

When Worlds Collide: Music and Ideology in France, 1946-1954

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study places the radicalisation of art music in early post-War France in its broader socio-cultural and political context. It achieves this by pursuing two general and intersecting lines of inquiry. The first details the stances towards musical conservatism and innovation adopted by cultural strategists representing Western and Soviet ideological interests at the onset of the Cold War. The study considers the implications of the performance at *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, an international arts festival staged in Paris in 1952, of two opposing musical types: neo-classicism (represented by Stravinsky's *Symphony in C*), and serialism (Boulez's *Structures 1a*). Organised by Nicolas Nabokov, the festival was one of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's attempts to question the validity of Soviet socialist realism. The second line of inquiry, which draws upon the commentaries of Adorno and Sartre, recognises that the Cold War generated a heightened political awareness amongst French musicians at the very time when the social relevance of avant-garde music had become the focus of widespread debate.

Five specific topics are addressed: the differences and similarities between socialist realism and Western cultural policy, as articulated by the Congress for Cultural Freedom during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*; the historical antecedents of the French socialist realist Progressiste movement in France, and the impact of its Zhdanovian dictates upon Serge Nigg's artistic development; the location of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, and the styles presented at it, within the ideological and cultural ferment of early post-War France; the attempt by René Leibowitz to situate Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* within the Sartrean existentialist idea of committed art, and Sartre's response to Leibowitz's findings; and the potential of works such as *Structures 1a* to challenge the Cold War ideological status quo.

Among the conclusions drawn is that whereas neo-classicism signified the maintenance of a post-War order in which French interests were rendered subordinate, serialism formed part of a revolutionary discourse which sought to question that order; and that the challenges to convention and musical comprehension presented by *Structures Ia* are highly significant given that the work was composed at a time and in a place where the Cold War antagonists had demanded conformity and transparency in artistic expression in order to ensure fidelity to their ideological values.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge, contains no material published previously or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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The study would not have been possible without the support and understanding of my wife Sarah, and son Brinley. It is to Sarah, Brinley, my mother Joan, and my late father John, that I dedicate this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

### Issues and Perspectives

On Wednesday 7 May 1952 the Parisian daily newspaper *Combat* gave notice of a concert of chamber music to be presented early that evening at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées. The event was the first of seven chamber concerts given in Paris during the month of May 1952 as part of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, an international festival of the arts presented under the auspices of the *Congrès pour la Liberté de la Culture* (Congress for Cultural Freedom). *Combat* advised that among the works to be performed on 7 May was one described vaguely as ‘Musique (P. Boulez). P. Boulez, O. Messiaen’.<sup>1</sup> Details published in an earlier weekend edition of the same newspaper (26-27 April) identified the work as “‘Structures’ pour deux pianos (Pierre Boulez). Pierre Boulez et Olivier Messiaen (1re audition)’.

On 8 May *Combat* reported that the fifth in a series of nuclear tests carried out by the United States military in the northern spring of 1952 had taken place the day before in the Nevada desert.<sup>2</sup> Chronological coincidence aside, it is significant in terms of this study that *Structures Ia* was given its première at a festival that was as much a product of the Cold War as were the American nuclear tests themselves. With that in mind, the purpose of this study is to expose the circumstances whereby *Structures Ia* and other compositions performed at the festival came to be assigned an ideological currency, and to explore the implications and the repercussions of that assignation. The distinction between intention and outcome is made by virtue of the fact that there was a considerable divergence of opinion between what the Congress for Cultural Freedom intended the festival to demonstrate, and what the bulk of critical opinion judged it to have achieved. These

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<sup>1</sup> ‘La Musique à Paris.’ *Combat* 7 May 1952: 3.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Nouvelle explosion atomique à Las Vegas.’ *Combat* 8 May 1952: 1.

differences highlight the cultural and ideological ferment in France during the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The inclusion in the festival of *Structures Ia*, and a work that might reasonably be regarded as its antithesis, Igor Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* (1940), implies that they were assigned a similar ideological and cultural significance by the organisers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Irrespective of the diametrically opposite aesthetic foundations upon which each work is based, the festival's organisers appeared to champion both as the products of societies in which intellectual thought and artistic production were free from political interference. The defence of freedom of thought and expression formed a sizeable part of the *raison d'être* of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an organisation dedicated to perpetuating a post-War world order that, with the United States acting as guarantor, maintained Western Europe as the bulwark against Soviet expansionism for some time to come.

The above premise becomes less straightforward, however, when the aesthetic prejudices held by the principal organiser of the festival and Secretary General of the Congress, the expatriate Russian composer and academic, Nicolas Nabokov, are taken into account. Once Nabokov's antipathy towards serialism is exposed, and its impact upon the Congress's cultural policy assessed, an important question arises. That is, what deeper significance can be drawn from the fact that *Structures Ia*, which was described by the man responsible for its inclusion in the chamber music component of the festival, the Parisian music critic Fred Goldbeck, as 'a war machine devised to kill convention',<sup>3</sup> shared the same platform with the *Symphony in C*, an archetype of convention composed by an

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<sup>3</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'Avantgarde: Ciphers, Games and Spells.' *Twentieth Century Composers. Volume IV: France, Italy and Spain*. Introduction by Nicolas Nabokov. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974) 126. The citation policy used in this study is to give full publication details at the first entry only. Subsequent references to the same source enable those details to be traced using the bibliography.



individual who was, as Alexander Ringer was later to assert, ‘perfectly attuned to the subliminal needs of the power elite’?<sup>4</sup> Two contentions will emerge from a clearer understanding of the culture-versus-ideology debate as it was then prosecuted by key individuals from both sides of the ideological divide, and among a politically and culturally aware cross-section of French society. The first is that the experimental nature of the more radical works that were included in the chamber-music series challenged the very cultural and ideological values that the Congress for Cultural Freedom sought to defend. The second is that as a measure of the confused allegiances that bedevilled early post-War Europe in general, and France in particular, the inclusion of those works highlighted the bankruptcy of the organisation’s attempts to invest music with an ideological import.

Using *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* as a backdrop, this study locates within the Cold War ideological discourse neo-classicist music, as typified by Stravinsky’s *Symphony in C*, and avant-garde music, which is in this instance represented by expanded serial technique. The study will, to use a political parlance in common use during the period under review, show how neo-tonal music, and neo-classicism in particular, was appropriated by the Congress for Cultural Freedom in its attempt to promote the ‘Either-Or’ (either the United States or the Soviet Union) position that infused the body politic of those countries regarded by the United States as its allies in the Cold War confrontation. In light of what will be shown to be the hostility displayed towards serial music by both of the Cold War antagonists, it is argued that *Structures Ia* should in this context be viewed as the manifestation of a ‘Neither-Nor’ sentiment, widespread in France, which maintained that the nation should ignore the overtures of both East and West and pursue independent political and cultural agendas.

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Ringer. ‘Musical Taste and the Industrial Syndrome.’ *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 5.1 (June 1974): 152.

A number of the key issues to be addressed in this study are outlined in Boulez's account of the situation that confronted young composers at the Paris Conservatoire in the early post-War years:

... very early on, differences began to appear among us, stemming from the fact that some refused, in the name of humanism and the need to communicate with others, to advance any further into territory where they risked not being understood – an ideology that filled me with horror, and that appeared to me above all to serve as a screen for conformity.<sup>5</sup>

The critical factors here are ideology, the need to communicate, and aesthetic conformity. At risk of appearing as one of Boulez's 'sophists' who can 'with just a few strokes of the pen, connect everything with everything, and anything with anything', Boulez in the above is offering a composer's perspective on what was a wider scenario wherein political ideologues, rallying under the banner of social justice, sought to appropriate to their cause music that they deemed suitable for propagandising their ideological beliefs.<sup>6</sup> Boulez appears to be referring specifically to Serge Nigg and his embrace of socialist realism, a *faux*-humanist cultural policy that espoused artistic conservatism and conformity in order to perpetuate Stalinism within the Soviet Union, and to promote it elsewhere. The strength and depth of support for socialist realism in French musical circles are addressed in detail in this study.

It will emerge that the ideological opponents were unified in their embrace of a conservative musical aesthetic: the Soviets and their proxies, in order to eliminate the possibility of subversion arising from cultural pluralism; the Congress, so as to promote a vision of social and political justice that held Stalinism to be its antithesis. Avant-garde music based upon deliberate non-conformism, and conceived in the absence of what Boulez in the above described as the need to communicate, was feared by both blocs for its

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<sup>5</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'From the Domaine Musicale to IRCAM: Pierre Boulez in Conversation with Pierre-Michel Menger.' *Perspectives of New Music* 28.1 (Winter 1990): 7.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Interior Duologue.' *Boulez on Music Today*. Susan Bradshaw and Richard Rodney Bennett, trs. (London: Faber, 1971) 14.

potential to sabotage their efforts to win the hearts and minds of Europe. Whether a work composed in the absence of a will to communicate is necessarily devoid of meaning is an issue revisited during the course of the study. As is the question as to whether that absence should be interpreted as an act of defiance or, as Theodor Adorno believed, a condition imposed from without upon traumatised artists who 'are no longer even permitted to articulate their condition'.<sup>7</sup>

Rather than dealing with all musical types that fell under the rubric 'avant-garde' during the early post-War period, this study for the most part restricts its terms of reference to serial music and its antecedent, twelve-tone music, which some commentators referred to as dodecaphony or as combinations such as *dodécaphonique-sériel* and *atonal dodécaphonique* and which, owing to their eccentricity, are left untranslated. The distinction between twelve-tone technique and serial technique proceeds on the understanding that both are based upon a pre-ordained order of succession for a given musical parameter. When, as was the case initially, the order of succession was restricted to pitch alone, it was described as twelve-tone technique. When the order of succession was applied to musical parameters other than (but including) pitch, the technique was termed serial. Although Boulez was later to describe as absurd the attempts to impose the number twelve on parameters other than pitch, this study is concerned with the early post-War period when the expansion of serial technique represented a radical and uncompromising application of what was already regarded by its detractors as an anti-expressive and fundamentally flawed compositional technique based upon the number twelve.<sup>8</sup> *Structures Ia* represents not only the culmination of expanded serial technique, but a supreme act of defiance on the part of

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<sup>7</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music' (1955). Edited and translated by Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will. *Telos* 77 (1988): 115.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Entries for a Musical Encyclopaedia: Series.' *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*. Paule Thévenin, ed. Stephen Walsh, tr. Introduction by Robert Piencikowski. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 235-6.

the composer in the face of his critics.

The decision to restrict the terms of reference to twelve-tone and serial music is based on the fact that their validity was keenly debated by all of the principal players identified in the study. As such, their contributions allow for an empirical examination of firm historical evidence. The narrowing of the research parameters should not be interpreted as an attempt to diminish the significance of *musique concrète*, Olivier Messiaen (and his *Mode de valeurs et d'intensités*, 1949, in particular), or an individual who loomed as the significant other among the composers of Boulez's generation, Karlheinz Stockhausen. Rather, it is a recognition that there exists ample documentary evidence to show that in France, at least, the expansion of serial technique was a matter of great concern to cultural planners on both sides of the ideological divide. To this end, the research methodology employed in the study treats as primary resources newspaper entries, journal articles, essays and monographs written during and immediately either side of the period under review. These are fashioned into a discourse that deals directly and clearly with the relationship between music and political ideology in early post-War France.

Among the more prominent French language sources used in this study, the Stalinist weekly *Les lettres françaises* appears to have been, despite its obvious pro-Soviet bias, an important catalyst for what was in France an ongoing debate as to the actual (and potential) role played by culture in general, and music in particular, in the ideological theatre. The sentiments expressed in *Combat*, a non-aligned Leftist daily newspaper were, for the most part, a reflection of the neutral Neither-Nor position which although generally anti-Soviet, was also highly suspicious of American intentions. *Le Monde* appears to have been less concerned with the broader issue of art and ideology than with *art pour l'art*, which is doubtless a reflection of the somewhat conservative taste of its cultural reporters, René Dumesnil in particular. Among the English language newspapers, the *New York Times* is of

interest because its political commentaries gave a great deal of exposure to the anti-Soviet position, but in matters of culture, and *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* in particular, it was more objective.

By far the biggest English language journal resource used in the study is the *Partisan Review*, an American Leftist periodical that published contributions by leading intellectuals and cultural theorists world wide. Not surprisingly, and save for a number of exceptions that further confirm the French domestic preference for the Neither-Nor position, the Congress for Cultural Freedom's French language journal, *Preuves*, articulated the Congress's position. The French music journals *La revue musicale*, *Contrepoints*, and *Polyphonie* draw the opinions of composers into the ideological fray, something that their English language counterparts seemed for the most part reluctant to do.

Through these and other resources an intimate and valid link is established between the underlying tensions and anxieties that bedevilled France at the time, and the restoration-versus-innovation debate which raged concurrently among French composers and critics. Thus, while the recent verdict by Pascale Goetschel and Emmanuelle Loyer that serial music was a 'child of the War'<sup>9</sup> is undoubtedly correct in the general sense, it is in a report tabled in 1953 by Rollo Myers (for whom serial technique constituted a 'dehumanization' of music<sup>10</sup>) that one feels more keenly the tense environment in which young serial composers extended the boundaries of their art. In response to the rhetorical question as to why many young French composers had adopted the serial idiom, Myers responded:

I think this may be due to a variety of causes, mainly social or psychological, directly or indirectly connected with the war. In a country like France especially, the changing

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<sup>9</sup> Pascale Goetschel and Emmanuelle Loyer. *Histoire culturelle et intellectuelle de la France au XXe siècle*. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1994) 103. All French language texts used in this study are translated by the author, except where indicated.

<sup>10</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Some Personalities and Trends in Contemporary French Music.' *Chesterian* 30 (July, 1955): 16.

structure of society, accelerated and aggravated by the after-effects of war, has undoubtedly engendered a feeling of unrest and instability to which, of course, artists and musicians are especially sensitive.<sup>11</sup>

One of the principal reasons for the instability described by Myers, one that validates this study's focus on Paris during the early post-War period, was not so much that the city described by Harold Rosenberg as the 'laboratory of the twentieth-century' had been 'shut down' by the Nazis, but that it found itself at the epicentre of the potentially even more calamitous Cold War schism soon after its liberation.<sup>12</sup> It is significant in terms of this study that neo-classicism enjoyed a measure of prestige and popularity in Paris at the very time when French society was under considerable moral, social, and economic pressure. This, when coupled with the fact that France was the focus of unwelcome attention from the competing power blocs, each of whom advocated cultural conservatism, meant that the restoration versus innovation debate acquired a socio-cultural and ideological significance greater than may have otherwise been the case in a more stable period in history.

Boulez has been chosen as being representative of those avant-gardists who, in seeking to jettison the out-moded values that had brought French society to its impasse, embraced innovation. But it will emerge that the avant-garde did so with the reluctant support of the man who appears to have assumed a position as the social, cultural, and political conscience of France in the early post-War period, Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's contribution to the art-versus-ideology debate, and in particular his exchange with René Leibowitz as to the possible role of the avant-garde in helping to bring about change, strikes at the very heart of the issues here under review. The same can be said of Theodor Adorno. Adorno's position, as communicated through a selection of essays written around, or pertaining to, the period in question, perform an interlocutory function at certain

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<sup>11</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Music in France in the Post-War Decade.' *Proceedings of the Musical Association – 80<sup>th</sup> Session, 1953-54*. (Nendeln: Kraus Reprints, 1968) 98.

<sup>12</sup> Harold Rosenberg. 'On the Fall of Paris.' *Partisan Review* 7 (1940): 440.

junctions in the study. This is done for a number of reasons, not the least of which being that Adorno appears an ideal Devil's Advocate in that he was equally dismissive of neo-classicism and serialism. Perhaps more importantly, the fact that his criticisms were based in equal measure upon aesthetic judgement, and an awareness of the possible socio-cultural implications to be derived from the rise of neo-classicism and serialism, places him in direct communion with cultural ideologies under review.

The nature of Adorno's criticisms, and in particular his generally pessimistic tone, become all the more relevant when it is shown how, through subtle shifts in emphasis, his lament that the increased popularity of serial technique was indicative of the general collapse of freedom in post-War society was given an anti-Soviet import by individuals associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, Rollo Myers in particular. At the very least, Myers's background in the British diplomatic corps, which began with his service in the League of Nations' Secretariat following the First World War, and subsequently with the British Consulate-General in Paris, and as the British Council's music representative in Paris during the sensitive period following Liberation, suggests that political and ideological considerations may have coloured his critiques and, more importantly, his translations.<sup>13</sup>

The thesis comprises ten chapters. These fall in five discrete pairs, with each pair addressing a specific area of inquiry. Chapters One and Two detail the cultural ideologies of the principal antagonists, and in particular their attitudes towards conservatism and innovation in music. Chapter One describes the critical features of Nabokov's selection criteria for the mainstream first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, and their relationship to the aims of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The implications of these criteria for the

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<sup>13</sup> Myers's career is detailed by Frank Howes in Myers's entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. 13. Stanley Sadie, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1980) 5.

broader issues under examination is confirmed by considering the affirmative values ascribed by Nabokov to Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* and, alternatively, his preparedness to link the rise of serial thought in France to political and social disaffection. Chapter Two locates Nabokov's attitudes and actions within the Cold War ideological discourse itself. Taking as its point of departure Nabokov's confrontation with Dmitri Shostakovich in New York, the chapter exposes the breadth and depth of Nabokov's understanding of Soviet cultural policy. It transpires that while Nabokov quite rightly identified the rationale behind the Soviet linkage between aesthetic conservatism and ideological pedagogy, and, conversely, its fear of the subversive potential of avant-garde music, he was either unwilling or unable to recognise that his position was, in terms of its outcome, scarcely dissimilar.

As if to reinforce Nabokov's lament regarding France's disillusioned, Chapters Three and Four detail the impact of socialist realism in French musical and intellectual circles where, for historical reasons, it is shown to have enjoyed a relatively strong and well-organised support base. Chapter Three traces the historical link between the pre-War *Fédération musicale populaire* and the post-War socialist realist *Progressiste* movement. It is shown that what had prior to the War been a strongly held view among key Leftist individuals that only aesthetically satisfying music was capable of communicating social and political commitment became, through the dictates of the *Progressistes*, a requirement that committed composers eschew modernist tendencies such as twelve-tone technique. It is argued that this attitude had the effect of excluding avant-garde composers and their music from the Leftist ideological discourse, at the very time when the cultural battle-lines between East and West were being drawn. Chapter Four describes how Serge Nigg, a prominent member of the *Progressistes*, was brought to the point where he could no longer reconcile his serial explorations with his pro-Stalinist sympathies. The widespread use



among young French composers of texted music, chiefly in the form of chorales and cantatas, is shown to be consistent with the socialist realist view that texts left no room for political and ideological ambiguity. It is argued that the increased popularity of choral music was a direct result of the influence exerted by the conductor Roger Désormière, who emerges as a typical example of those French artists who were attracted to the humanitarian aspects of socialist realism, but were troubled greatly by its authoritarian demands.

The cultural and ideological battle-lines having been established, Chapters Five and Six focus upon issues arising from *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* itself. Chapter Five exposes the widespread cynicism and hostility shown by a cross-section of French society towards the content and mode of delivery of the mainstream tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. It is argued that the pomp and grandeur of large-scale symphonic concerts, such as those featured heavily in the mainstream programme, were seen as reminiscent of the Nazi cultural *modus operandi* during the War. Furthermore, the widespread objection that the festival was staged by and for Americans is shown to have reinforced the perception that American foreign, economic, and cultural policy towards France was both chauvinist and exploitative. Chapter Six argues that the chamber-music series was, by contrast, generally consistent with contemporary views of culture that, in seeking to start afresh, eschewed outmoded cultural practices and ideological beliefs. Jean-Paul Sartre's culture defended versus culture created dialectic, which he invoked during the course of a vitriolic attack upon *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, is used in order to emphasise the relationship between avant-garde musical thought and political activism in France. The chapter concludes with what is the first of two appraisals of the way in which individuals associated with the Congress misconstrued Adorno's thoughts regarding a possible contiguity between the rise of serial thought and social malaise.

Chapters Seven and Eight focus upon an indigenous French attempt to establish an equilibrium between creative freedom and social responsibility, one that took as its point of departure Jean-Paul Sartre's idea of commitment in art. Chapter Seven addresses Sartre's view of the social relevance of art, which turned upon the belief that the artist who is committed to helping bring about social and political change had a duty to articulate that commitment by using expressive means that were comprehensible and unambiguous. Sartre's reluctance to include music within his idea of committed art is shown to have prompted Leibowitz to attempt to argue that avant-garde music, and Schoenberg's in particular, was capable of sustaining commitment. Chapter Eight details Leibowitz's argument that Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* met, and indeed exceeded, Sartre's requirements for commitment in art. It emerges that Leibowitz viewed commitment to artistic innovation as being no less valid than Sartre's ostensibly content-based form of social and political commitment. Leibowitz's position forced Sartre to concede that an intentionally non-signifying artform could, on the basis of its confrontational nature and the revolutionary fervour of its creator, be capable of sustaining a commitment to change the world.

Chapters Nine and Ten address the possibility that *Structures Ia* fulfilled these requirements. Chapter Nine measures the ability of *Structures Ia* to effect change by questioning the existence of an audience capable of understanding and responding to its challenges to cultural and ideological conformity. Given that the Cold War antagonists proved themselves adept at deluding actual audiences, the question is posed as to whether the imaginary audience thought by Sartre to be capable of divining meaning from intentional non-significance could become a reality. Chapter Ten identifies the ways in which *Structures Ia* challenged the cultural positions adopted by the dominant political ideologies. It is argued that while expanded serial technique may have shared the

technological world view through which both blocs sought empowerment, it undermined the quasi-romanticist ideal as to the restorative properties of music from which they sought to benefit. The destructive intent behind Boulez's expansion of serial technique is shown to be part of a general nihilism that was felt keenly in early post-War France. Further evidence is presented as to the way in which Adorno's concerns regarding what he saw as the dire sociological implications of the increased popularity of serial technique was misconstrued so as to infer that the technique contributed to, rather than was a symptom of, social malaise. It is pointed out that this verdict was not all that distant from the Soviet position. Bearing in mind the dual themes of creative abstractionism and widespread social unease, the chapter concludes by arguing for the inclusion of expanded serial technique within a qualified revision of the musical expressionist paradigm.

The study argues that the challenge to musical cognition presented by *Structures Ia*, and the socio-cultural significance attached by the composer to its compositional method, acquire a greater import and are better understood with the knowledge that the work was composed at a time and in a place where the Cold War antagonists had demanded transparency in artistic expression in order to ensure fidelity to their political values. The dialectic created in this study between neo-classicism and serialism is intended to demonstrate that expanded serial technique represented a hardening of an aesthetic position in the face of the increasing antipathy towards serial technique shown by those who, in the name of political ideology, favoured conservatism. An understanding of the way in which art music was drawn into the early Cold War ideological discourse validates the author's contention that the study of a given mode of cultural expression must, if it is to be well-balanced, take into account the relationship between art and the social and political ideologies that prevailed at the time of its emergence.

## CHAPTER ONE

Nabokov's Selection Criteria for *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, and their Implications

At its most fundamental level *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* constituted part of the attempt by an ideological movement, which included leading intellectuals and artists drawn from the non-communist Left in Europe and America, to seize the cultural, and with that the political, initiative from the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> During the late 1940s and early 1950s the Soviet Union had, through its organisation and sponsorship of a series of so-called international peace congresses, achieved considerable success in repairing the image of Stalinism abroad, and in discrediting those who stood in opposition to it. Of particular concern to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which included in its ranks a number of highly motivated and disillusioned former Marxists, was the Soviet Union's apparent success in fostering a politically neutral stance amongst intellectuals, artists, and scientists in Western Europe, and France in particular.

Addressing itself to Soviet attacks against so-called 'decadent' Western art, the Congress sought in this instance to counter the Soviet propaganda thrust by staging a cultural exposition featuring twentieth-century works of art deemed by Nicholas Nabokov to be 'the products of free minds in a free world'.<sup>2</sup> Although the exposition featured exhibitions of modern painting and sculpture, and a series of celebrity-studded panel discussions given over to issues related to modern art and literature, Nabokov's professional background and his intimate understanding of the Soviet Union's proscriptions against its own composers ensured that music was the primary focus. The inclusion in the festival of selected works by Soviet composers who were at best openly

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the birth of the Congress, see Peter Coleman, 'The 1950 Offensive.' *The Liberal Conspiracy: The Congress for Cultural Freedom and the Struggle for the Mind of Postwar Europe*. (New York: The Free Press, 1989) 15-32.

<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'This is Our Culture.' *Counterpoint* 17 (May 1952): 15.

criticised by their own government, and at worst silenced, was further intended to reinforce the Congress's view that it was a measure of the robustness of Western society that in all forms of expression were 'open to acceptance or rejection, praise or criticism, freely and openly'.<sup>3</sup>

The choice of Paris as the site of the festival pointed to a more assertive political agenda on the part of the Congress. Owing to the strength of the orthodox Stalinist Parti communiste français (PCF), France was seen by Western and Soviet strategists as the soft underbelly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance. The festival was intended therefore to shore up French support for the alliance and, for international consumption, as a demonstration of NATO solidarity with France, literally at a time when an American-sponsored draft treaty calling for the formation of a single Western European defence force was being initialled at the Quai d'Orsay. This in turn generated a vigorous debate, particularly within France itself, because in the eyes of many the festival was, as the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* argued, 'a parody of culture to facilitate the ideological occupation of France by the United States'.<sup>4</sup> The inclusion in the festival of the works of French composers, which was variously criticised as being proportionally either too little or too selective, further exacerbated concerns that French culture was being used as a pawn in an ideological struggle, the nature and course of which were beyond France's control. The result was that those in France who were opposed either to NATO in general or the United States in particular, or who believed it vital that France be neutral, were able to articulate their political concerns by targeting various cultural icons appropriated by the Congress in the name of 'freedom'.

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<sup>3</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'This is Our Culture': 15.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in *Newsweek's* review of the festival, 'Purpose in Paris.' *Newsweek* 12 May 1952: 84.

The cultural ramifications of the Congress's ideological stance become more apparent when the content of the festival's music programme is taken into account. As is also frequently the case with arts festivals today, the music programme of *L'Oeuvre de XXe siècle* was effectively divided into two tiers: the high-profile performances intended to entice the public to the box-office, and the fringe events, which aroused the public's curiosity and, as was the case with *Structures Ia* and a number of other works, its indignation.<sup>5</sup> The former were staged principally at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and were, as Janet Flanner (Genêt) pointed out at the time, 'presented and mostly paid for by well-intentioned wealthy Americans'.<sup>6</sup> The second tier included the chamber music series at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées – referred to tellingly as the 'true festival' by the editor of *La revue musicale*, Albert Richard – and those events considered 'en marge', including two concerts of *musique concrète* given at the Salle du Conservatoire.<sup>7</sup>

Programmed by Nabokov himself, the first of these tiers generated the most publicity for the Congress and, paradoxically perhaps in view of its relatively conservative outlook, attracted a good deal of controversy. Given the ambitiousness of the title *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, or rather what the French composer and critic Henri Barraud termed its inaccurate translation 'for American promotional purposes' as 'Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century', Nabokov's programme could not on the strength of its inclusions or omissions have satisfied everyone.<sup>8</sup> The most frequently voiced criticism of the programme was that it was, as the music critic for the *New York Times*, Olin Downes, suggested, 'a lopsided affair . . . looking mainly at the past and little at the present and future'.<sup>9</sup> Like many other

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<sup>5</sup> The festival programme is detailed at Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Flanner (Genêt). *Paris Journal: 1944-1965*. William Shawm, ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1965) 173.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Richard. 'Les festivals en France.' *La revue musicale* 220 (April 1953): 66.

<sup>8</sup> Henri Barraud. 'A French Critic Observes the Paris Festival.' *Musical America* 72.10 (August 1952): 8.

<sup>9</sup> Olin Downes. 'Paris Exposition in Sum.' *New York Times* June 15 1952. 2: 7.

observers, Downes was concerned that, aside from notable exceptions, there was a bias in favour of music that was either neo-classicist or drawn from the early twentieth-century canon or, somewhat inexplicably in view of the festival's title, even earlier in the case of Hector Berlioz's *Carnavale romaine* (1844), Richard Strauss's *Don Juan* (1889), and Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1892). Given the festival's stated aims, the inference drawn from this was that the defence of the 'free' world against 'the rise and spread of totalitarian doctrine' was best served through the exhibition of cultural icons created at a time removed from the historical moment.<sup>10</sup> This stance added fuel to the debate already raging in Parisian intellectual and artistic circles concerning the avant-garde and its relevance to post-War society.

The retrospective nature of the mainstream festival was confirmed by virtue of the place of honour accorded Igor Stravinsky, who amid great fanfare returned to Paris for the first time since the summer of 1938. Stravinsky's music had, much to the chagrin of Boulez and his classmates at the Paris Conservatoire, also been the focus of the 1945 commemorations of the liberation of Paris.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for the second time in seven years Stravinsky's name was associated with Paris and liberty. What Colin Mason described as the 'deification' of Stravinsky at the festival was, at least superficially, testimony to a personal friendship between two Russian expatriates.<sup>12</sup> Stravinsky's involvement should, however, also be considered within the context of Nabokov's contribution to what was at the time an ongoing debate as to the relative merits in post-War music of restoration (as characterised by neo-classicism) and innovation, as typified in the first instance by

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<sup>10</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'This is Our Culture': 13.

<sup>11</sup> Boulez in an interview with Antoine Goléa offered an enthusiastic account of his participation in the protests that greeted a performance at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées of Stravinsky's *Four Norwegian Impressions* (1942). *Rencontres avec Pierre Boulez*. (Paris: Julliard, 1958) 9-11. Dominique Jameux reported that René Leibowitz was widely suspected of being the instigator of the protests. *Pierre Boulez*. Susan Bradshaw, tr. (London: Faber, 1991) 15.

<sup>12</sup> Colin Mason. 'The Paris Festival.' *Tempo* 24 (Summer 1952): 15.

Schoenberg's development and use of the twelve-tone technique, and subsequently by Boulez's uncompromising application of the technique to parameters other than pitch.

The debate had earlier taken the form of a series of articles published in the *Partisan Review*. The articles cast in opposition to each other Nabokov and René Leibowitz. Nabokov was, together with Nadia Boulanger, among the more vocal defenders of Stravinsky's neo-classicism; Leibowitz was the principal advocate of Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique in the immediate post-War years in France. The opposing positions adopted by Leibowitz and Nabokov correspond to the dialectical model that was at the same time being formulated by Theodor Adorno for his *Philosophie der neuen Musik*.

In sum, Leibowitz argued that Schoenberg's greatness lay in his discipline. The composer in his development of the twelve-tone technique had 'accepted the consequences of a tradition' and used it in a way that had 'entirely transformed the art of sound'.<sup>13</sup> Stravinsky's approach to composition was by contrast 'arbitrary and hedonistic', and although the composer was 'originally attracted by new sounds and rhythmic devices [he] failed to really see what they implied'. Conversely, Nabokov's view was that Schoenberg was neither innovative nor necessarily disciplined. For Nabokov, the development of the twelve-tone technique was merely the final and inevitable step in the evolution of tonal harmony. According to Nabokov, Stravinsky was the true revolutionary, because his expansion of the rhythmic possibilities freed the composer from 'the burden of a declining [polyphonic] tradition' – supposedly a burden under which Schoenberg had laboured.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Music Chronicle: Two Composers – A Letter From Hollywood.' *Partisan Review* 15 (1948): 361-365.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'The Atonal Trail: A Communication.' *Partisan Review* 15 (1948): 584. Stravinsky in a subsequent letter to Nabokov, dated 23 September 1948, wrote that '... although your answer to this twelve-tonal obscurantism and to the impudent René Leibowitz is worthwhile, I think that the *Partisan Review* will not stop at this, but will give him its pages to continue his bad-mouthing.' *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II. Edited (and with selected commentaries) by Robert Craft. (London: Faber, 1984) 374-375.



Thus freed, Stravinsky sought to 're-establish ties with the true polyphonic thinking of the eighteenth-century tradition'.

It is significant that Nabokov in his defence of Stravinsky argued that the composer's neo-classicism constituted a form of renewal. The sociological implications of Nabokov's essentially Apollonian view of art (which he shared with Stravinsky) were expressed clearly in a letter to the composer written soon after the conclusion of World War II:

In the tragic world in which we live . . . only a few encouraging, reasonable, and beautiful things remain. One of these, and for me the most important, is your art, with all its nobility, beauty, and intelligence . . . It is in thinking of the Symphony in C that one begins to see clearly, and to feel again the meaning of *homo sapiens*.<sup>15</sup>

That Nabokov should find mankind's salvation in the most archetypal of Stravinsky's neo-classicist works established the precedent for the future content of the first tier of the festival, which, as was noted earlier, included a performance of the symphony under the direction of the composer. The possibility that Nabokov was assisted to this conclusion by the composer's dedication of the symphony 'to the glory of God' points to a value judgement based upon the relationship between text and music, one that will become increasingly significant as the study progresses. But for now it should be noted that Stravinsky's dedication evinces a sense of cognition further underscored by the sonata-form accommodation of the first movement of the symphony.

Nabokov's preparedness to laud the regenerative potential of neo-classicism, and Leibowitz's invocation of Schoenberg's by then increasingly outmoded twelve-tone technique with which to counter Nabokov's claims, doubtless failed to impress Boulez. Under the aegis of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* Boulez, both in word (the essay 'Éventuellement . . .') and deed (*Structures Ia*), adopted a position that implied that Leibowitz's logic was wrong for the right reasons, and Nabokov's was right for the wrong

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<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. Letter to Stravinsky, dated 22 March 1946. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 372.

reasons.<sup>16</sup> Boulez's view, made abundantly clear in 'Possibly . . . ' and the essay 'Schoenberg is Dead' (which appeared in English translation during the month of the festival) was that however innovative Schoenberg's development of twelve-tone technique may have seemed at first glance, the technique was in reality more evolutionary than revolutionary. In Boulez's estimation, Schoenberg's failure to apply serial operations to musical parameters other than pitch not only betrayed a lack of genuine revolutionary zeal but, more critically, it also meant that the overall unity of his twelve-tone compositions was hopelessly compromised, because pitch content was generated using serial logic, while the other musical elements were obtained according to a 'pre-existent' rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> By the same token, Stravinsky's 'blend of complex vocabulary and a complex rhythmic syntax' was effectively neutralised because it was rendered subservient to 'poles that are as classical as could be: tonic, dominant, and subdominant'.<sup>18</sup> Thus, according to Boulez's rationale, Leibowitz was right to recognise the importance of Schoenberg's adoption of the twelve-tone technique, but wrong because he failed to acknowledge Schoenberg's reluctance to pursue the technique to its logical, evolutionary conclusion. Nabokov, on the other hand, was right to emphasise the revolutionary aspect of Stravinsky's rhythmic innovations, but wrong to assume that this gave some kind of historical justification for neo-classicism.

A feature common to 'Possibly . . . ' and 'Schoenberg is Dead' was Boulez's preparedness in both essays to proclaim the redundancy of any composer who did not

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<sup>16</sup> 'Éventuellement . . . ' was first published in the special number of *La revue musicale* entitled 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle.' 212 (April 1952): 117-148. The essay appeared in *Relevés d'apprenti*, a collection of essays by Boulez presented by Paule Thévenin (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966). Citations used in this study are taken from the more recent translation of Thévenin's collection, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, in which Stephen Walsh translates 'Éventuellement' as 'Possibly', 111-140.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Schoenberg is Dead.' First published in *The Score and IMA Magazine* 6 (May 1952): 18-22. Citations details used here refer to the expanded version offered in translation in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 214.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Stravinsky Remains' (1951). *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 56.

embrace the serial aesthetic, while at the same time invoking the idea of freedom of choice through a generous use of the word ‘liberty’ in defending his position. The following passage from ‘Schoenberg is Dead’ captures Boulez’s style and idea:

It is not leering demonism but the merest common sense which makes me say that, since the discoveries of the Viennese School, all non-serial composers are *useless* (which is not to say that all serial composers are useful). It will hardly do to answer in the name of so-called liberty, for this liberty has the strong flavour of ancient servitude.<sup>19</sup>

In ‘Possibly . . .’ Boulez made it clear that the servitude to which he referred was one adopted towards ‘the vocabulary of classicism’ which, he argued, had become the rallying point for those who ‘in the name of *liberty*, forbid themselves to be *prisoners* of the [serial technique]’.<sup>20</sup> Boulez was here dealing with the concept of freedom at two levels. The first addressed the frequently voiced accusation that serial operations deprived the composer of compositional choice once the parametric sequence had been established – an assertion challenged by, among others, György Ligeti in his analysis of *Structures 1a*, published in *die Reihe*.<sup>21</sup> Pursuant to this was Boulez’s scepticism regarding the assumption that music which responds to the pull of a tonal centre necessarily ensures a greater freedom of choice on the part of the composer. Stravinsky (who was present at the première of *Structures 1a*) made it clear in a discussion of serialism conducted in Paris during *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* that he subscribed to this view when he stated that ‘the serialists are prisoners of the number twelve. I feel a greater freedom with the number seven’.<sup>22</sup> These contradictory views identify the first of a number of dialectics to be dealt with in this study, and that is the idea that freedom was a condition to be enjoyed, as was the case with Stravinsky, as opposed to being asserted, as Boulez sought to do through the expansion of serial

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<sup>19</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Schoenberg is Dead.’ *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 214.

<sup>20</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Possibly . . .’. *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 112.

<sup>21</sup> György Ligeti. ‘Pierre Boulez - Decision and Automatism in Structure 1a.’ *die Reihe* 4 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1958). English edition (Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1960): 36-62.

<sup>22</sup> Jean Roy. ‘Rencontre avec Stravinsky.’ *Preuves* 16 (June 1952): 37.

technique. It will emerge that neo-classicism of the type celebrated during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was an affirmation of an ideal of freedom that the United States, as the dominant partner in the NATO alliance, sought to impose upon its European allies, and France in particular. *Structures Ia* was, by contrast, an assertion of independence from the ideological and cultural conditioning to which France was being exposed.

Other than being a reaction to Stravinsky's ubiquitous media presence in France in the early post-War years, Boulez's polemic assumes a greater significance when cast in opposition to Nabokov's equation between neo-classicism and socio-cultural renewal. A particularly useful interpretation of these two positions emerges when they are examined in light of Clement Greenberg's observations concerning the ideological potential of avant-garde art and its dialectical opposite, kitsch.<sup>23</sup> Greenberg's argument hinged on the belief that the avant-garde 'imitates the processes of art [whereas] kitsch imitates its effects'.<sup>24</sup> This is because the former is concerned with articulating the primary creative impulse, with establishing the materials and processes through which those inner impulses find expression. Conversely, kitsch, with its emphasis on reception, is in effect a commentary on those primary impulses and processes. The intervention in kitsch of an imitative agency between the creator and his work therefore renders the work of art susceptible to subversion by a third party. That window of opportunity, the ability to assert that a given work is evocative of an extra-musical situation, was in Greenberg's estimation exploited by totalitarian regimes with the view to furthering their own ideological designs; socialist realism was the most typical example.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Clement Greenberg. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch.' The essay originally appeared in the *Partisan Review* 6 (Fall 1939): 34-49. Citation details used in this study refer to the revised edition published in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. (Boston: Beacon, 1961) 3-21.

<sup>24</sup> Clement Greenberg. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch.' *Art and Culture*, 15.

<sup>25</sup> Clement Greenberg. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch.' *Art and Culture*, 19.

There is a striking parallel between Greenberg's position on kitsch and Theodor Adorno's assessment of Stravinsky's neo-classicism, one that helps to establish the wider ramifications of Nabokov's praise of the *Symphony in C*. Echoing Greenberg's concerns regarding kitsch, Adorno described Stravinsky's work as 'music about music'. Adorno asserted that:

The concept of mutilated tonality itself, upon which all Stravinsky's works since *L'Histoire* are more or less based, presumes 'literarily' established subject matter for music. Such material exists outside the immanent formal validity of the work and it is determined through a consciousness which exerts itself also from outside the work.<sup>26</sup>

Note here Adorno's allusion to a third agency – 'a consciousness which exerts itself also from outside the work' – a notion that also informed Greenberg's reservations regarding the susceptibility of kitsch to ideological subversion. Nabokov in his recognition of the 'nobility' of Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* established what he believed to be the work's philosophical preoccupation, which was 'to feel again the meaning of *homo sapiens*'. It was the Congress's stated view that the nobility of mankind and freedom of political association were indivisible.<sup>27</sup> With this, it is possible to detect in Nabokov's aesthetic preferences an ideological import.

Due to the fact that the art of the avant-garde was, in Greenberg's estimation, impervious to such intrusions, only it could keep culture free from subversion 'in the midst of ideological confusion and violence'.<sup>28</sup> One way in which the avant-garde ensured its autonomy was to retreat into the academy, either metaphorically or literally. Martin Brody has successfully argued that Milton Babbitt's scientific and theoretical preoccupations during the early post-War period constituted a form of artistic isolationism driven by

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<sup>26</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster, trs. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1973) 182-183.

