Satyagraha* in that it was a work intended for performance by groups Reich had little to do with. While Glass moved toward theater (and later toward film), Reich moved toward the typical instrumental ensembles of the Western classical tradition. He had also begun, slowly, to allow Universal Editions to publish certain early pieces (*Four Organs*, *Clapping Music*, *Piano Phase*, *Violin Phase*, and *Clapping Music*).²⁰ Importantly, Reich believed that, "by about 1979...that there were people out there who could perform my music."²¹ Enough members had passed through or performed alongside Reich's ensemble that his performance techniques were becoming more widely distributed in the field. He no longer *had* to control performances of his works so tightly to ensure quality presentation. The stage was set, so to speak, for Reich to enter the score-as-commodity market even as he continued to organize performances for his own ensemble.

Though it would be years before either Reich or Glass would appear in its regular programming, the New York Philharmonic was not so different in stature from the

¹⁹ *Music for a Large Ensemble* in 1978 for the Netherlands Wind Ensemble to premiere at the Holland Festival and *Octet* for the Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt. These are discussed briefly in the previous chapter.

²⁰ Helen Wallace, *Boosey & Hawkes: The Publishing Story* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 2007), 171.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 170.

institutions that were commissioning the downtowners. With Boulez's departure, the Philharmonic had retreated to a diminished role in the field of new music. Mehta did not push the modernist works of his predecessor; there was no more drive to make the Philharmonic a kind of taste-trainer for its subscribers. Still, he did not entirely abandon new music. He programmed John Corigliano's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, Barber's *Souvenirs*, and Hindemith's *Trauemusik*, among others. These were hardly the dissonance or concept-peddlers competing for the future of new music, but they were much easier for the subscription base to swallow. Mehta's moderate programming and his contrast with Boulez on the podium helped reconcile the Philharmonic and its subscribers. That was not Mehta's only merit, though. He gave the Philharmonic something Boulez had seldom been able to offer: time.²² The Philharmonic's new music director, like the city's new mayor, put in long hours on the less glamorous part of the job.

Under the Mehta regime (and with Carlos Moseley's retirement as president in 1978), the Philharmonic had reverted toward a kind of Bernsteinian mean. (Although Mehta would never carry the Philharmonic to the heights Bernstein had managed.) Rather than seek to expand or leverage the Philharmonic's brand, the orchestra's leadership chose to consolidate it. The season slogans tell the story: "A tradition of greatness" (1977-78, the interim year between Boulez and Mehta), "subscribe now to American's longest-running musical hit" (1978-79), "that great New York Sound" (1979-80), and "share the glory" (1980-81)—all a dramatic shift from the last slogan of the Boulez years:

²² The 1980 annual report of the Philharmonic-Society notes that: "as Music Director, Mr. Mehta led the Orchestra in 87 concerts during 21 weeks of the season, which included one-half of the subscription season, tours, and Young People's, Non-Subscription, Pension Fund, Special and Parks Concerts." Boulez, by comparison, had usually worked 14 or 16 weeks.

“New Sight, New Sound, New Season.”²³ The Philharmonic belonged to the city, the nation, and to history. While the publicity materials praise Mehta’s conducting, he was not made the center of the Philharmonic’s identity. No matter how much the programming drifted back toward the mood established by Leonard Bernstein, the new music director would not be such an icon.

As the field of cultural production had fragmented, the power of such icons had waned, anyway. With Mehta and his programming, the Philharmonic backed away from the push it had made under Boulez for control in a broader swath of the field. In 1979, Mehta still had New York’s critics on his side and was still in the honeymoon phase with the orchestra’s members. The New York Philharmonic looked strong, stronger perhaps than it had since Bernstein’s departure at the Seventies’ opening. It had attained that strength, though, by accepting that strength’s limits. There would be no more Prospective Encounters, no more Informal Evenings. Though Mehta did not exactly *avoid* new music (going so far as to open the 1980-81 season with a concert including Stockhausen’s “Jubilee” Mahler’s “Kindertotenlieder” and Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*), it was peripheral to his goals as music director. The Philharmonic had returned—rather gratefully—to its role as a purveyor of the consecrated. Despite all the efforts of the Boulez years, new music had not become part of the Philharmonic’s proper purview.

Just as the Philharmonic was settling into the long tenure of Zubin Mehta, the Group for Contemporary Music was becoming thoroughly settled into its position at the Manhattan School of Music and New York’s cultural field. They split their six concert presentations of the 1979-80 season between the Borden Auditorium at the School and

²³ From subscription series advertisements and brochures, New York Philharmonic Archive.

Cooper Union in the East Village. Presentations at both “ends” of the New York new music scene aside, Wuorinen and Sollberger had not developed sudden sympathy for their downtown counterparts, instead continuing to work in modernist-derived styles. The Group did, though, make a conscious effort to go beyond New York artists, featuring one program by Californian composers (although they avoided any experimental Californians of the Partch/Cowell/Harrison mold) and a concert of music by English composers.²⁴ The Group continued to emphasize high performance standards, and reviewers continued to comment on them.

In December of 1979, the Group hosted a concert including works by John Cage. The evening also featured a panel discussion between Cage, Wuorinen, and John Rockwell (who had seldom been generous in his reviews of the Group’s programming). The program featured Wuorinen’s “Fast Fantasy” (1977—for cello and piano, played by Wuorinen and Fred Sherry), Cage’s “Third Construction” (1941—performed by the New Jersey Percussion Ensemble Quartet), Tod Machover’s “Yoku Mireba” (1977, for flute, cello, and piano), and Gerald Chenoweth’s “Fantasy Quartet” (1972). Despite the prestigious composers, the event gathered little press attention.²⁵ Nicholas Kenyon of *The New Yorker* reviewed it, but not until the following February, and only in conjunction with a more recent performance by the New Music Consort at Carnegie Hall. After making the usual enthusiastic gestures toward the quality of performance, as well as more abstract points about the political implications of works on the two concerts, Kenyon added:

²⁴ The October 15 concert of Californian composers featured Paul Chihara, Roger Reynolds, Edwin Dugger, and Leonard Rosenman. The February 22 concert featured the music of Michael Tippett, Bernard Rands, Robertor Gerhard, and Harrison Birtwhistle.

²⁵ Deaver (thesis) cites a review of the event by John Rockwell in the *Times* from Dec. 13, 1979. I could find no evidence of this review, nor of any other Rockwell review of the concert.

I can't resist recording an exchange in The Group for Contemporary Music's post-concert discussion between Wuorinen, Cage, and John Rockwell. Meditating on the supposed difference between the New York "uptown" composer, with his academic background and formal techniques, and the "downtown" composer, with his improvisation and chance procedures, Rockwell asked the two composers if they would like to react to those labels. There was a long, nervous pause, and then Cage said, with a cheerful gleam in his eye, "I guess it might be more interesting to discuss our Zip Codes," and proceeded to do so.²⁶

It was a perfectly Cagean answer, and while it might be read as an attempt at some new ecumenicalism, the concert itself did little to bridge divides or expand musical boundaries. "Third Construction" is an early Cage piece, composed well before his experiments with chance and choice procedures. Its assemblage of tin cans and toms, claves and cowbells is precisely notated, full of contrasting dynamics and rhythmic counterpoint. It was also nearly thirty years older than anything else on the program—composed when Wuorinen was three. It was not an improvisatory or chance-driven work, not particularly "downtown" at all. The *gesture* of programming Cage and inviting him to participate in a panel discussion was more important to the Group than adversarial engagement or, for that matter, conciliatory engagement. The invitation was simply about engagement itself, about creating associations between Cage and the Group, between Cage's East Village-ness and the Group's Upper Manhattan-ness. Juxtaposing the two (or at least making the pretense of doing so) was no more a reconciliation between Uptown and Downtown than bringing serial-inspired compositions to Cooper Union.

NEW MUSIC, NEW YORK will provide a comprehensive review of current developments in new music. Two other events with substantial impact on the new music movement will coincide with the Festival: an Institute of the Music Critics Association at which critics from all over the country will study and discuss substantive issues of Post Cageian music, and a national conference of the Directors of New Music Centers, who will meet to

²⁶ Nicholas Kenyon, "Musical Events: Politics," *The New Yorker*, Feb. 4, 1980, 116.

improve their communications and to discuss future plans relative to the contemporary composer and the organizations which provide a support structure. NEW MUSIC, NEW YORK is important not only as a celebration of these 54 composers and their compositions but also as the focal point of the effort to organize a better support system for composers and a distribution system to make this work better known.

—The Kitchen²⁷

As the city and its various presenting groups settled into a new stability, the Kitchen hosted a festival of new music—New Music, New York (which eventually became the more broadly conceived “American Music Festival/New Music America”). New Music, New York (NMNY) was, like Rockwell’s lists in the *Times*, an attempt to capture a moment that had already passed. While it looked to the future, NMNY was the last hurrah of SoHo’s experimental scene. The festival brought together a musical community increasingly fragmented by the changing neighborhood and real estate market.²⁸ Planned in parallel with the festival were two other important events: a conference of new music organizers and an “institute” of the Music Critics Association. The assemblage of presenters, organizations, and professional receivers creates a unique snapshot of the field of new music as it entered a new era.

New Music, New York was, for the Kitchen, emergence from a chrysalis carefully (but not always intentionally) built up over the years. With the creation and presentation of a major new music festival, the Kitchen ceased to be a neighborhood institution. It had not been a purely local organization since its earliest days, of course, but NMNY put it on the national and international map. New Music, New York was an expression of everything the Vasulkas had dreaded about becoming an institution (see chapter two). It was curation. It was organization. It was selection and planning and sorting and managing over fifty composers for more than a week (never mind the

²⁷ Press Release for New Music, New York, The Kitchen Archives.

²⁸ The Kitchen itself would move to Chelsea in 1986. See chapter seven.

additional performers, journalists, and presenters). In all matters but budget, it was a larger, more ambitious project than Lincoln Center's earlier Celebration of Contemporary Music. And it was the Kitchen, that former anarchic collective in a rotting hotel, that was putting it on.

The festival proper featured an astounding nine evenings of music, June 8-16. The first of these was a benefit for the Kitchen and the festival, and it brought out the heavy hitters: Glass, Reich (or at least members of his ensemble—the composer himself was in Europe), Monk, Robert Ashley, and Pauline Oliveros. Following on the heels of 1978's benefit gala (see previous chapter), it is hardly surprising that the Kitchen would secure a high-profile lineup for NMNY's opening night. The eight subsequent evenings of music featured six artists apiece, each presenting a representative fifteen-minute selection.²⁹

The Conference of Directors of New Music Centers (often referred to in print simply as the "New Music Conference") was more limited in scale, if not in ambition. Set at the Loeb Student Center at New York University, it ran three days midweek (June 12-14). The panel discussions covered fundraising, support organizations, functioning as an access center, and the role of the presenting organization. Panels from the first two days were designed to result in more participatory conferences on the third day—opportunities for organizations to network with each other and with potential funding providers. The conference's most important event was its culmination: "cooperation and future development," a session designed to "discuss the conference's findings and creatively project subsequent developments in the field."³⁰ The networking opportunities created by the conference would eventually result in the continuation of the festival as New Music

²⁹ A full list of composers and works can be found in Appendix Two.

³⁰ New Music Conference typescript schedule, The Kitchen Archives.

America (hosted in 1980 at Minneapolis' Walker Art Center and at many other venues around the country since) and increased opportunities for new music centers to cooperate in presenting tours and concert series.

The Music Critics Association Institute was part of a national series of events designed not to facilitate collaboration, but as educational opportunities. They were funded largely by a National Endowment for the Arts grant to the Music Critics Association's educational arm, MCA Educational Activities, Inc. Coincident with New Music, New York was the Institute on Contemporary Experimental Music. The *Times*' John Rockwell was an organizer and prominent participant, appearing on four of the nine panels that occurred June 12-17. Tom Johnson and Michael Nyman also appeared as panelists, as did Brian Eno and Philip Glass. Meredith Monk appeared as part of a panel on the relationship between new music and other arts. While the New Music Conference was centralized, the Institute held panels variously at the Loeb Student Center, the Collective for Living Cinema, the Experimental Intermedia Foundation, and at the Kitchen itself.

The critics' symposium drew out-of-town critics with fresh perspectives on New York's new music scene, and particularly on the Kitchen, SoHo, and the loosely-defined "downtown." Situating the festival in SoHo was an essential preliminary to discussing the music (and, often, to the discussions of the MCA Institute). For the visiting critics, the "New York" was at least as important as the "New Music." The city's reputation—and more specifically SoHo's—as an incubator for the experimental helped define the festival for the critics and for their audiences. Joseph McLellan called this site of challenges to

the “Western Musical Tradition” a “few grubby blocks of lower Manhattan.”³¹ Richard Dyer of the *Boston Sunday Globe* wrote:

SoHo is a place, but since it is a place in New York, it is also a Scene, the site of a state of mind. Within a few square blocks of factories and warehouses there are about 60 galleries; in the lofts above them live painters, sculptors, musicians, and video artists whose interaction has led to a whole movement, or at least led to a whole attitude, that has nurtured the most diverse sort of artistic activity.³²

New York critics were no less prone to discussing the SoHo state of mind. John Rockwell, in previewing the festival for readers of the *Times*, took a positively didactic approach, attempting to explain the whole history of downtown as if his audience never knew such a place (never mind such a scene) existed. “Most music lovers,” he asserted, “won’t even be aware of it [NMNY].”³³ He begins by explaining what this “underground” music *isn’t*: neither the uptown music of Carter and Wuorinen nor the midtown sound of Schuman, Mennin, or Persichetti. He then attempts to define the “intangible yet somehow perceptible” connections between downtown musicians:

The first links are sociological, relating to shared geography and sources of patronage. In New York, at least, these musicians tend to cluster with the painters, poets, dancers and video artists where the rents are cheap, in the manner of all Bohemian communities for the past 200 years. The result is that they share ideas with others in the community more easily than with practitioners of what is supposed to be their own art: in other words, composers in SoHo

³¹ Joseph McLellan, “Strange Music at the Kitchen: A Challenge to Western Tradition,” *The Washington Post*, June 24, 1979.

³² Richard Dyer, “Live, from New York! It’s... The, ah, new music, and sometimes the Emperor has no clothes,” *Boston Globe*, June 24, 1979. The headline was not Dyer’s, and he was not happy about the tone that it struck. An undated handwritten note from Dyer in the Kitchen Archives reads “Thanks for the pictures, but my editor decided to go with a drawing I hate. But not more than I hate the headlines that went on the stories.”

³³ John Rockwell, “Underground Music Surfaces for a Nine-Day Festival,” *The New York Times*, June 3, 1979.

have been as much influenced by SoHo painters, dancers, etc. as by Elliott Carter.³⁴

Rockwell himself was far more familiar with downtown music; his “beat” covered rock and pop as much as it did anything experimental. Still, there is something illuminating in the constant need to reintroduce downtown to *Times* readers. For all the press coverage certain downtowners had received, for all of their record deals and commissions and burgeoning careers as pop experimentalists, they had not managed a foothold in the mainstream. SoHo was still a terra incognita to all but the cognoscenti. But it was a scene, undeniably. What is striking about critical descriptions of SoHo is that insistence that there is a coherence, and that it has something to do with geography and socialization.

Even insiders writing for insiders, such as Tom Johnson at *The Village Voice*, fully familiar with the diversity of musical and presentational approaches operating under the “downtown” umbrella, felt this coherence. Johnson, however, was more inclined to recognize the historical element of that social coherence, and the ways that it had changed over the preceding decade:

I am impressed, for example, at the maturity of most of the artists. The SoHo scene, or the Kitchen scene, or the experimental music scene, or the new music scene, or whatever you want to call it, is still widely regarded by outsiders as a radical avant-garde genre, the implication being that it is carried on by rebellious young freaks who are still reacting against what their teachers taught them and trying to startle audiences with their iconoclasm. Such a description might almost be appropriate if we were talking about...those first Kitchen seasons that took place in the former kitchen of the old Broadway Central Hotel in the early '70s. But the present situation is very different. Most of these musicians sowed their first artistic oats long ago, and while their work may still seem bizarre to the general public, most of it now comes out of

³⁴ Ibid.

a good many years of experience, and most of its creators are over 35.³⁵

Johnson's preview of the festival suggests a SoHo that is settling down, settling in to explore the fruits of earlier experiments rather than continuing the radicalism which had initiated those experiments in the first place. Johnson is correct, too—SoHo institutions like the Kitchen had, by 1979, become institutions in the fullest sense of the word. The artists working there were not all young guns (Reich and Glass were children of the 1930s); many had acquired extensive experience in securing grants and commissions. (Monk, for example, had received some form of support from the National Endowment for the Arts every year since 1971.)³⁶ For all that a “challenge to the Western tradition” was part and parcel of SoHo's scene, that challenge was building a tradition of its own.