<sup>27</sup> See Article Two of the Congress's Manifesto, which is reproduced in full at Appendix B.

<sup>28</sup> Clement Greenberg. 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch.' *Art and Culture*, 5.

personal ideological concerns.<sup>29</sup> Although there are obvious comparisons to be made between Boulez and Babbitt in terms of their music and their defence of it during the period in question, a striking feature of Boulez's writings is his general (although, as shall be shown, not complete) aversion to exposing his political and ideological beliefs. That said, the issue here is not whether a given music belied the ideological beliefs of its composer, but rather that a conservative musical aesthetic was invested with an ideological import, and a progressive aesthetic deemed bereft of the same, by cultural arbiters working on behalf of the Cold War opponents. More specifically, it is necessary to resolve the question as to whether the second tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, with its emphasis on music that was resistant to ideological appropriation, constituted an attempt, either deliberate or subliminal, to depoliticise a cultural debate that William Barrett at the time warned was a precursor to World War Three.<sup>30</sup>

In a lecture series given at Darmstadt in 1960, Boulez acknowledged that there would always be 'outside commentators' who attempted to uncover a political message in a given piece of music.<sup>31</sup> This led Boulez to conclude that 'music cannot undertake the task of expounding rational ideas'. Yet Boulez immediately qualified this statement by adding that:

music can, on the other hand, undertake the qualification of our ideas, their emotional character and their ethical content. This is particularly true when there is a generally accepted system of conventions, so that certain musical situations automatically evoke certain mental situations by means of associative reflexes.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Brody. "Music For the Masses": Milton Babbitt's Cold War Music Theory.' *Musical Quarterly* 77 (1993): 161-192.

<sup>30</sup> William Barrett. 'World War III: The Ideological Conflict.' *Partisan Review* 17 (1950): 651.

<sup>31</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Putting the Phantoms to Flight.' *Orientations: Collected Writings*. Jean-Jacques Nattiez, ed. Martin Cooper, tr. (London: Faber, 1986) 81.

<sup>32</sup> As shall be shown, Boulez's judgement aligns him with Jean-Paul Sartre's view that music itself was incapable of socio-political intervention. Boulez's position therefore cast him in opposition to Leibowitz, who sought to convince Sartre that his position did not necessarily hold true in the case of Schoenberg's development and use of twelve-tone technique.

Neo-classicism constitutes a generally accepted system of conventions, governed above all by the resolution of dissonance to consonance. Stravinsky in his dedication of *Symphony in C* 'to the glory of God' created an association between conventional tonal practice and spiritual affirmation, and this association evoked in Nabokov a mental situation that accorded with his ideological beliefs. Nabokov's reflexive association might therefore follow a sequence whereby Stravinsky's neo-classicism reminded him of Man's nobility, which was itself a condition articulated in an expressive freedom that could only be guaranteed through freedom of political association. Boulez's attitude towards neo-classicism suggests that he, too, regarded it as a system of conventions, albeit one that he was determined to confront. On the basis of what has been shown, the reflexive association in Boulez's case would be that Stravinsky's neo-classicism was devolutionary, and that this condition pointed to artistic servitude and a general loss of individuality.

Boulez in the above passage went on to state that 'If this system of conventions disappears or the meaning of the conventions is for some reason lost, we are unable to decipher that particular code of ideas to which the music refers'. This realisation appears to bear out Greenberg's belief that the autonomy of the avant-garde, which is by definition against existing convention, meant that it was less susceptible to ideological subversion. A similar rationale can be ascribed to Nabokov's festival programme which, as Suzanne Demarquez observed at the time, eschewed music representative of 'today's esthetics'.<sup>33</sup> Chief among the reasons for this exclusion was that Nabokov found Boulez's serial compositions incomprehensible. Writing to Stravinsky just six months before the festival, he singled out Boulez as a composer 'who writes notes, not music'.<sup>34</sup> The perceived

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<sup>33</sup> Suzanne Demarquez. 'Paris Festival of Arts Has Rare Contrasts.' *Musical Courier* 146 (July 1952): 6.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. Letter to Stravinsky, dated December 1951. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 367.

incomprehensibility of a work such as *Structures Ia* will emerge as pivotal to the issue of avant-garde music and its resistance to ideological appropriation. Conversely, that same quality created problems for those who sought to argue the case for the socio-cultural relevance of avant-garde music.

The argument that the music of the avant-garde was regarded as ideologically impervious, and therefore politically neutral, is further reinforced by virtue of the fact that a similar verdict regarding Boulez's serial music was offered by an individual closely associated with the PCF, H  l  ne Jourdan-Morhange. Jourdan-Morhange, who contributed regularly to the Communist newspapers *Ce soir* and *Les lettres fran  aises*, was of the opinion that Boulez's serial music was incomprehensible to one who (like Nabokov) 'still craves . . . the moral strength of music'.<sup>35</sup> Jourdan-Morhange reported that the moral strength denied during a performance of Boulez's *Second Piano Sonata* (1948) was restored subsequently with a performance of an unnamed work by Robert Schumann. It will be shown in the next chapter that the Soviet government also eschewed avant-gardism in favour of art that it judged to have a moral fibre befitting the Stalinist enterprise.

Nabokov's programme, with its bias towards music that could be assigned an ideological import, was also consistent with the Congress's belief, stated clearly in its manifesto, that political freedom was a necessary precursor to individual freedom of expression. Nabokov and the Congress were of the opinion that once the favourable political (that is, pro-NATO) conditions were established in Eastern Europe, freedom of expression would flourish. Conversely, the Congress sought to remind those Western intellectuals and artists whom it feared had been targeted by the Soviet Union that there was no artistic freedom under Stalinism. Colin Mason was one of a number of critics who

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<sup>35</sup> H  l  ne Jourdan-Morhange. Review published in *Ce soir* 11 May 1950. Cited by Dominique Jameux in *Pierre Boulez*, 30.



suspected that the Congress cultural agenda was itself hostage to political exigencies. According to Mason, this was confirmed by the Congress's failure during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* to join in the protests in Paris that greeted the ban imposed by the French government upon Roger Vailland's play *Le colonel Foster plaidera coupable* (*Colonel Foster Will Plead Guilty*).<sup>36</sup>

A fiction set in war-time Korea, the play concerns the aftershocks of war crimes committed by an American colonel on the battlefield.<sup>37</sup> Comparisons were immediately drawn between the villain Colonel Foster and General Matthew Ridgway, whose stance in favour of biological warfare was widely publicised and condemned in Paris. The closing of the play by French police was, as the *New Statesman and Nation* reported: '... all the more awkward as we are now in Paris right in the middle of a Festival of "The Free Art of the Western World", whose aim is to show how lucky artists are, all the way from Bach to Britten, not to have lived or be living under the Soviet system of police controls!'<sup>38</sup> The Congress's indirect reply, via the June 1952 edition of *Preuves*, was that the play transgressed the fine line between freedom of expression and 'provocation'.<sup>39</sup>

The position taken by a significant proportion of French society was that the Cold War power struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union was more concerned with perpetuating outmoded and ultimately unworkable political ideologies, than in the genuine pursuit of liberty. To those who advocated a Neither-Nor stance, *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was little more than a thinly-veiled attempt by the Congress to make it appear that the

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<sup>36</sup> Colin Mason. 'The Paris Festival': 18.

<sup>37</sup> *Les lettres françaises* published an extract of the play (Act II, scene V), in which a decision is taken to execute Communist partisans and destroy their village. The play ends with Foster's capture and his defiant admission of guilt for these and other crimes. 'Une extrait de la nouvelle pièce de Roger Vailland: Le colonel Foster plaidera coupable.' 382 (4 October 1951): 7.

<sup>38</sup> 'Paris: Admirals and Generals.' *New Statesman and Nation* 17 May 1952: 575.

<sup>39</sup> Jacques Carat. 'À propos d'une interdiction: Roger Vailland: Le colonel Foster plaidera coupable.' *Preuves* 16 (June 1952): 68.

organisation also placed freedom of expression above political expediency. Jean Gandrey-Rety, the editor of the pro-Stalinist *Les lettres françaises*, declared that he had established the ulterior political motive behind the festival. According to Gandrey-Rety, any doubts that the whole exercise was little more than an ‘American political propaganda enterprise’ would have to be laid to rest in view of an article published in the *New York Herald Tribune* of 21 April 1952, which gave notice of the festival under the self-explanatory sub-heading ‘The War for the Spirit of Man: Soviet Cultural Propaganda Will Receive a Response in Paris This Spring Through a Festival Presenting Masterpieces of the Twentieth Century’.<sup>40</sup> A perusal of Nabokov’s programme led Gandrey-Rety to conclude that the festival ‘was not an expression but a caricature or falsification of the spirit of the twentieth century’.

A similar political motive surfaced in Nabokov’s own justification of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Echoing NATO concerns, Nabokov identified France as a country where ‘there are many who proclaim with bitterness that our culture is dead . . . that the fruits of our creative impulses lack meaning in today’s world’.<sup>41</sup> It is apparent from Nabokov’s earlier criticism of Leibowitz’s letter to the *Partisan Review* that those who embraced the serial aesthetic were judged to be among the disillusioned. Nabokov in his response accused Leibowitz of being reactionary in championing Schoenberg’s dodecaphony. Furthermore, Leibowitz’s ‘revival of a settled debate shows a lack of new ideas’ and as such was indicative of the ‘impotent attitude which is now so apparent in most phases of cultural and political life in Europe’.<sup>42</sup> Nabokov’s obvious bias against twelve-tone music obliged Dika Newlin to come to Leibowitz’s defence by pointing out that Nabokov’s accusation as to the dearth of ‘new ideas’ was ‘particularly infelicitous’ in view of the fact that twelve-tone

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<sup>40</sup> Jean Gandrey-Rety. ‘Le faux-nez du XXe siècle.’ *Les lettres françaises* 413 (9 May 1952): 1.

<sup>41</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘This is Our Culture’: 13.

<sup>42</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘The Atonal Trail: A Communication’: 581.

technique was at that time enjoying a revival in a France ‘dominated by Stravinsky, Boulanger, and *Les Six*’.<sup>43</sup> But Nabokov’s statement moves beyond a mere declaration of personal taste when it is borne in mind that his diagnosis of impotence accorded with the Congress’s later view that there was no place for neutralism in the face of an increasingly assertive ideological enemy.

Nabokov’s preparedness to make a connection between the precarious political situation in France and the rise of serial thought becomes more significant in view of the fact that the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s anti-neutralist stance in Europe was concordant with American foreign policy imperatives. That agenda was underscored by strong suspicions that the Congress was from the outset funded partially by the United States’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – an alleged relationship that when given wider publicity in the late-1960s led to the Congress’s demise.<sup>44</sup> The suspicion held by the French Left (Communist and non-Communist) that the United States government, and the Congress by association, were seeking to build upon the Nazi proscriptions against communism could only have been heightened by the spectre of *kulturbolshevismus* betrayed in Nabokov’s rejoinder to Leibowitz that ‘the problem of atonality’ was hitherto a ‘closed issue . . . the revival [of which] in France is a part of a general infiltration of

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<sup>43</sup> Dika Newlin. ‘Correspondence – The Atonal Trail.’ *Partisan Review* 15 (1948): 846.

<sup>44</sup> Proving the direct link between the Congress and the CIA forms the central theme of Frances Stonor Saunders’s recent book, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*. (London: Granta, 1999). Although Saunders masterfully recreates the web of intrigue between individuals whom she is able to link to the CIA and the Congress’s activities, she fails to find evidence of direct CIA intervention in the Congress’s affairs. To Peter Coleman’s reservations regarding her tendency to overlook ‘the independence [from the CIA] of the main participants’ might be added a deep concern at what appears to be Saunders’s over reliance upon secondary sources. With regard to *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* this tendency is confirmed by her assertion that the festival took place in April (as opposed to May) 1952. Aside from undermining the documentary value of Saunders’s study, it also points to the possibility that in failing to consult primary sources in the form of newspaper and journal articles she may have overlooked the nuances of the aesthetic debate, and the effect of these upon the Cold War antagonists. Although titillating, the issue of funding is of secondary importance. Peter Coleman. ‘Spooks in the Culture – No Evidence on *Quadrant*.’ *Weekend Australian* 21-22 August 1999. Review: 10.

“Mittel-europa” [sic] ideas into the “cora” [sic] of French civilisation . . .’.<sup>45</sup> As was the case with other ‘Mittel-europa’ ideas, Communism and Existentialism among them, serialism was regarded by Nabokov as intrinsically alien to the French, and a potential impediment to France’s cultural and ideological rejuvenation.

The notable exception to the exclusion of twelve-tone music from the first tier programme of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was Luigi Dallapiccola’s *Canti di Prigionia* (1938-41), which employs a less than rigorous use of tone rows. The reason for its inclusion was undoubtedly that, as is the case with Alban Berg’s *Wozzeck*, the various texts of *Canti di Prigionia* communicate a protest against physical and mental torture, a protest that was consistent with the Congress’s championing of the nobility of humanity in the face of persecution and tyranny. A similar protest may also account for the inclusion of works as diverse as Benjamin Britten’s *Billy Budd* and Schoenberg’s monodrama *Erwartung* which, in an irony not lost on Stravinsky, appeared on the same program as *Oedipus Rex*.<sup>46</sup>

An indication of the political machinations behind the festival emerges in Olin Downes’s report that pressure was brought to bear on the festival organisers by ‘the British’ in order to ensure that ‘if an opera by Benjamin Britten be performed it must be his latest work, *Billy Budd*’.<sup>47</sup> Irrespective of whether the insistence was based on the opera’s humanitarian message, or on a national rivalry that sought to showcase new works, the opera proved to be less than successful, not least because the French failed apparently to see the humour in the chorus “Down with the French!”

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<sup>45</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘The Atonal Trail: A Communication’: 581.

<sup>46</sup> In conversation with Robert Craft, Stravinsky remarked that ‘Less than a year [after Schoenberg’s death] his *Erwartung* and my *Oedipus Rex* – an impossible juxtaposition a few years before – were performed together in Paris as a double bill. I hope Schönberg would have been pleased and I know I was.’ ‘Some Composers by Igor Stravinsky with Robert Craft.’ *Musical America* 82 (June 1962): 10.

<sup>47</sup> Olin Downes. ‘Paris Exposition in Sum.’: 7.

The Congress extracted a good deal of propaganda value out of featuring works by composers who laboured under Soviet censure. These included Serge Prokofiev (*The Prodigal Son* and *Scythian Suite*) and Dmitri Shostakovich, whose *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* was performed as a concert suite ‘in spite of Stalin and the verdict of his commissars that the music would never again be played’, as Nabokov boasted.<sup>48</sup> Soviet sensibilities were no doubt further affronted by having these works performed at the festival by the West Berlin Radio in the American Sector Symphony Orchestra. The difficulties experienced by Shostakovich in the wake of *Lady Macbeth* were highlighted in an article by Nabokov published in the special issue of *Preuves* given over to *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.<sup>49</sup> It is significant that Nabokov in the article placed on an equal footing the loss of artistic liberty experienced by Shostakovich and the decision by Manuel de Falla (whose *Suite du Tricorne* was performed at the festival) to flee Franco’s Spain. In this regard one of the few areas of agreement between the Congress’s European members and the PCF was their mutual desire to block Spain’s admission to NATO. The article also contains a tribute to Béla Bartók, who was honoured at the festival with a concert featuring his works exclusively. As Nabokov pointed out in the article, not only was Bartók’s music the target of Soviet attacks, but his native Hungary was one of the more recalcitrant Soviet satellites.

A no less politically charged aspect of Nabokov’s selection criteria emerged in a letter from Nabokov to Stravinsky, in which the details of the latter’s impending involvement in the festival were discussed. A performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rake’s Progress*, to be conducted by Roger Désormière, apparently had been proposed for the festival. Nabokov’s response was that the Congress for Cultural Freedom found Désormière (who was at the

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<sup>48</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘This is Our Culture’: 15.

<sup>49</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘Élégie funèbre sur quatre notes.’ *Preuves* 15 (May 1952): 7-12.

time a close friend and confidant of Boulez) unacceptable because ‘he is an active member of the Communist Party’.<sup>50</sup> That a similar association did not preclude works by Elsa Barraine and Henri Dutilleux from being performed in the chamber music series underscores the more inclusive, or at least less ideologically doctrinaire, nature of the second tier of the festival, which was, as noted earlier, programmed by the Parisian music critic and champion of the avant-garde, Fred Goldbeck.

Our understanding thus far of Nabokov’s selection criteria for the first and most prestigious tier of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* can be summarised as one in which personal allegiance and aesthetic preference combined to produce an expectation that music, if it was to be of use to pro-NATO forces as a cultural weapon in their ideological struggle with the Soviets, had to be capable of sustaining an association with humanist values that the Congress argued were either absent or suppressed in the Soviet Union. Nabokov recognised the potential for neo-classicist music, and Stravinsky’s in particular, to fulfil these aims. Accordingly, neo-classicism became the centrepiece of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, which was intended not only to counter Soviet propaganda victories in Western Europe, but also to win over those in France who were deemed vulnerable to the Soviet thrust. Conversely, it has been shown that Nabokov made an association between twelve-tone technique and political and social disillusionment felt by many in France, even to the point of suggesting that it was among the root causes of the same. The views of Greenberg, Adorno and Boulez have outlined how and why neo-classicist music proved itself amenable to the intervention of politically motivated third parties, and serial music, less so.

For all of his advocacy of the festival as a celebration of ‘free minds in a free world’, Nabokov’s actions suggest that for him any propaganda value that could be extracted from

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<sup>50</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. Letter to Stravinsky, dated 17 January 1952. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 382.

the festival lay in celebrating the actual creative outcome not, as was the case with Boulez, in the freedom enjoyed in the creative process itself. Nabokov was, however, apparently willing to relax the aesthetic requirements of his selection criteria so as to include certain texted works in which the texts themselves communicated sentiments that were capable of being invested with some kind of anti-Soviet import by the Congress. That he deliberately excluded Désormière, an individual who will be shown to be a pivotal player in the early post-War French musical scene, points to an aesthetic and ideological bias that differed from the Soviets only in terms of its political complexion. It will now be shown that both parties remained preoccupied with the ends rather than the means – with the value or appropriateness of the creation itself, rather than the freedom implicit in the act of creation, an exercise of freedom that formed a significant part of the *raison d'être* of the French avant-garde.

## CHAPTER TWO

## Nabokov, Shostakovich, and the View from the Bridge

The confrontational stance adopted by Nicolas Nabokov in his programming of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was a manifestation of the aggressive Either-Or position adopted by the more militant members of the Congress. These individuals maintained, to the chagrin of the moderates, that there was, politically speaking, no middle ground. Western Europe had either to side with the United States or face the spectre of Soviet domination. The impact of this position upon the cultural politics of the immediate post-War period, and its relevance to Nabokov's subsequent organisation of the festival, are now exposed through an examination of newspaper and journal articles drawn from either side of the ideological divide. This material confirms Nabokov's understanding of official Soviet musical policy, and his reaction to Dmitri Shostakovich's role in its dissemination. It is shown that the essential difference between Nabokov and the Soviets was less a question of aesthetic preference, and more one of expectation as opposed to obligation.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom came into being literally at a time when Cold War tensions had been strained almost to breaking point by the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula. It was dedicated to countering what the American humanist philosopher and former Marxist, Sidney Hook, later described as the 'Communist Peace Offensive' of the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet offensive came typically in the form of a sponsored 'peace' conference staged, with few exceptions, in a major Western capital. One of the more celebrated of these, and certainly one of the most controversial, took place from 25 to 27 March 1949, at a time when Allied relief flights into Soviet-besieged West Berlin numbered over twelve hundred a day. Convened at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in

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<sup>1</sup> See Sidney Hook 'The Communist Peace Offensive.' *Out of Step: An Unquiet Life in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) 382-396.



New York City under the auspices of the American National Council of Arts, Sciences and Professions, the conference was given the title 'The Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace'. Among those representing the Soviet Union were the novelist and *apparatchik* Aleksandr Fadeyev, and Shostakovich.

Shostakovich's address to the conference's Fine Arts Panel, which was chaired by Olin Downes, appears to have been a defining moment in Shostakovich's personal ideological struggle, and in Nabokov's subsequent determination to stage *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Describing him as 'a mild-mannered little man [who] appeared nervous and uneasy', the *New York Times* of 28 March 1949 reported that Shostakovich's address to the panel 'rivalled the bitterest diatribes of the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Y. Vishinsky'.

The report continued:

The boyish-looking, bespectacled composer . . . told 800 cheering persons at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel that 'a small clique of hatemongers' was preparing world public opinion for the transition from cold war to 'outright aggression.' . . . There were only a few pickets around the Waldorf-Astoria when the composer delivered his attack on the West. His auditors, who packed the Starlight Roof to overflowing, gave Mr. Shostakovich a standing ovation after he had declared that the force of 'progressive workers in the field of culture is invincible.' . . . Mr. Shostakovich once again recanted the 'bourgeois formalism' of some of his work . . . 'In those of my works – especially those of the post-War years – in which I departed from big themes and contemporary images, I lost my contact with the people and I failed,' Mr. Shostakovich conceded . . . He then began a long recital of 'the truthful story of Soviet culture' in order to 'dispel the lies which are spread about the land of socialism by enemies of democracy . . .'<sup>2</sup>

Although the 'few pickets' outside the Waldorf-Astoria may have been spontaneous in voicing their opposition to the New York conference, a well-orchestrated counter-campaign had been organised under the banner 'Americans for Intellectual Freedom' (AIF) at the instigation of Hook. Despite being sympathetic to Shostakovich's plight, Nabokov, one of the AIF's more active members, assumed the role of provocateur during Shostakovich's address. Nabokov directed the composer's attention to an unsigned article

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<sup>2</sup> 'Shostakovich Bids All Artists Lead War on New "Fascists".' *New York Times* 28 March 1949: 1, 2.

in *Pravda* that singled out Paul Hindemith, Schoenberg, and Stravinsky for virulent criticism.<sup>3</sup> Nabokov then inquired as to whether Shostakovich agreed with this view. To which the latter, allegedly at the direction of a KGB interpreter, 'got up, was handed a microphone, and, looking down at the floor, said in Russian: "I fully agree with the statements made in *Pravda*".'<sup>4</sup> The report of the day's events in the abovementioned *New York Times* article detailed Shostakovich's response, a response that, given Nabokov's personal and aesthetic allegiances, would have caused him considerable alarm:

Mr. Shostakovich singled out Igor Stravinsky for special condemnation. Mr. Stravinsky, famed Russian composer now in Hollywood, 'betrayed his native land and severed himself from his people by joining the camp of reactionary modern musicians,' Mr. Shostakovich declared, adding: 'Stravinsky's moral barrenness reveals itself in his openly nihilistic writings, proclaiming the meaninglessness and absence of content in his creations'.<sup>5</sup>

According to Shostakovich's biographer, Solomon Volkov, the hand of Stravinsky was behind the episode:

[Stravinsky] exerted every effort to prevent Shostakovich from coming to the US, considering him his rival, and treated him ruthlessly as a competitor. . . . At the [Waldorf] press conference, Nicolas Nabokov, Stravinsky's man, completely under his control, stood up and, at the great master's instigation [posed the question cited above] . . . This was a war fought without rules.<sup>6</sup>

The difficulties awaiting Nabokov in his later attempt to seize the ideological high ground by exploiting the cultural differences between East and West were highlighted by

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<sup>3</sup> Nabokov later told Ian MacDonald that Shostakovich 'seemed like a trapped man' whose participation at the New York conference was 'part of a ritual redemption he had to go through before he could be pardoned [by Stalin] again'. *The New Shostakovich*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990) 198-199. This view was contradicted recently by Stalin's cultural commissar during the period in question, Tikhon Khrennikov. According to Khrennikov, Shostakovich 'wrote the music he wanted to. He joined the Communist Party of his own free will; no-one dragged him in'. Interview with Marcus Warren. 'It's My Party and I'll Decry If I Want To.' *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 January 1999: 6: 11.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. *Bagázh: Memoirs of a Russian Cosmopolitan*. (New York: Atheneum, 1975) 238.

<sup>5</sup> 'Shostakovich Bids All Artists Lead War on New "Fascists"': 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Solomon Volkov. In interview with Galina Drubachevskaya. 'Variations on a Theme: Variation I.' *Shostakovich Reconsidered*. Allan B. Ho and Dmitry Feofanov, eds. (London: Toccata, 1998) 338-9. Stravinsky's alleged involvement possibly explains a report in the *New York Times* that he had 'declined today to join in welcoming to the United States Dimitri Shostakovich, the noted Russian composer'. 'Stravinsky Snubs Composer.' *New York Times* 18 March 1949: 15.

the failure of New York's musical cognoscenti to agree on the significance of Shostakovich's presence at the Waldorf Astoria. Aaron Copland, who shared the podium with Shostakovich during the latter's address, felt obliged to point out that 'all cultural exchange [becomes] difficult when all foreign music from the West is condemned in advance . . . As a composer from the West I naturally find the attitude extreme'.<sup>7</sup> Yet Copland had earlier joined a number of other luminaries, including some that were openly criticised by the Soviets, Samuel Barber, Walter Piston and Leonard Bernstein among them, in welcoming Shostakovich in the hope that 'this kind of cultural exchange can aid understanding among our peoples and thereby make possible an enduring peace'.<sup>8</sup>

Reflecting the populist view, the rank and file were by no means as magnanimous. Richard McCann, the president of the New York chapter of the American Federation of Musicians argued that Shostakovich's visit was 'intended to further the imperialist foreign policy design of the Soviet Union to the detriment of the free nations of the world [and] will emphasise more than any other event the utter debasement of artistic freedom in the Soviet Union'.<sup>9</sup> McCann was not alone in his assessment. The political ramifications of the Waldorf conference were well understood by American political powerbrokers. Although still in its pre-Joseph McCarthy phase, the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities warned in the *New York Times* that 'ideological confusion' arising from the conference could 'pass over into outright treason'.<sup>10</sup> The Committee alleged among the ulterior motives behind the conference was the desire to promote Soviet foreign policy, and 'to discredit American culture and extol the virtues of Soviet culture'. Nabokov

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<sup>7</sup> As reported by Joseph Lash in 'Weekend at the Waldorf.' *New Republic* 18 April 1949: 12.

<sup>8</sup> Report in the *New York Times* 17 March 1949: 4.

<sup>9</sup> *New York Times* 17 March 1949: 4.

<sup>10</sup> *New York Times* 19 April 1949: 6. In a statement published in the *New York Times*, the United States State Department made it apparent that, despite serious misgivings, it had little choice but to sanction the conference in the interests of free speech. *New York Times* 20 March 1949: 2.

through *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was effectively to substitute this anti-American bias with one that was anti-Soviet, although not nearly enough in the eyes of the Congress's hawks.

Irrespective of Nabokov's personal allegiance, his preparedness to confront Shostakovich in an open forum was scarcely surprising given his career to that time. Nabokov was born in 1903 into a prominent White Russian family which was forced subsequently to flee Russia in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. His musical pursuits saw him move between Germany, where he studied in Stuttgart and at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin, and the Sorbonne in Paris. As a composer, Nabokov achieved a measure of success when Serge Diaghlev's Ballets Russes de Monte-Carlo commissioned and presented his ballet-oratorio *Ode* in Paris 1928. In 1933 Nabokov moved to the United States, and became a naturalised citizen in 1939.

Following a series of academic postings, Nabokov's language skills and political contacts led in 1945 to his appointment as a cultural advisor to the American Military Government in Berlin.<sup>11</sup> The amalgamation of Nabokov's ideological and aesthetic positions was doubtless strengthened further during this period, in that he was able to acquire an intimate understanding of the way in which the Soviet authorities in the eastern sector of Berlin were able to use cultural policy for political ends. Early in 1947 Nabokov joined the newly established Russian section of *The Voice of America*. In October of that year he resigned that position in order to take up the Chair in composition at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore.

As a Russian, Nabokov understood the ideological enemy possibly better than most. As a Russian musician, he had acquired an intimate understanding of the nature and extent of Soviet criticisms of Western music. In addition to offering an insight into his own

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<sup>11</sup> Nabokov detailed his duties as an officer in the ominous sounding 'Music Control Branch of the Information Control Division' of the American Military Government in his book *Old Friends and New Music*. (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1974) 263-4.

motives, Nabokov, in a fascinating study published in the *Partisan Review* soon after the conclusion of the New York conference, attempted to unravel the arcane logic employed by the Soviet authorities.<sup>12</sup> Nabokov considered the implications of a resolution handed down by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party on 10 February 1948. The resolutions marked the resumption of the official government campaign against 'decadent' Western culture, an attack which in the musical sphere can be traced to the series of pre-War formulations issued at the direction of the notorious Andrei Zhdanov, under the aegis of 'The Ideological Platform of the Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians'.<sup>13</sup>

The tone of the resolution of 10 February 1948 had been established at the outset with an attack on the hapless young Georgian composer Vano Muradeli, and his 'defective anti-artistic' opera, *The Great Friendship*.<sup>14</sup> The resolution then cast the net wider:

. . . the fiasco of Muradeli's opera is not an isolated case, but is closely connected with a precarious condition of contemporary Soviet music and with the spread among Soviet musicians of formalistic tendencies . . . The characteristic features of this music are the negation of basic principles of classical music; the preachment of atonality, dissonances and disharmony . . . the rejection of such all important concepts as melody, and the infatuation with the confused, neuropathological combinations which transform music into cacophony . . . This music is strongly reminiscent of the spirit of contemporary bourgeois music of Europe and America, reflecting the dissolution of bourgeois culture, a complete negation of musical art, its impasse.<sup>15</sup>

Drawing from official edicts, and the Soviet musicological journal *Sovietskaya Muzyka*,

Nabokov pieced together the official Soviet position on a number of Western composers:

Walter Piston is singled out for grudging praise . . . The Frenchmen Milhaud and Auric are usually found in a list of 'servile teasers of the snobbish bourgeois tastes of a capitalist city'. Poulenc's name is sometimes included and sometimes excluded from this list . . . In the U.S.A., the main offenders are Gian-Carlo Menotti and Henry Cowell . . . [Aaron] Copland . . . is grouped with 'gangsters' Raymond Mortimer and Bertrand Russell as false authorities to whom Soviet musicologists should never refer. The American critics Virgil Thomson and Olin Downes are frequently taken to task. The decadence started with Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* . . . From there come the 'great leaders' of Western decadence – the

<sup>12</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'Russian Music After the Purge.' *Partisan Review* 16 (1949): 842-851.

<sup>13</sup> The third and final resolution appears in translation in Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music Since 1900*. 4th ed. (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1971) 1353-1357.

<sup>14</sup> Published in translation by Nicolas Slonimsky as 'Soviet Musical Policy, 1948.' *Music Since 1900*, 1359.

<sup>15</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky. *Music Since 1900*, 1359-1360.

Stravinskys, Ravels, the Schoenbergs and Bergs, the Weberns and the Kreneks, the Hindemiths and the Kurt Weills. The younger generation – Messiaen and Jolivet in France, Benjamin Britten in England and Menotti here in America – are descendants of an ‘inglorious,’ ‘ignoble,’ ‘decaying,’ civilization.<sup>16</sup>

Three years later, works by the majority of the more conservative composers mentioned in the above, in some instances despite their questionable artistic merit, formed a sizeable part of the first tier programme of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.

A study of these and other Soviet pronouncements left Nabokov, in his own estimation, qualified to present ‘a faintly clear picture of what kind of music Stalin expects his composers to write’. Tongue firmly in cheek, Nabokov went on to suggest that Soviet composers could escape official persecution by adhering to the following regimen:

1. Avoiding dissonance.
2. Avoiding any harmonic syntax more advanced than that of the late Sergei Rachmaninov.
3. Learning to write easy tunes.
4. Avoiding dependence on ‘abstract’ instrumental and symphonic forms.
5. Writing more songs on Soviet subjects.
6. Strictly abstaining from jazz rhythms, paroxystic syncopation, ‘fake’ (meaning dissonant) polyphony and atonality.
7. Writing operas about Soviet life.
8. Turning his attention in general to the song of the great Soviet people and forgetting about the West.<sup>17</sup>

Nabokov’s check-list highlights the depth of his understanding regarding the weaknesses of Soviet cultural policy. Those strictures pertaining to symphonism and nationalist content were sufficiently transparent as to be directly challenged in the programming of the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. This was achieved through an emphasis on symphonic music and the performance of works by Soviet composers who had incurred official censure. Zhdanov’s demand that Soviet composers avoid dissonance was more difficult to

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<sup>16</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘Russian Music After the Purge’: 849-850. Nabokov offered a similar overview in the special number of *Preuves* given over to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, under the heading “‘Tempora Mutantur” ou les métamorphoses de M. Glebov.’ *Preuves* 15 (May 1952): 11-12. In the article Nabokov traced the transformation of Igor Glebov (Boris Asafyev) from staunch defender of Stravinsky to one of the composer’s more vociferous critics. Glebov was in 1948 ‘elected’ (Nabokov’s quotation marks) president of the Union of Soviet Composers.

<sup>17</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘Russian Music After the Purge’: 847.

refute because, as Nabokov's attitude towards serial technique confirmed, an assessment of the presence or degree of dissonance is a matter of individual preference. The first tier programme, with its overwhelming bias in favour of neo-tonal music, would appear to suggest that Nabokov was unwilling to expose his vision of cultural rejuvenation to the vagaries of personal taste.

Although Nabokov may have considered serialism to be an inappropriate weapon with which to counter Soviet cultural incursions, targeting the Soviet cultural *modus operandi*, socialist realism, on the basis of its aesthetic preoccupations proved more elusive. Indeed, it is reasonable to suggest that on the basis of the aesthetic demands of the Soviet cultural commissars, Stalin would have had little trouble with Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* had it been dedicated to the glory of the Soviet people rather than to God, or composed by a Soviet musician deemed acceptable to the Politburo. As Herbert Eimert pointed out in *die Reihe*, music is tolerated in totalitarian states, Communist and Fascist, 'as long as it limits itself to the ground between classicism-romanticism and mass music'.<sup>18</sup> The *Symphony in C* lies comfortably within that domain.

The essential difference between East and West, one that was pivotal to the Congress's campaign, hinged on the right of individuals to express themselves as they saw fit. In practice, freedom of expression was tempered by the expectation that the result be capable of sustaining affirmative values in keeping with the Congress's ideological agenda. Nabokov was of the opinion that the *Symphony in C* was appropriate because the music allowed him to 'see clearly, and to feel again the meaning of *homo sapiens*'. That verdict would have been heresy to the Politburo, which considered itself the sole guarantor of a system in which compliance took precedence over inspiration. The curtailment of freedom

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<sup>18</sup> Herbert Eimert. 'The Composer's Freedom of Choice.' *die Reihe* 3 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1957). English edition (Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1959): 9.

in the Soviet Union was, according to Boulez, what so troubled Désormière about ‘the idiotic propaganda for “progressive” music dictated by Zhdanov . . . Even when Stalinism was at its height, he went on conducting any music that he thought was worth performing’.<sup>19</sup>

As if to confirm Nabokov’s suspicions that France was a haven for ‘the politically homeless who have lost faith in the creative forces of the West’, socialist realism enjoyed a degree of acceptance among Boulez’s contemporaries in Paris between 1947-1952.<sup>20</sup> Serge Nigg was among the more prominent of them. Nigg shared a strikingly similar musical training to Boulez in that he studied harmony and composition with Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire from 1941 to 1946, and from 1945 to 1948 undertook private study with René Leibowitz. Soon after this, Nigg became one of socialist realism’s more celebrated converts.

Nigg’s name appeared regularly in *Les lettres françaises*, and he, together with the composers Louis Durey, Henri Dutilleux, Jean Weiner, and Louis Saguer, had signed a petition calling for nuclear arms control that later appeared on the front page of the journal.<sup>21</sup> One of a number of revealing exchanges between Nigg and the music critic Pierre Kaldor was published in *Les lettres françaises* following Nigg’s return from a visit to the eastern and western sectors of Berlin in late 1949.<sup>22</sup> During the visit Nigg was to have a work (unnamed, but possibly the symphonic poem *Pour un poète captif* [1950]) performed and recorded by the East German national radio, Berliner Rundfunk. Plans fell through, however, when the conductor, Désormière, was refused a visa to enter Berlin by the authorities in the city’s western sector. The refusal was doubtless due to Désormière’s

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<sup>19</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Roger Désormière: “I Hate Remembering!”’ Reprinted in *Orientations*, 510.

<sup>20</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘This is Our Culture’: 13.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Contre l’arme atomique se fait l’unanimité des intellectuels français.’ *Les lettres françaises* 315 (8 June 1950): 1.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Retour de Berlin le compositeur Serge Nigg.’ *Les lettres françaises* 292 (29 December 1949): 7.



membership of the PCF – a status that, it will be recalled, was later to result in his exclusion from *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.

In conversation with Kaldor, Nigg praised ‘the new German democracy’ and the contribution made to the building of the new state by young musicians through their ‘optimistic and simple’ compositions. Kaldor inquired as to what themes inspired musicians in the East. Nigg responded with a paean to socialist realism: ‘The reconstruction, peace and a profound feeling of friendly gratitude towards the USSR, which has enabled East Germany to begin to develop as a popular democracy’. After expressing his pleasure at being able to attend rehearsals in East Berlin of ‘a noble cantata’ by J.K. Foster, which was composed as part of the celebrations marking the seventieth birthday of Joseph Stalin – ‘the liberator of Europe and Germany’ – Nigg turned his attention to the western zone and the ‘strange spectacle’ of Werner Egk’s ballet *Abraxas* (1948). Sarcastically describing Egk as ‘the ambassador for Nazi music in the good old days of the occupation of Paris’ (a somewhat harsh judgement in view of the accusations of ‘degenerate pacificism’ levelled at the composer by the Nazis), Nigg began by criticising the choreography, which he found reminiscent of the front row of the *Folies-Bergère*. He then concluded that *Abraxas* was ‘symbolic of the state of ruin of West Germany, with its obscene and degrading scenes’.

Nigg was of course entitled to his opinion as to the artistic merits of *Abraxas*. But his preparedness to conclude that its shortcomings were consistent with those of the West German state as a whole underscores the socialist realist view that not only should culture reflect the condition of the social fabric, but that the artist as a member of the proletariat should actively contribute to the defence of the political foundations upon which that fabric is based. This position, which will be shown to have caused Nigg a great deal of discomfort, has its basis in Marx’s belief that all aspects of material life condition the

social, political and intellectual life of society as a whole. As has been demonstrated, the actions of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in general, and Nabokov in particular, confirm that they, too, subscribed to the view that there should be a correspondence between politics and culture.

Despite his Yeltsinesque demeanour, Nabokov was sufficiently politically astute to grasp the deeper significance of the Soviet government's attempts to control the output of those composers who fell under its sphere of influence, and to assail those of the West. Nabokov in his assessment of Soviet musical policy posed the question as to 'why did the Politburo include music in its campaign against Western culture and why did it surround this campaign with so much fervor and drama?' For him the answer lay in the realisation that:

The Politburo feels that the composers are doing something over which it has no immediate control. Some form of supervision must be established. Let them write music that is pleasing and comprehensible to the new Soviet middle class. That will keep the composers from participating in mysterious, unknown, and therefore subversive activities. A good name for such activities is 'formalism'. Despite all the jargon about formalism, classicism, and socialist realism, the real fear of the Soviet government is the state of mind which may grow within a closed body of specialists, with its own favorably-inclined critics, and its possible protectors in government circles . . . One should not forget that the Politburo considers the people it governs as part of an immense pedagogical enterprise, and the individual is only valid insofar as he actively and submissively participates in this enterprise.<sup>23</sup>

Thus it would appear that both Nabokov and the Politburo subscribed to Greenberg's recognition of the ideological potential of music that was aesthetically retrospective. But while Nabokov was happy to argue that the *Symphony in C* championed the virtues of freedom of expression, the Politburo considered what Shostakovich, possibly reluctantly, identified in Stravinsky's music as the 'absence of content' to be unsuited for their pedagogical purposes, and therefore potentially subversive. Nabokov, for his part, was suspicious of serial music, and for similar reasons.

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<sup>23</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'Russian Music After the Purge': 850-851.

This is not to suggest that the Soviets were unable or unwilling to find fault with neo-classicism. Igor Glebov suggested that from an aesthetic viewpoint, neo-classicist music was concerned with the 'exultation of the past', and as such it was 'a phenomenon of the decadence and the profound crisis' engulfing the West.<sup>24</sup> Glebov's position was at least superficially consistent with the Marxist view of cultural history, which argues that the spiritual and material progress of the proletariat ideally traces a unidirectional (that is, irreversible) trajectory, wherein the materials of production (the quantitative) give rise in the successive generation to a revolutionary (qualitative) change. To resurrect the materials and methods of an earlier, bourgeois age (in the case of the *Symphony in C*, Vienna circa 1790) was to sabotage the prospect of qualitative change in present (and subsequent) generations of the proletariat. This preoccupation was what Adorno described in Stravinsky as a 'fetishism of the means' – the tendency to submit to the materials at hand rather than, as was the case with Stravinsky's nominal antithesis, Schoenberg, to develop those materials in a way that responded to rather than reacted against social change.<sup>25</sup>

Adorno subscribed to the Hegelian dialectical view that genuine, that is to say progressive, art struggles with the same pressures as does the society from whence it emerged, pressures that seek to reconcile progress with continuity. The socially aware artist is, therefore, confronted with the need to balance innovation with tradition. Reactionary art, such as neo-classicism, negates the former through a preoccupation with the latter, which viewed in retrospect presents itself as a concatenation of materials and method. Conversely, art motivated by the sole desire to destroy tradition (Dada, for example) is ahistoricist and therefore of equally little value. The masterwork develops historical tendencies in innovative ways. Thus it was Schoenberg who was in Adorno's

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<sup>24</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. "'Tempora Mutantur" ou les métamorphoses de M. Glebov': 12.

<sup>25</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 172.

opinion the true genius, because there lay embedded in his art society's contradictions, contradictions that were articulated in an historically valid manner. The Soviets for their part denied the validity of art that served such a purpose, because all facets of Soviet society (Nabokov's 'pedagogical enterprise') were working towards a utopian vision of the present. According to Glebov, Schoenberg was little more than a 'decadent obscurantist', and therefore part of a bourgeois plot to perpetuate the enslavement of the proletariat.<sup>26</sup>

As far as Adorno was concerned, Stravinsky and Boulez had prostrated themselves at the altar of Apollo, and in so doing 'removed themselves from the picture' – a picture that from Adorno's Hegelian perspective should 'reflect the history of man'.<sup>27</sup> The separation from the 'picture' of Stravinsky's neo-classicism, which at its most apocryphal had Stravinsky composing his *Circus Polka* (1942) for a Barnum circus elephant while Europe was in flames, helps to explain its appeal to Ringer's 'power elite'. Stravinsky's appropriation of the style and technique of an historically abstract moment in time presented itself either as a distraction from the tribulations confronting war-time society or, as was the case with Nabokov, the opportunity to argue that his art stood for the fortification of an ideological belief that rose above those tribulations. This realisation is important because it further serves to confirm the premise that neo-classicism suited *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle's* ultimate ideological purpose, which was to remind people not of where European society stood at that historical juncture (*circa* 1952), but where it had been, and to where, provided it stood firm with the United States against totalitarianism, it would return.

Pursuing the logic described above, Adorno judged the expansion of serial technique to be a preoccupation with materials and method, and because of this the serial composer

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<sup>26</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. "'Tempora Mutantur' ou les métamorphoses de M. Glebov": 12.

<sup>27</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 43.

bore 'a fatal resemblance' to 'those who have crawled away into the ruins of a by-gone tradition'.<sup>28</sup> Adorno believed that serial composers, who had yielded 'to what they mistakenly consider the inner law of the material' were effectively abrogating their social responsibility in the face of a society beset by 'the contraction of freedom [and] the collapse of individuality'. Adorno considered serialism therefore to be one of the symptoms of a collapsing society. But to committed Communists (Désormière excluded) and, as shall be discussed, a number of individuals linked to the Congress, serial music was part of the problem. Hans Werner Henze, a lifelong committed Communist whose aesthetic preferences were not dissimilar to those of Stravinsky during the period in question – except that he deployed his talents in order to *épater le bourgeois* rather than fortify it – detected an ulterior motive in the music of the Darmstadt school during the early 1950s. In Henze's opinion, the attempt by Boulez, and others, to 'make music non-communicative' had 'something to do with the ruling class's belief that art is a thing apart from life, better kept that way . . .'.<sup>29</sup> Henze's assertion raises two questions which will subsequently be shown to be salient to this study. The first is that if the expansion of serial technique resulted in music that was 'a thing apart from life', does this reinforce the argument that the chamber music component of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* stood for the de-politicisation of the ideological debate? The second question is that if it is true that the expansion of serial technique brought music to the point of non-communication, does it necessarily follow that, given the social and political ferment in which it was formulated, such music is bereft of a communicative function?

Boulez's attitudes towards Stalinism, neo-classicism, and freedom of expression were possibly nowhere more clearly expressed than in his tribute to Désormière on the occasion

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<sup>28</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 114-115.

<sup>29</sup> Hans Werner Henze. *Music and Politics: Collected Writings, 1953-81*. Peter Labanyi, tr. (London: Faber, 1982) 49.

of the latter's death. With regard to Stalinism, Boulez praised the 'bold choice' which Désormière had made:

when he joined the Communist party, though not sharing its blunders or being unaware of the insoluble problems that bedevilled the years between 1947 and 1952. His reaction to inconsistent squabbling and dictated attitudes was simply that of an honest man determined to resist the imposition of any narrow, anti-historical conception of musical evolution: and he never had any truck with those reactionary 'ideologies' justified by the dictator miracle . . . which accused the most important among today's composers of cosmopolitanism or the vices coming under the general heading of 'cultural decadence'.<sup>30</sup>

From this it is apparent that Boulez, like Désormière, was troubled by the dictates of socialist realism. That Désormière should remain a faithful and active member of the PCF, and yet have significant reservations regarding a major plank of Stalinist cultural policy, not only underscores the fluid nature of cultural politics in France at the time, but also highlights a key problem awaiting Nabokov and the Congress in Paris, which was to identify ideological friend from foe on the basis of cultural preference.

Chapters One and Two have highlighted the chief areas of concern to Nabokov in his programming of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Chapter One has identified what he considered to be the primary strengths of Western culture, strengths that could be deployed for propaganda purposes against the Soviets. Chapter Two has described what Nabokov and others identified as the major weakness in the Soviet cultural armour, socialist realism. But what should have been the festival's relatively straight-forward cultural propaganda thrust was complicated by the fact that Nabokov's embrace of a conservative musical aesthetic and, equally importantly, his rejection of a progressive aesthetic in the form of serialism, and its antecedent, twelve-tone technique, was scarcely different from the official Soviet position regarding the same. Nabokov quite rightly identified the Soviet linkage between conservatism and ideological pedagogy, but failed possibly to recognise that he was attempting the same. Conversely, serial compositions, as 'notes, not music', were

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<sup>30</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Roger Désormière: "I Hate Remembering!"' *Orientations*, 510.

incomprehensible and therefore unsuited to Nabokov's aims. To the Soviet cultural commissar it was not just a question of dismissing music composed using serial techniques; its very presence was a threat to the Stalinist enterprise. Boulez, for his part, condemned what he called the 'common wish . . . for security' which he detected in both neo-classicism and twelve-tone technique; the former because it was based upon 'an aesthetic of reconstitution', the latter upon 're-evolution'.<sup>31</sup> These terms have a certain critical resonance because, although Boulez used them in relation to his own quest for artistic renewal, it will become increasingly apparent that his desire to jettison the façade of security offered by Stravinsky's neo-classicism and Schoenberg's twelve-tone orthodoxy was coincident with the French Neither-Nor sentiment, which rejected the NATO vision of reconstitution and the Soviet idea of re-evolution.

As if to confirm the accuracy of Nabokov's lament regarding France's disillusioned, Chapters Three and Four detail the impact of socialist realism in French musical and intellectual circles where, for historical reasons, it is shown to have enjoyed a relatively strong and well-organised support base. Addressing Boulez's reference to the insoluble problems that bedevilled the years between 1947 and 1952, it will transpire that socialist realism caused considerable difficulties for those composers in France who were sympathetic to Stalinism, and yet favoured modes of expression (serial technique, in particular) that were denigrated by the Soviet authorities. An understanding of the nature of the support for socialist realism helps further to explain the strength and depth of French resistance to the ulterior motives behind *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Equally importantly, the discourse concerning art and social responsibility that was generated as a result of the controversy surrounding socialist realism in France will be shown to have had a direct impact on the artistic and social significance assigned to expanded serial procedures.

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<sup>31</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Bach's Moment' (1951). *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 3.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### The Prague Manifesto and the Antecedents of the Progressiste Movement in France

From 20 to 29 May 1948 a music conference was convened in Prague. Organised by the Union of Czech Composers, the conference brought together composers, musicologists and music critics predominantly from the eastern bloc states and those countries with strong and active Communist parties, including France. It addressed what *Les lettres françaises* described as the ‘profound crisis engulfing music and musical life during our epoch’.<sup>1</sup> The negative assessment of the situation was politically motivated in that the crisis was seen largely as a Western phenomenon, one symptomatic of what was, in the Soviet view, the ideological and social bankruptcy of the West.

Its political agenda notwithstanding, the conference identified aesthetic and ideological issues that were of concern to musicians on both sides of the Cold War divide. The solutions it offered, which were tabled in the form of a manifesto, were consistent with the official Soviet position regarding the obligations of composers to the State as identified by the dictates of socialist realism. But beyond that, the so-called Prague Manifesto acted as a catalyst for an exchange of views amongst French composers and critical theorists that in many ways encapsulates the aesthetic and philosophical contradictions that were later to surface in the programming of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.

The Prague Manifesto had the effect of forcing certain composers, and those commentators who sought to locate music within the social and ideological tumult of the period, to confront a dilemma that although not peculiar to the immediate post-War period, had received added impetus through the coincident onset of the Cold War and the rise of high modernism. The dilemma stemmed from the fact that the Cold War confrontation

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<sup>1</sup> ‘La crise de la musique: Le manifeste de Prague – Les réactions des musiciens français.’ *Les lettres françaises* 228 (7 October 1948): 6.



generated a widespread awareness of political and social issues amongst artists and intellectuals at the very time when modernism as praxis had become preoccupied with its own forms and processes, to the extent that its broader social relevance was threatened by its perceived incomprehensibility. The issue thus needed to be resolved as to whether, or indeed how, the more extreme manifestations of modernism in music could engage with the pressing political and social issues of the day – henceforth referred to as “commitment” – while at the same time retaining a fidelity to the idea of aesthetic autonomy.

The ramifications of the debate, which was prosecuted with considerable vigour in the pages of *Les lettres françaises*, are in this chapter pursued as follows. The Prague Manifesto prompted Charles Koechlin to revisit the findings of a series of open enquiries concerning the relevance to post-War society of art music in general, and avant-garde music in particular, that were published in the journal *Contrepoints* (under the direction of Fred Goldbeck) in 1946-7. A critique of these and other articles confirms that Koechlin and other composers who had helped to formulate the progressive cultural policies of the pre-War Front populaire (Popular Front) were also active in the post-War socialist realist Progressiste movement in France. It transpires that what had earlier been a value judgement that equated supposed beauty and clarity in music with social and political affirmation became, through the policies of the Progressistes, an obligation to eschew modernist tendencies in general, and twelve-tone technique in particular. Koechlin emerges as a pivotal figure in both organisations, and it is argued that his personal disapproval of twelve-tone music may have contributed greatly to the exclusion of the young *dodécaphonistes* and their music from the ideological debate in France. The argument which holds that Goldbeck’s chamber music programme for *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was simultaneously less ideologically doctrinaire and more aesthetically inclusive than the first tier is further reinforced during the course of this chapter. This is most apparent when it is

borne in mind that while Désormière, Koechlin's confrère in both organisations, was excluded by Nabokov from participating in the first tier festival because of his ideological beliefs, Koechlin's *Pièce* for solo flute preceded *Structures Ia* at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées on the evening of 7 May 1952.

In keeping with its pro-Soviet inclination, *Les lettres françaises* in the above-mentioned article offered a detailed account of the proceedings in Prague.<sup>2</sup> The paper reported that the conference made the distinction between 'la musique dite sérieuse' and 'la musique dite légère'. For the purposes of this study, and for the sake of accuracy, these types will be referred to as art music and vernacular music, respectively. The conference alleged that art music had become 'too individualistic and subjective in its content, and too complicated and artificial in its form'. Vernacular music had, as Adorno was wont to point out, become 'dull, debased, and standardised' and it had, in certain countries, become 'a commodity, an object of the culture industry monopoly'. The alleged crisis for music had come about because the contradiction between the two types had become exaggerated to the extent that both had ceased to have any socio-cultural relevance, either to audiences or, as they had often done so in the past, to each other.

Echoing the Soviet position outlined by Nabokov at approximately the same time, the Prague conferees asserted that art music had:

forgotten the equilibrium of its elements; presently it is rhythm and harmony that enjoy a predominant role, to the detriment of melodic elements; at the same time it is the purely formal elements which predominate to the extent that rhythm and melody are themselves neglected. And finally, while one can observe in contemporary [art] music other types of music, the logical development of musical thought is replaced by the use of melodies that lack precise contours and which limit themselves to early contrapuntal forms, artifices which do nothing to hide the poverty of ideological content.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'La crise de la musique': 6.

<sup>3</sup> 'La crise de la musique': 6.

Aside from singling out twelve-tone music, with its imprecise melodies and reminiscence of early contrapuntal forms, the above statement captures the confusion behind the Soviet charge of 'formalism', which in the first sentence appears to have been aimed at ideologically suspect symphonic works such as Shostakovich's *Eighth Symphony* (1943), and Stravinsky's *Symphony in C*. The fundamental contradiction that holds that rhythm and harmony dominate, and are simultaneously beholden to the formal elements of the music, while at the same time as logical musical development is obscured by that same formal development, confirms that the charge of formalism was based upon a fear that certain musical types were conceptually impervious to ideological pedagogy, irrespective of the music's aural outcome.

The Prague Manifesto asserted that vernacular music had, on the other hand, limited itself to primary melody at the expense of all other musical elements, and had become reliant on corrupted, vulgar and standardised melodic formulae such as those found in 'la musique légère américaine'. Both musical types possessed a 'false cosmopolitan character' which was representative of 'a worrying cultural phenomenon that stemmed from defective social conditions'. The conference suggested that art music was in danger of leaving audiences behind precisely at a time when the simplicity of allegedly debased vernacular music offered itself as a viable alternative, to the supposed detriment of the critical faculties of the listener and of musical taste in general. These developments, which were taking place at a time when 'new forms of society were being constituted, and when human culture had attained a lofty state' (doubtless a reference to Stalin's USSR) meant that the composer faced 'new and urgent tasks' in order to reaffirm the relevance of music at a time of social upheaval. This view, which was not restricted to those sympathetic to the Soviet view, is salient to the exchange of views to be explored here.

The conference prefaced its Manifesto with an appeal to bipartisanship:

The [conference] does not want to issue technical or aesthetic directives for the production of music. It understands that each country will find its appropriate voice and method. But in view of the origins and the social nature of the musical crisis we need to be united in order to overcome it.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> 'La crise de la musique': 6.

The spectre of Zhdanov immediately made itself apparent, however, in the articles of the Manifesto, which proposed that the crisis could be overcome:

1. If composers . . . manage to dispense with extreme subjective tendencies in their music and instead express the higher progressive ideals of the popular masses.
2. If composers in their works pay closer attention to the national culture of their country and defend it against cosmopolitanism, because true internationalism in music stems from the development of diverse national characteristics.
3. If composers turn their attention to musical forms which permit a grasp of these points (above all, vocal music, oratorios, cantatas, choirs etc.).
4. If composers and musicologists work practically and actively towards the liquidation of musical alphabetism [a pseudonym for intellectualism] and for the musical education of the masses.<sup>5</sup>

The Prague conference called for the formation of an international association of 'progressive' musicians with the aim of restoring music to its former 'lofty and noble position in society'. *Les lettres françaises* reported that in response to this call a committee had been assembled in France which would form part of a soon to be established Association internationale des musiciens progressistes. The French committee comprised George Auric, Roger Désormière, Elsa Barraine, Charles Bruck, Louis Durey, Pierre Kaldor, Charles Koechlin, Jean-Louis Martinet, Serge Nigg, Louis Saguer, and Jean Wiener.

A sizable proportion of the committee of the Association française des musiciens progressistes (AFMP) which, as Claude Rostand pointed out, was 'banded together in order to submit to the Soviet principles of art', also formed the core of the revitalised French section of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).<sup>6</sup> A. Lebras reported that the French section was reorganised in 1948, with Koechlin as president, and it is interesting to note that it appears to have distanced itself from the ISCM's founding charter in a very subtle, yet fundamental way.<sup>7</sup> Lebras directed his attention to Article

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<sup>5</sup> 'La crise de la musique': 6.

<sup>6</sup> Claude Rostand. *La musique française contemporaine*. [1955] Translated by Henry Marx as *French Music Today*. (New York: Da Capo, 1973) 120.

<sup>7</sup> A. Lebras. 'La société internationale pour la musique contemporaine.' *Polyphonie* 6 (1950): 129.

Three of the founding charter (dated 1923): 'The ISCM has as its aims: to cultivate contemporary music of merit, without regard for the nationality, race, political opinions or the religion of the composer; to promote and above all to support diversity and trends that are difficult to grasp; to represent and to safeguard in an ideal sense the common interests of contemporary composers'.<sup>8</sup> As Lebras quite rightly pointed out, those aims were pursued through the staging of the ISCM's annual music festival. Yet in turning to the charter formulated in 1948 by the revitalised French chapter, the clause concerning the promotion of contemporary music that is 'difficult to grasp' appears to have been omitted – a move that superficially at least would be consistent with the Zhdanovian complexion of the AFMP. The omission also implies a hardening of attitudes similar to that which led in 1931 to the collapse of the Soviet affiliate of the ISCM, the Association for Contemporary Music (ACM), in the face of overwhelming ideological pressure from the officially sanctioned Russian Association of Proletarian Musicians (RAPM).

Bearing in mind Article Three of the ISCM's 1923 charter, the French interpretation of the same, which was formulated after the establishment of the AFMP, was reported by Lebras to include the following aim: '. . . to make known contemporary works by French and foreign composers, without having regard for the political opinions and religious convictions of either groups, and to safeguard their artistic ideals'. The crucial omission here of the ISCM's declared intention to defend music that is 'difficult to grasp' was not surprising in view of embrace of the findings of the Prague Manifesto by a number of key participants in both French organisations. As shall be confirmed, Koechlin in 1949 expressed qualified support for both the Manifesto and the AFMP.<sup>9</sup> It is also important to note that, as was the case with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the AFMP saw itself as

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<sup>8</sup> A. Lebras. 'La société internationale pour la musique contemporaine': 127.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Koechlin. 'Avant-propos: Art & liberté (pour la tour d'ivoire).' *Contrepoints* 6 (December 1949): 103.

championing freedom of expression against encroachments visited by an ideological enemy that sought to curtail such freedoms. In effect, both the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the AFMP defended views of culture which in their estimation were more sinned against than sinning. The crucial difference between the two organisations lay not in their methods but with the fact that they were ideological opposites.

One of the burning issues for those affiliated with the AFMP, aside from coming to terms with the authoritarian aspect of socialist realism, was to reconcile the deep-seated Gallic embrace of *art pour l'art* with social and political commitment in music. In order to acquire an understanding of the nature of this tension, which further identifies the proximity of the music of the avant-garde to the Cold War ideological discourse, it is first necessary to consider the composition and ideology of the key Leftist musical organisations in France prior to the Second World War. Chief among these was the Fédération musicale populaire (FMP), to which Koechlin, Durey and Désormière belonged. Koechlin had in 1937 succeeded Albert Roussel as the president of the FMP, and during the same period he also served as the president of the commission for music of the Association France-URSS (USSR). As has been noted, Koechlin later became the president of the revitalised French chapter of the ISCM. Before and after the War, Durey served as the secretary-general of the FMP, and in 1948 assumed the same position in the newly formed AFMP. In 1935 both men had joined with Désormière (and others, including Roussel, Georges Auric and Darius Milhaud) in forming what was in effect the Parisian performance arm of the FMP, the Chorale populaire de Paris.

Prior to the war the FMP was closely identified with the anti-Fascist Popular Front. The Front in its cultural policy aspired to remove the boundaries between bourgeois and

popular art in such a way as to elevate the latter rather than debase the former.<sup>10</sup> To this end Koechlin, as president of the FMP, championed the necessity for what Jane Fulcher has characterised as ‘a truly popular genre of high art, one that doesn’t sacrifice the rigors of great art but nevertheless appeals to the masses’.<sup>11</sup> This policy stood in opposition to the Fascist promotion of the spiritual and traditional (in the *Volk*-ish sense of the word) virtues of art. Koechlin outlined his aesthetic and ideological beliefs on a number of occasions, and in most instances he extolled the social virtue of high art by invoking the image of an ivory tower. The ivory tower was in his estimation, ‘*nevertheless social*, for it does represent to [me] *art for art’s sake* and typifies the symbol of freedom of inspiration’.<sup>12</sup> Koechlin’s idealism was soon to be challenged in the wake of dire reality of the Cold War.

Doubtless among many others, Rollo Myers was troubled by Koechlin’s image of the ivory tower. Myers’s response came in the form of an article entitled ‘Le musicien dans la cité’, published in *Contrepoints* in February 1946.<sup>13</sup> Myers began his article by describing the appropriation of culture along ideological lines with which this study is concerned:

In a troubled world, in a world in the grips of rapid economic, geographic and social change, the situation of art and artists is precarious and poorly defined. What will be the attitude of the artist in the face of material problems which, today, so deplorably complicate the life of nations in particular? The question is pressing; it is impossible to

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<sup>10</sup> See Julian Jackson. ‘The Cultural Explosion’. *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-38*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 113-145.

<sup>11</sup> Jane F. Fulcher. ‘Musical Style, Meaning, and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War.’ *Journal of Musicology* 8 (1995): 429.

<sup>12</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Étude sur Charles Koechlin par lui-même.’ Robert Orledge, tr. Reproduced in Robert Orledge, *Charles Koechlin (1867-1950): His Life and Works*. (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1989) 301.

<sup>13</sup> Rollo Myers. ‘Le musicien dans la cité.’ *Contrepoints* 2 (February 1946): 2-19. First published in January 1946, *Contrepoints* was established as a medium through which issues both generated by and confronting contemporary composers (French in particular) could be given a wider forum. The title was, as Goldbeck pointed out in his editorial to the first edition (January 1946: 1), intended to be a play on the compositional technique of the same name. As was the case with the technique itself, the journal sought to expose and manage contrasting voices according to ‘the old maxim *discordie accordée*’. Incorporated in 1950, together with *Polyphonie*, into *La revue musicale*, *Contrepoints* was possessed of what was later described as a ‘spirit of combat’. ‘Trois événements.’ *La revue musicale* 306-7 (1977): 10.

remain indifferent: the epoch in which we live no longer permits any ivory towers . . . today the ideologies which divide the people of the world have their corollary in the domain of art.

As Nabokov was to do three years later, Myers, possibly relishing his role on the staff of the British Consulate-General in Paris, offered evidence in support of this view by examining the attacks made on so-called 'decadent' Western music by RAPM (1929 and 1936), and the Nazi proscriptions against modernism. This led him to the conclusion that it was the duty of the artist:

not to identify with this or that party, or to serve as a spokesman in a political debate, but to preserve intact the dignity and independence of his art, and to express through this art certain spiritual values which remain unchanged, in contrast to the fleeting and always variable divergences that never cease to divide humanity politically.<sup>14</sup>

It would appear from this that in the political sense Myers was also advocating a kind of ivory tower mentality. But the difference between his vision of the ivory tower and Koechlin's seems to have rested with the activity that took place within it. Myers's position implied that the artist should reside in an ivory tower in order to ensure that their art escaped from it and made a positive contribution to Man's spiritual and social well-being. In keeping with his own political affiliations, Koechlin's view was that in order to have a social utility it mattered less whether the artist remained in the ivory tower, but it was vital that the work of art itself should aspire to it. Apparently stung by Myers's criticism, Koechlin clarified his vision of the ivory tower in the article 'Art & liberté: Pour la tour d'ivoire.'<sup>15</sup>

*Art for Art*, and the *Ivory Tower* have had bad press lately. I regret this. Because I maintain that there isn't any contradiction between one part of the Ivory Tower and the other, the profound utility of our art – its *social role*. It is by virtue of a very questionable postulate that one casts in opposition social utility and beautiful music created in the solitude of the Ivory Tower. This solitude, I well know, is never complete, but if the work is humane and beautiful it radiates outwards towards mankind. And the higher one rises in the Tower, the further the beam illuminates the world with beneficent clarity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Le musicien dans la cité': 16.

<sup>15</sup> The article first appeared in August 1947. It was republished, with an 'avant-propos' that carried a generally favourable response to the Prague Manifesto, in *Contrepoints* 6 (December 1949): 102-121, from which page numbers are cited in this instance.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Koechlin. 'Art & liberté: Pour la tour d'ivoire': 105.



In a thinly veiled attack on Myers, and possibly to insulate himself against further criticism, Koechlin went on to warn ‘my colleagues (and above all musicologists) against the danger of confusing between the Ivory Tower and indifference towards Man’. Koechlin’s own socio-political commitment, he reminded readers, was amply demonstrated in his own ‘fierce and revolutionary *Libérons Thaelmann*’. Koechlin’s *Chant pour Thaelmann*, Op. 138 (1934), a chorale composed as part of a campaign to free the German revolutionary Thaelmann from Nazi imprisonment, forms part of a body of works that the composer labelled his ‘music for the people’.<sup>17</sup>

Koechlin made it apparent at the outset that, like Myers, he believed that the composer had a duty to appeal to, and to enhance the spiritual and humanitarian values of society. Art for him was an absolute through which these values were articulated: ‘. . . don’t say that art is made for Man, – but Man for art’.<sup>18</sup> Where Koechlin appeared to diverge from Myers was that he believed that this appeal constituted a form of political commitment. This allowed him to argue that the beauty or quality of the work governed its humanity and therefore its commitment: ‘You [composers] will be more useful to humanity . . . through a beautiful symphony without political orientation, than through mediocre music for a propaganda film’.<sup>19</sup> This logic in turn allowed Koechlin to argue that true social commitment lay in the quality of the art, not the political persuasion of the artist:

Above all, I would never judge the value of an artist on the basis of their social ideas. Take [Henri] Sauguet: by no means communist, that I know, but [a] citizen of humanity [who] expressed profoundly the horrors of the war in his beautiful *Symphonie expiatoire*: for him it is not a question of politics, it is a question of music.<sup>20</sup>

But it would appear that there were limits to Koechlin’s equanimity:

As for musical grandeur, all the same it is among ‘those of the Résistance’ that you find the preference, and not among the Vichyssois – and even less among the opportunist ‘collaborateurs’.

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<sup>17</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Étude sur Charles Koechlin par lui-même.’ Orledge. *Charles Koechlin*, 313.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 121.

<sup>19</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 107.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 110.

Not surprisingly, this led Koechlin to the realisation that ‘with regard to the absolute separation between *esthétique* and *politique*, the problem is delicate’. In order to expand upon this assertion Koechlin took as his point of departure a comment by Fred Goldbeck which reinforces the proposition that under the latter’s directorship the chamber music component of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle* aspired to a Neither-Nor stance:

F. Goldbeck thinks that both communists and anti-communists write beautiful music. If that is so, then so much the better . . . However, will this music be no different from one to the other? And it is difficult to make the distinction from one side of the barricade.<sup>21</sup>

This verdict is consistent with Koechlin’s judgement that works of ‘quality’ and ‘beauty’ were capable of sustaining political commitment. He was willing to extend this judgement to anti-communists, but with one proviso:

The anti-communist who is sincere in their conviction and not (like the majority) looking out for his own interests, might also be moved to beauty. But not the uncharitable and narrow-minded bourgeois – the Spanish Republican and the *Franquiste* did not write the same funeral march – except if the *Franquiste* rose to the virtue of the Republican . . . And do you believe then that the Petainist collaborator ever mustered a power equal to an Elsa Barraine, for example, or the Poulenc of *Pont-de-Cé*, or of Louis Durey, who not long ago gave us (at a concert of the *Chorale populaire de Paris*) the very beautiful choral work, *Constructeurs*?<sup>22</sup>

Bearing in mind Koechlin’s involvement with the Popular Front, and the obviously still fresh memories of the war, his strident anti-Fascism is understandable. Similarly, his emphasis on value judgements such as quality and beauty were consistent with his passionate belief in the ascendancy of high art over popular culture. But Koechlin was so strong in his belief that only the politically correct were capable of creating works of such quality and beauty, that it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that he may also have believed the reverse. This was that supposedly inferior (or at least less beautiful) works are the product of, at best, the politically indifferent, at worst, the politically suspect. Thus he arrived at a similar finding to the Prague Manifesto, and to Nabokov, but through a more circuitous logic. The following captures the nature of Koechlin’s reservations regarding ‘le domaine de l’atonal dodécaphonique’ and the fervour of its young adherents:

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<sup>21</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 113.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 114.

I have not forgotten some lines by our young colleague Serge Nigg published the other year, regarding a concert in which the music was judged to be, for some reason, annoyingly *dated*. He said: ‘Sirs . . . your method of composing is from another time . . . Don’t you think that, perhaps, there is an evolution in the forms of expression and that what was good, appropriate, to a given epoch, is not good, is not appropriate to another?’ Well, no, I beg to differ. There is something naïvely presumptuous in imagining that one possesses a panacea for composition, and that his style constitutes the *current authentic style* . . . The style that Serge Nigg probably has in mind is the *dodécaphonique-sériel* dear to René Leibowitz; but why should that style be more “current” than that of Olivier Messiaen, or the polytonality of Darius Milhaud? In reality, all are admissible and each one permits good music. To speak truthfully, as I well know, this is fairly rare with regard to *atonal dodécaphonique*. But one occasionally finds it (notably with Alban Berg and Dallapiccola). As for fearing the *already existing* to the point of not risking an imprisonment that to you seems literally “revolting”, this is a simple folly, paralysis, and one that kills inspiration.<sup>23</sup>

Koechlin’s scepticism towards twelve-tone music contrasted markedly with the FMP’s pre-War position, which was to defend vigorously modernist music against the Fascist onslaught.

Despite the fact that he, like Désormière, was troubled by the authoritarian aspects of socialist realism, Koechlin served nevertheless on the founding committee of the AFMP, a role that implies at least a modicum of sympathy for the aims of socialist realism. Certainly, there can be little doubt that Koechlin was held in great esteem by the editorial staff of *Les lettres françaises*. Henry Malherbe considered him to be on a par with Leonardo da Vinci, and when Koechlin died in December 1950 he was the subject of no less than three effusive eulogies in the weekly.<sup>24</sup> Koechlin’s appeal to the Communists lay in the values with which he was identified. Writing soon after his death, Hélène Jourdan-Morhange outlined Koechlin’s ‘humanist’ values and lauded his belief that music should capture ‘the spontaneity of the popular spirit’ – a term that, like the word “peace” had acquired a Communist resonance.<sup>25</sup> Jourdan-Morhange whom, it will be recalled, was strident in her criticism of Boulez’s *Second Piano Sonata*, also cited approvingly Koechlin’s verdict that ‘Alban Berg is the sole humanist among the *dodécaphonistes*’.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 116.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Malherbe. ‘Charles Koechlin ou le “Léonard de Vinci de la musique”.’ *Les lettres françaises* 209 (20 May 1948): 6. Under the heading “Un grand compositeur est mort: Charles Koechlin le bon patriarche de la jeune musique”, Jane Bathori, Roger Désormière and Jean Gandrey-Rety offered eulogies to Koechlin. 344 (4 January 1951): 1, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Hélène Jourdan-Morhange. ‘Charles Koechlin: Notre poète-musicien à l’âme transparente.’ *Les lettres françaises* 350 (15 February 1951): 7.

Nabokov's inclusion of *Wozzeck* in the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* suggests a convergence of opinion that rose above ideological considerations.

Jourdan-Morhange recalled the occasion when she questioned Koechlin's use of 'un petit thème dodécaphonique' in his symphonic poem *Les bandar-log* (1939-40). *Les bandar-log* (Scherzo of the Monkeys) was the last to be composed of Koechlin's Jungle Book cycle, which was inspired by Rudyard Kipling's series of stories of the same name. When Jourdan-Morhange expressed her surprise at the composer's audacity in choosing to portray the antics of the monkeys using a twelve-tone theme, Koechlin was said to have replied 'The monkeys have no desire for consonant music'. In *Les bandar-log* the antics of the monkeys, manifested in their attempts to create what Koechlin described as 'an ugly modern music, strongly dissonant' are contrasted with, and ultimately assuaged by, the serenity and beauty of the forest, which represented popular taste.<sup>26</sup> Koechlin's own programme note captures his antipathy towards twelve-tone music, and the modernist impulse that motivated it:

The monkeys suddenly interrupt the calm of a luminous morning with their grotesque brawling . . . These monkeys, the vainest and most insignificant of animals, believe themselves to be creative geniuses; but they are nothing but vulgar imitators whose aim is to be fashionable and up to date. They shout out their so-called secrets, and for that they use the procedures of modern harmony; parallel fifths; parallel ninths; and consecutives. Then they arrive at atonal music, eager to obey Schoenberg's law of twelve notes. They do this with brusque and brutal leaps. But the entire forest begins to sing with them and as a result their atonality becomes musical and almost lyrical . . . This expressive evolution displeases the monkeys, and to escape from this Romanticism and declare themselves Classicists, they pretend to return to Bach in harsh and artificial polytonality. This is followed by a chromatic fugue whose subject and countersubject rival each other in stupidity. But, once again the forest intervenes and transforms this fugue into real music . . . The monkeys intervene again, this time with passages for percussion alone, in between which they take up their 'return to Bach' theme again in clattering uproar. But they are interrupted by the arrival of the lords of the jungle: Baloo, Bagheera and the serpent Kaa. The monkeys flee bewildered . . . One can see a satire on the pretentious and unskillful artists who want to be 'à la mode' in this symphonic poem. On the other hand, when the forest sings, there is a genuine homage to polytonal language and even to atonality.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Charles Koechlin. Letter to François Berthet. Cited in Jean Roy, *Présences contemporaines: Musique française*. (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Debresse, 1962) 63.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Koechlin. Programme note for the Paris première of *Le livre de la jungle* (15 April 1948). Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 191-2.

As was the case with Koechlin's earlier criticism of Nigg, the above suggests that he was troubled equally by the style and idea of twelve-tone music. That is, that it was the righteous fervour of its adherents as much as its unsettling aural outcome that earned his displeasure.

Koechlin's pre-War belief was that the higher the work of art ascended the metaphorical ivory tower, the greater its expression of personal liberty in the face of those that sought to deny such liberty. The work of art became liberty's beacon, illuminating society's path both towards and away from it. The role of the ivory tower in facilitating this two-way traffic was made clear in the FMP's initial declaration of principles, published in its journal *L'art musical populaire*: 'It is not sufficient for the intellectuals to go to the people; the people must come to the intellectuals'.<sup>28</sup> But the rise of twelve-tone music in France in the immediate post-War years, and the militancy of young adherents such as Boulez and Nigg, apparently tested this maxim to the extent that, in Koechlin's estimation at least, it should have been altered to read: 'It is not sufficient for the intellectuals to preach to the people; the people must come to those intellectuals who lead by example'. That said, Koechlin was not alone in allowing personal preference to impact upon his ideological beliefs. Nabokov's preference was for neo-classical music, and Stravinsky's in particular, which to him epitomised all that was "good" about the West. And, as Sidney Hook later caustically noted, 'the [Soviet] condemnation of the music of Shostakovich and Prokofiev cannot be explained only in the light of Stalin's politics. His ear played a considerable part in it'.<sup>29</sup> The point to be emphasised here is not that Koechlin had a personal dislike of twelve-tone music, one shared nevertheless by Nabokov and the Soviet cultural commissars. Rather, that given his position in the upper echelons of the

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<sup>28</sup> *L'art musical populaire* 1 (May 1937): 1.

<sup>29</sup> Sidney Hook. 'Science and Dialectical Materialism.' *Science and Freedom*. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955) 187.

post-War cultural politics of the Left, his verdict had the potential to alienate a significant proportion of avant-gardists from the Leftist cultural ideologies that had been influential prior to the war.

Any hope that the FMP may have moderated the anti-serial sentiments of the Prague Manifesto would have all but evaporated when, in July 1950, it was reported that the FMP was merging with the AFMP. The merger was decided upon following the Third Congress of the FMP, the first to be held since the war. In a notification of the impending meeting Durey, the secretary-general of the FMP, reminded members and prospective members that despite the 'suffering endured during the sombre period of Occupation, the disappearance of some of its directors, the destruction of its archives, and the dispersal of its effects [the federation] has never been broken, never dissolved'.<sup>30</sup> The decision to merge taken at that meeting was based equally on logistical considerations and the realisation that both organisations were fighting a common enemy – Fascism and war – in the name of peace. Thus, what Gandrey-Rety reported were reservations held by (unnamed) members of the FMP regarding 'the issue of musical choice' were put aside in order to 'fight truly for peace, without which all civilisation and all musical activity is likely to disappear'.<sup>31</sup>

With the benefit of hindsight, Claude Rostand felt emboldened to assert that 'in reality' the Zhdanovian doctrine behind the AFMP had failed to inspire 'even the militant [French] composers who seemed so fully convinced of the necessity for condemning "an art which isolates itself from life by burying itself in the mysteries of formalism and pessimism"'. Rostand's judgement was probably based on what was regarded by Jean Roy and others to be the creative impasse reached by Serge Nigg in his attempts to articulate his

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<sup>30</sup> Louis Durey. 'La fédération musicale populaire.' *Les lettres françaises* 318 (29 June 1950): 7.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Gandrey-Rety. 'Musique pour la paix: OÙ Stockholm à Saint Denis.' *Les lettres françaises* 319 (6 July 1950): 8.

militant political beliefs in a manner consistent with the dictates of socialist realism.<sup>32</sup> According to Rostand, the AFMP in advocating the position that ‘music can have value only if it expresses the life of the people and their fight for a better world and for peace’ had produced ‘only a few rather mediocre works by Louis Durey, a veteran formerly of Les Six, and by such youngsters as Serge Nigg, a fugitive from twelve-tone music’.<sup>33</sup> Rostand’s assertion that the AFMP had ‘produced more noise than works’ – a fairly severe judgement in view of the inherent conservatism of socialist realist art – suggests that his target was the ideology behind the music rather than the music itself – just as it had been for the authors of the Prague Manifesto. It also confirms that he chose to ignore the nuances of the cultural debate in France.

In Boulez’s estimation at least, Désormière, who was an active member of the PCF (in contrast to Koechlin, who by his own account was a fellow-traveller ‘not affiliated to the Party [but who] often expressed sympathy for the Communists’) was troubled by the interventionist undertones of the Prague Manifesto.<sup>34</sup> The ability to force a distinction between the theory and practice of socialist realism was consistent with what will be shown to be a tendency among the Left in France to overlook Stalinism’s repressive tactics. At a comfortable distance from any actual repression, those in France who were sympathetic to the cause were able to separate the aspirations of Marxist theory from its corrupted practical model. Jean-Paul Sartre reinforced the views of Désormière when he asserted that ‘the absurd Prague Manifesto . . . is the stupid and extreme consequence of a perfectly defensible theory of art and one that does not necessarily imply an aesthetic authoritarianism’.<sup>35</sup> As will be discussed in Chapter Seven, Sartre believed socialist

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<sup>32</sup> Jean Roy. *Présences contemporaines: Musique française*, 430.

<sup>33</sup> Claude Rostand. *French Music Today*, 120-121.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Étude sur Charles Koechlin par lui-même.’ Orledge, *Charles Koechlin*, 313.

<sup>35</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. Preface to *L’artiste et sa conscience*. Reproduced in *Situations*. Benita Eisler, tr. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1965) 219.

realism to be theoretically 'perfectly defensible' for two reasons. Firstly, because it was part of an effort that sought (in theory at least) to produce an egalitarian society. Secondly, because it coincided with his own existentialist view that all human endeavour combined to form the totality of human experience. It was simply neither possible nor desirable that artistic endeavour should be, in Rostand's words, 'a thing apart from life'.

The loss of support for what must have seemed the inexorable march of modernism meant that young composers, who like many artists and intellectuals in France had at the time embraced the spirit, *if not the letter*, of Communism, were faced with a conundrum. They could retain their passionate belief in the necessity for aesthetic renewal in music, and distance themselves from the politics of what purported to be the Left, which given the fact that the Right had long viewed them with suspicion, meant identifying with the Neither-Nor. Or, they could try somehow to reach a compromise between their aesthetic and ideological convictions. It is now shown that Serge Nigg attempted the latter path.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Creative Freedom or Political Obligation? Serialism and Stalinism in France

The conclusions drawn by the Prague conference appeared to have profoundly influenced Serge Nigg's artistic development. This chapter identifies those aspects of the Prague Manifesto that forced Nigg to confront the issue of ideological commitment in his music. It was his inability to reconcile his own serial preoccupations with that commitment which led him to embrace socialist realism. In the process of tracing Nigg's resolution of his dilemma in favour of Soviet cultural ideology, a number of other important issues emerge. Chief among these is that while serial technique may have been aesthetically ill-suited to fulfilling socialist realism's claims to social, and with that, ideological relevance, its methodological asceticism coincided not only with one of the chief aspirations of Soviet cultural policy, but also with the locally held belief that French composers had, in the lead up to the war and during it, abrogated their social responsibilities through stylistic self-indulgence. The desire to rectify this through a recourse to choral music emerges as one of the strengths of the Progressiste movement in France, one shared by the FMP. From this it becomes apparent that Nigg's rejection of high modernism was symptomatic of the failure of those who regarded themselves as politically committed to defend the right to freedom of expression that in theory underpinned the notion of commitment. Abandoned by the defenders of Stalinism and, as has been shown previously, by pro-NATO forces in the form of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, serialism was effectively marginalised by both of the Cold War ideological antagonists. It was to maintain this position until, for a number of reasons later to be identified, the Congress for Cultural Freedom helped to stage a festival biased intentionally in favour of serial music, *La Musica nel XX Secolo*, which was held at Rome during 4-15 April 1954.