Not everybody was happy with that. More resolutely experimental artists, often younger and still operating outside institutional supports, were quick to criticize the calcification of SoHo's experimentalism. Among the most visible (and entertaining) commentaries on New Music, New York were Beth Anderson's “reports from the front,” also titled “reviews for the critics.” Anderson, who had studied at Mills College with Robert Ashley and Terry Riley, composed text-music. Born in 1950, she belonged decisively to post-war America. She moved to New York in 1975, and was intimately involved with the production of EAR Magazine, a hand-published ‘zine featuring scores and commentary on new music. Her “reports from the front” slide easily from the journalistic to the literary, and she seldom hesitated to criticize:

³⁵ Tom Johnson, “Impressions of New Music,” *Village Voice*, June 11, 1979.

³⁶ Monk's applications and related correspondence can be found in the Meredith Monk Archive.

After all these years, Mr. Reich is too fucking loud. Men hitting things. I remember hearing this piece in 1973 in a big church in Berkeley and it was voluptuous. His music needs a hall with high ceilings and rugs. Aside from the sound, the formality is reassuring—like having your parents stay together for your sake. Comforting, but bad for the stomach. But, it’s fun for the players—wearing black shirts and getting off beating skins.³⁷

The piece in question was the first movement of Reich’s *Drumming*, the opening work for the gala benefit concert on June 8 (performed twice, at 6:00 and 9:30 p.m.). The lineup of that concert captures the festival’s moment well: the featured artists (with the possible exception of Robert Ashley) had gained a degree of prominence throughout New York and the nation, but most of them had close connections to the Kitchen itself. (Ashley, Glass, and Monk were all members of the Kitchen’s Board of Directors at the time.) They also all fell thoroughly into Johnson’s “mature” group, having spent years honing their particular styles.

The gala’s program was a showcase for those styles—and more importantly, the artists behind them—rather than for the works themselves. Like the rest of the festival, the opening concert restricted composers to short works. For Reich (who did not attend), that meant one movement of 1970’s *Drumming*. For Glass, it meant a single movement of *Dance* (a collaboration with film-maker Sol LeWitt and dancer Lucinda Childs). For Monk, it meant two (sung) excerpts from 1973’s *Education of the Girlchild* and 1970’s “Do You Be.” Pauline Oliveros led the audience in “The Tuning Meditation.” And Robert Ashley closed the evening with 1964’s “The Wolfman.” With the exception of Glass’s work-in-progress, the pieces programmed for the evening were not at all new.

John Rockwell noted this in his review (one of the few to treat the opening concert singly rather than as part of a festival summary):

³⁷ Beth Anderson, “Reviews for the Critics,” Report from the front #1 (June 8), The Kitchen Archives.

The program was an interesting one, full of good or at least stimulating music. But only some of it was new, and the composers selected, being well-known ones, didn't really constitute a preview of the evenings to come.³⁸

These established artists—and the thin slivers of their catalogues that they presented—had little in common with the artists who would form the bulk of NMNY's "comprehensive summary." Few critics spent much time with Reich's, Glass's, or Monk's performances, instead focusing on the evening's quietest and loudest works. The quietest came from Oliveros, whose collective listening/performing exercise "Tuning Meditation" created one of the most distinctive moments of the festival:

Pauline Oliveros...provided one of the festival's finest moments by making the audience the performers in a simple but marvelously effective group improvisation, each member of the audience singing a tone, listening to the others, and choosing another tone with which to harmonize. It's a risky business, but this was a talented audience and the effect was beautiful.³⁹

As the gorgeous choral texture began to rise very gradually out of the audience, it began to seem almost impossible that any thing could go wrong. There was something irresistible about her, about her belief, and about how she was able to somehow plug herself, and us, into an almost cosmic experience.⁴⁰

She is pulling the sound out of us and we get off. It's like the Episcopal church where everyone sings almost everything—participation—but better, since it's not possible to be out of tune. For this one, there is great admiration.⁴¹

Ashley's "Wolfman" relied on high volume, electronic keyboard sounds, and copious amounts of feedback. The volume divided critics and chased some audience members away, conjuring up memories of SoHo's more antagonistic past. Rockwell

³⁸ John Rockwell, "Music: Kitchen Offering Experimental Festival," *New York Times*, June 10, 1979.

³⁹ McLellan, "Strange Music."

⁴⁰ Tom Johnson, "New Music, New York, New Institution," *Village Voice*, July 2, 1979. This extensive review of the festival was eventually used as the liner notes for The Kitchen's 2004 release of "New Music New York 1979," a selection of recordings made during the festival (OMM0015, New York: Orange Mountain Music, 2004).

⁴¹ Beth Anderson, "report from the front #1."

called it “a real climax, the only bit of old-fashioned avant-garde aggression of the night” and “a new-music golden oldie” (although he concluded by dubbing it “amusing”).⁴² Anderson called it “agonizing” and, like the Reich and Glass, “too fucking loud.” Its only saving grace was that “it’s an old piece and it uses the wretched volume to endeavor to say something.”⁴³

The gala-as-showcase presentation model, though, prevented any of the composers (or the Kitchen, really), from “saying something.” Or at least saying something related to the art itself. The event’s importance was not in the pieces performed, no matter how cosmic or agonizing. The featured works could be older, shorter bits of their creators’ repertoires because it was the *creators* rather than the works that carried the evening’s weight. Audiences came to hear these five avant-garde heavyweights on one program (and to be seen hearing them). The works were not the point. At \$15 for non-members, tickets for the opening night were nearly quadruple the \$4 admissions to NMNY’s other concerts. Although smaller in scope and directly connected to the festival, the opening concert was not so different from 1978’s benefit concert (which featured nearly the same lineup, trading Oliveros for Laurie Anderson). It was a chance for the Kitchen to strengthen its connections and credibility, as well as to raise funds.

In strengthening its connections and finances, the Kitchen was working to cement its place in the field of cultural production, particularly in relation to the field of power. The presence of SoHo’s leading artistic lights, those happy few who had gained some traction outside its “grubby” environs, helped pull attention to the institution itself. That

⁴² Rockwell, “Kitchen Offering.”

⁴³ Anderson, “report from the front #1.”

presence drew critics, whose attention could not help but fall in part on the Kitchen. Attention to the event—or at least the anticipation of such attention—helped draw an audience willing to pay the higher ticket prices; the audience could gain more cultural capital from an event casting a wider shadow on the social field. These mutually-reinforcing trends, the same ones at play in the 1978 benefit, anchor the Kitchen in a network of respectability. By presenting those cultural producers who have acquired symbolic capital in the broader field of cultural production, the Kitchen demonstrates its own ability to act as a consecrator.

That ability to act as a consecrator was best-displayed (and most-tested) in NMNY's other programming. As with the gala, the format of these latter concerts posed difficulties. The fifteen-minute performances necessitated excerpting some of the composers' works, and were particularly confining for those artists working in prolonged styles, but they also allowed an astonishingly broad sample of styles to be presented over the festivals' nine days. It's suggestive of the "sampler" approach to programming that the pieces were listed alphabetically each evening by composer (and often performed in that order). Most of the composers were or had been active in New York's Downtown, but there were representatives from elsewhere in the Northeast and the West Coast and a few from the Midwest). Michael Nyman (better known for his book *Experimentalism: Cage and Beyond*)⁴⁴ traveled from England to present his *Five Orchestral Pieces Opus Tree* and to take part in panel discussions.

There was some criticism as to the selection of composers for the festival, as well as their number. John Rockwell suggested that

⁴⁴ Michael Nyman, *Experimentalism: Cage and Beyond* (London: Studio Vista, 1974).

a greater selectivity as to number would have been helpful, as would have been more care in insuring representatives from the country as a whole. A limited budget and six composers nightly tended to...focus attention unfairly on solo pieces and other works that trivialized some of the composers involved.⁴⁵

There were suggestions that the very name of the festival implied a certain amount of geocentrism. Joe Hannan, the Kitchen's publicity associate, defended the festival's title vehemently in a letter to Anderson's "reports from the front":

An earlier issue [of Anderson's "reports from the front"] suggests that the festival's title is a misnomer. I am the person responsible for titling NEW MUSIC, NEW YORK. The comma is included in the title to stress the title's address-like quality: this is a new music festival taking place in New York. The merest glance at the publicity or program notes confirms that the festival is not geocentric. Composers now living in Texas, Massachusetts, Michigan, Vermont, California, Illinois, Washington State, various cities in Great Britain and other places are included. We spent a good portion of our anemic budget on travel for composers. It annoys me to hear embittered locals complain that this festival is parochial.⁴⁶

Though Hannan's (and the Kitchen's) intentions were certainly good, budgetary limitations *did* limit the number of outside composers able to attend the festival.

Furthermore, the festival's programming was limited by the reach of its directors; they could hardly invite composers they did not know of already. (There was no formal "call for scores" to solicit national interest.) The festival was dominated by New Yorkers and former New Yorkers, many of whom had performed at the Kitchen previously.

There was an attempt, though, to at least include a diversity of styles. Two programming threads emerge. The first, probably attributable to Garret List (who had been the Kitchen's music director from 1975-77), was the presence of African-American

⁴⁵ John Rockwell, "Music: 53 Composers in 9-Day Festival," *New York Times*, June 18, 1979.

⁴⁶ Joe Hannan, Publicity Associate for the Kitchen, in a letter included in report from the front #5, The Kitchen Archives.

experimental music and jazz-inflected works. List and his A-1 Band presented what Joseph McLellan called “a brilliant, high-spirited, and very eclectic jazz set” on the June 9. On the twelfth, Don Cherry performed a tune on the *duzon goni* (an African hunter’s harp) and Jeanne Lee presented *Collaboration*, a mix of composed and improvised sections. George Lewis performed “The Kim and I,” an improvisation for trombone and “microcomputer” (the “Kim” of the title) on June 13.⁴⁷

Critical attention to these performances was limited and scattershot. McLellan wrote that Cherry’s performance “was a triumph more of personality than of music.”⁴⁸ Anderson—the only reviewer to comment on every piece performed at the festival—rather vaguely states that the music on the June 9 concert (which included a Spencer Barfield guitar solo, a text-sound piece by Marc Grafe, List’s band set, a performance by trombonist Peter Zummo with a dancer, and a large ensemble piece by Karle Berger) was all “tied to jazz in some way—except Grafe. Since many composers work between new music and jazz, one wonders how curatorial decisions were made.”⁴⁹

Anderson was not the only one speculating about the world “between new music and jazz.” The relationship between jazz—particularly the emphatically experimental “loft jazz”—and the SoHo community was an irregular one. Music made by African-Americans, regardless of how experimental it may or may not have been, tended to get lumped in with “jazz,” given over to a different set of critics (jazz or pop), and denied the feature stories that other (white) experimentalists often received. Michael Dessen and Benjamin Piekut examine some of the contradictions inherent in this artificial divide, as

⁴⁷ Lewis went on to serve two years as music director for the Kitchen beginning in the 1980-81 season. Lewis discusses his time in the downtown scene in a wide-ranging 2010 interview at: <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/george-e-lewis-the-storys-being-told/> (accessed June 2012).

⁴⁸ McLellan, “Strange Music.”

⁴⁹ Report from the front #2. The Kitchen Archives.

well as the tensions it created or failed to create in the experimental music community.⁵⁰

Even without the benefit of historical perspective, the problem of diversity was recognized by critics:

Some participants asked why this collection of experimental music did not include more work from the jazz tradition, much of which is as innovative as anything in the classical avant-garde. Despite the performances by Cherry, Jeanne Lee, and George Lewis, the festival was clearly weighted toward white musicians, but the reasoning seems to me to have more to do with recent history than with overt racism. As I see it the black-dominated loft jazz scene has evolved right alongside the white-dominated experimental scene throughout this decade. Loft jazz has been quite visible and successful in its own way, and for an institution like the Kitchen an attempt to take this genre under its own wing would be far more patronizing than constructive.⁵¹

Johnson goes on to argue that a “truly ecumenical” festival would have had to include klezmer bands, shakuhachi and khamancheh players, Balkan groups, and so on. His statement, though, effaces the problem, neatly tucking black experimental music back into the “jazz” category. Johnson operates from a privileged position, but also from a position thoroughly tangled in the discourse that divided black and white music-making. Michael Dessen (who elsewhere discusses Johnson’s blind spots, particularly in the early 80s), avers that:

The larger point here is that even as musicians were actively building new communities and methods which...were multi-ethnic in membership and multi-disciplinary in method, this same process faced substantial obstacles in the racially charged environment of New York’s cultural marketplace and in the subtle forms of racial coding in press taxonomies of genre.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Michael Dessen, “Decolonizing Art Music: Scenes from the Late Twentieth-Century United States,” PhD diss., University of California San Diego, 2003. See also Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), particularly chapter 3.

⁵¹ Johnson, “New Music, New York, New Institution.”

⁵² Dessen, “Decolonizing Art Music,” 67.

New Music, New York, of course, was not created to shatter taxonomies nor to promote ethnic diversity. It was, however, intended to present a “comprehensive review of current developments in new music.” The thread of jazz and African-American experimental music in the festival’s programming is a nod toward that comprehensiveness, but the Kitchen occupied a distinct position in the field of new music, one that for all its proximity to “loft jazz” was still only tangentially connected to it.

Out of the SoHo scene has come a panorama of musical ideas ranging from the Velvet Underground...to punk rock and New Wave rock to the minimalist music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass. Glass and Reich are the stars of the classical end of this spectrum and they are becoming recognized even in the uptown musical circles.

—Charles Ward⁵³

The other downtown trend to feature in New Music, New York, was the influence of pop and rock. Discussed in more detail in chapter seven, by 1979 there was already a substantial amount of overlap between downtown “classical” musicians, New Wave groups, and No Wave groups. Glass’s and Reich’s club gigs (discussed in the previous chapter) had demonstrated the potential pull of art music for nontraditional audiences. Minimalism and experimentalism had percolated through SoHo, mixing with developments in rock music to create something that, like much of the music labeled “loft jazz,” lacked a clear place in the field of cultural production.

At the forefront of this development, at least for the Kitchen, was Rhys Chatham. As a teenager, he had been the center’s first music director. He took over again from Garrett List in 1977. While he’d begun as a flautist, by 1979 his music (including *Guitar Trio*, featured on the June 16 concert) emphasized electric guitars and stark repetition.

⁵³ Ward, “Very Wide Umbrella.”

Several months after the festival, Gregory Sandow wrote of Chatham and Glenn Branca in the *Voice*:

So is this music rock or classical? I'll come down on both sides: I'd like to see these people get the grants classical composers get, but their music *sounds* like rock, and the sound of the music is aesthetically decisive... I wouldn't recommend Branca or Chatham to my Lincoln Center friends, or even to some of my SoHo friends. But if you like hard rock and brainy noise, hear them.⁵⁴

The creeping cross-trade between rock and classical would have greater impact in the downtown of the Eighties. For New Music, New York, it manifested most particularly on the last evening of the festival, which featured Laurie Anderson, Chatham, Peter Gordon, Jeffrey Lohn (with Glenn Branca in his band), Frankie Mann, and Ned Sublette. Anderson, born in 1947, was the oldest of these composers (the others had been born in the early 50s). This highlights what Tom Johnson noted as a “fairly distinct generation gap” between the established composers and their younger counterparts. The older group, according to Johnson, drew on Cage, avoided song form, tended to play synthesizers or standard instruments, and was influenced by Eastern philosophy. The younger group drew more from popular music than from Cage, tended to be involved with electric guitars or performance art, and emphasized volume over reflection.⁵⁵ The younger composers' experiences of the field had been different. Rock had been part of their lives, and an integral part of their early music making, and continued to be central in the lives of many:

Peter Gordon said a wonderful thing when he explained why he combines his love of rock with his love of experimental music: If you go THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP in a rock band all night 'til 4 a.m. making a living, and at 9 a.m. you go to school and work in the electronic music studio and go

⁵⁴ Gregory Sandow, “Loud Guitars,” *Village Voice*, February 25, 1980.

⁵⁵ Johnson, “New Music, New York, New Institution.”

HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM, eventually you go
HMMMMMMMMMMMMMM when the THUMP THUMP THUMP
THUMP is going on. This is a desperately important point—
composition is a result of the composers' lives...⁵⁶

For the younger generation of composers, that experience of rock—the loud volume, the “thump,” the use of song form—did not go away when their ambitions shifted. Vitally, shifting toward the artistic—the art-for-art’s-sake of new music production—was not necessarily viewed *as* a shift. One did not have to move away from the popular (or from rock) to make art.