In the edition of *Les lettres françaises* that immediately followed the publication of the Manifesto, Nigg discussed what he understood to be its implications with Pierre Kaldor, who had also attended the Prague conference. In expressing his qualified support for the Manifesto's criticisms of art music, Nigg observed that:

In their subtle geometric sonorities, some musicians have made a choice, and they are entitled to do so in a spirit of research. But in applying that spirit of research to the musical material they have not imagined, or grasped, the idea that true music is not a gratuitous play on that spirit but that, unfortunately, they have expressed a petrified social reality. Thus, linked to the forms of a society in decay, and lacking a rapport with the real world, they have become lost in a Resistance [which defends] musical procedure. These so-called "advanced" musicians claim, in every instance, an historical truth in the substance of their music, as well they may, but historical truth is in no way an isolated intellectual fact, one that ignores society, its struggles and aspirations.<sup>1</sup>

Nigg's use of the term 'historical truth' was a reference to what was a typical defence of twelve-tone technique, one that maintained that it was historically valid because it represented the next (and final) step in the evolution of tonality. This position, it will be recalled, is also what so infuriated Koechlin with regard to *les dodécaphonistes* in general, and Nigg in particular. Conversely, Nigg's reference to a 'petrified social reality', and a 'society in decay', locates his views within the Stalinist discourse.

It is apparent in the above that while Nigg defended the spirit of discovery behind serialism, he lamented the failure of those who employed serial techniques to make their music relevant to society and 'its struggles and aspirations'. Kaldor argued that the serial composer could not have it both ways. That is, they could not seek an engagement with society by using methods and forms that were incomprehensible to society. Nigg's response, which resonates with existentialist sentiments espoused subsequently by Leibowitz, was that 'in his isolation the musician creates ultimately his own universe, not simply all the fundamental values that are common to all men, in breaking down his

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<sup>1</sup> Serge Nigg, with Pierre Kaldor. 'Entretien sur la crise de la musique.' *Les lettres françaises* 229 (17 October 1948): 6.

feelings to the point where simple and natural sentiments are not excited, he has created the Unique, he is party to the search for “Vérité”, which is an entirely metaphysical species’. Leibowitz’s response to this assertion will be addressed in Chapter Eight.

Kaldor replied that most people could only respond to everyday concerns on the basis of the music presented to them, and that they were particularly inspired by ‘songs of love, songs of struggle and suffering, and songs of hope’. Nigg agreed: ‘Yes. Display not the symbols of the past, but the events of today in all the forms needed in order to reach as wide a public as possible’. Seizing upon this, Kaldor retorted:

But you, who is known as a composer who writes – who has written, more or less – using a technique that is far from clear, not solely for the wider public but for those who appreciate the music, do you think that you have the means to respond to these hopes using atonal or serial music? Note that I am not a strident critic of serial music; but if one is not to strain further the cohesion necessary between the public and composers [serial music] must be abandoned in favour of a simpler medium.

To which Nigg responded:

If musical art is to survive, there has to be a turning away from the path of exhaustive individualism, from the tentative freedom of pure research. One needs to try to integrate one’s more extreme research in a way that people can follow, into a synthesis that will form the basis of a truly new music. One should experiment with sensible possibilities resulting from these discoveries, and if these should result in an abstraction devoid of emotional content, [one must] seek out other paths.

Nigg’s appeal to artistic freedom provoked an indignant retort from Kaldor:

Have you the right, have you the luxury to spend so much time on these searches, on these experiences? Don’t you think that it is of vital importance that one establish renewed contact with the forms of inspiration and express them in an inclusive manner?

This forced Nigg finally to concede:

I am endeavouring, in my own way, to realise in a practical manner the Prague Manifesto, in that I have undertaken to compose a far-reaching work based on a very fine text by the young poet François Monod, for orchestra, chorus and reciters, in which I want to express the actual struggle undertaken by good people for a better world.

The work to which Nigg referred is the oratorio *Le fusillé inconnu*, which the composer completed in 1949. Jean Roy described it as a ‘hybrid work’, one that signalled

the composer's desire to accommodate serial technique within his Progressiste aspirations.<sup>2</sup> *Le fusillé inconnu* stood therefore, in theory at least, as an example of Nigg's stated desire to reconcile his Muse with the accessibility demanded of committed musicians by the Prague Manifesto. The oratorio represented the mid-point in Nigg's transition from an exponent of twelve-tone technique to a composer who embraced socialist realism – a transition reportedly rendered complete in 1950, with the composition of the symphonic poem *Pour un poète captif*. It is reasonable to assume that the composer considered his attempt at hybridisation unsuccessful, as *Le fusillé inconnu* is listed as 'destroyed' in the composer's detailed chronology (up to 1965), published in *Le Courrier musical de France*.<sup>3</sup> To an inquiry regarding its current whereabouts, Nigg's English representatives, UMP, simply responded 'no trace at all'.<sup>4</sup>

Nigg was not alone in his desire to use twelve-tone technique in order to communicate a Marxian view of social commitment, a desire that was understandably not without its critics among Marxists themselves. During the same period Hanns Eisler, who had been lionised by the Left for his 'proletarian music', was criticised for his use of twelve-tone technique. One of the more revealing Marxist critiques of Eisler's use of twelve-tone technique (and with that the technique in general) appeared in *Les lettres françaises* immediately prior to the Prague conference – a timing that, as was the case with the vast majority of articles published in the paper, was intended to have a propaganda value.<sup>5</sup> The critique underscores the importance assigned to a resolution of the innovation versus ideology debate among French Stalinists.

The article was written by the New York Marxist Sidney Finkelstein, who was a regular contributor to the Leftist weekly, the *Nation*. It began by reviewing a concert of Eisler's works staged at the New York City Hall, which was attended by Leonard

<sup>2</sup> Jean Roy. *Présences contemporaines: Musique française*, 429.

<sup>3</sup> Claude Chamfray. 'Fiches Techniques – Serge Nigg.' *Le courrier musical de France* 13 (1966): 57.

<sup>4</sup> *Universal Music Publishers*. Email to Gordon Abbott at the University of Adelaide, dated 30 April 1999. At the time of writing Nigg had not replied to the author's direct appeal for confirmation that the work was destroyed, or any other information concerning the work.

<sup>5</sup> Sidney Finkelstein. 'Hanns Eisler et la musique atonale.' *Les lettres françaises* 206 (29 April 1948): 6.

Bernstein, Roger Sessions, Aaron Copland, and Walter Piston, among others. After attacking the recent decision of the United States House Committee on Un-American Activities to order Eisler's expulsion from the United States, Finkelstein was quick to establish Eisler's Communist credentials by reminding readers that this was the second time that Eisler had been expelled from a country by the 'enemies of peace' – the first time being his expulsion in 1933 from Nazi Germany.<sup>6</sup> In Finkelstein's view, the staging of the concert was therefore not only a display of solidarity with Eisler, but also a 'eulogy for art and for the re-establishment of American democracy'.<sup>7</sup>

Given its lofty purpose, it was a matter of some concern to Finkelstein that the concert featured Eisler's twelve-tone works exclusively. Despite conceding that 'this music is too subtle to be fully understood after one hearing' Finkelstein felt emboldened to add that 'nevertheless one can see some limitations . . . one detects the complete absence of the qualities of the dance or of popular song, that is to say, an absence of a manifold human presence that makes music the language of the people and their aspirations'. Finkelstein's view, which was entirely consistent with the Soviet view of serial music, then served as the basis for a broader critique of the technique. This critique adds a further dimension both to the Soviet position and, as shall be discussed later, the validity of Nabokov's verdict that serialism constituted a 'Doppelgänger of Expressionism'.<sup>8</sup> Having reminded readers that Eisler had been for a time one of Schoenberg's principal disciples, Finkelstein traced the shortcomings of Eisler's twelve-tone music to the fact that the technique itself had its origins in the 'anguish of individuals before, during, and after the First World War'. But, more critically, twelve-tone technique during this initial period 'failed to represent the [concerns] of the workers and peasants' and instead was a system which in its purity:

<sup>6</sup> A partial transcript of the Committee hearings appears in Nicolas Slonimsky's *Music Since 1900*, 1394-1404.

<sup>7</sup> Eisler's response (which he was forbidden to read out during the hearing) was that 'It is horrible to think what will become of American art if [the House Committee on Un-American Activities] is to judge what art is American and what is Un-American. This is the sort of thing Hitler and Mussolini tried'. 'Fantasia in G-men.' *A Rebel in Music: Selected Writings*. Edited and with an Introduction by Manfred Grabs. (Berlin: Seven Seas, 1978) 152.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'Introduction: Twentieth-Century Makers of Music.' *Twentieth-Century Composers. Volume I: American Music Since 1910*, by Virgil Thomson. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) xiv.

actually signified the abandonment by intellectuals of the desire to portray the real world at the moment when the majority of people were working towards the construction of a society in which men could live in a freedom that could never be known under capitalism.

This sense of alienation, which Adorno considered a virtue, was completely at variance with the Soviet view that art should educate and inspire, and Koechlin's belief that high art should attract the masses to it. The verdict also explains why Nigg's desire to employ serial technique in order to meet the aspirations of the Prague Manifesto was compromised from the outset. Quite simply, neither he nor any other composer could hope to contribute to a resolution of the dilemmas facing society and its culture using a technique that was deemed if not to be part of the problem, then at the very least was judged to have developed as a result of a social malaise that Communism theoretically sought to correct.

Possibly in light of this realisation, what Jean Roy described as Nigg's 'final rupture' with serial technique came about in *Pour un poète captif* (1950).<sup>9</sup> The symphonic poem was intended as Nigg's contribution to the campaign launched by Louis Aragon, and given wide and ongoing publicity in the pages of *Les lettres françaises*. The campaign sought the release of the Turkish poet Nazim Hikmet, whose communist activism had resulted in his imprisonment in Turkey in 1938. Hikmet was very much a *cause célèbre* for *Les lettres françaises*, which formed a Comité de defense de Nazim Hikmet, chaired by Tristan Tzara. The committee lodged petitions calling for his release, and published poems by him and literary tributes to him.<sup>10</sup> Louis Durey, Nigg's fellow Progressiste also composed a work for choir and piano in honour of Hikmet. Entitled *Grève de la faim*, the work set to music a poem by Hikmet in order to show solidarity with the poet during his hunger strike in

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Roy. *Présences contemporaines: Musique française*, 430.

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Charles Dobzynski 'Pour mon ami Nazim Hikmet.' *Les lettres françaises* 308 (20 April 1950): 5; 'Une déclaration de Nazim Hikmet.' *Les lettres françaises* 309 (27 April 1950): 5.

prison.<sup>11</sup> Upon his release in July 1950, Hikmet praised the ‘efforts of the Soviet Union and the popular democracies’ in helping to obtain his freedom.<sup>12</sup>

*Les lettres françaises* served as the mouthpiece for the pro-Zhdanov Comité national des écrivains (CNE), chiefly through the regular feature entitled ‘Le C.N.E. vous parle.’<sup>13</sup> This affiliation needs to be borne in mind when considering the manner in which Nigg, Durey, and others, articulated their political commitment. In addition to being an unambiguous method for communicating the ideological content of their music, their use of texts was consistent with the cultural pursuits of those in their political milieu.<sup>14</sup> The CNE was strongly pro-Stalinist and, as one of the co-conveners of Le Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix (Paris, 20-25 April 1949), was an integral part of the Soviet peace offensive that was to be targeted specifically by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Even if one was to disregard Zhdanov’s call (reiterated at Prague) for a greater use of texted music, it made good sense for a composer who was sympathetic to the Soviet Union to align himself with a powerful literary bloc whose journal reached a wide readership, and whose preferred medium was poetry.<sup>15</sup> With regard to *Le fusillé inconnu*, Nigg was able to demonstrate his commitment by setting to music a text written by a poet, François Monod, who, with his wife Martine, was published regularly in *Les lettres françaises*.

<sup>11</sup> See ‘Un poète fait la grève de la faim.’ *Les lettres françaises* 300 (13 April 1950): 5. Durey’s work was given its première on 23 June 1951. Like the vast majority of Progressiste ‘chants du mass’ it remains unpublished.

<sup>12</sup> ‘Nazim Hikmet est arrivé en Roumanie: Enfin libre, après dix-sept ans de prison, le grande poète turc appelle au combat pour la vie.’ *Les lettres françaises* 369 (28 June 1951): 5.

<sup>13</sup> An effusive eulogy of Zhdanov was published in the journal following his death in August 1948. See Aragon, ‘Jdanov et nous.’ *Les lettres françaises* 224 (9 September 1948): 1, 5.

<sup>14</sup> The transcript of Eisler’s appearance before the American House Committee on Un-American Activities makes it apparent that the texts of songs (in this case Eisler’s) were also cited as evidence of subversive intent, real or imagined, by those on the other side of the political divide. In the verdict of the Committee, the so-called ‘filth’ that Eisler had produced warranted his expulsion from the United States.

<sup>15</sup> The importance of texted music to the Stalinist cause is made apparent in an exhortation by Louis Aragon. Addressing himself to ‘les enfants de France’ Aragon asked that they shed their dislike of song, because ‘all routes must be explored on the road to peace.’ ‘Le C.N.E. vous parle.’ *Les lettres françaises* 320 (13 July 1950): 5.

Prior to the official première performance of *Pour un poète captif* at Prague in May 1951, publicity surrounding the work resulted in Nigg acting as a spokesman, for a short time at least, for the Progressistes and socialist realist music in general.<sup>16</sup> Yet the noble cause behind the symphonic poem was insufficient to protect it from what by now would appear to be the usual aesthetic criticisms. ‘Fremiot’ (a *nom de plume*) detected in the work the simultaneous influence of Messiaen and of dodecaphony, both of which made the work ‘less valid; the former because it produced ‘gratuitous harmonies’; the latter because it resulted in a ‘lack of spirit’.<sup>17</sup> These shortcomings were deemed excusable, however, because Nigg was effectively sailing in unchartered waters. According to ‘Fremiot’ this was the first ‘tentative oeuvre symphonique progressiste’.

While Désormière, for one, apparently bridled at the obligations of socialist realism, he would not have been troubled by the argument that composers could best articulate social commitment through the use of choral music. Indeed, the preponderance in France in the late 1940s of works written for massed choirs appears to have represented a partial continuation of the ideals and practices of the pre-War period, most notably through the Chorale populaire de Paris. And it is through the influence of Désormière that one can trace the use of choral music among nominally non-committed composers at the time, most notably Boulez.

Even aside from its historical links to the Left, the Chorale populaire had a deeper legitimacy among those who recognised the didactic potential of socialist realism. Despite being an orthodox Stalinist, Louis Saguer in an article entitled ‘Scènes de la vie musicale’ pursued a revealing rationale which sheds further light upon the socialist realist view of the

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<sup>16</sup> See, for example, a report written by ‘Fremiot’ on a public lecture given by Nigg at the Hungarian Institute. ‘Musique Progressiste.’ *Les lettres françaises* 333 (19 October 1950): 7.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Fremiot’. ‘Lutte de l’invention et de l’harmonie.’ *Les lettres françaises* 335 (2 November 1950): 7.



importance of vocal music and *chants du mass* as a means of empowering the working class. Sagner's argument took as its point of departure the quite even-handed belief that the problem with regard to avant-garde music was as much the fault of contemporary audiences as it was the composers themselves. Although the latter through their music sought, from the Progressiste viewpoint, to distance themselves from the problems confronting society, it was the unwillingness of audiences to attempt to come to terms with that music which was itself 'a grave indication of the shattered state of our society'. This was because: 'The general public, like the bulk of bourgeois voters, are afraid to look in the face of reality and prefer an attitude of incomprehension *vis-à-vis* the burning issues of the day'.<sup>18</sup>

Invoking the spectre, first of Stravinsky, then of Schoenberg and those who subsequently expanded serial technique, Sagner detected among so-called bourgeois composers a similar lack of willingness, wherein:

a majority, comfortably installed in the ruts traced by their predecessors, pursue an academicism tamed by a tainted modernism; and on the other side [lies] an agitated minority who, like the small proportion of the so-called advanced bourgeoisie, combine a spirit of adventure and technology with a disdain for humanity. Ignoring the problem and disclaiming all responsibility, they pursue a purely technological path and allege that the simple possession of some new compositional system, like the possession of some atomic secret, will *ipso facto* resolve all difficulty.

These tendencies, which characterised the work even of those composers who sought a balance between them, was understandable because of the undeniable fact that 'all musical life is the product of class'. Elitism was, in Sagner's opinion, a trait shared equally by composers and performers alike: 'The composers and players come from the bourgeoisie,

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<sup>18</sup> Louis Sagner. 'Scènes de la vie musicale.' *Les lettres françaises* 305 (30 March 1950): 6. Eisler said much the same thing in his qualified appreciation of his erstwhile teacher, Schoenberg: 'When [Schoenberg's] music is heard in the concert halls of the bourgeoisie they are no longer charming and agreeable centres of pleasure where one is moved by one's own beauty but places where one is forced to think about the chaos and ugliness of the world or else turn one's face away'. 'On Schönberg.' *A Rebel in Music: Selected Writings*, 75.

and the mark of their mentality is not to address what the bourgeois public considers to be its norm, its capabilities, and its sensibility’.

From Sagner’s Stalinist perspective, bourgeois composers compromised any possibility that they might articulate a commitment to social or political change. If they directly and successfully addressed the problems of contemporary society (as was the case with reformists such as Nigg) they risked being ignored by bourgeois audiences, who preferred not to be confronted with ‘reality’. If bourgeois composers ignored the problems of contemporary society and tailored their art to suit the tastes of their audience (Stravinsky), they abrogated their responsibility to those bourgeoisie for whom the purpose of art was to lead by example. If, whether out of frustration or the pursuit of strongly held aesthetic beliefs, bourgeois composers embraced *art pour l’art* (Boulez, among others) they were deemed by bourgeois audiences to be part of a general social malaise, and therefore unworthy of their attention. From the Progressiste perspective, these composers were, on the basis of the above paradigm, guilty of obscurantism, decadence, and formalism, in that order.

No such problems confronted the working class and its musical aspirations. Its goals were, in Sagner’s estimation, clearly defined:

**The working class, through their struggle to improve their material situation and their political rights, aspire also to organise their own cultural life, in which music will have its due place. The people feel practically excluded from bourgeois musical life. There is an urgent need to give the people an appropriate musical education. But these aspirations will not be met solely through access to bourgeois musical culture. In fact, they don’t want this. What they want, and upon which they pin their efforts, is to have their own musical life, one distinct from [the bourgeoisie’s].<sup>19</sup>**

What needed to be done, and what was being done, was obvious:

**The first attempts in this direction have been made. Worker musicians, supported by some professional musicians (composers and performers) who are conscious of their responsibilities towards music and towards the people, have formed popular choirs. They know that the path is long and difficult, but they will persevere.**

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<sup>19</sup> Louis Sagner. ‘Scènes de la vie musicale’: 6.

The model that Saguer had in mind was the Chorale populaire de Paris. Writing on the occasion of the Chorale's fifteenth anniversary, Désormière offered a brief history of the organisation, one that gave a firm indication of its proximity to the Progressistes and their aims. Désormière reported that the Chorale was established in 1935 by a 'small group of workers: labourers, office-workers and artists'. It was devoted to:

beautiful music and to the social progress movement [the Popular Front] and quickly attracted a large number of sympathisers and, alongside the *Fédération musicale populaire*, it found moral support among the upper echelons of the musical world.<sup>20</sup>

The Paris Chorale was one of a large number of choral groups established throughout France by the Popular Front as a cornerstone of its cultural policy. The close relationship between the Paris Chorale and the FMP was confirmed by Désormière, who mentioned the participation in both organisations of those 'in the upper echelons of the musical world', which included Roussel, Koechlin, Milhaud, and Durey. The post-War relationship between the Chorale, reactivated following its dispersal during the Nazi occupation, and the AFMP was confirmed through the participation in both of Koechlin, Durey and Désormière.

Given their shared concern for 'peace' and 'the friendship of the peoples of the world' and their emphasis on texted music in order to communicate their version of commitment, it is hardly surprising that the two organisations overlapped. This is quite apparent in the anniversary programme heralded by Désormière, which included the following:

Louis Durey, *Paix aux hommes par millions* (text by Mayaskovsky)  
 Serge Nigg, *Chant pour les mineurs* (poem by François Monod)  
 Louis Saguer, *Paix, paix, liberté!*  
 Daniel Chabrun, *Nous ferons la paix* (poem by Jean Marcenac)  
 'Fremiot', *Henri Martin-Raymonde Diane* (poem by Henri Bassis)  
 Darius Milhaud, *Main tendue à tous* (poem by Charles Vildrac)

That these works seem to have disappeared without trace would no doubt have been seen by Rostand as confirmation of the mediocrity of the Progressiste oeuvre. That said, the

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<sup>20</sup> Roger Désormière. 'La chorale populaire de Paris fetera son 15e anniversaire le 17 Mars 1951.' *Les lettres françaises* 353 (8 March 1951): 7.

underlying themes of peace and liberty in the above titles confirm their pro-Soviet bias, a feature surely not lost on the readership of *Les lettres françaises*.

The above programme points to what was at the time in France a dominant feature of the musical landscape, and that is the preponderance of choral music. Given the aims of the Progressistes, the reliance on texts is understandable. Indeed, the chronologies of Nigg and Durey expose a striking preference for choral music from 1948 (the year in which the AFMP was established) up to 1952-3.<sup>21</sup> In addition to those works already mentioned, Nigg's oeuvre included *Batailles pour l'humanité* (1949), based upon a text by Roger Vailland, the author of the play 'Colonel Foster Pleads Guilty' which, it will be recalled, was to cause the Congress for Cultural Freedom a good deal of discomfort during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. To Durey's list can be added *Chant des combattants de la liberté* (1948), *La guerre et la paix* (1949), *La longue marche* (1949, text by Mao Tse-Tung), *L'étoile de la paix* (1950), and *Deux poèmes du Président Ho Chi Minh* (1951).

An equally striking feature of the chronologies of both composers is the general decline in the number of choral works, in favour of instrumental works, after 1952-3. Aside from bearing out the French Left's increasing disillusionment with Soviet political, and in particular foreign policy, it is reasonable to suggest that this decline is directly linked to Désormière's loss of profile, which was caused by an incapacitating stroke in 1952. Désormière's talents as a choral conductor, his commitment to Communism, and his pivotal role in the cultural politics of the Left undoubtedly influenced members of the AFMP in their choice of vocal medium in response to the Prague Manifesto. It is equally likely that Désormière's choral skills and political commitment inspired Boulez to compose *Le soleil des eaux* (poems by René Char). The original version was composed in

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<sup>21</sup> See Claude Chamfray's chronologies of Nigg and Durey in *Le courrier musicale de France* 13 (1966): 57-58 and 8 (1964): 265-8, respectively.

1948, and in 1950 Désormière conducted what was to be the second of four revisions of the work.<sup>22</sup> An allegory of the struggle of the disenfranchised against their oppressor, the work is, like *A Survivor from Warsaw*, an excellent example of serial operations being used in order to articulate a socio-political involvement. While the latter is obviously anti-Fascist, both works are in no way pro-Soviet, a feature that, given the political tensions at play during the period in which they were composed, implies a Neither-Nor sentiment on the part of the composers.

Turning now from questions of ideology to aesthetics, the dilemma that confronted Nigg in his attempt to reconcile his Muse within the confines of his political beliefs was doubtless exacerbated by the fact that he, like Boulez, had from the outset invoked the notion of freedom in his defence of the use of serial technique. This was confirmed in Nigg's justification of the technique, given in response to an inquiry into 'le métier de compositeur' established by Goldbeck in the first edition of *Contrepoints*, and carried over into subsequent issues.<sup>23</sup> *Contrepoints* invited a number of French composers to respond to the following questions:

1. What is the fundamental tenet of your aesthetic and of the technique which serves as the basis of your style?
2. Do you see some general stylistic principle in your overall output (harmony, counterpoint, form, sonorous preference, etc.)?
3. Are there any compositional procedures that you systematically either apply or avoid?
4. In each work of art there is a 'technical' element and an 'artistic' element: on the one hand technique, on the other expression and signification; there is the musical architecture in which you are the architect, and there is a magical element which you sustain and to which you give form. How do you see, in your music, the rapport between these elements?

Nigg's then forceful defence of the historical and aesthetic validity of serial technique began with what amounted to a call to arms: 'There are no greater chains than those of too

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<sup>22</sup> An extended search for the score of the first version of *Le soliel des eaux* ended when Boulez refused a direct appeal from the publisher, Heugel, for a copy. Email from Heugel to Gordon Abbott, University of Adelaide music librarian, 11 January 2000.

<sup>23</sup> 'Une enquête.' *Contrepoints* 1 (January 1946): 28-49.

much freedom'.<sup>24</sup> Nigg's declaration presages Boulez's later assertion that there lay in the expansion of twelve-tone technique a potentially greater expressive freedom (in the sense of a freedom from inherited acculturations) in a compositional discipline that neutralised those elements of tradition which manifest themselves as forces of habit. As was pointed out earlier with regard to Boulez, Nigg's declaration stood therefore in opposition to Stravinsky's comment during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* (cited earlier) that 'the serialists are prisoners of the number twelve. I feel a greater freedom with the number seven'.

What is of interest here is the self-disciplinary aspect of Nigg's statement, which is further confirmed by Messiaen's observation that the attraction of serial technique to French composers of Nigg and Boulez's generation was a reaction to the conservatism of his own generation. Messiaen believed this 'fertile' reaction to be justifiable because it 'resulted in a renewal of technique, asceticism and light'.<sup>25</sup> But what appeared to Messiaen as an overdue aesthetic correction also carried a potential ideological import, in that the Prague Manifesto had also demanded that committed composers exercise self discipline. What Messiaen probably did not anticipate was that the aesthetic corrections exercised by the Progressistes and the young serialists resulted in the imposition of a type of artistic conformity. But if Henri Barraud is to be believed, conformity through self discipline was a price to be paid if composers were to regain the goodwill of the public after the War.

A link was established between the idea of asceticism as renewal and the immediate post-War social situation in France by Barraud in the opening pages of the first issue of *Contrepoints*. In an article entitled 'Musique et résistance' Barraud reminded his readers of the oppression they had suffered at the hands of the Nazis and of the heroic resistance offered by the *Maquis*. After suggesting that musicians were possessed of a spiritual

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<sup>24</sup> Serge Nigg. 'Une enquête.' *Contrepoints* 3 (March-April 1946): 78.

<sup>25</sup> Olivier Messiaen. Cited in Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*. Felix Aprahamian, tr. (London: Stainer and Bell, 1976) 112.

freedom that even the Nazis could not curtail, Barraud then admonished composers for their self-indulgence, for not using their gifts, either before or during the War, in a way that contributed to the well-being of those less fortunate. This was not to happen again: 'Forget aesthetic theories, stylistic struggles. Dispense with the competitiveness towards the new, the unusual, the "modern". And above all make amends now in our field of endeavour'.<sup>26</sup>

Barraud's appeal for a greater stylistic uniformity in order to achieve socio-political engagement was consistent with the idea of artistic commitment called for at Prague. Nigg in conversation with Kaldor had spoken of the need for committed musicians to 'turn away from the path of exhaustive individualism'. Similarly, Barraud was of the opinion that the 'absurd choices' that faced audiences in France between the two wars constituted a dereliction of the composer's social responsibilities, for two reasons.<sup>27</sup> Firstly, such diversity 'shocked [the audience's] ears without stirring their sensibilities'. Instead of enjoying the affirmative properties of music, audiences apparently came away confused. Secondly, as Sagner was soon to argue, this confusion led to a certain amount of justifiable indignation among the bourgeoisie: 'The expression "épater le bourgeois" corresponded at that time to a reality, not from the point of view of creative artists who would never have such petty concerns, but from the point of view of the "bourgeois", always prepared to believe in offences to their dignity'.<sup>28</sup> Barraud argued that stylistic diversity gave the middle classes the opportunity to divorce their appreciation of music from social and political issues. If a given style was not understood, the bourgeoisie were offended and the music deemed irrelevant. If a style was understood then it was appreciated as a reflection of bourgeois values and aspirations, and in so doing appeared as a confirmation of the extant rather than an exhortation towards an unknown, but presumably better future. This

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<sup>26</sup> Henri Barraud. 'Musique et résistance.' *Contrepoints* 1 (January 1946): 7.

<sup>27</sup> Henri Barraud. Preface to *Pour ou contre la musique moderne?*, 6.

<sup>28</sup> Henri Barraud. Preface to *Pour ou contre la musique moderne?*, 6.

sentiment is most palpable in the bourgeoisie's embrace of Stravinsky's neo-classicism, an embrace upon which Nabokov sought to capitalise in the name of pro-Western political ideology.

Although the responses of the Progressistes and the serialists were doubtless not what Barraud had in mind, each party was motivated by the belief that composers had to impose a greater self-discipline. For serialists, the self-discipline inherent in the actual serial operations was a means of retaining strict (and with that, historically defensible) control of any or all of the compositional elements. From a purely aesthetic standpoint, such control was, in their opinion, requisite to their search for new means of expression. Nigg's attempt to place serial technique at the service of Soviet ideology implies not only that he was comfortable with a degree of self discipline, but also that he may have been reluctant to surrender his position at the forefront of the French serial movement. An example of Nigg's orthodox, if not doctrinaire, response to Leibowitz's teaching can be found in his *Deux pièces pour piano* (Op. 5). While obviously the work of a student of twelve-tone technique, this kind of orthodoxy came to infuriate Boulez, for whom the final rub was Congress of Dodecaphonists, which was first staged in May 1949 at Milan: 'Organising their conferences, like devotees playing at initiation ceremonies for timid novices; falsely doctrinaire, absurdly conservative, they sit enthroned like fat idiots to the greater glory of the *avant-garde*'.<sup>29</sup> That Boulez would accuse the convenors of a twelve-tone congress of doctrinarism and conservatism is telling in light of the fact that the musical policies of the Soviets and the Congress for Cultural Freedom (as articulated by Nabokov) were open to the same accusations. The nature of Boulez's criticism serves to confirm how far removed

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<sup>29</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Possibly . . .'. *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 111. Nicolas Slonimsky cites Schoenberg's salutation to the Milan Congress as follows: 'Proudly I greet my companions who aim to present musical ideas with new tools of musical logic – good luck!' *Music Since 1900*, 876.



he was from these prevailing tendencies and, alternatively, his proximity to the Neither-Nor position.

Barraud in his subsequent criticism of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* revisited the problem of stylistic diversity. Barraud agreed that the festival highlighted the fruits of 'free artistic creation'.<sup>30</sup> But the problem was that 'every work was so fiercely autonomous that the listener needed great flexibility, culture and goodwill to move from one to the next'. This state of affairs, he argued, 'renders the attitude of Communist authorities more understandable':

For although every previous period had its characteristic style, our century – for the first time in history – has none . . . Those who control Soviet culture have sought to compensate for it by imposing an arbitrary style upon their composers. It is this same lack the proponents of the twelve-tone system would seek to rectify by creating a new language, which in turn would create a new style common to all composers.

Thus in Barraud's estimation (and doubtless further confirming Nabokov's suspicions regarding the relationship between the two "Mittel-Europa" ideas) the Communist authorities and twelve-tone composers shared a common aim: the standardisation of compositional styles.

Like Finkelstein, Barraud acknowledged that serial technique had its origins in what the latter termed the 'muddy values [and] gamy eroticism' of German Expressionism.<sup>31</sup> But to Barraud any legitimacy that the technique may have earned was dependent on the way it was handled. Dallapiccola's *Canti di Prigionia* was, for example, an 'impressive and dramatic work of powerful structure, somber in colour yet completely sane and frank in its appeal'. In effect, the composer's social responsibility was perceptible because 'Latin

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<sup>30</sup> Henri Barraud. 'A French Critic Observes the Paris Festival.' *Musical America* 72. 10 (August 1952): 28.

<sup>31</sup> Henri Barraud. 'A French Critic Observes the Paris Festival': 10. According to Barraud, atonal music, upon being 'systematized by Schoenberg', became a 'tool marvellously adapted to the musical expression of the deleterious poetic upon which a whole period of German art nourished itself.' This kind of rhetoric is reminiscent of language adopted by the Nazis in their attacks on the music of the Second Viennese School.

clarity and the purifying sun of the South have worked upon the atonal style'. What Barraud left unsaid was that the frankness of the work's appeal rested to a large degree upon the composer's use of politically unambiguous texts. It will emerge that Sartre was quick to point out that it was the nature of the text which allowed Leibowitz to detect similarly affirmative qualities in Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*. It is for this reason that both Barraud and Leibowitz were troubled at what the former described as 'the abstract speculation' of expanded serial technique. Turning to Boulez's *Structures 1a*, Barraud reckoned that this speculation 'plays too large a role to leave room for the expression of sentiment of any sort'.<sup>32</sup>

If Barraud's verdict that the Soviet cultural commissars were driven by a kind of altruism appears with hindsight to be naïve, his naïvety needs to be balanced by the realisation that socialist realism differed from the aims of the first tier *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* only in the transparency of its intent. Barraud was not alone in finding virtue with elements of Zhdanovian doctrine. Colin Mason in his review of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* thought that there was:

no harm in the artist's having to serve an employer, even if that employer is the State, nor in his having to paint tractors or to write cantatas about re-afforestation, nor even in having to do so in a manner intelligible to the average man . . . In being required to take orders from the State as to the kind of works that he should produce . . . the artist in a Communist country is [scarcely any worse off] than his fellow in the West, who, desiring to find some market, some use for his work in society, seeks commissions . . . or than the eighteenth-century artist, who was expected by his patron to produce a suitable poem, portrait or cantata, often on a subject no more inspiring than tractors or re-afforestation, for almost any occasion – the birth, death, marriage or visit of a prince, or for the entertainment of his guests. Except in the nineteenth century, art has always been a job.<sup>33</sup>

The general thrust of Mason's argument suggests that he, too, subscribed to the view that composers, if they wished to make a contribution to society, needed either to be willing to impose a degree of self-discipline, or to yield to the discipline imposed by an outside party.

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<sup>32</sup> Henri Barraud. 'A French Critic Observes the Paris Festival': 10.

<sup>33</sup> Colin Mason. 'The Paris Festival': 18-19.

Mason's reference to cantatas in praise of re-afforestation, points to an article written by the editor of *Les lettres françaises*, Pierre Daix, concerning the 'actual problems of Soviet music'.<sup>34</sup> From this it is quite apparent that unlike some musicians associated with the Progressistes, Daix's Stalinist orthodoxy left him untroubled (as it had done with Kaldor) by the authoritarian aspects of socialist realism. The article also gives an indication of the nature of socialist realism's appeal in France. Travelling to a Soviet 'village de création' Daix conducted an interview with Zhdanov's successor, Tikhon Khrennikov. What today would seem to be the sinister ulterior motive behind housing artists in 'an immense park on the outskirts of Moscow' was justified by Khrennikov (and accepted without question by Daix) on the basis that many had lost everything during the Nazi invasion. In the village 'composers, singers, virtuosi and critics live and work together'.<sup>35</sup>

The supposed challenge facing composers in the Soviet Union was to develop 'a new music' based upon national characteristics. To this end, Khrennikov was pleased to report to Daix that 'our composers have two major preoccupations: simplicity and perfection of form'. A roll-call of those composers to have come to Khrennikov's creative village included 'Myaskovsky, who came here to die . . . Katchaturian to make the music for the film *The Battle of Stalingrad* . . . [and] Prokofiev . . . who has been seriously ill'. Khrennikov made much of the fact that (a presumably suitably chastened) Shostakovich came to the village to finish his oratorio '*La Chanson de la forêt* [sic] dedicated to the great re-afforestation plan'. Soon after this Daix admitted to losing the thread of the conversation 'because I began dreaming of the re-afforestation plan, of the immense transformation of nature in the service of Man . . . and also [of] my dear friend . . . Andrei Zhdanov'.

If mention of Shostakovich's oratorio caused Daix to succumb to an ecstatic vision, it had quite the opposite effect on the Progressistes in Paris, where news of its impending première was greeted with excitement. Shostakovich's *Song of the Forests* was given its

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<sup>34</sup> Pierre Daix. 'Les problèmes actuels de la musique soviétique.' *Les lettres françaises* 331 (5 October 1950): 7.

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Daix. 'Les problèmes actuels de la musique soviétique': 7.

French première on 4 November 1950, at the first of a series of regular concerts staged on the first and third Saturday each month by the AFMP. These concerts were staged in order to compensate for what 'Fremiot' characterised as 'le lock-out' inflicted upon Soviet music by the West.<sup>36</sup> The programme that day also featured a cantata by Durey, based upon a poem by Myaskovsky, entitled *Paix aux hommes par millions*, which had been premièred by the *Chorale populaire de Paris* in February that same year. If Renaud de Jouvenel's review is any indication, *Song of the Forests* was a source of inspiration to the audience of '... musicians, students and workers [who] expressed their great joy in discovering in this music "their" music, which expresses their aspirations and touches their heart'.<sup>37</sup> But, more significantly, the event was:

particularly important for Progressiste musicians, partly because a work by Shostakovich is perhaps for them an example, and partly because it has established, at their first public outing, a genuine public following for their efforts and their initiatives, a new following thirsty for knowledge, and soon to be musically nourished.

The question remains unresolved as to whether Shostakovich was at heart a socialist realist musician, or whether he was forced into being one by Stalin.<sup>38</sup> Understandably, the latter option was not even entertained at *Les lettres françaises*, which in the week before de Jouvenel's review published what appears to be the full transcript (in excess of three thousand words) of Shostakovich's address to the Soviet 'Partisans for Peace' conference staged in Warsaw. The composer began with a phrase strongly reminiscent of one later used, as part of the same ideological discourse, by John F. Kennedy in West Berlin: 'Je suis musicien'.<sup>39</sup> The somewhat rambling speech, which Nabokov and Solomon Volkov

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<sup>36</sup> 'Fremiot'. 'Où entendre la musique des compositeurs soviétiques?' *Les lettres françaises* 332 (12 October 1950): 8.

<sup>37</sup> Renaud de Jouvenel. 'Un événement musical: La Cantate des forêts de Chostakovich.' *Les lettres françaises* 341 (14 December 1950): 6.

<sup>38</sup> The issue was explored in detail in Larry Weinstein's 1997 documentary *The War Symphonies: Shostakovich Against Stalin* (Rhombus Media, IDTV Cultuur, ZDF & Arte). Based on evidence presented by the composer, his friends and fellow composers, it can be concluded that Shostakovich acted out of fear for his life. On camera Khrennikov insisted that Shostakovich acted of his own free will.

<sup>39</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich. 'Ce que le compositeur Chostakovich y a proposé.' *Les lettres françaises* 340 (7 December 1950): 1, 4.

would no doubt suggest was written for Shostakovich by a Party apparatchik, nevertheless made a few key points. Among these was that he, like all Soviet people, was committed to peace; that to Soviet people culture and the pursuit of peace were indivisible; and that Soviet culture was robust and multi-faceted.

A good deal of the speech detailed the lack of understanding on the part of the United States regarding the Soviet Union which, Shostakovich argued, was the fundamental cause of East-West tension. In Shostakovich's estimation, this could be overcome through the organisation of a series of scientific and cultural exchanges between the countries of the world. Yet for all its propaganda, Shostakovich's address contained sentiments expressed with a clarity and logic that helps not only to capture the tension of the period, but also goes a long way to explaining the appeal of socialist realism in French musical circles.

After stating that while he would rather be communicating to his audience through his music, the urgency of the Cold War situation (bearing in mind that this address was given just months after the outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula) had obliged him to resort to words:

the language of music does not understand the word "war". This is why my conscience tells me to talk, not with the aid of musical notes, but with the aid of words. Today, in Korea, music, books and paintings are not the only things aflame, the houses where people live also burn and, even more shocking, people are also burning. And also children . . . The country is in a state of chaos . . . I know: it is not a symphony, nor a novel or a Venus de Milo, that remain in the houses of dispossessed Koreans, even less those who [attempt to] resuscitate murdered children. But is it that science and art cannot act to save other houses, so that no more bombs and no more fires come to interrupt the play of living children? The great geniuses of musical art have sung in their works of liberty and the friendship of people. The operas of Tchaikovsky, of Glinka, of Mozart, of Verdi, of Mussorgsky are infused with the immortal ideas of humanism, fire has never quelled the humanitarian spirit. The idea of the fraternal union of a free humanity has been symbolised with genius by Beethoven in his Ninth Symphony. I am proud that, in the list of the millions of people of different nationalities and professions who have defended peace, there are the names of hundreds, of thousands of musicians from my country. Through songs, new cantatas, new oratorios celebrating peace, through their passionate political intervention in meetings and congresses, through their signatures on the Stockholm appeal, they defend the cause of peace.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich. 'Ce que le compositeur Chostakovich y a proposé': 1.

The appeal of this kind of rhetoric to those motivated by, and alarmed at, the course of world events is obvious. The emphasis on peace and unity was also intended to appeal to those who felt no particular allegiance to either side (the Neither-Nor). To this end the speech's prominent position on page one of *Les lettres françaises* may have been intended to catch the eye of the casual, as well as the regular readership. The main thrust of the above passage, that composers actively contribute to the cause of peace through songs, cantatas and oratorios, was consistent with the findings of the Prague Manifesto.<sup>41</sup> It also identifies the *modus operandi* of committed composers in France, and it is in the use of these media that there lies a nexus between the pre-War FMP and the post-War AFMP.

None of this is to suggest that socialist realism's infringements upon artistic freedom remained unchallenged among the faithful in France. An overview of articles published in *Les lettres françaises* makes it apparent that the advocates of socialist realism in France were at pains to emphasise its positive aspects and downplay its authoritarian character. Despite the fact that just a few months later he was to confront Nigg on the issue of artistic freedom, Pierre Kaldor in March 1948 stressed that 'the first rule' of socialist realism in the Soviet Union was to re-establish contact between music and the Soviet people.<sup>42</sup> Kaldor appeared nevertheless to concede that with this came an element of obligation, but like Nigg he saw a degree of freedom within this obligation: 'Every art creates its own rules: within the limits of these rules, the genius finds liberty. The Soviet Communist Party re-invokes these principles; and for them it is a rule of art that the work of art is made for the gratification of the public'. Taken at face value, the first part of this assertion, that the genius finds liberty through the imposition of rules, was a rather clever way on shifting the

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<sup>41</sup> The findings of the Prague Manifesto, and of the importance of vocal music to the Left's cause, was foreshadowed by Eisler in considerable detail in his 1935 essay 'The Crisis in Music.' *A Rebel in Music: Selected Writings*, 114-120.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre Kaldor. 'En marge des discussions musicales en Union soviétique: Formalism et inspiration.' *Les lettres françaises* 199 (11 March 1948): 4.

onus back onto composers, an onus that, if left unchallenged by political ideology, serial composers were happy to bear. The second part of Kaldor's assertion, that the Soviet Communist Party had as a rule that 'art is made for the gratification of the public' enshrined in law what others, ranging from Koechlin to Nabokov, exercised by invoking personal taste. Thus, what hope the first part of Kaldor's statement may have extended to serial composers, the second part took away.

Perhaps mindful of anxieties that the Soviet's "rule" might engender, an editorial published a week earlier in *Les lettres françaises* accused the United States of the same excess. The editorial reminded readers that 'the enemies' of peace had attacked the right of artists to freedom of expression: 'Pablo Neruda is threatened with death, Hanns Eisler flees to France . . . José Bergamin to Brazil. Arthur Miller tells us "The U.S.A. has a siege mentality".'<sup>43</sup> These events served to confirm that of utmost importance was to 'struggle for the continued existence of progressive culture, for the right of intellectuals who defend the values of human liberation to speak out . . .'. To this end Aleksandr Fadeyev and René Petit argued that the ultimate purpose of socialist realism was to ensure the education of the masses, and so to aid in their empowerment.<sup>44</sup> It was for this reason that Fadeyev began by citing that part of Stalin's material dialectic which held that 'the evolution of the inferior to the superior is not the product of following a method which is that of an harmonious unfurling of phenomena, but to follow a method that uncovers the contradictions peculiar to objects, to phenomena, a method which is that of a struggle between opposing tendencies . . .'.<sup>45</sup> According to Fadeyev, the problem with regard to the avant-garde was that in its pursuit of innovation it undermined the fundamental opposition

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<sup>43</sup> 'Périls sur la culture.' *Les lettres françaises* 198 (4 March 1948): 2.

<sup>44</sup> René Petit. 'Le réalisme socialiste : porte-t-il le visage de son père? . . . je crois maintenant à sa puissance éducative.' *Les lettres françaises* 317 (22 June 1950): 8.

<sup>45</sup> Aleksandr Fadeyev. 'Le réalisme socialiste et les critiques.' *Les lettres françaises* 298 (9 February 1950): 1.

between these two tendencies, and by so doing ensured what would tomorrow be its own obsolescence. In disrupting the natural progression of the inferior to the superior, such art had no validity beyond itself and was therefore “formalist”. When transposed into the humanitarian sphere, the failure of avant-garde art to preserve this natural progression, and so to lead by example, resulted in the charge of ‘obscurantism’. Pursuing Stalin’s dialectic to its obvious, if sinister conclusion, avant-gardists were anti-humanitarian and had to be excluded from the inexorable march of the proletariat towards victory. But as Koechlin, secure in the distance between the nearest ‘village du création’ and himself, was at pains to point out, was it the place of governments to decide at what point a work becomes formalist or obscurantist?<sup>46</sup> It is perhaps not surprising therefore that Boulez spoke of the ‘insoluble problems that bedeviled [French Communists] between the years 1947 and 1952’.<sup>47</sup> The humanitarian values that underpinned the commitment displayed by Koechlin, Désormière, Durey, and others of the pre-War Popular Front generation, were incompatible with the idea that the artist should answer to a higher political authority. As Leibowitz argued, the artist’s conscience was the highest guarantee of commitment.

As was the case with Boulez and his artistic development, so, too, did Nigg’s represent a personal struggle. For Boulez it was a case of remaining firm in his belief in the necessity of extending serial technique to other parameters. For Nigg it was a question of executing what may be characterised as either the exchange of one orthodoxy (artistic) for another (ideological) or, in terms of his art alone, a *volte-face*. But by 1955 Nigg had arrived at the realisation that serial technique was, ‘like a political party, a religion, a belief, a philosophical concept . . . a system, no more, no less’.<sup>48</sup> Nigg’s own quest for self identity

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<sup>46</sup> Charles Koechlin. ‘Art & liberté: Pour la tour d’ivoire’: 103.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Roger Désormière: “I Hate Remembering!”’ *Orientations*, 510.

<sup>48</sup> Serge Nigg. *Pour ou contre la musique moderne?* Bernard Gavoty and Daniel Lesur, eds. (Paris: Flammarion, 1957) 245. Nigg made similar claims in an enquiry published in *Journal musical français* entitled ‘Les jeunes musiciens français devant le dodécaphonisme.’ 31 (1954): 10.



and self expression apparently could no longer tolerate blind aesthetic or ideological allegiances.

In May 1951, the year after Koechlin's death, *Les lettres françaises* carried a notice advising of a new debate regarding socialist realism and music, in which Désormière and Durey participated.<sup>49</sup> The findings of the debate were not disclosed, and the following year Désormière fell silent. The debate may well have come to the realisation that the politically unambiguous approach adopted by the Progressistes had generated its own set of problems. Not least of these was that their stance, already transparent through their choice of texts, was so biased towards the policies of the Soviet Union as to have limited appeal beyond their own political faction. The Progressistes were effectively preaching to the converted, and as such their efforts fell outside the propagandist aims of socialist realism, which sought to win over the disaffected, as well as give hope to the disenfranchised. If the Progressistes sought to pursue their own artistic and political imperatives through what was a kind of *nuovo prima prattica*, how, then, was it possible to capture the hearts and minds of bourgeois audiences, imbued as they were with the transcendent qualities of *art pour l'art*?

The solution, the one most feared by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, lay in the approach adopted by Shostakovich in his Warsaw speech, which upon reflection was not far removed from Koechlin's position. Shostakovich in his speech linked the cause of world peace with the heritage of composers whom history had judged to be 'great'. In effect, he was suggesting that other pro-Soviet composers and he had assumed the humanist mantle of composers whom the West regarded as icons. Beethoven's greatness, for example, lay as much in his social commitment as it did in his art and, more crucially, his art was great *because* he was socially committed. Conversely, it scarcely required a

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<sup>49</sup> 'Nouveau débat sur le réalisme en musique.' *Les lettres françaises* 361 (3 May 1951): 8.

paradigm shift in order to connect the image of Koechlin's *dodécaphoniste* monkeys scurrying up the ivory tower in supposed abrogation of their social responsibilities with the alleged ideological and moral bankruptcy of the West.

Seen in this context, the Congress for Cultural Freedom's decision to stage *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* becomes all the more understandable, as does Nabokov's determination to base his ideological counter-attack on twentieth-century neo-tonal icons that he would have known, thanks to the polemics of Zhdanov and Khrennikov, were not at risk of appropriation by the Soviets. Equally understandable, given the negative propaganda opportunity that serialism appeared to present to the Communists and their Progressiste proxies, was Nabokov's decision to exclude serial music (other than twelve-tone music purified by the Mediterranean sun) from his programme.

Chapters Three and Four have outlined the nature and depth of support for socialist realism among French composers. Chapter Three has described the strong historical link between the pre-War FMP and the post-War Progressiste movement, a link made apparent by tracing the role played in each by pivotal figures such as Koechlin and Désormière. Koechlin's dislike of twelve-tone music acquired a greater significance when it was considered in tandem with his strongly held view that only aesthetically satisfying music was capable of communicating socio-political commitment. This sentiment became, through the French response to the Prague Manifesto, an expectation that committed composers eschew modernist tendencies such as twelve-tone technique. Although serialism was excluded from the "struggle for peace" by official Stalinist decree, much the same result was in Koechlin's case achieved by invoking personal taste. His argument, shared by others of his generation (but not Désormière), was that such incomprehensible music had no place at the barricades. The conundrum for composers such as Nigg was that while they may have agreed with the Manifesto's demand that they make more of a contribution to

stabilising (on Stalin's terms) an increasingly uncertain political and social situation, they were troubled by the idea that they be *obliged* to embrace or disavow certain types of music.

Chapter Four has shown how Nigg was brought reluctantly to the point where he could no longer reconcile his aesthetic preferences with his political obligations. What was a widespread use of choral music during this period was shown to be a continuation of the pre-War trend established by the FMP, and its *Chorales populaires*. In the immediate post-War period this same tendency proved to be consistent with the Stalinist view, reaffirmed at Prague, that texts left no room for ambiguity with regard to the political and ideological content of the music. Although differences emerged as to its mode of delivery, the serialists and the Progressistes pursued a type of conformity that Messiaen and Barraud thought necessary in order to compensate for earlier stylistic excesses. The appeal of socialist realism to composers from the French Left was shown to be understandable in light of the emphasis placed upon humanitarian values by propagandists ranging from Kaldor to Shostakovich. By the same token, it has been shown that even within French Stalinist circles there were serious misgivings about socialist realism's infringements upon artistic liberty.

Within the overall plan of the current study, an important revelation to emerge from Chapters Three and Four is the way in which serial music was excluded from making a positive contribution to the ideological debate by politically aware individuals in France who might reasonably have been expected to be receptive to it. Shunned by the Cold War antagonists themselves, as was demonstrated in Chapters One and Two, serial music was also abandoned in one of the key theatres in which the political and cultural struggle between East and West was being prosecuted. But whether the rejection of twelve-tone music by Koechlin and the FMP had the effect of pushing someone like Boulez further up

the ivory tower is difficult to confirm. Boulez's own polemics suggest that he would have ascended regardless. It does, however, leave open the possibility that he accordingly felt no compunction to associate his ascent with the politics of the Left, which gave every appearance of abandoning twelve-tone music, however favourably disposed individual composers may have been to combating capitalism. This abandonment may have seemed all the more severe given that, as was the case with Soviet policy prior to Zhdanov's edicts, the FMP had prior to the War encouraged modernist innovation as an expression of personal liberty against those who sought to curtail the same. For someone such as Koechlin, situated as he was in the upper echelons of early post-War cultural politics, to dismiss the efforts of Leibowitz and those young composers who had gathered around him, must have suggested to those same composers that the values so cherished by the Popular Front before the war were no longer applicable, either generally, or to them in particular.<sup>50</sup> Thus it would appear that two apparently pro-democracy movements, the Popular Front and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, had at different times joined hands with their totalitarian foes in rejecting serial music.

Conversely, Nabokov's attempt to use culture as a weapon against the disaffected in France was complicated by the fact that many of that same disaffected harboured a contempt for both neo-classicism and socialist realism. Boulez alluded to this when he lauded Désormière's refusal 'to be dictated to, and for grasping the necessity . . . of cultural exchange and mass communication yet rejecting the easy hypocritical solutions tainted with nationalism and the worst kind of conservatism'.<sup>51</sup> This thinly veiled attack on socialist realism and neo-classicism was immediately followed by a passage that could

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<sup>50</sup> Robert Ortledge cites a letter from Koechlin to Leibowitz, dated 14 November 1944, in which the former wrote of his intense dislike of Leibowitz's vocal lines, which 'resemble jagged Russian mountains'. *Charles Koechlin*, 38.

<sup>51</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Roger Désormière: "I Hate Remembering!"' *Orientations*, 511.

well have been directed at Nabokov. It was couched in terms that not only would have alarmed Nabokov, but also confirmed his suspicions about the ideological convictions of the French avant-garde:

We can understand how [Désormière] detested the stale smell of the *petit-bourgeois* stables! If he had adopted that hideous disguise, he would not have been Désormière but one of the countless parasites who like to parade their high-mindedness while all the time devoting themselves in fact to the most utter mediocrity.

Boulez's music was judged by Nabokov to be inappropriate because as 'notes not music', it was not readily identifiable, at least to the untrained ear, with an historical role model. Nabokov was apparently of the opinion that this unknown quality rendered Boulez's music ineffective for his ideological ends. It will now be argued that while Nabokov was undoubtedly correct in his verdict, his judgement was astray. This was because his decision to relegate to a relatively minor role a music that was impervious to ideological subversion only succeeded in bringing further attention to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*'s blatant either-us-or-them posturing, at a time when there was in France a widely held desire that the nation remove itself from the Cold War ideological battlefield.

It will become increasingly apparent during the course of Chapters Five and Six that Nabokov was in effect attempting to juggle two significant dichotomies, those of conservatism and innovation in art, and obligation and freedom in political ideology. Through *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* he established a linkage between conservatism and political obligation in such a way as to make an association between artistic innovation and political freedom appear the more attractive option to a section of the French populace that was not only more favourably disposed to Communism than its allies would have wished, but also increasingly mistrustful of American intentions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Culture and Confrontation: The First Tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*

In the short time that elapsed between the New York and Paris Soviet-sponsored peace conferences (staged in March and April 1949, respectively), the European political landscape changed dramatically with the ratification on 4 April 1949 of the North Atlantic Treaty, to which France was a signatory until its withdrawal in March 1966. European concerns regarding the implications of the Treaty's mutual defence clauses were heightened by a declaration on 7 April 1949 by President Truman that the United States 'will not hesitate' to use the atomic bomb in the interests of world 'peace'.<sup>1</sup> This kind of belligerent rhetoric had the effect of galvanising anti-United States sentiment in France at a time when it was obliged to tolerate American interference in its internal affairs as the price for economic and military assistance. The Soviet Union's successful testing of its first nuclear device in September 1949 rendered unthinkable the implications of that accommodation.

An understanding of these complexities helps to put in perspective the strident nature of some of the criticisms levelled at *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, and further confirms the premise that the first tier of the festival was symbolic of the Cold War power political discourse. Taken in the order in which these issues are dealt with here, the first tier, with its blatant anti-Communist posturing, was testimony to an indifference to local political sensibilities. Further to this, the erection of a pompous and propagandistic conservative cultural façade was troubling to those with still fresh memories of the Nazi *modus operandi* in Paris during the War. And finally, coming as it did at a particularly sensitive period in American-Western European relations, the first tier gave every appearance of

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<sup>1</sup> 'Au lendemain du pacte atlantique.' *Le Monde* 8 April 1949: 1.

being a rather crude form of cultural imperialism intended to ensure that France remained cuckolded by American foreign policy objectives. Chapter Six then argues that the chamber music series was, by contrast, more in touch with the domestic political and cultural situation that confronted Nabokov in Paris during the month of May 1952.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom was motivated by the desire to link cultural aspirations with political ideology. Although nominally Leftist, the Congress's anti-Communist stance ensured that within the context of the economic, military, and political polarisation of post-War Europe it was associated with the NATO sphere of influence.<sup>2</sup> *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* sought to remind its target audience of the rich cultural heritage of those countries sheltering under the NATO umbrella – a heritage to which Nabokov argued the United States belonged, and one that was in the Congress's view best guaranteed by American military and, by virtue of the Marshall Plan, economic patronage.<sup>3</sup> But judging from an overview of French press reactions to the festival, published in the June 1952 edition of *Preuves* (a month after the festival), the Congress was taken aback by the number of commentators who were of the opinion that the content of the festival highlighted the pitfalls of France's entry into what was thought by individuals across the political spectrum to be an increasingly subservient relationship with the United States.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Coleman has listed the signatories to the Congress's founding charter on the basis of their proximity to what Malcolm Muggeridge had termed 'our generation's Stations of the Cross': World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, Italian Fascism, the Depression, German Nazism, the Spanish Civil War, the Moscow purges, the Hitler-Stalin Pact, World War II, and the Holocaust. 'The 1950 Offensive.' *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 19-22.

<sup>3</sup> Nabokov in his justification of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* stated that 'We [the Congress] believe that American culture has its roots in the ancient cultures of Europe and that it is an integral part of Western culture today.' 'This is Our Culture': 13.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Carat. 'La presse française et L'Oeuvre du XX siècle.' *Preuves* 16 (June 1952): 48-58. J.W. Freiberg has pointed out that there was in France in the immediate post-War period a marked increase in the number of Leftist newspapers and journals, at the expense of the conservative papers that enjoyed a dominant position prior to the war. A significant number of the latter were accused of collaborating with the German occupation forces and were either closed down or handed over to teams of journalists 'who had distinguished themselves by publishing clandestine newspapers during the war.' *The French Press: Class, State and Ideology*. (New York: Praeger, 1981) 19.

This chapter begins by exploring what were sound historical reasons for France's scepticism.

Writing in 1949, Claude Bourdet chided his American readers that it was folly to assume that Western Europe in general, and the French in particular, were united in their friendship for the United States and hatred of the Soviet Union. According to Bourdet 'the majority of the French working class and 25 per cent of the whole electorate follow the Communist's directives'.<sup>5</sup> The PCF derived much of its strength and credibility from the leadership role taken by Communists during the Resistance struggle against the Nazi occupation, a role which at least in terms of its recent history stemmed from the Communist participation in the Popular Front prior to the war. This meant that in contrast to other nations in Western Europe, where the threat to national security was perceived to be from without – from the Soviet Union itself – the threat to the bourgeoisie was in France one of internal revolution, driven by a Communist Party that was, as Richard Vinen has suggested, 'more obedient to Moscow than that of any other West European nation'.<sup>6</sup> Any attempt by the United States or its allies to undermine the influence of the PCF under the pretext of France's membership of NATO could be catastrophic. 'Already the subject of violent disputes', Bourdet warned, 'the Atlantic Pact would become the cause of the most atrocious civil war'.

An edition of *Les lettres françaises* published on the eve of local government elections, and a month prior to the Soviet-sponsored Paris conference, *Le Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix*, carried an overview of the positions held by parties across the

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<sup>5</sup> Claude Bourdet. 'A Plea for a Neutral Europe.' *Nation* 168.14 (2 April 1949): 382.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Vinen. *Bourgeois Politics in France, 1945-1951*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 22.



political spectrum with regard to 'the problems of culture'.<sup>7</sup> The views held on the right by the Gaullist Rassemblement du peuple français (RPF) and on the left by the PCF encapsulate the cultural ideologies that were to collide during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. No attempt was made to soften the Zhdanovian, interventionist undertones of the PCF's position:

The Communist Party has the right to recommend to intellectuals who are on its side that they reject with contempt the offensive arguments of the falsifiers of national ideology, destroyers of aesthetic covenants, that make everyday use of an artistic and literary 'beau monde'.

The thoughts of André Malraux were chosen as being representative of the RPF: 'What makes politics actually perform a large role in literature and art is that artists are nearly always searching outside of their solitary art, [a search] that they take for granted'. Malraux, who was one of the more celebrated Frenchmen to appear at the literary discussions staged as part of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, went on to say that it was the role of politics to ensure the social and political conditions favourable to the artist's quest for self expression. This view, which lay at the heart of Malraux's subsequent creation during the 1960s of his 'Maisons de la Culture', was consistent with the liberal philosophies later championed by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Although the Congress steadfastly proclaimed its refusal to subordinate culture to politics, through its actions and its anti-totalitarian rhetoric it communicated quite the opposite, namely, that political freedom was requisite to ensuring freedom of expression.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> 'Les partis politiques devant les problèmes de la culture.' *Les lettres françaises* 251 (17 March 1949): 1, 5. The journal subsequently published an incomplete list of those who expressed solidarity with the peace conference, which in French musical circles included Fernand Léger, Elsa Barraine, Roger Désormière, Henri Dutilleux, Fernand Lamy, Jean-Louis Martinet, and Serge Nigg. 'Le Congrès Mondial des Partisans de la Paix s'ouvre à Paris le 20 Avril.' *Les lettres françaises* 250 (10 March 1949): 2.

<sup>8</sup> See Denis de Rougement's declaration in *The Congress for Cultural Freedom* booklet, np.

The PCF as the Congress's prime target in France led the charge against *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* at a time when the Party was also in the midst of staging protests in Paris at, among other things, the arrival in Europe of General Ridgway, 'the microbe General,' as the commander of NATO forces in Europe; the arrest of the leading Communist Jacques Duclos on trumped up charges of espionage; and the execution in the United States of the Rosenbergs for the same crime. The effectiveness of the PCF's criticism of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* lay in its ability to portray the festival as the tip of a cultural and ideological iceberg. The following from Jean Gandrey-Rety highlights the way in which the PCF used an attack on the festival as the point of departure for a broader criticism of American foreign policy objectives:

The [festival] has lost its disguise. In all the French press' there has already been published protests, signed by people that we are happy to point out are far removed from our ideas and our tastes, denouncing all that is adulterated, arbitrary, pretentious and vain about the programme of the festival, [which is] not an expression but a caricature or a falsification of the spirit of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup>

Gandrey-Rety's reference to the extent of criticisms directed at the style and idea behind *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was accurate. As shall be shown, the problem for the Congress, and Nabokov in particular, was that, through their cultural and ideological heavy-handedness, they had unwittingly united normally disparate factions in opposition against them. Not wishing to let the opportunity pass, Gandrey-Rety's apparent bipartisanship was followed by an archetype of Communist rhetoric:

All the more remarkable is that there is something even more sinister – or insolent – which is the pretension of Americans to present – to Americans! – the quintessence of Western art of the twentieth-century and to make some sort of circus spectacle of works that blossomed in countries other than their own. All the more sinister and insolent is the duplicity of those people who present this style so as to glorify the benefits of freedom, of art, of culture, at the same time as they are frantically preparing for total war, atomic, bacteriological, that is to say the destruction of culture, of art, of liberty, the extermination of man.

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Gandrey-Rety. 'Le faux-nez du XXe siècle.' *Les lettres françaises* 413 (9 May 1952): 6.

The problem for the Congress was that, Gandrey-Rety's vitriol notwithstanding, the concerns he raised were not entirely out of step with popular sentiment in France. Chief among those concerns was that France was being forced into a marriage of convenience with a country that, thanks to an 'irritating mixture of chauvinism and inferiority complex', had little grasp of the subtleties of the European political situation.<sup>10</sup> These sentiments permeated not only the ranks of the PCF and the centrist parties. There were also a significant number of Gaullists who, despite being pro-United States in its confrontation with the Soviet Union, were for reasons of recent history alarmed at the push by the United States to rearm West Germany as a military buffer to the Soviets.

*L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was in part a recognition that the United States needed a higher and more positive propaganda profile in Europe, and was further intended to remind France that it had, as Sidney Hook asserted, more in common culturally and ideologically with the United States than the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> The Congress's intention was to target those in France who subscribed to the Neither-Nor position. That is, those who were equally sceptical of Soviet assurances of 'Peace' and American promises of 'Liberty', a supposedly deluded majority described by Nabokov as the 'great middle layer [who] suffer from the political dislocation, political disorientation compacted of the disillusionments [sic] of the past and of the fears of the future'.<sup>12</sup> An overview of the manifestly fluid nature of French politics at that time will help to account for the degree of support for the Neither-Nor position.

By 1952 the two extremes of French party politics were delineated by the PCF on the Left, and the RPF and the Conseil national des indépendants et paysans (National Council

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<sup>10</sup> Guy Dumur. 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle et le dialogue France-Amérique.' *Combat* 17-18 May 1952: 6.

<sup>11</sup> Sidney Hook. 'Report on The International Day Against Dictatorship and War.' *Partisan Review* 16 (1949): 729.

<sup>12</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'This is Our Culture': 13.

of Independents and Peasants, the CNIP) on the Right. In the centre was an array of political parties and factions whose allegiances shifted according to the nature of political problems at hand, but who were able to accommodate, however temporarily, their conflicting ideologies in such a way as to form a series of fragile coalition governments. For a period prior to March 1952 the ruling coalition comprised an uneasy alliance of the SFIO (the French Section of the Socialist International), the Radicals (a pro-Republican centrist grouping founded in 1901), and the Mouvement républicain populaire (MRP). The latter was a Christian Democratic party whose policies encapsulated all of the contradictions of French politics at the time, in that it supported the Republic, yet sanctioned the need for sweeping but constitutionally based revolution, and was opposed to both unfettered capitalism and Communism. Following the arrival and departure of three prime ministers in twelve months, the coalition collapsed in March 1952, with President Auriol being forced to broaden the representative base still further by enticing a number of Gaullists into the fold.

Given this political ferment, and the cultural uncertainties described in Chapters Three and Four, the programme devised for the first tier of the festival proved to be a misreading of the situation in France for a number of reasons. Firstly, Nabokov in his desire to stage ‘a music and arts festival [which] will have more *retentissement* than a hundred speeches by Arthur Koestler, Sidney Hook, and James Burnham about the neurosis of our century,’ opted in the first tier programme for a simplistic “bread and circuses” response to what in France had become an increasingly intellectualised debate.<sup>13</sup> A large number of French intellectuals, ranging from those closely identified with the Congress, including Raymond Aron and Denis de Rougement, to those nominally opposed, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus included, argued that the Cold War political debate masked the true nature of the

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<sup>13</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. Cited by Peter Coleman in *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 46.

problem confronting post-War European society, which was to balance the pursuit of individual freedoms with the demands made by industrialised societies (capitalist and Communist) for security based on conformity. All believed, with varying levels of conviction, that avant-garde artforms, being what Camus described as 'a consent as well as a refusal' to yield to the demands of modern society, were uniquely placed to show the way forward.<sup>14</sup> Where they differed from Congress and Soviet cultural policies was that the latter maintained that security could only be preserved by promoting a conservative aesthetic capable of sustaining an ideological program of their own choosing, and conformity thus became a means of enforcement rather than a condition to be enjoyed. Secondly, the general feeling in Paris was that however problematic the link between the PCF and the Kremlin, virulent anti-Communism of the sort espoused by the United States and celebrated during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was, as Charles Micaud pointed out, synonymous with Fascism.<sup>15</sup> Many in France would have doubtless recalled that Vichy France was also obsessed with anti-Communism.<sup>16</sup> Thirdly (and related to this), Nabokov, in attempting to associate a retrogressive musical style with social renewal, appeared to follow a trend established by reactionary regimes in the pre-War period, and which culminated in the appropriation of neo-classicist and neo-romanticist music by the Nazis.<sup>17</sup>

The official Soviet verdict with regard to his music notwithstanding, Stravinsky had revealed his ideological preference in his attack on Soviet culture in general, and socialist realism in particular, in the essay 'The Avatars of Russian Music'. The essay appeared in

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<sup>14</sup> Albert Camus. 'Art and Revolt.' Joseph Frank, tr. *Partisan Review* 19 (1952): 272.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Micaud. 'French Intellectuals and Communism.' *Social Research* 21 (1954): 287.

<sup>16</sup> See Philippe Burrin. *Living with Defeat: France Under the German Occupation, 1940-1944*. Janet Lloyd, tr. (London: Arnold, 1996) 14.

<sup>17</sup> Leon Botstein has discussed the Nazi embrace of a neo-romantic and neo-classic aesthetic in his essay 'After Fifty Years: Thoughts on Music and the End of World War II.' *Musical Quarterly* 79 (1995): 229.

his monograph *Poetics of Music*, which was circulated widely in France.<sup>18</sup> Local sensitivity as to the extent of support for Stalin in France was graphically illustrated by the decision made in late 1945 by the French publishing house Janin to seek Stravinsky's permission, duly granted, to omit the offending chapter out of fear that the entire book might be banned by the censor in the interests of public security. As his high profile involvement in *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* confirms, any desire that Stravinsky may have had to yield to French political sensibilities had by 1952 all but evaporated, and the offending chapter was reinserted at Stravinsky's insistence in an updated edition, published by Editions le Bon Plaisir in 1952. Conversely, in that same year the aggressive anti-Communist stance adopted by the United States prompted Sartre, who in the late 1940s had established the Left-wing, non-aligned Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire (RDR) in the hope of steering French politics down a middle path between the United States and the Soviet Union, to harden his own position and declare that 'the anticommunist is a rat' and enter into what was an ultimately ill-fated relationship with the PCF.<sup>19</sup>

Turning now to the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, the first point to be made is that the festival's emphasis on retrogressive works staged as large-scale spectacles was strongly reminiscent of the cultural substance and style favoured by Fascist dictatorships during the war. Certainly, the moral fortitude that Nabokov detected in the *Symphony in C*, together with his censure of Boulez's high modernism, more than faintly echoed the

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<sup>18</sup> Igor Stravinsky. 'The Avatars of Russian Music.' *Poetics of Music: In the Form of Six Lessons*. Arthur Knodel and Ingolf Dahl, trs. Preface to English edition by George Seferis. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975) 91-118. Nabokov wrote to Stravinsky on 1 June 1945 offering to write 'a kind of commentary on the *Poétique musicale* [in order to counter] the musical ordure coming from the USSR, the United States, and the young French school'. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 371. Stravinsky reaffirmed his implacable opposition to Soviet political and cultural ideology in a letter to the editor of *Composer*, dated 1 April 1969. Reproduced in Igor Stravinsky with Robert Craft, *Retrospectives and Conclusions*. (New York: Knopf, 1969) 19-22.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'Merleau-Ponty.' *Situations*, 287.

rhetoric of Goebbel's *Reichskulturkammer*. This helps to explain Gandrey-Rety's indignation that 'this style' should be used 'so as to glorify the benefits of freedom, of art, of culture . . .'. Given their close political affiliation, Gandrey-Rety would doubtless have subscribed to Désormière's pre-War denunciation of the 'false stylistic grandeur' of symphonism, which the latter associated with Fascist opposition to modernist music.<sup>20</sup>

No less contentious was the Congress's identification with Beethoven's *Egmont* overture, a practice that started at the opening ceremony of the inaugural conference in West Berlin on 25 June 1950, and which continued during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* with a performance of the same, given by the Berlin Philharmonic under the direction of Wilhelm Furtwängler. Rightly, or wrongly, Furtwängler was, like Richard Strauss, suspected by many outside Germany of having held Nazi sympathies.<sup>21</sup> David Dennis has reported that in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the Second World War the Berlin Philharmonic's practice of playing Beethoven, and the *Egmont* overture in particular, as part of the National Socialist foreign propaganda programme was attacked by anti-fascist leagues in France and Britain.<sup>22</sup> The delicious irony is that, as Dennis reported, the same work was lionised as a 'revolutionary vision of the future' in the post-War Deutsche Demokratik Republik. This judgement was doubtless based upon the Stalinist view (reiterated by Shostakovich at Warsaw) that Beethoven's music was an inspiration because of the composer's humanitarianism.

The appropriation of the *Egmont* overture in this way reinforces the contention that neo-tonal works (or their original archetypes) were susceptible to ideological subversion

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<sup>20</sup> Jane Fulcher. 'Musical Style, Meaning, and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War.' *Journal of Musicology* 8 (1995): 430.

<sup>21</sup> It is perhaps telling that the official festival programme neglected to mention Furtwängler's appearance, which was reported by Edmund Pendleton in 'The Paris Festival: Two Views.' *Musical America* 72 (July 1952): 20.

<sup>22</sup> David Dennis. *Beethoven in German Politics, 1870-1989*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 169.

by reactionary political movements. Adorno reckoned the combination of conservatism and spectacle to be a *modus operandi* favoured by any regime (irrespective of political persuasion) that aspired to social or political intervention. According to Adorno such a program demanded ‘conformism, respect for a petrified façade of opinion and society, and resistance to impulses that disturb its order . . .’.<sup>23</sup> An integral part of that spectacle, and one conspicuously absent from the majority of the chamber music programme of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, is the visual impact of the imposition of the will of the conductor, thereby invoking the idea of the leader and the led. As was the case with the impositions of socialist realism and of the *Reichskulturkammer*, the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was a manifestation of the desire to erect a conservative cultural façade so as to ensure the preservation of an existing, if in the eyes of many in France, precariously poised political and ideological status quo. That it did so in a way that celebrated retrogressive aesthetic conformity through the ritual of the symphony concert, staged in one of the French temples to high art (or, alternatively, one of Boulez’s petit-bourgeois stables), the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, confirms the validity of Adorno’s position.

Building upon the idea of the leader and the led, the use of the symphony concert by the Congress bears out the assertion by Christopher Small that there lies embedded in the rituals surrounding such concerts the hierarchies of Western industrialised society.<sup>24</sup> What is of interest here is Small’s contention that the cost of admission generally serves to ensure the exclusion of those other than a financially (and with that, often politically) powerful social group. But the charge of ‘snobisme’ levelled at the first tier by Albert

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<sup>23</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Commitment.’ (1965) Francis McDonagh, tr. Reprinted in *Aesthetics and Politics*. Afterword by Fredric Jameson. (London: New Left Books, 1977) 179.

<sup>24</sup> Christopher Small. ‘Performance as Ritual: Sketch for an Enquiry into the True Nature of a Symphony Concert.’ *Lost in Music*. Sociological Review Monograph 34. Avron Levine, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1987) 6-32.



Richard and René Dumesnil has a deeper significance.<sup>25</sup> The fact that the organisers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* were roundly criticised in the press for the prohibitively high cost of the tickets, at a time when many in Paris still suffered privations brought about by the war, suggests that rather than seeking to identify with Nabokov's 'disaffected', the Congress was more concerned to make its case known to those able to render it financial and political assistance in its anti-totalitarian campaign.<sup>26</sup> Gandrey-Rety's dismay that the festival was in effect staged by Americans for Americans highlights their dominance of the post-War Western European order. It also serves to confirm the premise that the first tier programme articulated one side of an ideological confrontation in which the concerns of individual European states were rendered subordinate.

The ritual significance assigned the symphony concert in the maintenance of that hierarchy, and the pomp and grandeur associated with it, appears to have been confirmed by the attendance of President Auriol as the guest of the United States ambassador to France, James Dunn, at a performance of the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the direction of the expatriate Frenchman, Pierre Monteux, given on 8 May at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. As he had done at the same venue some thirty-nine years earlier, Monteux conducted Stravinsky's *Le sacre du Printemps* in the presence of the composer, albeit to a more agreeable audience reaction than the one that greeted the earlier première.<sup>27</sup> International statesmanship appears to have yielded to domestic politicking with the inclusion in the official party of the French foreign minister Robert Schuman, the

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<sup>25</sup> René Dumesnil. 'Musique.' *Mercure de France* 1068 (August 1952): 712; Albert Richard, 'Les festivals en France': 66.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Janet Flanner (Genêt). 'Letter from Paris': 62-63. This criticism was also a recurring theme in Guy Dumur's attacks on the festival in *Combat*.

<sup>27</sup> Letters exchanged between Nabokov and Stravinsky make it apparent that they had intended initially to mount a full stage production of *Le sacre*, re-choreographed by George Balanchine, who wanted to collaborate with Picasso on the set design. As was the case with Désormière, Nabokov responded by saying that 'naturally, after the recent antics of Comrade Picasso . . . he is out of the question for us.' *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 381. Chief among Picasso's supposed antics was his well-publicised support for the Soviet position.

controversial architect of the recently ratified European Coal and Steel Community agreement, and of the American-instigated European Defence Community treaty. The perceived loss of French sovereignty in both agreements led to angry protests against Schuman during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.

The works performed that night are representative of Nabokov's aesthetic and ideological preoccupations. In the programme reproduced in *Preuves* (see Appendix A) the works listed are Willem Pijper's *Symphony No. 3* (1926), Darius Milhaud's *Protée, Suite No. 2* (1919), William Schuman's *Symphony No. 3* (1941), and Stravinsky's *Le Sacre* (1913). Edmund Pendleton in his review of the night's proceedings failed to mention Pijper's symphony, and listed instead Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Fantasy on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* (1909).<sup>28</sup> Everett Helm reported that the 'unnecessary' Pijper symphony was re-inserted in the festival's closing concert, which was in his opinion 'a curious patchwork of old and new'.<sup>29</sup> In view of its contradiction of the festival's title (and the *Preuves* programme) the content of the closing concert, as reported by René Dumesnil, is worth listing: Hector Berlioz's *Carnaval romaine* (1844); Piano concerto in E minor by Franz Liszt; *Cygne de Tuanelà* by Jean Sibelius, a symphonic interlude from Vincent D'Indy's *Fervaal*, *Ballade* by Gabriel Fauré, Pijper's symphony, Aaron Copland's *El Salon Mexico* (1936), and an orchestral suite from Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911).<sup>30</sup>

The fact that a number of nineteenth-century works crept into a programme celebrating the 'rich cultural achievements of the first half of the twentieth-century' suggests that the festival forsook historical accuracy for the maintenance of Adorno's petrified façade. The façade was reinforced through the use of the epithet 'masterpiece' in

<sup>28</sup> Edmund Pendleton. 'The Paris Festival: Two Views': 20.

<sup>29</sup> Everett Helm. 'The Paris Festival: Two Views': 5.

<sup>30</sup> René Dumesnil. 'Clôture de L'Oeuvre du Vingtième Siècle.' *Le Monde* 3 June 1952: 10.

the English translation of the festival's title, a value judgement intended to link the Congress's ideological stance with positive cultural achievement. It will be recalled that this was also the approach taken by Shostakovich in his address to the Warsaw Partisans for Peace congress. Nabokov's assertion that the festival was 'the first positive effort by the West to answer the propaganda which seeks to indict our culture as "decadent," "degenerate," and "cosmopolitan" . . .' not only identifies the enemy through the quotation of polemical flourishes favoured by the Soviet Union, but also confirms the appropriation of neo-tonal music within the Cold War dialogue as a whole.

That neo-tonal music should be used in this way recalls earlier historical periods when art music was a commodity valued for its capacity to give pleasure to those in positions of power, whose frequent beneficence effectively ensured a continuity of tradition. Certainly, if letters exchanged during the period in question between Stravinsky and Nabokov, whom Stravinsky was wont to call the 'culture generalissimo', are any indication, the relationship turned on Nabokov's ability to reintroduce Stravinsky's music to the political and cultural elite of Europe. Stravinsky's preoccupation with matters pecuniary in these exchanges not only underscores the image of his music as a commodity, but also appears to bear out Jérôme Spycket's description of the composer as 'the mighty genius, who became the little shopkeeper incarnate, perched behind his cash register'.<sup>31</sup> Spycket reports that this demeaning image of Stravinsky greatly troubled Nadia Boulanger, whose shadow loomed large over *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.

Boulanger, Nabokov, and Stravinsky formed a triumvirate that wielded considerable artistic power during the festival. The exchanges between Nabokov and Stravinsky, mentioned above, create the impression that Boulanger, whom Nabokov described as 'the best, the purest, the most loyal and incorruptible' of their mutual friends in Paris, was their

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<sup>31</sup> Jérôme Spycket. *Nadia Boulanger*. M.M. Shriver, tr. (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon, 1992) 138.

point of contact in Paris.<sup>32</sup> Boulanger's role as the figurehead of the neo-tonal movement in Europe has been well documented, as have her close links to the American neo-tonal school. As was the case with Poulenc, Milhaud, Sauguet and others, the appearance on the festival programme of the American composers Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Samuel Barber and Walter Piston undoubtedly had as much to do with their friendship with Boulanger as it did with their links to American academia. Nabokov and other principal members of the Congress also enjoyed close links to American academic institutions. The relationship between Stravinsky, Boulanger, and Nabokov could well be described as one in which Stravinsky's neo-tonal music was defended by Boulanger and marketed by Nabokov.