The fluidity of boundaries is evident in the presentation of shows on NMNY’s periphery. The festival’s program book lists a variety of new music offerings in SoHo (see figure 6-1). The full slate of events at the EAR Inn represents an experimentalism largely independent of the rock or jazz worlds (including a text-sound work by Beth Anderson and additional works by Charlie Morrow). The other events, though, particularly the shows on Wednesday the 13th (scheduled after the NMNY show, highlight the amount of overlap between the art-rock and rock-art scenes.

At Fiorucci’s, a group made up of Kitchen regulars (and employees—Chatham and Hannan both worked for the center) celebrated the release of a book on “live art.” While the two club shows that night may not have featured Kitchen personnel, they received more extensive write-ups than anything else in the “additional events” listing. Rather than emphasizing the ability of the performers, the blurbs highlight the bands’ importance (and novelty) within the field: “These bands have been exploring new timbres, tonality and audience interaction in their music, while remaining true to their rock heritage. These bands are a must for those interested in new developments taking

⁵⁶ Beth Anderson, report from the front #9 (June 16), The Kitchen Archives.

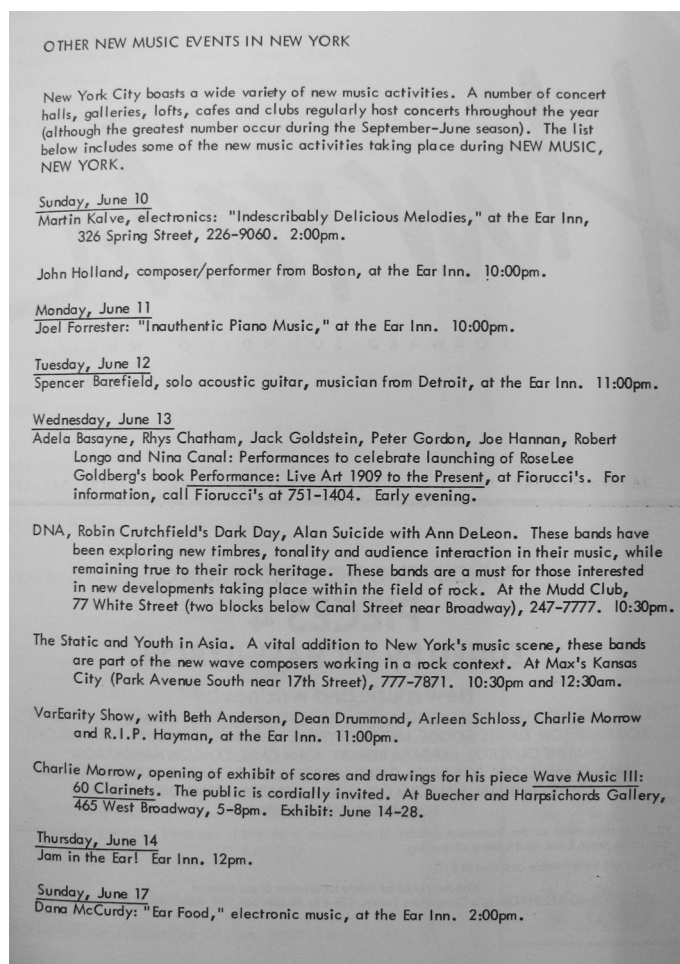


Figure 6-1 "Other New Music Events," New Music New York program book. The Kitchen Archives.

place in the field of rock" and "a vital addition to New York's music scene, these bands are part of the new wave composers working in a rock context."⁵⁷ The emphasis on exploration, on experimentation—the treatment of the bands as *composers*—tie these rock shows to the experimental music scene that NMNY hoped to encapsulate. Both the Mudd Club and Max's Kansas City were friendly to new music, and had hosted performances from the more "classical" end of the downtown spectrum.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ New Music, New York program book. The Kitchen Archives.

⁵⁸ Mickey Ruskin of Max's Kansas City had, in fact, allowed the Vasulkas to host showings upstairs at Max's shortly before they founded The Kitchen.

Though included in New Music, New York, these elements of the overlapping avant-rock and “loft jazz” scenes were less prominent than pieces more thoroughly in SoHo’s experimental tradition.⁵⁹ The New York critics highlighted performances experimental in their sonic content: Rockwell chose works by Phill Niblock, Charles Dodge, David Behrman, Rhys Chatham, Frankie Mann, and Laurie Anderson as the festival’s “best” pieces (though even he put quotes around the term). Johnson complimented Niblock and Anderson, as well as performances by Philip Corner, Jon Gibson, and Gordon Mumma.⁶⁰ Like the vast majority of the works on NMNY, these were pieces performed by their composers (often alongside other composers who also had works programmed): “There have been too many solos in this festival. (I know it comes from not having the funding.) ... The same people keep coming up to play each other’s pieces.”⁶¹

Critics from outside New York, perhaps to highlight the “experimentalism” of New York, were much more likely to include discussion of the festival’s most theatrical work, William Hellermann’s “Squeek” for performer and a rosined swivel chair. Joseph McLellan of the *Washington Post* opened his review of the concert with a description of Hellermann’s performance, “one of the 50-odd (some very odd) compositions” presented on the festival. Richard Dyer of the *Boston Sunday Globe* also included a description of the Hellermann performance. Aside, perhaps, from Charlemagne Palestine yelling at the audience in a darkened room, the Hellermann was the most theatrical piece of the festival, a clear descendant of FLUXUS in which the trappings (the chair, for example,

⁵⁹ John Rockwell, in one of his few criticisms of NMNY, wrote “Real rock and jazz that also happen to be experimental were underrepresented.” (“53 Composers”).

⁶⁰ Tom Johnson, “New Music, New York, New Institution.”

⁶¹ Anderson, “Report from the Front #7.”

was carried onstage in a quilted case) were as central to the work as the sonic content (which was minimal and avoided any percussive or sustained sounds from the chair).

Relatively little attention was paid by newspaper critics to pieces involving electronics. Given the prevalence of amplification and synthesizers in the downtown scene, it was hardly straightforward to draw a line between “electronic music” and “music using electronics.” There were a few pieces that were definitively the former, concentrated particularly on the June 13 concert: Larry Austin’s *Catalogo Voce* for tape and bass-baritone, Joel Chadabe’s two-theremin-controlled *Solo*, George Lewis’ “The Kim and I” for improvising trombone and computer, Laurie Spiegel’s tape piece *Voices Within*, and a “work in progress” from Alvin Lucier. This last, an extraordinarily slow rendition of an ascending series of tones, was intended to be an exercise in hearing attack, envelope, and acoustic space. Electronics were to modify the tones.

Thomas DeLio of *Artforum* found the piece a fine representative of Lucier’s interest in the interactions between sound and environment, part of the same tradition as *I Am Sitting in a Room*:

The piece was very subtle but, nonetheless, quite impressive. With the aid of an electronic amplification system the composer was able to capture and project the particular spatial configurations determined by a variety of different keyboard tones.⁶²

His was one of very few positive comments on the piece. Beth Anderson was moderately sympathetic:

It didn’t really work last night, but he needed more set-up time and he intends to modify the electronics. The audience was impatient,

⁶² Thomas DeLio, “Avant-Garde Issues in Seventies Music,” *Artforum*, 18, no. 1 (September 1979): 61-67. Reprinted in *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1981). Quote from *Breaking*, 269.

and for good reason, but everyone takes their chances with music that is really an experiment.⁶³

...John Rockwell, rather less so: “An effort by Alvin Lucier... failed almost entirely, unless its very intention was to show that failed experiments have a place in a festival of experimental music.”⁶⁴

It is worth noting, however, that both highlight the experimental nature of Lucier’s work. As a work-in-progress, it was something of an experiment by definition, one of very few works on the program that were not in finished, polished form. Experimentation remained an important element of downtown new music, but its place in the more “official” segment of the field—at places like The Kitchen and events like NMNY—was diminishing. In the early Seventies, experimentation had often *been* the performance; downtown presentation had been about the headiness of the new and breaking boundaries. By 1979, SoHo had settled. More importantly, the expectations had changed, moving toward formal presentation of works tightly composed (or thoroughly rehearsed, even in the case of improvisations). The organizers of New Music, New York operated in that mode of formal presentation. To organize a comprehensive review of “experimental music” meant pushing experiments to the periphery and presenting finished products.

Since the Institute on Contemporary Experimental Music (Music Critics Association) sessions are running simultaneously with this incorrectly named festival, “New Music, New York,” it is important to report that the sessions yesterday were DEADLY.

—Beth Anderson⁶⁵

⁶³ Anderson, “Report from the Front #6.”

⁶⁴ Rockwell, “53 Composers.”

⁶⁵ The Kitchen Archives.

“Experimental music” was also the broad label for the Music Critics Association Institute, one that required as much (quixotic) wrestling with comprehensiveness as the organizers of NMNY had gone through with their concert programming. Like their presenting counterparts, though, the critics tried. Panel discussions covered most of the issues mentioned above; there were panels on “Rock and Experimental Music,” “Jazz and Experimental Music,” “Electronic Music,” and “The Relationship between New Music and Third World Music” (this last representing a development of terminology from “primitive” music, one meant to imply a greater respect for the foreign cultures used as inspiration). Most panels were moderated by a combination of critics (particularly John Rockwell and Robert Palmer of the *Times*) and festival composers. Brits Brian Eno and Michael Nyman held prominent places on the Institute program, with Eno in particular drawing large crowds.

As a meeting of artists and professional opinion-makers, the discussions were often contentious. The panelists (and the actively engaged audience) came from substantially different positions in the field, and brought their agendas with them. The panels were never intended to create consensus, but the depth and persistence of divisions was noteworthy:

The actual discussions [in the Music Critics Association panels] frequently consisted of people being certain about things no one can be certain about. ‘We are not trying to arrive at conclusions.’ the moderators repeatedly kept saying, but the conversations chiefly consisted of stating conclusions people had already arrived at. But hardly anything remained unchallenged...⁶⁶

The divisions were often drawn along aesthetic lines, particularly at the panels attempting to define experimental music and its relation to other musical styles. In

⁶⁶ Dyer, “Live, from New York!”

addition to panels aimed at dissecting narrow questions of stylistic relationships, some aimed to define experimental music more broadly. Johnson and Nyman's opening panels on "The History and Esthetics of Experimental Music" were not particularly successful. Anderson called Nyman "a very friendly looking man...[who] is very argumentative while lacking any logical argument." Johnson spent "something akin to an eternity reading his own reviews from 1972 and 1973."⁶⁷ Keith Raether of the Albuquerque Tribune called Johnson's history "poorly-ordered at best and self-congratulatory at worst (a 'selective' reading of his *Voice* reviews which rambled for hours.)"⁶⁸ Both of these men were critic-composers, writers who had opined extensively on the history of their art and worked to create historiographies of the experimental.

Other critics have done the same, but Nyman and Johnson were in the position of both creating music and explaining it. Both had pieces on the festival; Johnson performed his own text-sound pieces. The result is not precisely a conflict of interest (Johnson, for example, fastidiously avoided talking about his own compositions in his *Voice* reviews), but, in the context of a music critics conference, a conflict of position in the field. As producers of cultural products, Nyman and Johnson were positioned to engage the fundamental questions of the field of new music. As critics and historiographers, though, they were positioned to *determine* those questions. Johnson and Nyman had to be pundits and presenters alike, highlighting the insularity of the experimental scene and the problems that created.

At the panel devoted to "Criticism and Experimental Music," the division-straddling role of the new music critic was explored at some (surprisingly amiable)

⁶⁷ Anderson, "Report from the Front #2.

⁶⁸ Keith Raether, "Criticism is 'Wishful Narcissism,'" *The Albuquerque Tribune*, June 27, 1979.

length. The self-reflexive examination of the critic's role and responsibilities was led by John Rockwell:

Yesterday the critics' conference talked about what it does and what its members are: critics who criticize, critics who compose, critics who perform or used to, ex-critics, ex-composers, etc. Mr. Rockwell discussed the best background for critics, the possibilities as to who actually read reviews and for whom they were written, the functions of the critics, the possible ways of writing (descriptive, evocative, reportive, literal, judgmental...), and the affect on the composers and performers' lives of the review.⁶⁹

The panel was a substantive reflection on the critic's role(s) in the field of cultural production, the ways in which critics fit into the experimental scene and the extent to which they functioned as liaisons between producers and consumers of art. The critics' position was not a monolithic one. Disparities in publications and aesthetic positions did as much to shape the critical field as the field of artistic production itself. Given those differences among the critics (and the fact that many of the reviewed artists would be in the audience), there was some expectation that the panel would be a contentious one:

'Criticism and New Music,' chaired by Rockwell, was not the stormy session many thought it would be. The New York Times critic suggested that writing criticism is 'a kind of wishful narcissism that reflects a shared interest in art and the creative process.' 'It is an act like composing,' he said.⁷⁰

Rockwell was certainly correct that criticism is an act, and one that is in most senses creative. Just as Bourdieu places cultural production on a continuum between art-for-art's-sake and commercial art, though, criticism varies in its orientation. Regardless of the critic's "shared interest" in "the creative process," the critic also has an interest (in all senses of the word) in appealing to his or her readers and editors. The venue of

⁶⁹ Anderson, "Report from the Front #6."

⁷⁰ Raether, "Wishful Narcissism."

publication shapes the expectations of those vital others. Even when they covered the same events—and even when they shared the same general opinion of those events—John Rockwell wrote differently for the *Times* than Johnson did for the *Voice*. The “Criticism and Experimental Music” panel addressed some of those differences (and, without naming names, why critics did or did not write about certain events).

It did not, though, address the generation gap in criticism. Johnson and Rockwell had grown up more or less alongside the older generation of downtown composers. Rockwell began at the *Times* in 1972, Johnson at the *Voice* in 1971—at roughly the same time that downtown was completing its generational shift from the conceptualists to intermedia artists and minimalists. By 1979, the same generation whose composers were experimenting with the incorporation of rock and pop elements was producing its own critics. Beth Anderson, whose “reports from the front” are one of the best records of New Music, New York and the accompanying events, belonged to that younger generation. As a founding editor of *EAR Magazine*, she took an aggressively contrarian position regarding many of her seniors. More importantly, in writing for her own ‘zine, she was able to blur the lines between literary writing and journalism, to advance specific aesthetic agendas without being beholden to her publishers.

Like most of the writers for *EAR*, Anderson was also a composer heavily involved in debating the questions of the field. Anderson and her contemporaries sought to engage those questions on all available fronts. Their project, like that of the “mature” generation of downtowners, was one of negation. Their boundary pushing continued downtown’s shift toward rock, pop, and performance art. Their rhetoric insisted on continued

experimentation. It was also one colored by resentment of the increasingly institutionalized downtown and its developed hierarchies.

The hierarchies of an established scene manifested most clearly in discussions of money. Those who had achieved stability were generally resented by those who had not. At the MCA institute, that argument between haves and have-nots was clearest in the panel of Sunday, June 10, titled “Commerciality, Mystique, Ego, and Fame in New Music.” It “brought a panel of Rockwell, Eno, [Robert] Fripp, [Leroy] Jenkins and Glass together with a shouting, overflow house at the Collective for Living Cinema, [and] proved a charged discussion—at times, a joust between audience and panelist or audience and audience.”⁷¹ The panel was so crowded that Anderson had to rely on secondhand information for her report from the front (and included little of consequence). Richard Dyer, who attended the panel, explained that

...the discussion was particularly volatile. ‘It was,’ said someone who was there, ‘a case of the caterpillars complaining about the butterflies,’ for some members of the audience apparently felt that the only difference between themselves and Eno was the interest of John [Rockwell] and the power of the New York Times.⁷²

Eno, of course, was a commercial and critical success...and one who had little reluctance to express his opinions. The combination of his success and his rhetoric made him an easy target for those who would accuse him of selling out or, more dangerously, substitution of others’ innovations for his own:

In two of the critics’ sessions, we heard Brian Eno proudly explain his (acknowledged) expropriation of experimental musicians’ ideas by the metaphor of science. It seems that he’s been reading a little about genetics, and feels that by taking ideas from ‘experimental musicians’ into the lucrative world of corporate rock, he’s merely

⁷¹ Keith Raether, “Critic Is to Be ‘Healer’ in World of New Music,” *The Albuquerque Tribune*, June 13, 1979.