Writing in *Combat* Guy Dumur pointed out in less than glowing terms that *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was sponsored jointly by the Congress and an 'American Maecenas,' the Cincinnati industrialist Julius Fleischmann.<sup>33</sup> Dumur drew a connection, one made without further comment, between American sponsorship of that event and, earlier, of the Conservatoire Américain de Fontainebleau, an institution with which Boulanger was closely identified from its inception to her death. What is of interest here is that, as if to further strengthen neo-classicism's affiliation with American foreign policy objectives, the Conservatoire Américain and *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* were established during periods of consolidation which followed the signing of treaties that fundamentally realigned the European political landscape.<sup>34</sup> The treaties, Versailles following the conclusion of the First World War, and the NATO Pact after the Second World War, greatly facilitated the

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<sup>32</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. Letter to Stravinsky, dated 23 December 1950. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 367. Leibowitz for his part described Boulanger as that 'strange woman [and] high priest of the Stravinsky cult'. 'Two Composers: A Letter from Hollywood': 364.

<sup>33</sup> Guy Dumur. 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle et le dialogue France-USA.' *Combat* 16 May 1952: 3.

<sup>34</sup> See Bruno Monsaingeon. 'Fontainebleau.' *Mademoiselle: Conversations with Nadia Boulanger*. Robyn Marsack, tr. (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1985) 28-29.

projection of the United States's military and economic interests into Europe. Both cultural enterprises were supported by what was a combination of private funding and military patronage. The Conservatoire Américain was established in 1921 at the behest of General Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force to Europe, while *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was supported by the Congress, which was, as has been noted, allegedly partially funded by the CIA. Thus it would appear that amid the ruins of two European conflagrations an aesthetic judged by Adorno to have been the ruin of an earlier bourgeois age became a commodity used in order to introduce Americans to European culture and, at the same time, to establish an American cultural presence in Europe.

Ringer's comment concerning Stravinsky's music and its appeal to the power elite could well be expanded to take into account the access to the corridors of political power afforded two of the more enthusiastic advocates of his neo-classical music, Boulanger and Nabokov. Both acted as cultural advisors to a number of European leaders, and were subsequently awarded national honours for their efforts. Boulanger's services to French music in general, and the Royal family of Monaco in particular, led to her later being made a Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor by the French President, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Nabokov's role during the early 1960s as cultural advisor to Mayor Willi Brandt of West Berlin saw him being made a commander of the Grand Cross of Merit of the German Federal Republic. It was Nabokov's long term friendship with Arthur Schlesinger Jr, a Congress for Cultural Freedom associate and later Democratic White House official, that led to Stravinsky being fêted by President Kennedy on the occasion of the composer's eightieth birthday in 1962.

The programme of the 8 May 1952 concert had a deeper geo-political resonance by virtue of the fact that it featured works by composers from the United States, Britain, and France – the three principal members of the Western alliance. Not surprisingly given what

has been revealed, Stravinsky and his music were given pride of place at the concert. But possibly more significant was that there lay embedded in the performance ritual on 8 May the cultural ramifications of a post-War European political and economic order dominated by the United States. The westward shift of the cultural epicentre, as evidenced by the migration to the United States of Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Hindemith, among many others, was no doubt impressed upon the President of France as he witnessed the performance of a work by France's pre-eminent composer, Darius Milhaud, a resident of the United States since 1940, by a leading American orchestra under the baton of a celebrated French conductor who also had elected to reside in the United States. Given this scenario, Janet Flanner's description of the festival as an 'American exposition' is appropriate.<sup>35</sup> That it should have taken place 'in this period of touchy Allied relations' was, in her estimation, 'one of its several errors'.

While it would be reasonable to suspect that certain composers may have been included or omitted on the basis of their political beliefs, the absence of incontrovertible evidence of the sort furnished with regard to Désormière and Stravinsky makes any such assertion too speculative to be of use. Fulcher has pointed out that in France before the War, classicism of the sort espoused by D'Indy's Schola Cantorum was adopted as the centrepiece of what she terms 'the French Fascist musical aesthetic'.<sup>36</sup> Conversely, groupings such as Les Six and L'école d'Arceuil were associated with the progressive and politically multi-faceted Popular Front. But any attempt to rationalise the selection criteria on the basis of these associations needs to be tempered by the realisation that the political views of individual composers did not necessarily reflect the political significance assigned to the whole. Fulcher has demonstrated that Milhaud and Auric were, like Satie, associated

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<sup>35</sup> Janet Flanner (Genêt). 'Letter From Paris.' *New Yorker* 38 (31 May 1952): 62.

<sup>36</sup> Jane Fulcher. 'Musical Style, Meaning, and Politics in France on the Eve of the Second World War': 427.

with the politics of the Left, Sauguet and Poulenc, with the Right. Indeed, the fact that all were included in the festival serves to confirm the pre-eminence of Nabokov's aesthetic criteria. Nabokov's criteria in turn appear to be motivated by the belief that neo-tonal music could be invested with an ideological significance that suited the Congress's aims. As was the case with the music of other European states, contemporary French music had been assigned a neutral commodity value in the Cold War ideological struggle.

Gandrey-Rety's political allegiances notwithstanding, the issue he raised with regard to American cultural imperialism was at the time an acutely sensitive one in France. Antagonism towards American interventionism was exacerbated by French suspicions that the Marshall Plan for the rejuvenation of Western Europe amounted to little more than a rather crude form of economic and cultural imperialism. These fears appear to have been well-founded, particularly in view of the fact that the United States had earlier made its offer of post-War economic assistance contingent upon the dismissal of communist ministers serving in the socialist Ramadier government of the day. The ministers were dismissed in May 1947 and economic aid flowed in June 1947.<sup>37</sup> To make matters worse, the Americans insisted that part of the price to be paid by the French for economic assistance, aside from undertaking to behave in a fiscally responsible manner, was that they remove all barriers to American exports and investments.

The subsequent flood of American imports, and with it American culture, injured Gallic pride, and prompted Robert Escarpit to launch a protest on the front page of *Le Monde* in March 1950. Mimicking an earlier call to arms that followed the Nazi annexation of Danzig, Escarpit's article carried the title 'Mourir pour le Coca-Cola.' (To die for Coca-Cola). It read in part:

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<sup>37</sup> These and other relevant developments are detailed by Robert Gildea in 'Crisis of Empire'. *France Since 1945*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 4-29.

One cannot always choose the frontiers that one is obliged to defend. All the same it is perhaps surprising given that Coca-Cola seems an insignificant pretext for a large polemic between our American friends and us. We have accepted in silence chewing-gum and Cecil B. de Mille, the Reader's Digest and bebop. Coca-Cola seems to be the Danzig of European culture. After Coca-Cola, enough!<sup>38</sup>

The American position was articulated forcefully by James Burnham, who, together with Hook and Arthur Koestler, was among the more belligerent members of the Congress. Burnham believed that Europe had little choice but to wash down capitalism's bitter pill with Coca-Cola, paid for with American dollars:

No doubt the Marshall Plan is a plot of American imperialism. An imperialism which ships into Western Europe 15 billion dollars worth of goods seems in some respects preferable to a liberation which drains a like amount out of Europe's East.<sup>39</sup>

A linkage was established in the Parisian press between the fact that the *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was funded principally by Americans and the dearth in the first tier programme of works by French composers, other than those already celebrated world-wide. This absence, which Jean Fabiani attributed sarcastically to the likelihood that few others were known 'in Alabama and Idaho', highlighted the perceived erosion of French culture not only at home, but in its increasingly restive colonies, ranging through North Africa and the Middle East to South East Asia.<sup>40</sup> Writing in *Combat*, Raymond Loir reasoned that the erosion of French culture abroad was in part due to the fact that France could simply no longer compete with the growing financial and political influence of the United States.<sup>41</sup> The first tier programme of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* confirmed that French culture faced a similar challenge at home.

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<sup>38</sup> *Le Monde* 29 March 1950: 1. It seems that the French were not alone. A report entitled 'Venice Gondoliers Angry About a Coca Cola Boat.', published in the *New York Times* 10 November 1950: 10, noted that the gondoliers' threat to strike unless a boat painted in the soft drink's colours was removed from service would be viewed sympathetically by the mayor of Venice, '... a Communist whose party likes to attack Coca-Cola imperialism.'

<sup>39</sup> James Burnham. 'Rhetoric and Peace.' *Partisan Review* 17 (1950): 868.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Fabiani. 'Le festival du N.A.T.O.' *Combat* 7 May 1952: 1.

<sup>41</sup> Raymond Loir. 'Culture française en péril.' *Combat* 14 May 1952: 1.



The point to be emphasised here is that the criticisms outlined above confirm that, rather than offering a way out of the political morass, the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* resonated with the very ideological and cultural prejudices that had brought the Cold War confrontation to its then calamitous state. Serge Moreux in an article published in 1949, entitled 'Métaphysique du Festival', had the prescience to realise the implications of such a festival:

In this epoch, where national independence has been substituted by a dependence on economic groupings, and which [itself] stems from the concentration of power that has followed the collapse of the old world order, we need seasonal festivals that are not vain, not imperious, but vital. We do not have any more a sanctuary in order to preserve bravely, as in the Middle Ages, the spoils, the ferments . . . as civilisations pass from one to another, of the agony of their birth.<sup>42</sup>

It will now be argued that the chamber music component of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* answered Moreux's call. The chamber music programme stood in direct contrast to proceedings at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, a venue that Eugène Mannoni noted sarcastically had been appropriated by the Congress as 'the general headquarters of free culture'.<sup>43</sup> Whereas the first tier programme celebrated, in regal style, conformity through the embrace of a reactionary musical aesthetic, the chamber music programme embraced diversity and innovation, chiefly at a venue, the Comédie de Champs-Élysées, noted for its reputation in staging works 'distinguished by a certain worldly intellectualism'.<sup>44</sup> Whereas the first tier was tainted by the accusations of American cultural imperialism and its attendant perils, the chamber music festival gave pride of place to works by French composers.

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<sup>42</sup> Serge Moreux. 'Métaphysique du festival.' *Polyphonie* 5 (1949): 32.

<sup>43</sup> Eugène Mannoni. 'Ignazio Silone: "Les totalitaires n'ont plus le monopole des réunions d'intellectuels".' *Combat* 16 May 1952: 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Dictionnaire de Paris* (Paris: Larousse, 1964). s.v. 'Champs-Élysées, Comédie des'.

## CHAPTER SIX

The Chamber-Music Programme of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* and a Neutral France

The polarisation of post-War Europe according to capitalist and communist spheres of influence was reflected metaphorically in their shared embrace of a musical aesthetic that, like their conflicting political aspirations, turned on the thesis-antithesis-synthesis of ideas based on dichotomy, whether tonic-dominant, resolved cadentially, or capitalist-communist, and which threatened to be resolved at the barrel of a gun. It is now argued that the ultimate negation of the aesthetic dichotomy at the hands of the post-War avant-garde, whose more extreme pursuits, expanded serial technique and *musique concrète*, were exposed to a wider audience during the chamber-music component of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, was a reflection of the coincident embrace of the Neither-Nor stance in France.

Following an overview of the chamber-music programme, this chapter argues that the atomisation that lay at the heart of Boulez's expansion of serial technique should be considered as part of the Structuralist discourse, which sought to decode bourgeois society's artefacts in order to understand and, possibly, to challenge the forces that led to its empowerment. Jean-Paul Sartre's culture defended versus culture created dialectic, which he invoked during the course of a vitriolic attack upon *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, is used in order to attenuate further the relationship between avant-garde musical thought and political activism in France. The use of neo-classicist music in the defence of what many in France viewed as outmoded cultural and political values is then considered in relation to Werner Meyer-Eppler's semantic and ecto-semantic models for musical communication. The chapter concludes with what is the first of two appraisals of the way in which individuals associated with the Congress misconstrued Adorno's thoughts regarding a possible contiguity between the rise of serial thought and a general collapse of social freedom.

The chamber-music programme was chosen by Fred Goldbeck. Aside from serving as the editor of *Contrepoints* from 1946 to 1952, Goldbeck was also a regular contributor to *La revue musicale* and the chief musical correspondent for *Preuves*. For a period prior to and during the festival Goldbeck conducted a series of public seminars on contemporary music, at which a recording was played and the work discussed. It was at one of these given during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* that Iannis Xenakis was later to recall he first heard the music of Varèse.<sup>1</sup> Goldbeck was also a keen supporter of Boulez during the early 1950s, something that given the fact that Nabokov was an equally ardent detractor of the same, serves to confirm that his aesthetic preferences differed markedly from Nabokov's, as does Goldbeck's own generally muted praise in *Preuves* of the first tier programme.<sup>2</sup>

An indication of the motivation behind Goldbeck's programme can be gleaned from his earlier appraisal of the Parisian music scene:

More and more, the musical scene in Paris seems to undergo the effects of an international phenomenon: the state of divorce that exists everywhere between the music living composers compose and the music performers perform. A visitor to France might stay for several months, read every poster and every announcement, and haunt the concert halls night after night without noticing much about the diverse and lively tendencies of the French school . . . new music has ceased to be 'scandalous'; it has simply gone underground.<sup>3</sup>

Nabokov's programme sought tacitly to exploit one 'international phenomenon' – the hiatus between contemporary music and contemporary audiences – so as to perpetuate another, the Cold War ideological schism. It sought not to challenge the values and

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<sup>1</sup> Iannis Xenakis in interview with François-Bernard Mâche. 'Varèse et Xenakis.' *La revue musicale* 383-385 (1985): 221. Xenakis recalled that the seminar was presented by Pierre Schaeffer, but an examination of the usually reliable chronicle of musical events in Paris published under the heading 'La musique à Paris' in *Combat* lists Goldbeck as the presenter the night that the Club de la Musique Enregistrée discussed the music of Varèse, together with Barber, Copland, Lambert, Walton and Britten - all of whom also featured in the chamber-music series. 'La musique à Paris.' *Combat* 20 May 1952: 3.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Goldbeck's appraisal of Boulez's work in 'Current Chronicle: France.' *Musical Quarterly* 35 (1950): 291-295. Goldbeck's critique of the first tier programme appears in 'Le festival musical: Musique de ce siècle.' *Preuves* 16 (June 1952): 35-35.

<sup>3</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'Current Chronicle: France.' *Musical Quarterly* 35 (1949): 312.

attitudes that had led to the latter. Rather, it held out the prospect of security through conformity, both aesthetic and ideological. Conversely, Goldbeck's programme enticed contemporary composers out of their carapaces, presumably to their benefit, and the ultimate benefit of their art, rather than for any perceived ideological imperative. But this is not to suggest that the chamber-music programme was the product of ideological ignorance or indifference. It is argued here that the more revolutionary works performed bear out Jean-François Lyotard's contention that revolutionary politics (of the sort that could extract France from the Cold War ideological morass) should take the lead offered by revolutionary art.<sup>4</sup>

The chamber-music programme enjoyed nowhere near the profile or the publicity accorded the first tier. Indeed, the two-page 'Programme Musical' published in *Preuves* ignored it completely, which is as telling as it is surprising in view of the fact that of the thirty-nine chamber works performed, sixteen were by French composers. This ratio contrasts markedly with the first tier programme. Jean-Claude Ledrut argued that the music component of the festival not only neglected French composers in general, but failed to do justice to 'true' French musicians such as D'Indy (a description strongly reminiscent of the Fascist championing of D'Indy and his Schola Cantorum in the pre-War years).<sup>5</sup> Goldbeck's response to Ledrut's criticism was to point out that with regard to the supposed under-representation of French composers, of the sixty-six composers featured, twenty-two were French.<sup>6</sup> Goldbeck's approximate figures belied the fact that French participation in the chamber-music component made the overall proportion appear more favourable than it

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<sup>4</sup> Jean-François Lyotard. *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*. (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1973) 235.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Claude Ledrut. 'À propos de L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle.' *Combat* 6 May 1952: 2.

<sup>6</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'Autour de "L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle.'" *Combat* 28 May 1952: 3.

would have been otherwise. Goldbeck's reaction to the second of Ledrut's accusations was that it was in his view vital that musicians of all generations and tendencies be represented.

As was the case with the appearance of Schoenberg's *Erwartung* in the first tier programme, the chamber-music programme (listed at Appendix A) contains some striking anomalies. Certainly, the works of Vaughan Williams, Lambert, Walton, and Fauré appear out of place among those that not only stood outside of mainstream acceptance but, in the case with the Schoenberg and Webern quartets, and the compositions by Ives, Messiaen and Varèse, enjoyed no small measure of prestige among the avant-garde. It is probable that the inclusion of the English composers cited above was a product of the machinations that led also to the inclusion of *Billy Budd* in the first tier. In each case the inclusion might also be testimony to the relationship between Goldbeck and Rollo Myers, who made his conservative aesthetic preferences known in his overview of English music that was published in the special number of *La revue musicale* given over to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.<sup>7</sup> Bearing in mind that the year 1952 also marked the high point of experiments in *musique concrète*, the chamber-music component of the festival was certainly representative of the aesthetic preoccupations of the avant-garde. *Combat* reported under the heading '2 concerts de "musique concrète"' the following:

On the margin of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, certain extremely revolutionary trends will be represented through two concerts of 'musique concrète' to be given on 21 and 25 May at the Salle du Conservatoire by the Club d'Essai de la Radiodiffusion Française. Works by Olivier Messiaen, Yves Baudrier, André Jolivet, Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer will be featured.<sup>8</sup>

*Combat* reported subsequently that the same programme was performed at both concerts.<sup>9</sup>

As to the identity of the works, Colin Mason in his report on the festival mentioned that he heard Messiaen's *Timbres-durées* which, together with Satie's *Socrate* and Barraud's *Le*

<sup>7</sup> Rollo Myers. 'L'école anglaise.' *La revue musicale Numéro Spécial: L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. 212 (April 1952): 15-21.

<sup>8</sup> *Combat Spéciale A: L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. 25 April 1952: np.

<sup>9</sup> 'La musique à Paris.' *Combat* 24-25 May 1952: 2.

*Testament Villon*, Mason thought exemplified the French penchant for ‘sustained monotony’.<sup>10</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez reports that the following works were also performed: André Hodier, *Jazz et Jazz*; Pierre Henry, *Vocalises*; and Pierre Boulez, *Étude sérielle sur un son* and *Étude sérielle sur sept sons*.<sup>11</sup>

Robert Craft recalled attending the Salle du Conservatoire in the company of Stravinsky and Boulanger. An entry in Stravinsky’s diary recorded his reaction: ‘Endless pieces whose substance was a mélange of sounds and noises . . . The participants were professional composers, very antipathetic, and amateurs, “revolutionaries,” rather sympathetic’.<sup>12</sup> Stravinsky had also attended the première of *Structures Ia* which, according to Dominique Jameux, he had pronounced ‘arrogant’, and his apparent enthusiasm in acquainting himself with the latest trends was matched only by Nabokov’s reticence in doing the same.<sup>13</sup> These sentiments represent a strong departure from the sense of affirmation that Nabokov in his first tier programme sought to evince from the audience, and which he hoped to link with anti-totalitarian ideology. Irrespective of whether they were directed at the music or those responsible for it, negative judgements such as ‘antipathy’ and ‘arrogance’ were clearly of little use in what was, as was pointed out in Chapter Five, a fairly simplistic propaganda exercise.

It would appear that Stefan George’s ‘air of another planet’, evoked in Schoenberg’s second quartet, is an appropriate metaphor for the revolutionary atmosphere that permeated the Comédie de Champs-Élysées and the Salle du Conservatoire. Extending the metaphor,

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<sup>10</sup> Colin Mason. ‘The Paris Festival’: 15.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez. Footnote to letter from Pierre Boulez to John Cage, dated ‘before’ 21 May 1952. *The Boulez–Cage Correspondence*, 128.

<sup>12</sup> Igor Stravinsky. Note cited by Robert Craft in *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 349-350. Stravinsky went on to observe that ‘A lady next to me raged in the intermission, declaring that this “music” was horrible. I had . . . a great desire to ask her: “But how do you know, Madame?” Was she acquainted with other examples of *musique concrète* that were not so bad?’.

<sup>13</sup> Dominique Jameux. *Pierre Boulez*, 51.

it is now demonstrated that what were at the time the latest developments in the music of the avant-garde, expanded serial technique and *musique concrète*, were something of a Mistral in the face of the chill wind of Cold War ideology. It is argued that expanded serial technique and *musique concrète* were a manifestation of a Leftist revolutionary discourse which in France signified an attempt to argue the case for socio-cultural renewal, without falling prey to the ideological propositions of either Stalinism or the supporters of capitalism.

It has been noted that the Congress felt obliged to exclude individuals such as Désormière from *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* because of their political beliefs. Yet Désormière had, as Boulez recalled, made the ideals of 'freedom of choice, open discussion and critical analysis . . . the "foundation and summit" of his life, both professional and private'.<sup>14</sup> Désormière's selective support of Communist ideologies was typical of the large number of disillusioned French intellectuals and artists who, despairing at the perceived failure of France's established institutions to maintain the humanist ideals upon which their educational system and their Catholicism were based, turned instead to what Charles Micaud at the time described as the 'intellectual certitude [offered] by the beautiful, logical construction of Marx and revised by Lenin'.<sup>15</sup> A mixture of Cartesian thought and humanism informs the 'three myths' upon which Raymond Aron, a signatory to the Congress's founding manifesto, reckoned the Marxist edifice rested: 'the myth of universal plenty based on technological progress; the myth of rational reconstruction of the social

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<sup>14</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Roger Désormière: "I Hate Remembering!"' *Orientations*, 511.

<sup>15</sup> Charles Micaud. 'French Intellectuals and Communism.': 288. See also Maurice Nadeau, 'La Gauche intellectuelle et le communisme.' *Combat* 30 June 1950: 4. In an article entitled 'Communism and French Intellectuals', David S. Bell explores possible reasons for 'communism's recurrent, if transient, hold on French intellectuals'. *Modern and Contemporary France* NS 1 (1993): 25-36.

order; [and] the myth of humanity's salvation through the rebellion and triumph of the unfortunate, that is the proletariat'.<sup>16</sup>

Although falling well short of declaring his solidarity with the proletariat, Boulez was one of a number of artists and intellectuals who, armed with a messianic belief in the need to reform society, its institutions and its artefacts, challenged by word and deed the very institutions charged with ensuring continuity of tradition, the government and the universities among them. Boulez was, as he was later to recall '... very Leninistic. I'm all for the efficiency of the revolution, by going to the important organisations to change the sense of them and to convince them by my existence'.<sup>17</sup> The belief in the need to bring about change through rational argument characterised Boulez's rhetoric in support of the expansion of serial technique. It was his view that the 'transubstantiation [of] our musical heritage' should by necessity be preceded by a period in which the materials and processes of music were 'atomised', that is, reduced to their elemental state.<sup>18</sup> Thus stripped of their acculturations, the raw materials could assume an equilibrium fashioned by the socio-cultural forces at play in his epoch, rather than those of a bygone era.

Boulez's approach in this regard was consistent with the gradual embrace amongst the more receptive French academic disciplines during the late 1940s and 1950s of *pensée structurale* – structuralist thought. Taking as its point of departure the linguistic theories of Ferdinand Saussure, Structuralism is based upon the belief that the cultural significance of a given sign or icon is effectively greater than the sum of its parts, because the way in which it is perceived is governed by receptive processes that are themselves culturally determined. To reverse the process is to gain analytical insights into the cultural (and

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<sup>16</sup> Raymond Aron. 'Politics and the French Intellectuals.' *Partisan Review* 17 (1950): 598.

<sup>17</sup> Pierre Boulez. Cited in interview with Robert Jacobson. *Reverberations: Interviews with the World's Leading Musicians*. (New York: William Morrow, 1974) 22.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Boulez. In Robert Jacobson, *Reverberations*, 26.



social) forces that help to shape the society for which the icon has significance. This rationale was embraced by the Parisian Left as a means of effectively engaging with the first two of what Aron in the above dismissed as myths so as to facilitate the third. The idea was that if one was to decode through atomisation (to deconstruct) the artefacts and conventions of bourgeois society it then becomes possible to identify and therefore potentially to overcome the forces which empower that society.

Although he appears to have remained aloof from the more overtly political ramifications of structuralist thought, Claude Lévi-Strauss, one of the post-War period's pre-eminent structuralist thinkers and a close friend of René Leibowitz, was later to refer to serial music and, albeit less enthusiastically, *musique concrète*, which he argued were not hostage to the creator's need to be understood according to pre-existing stylistic and technical conventions.<sup>19</sup> Serialism therefore stood diametrically opposed to neo-classicism which, as has been demonstrated, evinced in Nabokov a reflexive association between the notion of Man's nobility and the restoration or maintenance of political power structures ideologically inclined to the West. By stripping the musical elements of their inherited acculturations and reordering them in accordance with an inner logic dictated by the materials themselves rather than the will of the composer – a will that according to structuralist logic could not but reflect society's existing power structures – serial music in Lévi-Strauss's assessment therefore 'set itself up as a conscious product of the mind and an assertion of liberty'.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss. Overture. *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology I*. John and Doreen Weightman, trs. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970) 22-23. Howard Davies discusses Lévi-Strauss's apoliticism (or more accurately, his reluctance to contemplate the PCF's quandary concerning Stalin's excesses) in his study of the relationship between Lévi-Strauss and Sartre at the latter's *Les temps modernes* in 'The First Six Years: The Participation of Leiris and Lévi-Strauss.' *Sartre and 'Les temps modernes'*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 13-39.

<sup>20</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss. *The Raw and the Cooked*, 26-27.

Boulez referred specifically to Lévi-Strauss's theories so as to explicate the logic of his own innovations.<sup>21</sup> It is significant within the context of this study that Boulez was prepared to couch in structuralist terminology the antithesis of serial and classical thought:

Modern serial thought insists that the series must not only generate the actual vocabulary, but must expand into the very structure of the work. It is thus a complete reaction against classical thought, which wishes form to be, practically, something pre-existent, like a general morphology . . . Classic tonal thought is based on a universe defined by gravity and attraction; serial thought on a universe in continual expansion.<sup>22</sup>

It matters not that Umberto Eco was later to identify lacunae in these attempts to equate serial and structural thought (primarily because 'structural thought seeks to discover, serial thought seeks to produce'— meaning that the former is an analytical tool, the latter a means of production).<sup>23</sup> Rather, it is important to emphasise that there was an awareness on the part of Boulez and Lévi-Strauss that serialism was part of a revolutionary discourse which at the time sought to challenge existing conventions, in this case tonal thought, by breaking them down to their constituent elements so as to identify their conceptual weaknesses and start afresh. Boulez's vehement opposition to Stravinsky's neo-classicism during the post-War years, which he later ascribed to the fact that it was used as a rallying call '*against* the progress of the Vienna School', is consistent with that revolutionary momentum.<sup>24</sup> While neo-classicism was in Boulez's estimation a spent reactionary force, in the Congress's view it was an affirmation of libertarian, in this case, anti-totalitarian, values.

To a significant number of Parisian intellectuals in the late 1940s and early 1950s the gravitational forces described by Boulez in the above came in the guise not only of outmoded forms of expression but equally of outmoded political allegiances. It was these allegiances that they believed were plunging France headlong towards a war not of its own

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<sup>21</sup> See Pierre Boulez. 'General Considerations.' *Boulez on Music Today*, 32.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Entries for a Musical Encyclopedia: Series.' *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 236.

<sup>23</sup> Umberto Eco. 'Pensée structurale et pensée sériale.' *Musique en jeu* 5 (1971): 48.

<sup>24</sup> Pierre Boulez. In Robert Jacobson, *Reverberations*, 24.

making, and over which it had little control. Given that, as Guy Dumur pointed out, the Soviet propaganda machine had succeeded in creating a reflexive association between the words 'Russia' and 'Peace', Marx's 'beautiful, logical constructions' offered themselves as the means to escape the perils of intellectual and artistic stagnation, and war.<sup>25</sup> The force of the attraction was such that, as was the case with Désormière, it became possible to overlook the difference between Marxism as theory and its corrupted practical model, Stalinism. As Lionel Abel at the time observed of the nature and extent of French support for Stalinism: 'Sympathy for Russia . . . is not based on an ignorance of what is going on in Russia. People know about the forced labor, the police repression, etc. They think these evils may be transitory. But even if they have little enthusiasm for communism, they have absolutely no hope for capitalism'.<sup>26</sup>

The immediacy of the perceived internal threats to France's political stability (and therefore to NATO cohesion) was highlighted during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* when on 28 May 1952, and in open defiance of a ban imposed by the authorities, a large anti-government demonstration organised by the PCF swept through the streets of Paris. The day after, as those arrested during the protest were being arraigned before a magistrate, the aesthetic gulf that existed between the two tiers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* – itself a symbol of the PCF's nemesis – was graphically illustrated when at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées the audience was entertained by the music of Busoni, Roussel and Ravel, while at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées an audience contemplated the music of Varèse, Webern, and Henk Badings.

The demonstration marked the public emergence of Sartre as a supporter of the PCF. Given this association it was scarcely surprising that Sartre, together with Camus, André

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<sup>25</sup> Guy Dumur. 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle et le dialogue France-USA.' *Combat* 16 May 1952: 3.

<sup>26</sup> Lionel Abel. 'Letters From Paris: Impressions and Conversations.' *Partisan Review* 16 (1949): 399.

Breton, and René Char, had pointedly declined the invitation to participate in the literary discussions that were part of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.<sup>27</sup> But as naïve as it later turned out to be, in view of the Soviet Union's brutality in crushing political dissent in Hungary, Sartre's flirtation with Communism was, as had been the case with his earlier establishment of the short-lived *Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire*, motivated more by the desire to keep American influence in check than in a genuine embrace of Stalinism. This position becomes abundantly clear in his later, rather histrionic account of the events of 28 May 1952, which he addressed to the pro-American, anti-Communist 'slimy rat':

You simpletons are so afraid of the Soviet régime that you do everything you can to bring it upon yourselves. For today there is peace; the Americans are among us and the Russians are in Russia; but if there should be war tomorrow, the Americans would be in America and the Russians would be among us. The workers . . . want the Russians to be in Russia and the Americans in the USA.<sup>28</sup>

From this it is quite apparent that firstly, Sartre was concerned that overtly anti-Soviet displays might provoke the Soviets into a pre-emptive strike; secondly, that in view of the fact that 'the Americans are among us' a passive approach to neutrality was tantamount to appeasement; and thirdly, that if war was to happen then it would be the French that would have the most to lose and the Americans the least.

Sartre in a clear reference to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* went on to suggest that the festival was part of a general recklessness that sought to allow the United States to insinuate its way into the European cultural equation:

When, in spite of everything, for conscience's sake, you want to produce reasons for dying for the United States, you arrange art exhibitions, conferences and concerts: in short, you take part in what has for some little time been called a 'cultural battle'. But you are careful to double the price of entry: so as to ensure that you will at least be 'among yourselves'. Or perhaps you send from Paris to London and Berlin a skewerful of intellectuals, wan and sweet as young ladies, who recite compliments

<sup>27</sup> As reported by Guy Dumur. 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle et le dialogue France-Amérique.' *Combat* 17-18 May 1952: 6.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Demonstration of May 28, 1952.' *The Communists and Peace*. Irene Clephane, tr. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969) 25.

they have learned on culture and liberty. But whom do you want this feminine orchestra to persuade, apart from the readers of *Annales*? Culture is certainly dead when writers set out to *defend* it instead of *creating* it.<sup>29</sup>

Sartre's judgement that *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was elitist and superficial was consistent with criticisms offered in Communist and non-aligned Leftist newspapers alike. That it appealed to 'the readers of *Annales*' reinforces Sidney Hook's later accusation that Nabokov's festival achieved little more than 'to win over well-wishers for the Congress among the political indifferents . . . by dazzling them with artistic delights after the high cultural season in Paris was over'.<sup>30</sup> What is of more pressing interest here is Sartre's comment regarding the culture defended-or-created dialectic.

The first tier music programme acted to reaffirm the notion of liberty to those who could afford the price of admission (and who possibly therefore had a great deal to lose in the event of war), through what Sartre quite rightly viewed as a defensive action. That action sought to defend an ideological stance by presenting a view of culture (as manifested in a reactionary musical aesthetic) that the Congress argued was an archetype of freedom of expression. Culture defended in this manner was in Sartre's estimation 'certainly dead', presumably either by its own hand, through a stagnation based upon referentialism of the sort exemplified by neo-classicism, or because it would bring down upon itself the military might of those antagonised by such propaganda displays. It therefore stood to reason that culture 'created' was better placed to resist these twin perils.

The bulk of the chamber music series featured works by composers who to Sartre's way of thinking would have been among the creators; iconoclasts who chiefly through their embrace of one of the centrepieces of modernism – the pursuit of innovation through experimentation – eschewed existing modes of expression in favour of personal aesthetic

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Demonstration of May 28, 1952', 25. *Annales* is the Gallic equivalent of *Tatler*.

<sup>30</sup> Sidney Hook. 'The Congress for Cultural Freedom.' *Out of Step*, 445-446.

considerations. The current wisdom is that modernist impulses as represented by Boulez constituted a type of aesthetic endgame, whereby the modernist experiment lay siege to bourgeois culture to the extent that, as Peter Bürger and others have posited, it became an ideology in and of itself, one whose *idée fixe* was to bring about the final rupture between the artist and those aspects of society that they sought to confront.<sup>31</sup>

Yet in the immediate post-War years in Western Europe the political certainties upon which society was based were transformed to the extent that, as Arthur Koestler argued at the Congress's inaugural conference, the distinction between Left and Right had lost all meaning 'now that Stalinism had emerged as the most reactionary force in world history'.<sup>32</sup> But as political certainties fell away, the notion of 'progress' in art remained an essentially static one, in the sense that while the state of rupture that existed between the avant-garde and its audiences may have changed quantitatively (by becoming more exaggerated) it remained unchanged in the qualitative sense, in that it continued to remain based upon subjective aesthetic judgement.

Boulez's actions confirm this realisation. Boulez had joined classmates of Messiaen's 1945 harmony class at the Conservatoire in heckling Stravinsky's neo-classicism at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées because he (Boulez) was of the opinion that those works were used against the progress of the Second Viennese School; that is, against those who were responsible to varying degrees for some of the more extreme manifestations of modernism in music. Although Boulez's position may, by 1952, have become more radicalised, in that he had formed the opinion that, with the exception of Anton Webern, the Second Viennese School was guilty of similar shortcomings, Boulez's modernism remained essentially

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<sup>31</sup> Peter Bürger. *Theory of the Avant-Garde*. Foreword by Jöchen Schulte-Sasse. Michael Shaw, tr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 72.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur Koestler. Cited in Peter de Mendelssohn's report of the inaugural Berlin congress. 'Berlin Congress.' *New Statesman and Nation* 40.1010 (15 July 1950): 62.

unchanged qualitatively in that he was driven by the same aesthetic as he had been earlier. And yet political ideologies that gave rise to the performance of Stravinsky's works in 1945 as an anti-Fascist celebration of the music of composers condemned by the Nazis had by 1952 been reversed. Neo-classicism was now faced with a new enemy, Stalinism, and accordingly had become an integral part of an anti-Communist celebration. Thus, while Boulez's aesthetic antagonism towards tradition remained essentially unchanged, the political antagonisms that prompted each celebration had changed so radically that, as Koestler noted, there was no longer any difference between them.

The political will that helped to redress the denigration of Stravinsky suffered at the hands of the Nazis and the Soviets and, albeit less enthusiastically, of Schoenberg, was in itself either not sufficiently inspired by or cognisant of the avant-garde as to include it in its efforts. To turn Carl Dahlhaus's statement into a question – why is it that 'a ruling class whose conspicuous consumption includes serial music does not exist'?<sup>33</sup> Evidence has been presented to confirm that the music of the avant-garde was seen as somehow diametric to the purpose and aims of the Congress, at least with regard to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Works such as *Structures Ia* and the various studies in *musique concrète* performed as part of the chamber-music component stood in Nabokov's estimation sufficiently outside the aesthetic experience of his target audience as to remain impervious to ideological subversion. Given the politically charged atmosphere in which the festival was staged, and its stated aims, that imperviousness was tantamount to neutralism.

It has been noted that the ultimate purpose behind *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was to remind people not where European society stood at that particular historical juncture, but to remind them of where it had been and to where, provided it remained firm against

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<sup>33</sup> Carl Dahlhaus. 'Progress and the Avant-Garde.' *Schoenberg and the New Music: Essays by Carl Dahlhaus*. Derrick Puffett and Alfred Clayton, trs. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) 18.

totalitarianism, it was possible to return. Thus, an historical and cultural given (past cultural achievements) became Adorno's petrified façade, one erected during a time of present uncertainty in order to project a vision of future security in the form of spiritual and material prosperity based notionally upon freedom of political association and with that, freedom of expression. This paradigm is consistent with the *modus operandi* favoured by Dahlhaus's 'ruling class' (or, in Nabokov's case, an individual in its service), which was to present a vision of the future that sought to reassure through the conspicuous consumption of known, and therefore malleable, cultural archetypes capable of being 'defended', in Sartre's pejorative sense of the word. Conversely, it was for this reason that Albert Richard described the chamber-music series as the 'true festival', rather than the 'superficial' programme 'unfurled' at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.<sup>34</sup> This was because the avant-garde works performed during the chamber series presented the reality of culture as it *then* stood which, Richard quite rightly asserted, should be the duty of any festival staged under the auspices of a cultural freedom currently enjoyed.

An understanding of the appropriateness of a work such as Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* in presenting Nabokov's (and by extension the Congress's) vision of the future, and the inappropriateness of any number of the avant-garde works presented as part of the chamber-music programme, can be facilitated by considering Werner Meyer-Eppler's thoughts on musical communication. Aside from being one of the initiators of electronic music at the Cologne Studios, Meyer-Eppler distinguished himself in the fields of communication theory and philosophy. In 1959 Meyer-Eppler asserted that the relationship between music and the listener existed in two dimensions: the semantic and the

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<sup>34</sup> Albert Richard. 'Les festivals en France': 66.



ectosemantic.<sup>35</sup> The semantic was identified as those attributes that fall ‘under some agreement or convention between communication partners’. The ectosemantic is that which falls outside those attributes. Meyer-Eppler asserted that

Each musical style . . . has its own inventory of forms and internal structures . . . Likewise, every listener has [his] inventory of forms and structures derived from [his] listening experience. For music to be understandable semantically, the composer’s inventory of forms must coincide with the listener . . . to a certain degree, below which such music played can only have an ectosemantic effect.<sup>36</sup>

Meyer-Eppler went on to point out that ‘there can be no doubt that such a discrepancy in the inventories is frequent in present-day concert life, especially as concerns modern music’.

Contemporary research into the semiotic in music notwithstanding, the invocation of semantics when discussing music is fraught with misapplication and misunderstanding. But within the context of the current study, the semantic attributes of the music, that is, the connection between the music and its context and what it is taken to signify, is well defined. Recalling Nabokov’s reflexive association between *Symphony in C* and Man’s nobility, neo-classicism was featured at the festival as a means of promoting an ideological position. The close identification between the performances at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and the Congress’s anti-totalitarian agenda rendered unambiguous the semantic attributes assigned to the music.

Building upon Meyer-Eppler’s observations, it is reasonable to suggest that neo-classicism’s ‘inventory of forms and internal structures’ was generally coincident with those of the listener. This is confirmed by virtue of the fact that the music’s semantic attributes were sufficiently understood as to have engendered widespread debate as to the implications of the Congress’s agenda. Conversely, the chamber-music programme

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<sup>35</sup> Werner Meyer-Eppler. ‘Musical Communication as a Problem of Information Theory.’ *die Reihe* 8 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1962). English edition (Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1968): 7.

<sup>36</sup> Werner Meyer-Eppler. ‘Musical Communication as a Problem of Information Theory’: 10.

featured music that can be seen to have operated within Meyer-Eppler's ectosemantic dimension. This assertion is based upon two readings. Firstly, the semantic relationship between ideology and the programme appears not to have enjoyed anywhere near the publicity accorded the first tier programme, which was in review almost always prefaced by a comment regarding the Congress's agenda. Secondly, the music's 'inventory of forms and internal structures' was not sufficiently coincident with those of the listener as to sustain any semantic application. This is born out through reactions such as the *mêlée* that erupted during the performance of *Structures Ia*, and the bemusement that greeted the concerts of *musique concrète*. In each case it was the music, not the Congress's ideological position, that was the subject of intense debate.

H.H. Stuckenschmidt's assertion that the 'considerable discrepancy between postulation [the idea behind the work] and reception' was a deliberate act on the part of the avant-garde composer to deny any associative reference will be discussed in the chapters following.<sup>37</sup> But it can be acknowledged here that Dahlhaus's 'ruling class', which had after all attained that status through its ability to communicate its agendas to the general populace through semantic associations consistent with that populace's expectations and desires, would have little use for musical forms that either detracted from or were incapable of sustaining such semantic associations. As Jean Allary pointed out in his critique of the festival in the *Revue de Paris*, although Berg's *Wozzeck* 'shattered my nerves [it] lifted my spirits. If God were to grant me another quarter of a century I may ultimately feel the same about *musique concrète*.'<sup>38</sup> Allary's sense of spiritual uplift is doubtless exactly what Nabokov had hoped for, and what he would have been eager to

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<sup>37</sup> H.H. Stuckenschmidt. 'The Third Stage: Some Observations on the Aesthetics of Electronic Music.' *die Reihe 1* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1955). English edition (Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1958): 11.

<sup>38</sup> Jean Allary. 'Le festival de L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle.' *Revue de Paris* (June 1952): 156.

associate with the Congress's anti-totalitarian agenda. This kind of association is doubtless also what so infuriated Sartre about culture defended, as opposed to culture created.

In Goldbeck's view neo-classicism constituted a form of 'esthetic appeasement'.<sup>39</sup> His choice of the word 'appeasement' is telling in view of the fact that the relatively large proportion (by Western European standards) of French society who were pro-Communist, and an even larger proportion of its intelligentsia, were being called upon to enter into an appeasement with NATO. In effect, the Congress through *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* had hoped that one form of appeasement would entice the supposedly misguided to engage in another. But, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, it is an entirely different matter to suppose that a work such as *Structures Ia* articulated the concerns of those who took umbrage at the Congress's attempts and who were, as Lionel Abel observed, not so much pro-communist as anti-capitalist. Indeed, the disillusioned may well have subscribed to Adorno's view that there was a contiguity between totalitarianism and serialism because they believed that both acted to curb individual freedoms.<sup>40</sup> Adorno's accusation, curiously enough, appears to have elements in common with Nabokov's view that 'the problem of atonality' belied a lack of new ideas, a dearth which in his opinion did nothing to confront totalitarian infringements upon personal liberty.

Writing in *die Reihe* Herbert Eimert launched a savage attack on Adorno's position, although unlike Heinz-Klaus Metzger, he failed to mention Adorno by name.<sup>41</sup> Eimert railed against 'the fashion for empty-headed critics to make out that the systematic

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<sup>39</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'Current Chronicle: France.' *Musical Quarterly* 35 (1949): 312.

<sup>40</sup> This rather simplistic rationale also underpins Francis Pinguet's characterisation of the period in France during which serial technique was expanded as 'la phase Stalinienne'. Pinguet's verdict is based on the belief that the technique and Stalinism shared attributes (or traits) such as 'iron discipline', 'ferocity', and an acquiescence to the demands of a 'higher tribunal'. 'Le retour au classique: Interrogation – Perspective.' *La revue musicale* 308-309 (1978): 16.

<sup>41</sup> Herbert Eimert. 'The Composer's Freedom of Choice': 9. Metzger took Adorno to task in 'Just Who is Growing Old?', followed by 'Intermezzo II.' *die Reihe* 4 (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1958). English edition (Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser, 1960): 63-84.

“management” of musical material is identical with the terrorist rule of force in totalitarian political systems’. Eimert and Metzger based their criticisms of Adorno on passages drawn from the latter’s ‘Das Altern der neuen Musik’, which in English translation first appeared in *The Score and IMA Magazine* as ‘Modern Music is Growing Old’, and more recently in *Telos* as ‘The Aging of the New Music.’ The essay was published, translated and disseminated by journals closely associated with the Congress for Cultural Freedom, journals which have generally carried the odium of being funded partially by the CIA. The main thrust of the essay, that serialism constituted a repression of the subjective impulse caused by the contraction of social freedoms, will be dealt with subsequently. Of interest here are the subtle ways in which ideological concerns infiltrated matters of culture during the period under review. In tracing the metamorphosis of one of the essay’s more contentious passages it will also become apparent the extent to which serialism appeared as an unknown quantity in the discourse pertaining to culture and ideology.

In a footnote appended to the *Telos* translation of the essay, the Adorno scholars Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will point out that ‘a peculiar, abbreviated and completely confabulated paraphrase of Adorno’s essay, translated from the French, was published in *The Score* in December 1956’.<sup>42</sup> Metzger stated that it was the version published in *The Score* that he used as the basis for his criticisms of Adorno. Metzger reported that Adorno had originally presented the essay as a lecture given early in 1954, and that it had then been published ‘in a periodical with a wide circulation’.<sup>43</sup> The periodical in question was the West German cultural journal *Der Monat*. *Der Monat* had sponsored the Congress’s inaugural Berlin conference in 1950, and was itself the product of an earlier decision by the United States military authorities in occupied Berlin to move

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<sup>42</sup> Robert Hullot-Kentor and Frederic Will. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 95, *fn* 1.

<sup>43</sup> Heinz-Klaus Metzger. ‘Just Who is Growing Old?’: 65.

away from an appeasement of Soviet demands regarding the curtailment of free speech in West Berlin. Published by the American Information Services Division in West Berlin, *Der Monat* was intended both as a propaganda instrument, and as a conduit for replenishing the perceived impoverishment of West German cultural life. Direct United States government sponsorship of *Der Monat* was withdrawn in late 1954, and was replaced with grants from the Ford Foundation, although this had, to the continued irritation of the Soviets, no palpable effect either on what Peter Coleman has described as the journal's 'transatlantic cultural mission', or its close relationship with the Congress for Cultural Freedom.<sup>44</sup>

In May 1955 *Der Monat* published the abbreviated version of 'Das Altern der neuen Musik', mentioned above. The final expanded version of the essay, upon which the *Telos* translation is based, appeared in the collection of essays entitled *Dissonanzen: Musik in der verwalteten Welt*.<sup>45</sup> Nine months after its appearance in *Der Monat* 'Das Altern der neuen Musik' was translated by Fred Goldbeck and published in *Preuves*.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly in view of Goldbeck's support for serialism, he was at pains in the translator's preface to point out that Adorno's objections to serialism served to confirm the diversity of music and music criticism, and that 'above all, the bitterness that circulates in [Adorno's] essay is as enervating as sea air'.<sup>47</sup> Goldbeck's translation was then translated into English by Rollo Myers, and published in *The Score and IMA Magazine*.<sup>48</sup> As has been noted, Myers appears to have had a close relationship with the Congress. Certainly, his indignation that

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<sup>44</sup> Peter Coleman. *The Liberal Conspiracy*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'Das Altern der neuen Musik.' *Der Monat* 80 (May 1955): 150-158. The revised and expanded version of the essay appeared in *Dissonanzen: Musik in der verwalteten Welt*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956) 143-167.

<sup>46</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'Le vieillissement de la musique moderne.' Translated and with preface by Fred Goldbeck. *Preuves* 60 (February 1956): 24-34.

<sup>47</sup> Fred Goldbeck. Preface to 'Le vieillissement de la musique moderne': 24.

<sup>48</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'Modern Music is Growing Old.' Rollo Myers, tr. *The Score and IMA Magazine* 18 (December 1956): 18-29. Myers appends the footnote 'translated from the French'.

*L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* had attracted 'a good deal of criticism in various quarters – criticism not always free from a partisan taint, either political or artistic' suggests that Myers was acutely sensitive to the attacks made upon the festival by those on the other side of the ideological divide.<sup>49</sup> Myers was to serve on the judging panel for Nabokov's next Congress outing, *La Musica nel XX Secolo* (see the Conclusion). Myers's translation of Goldbeck's translation of Adorno's essay attenuated the equation between serialism and totalitarianism to the extent that, as shall now be demonstrated, Myers distorted Adorno's reference to totalitarian states in general so as to make it appear as though the author was referring to Stalinism specifically.

The scholarly translation published in *Telos* contains a passage that begins: 'The brutal measures taken by the totalitarian states, measures that over-control music and attack all deviation as decadent and subversive, give tangible evidence of what happens less visibly in non-totalitarian countries . . .'.<sup>50</sup> This passage, which appears to accuse parties on either side of the ideological divide of the active and passive censorship detailed in this study, was based upon the passage as it appeared in *Der Monat*, and which was retained unaltered in *Dissonanzen*. The original began as follows: 'Die brutalen Maßnahmen der totalitären Staaten beider Spieltarten, welche die Musik gängeln und die Abweichung als dekadent und subversiv . . .'.<sup>51</sup> What can be reasonably assumed to be a reference to totalitarianism 'of both types', that is, to Nazism and Stalinism, invokes the possibility that Adorno was well aware of the ideological persuasion of the bulk of *Der Monat*'s readership, a persuasion which was consistent with the Congress's anti-totalitarian stance. A reference to both Nazism and Stalinism would also have had a particular resonance for those living in occupied Berlin, where *Der Monat* was published.

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<sup>49</sup> Rollo Myers. 'The Paris May Festival.' *Chesterian* 27 (July 1952): 23.

<sup>50</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 115.

<sup>51</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'Das Altern der neuen Musik': 158.

Goldbeck translated the passage in question as: ‘Les mesures brutales des régimes totalitaires, où la musique est prise en laisse et toute déviation jugée décadente et subversive, et menacée de sanctions – ces mesures reflètent, grossièrement, ce qui, de façon larvée et plus subtile, se passe également dans les autres pays . . .’.<sup>52</sup> The absence here of any reference to totalitarianism ‘of both types’, together with the omission of Adorno’s suggestion that non-totalitarian (by inference, anti-Soviet) states were guilty of similar acts of censorship, suggests a benign intervention of the part of Goldbeck who, perhaps mindful of the already tense situation in Paris, may have chosen to delete the reference. If this was the case then serialism as a manifestation of the Neither-Nor had found a stout defender.

The final twist came when Rollo Myers translated Goldbeck’s version as: ‘The brutal measures current under totalitarian régimes, where music is muzzled and any “deviation” looked upon as decadent and subversive . . .’.<sup>53</sup> In 1956 the only regime ‘currently’ engaged in this type of censorship was the Soviet Union. Myers’s distortion may of course have been the result of careless translation. But it is more probable that he was driven to fabrication either on account of his diplomatic connections, or because he was conscious of the ideological concerns of his English-language readers. But most importantly, Myers’s actions confirm that serial music was ill-suited for propaganda purposes because, if it was a sufficiently unknown quantity that Myers felt emboldened to embellish another’s attempt to justify it, could not the Soviets do the same? Whatever is the case, the episode serves to confirm that truth, or at least editorial accuracy, was among the first casualties during the Cold War. It also highlights the need for caution when dealing with source material of this nature.

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<sup>52</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Le vieillissement de la musique moderne’: 33.

<sup>53</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Modern Music is Growing Old’: 28.

In a clear reference to Adorno, Eimert in his above-mentioned article pointed out that ‘one such “social critic” of music has in fact attributed to the twelve-tone system the power to produce programme music, whose only suitable counterparts would be concentration camps’.<sup>54</sup> In keeping with what has been argued as to serialism’s resistance to ideological appropriation, Eimert argued that it was folly to suggest that serialism could sustain programmatic references of this (or indeed any) sort. But what serialism represented (as opposed to portrayed) was, in Eimert’s estimation, ‘the only true freedom [which] lies in the guidance provided by one’s own personal strategy’.<sup>55</sup>

Boulez’s rhetoric in defence of the expansion of serial technique resonated with the very quality that Eimert identified. This was a dedication to his own creative path, not one that owed an allegiance to anyone or anything else. The ‘petrified façade’ through which culture was defended in the name of preserving a pre-existing ideological and political order was quite simply of little or no consequence to Boulez. Boulez’s recollection was that during the late 1940s and early 1950s ‘the USSR stood for ideology, US for modernity. Seen in retrospect, what a curious pair of alternatives!’<sup>56</sup> Aside from confirming Abel’s observation with regard to the ubiquitousness of Soviet propaganda at the time, this also suggests that for Boulez at least, aesthetics and political ideology were irreconcilable. His subsequent denigration of Nabokov as a ‘mercenary lackey’ whom, as he boasted to John Cage, he ‘had put in his place’, suggests that Boulez was not only keen to maintain the separation between art and ideology, but that Nabokov’s efforts to establish

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<sup>54</sup> Herbert Eimert. ‘The Composer’s Freedom of Choice’: 9, *fn* 5.

<sup>55</sup> Herbert Eimert. ‘The Composer’s Freedom of Choice’: 9.

<sup>56</sup> Pierre Boulez. Letter to Jean-Jacques Nattiez, dated March 1990. *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, 24.



a linkage between Boulez's 'curious pair of alternatives' – political ideology and culture – were disingenuous.<sup>57</sup>

This study has exposed the attitudes towards serialism adopted by individuals and parties on both sides of the Cold War divide. In contrast to the opposing verdicts taken with regard to neo-classicism, the antagonists appear to have been unified in their mutual hostility towards serialism. This hostility was for a large part based upon suspicion, which itself stemmed from an inability or an unwillingness to fully comprehend the style and idea of the music. Nabokov's very astute assessment of the rationale behind the Soviet charge of 'formalism' – that formalist composers were 'participating in mysterious, unknown, and therefore subversive activities' – reflected sentiments that, through his actions, may have been attributed to Nabokov himself. Although not succumbing to the paranoia behind the Soviet verdict, Nabokov shared the preference of the Soviet cultural commissars for music that resided in Meyer-Eppler's semantic dimension; that is, music capable of sustaining associations that could be used to support their respective ideological positions.

Leaving aside that aspect of Nabokov's selection criteria which, in embracing the dictum 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend', sought to lionise Soviet composers censured by their own government, both parties attempted to judge the ideological fortitude of a given piece of music according to one or both of two parameters. The first was a value judgement based upon the appropriateness of the music in sustaining their ideological beliefs. The second concerned the presence or absence of a supporting text, whether intrinsic to the work itself, as is the case with *chants du mass*, for example; or extrinsic, such as is the case with Stravinsky's dedication of the *Symphony in C* to 'the glory of God'. The balance between these two parameters varied, in that Nabokov, for

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<sup>57</sup> Pierre Boulez. Letter to John Cage, dated 'after' June 18 1953. *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, 145.

example, considered the aesthetic attributes of the music, and the potential ability of those attributes to appeal either to people in positions of power, or those supposedly in need of guidance by them. He appears to have been prepared to relax his aesthetic requirements if the music in some way enhanced the impact of a text that suited the Congress's ideological message, as was the case with Dallapiccola's *Canti di Prigione*. Although this reasoning still fails to account for the inclusion in Nabokov's programme of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, in that the details of the text remain obscure to the uninitiated, it is possible that the work was deliberately positioned so as to 'shatter the nerves' of people such as Jean Allary in order to make the affirmative qualities of *Oedipus Rex* (which followed *Erwartung* on the night of 20 May 1952) appear more so. René Dumesnil, for one, thought that *Erwartung* suffered unfairly because of the juxtaposition.<sup>58</sup> The Soviets for their part pursued a capricious and arcane rationale that, as Aaron Copland had pointed out to Shostakovich in New York, allowed them to criticise a wide range of compositional styles in advance.

The attitudes of both Cold War antagonists to serial music were driven by political imperatives that had little use for artforms wherein the act of creation was more important than any perceived ideological content, whether imposed from without, by cultural agents such as Nabokov and Khrennikov, or created from within, by the Progressiste composers. It has been shown that among composers themselves, ideological imperatives were either allowed to dominate individual creativity (Nigg, for example), or ignored in favour of personal artistic freedom (Boulez). It will become apparent that the latter course of action was, given the circumstances at the time, scarcely less of a political act than the former.

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<sup>58</sup> René Dumesnil. 'Les concerts – "Erwartung de Schoenberg aux Champs-Élysées.'" *Le Monde* 23 May 1952: 9.

Chapter Five has described those aspects of Nabokov's first tier programme that were viewed with cynicism by a Parisian public that was neither as anti-Communist as the Americans had hoped, nor blindly accepting of American foreign economic and cultural policies. This cynicism was further aggravated by both the content and the mode of delivery of the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Chapter Six has shown how and why the chamber-music series was consistent with the belief that France remove itself from the ideological battleground. The chamber-music repertoire, chosen by a French champion of the avant-garde, was shown to be for the most part more in keeping with contemporary views of culture that eschewed outmoded cultural practices and ideological beliefs. As Guy Dumur wrote after attending the première of *Structures Ia*: 'Thus go the times. There goes the old Europe. Since this is its whole point'.<sup>59</sup> Myers's misrepresentation of Adorno's suggestion that society was to blame for the rise of serial music was offered as evidence of the ambiguity (based upon an unwillingness, or inability, to comprehend) surrounding serial music. This ambiguity, this lack of definition of the sort offered by either neo-tonal or texted music, rendered serial music unsuited for ideological propaganda purposes.

The study has thus far exposed what third parties argued serial music was not; namely, a form of expression capable of being pressed into the service of a given ideology. Chapters Seven to Ten describe what it was, and that is a conscience-driven affirmation of personal liberty that in both the severity of its compositional method and its aural outcome reflected the aspirations and fears of contemporary society. In so doing it articulated truths that neither of the Cold War antagonists were willing to countenance. To this end, Chapters Seven and Eight demonstrate that the discourse concerning the need felt by socially aware artists to find an equilibrium between creativity and social responsibility was in France the

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<sup>59</sup> Guy Dumur. 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle et ses lacunes: La partie musicale ne peut subir que des critiques de détail.' *Combat* 14 May 1952: 1.

subject of a more balanced, if somewhat abstract exchange, one that took as its point of departure Jean-Paul Sartre's view of commitment in art. Sartre's contribution to the art versus ideology debate further demonstrates how the music of the avant-garde came to be associated in France with a non-aligned, albeit Left-leaning, school of thought.

Sartre's pre-Stalinist views become particularly relevant to this study when considered in tandem with the contents of Leibowitz's monograph *L'artiste et sa conscience: Esquisse d'un dialectique de la conscience artistique* (Paris: L'Arche, 1950), for which he provided the preface. Leibowitz in his book offered a sharp and detailed response to Nigg's embrace of the findings of the Prague Manifesto. But he did so in a way as to afford the opportunity to assess what is essentially a politically neutral critique concerning art and social responsibility, one which challenged Kaldor's view that creative innovation and social responsibility were in effect mutually exclusive. It will transpire that the exchange between Sartre and Leibowitz points to another permutation of the dichotomy between the message and the medium, one in which the validity of the message was dependent upon the innovation brought to bear in expressing it. This finding helps pave the way for the argument that a certain level of commitment lies embedded in *Structures 1a*.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## Music and Jean-Paul Sartre's Idea of Commitment

According to Maxwell Adereth, commitment in art is predicated on ‘. . . two simple propositions. One is that interest in one's own time is a great source of inspiration for art, and the other is that creative freedom for the writer is inseparable from a sense of social responsibility’.<sup>1</sup> On the basis of these propositions it is easy to see why socialist realism constituted a form of commitment. As Adereth points out, when Maxim Gorky coined the expression “socialist realism” at the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934:

It was merely an assertion of his belief in the superiority of Marxism and of the Soviet system and an appeal to *like-minded* artists that they should observe and describe reality in the light of the changes taking place around them and of their socialist convictions.<sup>2</sup>

Had socialist realism been pursued in the way that Gorky had intended originally, it may well have been what Sartre hoped would be ‘a perfectly defensible theory of art’. The problem was that, as has been demonstrated with regard to the Progressiste movement in post-War France, Gorky's original intention was perverted by Stalinism in order to impose its own political orthodoxy, irrespective of personal aesthetic convictions. To this end socialist realism became an administrative obligation, one that in Nigg's case appears to have exerted unwelcome pressures on his creativity, despite his allegiance to the ideology that it sought to promote.

In post-War France there existed another view of commitment in art, one that, although more speculative, appears to have had a broader appeal to those intellectuals uncomfortable with the orthodox and ultimately illusory political model offered by socialist realism. This is not to suggest that the French approach was apolitical. The

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<sup>1</sup> Maxwell Adereth. *Commitment in Modern French Literature*. (London: Gollancz, 1967) 30.

<sup>2</sup> Maxwell Adereth. *Commitment in Modern French Literature*, 197.

Occupation and Resistance prompted committed artists (and a significant proportion of the French populace) to conclude that the struggle against injustice was largely one of the Left to overcome the Right. To these individuals the quasi-feudal hierarchy upon which capitalism is based was a breeding ground for Fascism. For them, only Marxism held out the possibility of a truly egalitarian society. This reasoning establishes the political complexion of the view of commitment promoted by Jean-Paul Sartre around 1947, one that nevertheless became increasingly more pronounced as he moved closer to the Marxist camp. Leibowitz in *L'artiste et sa conscience: Esquisse d'une dialectique de la conscience artistique* (Paris, 1950) attempted to situate certain types of music (Schoenberg's in particular) within, or more accurately, adjacent to Sartre's view of commitment. Adjacent, in the sense that Leibowitz was more preoccupied with the humanist, rather than the political resonances of Sartrean commitment. It matters not that, as Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka have suggested, Leibowitz's book 'does very little to fulfil the promise of [its] subtitle', which translates as 'Sketch for a Dialectic of the Artistic Consciousness'.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this study, the book offers itself as an important documentation of the attempt made by the 'St. John the Baptist of Schoenberg's "religion"', to come to terms with the ideological and philosophical currents coursing through French intellectual circles in the late 1940s and beyond.<sup>4</sup> In so doing it further highlights the political and aesthetic position taken by one of Nabokov's (and Stravinsky's) more vocal, and less ideologically driven, opponents.

In order to properly appreciate Leibowitz's stance it is first necessary to gain an understanding of Sartre's stylised view of commitment, and of the existentialism that

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Contat and Michel Rybalka. *The Writings of Jean-Paul Sartre. Volume 1: A Bibliographical Life*. Richard McCleary, tr. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) 238.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Rostand. *French Music Today*, 133.

motivated it, because it is here that the French perspective regarding the sociological implications of high modernism in music, and its relevance to the Cold War confrontation, is brought into stark relief. Sartre's concept of commitment can be summarised as one in which the ideas of freedom and responsibility that lay at the heart of his pre-War existentialism were given an added moral and political impetus through his (and France's) war-time experiences. The Occupation led Sartre (who was himself imprisoned by the Nazis upon France's surrender in 1940) to the belief that rather than treating freedom and responsibility as abstractions, as he himself had done in his existential archetype *La Nausée* (1938), it was the writer's duty to disavow artistic isolation (Koechlin's *tour d'ivoire*) and work actively towards an egalitarian society.

Sartre's belief that society is truly free only when all of its members enjoy an equal degree of freedom introduced a Marxist aspiration to his existentialist belief that Man *is* Man because he is free to act, free to make choices based upon an evaluation of his circumstances. In existentialist terminology this determinism is based upon a duality between an entity's *existence* – in other words, what it is at the point of its creation, and its *essence* – what it is destined to become. With the exception of Man, in all other inanimate or animate entities *essence* is thought to precede *existence*; that is, the entity itself has no control over what it will become. For example, a seed will grow into a plant or a tree, its size predetermined by an event beyond its control, namely, the amount and condition of the soil in which it finds itself. Similarly, a calf will become a cow, its role in life (as the provider of beef, milk, or leather) being determined by the farmer. Only in Man does existence precede essence. Only Man, in what Sartre believed was the absence of God, is free (or indeed doomed) to choose the course of his life, in that he is a man before he is a musician, a builder, a politician. As Jan Maguire points out, Leibowitz extended this idea to twelve-tone music. The row chosen by the composer constituted the *existent* of the

composition; the composer in his handling of the row elaborated its *essence*.<sup>5</sup>

Sartre's idea of literary commitment was based upon the premise that 'the writer, a free man addressing free men, has only one subject – freedom'.<sup>6</sup> The artist's creative freedom was tempered by the expectation that he be responsive to society's needs, and that he communicate his concerns in a comprehensible way. As to how this was best achieved, Sartre believed that the committed artist bore a responsibility not to 'overwhelm' his audience; that is, he should communicate his commitment using means that were clear, or at least unambiguous.<sup>7</sup> The link between responsibility and comprehension points to a theoretical convergence between Sartre's view of commitment and the one espoused by socialist realists. But where the two diverge lies in the choice of expressive means through which the artist articulated his social responsibility. To the Soviets and their proxies any artform was permissible provided it was seen as espousing Stalinist political dogma. In Sartre's view, prose alone was to be entrusted with the burden of commitment, one that prior to his embrace of Stalinism (or perhaps more accurately, his rejection of imperialism) rose above political expediency.

Both forms of commitment require the committed artist to take into account the public at which their art is directed, and in Sartre's case the importance of this responsibility is confirmed by the sheer size of the chapter 'For Whom Does One Write?', which forms the bulk of his article of faith concerning commitment.<sup>8</sup> At a superficial level this requirement was linked to the issue of comprehensibility – to the need for the public to be given the opportunity to understand what the artist wished to express. But Sartre's belief in the necessity of an *engagement* (commitment) between the politically aware artist and his

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Maguire. 'René Leibowitz (1913-1972).' *Tempo* 131 (December 1979): 7.

<sup>6</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'Why Write?' "*What is Literature?*" and *Other Essays*. Introduction by Steven Ungar. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988) 68.

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'For Whom Does One Write?' "*What is Literature?*", 56.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'For Whom Does One Write?' "*What is Literature?*", 70-140.



public was grounded upon a class consciousness similar to that which led Louis Saguer to conclude that Stravinsky and Schoenberg were bourgeois because to Saguer's way of thinking they deliberately aimed their art over the heads of bourgeois audiences.<sup>9</sup>

The quandary for Sartre, and in this he was arguably more realistic than many French intellectuals at the time, was that he was prepared to acknowledge that in comparison at least to his English and American counterparts, the French writer was 'the only one who has remained a bourgeois'.<sup>10</sup> By this he meant that from a Marxian economic perspective the French writer was a consumer rather than a producer: 'Well housed, decently dressed, not so well fed, perhaps'.<sup>11</sup> Sartre's position points to a valid but seldom acknowledged parallel between Marx's utopian vision of a society dominated by the producers (the working class) and a post-War Europe 'preoccupied before everything else with reconstruction'.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, in a society 'which insists upon production and restricts consumption to what is strictly necessary, the work of literature is evidently gratuitous'. This led Sartre to conclude that 'An author shot is one less mouth to feed. The least important producer would be a greater loss to the nation'.<sup>13</sup>

Significantly, what saved the author was that the gratuitousness of the literary work 'far from grieving us, is our pride, and we know that it is the image of freedom.' This sheds further light upon the circumstances surrounding the exclusion of the musical avant-garde from the post-War social and ideological discourse. If Sartre's verdict regarding

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that in 1950 Schoenberg wrote that before he was twenty-five he 'found out that [he] was a bourgeois and turned away from all political contacts.' 'My Attitude Towards Politics.' *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*. Leonard Stein, ed., Leo Black, tr. (London: Faber, 1984) 505.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Situation of the Writer in 1947.' "*What is Literature?*", 141. Sartre reckoned that 'the American writer has often practised manual occupations before writing his books; he goes back to them'. English 'intellectuals are less integrated into the collectivity than we; they form an eccentric and slightly cantankerous caste which does not have much contact with the rest of the population'.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Situation of the Writer in 1947.' "*What is Literature?*", 142.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Situation of the Writer in 1947.' "*What is Literature?*", 190.

<sup>13</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Situation of the Writer in 1947.' "*What is Literature?*", 191.

post-War European society's preoccupation with production (or, from Nabokov's perspective, restoration) rather than consumption can be taken to be accurate, then presumably music, like literature, would also be 'evidently gratuitous'. Like the author, the composer was, in terms of his social function, a consumer during a period that favoured the producer. But that which saved the author from the firing-squad, his ability to offer society an image of freedom, was not a property that Sartre saw fit to extend to music. Thus, at a time when the political current in France had swung to the Left, and when the emphasis on production rather than consumption (to the undoubted chagrin of the American architects of the Marshall Plan) saw European society at least temporarily gravitating towards Marx's utopian economic model, the majority of avant-gardist composers who identified with the Left were consigned, in a metaphorical sense, if not to the firing-squad, then at least to Coventry.

The author in dealing directly with "meaning" was able to assert an image of existential freedom that to Sartre's way of thinking, and with suitable qualification, should be the *raison d'être* of committed art. Sartre was at the time quite adamant that music in general was unsuited to communicating commitment: 'One does not paint meanings; one does not put them into music. Under these conditions, who would dare require that the painter or musician commit himself?'<sup>14</sup> Although Sartre was later (in *Les Mots*, Paris 1963) to modify his position, it was his preparedness in the late 1940s to deny the presence of commitment in all forms of art save for prose, and his reasons for doing so, that prompted Leibowitz to attempt to include music (and Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* in particular) within the idea of commitment.

Sartre's expectation was that committed art should militate beyond its subject matter. This view emerges in his reaction to Picasso's *Guernica* – which was to ask 'does anyone

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<sup>14</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'What is Writing?' "*What is Literature?*", 28.

think that it won over a single heart to the Spanish cause?'<sup>15</sup> Sartre's verdict was based upon the belief that the painting did not communicate his notion of commitment because beyond its documentary value it offered no solutions as to how this particular form of social injustice might be overcome.<sup>16</sup> Rather than offering a solution, *Guernica* was evidence of the artist's reaction to the injustices meted out by the forces of Fascism. Although the painting is expressive of a barbaric event, to Sartre it could never be anything more than an account of a barbaric act. Like all visual art, poetry, and music, it was to Sartre an "object" impregnated with the creator's emotions – emotions which however sublimely expressed, the creator could only hope will find a resonance with those of the observer. Its meaning thus beholden to someone else, the painting is not free, and therefore to his way of thinking it could not be expected to communicate a commitment to freedom.

The use of the word "meaning" in the above needs to be qualified by an understanding of the distinction that Sartre made between the terms "meaning" and "significance". The distinction was defined very clearly in his preface to *L'artiste et sa conscience*. Here Sartre argued that the very best to which music (and visual art, such as *Guernica*) could aspire was to carry significance, whereas only meaning is capable of sustaining commitment:

I have always really distinguished meaning from significance. It seems to me, an object signifies when an allusion to another object is made through it. In this case the mind ignores the sign itself; it reaches beyond to the thing signified; often it so happens that this last remains present when we have long since forgotten the words [or object] which caused us to conceive of it. The meaning, on the contrary, is not distinct from the object itself and is all the more manifest inasmuch as we are more attentive to the thing which it inhabits. I would say that an object has meaning when it incarnates a reality which transcends it but which cannot be apprehended outside of it . . .<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'What is Writing?' "What is Literature?", 28.

<sup>16</sup> Bearing in mind the period in which Sartre made this statement, Picasso's Stalinist idolatry, which on the occasion of Stalin's seventieth birthday saw *Les lettres françaises* publish a Picasso sketch depicting a wine glass toasting 'Staline: à ta santé', may indeed have implied that the artist had succumbed to a myth that committed prose sought to confront; namely, a dictator's perverted vision of social justice. *Les lettres françaises* 298 (9 February 1950): 8.

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 216-217.

To Sartre, *Guernica* was an object, the value of which lay in the quality of the artistic expression that Picasso brought to bear in the act of creating the painting. The shapes and colours on the canvas were, like musical notes, ‘not signs. They refer to nothing exterior to themselves’.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, in Sartre’s estimation Picasso as a painter ‘does not want to draw signs upon his canvas, he wants to create a thing’.<sup>19</sup>

But this is not to say that a third party might assign a significance – ‘confer [a] value of signs’ – upon the painting. The painting’s potential significance therefore reaches beyond its existence as a ‘thing’ to the actual event that it depicts, which is the destruction of the Spanish town Guernica during a Fascist air-raid. The problem for *Guernica*, as Sartre suggested in his description of meaning, was that the viewer’s attention is more likely to focus upon it, rather than ‘the thing which it inhabits’, namely, the loss of life and liberty. In effect it is up to the viewer to rationalise his sensory reaction in order to confer a significance upon the painting, to see it as a system of signs from which a meaning (in this case, the evils of Fascism) might be drawn. The ultimate paradox was that, and bearing in mind Adorno’s lament regarding the commodification of high art, the genius of Picasso’s art effectively neutralised its militancy. As Sartre pointed out, Picasso was ‘a sincere Communist’, whose “formalism”, while being ‘condemned by the Soviet leaders’, resulted in him being seen simultaneously as a ‘purveyor by appointment to rich American collectors’.<sup>20</sup>

It fell to Adorno to argue that a certain quality of commitment resided in an aesthetically autonomous work such as *Guernica*, not least because its aesthetic preoccupations succeeded in highlighting the plight of the innocents in such a way as to confront those who would perpetrate such a crime, a ruling class intellectually equipped to

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<sup>18</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘What is Writing?’ “*What is Literature?*”, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘What is Writing?’ “*What is Literature?*”, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘The Artist and His Conscience.’ *Situations*, 213.

appreciate its aesthetic deviation. As Adorno recounted: ‘An officer of the Nazi occupation forces visited the painter in his studio and, pointing to *Guernica*, asked : “Did you do that?”. Picasso is said to have answered, “No, you did”. Autonomous works of art, too, like this painting, firmly negate empirical reality, destroy the destroyer, that which merely exists . . .’.<sup>21</sup> The question pursued in this and subsequent chapters is whether the autonomy inherent in a work such as *Structures Ia* constituted a similar negation of an empirical reality – if Adorno is understood to be referring here to a reality capable of being related to one already experienced – and that in the act of negation it effectively confronted ‘that which merely exists’. Had the actual historical circumstances been different, the German officer might well have confronted Boulez at the Comédie des Champs-Élysées after the premiere of *Structures Ia* and demanded ‘Did you do that?’ As Adorno would have it, Boulez would have replied ‘No, you did’.

The idea that an autonomous work of art can negate reality, an idea which Adorno attributed to Sartre, is described by the former as ‘the connection between the autonomy of a work and an intention which is not conferred upon it [Sartre’s significance] but has its own gesture towards reality’.<sup>22</sup> This possibility was canvassed by Leibowitz in *L’artiste et sa conscience*, and in particular the chapter entitled ‘*La signification de l’engagement musical*’, in which he argued that Schoenberg’s development and use of twelve-tone technique constituted a form of artistic commitment equivalent to the political commitment embedded in the subject matter of the text of *A Survivor from Warsaw*.

Sartre’s response to this suggestion, which will be the subject of close examination, leaves open the possibility that some form of commitment based upon intentional non-significance may reside in the highly abstract nature of *Structures Ia*. As Sartre himself

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<sup>21</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Commitment.’ *Aesthetics and Politics*, 190.

<sup>22</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Commitment.’ *Aesthetics and Politics*, 190.

asked in relation to socialist realism, which is more committed, ‘An art that is free but abstract, or an art that is concrete but indentured?’<sup>23</sup> Although difficult to understand in the normative sense and, as has been argued previously, therefore resistant to ideological appropriation (‘an intention conferred upon it’), *Structures Ia* may well have gestured towards the dire post-War reality described by Adorno in ‘The Aging of the New Music’. Somewhat ironically, the work may also have evoked an existential freedom that operated at a level beyond that which Sartre wished for prose, one that neither of the Cold War antagonists could subvert to their own ends.

In Sartre’s view only ‘the writer deals with meanings’.<sup>24</sup> This is because, as he argued in the above, written words incarnate a reality that transcends the ink markings on the page, and at the same time this incarnation is totally dependent on the words as the expressive medium. Although he appeared to leave the window of opportunity ajar, non-texted music could not in Sartre’s estimation communicate a type of commitment based upon significance, let alone meaning. As he pointed out to Leibowitz:

But as for “lofty progressive ideas”, how on earth do you set them to music? For music is a *non-signifying* art. Slovenly minds might have taken delight in speaking of a “musical language.” But we are perfectly aware that a “musical phrase” has no designated object: it is in itself an object. How then can this mute evoke for man his destiny?<sup>25</sup>

Turning his attention, as Leibowitz had done in the body of his text, to the Prague Manifesto, Sartre ridiculed its attempt at a solution:

which for its sheer naïvety is a joy: we shall cultivate “musical forms which allow these goals to be attained, above all, vocal music-operas, oratorios, cantatas, chorales, etc.” Good God, these hybrids are nothing but babblers, making small talk to music. What they are really saying is that music should be only a pretext, a means of enhancing the glory of the word. *It is the word* of which Stalin will sing, the Five Year Plan, the electrification of the Soviet Union. Set to other words, the same music could glorify Pétain, Churchill, Truman, the T[ennessee] V[alley] A[uthority]. By changing the words, a hymn to the Russian dead of Stalingrad will become a funeral oration for

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘The Artist and His Conscience.’ *Situations*, 224.

<sup>24</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘What is Writing?’ “*What is Literature?*”, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘The Artist and His Conscience.’ *Situations*, 214.

Germans fallen before the same city. What do the sounds contribute? A great blast of sonorous heroism; it is the word which will speak.<sup>26</sup>

Sartre's assertion is validated by the way in which Beethoven's *Egmont* overture was appropriated by the Nazis, the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and the Deutsche Demokratik Republik. In Sartre's opinion Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* suffered a similar plight. 'Even there', Sartre writes, 'Schoenberg could not avoid recourse to words. In that "gallop of wild horses," how would we recognise the enumeration of the dead without the words? We would only hear a gallop'. In actual fact, and Sartre acknowledged this, Leibowitz had side-stepped in a number of ways the shortcomings that Sartre ascribed to music. Firstly, Leibowitz chose (as will be shown, with good reason) one of Schoenberg's few overtly political works (*A Survivor from Warsaw*) as his case in point; secondly, he included the text in his consideration of the music; and thirdly, he argued that a commitment to radical artistic innovation is no less valid than, and indeed forms an integral part of, social commitment. It is the last of these that forms the pretext for arguing the case for commitment in *Structures 1a*.

The contents of Leibowitz's book, in particular the amount of space he devoted to criticising Soviet cultural policy, make it clear that he blurred the distinction somewhat between involvement and commitment. Adereth has emphasised the important difference between the Sartrean idea of involvement ('which no writer can avoid') and commitment ('which is the conscious acknowledgement of the involvement').<sup>27</sup> The difference between the two terms can be understood by again referring to Picasso's *Guernica*. The painting confirmed the painter's *involvement* with one of the more pressing issues of the day, the struggle against Fascism. But to Sartre's way of thinking it did not demonstrate Picasso's *commitment* because, existing as it does within the realm of the imaginary (in the sense that

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 214.

<sup>27</sup> Maxwell Adereth. *Commitment in Modern French Literature*, 35.

the marks on the canvas are not a literal, that is historical, account of the destruction of Guernica) it requires an act of goodwill, or at least sympathy, on the part of the observer in order to assign significance, and with that, meaning.<sup>28</sup> As such, the painting, like a poem, or a piece of music, operated at a sensory level and therefore offered no evidence of the painter's *conscious* acknowledgement of the reality of his own involvement. Such an acknowledgement could, to Sartre's way of thinking, only be articulated through the directness of the written word.

Reinhardt Kapp appears to have confused what he considers to be Leibowitz's political involvement for artistic commitment. According to Kapp, Leibowitz 'adapted the 12-note method in an intellectual climate conditioned by the problems of the Popular Front and political commitment. His artistic commitment during the Spanish Civil War seems inseparably linked with the music of Schoenberg'.<sup>29</sup> Kapp appears to be using the term 'political commitment' in the same sense that it was used previously, in reference to the political awareness of those associated with AFMP. It has been demonstrated that no less a figure than Picasso was politically aware, but that in spite of this his art was deemed by Sartre to be incapable of sustaining commitment. To Sartre's way of thinking an artist's political awareness did not necessarily ensure that he would produce committed art. More significantly in terms of this study, an absence of an overt political awareness of the sort offered by Picasso, for example, should not be taken to preclude the possibility that an artist might be capable of articulating, through his art, the social ramifications of a third party's political expediency.

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<sup>28</sup> Keith Gore considered at length Sartre's understanding of the real, as opposed to the unreal or the imaginary. This led Gore to conclude that 'the work of art escapes the limitations and the conditions of the real world . . . Once an artist has created it, it exists absolutely and for all time, untouchable and unchangeable'. *Sartre: La Nausée and Les Mouches*. (London: Arnold, 1970) 12.

<sup>29</sup> Reinhardt Kapp. 'Shades of the Double's Original: René Leibowitz's Dispute with Boulez.' *Tempo* 165 (June 1988): 4.



Kapp appears to have been a little hasty in drawing an equation between Leibowitz's political and artistic commitment. At the very least it is problematic to link political commitment with the notion that Leibowitz himself was artistically committed. It should be apparent from what has been outlined above that Leibowitz could not commit simply through an association with Schoenberg's work – even if, as he suggested in *Schoenberg and His School*, that coming to grips with Schoenberg's 'language', and assimilating it into his creative and social consciousness, had become 'the chief goal of [his] existence'.<sup>30</sup> Neither could Schoenberg himself argue the case for his own commitment, even if in the unlikely event he wished to do so. Sartre in his response to Leibowitz firmly closed off such an option:

. . . the artist should not be a commentator of his own work for the benefit of the public. If his music is committed, this commitment will be found in its intuitive reality, in the sonorous object as it will appear immediately to the ear, without reference to the artist or to previous traditions. Is this even possible?<sup>31</sup>

Leaving the main thrust of this question unanswered for the time being, it will suffice to say that Leibowitz in *L'artiste et sa conscience* sought to argue the case for artistic and social commitment in Schoenberg's work, not his own. It is fair to say that the book was more successful in confirming Leibowitz's political awareness, an awareness nevertheless requisite to an ability to divine commitment in the work of another.