⁷² Dyer, “Live, from New York!”

participating in the formation of new species. (What could be less onerous to us than participating in evolution? After all, parasitism is a part of nature.)⁷³

Ned Sublette went on to describe Eno not as a “brother researcher but as a representative of the United Fruit Company lecturing natives of the banana republic.” He was, according to Sublette, an oppressive, thieving charlatan. Eno was not without his defenders, though: Joe McLellan of the *Washington Post* replied the next day that:

Brian Eno’s big offense to SoHo artists is that he is a success. Anyone else is free to do what he has done—take the disjointed ideas floating around here and integrate them into something coherent that a lot of people will want to hear more than once. ...[Eno’s critics] are also undermining the effort to get a large audience interested in ‘experimental’ styles and techniques. And they are gratuitously attacking one of their few influential friends—but that is part of the fine old tradition in this kind of art.⁷⁴

While it is easy to read Sublette’s attacks as a product of simple resentment, those attacks reveal deeper gaps in the field of new music. Sublette and his EAR cohort operated in the last vestiges of SoHo’s bohemian mode of production. Glass, Reich, Monk and The Kitchen had developed more stable modes of production. Eno had done them one better and drawn on downtown aesthetics to produce a kind of new music that was commercially viable. Along Bourdieu’s continuum from art-for-art’s-sake to commercial art, Eno was much closer to the latter pole than any of the other NMNY participants. Unlike Sublette or Anderson, Eno had little need to accrue the symbolic capital of consecration, because his works’ commercial appeal secured his place in the field. It was Eno’s *overlap* with the downtown segment of the field that caused friction. He borrowed techniques and sounds from the avant-garde without borrowing (or

⁷³ Ned Sublette, “A Note on Two Meetings of the Music Critics’ Association” report from the front #7.

⁷⁴ Joseph McLellan, “Reply to Ned Sublette,” report from the front #8.

suffering) its mode of production. He was making business of new music, something both Sublette's criticism and McLellan's defense make clear.

Their discussions have centered around the development of access centers (getting the equipment to make the art), fundraising, and presenting organizations (spaces that put on events). The business of the 'bureaucratizing' the aesthetic. It's called 'networking' at the meetings.

—Beth Anderson⁷⁵

Even among those individuals and institutions clinging to art-for-art's-sake, the business of new music required increasing amounts of organization. For presenters, the Conference of New Music Centers provided a venue to discuss that organization and how to maximize available resources.⁷⁶ Broadly speaking, the sessions of the three-day conference can be split into two topics: what new music centers do, and how best to do it. Representatives from new music and art centers around the country attended, including Minneapolis' Walker Art Center, Seattle's And/Or Gallery, Hartford's Real Art Ways, and San Francisco's 1750 Arch Street. These institutions were all intensely involved in presenting avant-garde works, but were moving by fits and starts toward stability.

Panels addressed two core functions of new music centers: presenting new works and serving as equipment resource centers. As presenting organizations, new music centers were increasingly required to play a curatorial role. The conference panels, though, focused less on the abstract concerns of curation than on the practical concerns of keeping centers functional. Panelists from the Walker and the Kitchen led a discussion on audience development, publicity, and membership programs. All of these moving parts were necessary elements of presenting new art, fundamentally oriented toward audiences and potential audiences rather than producers. For those institutions that served as access

⁷⁵ Beth Anderson, "Reviews for the Critics: June 14 at The Kitchen," report from the front #7.

⁷⁶ A transcription of the conference schedule appears in Appendix Three.

centers, the emphasis instead was on those producers, on effectively organizing and managing equipment, fostering community, and functioning as part of the process of cultural production.

Whether functioning as presenting organizations or access centers, new music centers required resources. The pool of such resources for the avant-garde was a shallow one. Panels on fundraising and support organizations aimed both to deepen the pool and to increase cooperation in utilizing those scarce resources. Discussions of fundraising addressed not only potential sources of income, but also those sources that “would only be dead ends.” Participants were expected to share their own experiences regarding funding, but the sessions also included representatives from organizations such as ASCAP, BMI, and the Meet the Composer program.

Part of maximizing return on resources was cooperation. Just as Glass and Wilson had strung together the first European tour of *Einstein on the Beach* by arranging different contributions from presenters in different countries, American new music centers could arrange tours and create performance networks to foster the careers of new music artists and to share the risk inherent in new productions. Mimi Johnson of Performing Artservices and David White of the Dance Theatre Workshop, both of whom had extensive experience organizing tours, led the session on cooperation.

The conference also included committee sessions, chances for those interested in specific topics to discuss them in more detail. The chairs of those committees presented the results of their discussions on the conference’s final day, which was largely given to summary and planning for future collaborative work. Representatives from private and government agencies attended the morning session to share advice and meet with

potential grant applicants. This “networking,” which Beth Anderson dismissed as the “bureaucratizing of the aesthetic,” was central to the conference’s culmination and, really, its primary purpose. The final panel, “cooperation and future development,” allowed “all participants [to] discuss the conference’s findings and creatively project subsequent developments in the field.”⁷⁷

That there were enough institutions, and that they were sufficiently established to network, is demonstration of experimental music’s new place in the field of cultural production. It *had* been bureaucratized, in presentation if not always in content. The Downtown style and its analogues in other parts of the country had coalesced into something sustainable. The increasing prominence of its leading lights and the presenting organizations’ involvement with corporate and government funding meant that the bohemian mode of cultural production (with the peculiar cachet of the rebel artist) was ending. Though it had not attained the kind of consecrated status of the Western classical canon (nor the institutions that held sway over that repertoire), experimental music and its institutions had carved out a stable place in the field:

[New music institutions], like the composers they present, can no longer hide along the fringes of American culture. This situation raises a number of questions, several of which were expressed emphatically by composer Ivan Tcherepnin: “[...]Are [the conference’s] participants not facing the danger of being seen as Collaborators, by the underground? Is not the stand being taken, viz. to ‘establish’ the Experimental music scene and provide an endowment for its sustenance also tying the participants into the system, which will eventually incorporate it? Was not one of its fortes its independence from such poisonous tentacles? Isn’t there an implicit complicity with Big Business and Government involved here?”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Typescript conference schedule, The Kitchen Archives.

⁷⁸ Tom Johnson, “New Music, New York, New Institution.”

Tcherepnin's questions were sincere, an indictment of the degree to which certain experimentalists and institutions had become "the Man." They also point to the fundamental conflict in the idea of an "experimental institution." To an extent, SoHo's problem resembled the one implicit in Boulez's essay for the Celebration of Contemporary Music a few years earlier: institutionality and artistic freedom could not peacefully coexist. Boulez's rebellious "confrontation" with institutional authority, the schism between producer and presenter, had arrived downtown.⁷⁹ Though the downtown composers and presenters remained interested in art-for-art's sake, there was an increasing interest in consecration—and not just consecration within the limited subfield of downtown cultural production. Awards and grants went more often to those establishing new(ish) forms than tearing down the older ones. Entering the world of corporate and government politics meant trading creative anarchy for the business of consecration—the change that would eventually lead Dmitri Devyatkin to call SoHo "a syndrome of artists pitching projects to foundation executives over expensive lunches."⁸⁰

Tcherepnin's "implicit complicity" with the operational models of business and government was a necessary consequence of institutionalization. The curatorial work of institutions like the Kitchen took on new dimensions as their programming became answerable to, if not always their benefactors, then grant and foundation boards. Those institutions became more thoroughly enmeshed with the journalistic apparatus, increasingly prey to the same consequences of reviews that colored the work of Lincoln Center institutions. None of this is to say that the new music institutions were beholden to or dominated by their establishment connections, but those connections altered the

⁷⁹ See chapter four.

⁸⁰ Dimitri Devyatkin, "The House of the Horizontal Synch." See chapter two for a fuller discussion of Devyatkin's essay.

institutions' place in the field, and necessarily changed their presentational models.

Achieving balance was difficult:

Money has come primarily from the government agencies, first the New York State Council for the Arts and then the National Endowment. Now, the Kitchen has received its first grants from private foundations, part of a conscious attempt to diversify sources of funding, says Mary MacArthur, the director.

The Kitchen has sought to remain in the vanguard of the avant-garde and experimental. 'The thing about the Kitchen is that it's responsive to the new waves of artists,' she says. 'If there is a renaissance of painting in New York, I hope we could show it. I hope we never get to the point where we don't shock people.'⁸¹

Shocking people could only win so many grants. Achieving institutional stability meant achieving economic stability. The Kitchen needed funding; its budget was projected to increase more than 50% from 78-79 to 79-80. The Wooster Street space was in the process of becoming a co-op, which would raise the center's rent over \$300,000 per year.⁸² Fundraising, like presenting events, had to become professional and year-round. Galas and benefit concerts existed at the intersection of the practical and the aesthetic, the strange trading on names and "brand" to raise the funds to reinforce the brand (as well as to subsidize those experimental events that failed to produce economic returns).⁸³

The aesthetic challenges extended beyond benefit concerts, though. Altered presentational models such as those discussed at the New Music Conference changed access for artists. There *was* bureaucratization of the aesthetic, even if networking created

⁸¹ Charles Ward, "Finding 'Alternative Spaces' for New Musical Ideas," *The Houston Chronicle*, July 24, 1979.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ In this, small institutions such as the Kitchen come to resemble the avant-garde publishers Bourdieu discusses in both *Rules* and *Field*.

new opportunities for artists and institutions alike. In SoHo, the pressures of the congealing experimental were felt increasingly as grounds for a new rebellion. Michael Sahl (again, part of the younger generation associated with *EAR Magazine*) called SoHo “a crabbed, tradition-minded, academic cloister, an orthodox synagogue, a cultural Tibet.” The problem was not so much with the individually successful artists as with those institutions defining the aesthetic debates (and therefore the field itself):

...the real explanation lies with institutions and funding. The performance institutions sit, like trolls, on the bridges of musical life, and they are the only game in town, because behind them stands the big mafia of arts funding, and unless you have the money (plenty of it) to spend on yourself, you can't get heard, and even if you do spend it, you can be blacked out by the TIMES, the Supreme Court of the arts, still pretty much the only way out to a wider public. So everybody is scared to offend, and simultaneously tries to attract attention by the right kind of sensationalism... This creates a terrible climate of boosterism and don't-rock-the-boat-ism, which we are presently enduring. People mutter, but they don't speak out. They still hope to put together that magic Exakta of the Kitchen, the Times, and the Colleges. In the meantime, we listen to the concerts, in an attitude of something less than messianic expectation. If we are to have a rebirth of musical life, we need new performance institutions (and diversity of them) and we need new media to propagandize and argue about it. A debateless art is a dead art.⁸⁴

For Sahl, the Kitchen and similar institutions had become new parts of the old apparatus, representing different elements of potential success, but still functioning as gatekeepers. By controlling funds, they controlled performances—at least the performances that would lead to more performances and economic subsistence. Getting one's foot in the door required some alignment of the forces the field—it did not have to be the complete “exakta” of the Kitchen, the Times, and academe, but it generally required two of the three. The necessity of aligning with those forces of the field, Sahl

⁸⁴ Michael Sahl, “Avant-garde Intimidation,” *EAR Magazine Report from the Front #5*, June 12, 1979, The Kitchen Archive.

effectively argues, stifle experimentation and lead to timid music-making. Bourdieu would argue instead that:

...what ‘makes reputations’ is not...this or that ‘influential’ person, this or that institution, review, magazine, academy, coterie, dealer or publisher...it is the field of production, understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate.⁸⁵

The critics and institutions do not *consciously* serve as gatekeepers; they are agents themselves, acting in accordance with their own interests in the field. Only in the struggle for symbolic can meaning emerge, and it does so through dynamic interactions rather than institutional fiat. Capital had simply shifted to some institutions that had previously lacked it.

Experimentalism was not dead—the rebellious racket in the “reports from the front” and the new influences brought in by the younger generation of composers were evidence that experiments still happened—but its context had changed. Most importantly, the context and form of the “senior” generation of downtown composers had begun to settle down, creating the hierarchy against which the younger generation rebelled. Like the Kitchen, they had reached a point of stability:

This pointed to a last paradox about the festival—there is now a sense in which some goals have been reached. The Kitchen is now going to have to move to a larger building and its director admits with regret that artists can no longer afford to fail there ‘because the Times comes and the Voice comes.’...

But this was a time to celebrate what was before us now, its seriousness and its fun, its moral and philosophical weight, the sheer wonder of its fantasy of sounds.”⁸⁶

The delicate balance of moral and philosophical weight with the wonder of sounds was the balance not just of New Music, New York, but of SoHo’s new music

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, *Field*, 78.

⁸⁶ Dyer, “Live, from New York!”

scene and, in many senses, new music across New York's field of cultural production by 1979. The potential successors to Cage and Babbitt had battled for control of new music. They had experimented with sounds and with presentation, with funding models and institutional support. Various artists and organizations had forayed into "opposition" territory. The last few years of the Seventies were first about consolidating gains, then about celebrating success. New Music, New York was a celebration, but it was also colored by undercurrents of rebellion from a generation not quite ready to settle for the new status quo its elders were beginning to embrace.

New Music, New York was also the high water mark of an experimental tide that was already receding. The younger generation had different allegiances—to rock music and film rather than non-Western music and sculpture.⁸⁷ The generation of process minimalists and intermedia artists had already created their most experimental works, and were content to explore the implications of those experiments rather than conduct fresh ones. Just as importantly, they had made their most experimental presentations. The presentational mode the Kitchen began to embrace—tie and tails for benefits, professional publicity and fundraising—was largely the mode of established institutions like the Philharmonic. New Music, New York marks the maturation of that presentational practice and the Kitchen's place in the field of new music.

It was a field that, like New York City itself, had begun to convert scattered fragments into a new order. Koch's reforms and business-friendly policies encouraged growth that created new anchors for New York's economic and cultural development. While the city and the nation in 1979 might not have been better off than they were when

⁸⁷ Though the geographic centers shifted in reaction to real estate costs, this younger generation produced enough experimental work for Michael Dessen, after George Lewis, to dub it a "downtown 2." See Dessen, "Decolonizing Art Music," 86 ff.

Jimmy Carter took office, there began to be a sense that the trials of the Seventies could be escaped. Deregulation and emphasis on individual responsibility would not solve all problems, but the new order could simply efface many of the ones that remained. In the meantime, the dissipation of central authority left competing segments of the new music field without a singular goal, abandoning them to a detente in which nobody had to like each other's music, but there was no question of *replacing* others' musical practices with one's own. All that was left was to pick up the pieces.

**CHAPTER SEVEN:
What Was Next, What Was Left**

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth.

—Ronald Reagan, 1981

Perhaps the most interesting thing about avant-garde music at the moment is its scarcity. Of course, plenty of concerts around New York are billed as the latest, newest, most adventurous thing, but real, tough-minded, grassroots experimentation has become rarer and rarer. Most of the new music I hear lately is semi-classical, nostalgic, relatively accessible, and derivative, influenced by jazz and popular idioms, or in some other way aimed at a relatively general audience.

—Tom Johnson 1979¹

Tom Wolfe's "Me Decade" meant more than the self-indulgence he excoriated. Under Nixon, Ford, and Carter the New Deal of the 30s had collapsed, along with the unanimity of national purpose of the 40s and early 50s. In many ways the Seventies saw the end of "we" and "us" in American discourse. When Ronald Reagan won the 1980 presidential election, the implicit promise was for a new kind of "me decade," an era in which the individual would free himself from burdensome government authority, where individual responsibility would be simultaneously a right and an obligation. The government was going to get out of the way, and society was following suit.

Though less far reaching in its consequences, the battle for symbolic capital I've called "the war for what's next" ended similarly. Heirloom institutions like the Philharmonic got out of the way, not to be replaced by equally large institutions, but by loose networks of individuals and micro-institutions. Downtown performers had opened ways to new modes of artistic existence without making them a new standard. Just as few of the broad-based changes called for in the Sixties had manifested in sweeping political

¹ "Music Returns to Normal," *Village Voice*, January 25, 1979.

transformation, the stylistic and aesthetic changes advocated by the various post-Schoenberg/Stravinsky creators resulted not in a dominant new musical style, but in a patchwork of fragments and compromises. Amid that fragmentation, the meaning of “new music” itself had changed.

On January 20, 1981, Ronald Reagan became the first president to be inaugurated on the White House’s west front, facing the National Mall. Using the White House steps obviated the need for setting up a platform, and conducting the inauguration facing the National Mall allowed for a much larger number of spectators. While these practical considerations are important, the shift to the west front can also be read symbolically—as cementing the westward shift of the nation’s political balance, as looking away from an European past, as inaugurating a new era.² Reagan had promised to do just that. His inaugural address valorizes individualism as a fundamental American principle. Government, Reagan averred, had become the problem. More importantly, government had become the problem because it believed it knew more than “the people”:

From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.³

Budgets could not be balanced on the backs of the wealthy; tax cuts and deregulation would put money and authority back where it belonged: in individual hands.

² This line of argument, though not specifically tied to Reagan’s choice of inauguration site, is articulated by Bruce Schulman in capsule form on p. 220 of *The Seventies*.

³ Reagan Inaugural Address, paragraph 10.

Reagan blamed America's recent problems on the "intervention and intrusion" of the government in daily lives. He praised the everyman's values and hard work, promising to "remov[e] the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity."⁴ This meant reducing a "punitive" tax burden and getting the government "back within its means." Taxes and spending would both be cut to facilitate capital movement through the economy's private sector. Combining tax cuts and deregulation would, Reagan promised, "reawaken this industrial giant."

Reagan also promised that America would once again take its place as a giant on the world stage. Strength abroad was a necessary corollary to strength at home. Becoming a "beacon of hope for those who do not now have freedom" would ultimately mean starkly interventionist foreign policy and escalating the arms race beyond the means or will of the Soviet Union. Reagan invoked national heroes of the past (Lincoln, Jefferson, and Washington) as well as soldiers who had died in America's wars to evoke the myth of the America the Great, to hint at a manifest destiny that—with his laissez-faire economic policy and a strong military—would again echo across the globe.

He promised, in short, that he would close the door on the Seventies.

The Seventies (and to a lesser extent, the Sixties) had been marked by the fumbling and fragmentation of big public institutions. Global economic changes, in particular, had upset old orders and challenged the orthodoxy on which predictions were based. Reagan and the conservative movement he represented promised new orthodoxy for the new era, a reduction of government clumsiness by a reduction in its size and scope. Primacy in the field of power shifted away from public institutions and toward

⁴ Reagan Inaugural Address, paragraph 22.

private ones, especially business interests. Reagan continued deregulation and anti-union activity, most spectacularly in the mass-firing of striking air traffic controllers in August of 1981.⁵ Reagan wanted policy to be set less at the ballot box than at the checkout counter. Individuals voting with their dollars would be more efficient and more profitable the less government got in the way.

Individual failure was the necessary corollary of individual success. By the Seventies' end, individuals owned the results of their actions more than they had at any time since the New Deal went into effect. The demise of universal citizenship discussed in chapter four lessened Americans' sense of shared obligation and shared sacrifice. Reagan could excoriate "welfare queens" because society had shifted such people even further to the periphery; they were "them," not "us."⁶ Government had a responsibility to preserve order and to maintain America's military and commercial might. *Saving* individuals had been an overreach of Johnson's Great Society, one that had to end. Welfare was reformed and reduced in the name of fiscal—and personal—responsibility. In Reagan's America, the individual would be as free to fail as to succeed.

Edward Koch had not entered the mayor's office with the conviction that government was the problem; his dramatic reductions to city programs had largely been a crisis-induced necessity. Like Reagan, Koch had cheered on and cheered up his constituents in the face of a dismal situation. He became enormously popular—so

⁵ PATCO (the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization) had supported Reagan during the election. Because its members were officially government employees, Reagan was able to invoke the Taft-Hartley act of 1947 to fire striking members. He also saw to the decertification of their union and banned the strikers from federal service for life.

⁶ Reagan had popularized the term "welfare queen" in his unsuccessful 1976 bid for the Republican presidential nomination. His hyperbolic story of a Chicago woman fraudulently collecting over \$150,000 per annum was a favorite anecdote in his campaign to curb government programs.

popular, in fact, that he campaigned for and received endorsement from both the Democratic and Republican parties in his 1981 re-election campaign. He won handily, and tried to parlay his success in New York into the Governor's mansion in Albany. In this he failed, soundly beaten in the Democratic primary by his old opponent Mario Cuomo. Still, by the early Eighties he had managed to right the city's financial course, encourage future development, and thoroughly alter its politics.

He served three mayoral terms as a Democrat, but one of Koch's lasting impacts on New York's political field was his legitimization of the Republican party in municipal politics:

Koch was a godsend to New York Republicans; their party had received only 4 percent of the mayoral vote in 1977. Two of the three mayors elected after Koch were Republicans—in part because Koch legitimized New York City's Republican Party in 1980-81. Through his friendly attitude toward Reagan, and his run on the Republican line in 1981, he made it easier for thousands of increasingly conservative but traditionally Democratic Jewish voters to support Republicans for years afterwards. Koch's gestures to Reagan also gained him some favorable notice from conservative Catholics, who had gone largely for Cuomo in 1977 and strongly supported Reagan in 1980.⁷

Koch Republicans became an obverse of Reagan Democrats: voters who would cross party lines for the right candidate, who could pick a handful of important issues and let them override more general party loyalty.⁸ The combination of disintegrating universal citizenship with soaring budget deficits encouraged the same shift toward conservative attitudes in New York City that it had encouraged nationally. While Koch worked to maintain city services (particularly in his second term), his administration's

⁷ Soffer, *Ed Koch*, 222.

⁸ Party loyalty itself was in decline. In New York, the machine politics of earlier generations were almost extinct, their foundations undercut by flight to the suburbs and governmental reforms. "Political loyalty had been in decline for a generation, and by 1981 there was hardly a 'boss' to be found in either party." (Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 229).

fundamental model for revitalizing New York had been “FIRE”—Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate.⁹ These service-oriented businesses could take advantage of New York’s position as a global information hub without requiring industrial infrastructure spending. Tax abatements drew businesses into real estate deals. Their employees needed places to live, too, bolstering the residential real estate market (even as this encouraged gentrification). These businesses were also in prime position to take advantage of Reagan’s relaxation of regulation:

The rebirth of America’s metropolis allowed it to benefit inordinately from what has been called the “greed decade.” Fiscal disaster and loss of city sovereignty had been overcome, and the city was again ready to lead the nation forward.¹⁰

Reforms induced by waves of recession and insolvency had pushed New York ahead of the fiscal and regulatory curve (at least relatively—New York’s taxes remained high compared to national averages). The city could take advantage of its location and legacy as an international city to attract investment. It was that investment in service industries that fueled the city’s recovery; public sector and manufacturing employment continued to wane. It was thus largely a “top-down” recovery, one that took considerable time to improve living conditions for the city’s poorest residents, and one that did little to reverse New York’s population decline of the Seventies.¹¹ Seventies New York was a natural setting for the frayed society of *Taxi Driver*, a city with a crawling criminal underbelly of pimps and derelicts. With Koch and Reagan, Eighties New York became

⁹ The FIRE strategy is one of the central threads of Jonathan Soffer’s *Ed Koch and the Rebuilding of New York City*.

¹⁰ Lankevich, *American Metropolis*, 229.

¹¹ Between 1970 and 1980, the total population of New York City dropped 10.4%, from 7.896 million to 7.072 million. The city’s population density dropped, too, by nearly 3,000 people per square mile. Population (and population density) did not recover until 2000. In that year’s census, New York’s population stood at 8.008 million. Density rose again past 26,000 people per square mile, due mostly to increased population density in Queens and Staten Island. Figures taken from the U.S. Census via <http://www.demographia.com/dm-nyc.htm>, accessed 4 August 2012.

easy environs for *Wall Street's* Gordon Gekko; greed became good and profits were there for the taking.

In this New York became emblematic of the broader shift in American society. Aspiration—especially material aspiration—became the driver of social change. Inflation had turned many Americans into investors by necessity. Neither the government nor the banks could protect savings against a rapidly rising dollar. Americans took ownership of their risk...and they did so as individuals. It was not only the New Deal coalition that failed in the Seventies, it was the underlying New Deal principle of shared responsibility and shared sacrifice. Individual aspiration replaced that idea as the driver of political change and economic growth.

Reagan—and to some extent, Koch—worked to get government out of the way of individual aspiration. Government would cede part of its control of the field of power, reduce its sphere of influence in order to let the private sector revitalize America. That improvement would ultimately come from individuals. Just as the heirloom institutions that housed debates over the future of new music had lost much of their relevance by the Seventies' end, the government itself began to be treated as an heirloom institution: it could no longer set the terms of the debate. The great conservative wave shifted the defining question of government from “what can government do to improve the situation?” to “what *should* government be doing at all?”

This second question could only be asked in an environment where the New Deal was over, one in which the idea of universal citizenship had fallen out of favor. If the government could not do everything for everybody, it would have to act only on behalf of some citizens. Over the course of the Seventies, the rise of “identity politics” repeatedly

created situations of direct competition between different segments of society. The revolts of the Sixties had been about a “great negation,” a complete overturning of the government without destroying it. The protests of the Seventies—whether conservatives encouraging tax revolts or identity groups clamoring for civil rights—were about myriad small negations. Rather than changing the whole of America in one go, it would be changed piece by piece.

These small negations became necessary (or at least viable) largely because of the political and economic constraints America (and Americans) suffered in the Seventies. Oil Shocks and inflation dramatically curbed the growth of real income. Though local governments benefited briefly from the increased tax revenues that accompanied inflation, the federal government continued to wrestle with budget deficits and the management of commitments it had made during the postwar boom. At all levels of society, Americans had to deal with limits that had seemed improbable only a decade earlier. Growth liberalism was unsustainable without growth. Economic constraints, like altered social ideas of citizenship, spurred segments of society to carve out their own segments in the field of power. The government no longer had the means to dictate the field’s shape.

Reagan and Koch, like Carter beforehand, privatized certain government services. More importantly, the newly-prevailing model of individual responsibility shifted revenue away from government and toward private consumption of goods and services. Symbolic capital shifted with the economic capital toward the private sector. Business interests had increasing sway over legislation. Just as importantly, they had increasing sway over the everyday life of Americans; deregulation left more and more services in

private rather than public hands. Reagan's "sleeping giant" would not wake up merely to churn out rivers of goods, but also to help set the terms of political and social debate as never before.

The rivers of goods, though, were also worth noting. The same baby boomers who had protested in the Sixties and spent the early part of the Seventies dropping out settled into a newly-aggressive consumer culture. Inflation had encouraged consumer spending. More importantly, purchasing became a means of expressing identity. Advertisers appealed to specific elements of society and tuned their pitches to resonate with particular ideals.¹² Individuals established their place in the social field through their possessions...which allowed further social fragmentation and dispersal of concentrated (symbolic) capital.

The mobilization of segments of society—whether as political coalitions of single-issue voters or as marketing categories—changed what negotiation meant. The de-homogenization of American society reduced negotiation's scope to reversals within splinters of the social field. Reagan Democrats (and Koch Republicans) demonstrated that in the political field. In the social field, negotiation often boiled down to a choice of what to buy and what to boycott. Though wholesale socio-political negotiation had never been feasible outside the dreams of utopianists, by the end of the Seventies it was rapidly vanishing from the discourse.

In the field of new music, the balance of power had undergone similar shifts—shifts that were able to stick because they echoed the shifts in the field of power.

¹² See chapters two and three of Robert Fink, *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005) for a brief history of advertising and an exploration of the idea of "consumer subjectivity."

Politically and economically, the Sixties had ended with clashing concepts of what the country would look like next. Musically, that argument had largely revolved around the Cage-Babbitt dichotomy, the free versus the structured, conceptual and aleatory versus serial. The defining questions of the discipline were about re-constituting the musical work after it had been destroyed. The conflicts played out largely in academe and the concert halls of heirloom institutions.

Described in the broadest strokes, the new music field of 1981 described above is not so different from the new music field of 1968: the split between Uptown, Midtown, and Downtown remains. As detail is added, though, a changed picture emerges. The uncertainty of the Seventies enabled (and had sometimes forced) changes in presentation and function within the field. Most importantly, the defining questions of the field had changed. In 1968, the field had been split roughly between serialists, conceptualists, and those who hewed to new iterations of tonality. “Babbitt versus Cage” was not just a matter of personal taste, it was a matter of aesthetic definition and a necessary position-taking in the field. By the Seventies’ end, the Cage-Babbitt dichotomy had splintered...and nothing had developed to replace it.

Process minimalism arrived as a contrast to Cage and Babbitt alike, then evolved into various post-minimalisms. Glass’s *Satyagraha* hardly belonged to the world of “Two Pages.” Conceptualists had left their mark, especially in intermedia arts. Serialists had extended and distended their practices toward a new complexity. Neo-Romantics had rejected novelty and rebuilt an abandoned inheritance. Vitally, though, none of these groups could monopolize institutions the way the cultural producers of the Sixties had hoped to. It was left to individuals to promote and—in many cases—*present* their music.

Institutions remained, but changes in the field of power had pushed them away from their old role as consecrators. Loci of symbolic capital still existed, but their pull was weakened, and the variety of styles and modes of cultural production orbiting them increased dramatically.

For all the thunder of Boulez's arrival at the New York Philharmonic, both he and his influence were long gone by Reagan's inauguration. His withdrawal from the Philharmonic's activities had begun before the official end of his tenure, hastened by Boulez's focus on IRCAM's development. The innovations into which he had poured so much of his effort in the early Seventies didn't stick. The Prospective Encounters staggered to a quick end under Gunther Schuller. Changes to Avery Fisher Hall had precluded continuation of the Rugs. The Informal Evenings and aggressive programming of modernist avant-garde works had ended by the Bicentennial.

With his departure, Boulez had allowed the Philharmonic to return to something closely resembling its old place in the field as an heirloom institution. Though he clearly realized from the start that he could never make the Philharmonic a *purely* avant-garde institution, Boulez had pushed hard to move the institution (and its audiences) toward art for art's sake, to make the organization one focused primarily on the acquisition and manufacture of new symbolic capital. In that, he failed. Boulez's goals were too far removed from the institution's substantial legacy to much inflect its course.

With Zubin Mehta, there was little question of changing course. He became the longest-serving music director in Philharmonic history, holding the post until 1991. Despite his initial popularity as a corrective to the Boulez years—admiration for his

charisma and ebullience on the podium, a taste for canonical composers and works that had been absent—Mehta faced criticism by the early Eighties. His honeymoon with the critics ended in the 1982-83 season.¹³ He also faced skepticism from the orchestra itself. The results of an internal questionnaire were leaked to the media in the summer of 1983. Players complained about Mehta’s work both as a conductor and an administrator (they also complained about things that were beyond his direct control, such as the expiration of a contract with CBS records, a “diminished reputation,” and the now decades-old complaints about the acoustics of the hall).¹⁴ Shortly after the leaked questionnaire and amidst speculation that Mehta would return to a newly-open job at the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Carlos Moseley renewed and extended Mehta’s contract. Aside from the board and Mehta himself, the extension attracted more confusion than praise:

[Bernstein’s] eleven-year rule over the Philharmonic may have infuriated a lot of critics, and perhaps the orchestra did give a number of dreadful concerts, but at least there was always a tremendous sense of vitality and of risks being taken. Things were rarely dull. Today’s Philharmonic, by comparison, generates little more than a yawn.¹⁵

Increasingly lukewarm responses to Mehta’s programming and conducting were not enough to remove him from the position. Just as important as his “maestro” role, Mehta also had to work *for* the Philharmonic. He was able to give the Philharmonic more time and focus than either Boulez or Bernstein had—twenty weeks a year were mandated in his second contract, and he often exceeded that. Mehta participated regularly in special

¹³ For example, “Mr. Mehta seems too often content with muscular, rough-edged performances that don’t convey a deeply felt sense for the phrase-by-phrase articulation... while his interpretations have a reasonable overall shape and feeling, they sound abrasive and insensitive.” from a John Rockwell review (“Philharmonic: Unity Despite Variety,” *New York Times*, April 10, 1983. For a more thoroughgoing assessment of the Philharmonic in the early Eighties, see Rockwell’s “Philharmonic” *New York Times*, Sept 19, 1982.

¹⁴ Edward Rothstein, “Philharmonic Musicians Complain,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1983.

¹⁵ Peter G. Davis, “Mehta Faces the Music,” *New York Magazine*, Jan. 14, 1985, 26.

events and public education. He worked closely with the Philharmonic's leadership.

Power struggles were few and far between. Mehta was a good company man:

Mehta's concern for the Philharmonic's well-being extends far beyond the time he spends on the podium; in fact, there is very little about the orchestra's operations that the music director doesn't get involved in, from fund-raising and special projects, such as the two 'Horizons' contemporary-music festivals, down to the tiniest details of day-to-day planning. Isaac Stern is right: Mehta's devotion to his job is total and all-consuming, and you will not find that sort of commitment in many conductors nowadays...management obviously finds him a pleasant fellow to have on the company team, a worker of boundless energy and one more than willing to plunge in and get his hands dirty.¹⁶

Mehta was thus able to align his work with the Philharmonic's position in the field. As a purveyor of the consecrated, the Philharmonic needed a music director who was at least as concerned with the already-canonical as with new music. As a member institution of Lincoln Center with broadening obligations of community and educational involvement, the Philharmonic needed a music director who would not foist such activities off on assistants or guest conductors. It needed a music director comfortable with the Philharmonic's alignment with the existing field of power. In Zubin Mehta, that is what the Philharmonic got.

Despite radical differences in their place in the field, Meredith Monk and Charles Wuorinen remained largely in the same places at the Seventies' end that they had occupied at its opening. Each developed models of presentation that changed to suit immediate needs, but neither altered their models of presentation sufficiently to alter their place in the broader field. Monk remained downtown, Wuorinen remained uptown, each secure in their particular avant-gardes.

¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

Wuorinen, who had spent the Sixties as a young lion and probable heir to authority in the Columbia-Princeton Axis had changed his professional address, but little else. The Pulitzer Prize he'd won for *Time's Enconium* had not protected him from Columbia's dismissal, nor had it inured him from the friction between academic and artistic obligations. The Group for Contemporary Music flourished, relatively speaking, at the Manhattan School of Music. Ready access to talented performers helped bolster the Group's own ranks, as well as spawning a new generation of ensembles with personal and professional connections to the Group's leadership.¹⁷ In the late Seventies, the Group moved beyond its own performances to experiment with acting as a presenter for other avant-garde musicians.

The early 80s were a successful time for the Group—they hired the firm of Woerner/Bohrick Associates to handle publicity.¹⁸ They received increasing amounts of grant dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts. They began to present more concerts beyond the Manhattan School, regularly performing at the 92nd Street Y.¹⁹ The Group also participated in the Horizon series presented by the New York Philharmonic (under the direction of Jacob Druckman as composer-in-residence). Gradually, though, the Group began to change. Sollberger accepted a post at Indiana University in 1983, diminishing his role. Wuorinen became composer in residence for the San Francisco Symphony. Nicolas Roussakis resigned as executive director in 1985. Most importantly, though, the Group lost its position as ensemble-in-residence at the Manhattan School of Music at the end of the 1985-86 season.

¹⁷ By 1980, the GCM was sometimes performing in collaboration with these groups, such as Parnassus and Speculum Musicae.

¹⁸ Deaver thesis, 127.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

By the time it lost its residency, the Group for Contemporary Music had established itself as an institution. It survived changes in membership and leadership, and while it was forced to undertake dramatic changes to its programming and presentational practices in the late 1980s, its artistic identity was strong enough to keep it going. Those later changes fall outside the scope of this dissertation, but they only slightly changed the Group's position in the field of new music. It remained, as it had been at the end of the Seventies, a purveyor of the most restrictively consecrated art-for-art's sake. (Wuorinen in particular railed against new music as mere entertainment.) Their goal was to offer highly rehearsed performances of the most "difficult" new music. They remained peripheral to general musical consciousness, but were at the heart of presenting new chamber music. Particularly with their academic affiliations, Wuorinen and the Group remained quintessentially "uptown."

"It's the juxtaposition that makes the resonance. That's very conscious. In a sense it's a metaphor for how I work as a whole. I have, for some reason, developed myself in a variety of ways, ever since I was a child. I did play piano when I was a child, and I did sing, and I did dance, and I did have a kind of interest in drama. It has something to do with that simultaneity of interests as a whole. My impulse, at the time, was to figure out how I could make a form in which I could use all the different interests in a single form."
—Meredith Monk²⁰

Meredith Monk's foothold at the periphery of the Judson Group came just as downtown was beginning to *be* something. Artistically, she grew up with and into SoHo. She pushed alternative modes of presentation and relied on the economy of bartered services to overcome limited economic capital. In leading The House, Monk pioneered multiveneue performances and was an important proponent of performances in loft spaces (with varying degrees of formality and intimacy). The House was also an important

²⁰ Interview with David Garland in EAR Magazine 5, No. 4 (Feb/March 1980), 9.

example of collaborative creation in intermedia. Monk's mode of presentation could not have existed without the confluence of factors that made the SoHo scene possible, and even as fame and more stable income solidified her position in the field, Monk held to downtown presentation models.

While Monk's The House did not long outlast the Seventies as a performing group, the alterations to the organization did not radically alter Monk's artistic practice. In 1978, Monk had changed the House's management from C.F. Smith to Kaylyn Sullivan of KLS Management; along with the change came a (successful) grant application to the NEA for funding to hire a full time administrator for the newly rechristened "The House Foundation for the Arts." The following year, Monk applied for an extension of the administrative grant (and again received it). She also received a separate grant to support the creation of a repertory company:

Since she still continues to choreograph new works much of the older works are being lost as live performance pieces and survive only on documentary video tape. In an effort to place some of those pieces back into repertory, The House has created MEREDITH MONK REPERTORY COMPANY. It will be a touring group of senior company members able to tour without being restricted by Ms. Monk's availability and able to present to others the early and recent works of Meredith Monk.²¹

The establishment of a company to keep Monk's early works in circulation was a mark of her establishment in the field. By creating the repertory company under The House's aegis, Monk continued to have direct control over her presentation that other downtown artists relinquished in favor of wider dissemination of their works. The nature of dance plays a part in this, of course—choreographies can be recorded and shared, but are not generally subject to the same model of production and repetition associated with

²¹ NEA Materials dated 14 May 1979, Meredith Monk Archive.

musical scores. Dance and intermedia remained important elements of Monk's cultural production, though the confluence of production types has occasionally created difficulty in navigating the bureaucracies of grant-giving groups. Early on, this was simply a matter of making sure that applications under different categories were for distinct projects (and Monk generally applied for several NEA grants simultaneously). In the late Eighties and early Nineties, though, the National Endowment's dance panel challenged her application for funds on the grounds that it belonged in music rather than dance. Monk responded forcefully:

What that [designation as "music only"] means to me is that the field has gone back thirty years to a definition of Dance as consisting of only certain techniques and ways of doing things that are standardized and familiar. One of my great joys, stimulations, and challenges throughout my working life has been to keep questioning what Dance is, and to continue to stretch its definition so that I and my audience can attempt to look at it in a fresh way.

...I have written this letter because of my deep concern that the climate of the times will endanger the idea of multiplicity of approaches in our field. Dance is my community, my artistic home. I feel that I stand for a certain way of thinking about and doing dance and that my work deserves to be looked at in that light.²²

Even a decade after the Seventies ended, Monk continued to work in an interdisciplinary, boundary-challenging mode. Most importantly, she has continued to produce works primarily for her own performance. In part, this is due to her unique physical and vocal talents. It also, though, highlights the endurance of the creator-performer-impresario model pioneered in the SoHo's scene. Monk continues to support her work with a mixture of grants and touring, and has published only a small handful of

²² Letter from Monk to panel members of the dance department at NEA, 13 July 1989. Meredith Monk Archive, NYPL Box 200, Folder 8. Similar language is employed in a letter dated 30 June 1993.

works for traditional ensembles. Performing—rather than producing scores—remain the core of her presentational activity.

The shift toward producing scores inflects the divergent trajectories of Philip Glass and Steve Reich. While both continued to live in the general vicinity of SoHo, their post-Seventies career paths took them toward different kinds of consecration. The roots of this split are evident even at the Seventies opening—Reich's intense interest in process, structure, and antique (Western) sounds against Glass's involvement in theater and non-Western subjects. It is therefore not especially surprising that Reich moved earlier and more emphatically toward publication and production of scores and a greater traction among academics and institutions. Glass moved more thoroughly into theatrical music and film scoring, presentational modes in which he retained more control over the performances as well as the content of the scores.

For Glass and Reich, the Seventies had been the era of the ensemble. Though neither kept precisely the same personnel through the whole era, both relied on their ensembles for presentation of their music. Particularly in Glass's case, the ensemble had become an institution of its own, with a complicated (if somewhat shoestring) business model and defined patterns of touring and time off. Rehearsing and presenting with such ensembles required material support, not just for members' wages, but also for rehearsal space and professional expertise (promotions, recording, etc.). While Reich and Glass had initially operated in the mode of rock bands or jazz groups—a collective with a front man—the necessities of material support led to increasing institutionality as the Seventies wore on.

For Reich, the necessity of his own dedicated group waned as his compositional practice shifted toward traditional ensembles and commissions. His group's membership had never been as consistent as the Philip Glass Ensemble. Reich had maintained control of the group not so much because he wished to advance it as a performing ensemble, but because it allowed him total control over the performance of his works. In 1983, Reich began negotiations with Boosey & Hawkes to publish his music. By this point, he was undertaking symphonic commissions: "These were very large pieces. My ensemble was obviously not going to be touring with them, and their only future lay in being available to other groups."²³ Allowing Boosey & Hawkes to publish his music dramatically expanded the number of performances Reich's works could receive worldwide—up from the "five or six per year" to more than 200.²⁴ The publisher's catalogue and publicity machine distributed the music worldwide, ensconcing Reich in the repertoire and moving him (slowly) toward consecration as part of the canon.

Reich had always been the more classically-minded of the two composers. The move toward larger ensembles he'd begun with *Music for 18 Musicians* was a move away from the band model, a move toward the academic mode of consecration. Publishing his works, as well as accepting commissions for orchestral music, helped cement that consecration. While he was still a long way from an "insider," Reich had altered his presentation and mode of cultural production in ways amenable to "respectability." As a cultural producer, Reich increasingly created works rather than performances, and works were commodities much better suited to the intellectual marketplace.

²³ Steve Reich quoted in Helen Wallace, *Boosey & Hawkes: The Publishing Story*, 171.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

Glass [works] in several musical fields at once, crossing and recrossing the borders normally erected between, for instance, 'concert music' and opera on the one hand, and popular songs, music for films and even television advertising on the other. Practically speaking, the composer has achieved this by taking on more obviously commercial work in order to subsidise his more experimental projects.

—Keith Potter²⁵

Glass, meanwhile, continued to eschew traditional channels of consecration. Even as he began to create works for other groups to present, he resisted publishing. His reasons were similar to Reich's: avoiding publication kept control of Glass's music in Glass's hands. The works he created on commission, though, tended to be less amenable to publication anyway. In composing for theater, film, and advertisements, Glass chose avenues that continued to place presentation ahead of commodification—at least in terms of the produced objects.

Glass followed *Satyagraha* with the third of his “opera trilogy”: *Akhmaten*. Completed in 1983 and premiered in 1984, the opera about a monotheistic pharaoh's religious convictions was, like its predecessors, a European commission, this time from the Stuttgart State Opera. (Glass's operas had done and continue to do well in Germany; Stuttgart later assembled performances of the whole trilogy.) Glass reached new heights of popularity in the early and mid-80s, producing music for the Los Angeles Olympics, collaborating with songwriters like Paul Simon and Leonard Cohen, and experimenting with more traditional ensembles (particularly in collaboration with the Kronos Quartet).

While these activities did little to win Glass consecration in the academic field, they helped get his “sound” out to a wider audience. More than any of the artists discussed in this dissertation, Glass penetrated the popular consciousness and had a direct impact on popular music. While he was far from a chart-climbing pop artist, the success

²⁵ Potter, *Minimalists*, 341.

of his music (particularly in recordings) garnered him more compensation than consecration. Glass did not “depart” from minimalism any more than Reich did; both artists developed styles that used repetition but began to eschew strict use of process. Glass, though—in continuing to compose for amplified ensemble, in working for stage and television, in *embracing* pop culture and rock music—avoided the growing respect Reich received from the new music establishment. He was suspected (often rightly) of producing art for commerce’s sake rather than art’s sake alone. Despite his marketable ventures, Glass did not give up on art for art’s sake (and speaks with remarkable calm about his ability to work in different segments of the field of cultural production). Increasingly, though, his experiments for art’s sake had to exist alongside his more marketable work.

For a time in the late Seventies, though, Reich amassed popular appeal right alongside Glass. Their “hard” minimalist pieces may have attracted critical attention, but as they moved toward texture and “harmony,” they attracted broader audiences. Reich performed with his ensemble at rock clubs like The Bottom Line. Glass was more directly involved in art-rock and pop as a performer and sometimes producer. Their records had more indirect impact than direct; both artists (as well as Terry Riley) influenced “progressive” rock and electronica in the subsequent decades. Reich’s recording of *Music for 18 Musicians* garnered reviews in *Rolling Stone* and *Billboard* magazines. Glass’s music helped influence the founding of German electronic groups such as Kraftwerk. Glass (and Reich) were direct influences on Brian Eno, who heard their music in Britain and adopted many of their techniques for his *Music for Airports*. Through Eno, Reich and Glass influenced certain of David Bowie’s experiments,

particularly *Low* and *Heroes* (both of which have received symphonic treatments by Glass).²⁶

As Glass and Reich drifted toward the popular and the consecrated, respectively, they remained the best-known faces of downtown. Their successes allowed them to embrace modes of presentation (publishing and consecrated theatrical production) that had been well outside their segment of the field at the Seventies' opening. New avenues for presentation expanded their influence on both the field of new music and the field of cultural production more broadly. While their ensembles did not precisely become institutions, the two composers had established personal brands just as potent (and more durable) than the SoHo where they had conducted so many experiments.

In the 1970s, The Kitchen was the heart and soul of SoHo. ...The Kitchen was its crossroads—Broome and Wooster, just off West Broadway. For a community of artists and writers, dancers and musicians...it was, by day, a convenient midway point between studio and an afternoon hamburger at the Broome Street Bar...by night it was en route to CBGB's or the Mudd Club, where any number of punk and post-punk bands—often made up of the very same artists working that day at The Kitchen—might be playing.

—Roselle Goldberg²⁷

I have the feeling that it's going to be harder and harder for new institutions to come in and take this place that we now have, and which began in the 70s. Now is the moment to establish it, to firm it up. Although we talk about performance artists being permanent, we really shouldn't. However we can talk about a place where they can be.

—Philip Glass, 1987²⁸

The changing field had already forced The Kitchen to move once—from the Broadway Hotel to Wooster Street—and the changes of the late Seventies put it on the path to move again in 1986, this time to Chelsea. The SoHo transition from artistic to

²⁶ For some discussion of Reich and Glass's influence on popular music, see Potter, *Minimalists*, 248-49 (Reich) and 339-341 (Glass). See also Strickland, *Minimalism*, 247-48.

²⁷ "No Other Place," in *The Kitchen Turns Twenty: A Retrospective Anthology*, ed. Lee Morrissey (New York: Haleakala, 1992), 47.

²⁸ "A New, Important Stage," in *The Kitchen Turns Twenty*, 85. Glass's remarks were occasioned by the Kitchen's purchase of its new Chelsea location.

merely artsy was part of the pattern of gentrification and urban renewal through real estate development that had fueled New York's recovery. The Kitchen, for all that it had established itself as an institution, was still a part of the "old" SoHo. Its economic model couldn't account for the changing neighborhood. What had begun from collective efforts had little place amidst the new crop of boutiques and chain stores. The artists who had, as locals, provided The Kitchen with so much content and patronage were priced out of their lofts. There was little, materially, to hold the institution at its Wooster Street site, and plenty of material reason to move it.

When The Kitchen relocated, it dramatically slashed its staff—from twenty-three to seven. It initially rented the building from the Dia Foundation after selling the Broome street location (which it had long rented before purchasing).²⁹ The institution's existence was, for a time, tenuous. Much of the younger generation that had pushed rock and jazz at New Music New York had traded SoHo for the East Village. The older generation of artists were established enough to present their works at midtown and uptown venues. As its constituency wavered, The Kitchen also floundered for several months without a director. Barbara Tsumagari, the director who came in to fill the gap, said:

There had been a real chance that the Kitchen might close down for good. The old space had been sold, and there was no new building, no director, no staff, no funding and no programming.³⁰

Shrinking and re-organizing the staff—and eventually securing a loan to purchase the new building—laid the groundwork for real institutional stability. The Kitchen had to renew the interest of a dispersed artistic community, but by the mid-Eighties, its brand

²⁹ For some particulars of the relocation and a description of the new space, see Jennifer Dunning's "New Room for the Arts: Kitchen Goes 'Uptown,'" *New York Times*, January 3, 1986.

³⁰ Barbara Tsumagari, quoted in John Rockwell, "Under New Chief, the Kitchen Has Regained Some of Its Zip," *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1987.

was strong enough to do that. “We’re way over by the Hudson River,” Tsumagari noted, “a demonstration of how artists are being pushed out of New York. But this is still a raw neighborhood, and it leaves the Kitchen free to define itself.”³¹ That definition changed little; the Kitchen remained multi-disciplinary, intensely focused on the new, and a headlining institution of the avant-garde.

In some ways, the 1986 relocation resembles the one more than a decade earlier. The Kitchen moved from an anarchic space to a more ordered one, and again from a small space to a larger one. The new building (which The Kitchen still occupies as of this writing) had two large performance spaces, with additional room for storage and offices. It functioned much better as a performance venue, lacking the sightline-impairing pillars and noisy truck traffic of the Broome Street location. By all material measures, it was a vital improvement to The Kitchen’s circumstances. Practically, the most consequential loss was of centrality. The Kitchen could no longer be that neighborhood hangout, that spot on the way to everything, the hub of the scene. It was *an* institution, not *the* institution.

Despite the material and situational changes of the 1986 move, the earlier relocation was the more important one. The loose collective of video artists who’d made the Broadway Hotel’s kitchen a home on Friday nights was a product of the field’s shape in the transitional moment between the Sixties and Seventies, a social-artistic experiment that partook of Sixties idealism and the nascent Seventies ideas of community. By moving to Wooster Street and establishing an institution, Woody and Steina Vasulka had stepped firmly into the new era. It was an intentional move by the Kitchen’s leadership, an action. It would have been possible for the loose collective to continue without an

³¹ Ibid.

institutional support (though it would doubtless have been short-lived). The move to Chelsea was an institution's *reaction*—to a changing neighborhood, to a changing role within the field, to changes in funding patterns and expense. The material circumstances that prompted the move were threats to the Kitchen's existence, but not its identity. It had survived the Seventies.

Surviving the Seventies meant adapting to a fragmented field—whether that was the political field, the economic field, or the field of new music. While conservatives and corporations made enduring gains in influence, they also created an environment that was more competitive, harder to push in a single direction. Ed Koch in New York oversaw plenty of new construction, but the projects were series of private developments or private-public partnerships. There was nothing like the massive public works undertaken, for example, by Fiorello LaGuardia. Reagan spent billions of government dollars, but invested them in contracts with private corporations in the interest of narrow political ends. In the field of new music, too, the field had fragmented. Varying styles and modes of presentation had arisen and survived the Seventies, but none occupied a strong enough position to dominate the field.

Minimalism came closest to superseding its predecessors, but never quite managed. On an aesthetic level, early minimalism mingled serialism's rigor with conceptualists' attraction to sound and idea without fully being party to either. It began as a negation of what had come before, but process minimalism proved to be something of a compositional dead end. Its major practitioners had abandoned its most rigorous applications by the mid-Seventies. Reich's *Music for 18 Musicians* and Glass's score for

Einstein on the Beach both marked departures from process minimalism, straying into what Keith Potter and others call “post-minimalism.”³² As a negation of predecessors and alternatives, minimalism remained incomplete.

The works of intermedia artists like Monk also attempted negation. Intermedia, like minimalism, failed to develop into sustainable patterns that could redefine the questions of the field or become a subject for negation in its own right. Monk had to exchange the large, site-specific works she had created with The House for smaller ones more amenable to repetition and touring. Her difficulties with the NEA illustrate the challenge of altering the defining questions of the field.

Engaging the aesthetic questions of the era led to musical innovations Downtown. Of more enduring consequence were the Downtowners’ engagement with the pragmatic level of artistic life, with presentation. The Downtowners organized their musical lives mostly outside of others’ institutions. Especially in the early Seventies, to operate Downtown had meant informal concerts, economic exchanges that eschewed cash in favor of bartered services, and small collectives.³³ Embrace of the “band” model allowed new music creators to sidestep traditional reliance on “outside” professionals. By presenting outside the established channels for new music, the Downtowners altered the shape of the field. For a moment, it seemed those changes could solidly take root and form the basis for a new mode of artistic life. Then the field of power reasserted itself. The ambition behind *Music for 18 Musicians* and *Einstein on the Beach* necessitated

³² It is significant that Potter’s *Four Musical Minimalists* covers their works only into the mid-Seventies, but somewhat strange to speak of “post-minimalism” when musical minimalism itself scarce lasted a decade.

³³ In this it resembles Attali’s “composition” phase of musical existence.

institutional support—notably, both of those works moved beyond the composers’ personal ensembles.

Many of the Downtown artists were able to create their own small institutions, to use each others’ for support (as Wilson’s Byrd Hoffman supported *Einstein*, for example) or to use downtown-friendly professional organizations like Performing ArtServices. While this allowed artists to retain creative control of their works and—to an extent—their presentation, it channelized the revolutionary potential of the early Seventies. By the era’s end, making new music had been professionalized even in Downtown. The shape of that professionalism resembled that in the commercial sector: publicity and branding were as important as accounting and networking. Even the small institutions thus partook of the operational model of their older and larger predecessors. The field was altered, but it was not turned on its head.

The combination of practical and aesthetic necessities limited the effect of Downtown’s revolutions even within the narrow field of new music. The creators involved in the revolutions succeeded in cracking open the serial/conceptual split to allow for new opportunities. They failed in creating an alternative dominant enough to serve as the target of future negation. They fought, they shifted the lines of argument and the sites of conflict, penetrating into markets and venues that seemed utterly improbable in 1968...but they did not conquer. They did not vanquish.

And because the Downtowners vanquished neither Midtown nor Uptown, the battle for “what’s next” in new music *had* to end in detente. There were no clear victors, and no clear losers. Most of the figures discussed in this dissertation achieved some kind of sustainable success, but they did so in an environment with fewer and fewer havens for

art-for-art's sake. Commissions for new music remained few and far between. The ability of universities to support ensembles, never great, diminished in New York as in other places as public and private funding shifted to other programs. Though some ensembles could sustain themselves financially, the market was restricted (and remained, even at the Seventies' end, highly reliant on touring abroad).

In playing in venues that typically featured more "popular" music, Reich and Glass highlight the diminishing boundary between pop and art music at the Seventies' end. The patterns of influence between Glass, for example, and Brian Eno or Donna Summer are evidence of this blurring. In a different but equally salient manner, the advent of "neo" styles (neo-romanticism and fresh iterations of neoclassicism) accomplish a similar erosion of the boundaries of new music. When Wendy Carlos records an album of synthesized compositions of J.S. Bach to great popular success, "novelty" must bear a double meaning. New music was no longer so thoroughly distinct in its relation to either historical or popular music.

With the reduction of havens for new music making and the general erosion of art music's distinction, the field of new music's autonomy diminished. Autonomy, after Bourdieu, is relative, dependent largely on the polarity of symbolic versus economic worth (i.e., consecration versus marketability):

The degree of autonomy of a field of cultural production is revealed to the extent that the principle of external hierarchization there is subordinated to the principle of internal hierarchization: the greater the autonomy, the more the symbolic relationship of forces is favorable of producers who are the most independent of

demand, and the more the break tends to be noticeable between the two poles of the field...³⁴

The link between expanded performance options and new music's eroding autonomy is not necessarily causal (or at least not causal in a unidirectional way). Too, the distinction did not *vanish*: Philip Glass could still be criticized for his "accessibility" and Boulez could still be lauded for the complexity of his works. The distinction between the commercial and artistic merit, though, had little effect on the defining questions of the field by the Seventies' end. "Control" of new music was not won by any of the candidates operating at the Seventies' beginning. It was in part the lack of a victor that reduced the potency of the "what comes next" question. When the new thing could be an old thing, when the artistic thing could be a commercial thing...what was left to define the field?

Changes in the field of cultural production endure to the extent that they echo changes in the field of power. This is true even when a field achieves significant autonomy:

...although largely independent of them *in principle*, the internal struggles [of a field] always depend *in outcome*, on the correspondence that they maintain with the external struggles—whether struggles at the core of the field of power or at the core of the social field as a whole.³⁵

In the case of new music in the Seventies, correspondences abounded. Old institutions—and to an extent, large-scale institutionality—waned. The "Reagan Revolution" explicitly pushed against the government as institution; it implicitly attacked the very idea of institutions as a means of social organization. Institutions relied on

³⁴ Bourdieu, *Rules*, 217.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 127.

expertise, expertise had been unable to solve the dilemmas of the Seventies, and if expertise could not solve problems, then experts and their institutions ought to be relegated to the dustbin of history.³⁶ Without direction from a central authority, the notion of authority had itself been diminished. While corporations—the next best candidate after government for leadership—could be trusted to act in their own interest, the simultaneous rise of environmental and consumer safety movements demonstrated that corporations, too, were no safe seat for authority. In place of concrete institutions, abstract principles drove political and social debates: the market, manifest destiny, religiosity freed from central leadership. Advertising executives and politicians alike encouraged citizens to choose for themselves, to trust their own judgment. The concurrent great wave of self-empowerment movements added to a shift from large groups to individuals, from “movements” to “personalities.” The mostly homogeneous nation of the World War II generation was gone, and the homogeneous, quasi-universal ideals that had accompanied it followed.

Consumer culture, identity politics, and the marketing based on them did not precisely come to stand in for authority, but they served similar purposes in structuring the broad social field and the field of power. The debt-financed spending that began as a reaction to inflation (buy at today’s prices, pay with tomorrow’s dollars) became a means of establishing identity: you are what you own. Coupled with the erosion of central authority, the prominence of consumption displaced the nexus of exchanging economic capital for cultural capital. One could just as well establish one’s taste with a high-speed

³⁶ There is some irony in the fact that the conservatives’ success relied on their own expertise in organizing and mobilizing their fragmented coalition. Even that organization, though, was initially about grassroots mobilizing, about directing collections of people to act directly rather than organizing collections of people to lobby authority. Consider the reliance of the tax revolt on ballot initiatives over legislation.

record changer and imported speakers as with a subscription to the Philharmonic (never mind the trouble of playing music yourself). The yuppies' wine and cheese parties did not require the arbitration of a chef to determine their worthiness. By the end of the Seventies, the movement of cultural capital was facilitated by marketing and consumer practice rather than heirloom institutions. Symbolic capital—that vital ability to determine what is consecrated and worthwhile—had been dispersed across the field. While it remained primarily in the hands of the elites, those elites were just as fragmented as the rest of American society.

The fragmented field of new music went through the same changes. The erosion of central authority lessened the usefulness of heirloom institutions as providers of consecration and specific symbolic capital. In the field of cultural production, the old institutions diminished for much the reason that those in the field of power did; their experts had failed to meaningfully engage with new music (whether Wuorinen versus Columbia or the challenges the Downtowners faced in presenting their music). Boulez at the Philharmonic had attempted a more meaningful engagement, but retreated from New York's field when a better opportunity presented itself in Paris. Faced with the challenge of the new, many heirloom institutions acted in their own best interest to maintain their established brands (as Mehta's appointment as Boulez's successor demonstrates).

More importantly, producers demonstrated over the course of the Seventies that they could create works outside the frame of the old institutions and still find success. Driven away by conservative institutions—and keep in mind that Reich and Glass had both gone to Juilliard—these producers had created their own smaller ones, institutions specially designed to advance their conceptions of new music. The institutions that drove

the Seventies coalesced in a fragmented cultural landscape, but were neither large nor numerous enough to erase that fragmentation.

The rise of consumer culture facilitated the rise of small institutions even as it eroded the usefulness of consecration stemming from a central source. The “cultured” consumer could happily purchase Philip Glass records as a mark of taste. (Meanwhile, the New York Philharmonic lost its contract with CBS records.) Small record labels could survive even as popular tastes skewed away from the consecrated. The new ability to exchange economic capital for cultural capital without heirloom institutions as mediator enabled some producers (most notably Glass) to do well despite their lack of institutional affiliation. Simultaneously, though, the intrusion of economic capital more directly into the field of new music production diminished its autonomy.

The erosion of consecration, the increase in “consumptionism,” and the diminished role of heirloom institutions mutually reinforce one another in the field of power, the field of cultural production, and the broader social field. It must be stressed, though, that for all the prevalence of words like “diminished,” “erosion,” and “fragmentation,” this reading of the Seventies is not a lament about how they ruined everything. The fragmentation I have described can just as easily be read as the destruction of barriers, as David Frum does:

A carapace of control had been locked upon the country as an emergency measure. But as the emergency dragged on for decade after decade, the carapace chafed and abraded. In the 1970s, the country at last burst through it. In bursting through the carapace, Americans did not pause to distinguish between obsolete and unnecessary restrictions and wise and good ones. They smashed them all.³⁷

³⁷ David Frum, *How We Got Here*, (New York: Perseus Books, 2000), 355.

Smashing restrictions has consequences. The material circumstances of the Seventies—particularly the economic and political instability created by changing balances of influence and technology—accelerated the dissolution of boundaries. It is not possible (or particularly useful) to try and untangle new freedoms to succeed from new freedoms to fail. The changes that gave the nation Ed Koch and Ronald Reagan also gave it punk rock, liberated sexual identity, and a plethora of new arts.

'Experimental music' is a euphemism. It covers everything. In the 1960's the avant-garde fought the neo-classic/academic, and won, but they didn't get [a] good treaty agreement.
—Larry Austin³⁸

The successes and failures of the Seventies altered the definition of new music. As described in chapter one, new music has meant music engaged dialectically with both its historical predecessors and popular music. The changes of the Seventies have significant consequence for both of those dialectics. The negation on which the historical dialectic largely depends *was* undertaken by various cultural producers in the late Sixties and early Seventies, but they were not completely successful in reducing their predecessors to an old guard—Negation did not lead to marginalization. Modernist composers, so enamored of a progress narrative of musical language, were not able to conjure serialism to dominance. Simultaneously, the cultural narrative of progress in postwar America foundered in the political and economic crises of the Seventies.

Nor is it true that the modernists “lost” simply because they were successfully negated by the conceptualists. The conceptualists’ kind of revolution, spiritually aligned with the counterculture, helped hasten the waning of the progress narrative, but were hardly central to the Seventies’ crises: Watergate had little to do with Woodstock, Oil

³⁸ Larry Austin, quoted in Report from the Front #6, EAR Magazine, Kitchen Archives.

Shocks little to do with longhairs. The hoped-for revolution materialized in no greater part than the promised progress. Neither attempt at historical negation succeeded—conceptualists opened doors without “freeing” music; modernists advanced technique without ensuring previous advances became commonplaces.

The biggest factor in the erosion of new music’s historical dialectic, though, is not the failure of revolutionaries (of any ilk): it is that the old refuses to go away. It is, in fact, freshly embraced in the Seventies in different forms: Rochberg’s Neo-Romanticism and the sudden prevalence of Baroque concerti, among others. An incomplete negation is no negation at all. The underlying assumptions of the “old” were never vanquished. The historical narrative becomes murky, and without a strong sense of history, engaging with it dialectically becomes a lost cause. Garret List skirts this point in addressing later iterations of New Music, New York (after it had become New Music America):

The only New Music America festival in which I have participated (1989) made perfectly clear that the music has become what we had started in The Kitchen. The big grab-bag in the sky!! Minimalism did not become a predominating style in the art of composed music. The only things to do involved style-changing and the mixing of contexts. Even doing something new seems unimportant in our era.³⁹

Creating new means of musical expression was no longer necessary. In the Adornian sense, then, new musical subjectivity is no longer possible. Composers must perforce end up in the Stravinskian situation of ironic borrowing, plucking from history what they can and what they will. That (Adornian) reading relies on an Enlightenment notion of subjectivity, though, an assertion of a rational actor’s self against an irrational society. Though Adorno wouldn’t like it, engaging in a dialectic with the history of music in the Seventies and after becomes less an *assertion* of self than a *construction* of self.

³⁹ Garret List in *The Kitchen Turns Twenty*, 28.

Negation becomes a much hazier thing when the old has itself become a repudiation of the new—Neo-Romantic music is just as much an attempt at negation as process minimalism or serialism. As inherited notions of culture and self erode, subjectivity (broadly considered) also becomes a process of construction rather than assertion.

With history made vague, could new music seek to preserve its identity through dialectic relation to the popular? Not exactly. The same trends that muddy new music's relation to historical music muddy its relation to popular music. As some new music slips toward the commercial and away from art for art's sake, it becomes increasingly difficult to define one's artistic self *against* the popular. That blurring of divisions is most obvious in Glass and Laurie Anderson. "Pulse-pattern minimalism" aligned in many respects with disco and progressive rock. (Robert Fink offers a compelling analysis of the alignment of repetitive practices in various cultural practices, including disco, in *Repeating Ourselves*.) There was naturally a kind of counterinsurgency toward the popularizing of the minimal, an attempt by composers from different segments of the field to diminish minimalism as art:

About one minute of minimalism is a lot, because it is all the same. Minimalists are not aware of the larger dimensions of life. One also hears constant repetition in the speeches of Hitler and in advertising. It has its dangerous aspects.⁴⁰

There were others, though, who found minimalism's popularity salutary. By listening to music that partook of both the commercial and art-for-art's-sake, audiences could perhaps be drawn more thoroughly to the latter. Or so the reasoning went. Debates over mass appeal were hardly anything new (they account for at least some of Adorno's

⁴⁰ Elliott Carter, interview with Michael Walsh, "The Heart Is Back in the Game," *Time*, September 20, 1982: 60. Quoted in Fink, *Repeating Ourselves*, 63. Fink also quotes a 2001 interview in which Carter again compares minimalism to advertising—television and junk mail.

loathing for Stravinsky), but the development of certain downtown styles into legitimate musical commodities made the debate more than, so to say, academic. As the subsequent generation of downtown composers explored *explicit* incorporation of pop and rock elements, what comprised art-for-art's sake was more and more difficult to discern. With former avant-garde darlings selling records, performing in clubs, and appearing in advertising (e.g., Philip Glass in a 1982 Cutty Sark ad), what had once been the field's interior debates bled out into the social sphere. Once those interior questions become exterior, it is much more difficult to make the case that new music defines itself through a dialectic with the popular.

If new music must simultaneously efface history and embrace the commercial, how could its creators express truth? Adorno, gloomily, would no doubt lament the triumph of the objectified self (musical and otherwise). Jacques Attali, in the final, utopian section of his treatise *Noise*, proposes a different solution to the dilemma of objectification:

We are all condemned to silence—unless we create our own relation with the world and try to tie other people into the meaning we thus create. That is what composing is. Doing solely for the sake of doing, without trying artificially to recreate the old codes in order to reinsert communication into them. Inventing new codes, inventing the message at the same time as the language. Playing for one's own pleasure, which alone can create the conditions for new communication.⁴¹

Attali's argument posits musical change as an advance indicator of changes in society. His free-flowing "composing" would advance (or perhaps return) society to a condition where subjectivity and the assertion of difference could be continuously recreated. Time and labor would cease to be fungible. Simultaneity of code and message

⁴¹ Attali, *Noise*, 134.

would eliminate new music as a distinct category altogether, because new music as a category relies on socio-economic fungibility. The problems this hypothetical situation would pose for new music makers are irrelevant; even Attali acknowledges the utopian elements of a theory that would simultaneously require infinite tolerance and infinite autonomy.

Understanding what “new music” meant at the end of the Seventies requires a navigation between Adorno’s pessimism and Attali’s utopianism. More importantly, it requires a navigation between Adorno’s insistence that the value of a work inheres in its creator’s ability to assert an individual subjectivity and Attali’s insistence that music, through human history, has been merely a social transaction. Bourdieu’s field theory tends to favor the latter position, but through the addition of habitus allows for a more nuanced understanding of music as social phenomenon. Habitus—the notion that actors act strategically within the field, but still act of their own volition—reinserts the individual into Attali’s mechanistic exchange model. More importantly, field theory suggests that historical meaning is to be found in the underlying struggles for power rather than in explanations of systems or individuals.

The struggles in the field of new music have been struggles for symbolic capital, for the ability to determine what is valued and what is not. Fundamentally, they have been struggles for power. What distinguishes the Seventies is that the struggles within the field of new music, even in as geographically a delimited area as New York, echo the struggles for symbolic capital in the political and broader social fields: struggles over the role of individuals and the role of institutions, struggles over the place of “progress” and “history,” struggles to adjust to a changed economy. Producers of new music—from the

Philharmonic to the Kitchen, from Wuorinen to Monk to Glass to Boulez—both reacted to the changing shape of the field and sought to create their own changes. Some changes were simply stylistic.

The enduring changes, however, the ones that ultimately affected the arrangement of symbolic capital, were changes in presentation. At the period's opening, symbolic capital resided mostly with partisans of either Babbitt or Cage. That question was the defining one of the field. FLUXUS had challenged traditional modes of presentation, but had failed to gain any enduring stability. Presentation, by and large, was a matter of gaining access to institutions and concert halls. Generally, producers of new music required some endorsement by a consecrating authority to get that access. By the Seventies' end, that was no longer the case.

Producers of new music had far more avenues to consecration when Reagan was elected than they had when Nixon was. Through the efforts of artists to manage their own brands and to create their own institutions, they had managed to win symbolic capital. Playing at The Kitchen *meant* something in 1980. It was a sign of endorsement by the experimental establishment, a kind of consecration. Glass had parlayed his experiments with *Einstein on the Beach* into a series of commissions for more traditional operas in the consecrated venues of Europe. Reich began to publish and write for traditional ensembles. Monk continued to secure grants from federal and state agencies even as The House put into place a junior company to keep her earlier works in the repertory. New music could be performed at rock clubs and taken—at least by certain segments of the field—seriously. Composer-driven ensembles continued to be a viable means of presenting new work. The creation of these avenues to symbolic capital was not an

assertion of subjectivity in the Adornian sense, nor was it some subversion of Attali's system of musical exchange. It was a product of actors in the field exercising their abilities to take advantage of changes to material circumstance, of agents acting strategically.

The gains in symbolic capital made by various downtown institutions were not sufficient to give "Cage" a victory over "Babbitt." Increased institutionality—as evidenced by the conference of new music centers concurrent with New Music, New York—led to greater interest (in multiple senses) in consecration, and the expansion of consecration was concomitant with an embrace of the stylistic diversity that fell under the label of "downtown." Just as experimental styles failed to displace their predecessors (or competitors), downtown's gains in symbolic capital did not demolish the symbolic capital already accrued in the universities and midtown institutions. Those had to deal with the changed field, and were certainly diminished somewhat in the new balance of power, but they were still purveyors of symbolic capital—and a comparatively consistent supply of economic capital ensured they would continue to be so.

For the field of new music, the Seventies proved to be a time of diffusion. Symbolic capital expanded and ultimately thinned as new music's autonomy diminished. What had begun as a war for what's next became a struggle for control over what was left. Around its edges, the field of new music bled into other fields. In terms of presentation, "what was left" was a hodgepodge of diminished and newly established institutions drifting toward a mean that was something like The Kitchen: professionalized presentation, complete staff, and a stated interest in new music. The truly avant-garde spaces, like the EAR Inn, continued to flicker in and out of existence, eventually fleeing

SoHo's real estate market to Chelsea and the East Village. Particularly with the rock and disco influenced avant-garde, clubs were much more important than "halls" or venues specifically catering to "new music."

"What was left" was, for the field of new music, like the broader social field, an array of choices centered on individual agency. Government and private funding remained and despite conservative rhetoric, were not actually much reduced. They, were, though, more widely distributed in accordance with the new arrangement of symbolic capital. Concert dollars, similarly, did not vanish. The record industry could not be quite the engine for new music that it had intermittently been (recall that Mehta and the Philharmonic lost their contract with Columbia in 1983), but small labels had gained a toehold.

As the field settled down in the early Eighties, something resembling ritual combat replaced more direct conflicts for symbolic and economic capital. Occasional jousts in journals and editorial pages, debates over specific persons or presentations...these tended to be struggles for prestige rather than control of the field. They seldom affected the actual practice of putting new works before the public as they had in the preceding era. The parallel conflicts in the field of power did not wax as sanguine, but there, too, the field had taken a new shape that would retain surprising stability. The "War for What's Next" was, in the end, about fragmentation and fortification, about a conflict that maintained vitality without maintaining organized fronts. Reagan would not use "it's morning in America" as a campaign slogan until 1984, but as he was inaugurated on the White House's west lawn, it really *was* a new day for America and its music. The field had changed, and it was time to make the most of it.

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Appendix One: Prospective Encounters

Season 1

- Oct. 1, 1971: Boulez conducts Mario Davidovsky (Synchronisms No. 6), Charles Wuorinen (Politics of Harmony)
- Oct. 29, 1971: Michael Gielen conducts Robert Moevs (Musica da Camera), Frederic Rzewski (*Requiem*), Riesman (Chamber Concerto), Reich (*Phase Patterns*)
- Jan 21, 1972: Bruno Maderna conducts Earle Brown (Event: Synergy II), R. Murray Schafer (*Requiems for a Party Girl*)
- Feb 18, 1972: Boulez conducts George Crumb (*Ancient Voices of Children*), Stanley Silverman (*Planh*), Eric Salzman (*Ecologue*)

Season 2

- Oct. 6, 1972: Boulez conducts Jacob Druckman (*Incenters*), Peter Maxwell Davies (*Eight Songs for a Mad King*)
- Nov. 3, 1972: Michael Tilson Thomas conducts David Del Tredici (*Syzygy*), “work TBA” (eventually works by John Cage, including *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano* and *Credo in Us*)
- Jan. 12, 1973 Boulez conducts William Bolcom (“Morning and Evening Poems”), Mauricio Kagel (*Match*)
- Mar. 30, 1973: Boulez conducts world premiere of Milton Babbitt (Concerto for Violin, Small Orchestra and Tape), György Ligeti (*Adventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*)

Season 3

- April 26, 1974: Boulez conducts Anton Webern (Concerto, Op. 24), Charles Ives songs, Harvey Sollberger (Chamber Variations)
- May 3, 1974: Boulez conducts Edgard Varese (*Octandre*), Stefan Wolpe (*Piece for Solo Trumpet* and *Piece for Trumpet and 7 Instruments*), György Ligeti (Chamber Concerto)

Season 4

- Jan. 17, 1975: Boulez conducts Donald Harris (*Ludus II*), Jacob Druckman (*Valentine for Solo Bass*), Arnold Schoenberg (“Serenade” Op. 24)
- March 21, 1975: Boulez conducts Elliot Carter (Duo for Violin and Piano), Peter Lieberson (Cello Concerto). Lydia Dlugoczewski’s “Abyss and Caress” was scheduled, but not the work was not yet completed. It was replaced by Anton Webern (Quartet Op. 22), and Alban Berg (Four Pieces Op. 5)

Season 5

- December 5, 1975: Boulez conducts delayed Dlugoczewski work, Donald Martino (*Notturmo*), Harrison Birtwistle (*Verses for Ensembles*)
- May 14, 1976: Boulez conducts world premier of Jon Deak (*Dire Expectations*), Earle Brown (*Centering*), George Rochberg (*Tableaux*)

Season 6

- Oct. 29, 1976: Boulez conducts Loren Rush (*Nexus 16*), David Gilbert (*Poem VI* and *Centering II*), Steve Jablonsky (*Wisconsin Death Trip*)

Feb. 4, 1977: Boulez conducts William Albright (*Marginal Worlds*), Daniel Plante (*Love in the Asylum*), Luciano Berio (*Chemins II*)

May 13, 1977: Boulez conducts Jeffrey Levine (*Divertimento*), Harley Gaber (*The Winds Rise in the North*), Sydney Hodkinson (*The Edge of the Olde One*)

Season 7

Feb. 3, 1978: Gunther Schuller conducts Olly Wilson (*Echoes*), David Stock (*Scat*), William Thomas McKinley (*Paintings No. 2*), Anders Eliasson (*Disegno per Sasetto d'ottoni*), Edwin Dugger (*Intermezzi*)

April 29, 1978: Gunther Schuller conducts Andrew Thomas (*Dirge in Woods*), Edward Cohen (*Madrigal*), Gunther Schuller (*Night Music*), Charles Mingus (*Revelations*), George Edwards (*Gyromancy*), Tristan Murail (*Couleur de mer*)

Appendix Two: New Music, New York Composers and Works

June 8, 1979 (Gala Benefit Concert)

Robert Ashley, *The Wolfman*

Philip Glass, *Dance No. 4* (1979) A Work-in-progress

Meredith Monk, "Traveling Song" and "Biography" from *Education of the Girlchild* (1973), "Do You Be" (1970)

Pauline Oliveros, *The Tuning Meditation*

Steve Reich Ensemble, *Drumming* (Part One)

June 9

A. Spencer Barefield, *Monsoonyur Pienot Noear*

Karl Berger, *Who Knows* (Spirals 1-4)

Marc Grafe, *Art, Artristry and Artness*

Garrett List, *Where We Are*

Leo Smith, *Aura*

Peter Zummo (with Stephanie Woodard, dancer-choreographer)

June 10

Charles Amirkhonian and Carol Law, *Audience* (1978) and *The Type without Time* (in progress, 1979)

Connie Beckley, *Tiptoe*

Jon Deak, *A Flatlander in Colorado*

Scott Johnson, *Involuntary Variatons #2*

Jill Kroesen

David van Tieghem, *A Man and His Toys*

June 11

Michael Byron, *Duet* (from '158 Pieces for String Instruments)

Philip Corner, *Gamelan: Italy Revisited III* (regolato)

Malcolm Goldstein, *Soundings*

William Hellermann, *Squeek*

Peter Kotik, *Many Many Women*

Charlie Morrow, "Gesture Song," "Dream Song/Vision Chant," "Two Kinds of Whistling"

June 12

Barbara Benary, *Exchanges* (1971)

Joe Celli, "Some Transformational Improvisation"

Don Cherry

Tom Johnson, *Simple Arithmetic*

Jeanne Lee, "Collaboration"

Phill Niblock, *Four Arthurs* (superimposed with *Two Octaves and a Fifth*)

June 13

Larry Austin, *Catalogo Voce*
 Joel Chadabe, *Solo* (1978)
 Charles Dodge, *Any Resemblance is Purely Coincidental*
 George Lewis, *The Kim and I*
 Alvin Lucier, work-in-progress for amplified piano
 Laurie Spiegel, *Voices Within*

June 14

David Behrman, *Touch Tones*
 Tony Conrad, (untitled pieces)
 John Gibson, *Criss Cross*
 Annea Lockwood, (untitled new work)
 Charlemagne Palestine, "Untitled for Solo Voice" (1978)
 Ivan Tcherpenin, Two Pieces for Piano

June 15

Jon Hassell, *Fourth World Sketches*
 David Mahler, composition to be announced
 Gordon Mumma, *Schoolwork* (1970)
 Michael Nyman, *Five Orchestral Pieces Opus Tree*
 Richard Teitelbaum, Solo for Synthesizers
 "Blue" Gene Tyranny, *The White Night Riot* (Mixed and Unmixed)

June 16

Laurie Anderson, Three songs from "Americans on the Move"
 Rhys Chatham, *Guitar Trio*
 Peter Gordon, *Extended Niceties*
 Jeffrey Lohn, *Humans Know How Many Toes They Have Whether They Are Looking at Them or Not*
 Frankie Mann, *The Mayan Debutante Revue*
 Ned Sublette, *The Mormon Bishop's Lament*

Appendix Three: Agenda for New Music Conference

New Music Conference June 12-14, 1979

AGENDA: Conference to take place at New York University, Loeb Student Center, 566 LaGuardia Place (corner of West 4th Street at the south end of Washington Square Park)

Tuesday June 12

9:30-10:15 Opening Introductions

10:15-11:00 Fundraising: This session will focus on the special problems of seeking funds for contemporary music and will identify the sources available and avenues which would only be dead ends. It will also examine the ways in which organizations can best help themselves—e.g., earned income. It is expected that the participants will discuss how best to alert funding agencies to their particular needs. Resource personnel: Stephen Benedict*

1:00-2:15 Lunch

2:15-4:00 The Access Center: This session will concentrate on the special problems of the equipment resource center, its organization, functions, community and its future development. Resource personnel: Robin Kirck, Robert Ashley, Mills College*

4:15-6:00 Support Organizations: Representatives from organization which provide alternative means of support to composers and institutions will explain their programs. Resource personnel: Peggy Jory, The American Music Center; Martin Bookspan, ASCAP; James Roy, BM; John Duffy, Meet the Composer.

Wednesday, June 13

9:30-12:30 The Presenting Organization: The session will examine the functions of such an organization and concentrate on programming, responsibilities to the artist, audience development, publicity, membership programs and future plans. Resource personnel: David Mahler, and/or; Nigel Redden, The Walker Arts Center; Mary MacArthur, The Kitchen Center*

1:45-3:30 Cooperation: The participants will explore ways of working together through sharing resources and the establishment of a touring network. At this session the formation of a national alliance of New Music Centers will be discussed. Resource personnel: Mimi Johnson, Performing Artservices; David White, Dance Theatre Workshop.

*Note: All resource personnel do not appear here. Additional persons will be asked to serve in this capacity.

3:30-5:00 Committee sessions on each topic. Precipitous discussions and conclusions stated.

5:00-6:00 General discussion of committees' statements.

Thursday June 14

9:30-10:15 Introductions

10:15-12:30 The Access Center and the Presenting Organization. Participants will share with representatives from private, federal, and state agencies the matter of their discussion and will invite reactions, information, and advice.

2:30-5:00 Cooperation and Future Development: As at the morning session, it is hoped that all participants will be able to discuss the conference's findings and creatively project subsequent developments in the field.

5:00 Reception