Kapp considered Leibowitz's contributions to *Esprit*, a journal linked with the Popular Front prior to the War, to be evidence of his political commitment. It is more accurate to suggest that Leibowitz's articles highlight an involvement (in Adereth's sense of an unavoidable awareness) with the journal's political preoccupation, which was anti-totalitarianism in general and, at the time of Leibowitz's contributions, bolstering the Republican cause in Spain. *Esprit* regularly published a full-page statement of its beliefs

<sup>30</sup> René Leibowitz. *Schoenberg and His School*. Dika Newlin, tr. (New York: Da Capo, 1970) xi.

<sup>31</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 215-6.

and aims. The statement began by pointing out that the journal was established in October 1932 by 'a group of young men sensitive, above all, to their presence in a world of misery, who have decided to liquidate the established disorder and realise a new order based upon the living primacy of spiritual values'.<sup>32</sup> To this end, *Esprit* undertook two tasks; firstly, to be 'a work of purification . . . to denounce exploitation by the world of money, the social regime, the press, [political] parties, etc . . . Secondly, to be a work of creation, the voice of a new political and social force', one opposed equally to Fascism and Marxism.

Leibowitz's articles in *Esprit* are illuminating not only because they offer a counterbalance to the anti-serial sentiments expressed by Koechlin on behalf of the Popular Front, but also because they generally manage to include one or both of the positions that in music history have proven to be Leibowitz's legacy; namely, his championing of the music of the Second Viennese School and his dislike of Stravinsky's music, in particular what he at one point described as the latter's 'hedonistic' approach to composition.<sup>33</sup> One such article, in which Leibowitz dismissed Stravinsky's *Jeu de cartes* as a 'nightmare', provoked a heated exchange between Leibowitz and the music critic he ultimately replaced at *Esprit*, Maurice Jaubert.<sup>34</sup> Not only does the tone of the exchange foreshadow his confrontation with Nabokov some ten years later, it also raises a number of issues salient to this chapter.

Leibowitz was troubled by Stravinsky's 'borrowings' from 'Gregorian melody, the masses of Palestrina, Bach fugues, Beethoven quartets, [and] Chopin mazurkas'. Stravinsky's eclecticism led Leibowitz to conclude that *Jeu de cartes* was conceived in an absence of '*pensée musicale* [musical thought]', and was therefore inorganic and could not

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<sup>32</sup> 'Pourquoi Esprit?' *Esprit* 66 (March 1938): Table des matières, np.

<sup>33</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Two Composers: A Letter From Hollywood': 362.

<sup>34</sup> René Leibowitz. 'La musique.' *Esprit* 67 (April 1938): 138-140.

rightfully be called music.<sup>35</sup> Music, in Leibowitz's estimation, meant more than producing agreeable sounds and blending them skilfully. As to why audiences would find this music pleasing, Leibowitz suggested that *Jeu de cartes* offered an 'instant and cheap pleasure' that appealed to an 'ignorant and petty' section of society, one that presumably tolerated the composer's 'quasi-dictatorial imposition of [musical] taste upon his "subjects"'.<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps not surprisingly, Jaubert was greatly offended by what he called Leibowitz's 'polemic' against Stravinsky. Jaubert took issue in particular with Leibowitz's reference to the absence of musical thought in Stravinsky's music: 'I confess to being unconvinced as to whether there is such a thing as *musical* thought – music – no more than fine arts and poetry – does not to me seem a medium capable of transmitting a *thought*'.<sup>37</sup> In this regard Jaubert concurred with Sartre's characterisation of music as mute. But Jaubert continued in a vein that, although he may have been forgiven for thinking Leibowitz would agree, actually met with the opposite reaction:

I well understand that the use of the term [musical thought] highlights a salutary and well-founded desire to react against the expressionism and sensualism of yesteryear. But I'm afraid it also conceals the tendency to reintroduce into the arts an intellectualism which, like expressionism and sensualism, but by another route, carries the strong risk of removing art from its proper domain.

As to the nature of this 'proper domain' Jaubert asserted that *Jeu de cartes* was 'the first musical work to eschew totally all traditional formalism and embrace the new realism that has revealed itself in today's visual art'. Far from betraying a poverty of ideas, Stravinsky's eclecticism, his 'use of musical elements effectively without originality and intrinsic value', indicated that the composer was dealing with a 'profoundly original musical reality'. In borrowing from disparate and already existing musical styles and

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<sup>35</sup> René Leibowitz. 'La musique': 139. Fred Goldbeck was later to detect what he considered to be a similar arbitrariness and capriciousness in Stravinsky's theoretical tract *Poetics of Music*. 'La théorie d'Igor Strawinsky.' *Contrepoints* 3 (March-April 1946): 13.

<sup>36</sup> René Leibowitz. 'La musique': 140.

<sup>37</sup> Maurice Jaubert. 'La musique: Dialogue sur Strawinsky.' *Esprit* 70 (July 1938): 583.

fashioning them into a collage far removed from their original context (a thoroughly postmodern pursuit) Jaubert ventured to suggest that Stravinsky's *Jeu de cartes* was the first musical work to reveal the influence of surrealism. This led Jaubert to conclude that *Jeu de cartes* was a work that 'finally frees the musician from an obedience to automatistic techniques and out-moded aesthetics, and restores the eminent dignity of the *creative imagination*'.<sup>38</sup>

There is much to commend Jaubert's equation of Stravinsky's eclecticism with the Surrealist movement in France in the mid-1920s to early 1930s. Stravinsky's preparedness to create collages by manipulating historically disparate technical and stylistic elements was not dissimilar to Surrealist attempts to create 'unreal' entities by juxtaposing objects identifiable with, but removed from, what they considered to be the horrible reality of post-First World War European society. Under the slogan 'Partir' French Surrealist poets such as Louis Aragon and André Breton sought to protest against, and to rise above, the dire reality of their own existence. Just as Surrealist painters sought to aggressively decontextualise known objects, so, too, did the poets of the Popular Front generation hope to free themselves from the deceptions of their own age and draw upon nobler experiences. The fundamental difference between the Surrealists and Stravinsky was that while the former, in their radical attack on convention, aspired to create a better world (an aspiration that saw many of them join the newly-formed PCF), Stravinsky's approach was deemed by those who challenged the bourgeois status quo to be bereft of such altruism.<sup>39</sup> Adorno suggested some years later that Stravinsky's objectivism was a 'deception', an 'illusory

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<sup>38</sup> Maurice Jaubert. 'La musique: Dialogue sur Stravinsky': 584.

<sup>39</sup> Writing in *Contrepoints* in December 1949, Virgil Thomson, a composer and critic whose performance opportunities benefited greatly from a close association with Nabokov and the Congress for Cultural Freedom, dismissed a call made by André Breton ('a good Marxist') for French musicians to embrace the expressive literary principles of Breton's generation. 'Surréalisme & musique.' *Contrepoints* 6 (December 1949): 74-78.

façade of power and security' – an attribute used to good effect by Nabokov.<sup>40</sup> Stravinsky's eclecticism may well have created what Jaubert termed a surreality. But as Leibowitz would have it, if the motivation behind Stravinsky's aesthetic was to distract people from the reality of their own existence, this was not done so in order to create a better world, but to preserve, and later, in the chaotic aftermath of the War, to restore bourgeois values.

Leibowitz replied immediately to Jaubert's scepticism regarding *pensée musicale*, but in his defence he chose what might be termed the soft option in that, rather than defending his position by drawing upon a work by Schoenberg (as he was regularly wont to do), he cited the first movement of Beethoven's First Symphony, in C Major, as his case in point. Leibowitz pointed out that here the 'various heterogeneous elements [melody, harmony, rhythm, and orchestration]' were blended together by means of a 'synthesis' – one that progressively reinforced the formal scheme of the movement. The composer's *pensée musicale* was exposed in the manner in which he was able to manipulate these elements so as to form localised episodes that themselves contribute to the overall form of the movement, a logic easily assigned to (and detected in) sonata form. In Leibowitz's estimation it was Stravinsky rather than Schoenberg who was guilty of intellectualism because, rather than synthesising the elements into an entity greater than the sum of its parts, as Beethoven had done, Stravinsky in *Jeu de cartes* composed using an additive process, and in so doing he had created a 'list' rather than a composition.<sup>41</sup> Attacking *Jeu de cartes* with a greater vitriol than he done initially, Leibowitz concluded that 'the inhuman paradox of this art, its lack of any spiritual substance, seems to me a scandalous phenomenon, one of the great sins of our time'.<sup>42</sup> This verdict identifies the lines of

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<sup>40</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 201-2.

<sup>41</sup> René Leibowitz. 'La musique: Dialogue sur Strawinsky.' *Esprit* 70 (July 1938): 587.

<sup>42</sup> René Leibowitz. 'La musique: Dialogue sur Strawinsky': 587.

demarcation according to spirituality in music that were later to emerge in Nabokov's championing of Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* as an elixir for the spiritual and political impoverishment of Europe's disaffected.

Schoenberg's apparent position as Stravinsky's antithesis emerged in an article by Leibowitz which appeared in *Esprit* in February 1940, when Europe was still engaged in its so-called 'phony war', but when the catastrophe of France's defeat had yet to unfold. Leibowitz began by suggesting that the atonal musical upheaval ministered by 'the Austrian Jew' Schoenberg was a reflection of humanity's crisis in general. But more than this, Leibowitz asked:

Is it possible that a superhuman force, in inducing Schoenberg to overthrow all pre-existing musical ideas, whispered in his ear the secret which will one day determine extraordinary circumstances: the renewed persecution of his race [and] the disappearance of his country? It is in the music of Arnold Schoenberg and those who followed him that we are able to interpret the apocalypse of our times.<sup>43</sup>

In reference to 'those who followed' Schoenberg, Leibowitz singled out the twelve measures that comprise the third movement of Webern's *Variations for Orchestra*, Op. 30 (1935) in particular the 'sporadic' orchestration that characterises the movement, as invoking 'the end of the world . . . an inexpressible terror'. Webern's orchestration, most notably his innovative use of a pair of cow-bells, further confirmed to Leibowitz the presence of a 'superhuman force'.

But rather than presaging 'ruin and disintegration' the atonal apocalypse ushered forth a period of reconstruction that came in the form of Schoenberg's development of twelve-tone technique. The fact that audiences had failed to appreciate this development, and more particularly that they had found solace in 'the more immediate gratification in the music of certain contemporaries of [Schoenberg, Webern and Berg]' (an obvious reference to

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<sup>43</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Propos sur le musicien.' *Esprit* 89 (February 1940): 247-8.

Stravinsky) suggested to Leibowitz that the triumvirate had refused to succumb to the 'devil's eschatology'.

This metaphysical invocation (which by today's standards appears fanciful at best) needs to be tempered by a realisation that, as Mark Poser has suggested, Western Europe was at the time in the grips of 'the continental sensation' that was existentialism.<sup>44</sup> Leibowitz was here concurring with his student Nigg's later suggestion to Kaldor that twelve-tone composers were in pursuit of a metaphysical 'truth', an aspiration thrust upon them by social calamity. As Kaldor intimated, this was an indulgence society could ill afford when truth was in short supply on the ground. Both Kaldor and Sartre were in agreement as to the need for the politically aware artist to make a more direct contribution to the search for a socio-political remedy to society's ills. That said, Leibowitz's metaphysics, like his later attempt to refute Zhdanovian doctrine through a recourse to Sartrean existentialism (rather than, as Sartre himself did, by pointing to its obvious, more immediate creative shortcomings) should be seen in terms of the social milieu in which Leibowitz moved. As Maguire has noted, Leibowitz, both on the strength of his own personality and his father's and wife's connections to the pre-War Parisian intelligentsia, 'fell readily into the company of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus [and] Tristan Tzara'.<sup>45</sup> With a disarming honesty Sartre began his preface to *L'artiste et sa conscience* by suggesting that Leibowitz sought to benefit by such an association:

You have asked, my dear Leibowitz, that I add a few words to your book, since, some time ago I had occasion to write on the subject of literary commitment [*What is Literature?*], and you now hope, through the association of our names, to emphasise the solidarity which unites artists and writers in their common concerns in a given age. Had friendship alone not sufficed, the desire to declare this solidarity would have decided me. But now that I must write, I admit to feeling very awkward.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Mark Poser. *Existential Marxism in Postwar France: From Sartre to Althusser*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 72.

<sup>45</sup> Jan Maguire. 'René Leibowitz (1913-1972)': 7.

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 205.

The reasons for Sartre's awkwardness will remain unspecified for the time being.

Leibowitz's metaphysics was indirectly refuted by Henri Davenson who, in December of 1940, when France was under Nazi occupation (and when *Esprit's* headquarters had been moved 'provisionally' to Lyons in Vichy France) issued 'A Plea for an Impure Music'.<sup>47</sup> Given the dire immediacy of the situation, Davenson asserted that:

music is a human endeavour: it isn't an inter-stellar phenomenon which will continue to exist in the total absence of human ears, perfect and complete, like that pseudo-music attributed to ancient Platonism, based upon the certitude of some splendid mathematical connection. Music does not exist in, and for, the human spirit; it is made by people.<sup>48</sup>

Davenson, like Koechlin and Barraud, was highly critical of the 'Schoenbergians' and their pure music, which was 'supremely indifferent to the heart of man, and his emotions'. Reversing Leibowitz's metaphysics, Davenson drew a connection between pure music and inhumanity, not by suggesting that the former was the cause of the latter, but rather that if, as Plato believed, music was in direct communion with the spirit, then pure music was a deception because 'the musician . . . is first of all a man and not a Muse, a pure Idea: a man, a carnal being, complex, ungainly – worldly and terrible [terrestre et terreux], impure'. Given this, why, asked Davenson, 'be shocked by impure music?'<sup>49</sup> Impure music, which although left undefined appears to be anything other than that of the Second Viennese School, sought not to mask its imperfections, something that pure music, as was the case with Fascism and Marxism, was prone to do.<sup>50</sup> Only impure music could heal the spirit.

Thus it came to pass that two contributors to what was one of the foremost and determinedly non-aligned journals of the period had conflicting views with regard to twelve-tone music. To Leibowitz it was an integral part of Man's search for truth. To

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<sup>47</sup> Henri Davenson. 'Plaidoyer pour une musique impure.' *Esprit* 95 (December 1940): 1-17.

<sup>48</sup> Henri Davenson. 'Plaidoyer pour une musique impure': 1-2.

<sup>49</sup> Henri Davenson. 'Plaidoyer pour une musique impure': 4.

<sup>50</sup> Henri Davenson. 'Plaidoyer pour une musique impure': 10.



Davenson, as it was to Koechlin, and later Nabokov and Khrennikov, it was part of a grand, anti-humanist deception. The prejudices against twelve-tone music that Leibowitz took upon himself to overcome were based on the belief that it was either a reflection of moral and social confusion (Nabokov), or perhaps even turpitude (Barraud), or among the root causes of the same (Khrennikov). Leibowitz's approach in *L'artiste et sa conscience* appears to have been to deflect the former criticisms so as to dismiss the latter. Although he fell out with Boulez over the expansion of serial technique, Leibowitz's defence of the artistic and social relevance of twelve-tone technique created the precedent which allows its expansion to other compositional parameters to be seen as a cultural by-product of the Cold War, rather than a dogged pursuit of *art pour l'art*.

Chapter Seven has detailed Sartre's view of the social relevance of art, which was based in the first instance upon the existentialist belief that the act of creation is an affirmation of personal freedom, a freedom Man alone enjoys. Affirmation became commitment when the artist articulated, using means that were unambiguous, his desire to "change the world". Although, as will be shown, Sartre left the door ajar, he was of the opinion that an absence of ambiguity could only be guaranteed by the meaning of the work, as opposed to its possible significance – and only the written word could carry meaning. Leibowitz's desire to include music within the idea of committed art was traced to his earlier involvement with *Esprit*, a journal that challenged the perceived spiritual bankruptcy of the dominant pre-War ideologies by championing spiritual affirmation through creativity. The exchanges between Leibowitz and Jaubert exposed Leibowitz's belief that true expressive freedom, the prerequisite for committed art, lay in the organic synthesis at the heart of Schoenberg's twelve-tone technique, rather than in Stravinsky's eclecticism. The fact that the latter enjoyed a wider popularity pointed, in Leibowitz's estimation, to the abject state of society, which was the reverse of Nabokov's view.

Similarly, Davenson's war-time plea for accessible 'impure' music free from deception, was countered by Leibowitz's later argument that only the discipline of Schoenberg's technique could ensure the absence of deception.

What is in these chapters an incremental push towards establishing the presence of commitment in the intentional non-significance of *Structures Ia*, at a time when the uncertainties created by the ideological confrontation demanded that signification be all, is in Chapter Eight reinforced further by considering the detail of Leibowitz's case in defence of Schoenberg in *L'artiste et sa conscience*. The fact that Leibowitz incorporated into his defence an appraisal of the Prague Manifesto underscores the relevance of his views to the Cold War discourse concerning art and ideology.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

René Leibowitz and *L'artiste et sa conscience*

The principal motivation behind Leibowitz's *L'artiste et sa conscience* was to establish the presence of Sartrean commitment in Schoenberg's use of twelve-tone technique. This was done by forging an alliance between Sartre's definition of social commitment and Leibowitz's own idea of artistic commitment. To this end, Leibowitz began by stating his intention to 'expose a dialectic between different levels of artistic engagement' with a view to 'revealing a dialectic of another sort; the equation between extra-musical and purely musical concerns'.<sup>1</sup> Leibowitz approached the challenge in two ways. Firstly, he sought to dispel 'a certain number of illusions' arising from the findings of the Prague Manifesto. Secondly, through a selective analysis of Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*, he attempted to identify existential structures capable of 'co-existing in the artistic conscience'.<sup>2</sup>

Leibowitz asserted that the interaction between the artist and society was predicated upon society's expectation that the artist should make a social contribution, and that the artist himself would want to make such a contribution.<sup>3</sup> As these conditions have always existed, the quality of commitment (*engagement*) was dependent upon the degree of willingness (*volonté*) on the part of society, or the artist, for such a commitment. Treating the issue of commitment from society's perspective, Leibowitz argued that society generally had a willingness to include the artist in social life, to 'confer upon the artist a social responsibility'. Conversely, the artist who was 'aware of his human condition does not want to be relegated to the level of a parasite – or a source of amusement', and it was

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<sup>1</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Avant-propos.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 39.

<sup>2</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Avant-propos.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 40.

<sup>3</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Le musicien et l'engagement.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 45.

therefore understandable that they search for a social responsibility in keeping with society's expectations. But for Leibowitz the question of commitment was allied to what the artist himself viewed as his social responsibility, rather than what society expected from him:

An artist who is passionate for revolution, who takes part, isn't any different from his neighbour, worker, peasant, doctor, craftsman, or barrister. He is in this case a revolutionary, but not necessarily a revolutionary *artist*. For that to happen it will be necessary for his art itself to be revolutionary or that this art has, according to the artist, some rapport with the revolution. At this moment alone, one can speak of an artistic commitment authentic in relation to social reality.<sup>4</sup>

Leibowitz directed the reader to Sartre's view that only the writer, by virtue of the fact that his artistic medium deals directly with meaning, can be simultaneously socially and artistically committed. 'This' said Leibowitz, 'is the attitude of an aesthete who sees the musician as a dreamer'.<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the Prague Manifesto, Leibowitz, after offering a point-by-point critique of the declaration as it appeared in *Les lettres françaises*, arrived at a verdict similar to Sartre's – that it was 'in the end, strongly commendable', although he had grave doubts that any prominent composer would respond positively to any of its findings.<sup>6</sup> Leibowitz's qualified approval was based on a recognition that the Manifesto displayed, at least nominally, a confidence in the possibility of commitment for musicians. Of greater interest to Leibowitz was Nigg's subsequent discussion with Kaldor. Here, according to Leibowitz,

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<sup>4</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Le musicien et l'engagement.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Le musicien et l'engagement.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 52.

<sup>6</sup> It is probable that the hand of Leibowitz was behind the resolution handed down by the First International Congress of Dodecaphonic Music, which was convened at Milan and which, as was noted earlier, earned Schoenberg's blessing and Boulez's contempt. The resolution was published in a special edition of *Contrepoints* given over to twelve-tone music, and which featured the thoughts and music of Leibowitz. The resolution called upon twelve-tone composers to reconcile their aesthetic pursuits with their social responsibilities. 'Résolution du premier congrès pour la musique dodécaphonique.' *Contrepoints* 4 (June 1949): 5-6.

the reader was furnished with an actual instance of a composer attempting to reconcile theoretical commitment with compositional practice.<sup>7</sup>

Although Leibowitz was happy that Nigg was prepared to link certain musical types with ‘society’s defects’ – thus establishing a connection between artistic creation and its social significance – the younger composer did so in a way that, thanks largely to Kaldor’s ‘stupid’ questioning, was ‘brief and gratuitous’.<sup>8</sup> This was because, rather than accepting that music based upon serial operations was a reflection of a ‘social reality’, Nigg was in Leibowitz’s estimation coerced by Kaldor into suggesting that society itself was at fault for creating the conditions that gave rise to such music. According to Leibowitz, Nigg had nevertheless touched upon a crucial issue because ‘if what Nigg says is true, it becomes clear that musical commitment possessed of this quality is possible and realisable within the context of social reality’.<sup>9</sup> Leibowitz noted ironically that, following Nigg’s suggestion that the composers of twelve-tone music were engaged in a search for a “‘Truth”, of a totally metaphysical species’, Kaldor abruptly changed his line of questioning.

What seems to have particularly bothered Leibowitz was Nigg’s timid response to Kaldor’s challenge that he, as a composer who used serial technique, had little right to talk of truth, actual or metaphysical. Following Kaldor’s assertion that Nigg had to establish ‘the path of salvation for artistic freedom [‘what?’, Leibowitz asked] by re-establishing the love between the public and yourself’, Nigg drew attention to *Le fusillé inconnu* and its ‘expression of the actual struggle waged by good people for a better world’.<sup>10</sup> Leibowitz then posed the rhetorical question as to how, in the absence of further detail, Nigg intended to achieve this lofty aim. On the basis of his study of the articles of the Prague Manifesto,

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<sup>7</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 64-5.

<sup>9</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 65.

<sup>10</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 72.

and the exchange between Nigg and Kaldor, Leibowitz summarised the attitude of socialist realists towards commitment as follows:

1. Their concerns are purely social.
2. They deplore the present state of music.
3. They would like to remedy it but
4. They are in a state of fervour, without ever arriving at the need to formulate a plan of action, and that
5. At heart, and above all, they consider the music of today too complicated.<sup>11</sup>

According to Leibowitz, ‘this last idea, which is more or less implicit and explicit in the declarations that we have glanced over, conveys the impression that our musicians believe and think that a simplification of the art of sounds will facilitate an actual link between artistic and social commitment’. Since no clarification had been forthcoming as to how this linkage might be achieved, ‘we need now to begin again at zero. What is meant by “simplicity” and “complexity” in music, and what can one expect from the proposed “simplification”?’<sup>12</sup>

In the next chapter, ‘Signification de l’engagement musical’, Leibowitz laid the groundwork for his claims regarding the existence and validity of artistic commitment in Schoenberg’s twelve-tone technique. The chapter begins with an historical outline of what Leibowitz saw as the progression from musical simplicity to complexity, an outline he measured in terms of the evolution from monody to polyphony.<sup>13</sup> In choosing this particular plan of attack Leibowitz was able to argue that the Prague Manifesto’s ‘nostalgia’ for ‘simple monody’ was at worst anti-historicist and therefore reactionary, or at best betrayed a total indifference to commitment at an artistic level.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, Leibowitz stated that ‘the foremost act of musical commitment is the artist’s revolt against . . . closed systems of social organisation and the petrification of the musical

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<sup>11</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 73.

<sup>12</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Le manifeste de Prague.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 74.

<sup>13</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Signification de l’engagement musical.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 75-7.

<sup>14</sup> René Leibowitz. ‘Signification de l’engagement musical.’ *L’artiste et sa conscience*, 78-9.

conscience that arises as a result [of these closed systems]'.<sup>15</sup> Leibowitz acknowledged that the musical sensibilities of performers and music-lovers have always been more inherently conservative than those of composers; and because of this there was nothing particularly unique or unusual about the charges of complexity, individualism, and subjectivism levelled against twelve-tone music.

Where these conditions conspired to form a closed system was that 'at the same time as there are reactionary regimes in place in America and the USSR so, too, is there organised resistance to radical innovation in each of these centres – resistance that comes in the form of the impresario in America, and the Council of State and the Prague Manifesto in the USSR'. With their desire to preserve a musical status quo, these closed systems constituted 'a very large obstacle to the blossoming of valid artistic activity'.<sup>16</sup> With Nabokov acting as the impresario, *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* undoubtedly contributed to Leibowitz's closed system.

As Leibowitz was of the opinion that all composers were to some degree ahead of their public, it was only those who struggled against official currents, against closed systems, that were fit to be called artistically committed.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore: 'In this continual subversion, this constantly recurring revolt, there resides a profound sense of musical tradition which appears to us as a succession of manifestations of the *liberty* of the artist and of Man in general'. Just as this acts to exclude Stravinsky so, too, does it facilitate Schoenberg's inclusion. This is because not only was Schoenberg acutely aware of the historical basis of his innovations but, if the loss of artistic liberty that lay at the heart of the demands made in the Prague Manifesto is to be understood in terms of a hankering for simpler vocal forms (in effect, a reversal of the historical trend towards complexity) then

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<sup>15</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 80.

<sup>16</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 82.

<sup>17</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 82.

Schoenberg's innovations certainly constituted an affirmation of both personal and artistic liberty. On a somewhat triumphal note Leibowitz pointed out that 'here is revealed to us the true "significance" of the non-signifying art, as Sartre says, that is music. Authentically crafted music, like all creative activity, is one of the conquests, and one of the manifestations, of liberty'.<sup>18</sup>

What remained for Leibowitz was to arrive at a precise definition of the total sense of commitment for the musician, one that synthesised the two categories of commitment – social and artistic. In Leibowitz's estimation, Nigg's problem was that although he appeared to be socially committed, his preparedness to abandon his artistic convictions to 'vague [ideological] prophesies' undermined his artistic commitment to the idea of liberty. Moreover, the ease with which he abandoned his artistic convictions put him in the same category as 'the reactionary conservative, or Fascist'. In reality, what the 'partisans' of the Prague Manifesto had done by issuing artistic dictates on behalf of the masses was to demean those same masses by assuming that they were not fit to judge for themselves.<sup>19</sup> And possibly more damaging was that the Manifesto, through its preoccupation with the composer's aesthetics, destroyed any possibility of a composer articulating their social commitment, the very thing it purported to encourage. The reason for this course of action – and here Leibowitz reinforces one of the central hypotheses of this study – was that by denying the possibility of the composer articulating his own social commitment, his music could be made to conform to the social regime of the powers that be.<sup>20</sup>

Pushing ever closer to his conclusion regarding Schoenberg's commitment, Leibowitz asked:

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<sup>18</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 82-3.

<sup>19</sup> Leibowitz's view was in this regard consistent with his Popular Front confrère Koechlin, whom, it will be recalled, sought not to debase so-called 'bourgeois' art but to elevate popular art.

<sup>20</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 85.



If we were now to ask if there is, for the musician, a possibility of committing in the *total sense*, if their musical commitment might have a meaning and an impact at the social level, we will respond without hesitation in the affirmative. The composer who identifies with a tradition of which he has a lucid understanding, knows that he needs to direct that tradition down the path to liberty and that this is his duty with regard to his contemporaries.<sup>21</sup>

This obvious reference to Schoenberg and his school can be applied equally to Boulez, who had a profound understanding of the traditions he sought to overturn. Leibowitz confirmed this possibility by asserting that the musical conscience of such a composer:

will not permit a disassociation between the complexity of the musical technique and its valid expression . . . He will not recoil in the face of his task to create new existents which will be of necessity *in advance* of society in his day. No more than the man of science or philosophy, the true artist will not resile in the face of complexity, perhaps frightened, from the techniques he employs, because . . . that novelty itself constitutes a valuable and constructive message for other members of society. It is therefore in the technical invention and in the act of freedom that accompanies it that the mediation between artistic freedom and the freedom of man, between artistic commitment and social commitment, resides. The committed musician is one who, defying the established musical order, is also courageous in establishing that order at the social level, thereby contributing towards a free society.<sup>22</sup>

Boulez's expansion of serial technique is an excellent example of a composer championing a highly complex compositional technique, one about which even he was unsure as to the extent of its usefulness, but that was, as Goldbeck observed, 'a war-machine designed to kill convention'.<sup>23</sup> Boulez was acutely aware of the broader ramifications of his attack on convention, on the outmoded values that he considered no longer applicable to those of his generation. Certainly, he was nothing if not courageous in both the scope and severity of his attacks.

Leibowitz's description in the above of the composer's simultaneous acceptance and denial of the social order touches upon the fundamental conflict between the artist and society. Although apparently eternal, the conflict was particularly acute during the period in question, and struck at the very essence of the cultural confrontation between the Soviets

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<sup>21</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 86.

<sup>22</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Signification de l'engagement musical.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'Avantgarde: Ciphers, Games and Spells.' *Twentieth Century Composers. Volume IV: France, Italy and Spain*, 126.

and the West. Sartre, who agreed with Leibowitz on this point, described the conflict as follows: ‘. . . art is a permanent revolution, and for forty years now, the fundamental situation of our societies has been revolutionary; but the social revolution calls for a conservative aesthetic whereas the aesthetic revolution demands, in spite of the artist himself, a social conservatism’.<sup>24</sup> During the Cold War each of the antagonists directed a good deal of their energy to countering the social and political ideologies of their opponents. At the cultural level the conflict was prosecuted by the Soviets through their Partisans for Peace congresses, to which the Americans duly responded through the efforts of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. But each preached revolution to the other by promoting a conservative aesthetic; the Soviets through socialist realism, the Congress *circa* 1952, Stravinsky and neo-classicism.

The second part of Sartre’s exposition, that ‘aesthetic revolution demands a social conservatism’, turns on the idea that if the artist and his art are permanently in revolt, then it stands to reason that the creator must be in conflict with a society more conservative than he. This occurs ‘in spite of the artist himself’ for two reasons. Firstly, because for all his revolutionary intentions the artist is still a member of, and furthermore needs the support of the society with which he is in conflict. Secondly, and related to this, is the likelihood that, as Albert Camus observed, ‘Art, like revolt, is a movement which exults and denies at the same time’.<sup>25</sup> That is, art is an exultation of the alienation of the artist, but that for all the artist’s denial, his alienation is best measured in relation to the society that engendered it. But whereas the creator in the above passage by Leibowitz overcomes this paradox by considering his expression of alienation as an act of creative or technical innovation, society measures the result in terms of the art that has come before it, an action implicit in

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<sup>24</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘The Artist and his Conscience.’ *Situations*, 213.

<sup>25</sup> Albert Camus. ‘Art and Revolt.’: 269.

value judgements such as beauty or ugliness. Camus, in referring to Marx's justification of beauty, argued that beauty 'expresses the naïve infancy of a world' – it is a kind of utopian reminiscence, a look at history through rose-coloured glasses. For Camus this helped to explain why, in March 1952 – 'in the midst of our adult struggles' – society had a nostalgia for that infancy. As both the Soviets and the West sought to capitalise upon the nostalgia for beauty for their own propaganda purposes, Camus asserted that 'the condemnation of art has begun, and is followed up today with the embarrassed complicity of artists and intellectuals themselves, dedicated to the calumny of their art and their intelligence'.<sup>26</sup> Irrespective of whether or not Camus had in mind Leibowitz's defence of Schoenberg when he spoke about the embarrassed complicity of artists in having to defend their art on the basis of someone else's aesthetics, he would have found a ready ally in Boulez, who regularly expressed his disgust at those who fell over themselves to defend twelve-tone technique, while at the same time producing works that failed generally to grasp its revolutionary significance.

It is nevertheless understandable that Leibowitz should feel an affinity with Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*, which to Leibowitz's way of thinking undoubtedly merged the metaphysical and the temporal impulses that he had described in his earlier *Esprit* article. What Leibowitz termed the 'correspondence' between Schoenberg's

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<sup>26</sup> Perhaps Camus should have specified music, as opposed to art in general. Frances Stonor Saunders has provided documentary evidence to further support long-standing claims that the Congress for Cultural Freedom and its apparent masters in the CIA patronised the New York Abstract Expressionist school. They did so allegedly for two reasons: firstly, because it could be used to win over Europe's intellectuals; and secondly, as it was 'non-figurative and politically silent, it was the very antithesis of socialist realism'. See Frances Stonor Saunders 'Yanqui Doodles.' *Who Paid The Piper?* 252-278. As the current study has been at pains to argue with regard to music, this second point is to a certain extent a naïve reading of the situation because the whole purpose of the Congress was to rise above the passive opposition to the Soviet cultural incursions, which came in the form of the Partisans for Peace congresses, and to actively counter the Soviet threat. Non-figurative art (music in this instance) was an attractive propaganda tool not because *ipso facto* it was 'politically silent', but because that silence could be overlaid with an ideological significance of the antagonists' own choosing.

development of twelve-tone technique and ‘the renewed persecution of his race and the disappearance of his country’ echoed Leibowitz’s own personal circumstances as a Polish Jew. Alexander Ringer has offered documentary evidence of Schoenberg’s passionate concern for European Jewry in the face of the rabid anti-Semitism of the pre-War decade.<sup>27</sup> This concern, when linked with the subject matter of *A Survivor from Warsaw*, conspired to make the latter what Michael Strasser has termed ‘a parable of [Schoenberg’s] own spiritual struggle and that of his people throughout history’.<sup>28</sup>

Leibowitz appeared to approach the work with a zeal bordering upon idolatry.<sup>29</sup> In his consideration of *A Survivor from Warsaw* in *L’artiste et sa conscience* he began by pointing out that, given the magnitude of the crimes against the Jews, it would be ‘absurd’ to doubt both the validity of the work’s subject matter and its potential as a source of inspiration to the composer. Outlining the ways in which Schoenberg sought to articulate the subject matter at a purely musical level, Leibowitz placed a good deal of importance upon Schoenberg’s use of *Sprechgesang*. *Sprechgesang* was in Leibowitz’s opinion an effective link between the composer’s musical and extra-musical concerns because it heightened the dramatic tension in a way that, as opposed to its historical antecedent, the recitative, allowed the commentary to remain an intrinsic part of the music itself.

With regard to the musical material, Leibowitz suggested that, contrary to the commonly held belief that such an ‘athematic style’ was ill-suited to carrying cognitive

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<sup>27</sup> Alexander Ringer. *Arnold Schoenberg: the Composer as Jew*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>28</sup> Michael Strasser. “‘A Survivor From Warsaw’ as Personal Parable.’ *Music and Letters* 76 (1995): 59.

<sup>29</sup> Leibowitz on the visit to Schoenberg in Los Angeles that became the subject of the Hollywood Letter to the *Partisan Review* cited earlier, prepared the full score of the work from what was, due to the composer’s steadily deteriorating eyesight, a short score notated on oversized staves. Leibowitz conducted the European première of the *A Survivor from Warsaw* in Paris in early November 1949, and aside from his cursory study of it in the *L’artiste et sa conscience*, he offered a detailed analysis of the work in *Introduction à la musique de douze sons*. (Paris: L’Arche, 1949).

associations, Schoenberg's handling of the row resulted in a seemingly infinite number of subtle variations which themselves sustained the dramatic action. This rationale allowed Leibowitz to trace what amounts to programmatic references, which take the form of march rhythms that invoke the 'terrifying atmosphere of military discipline', and the use of percussive instruments that have quasi-military allusions and heighten the stridency of the German sergeant's commands. Leibowitz also singled out Schoenberg's undeniably dramatic treatment of the prisoners counting off, which is accompanied by an orchestral *accelerando* and *crescendo*, and which leads to the climax of the work, when the prisoners break into the Jewish prayer 'Shema Yisroel'.

If Leibowitz's analytical detail appears vague in comparison to his own work in *Introduction à la musique de douze sons*, it needs to be remembered that he was in this instance concerned with confirming the presence of Sartrean commitment in Schoenberg's work to what he doubtless hoped would be a wider (and possibly musically unschooled) readership.<sup>30</sup> While Leibowitz was quite justified to conclude that Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* was 'an authentic work of art', one in which a 'social reality' served as the inspiration for what was a masterful handling of the musical material, his verdict failed to satisfy Sartre.<sup>31</sup> As was noted earlier, Sartre was quick to point out that the social consciousness articulated in the work (and with that, any possible commitment) was reliant upon the text. Sartre's concerns were understandable given Leibowitz's constant references to the text and the ways in which the music supports the drama unfolding in the text. But what Sartre failed to recognise (or perhaps acknowledge) was that Leibowitz considered the text and its *Sprechgesang* treatment as an integral element of the artistic creation, whereas Sartre, as a writer, appears to have been of the opinion that *A*

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<sup>30</sup> See René Leibowitz. *Introduction à la musique de douze sons*, 322-332.

<sup>31</sup> René Leibowitz. 'Conclusion.' *L'artiste et sa conscience*, 110.

*Survivor from Warsaw* was a synthesis of two quite distinct artistic disciplines, literature and music, and the act of bringing the two together apparently robbed the work of the critical momentum required of committed art.

Leibowitz's attempt to establish the presence of Sartrean commitment in *A Survivor from Warsaw* focussed upon the tension between Schoenberg's objective manipulation of the pitch material and his subjective response to the survivor's story. Leibowitz adopted the position that Schoenberg's commitment was confirmed by the fact that the composer's subjectivity survived, or was indeed enhanced, by the objectivity brought to bear during the compositional process. The crucial issue with regard to serialism's "chains of freedom" lies therefore with the possibility that it reinforces John Mander's contention that 'commitment is what remains in the work of the author's subjectivity after the author has done his utmost to eliminate it'.<sup>32</sup> As Sartre himself put it, the active intervention that the artist brings to bear on his own creative process must serve a higher cause: 'There is no given freedom. One must win an inner victory over one's passions, one's race, one's class, and one's nation and must conquer men along with oneself'.<sup>33</sup> In this regard Sartre's idea of commitment has a good deal in common with Wassily Kandinsky's "inner necessity". It is therefore significant that Louis Aragon, whose art evolved from the negative realism of Surrealism to the positive realism espoused by Zhdanov, used the term in relation to his own more militantly patriotic view of commitment.<sup>34</sup>

Leibowitz in the preface to *Schoenberg and His School* also appeared to have been caught up in the idea of an inner necessity, which for him stemmed from what he called a 'sudden consciousness':

. . . those who become composers begin . . . by *making* music or composing. But at one time or another there comes to them what I like to call a *sudden consciousness* of

<sup>32</sup> John Mander. *The Writer and Commitment*. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961) 108.

<sup>33</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'For Whom Does One Write?' "*What is Literature?*", 70.

<sup>34</sup> Maxwell Adereth. *Commitment in Modern French Literature*, 30.

the true meaning of the language of music. From that day forward, if the activity of composing or of making music is carried on with the intention of solving those profound problems which have confronted the consciousness of the individual, that individual has a chance to become a composer, a true musician. In the case of the composer, this sudden consciousness comes at the moment when . . . he discovers what seems to him to be the language of his epoch.<sup>35</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Sartre may have regarded Leibowitz's description of music as a language as the work of a 'slovenly mind', the above provides the point of departure for a number of issues of particular interest here, and subsequently. Chief among these is Leibowitz's description of Schoenberg's development of twelve-tone technique as the transformation of an '*intuition into knowledge*'.<sup>36</sup> Schoenberg himself had established a similar connection in 1923 when he described his development of the technique as part of a need to better organise, but not necessarily to suppress, his expressive urges. That is, to turn his intuitive approach to negating the gravitational pull of tonality into a rational compositional procedure:

At the root of all this is the unconscious urge to try out the new resources independently, to wrest from them the possibilities of constructing forms, to produce with them alone all the effects of a clear style, of a compact, lucid and comprehensive presentation of the musical idea.<sup>37</sup>

Using Mander's logic, any commitment that may be present in the music must lie in the residue that remains after the composer's subjectivity ('the unconscious urge') has been handled objectively. With regard to Schoenberg, this residue lay in what the composer described as 'the decent distance' between 'my ideas [and] the feelings accompanying them' – an act of temperance not inconsistent with Sartre's 'victory over one's passions'.<sup>38</sup>

As for the intention that Sartre insisted must motivate the committed artist, Leibowitz in the above spoke of Schoenberg's (and his own) 'activity of composing or of making

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<sup>35</sup> René Leibowitz. *Schoenberg and His School*, x.

<sup>36</sup> René Leibowitz. *Schoenberg and His School*, xi.

<sup>37</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. 'Twelve-Tone Composition' (1923). *Style and Idea*, 207.

<sup>38</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. 'New Music' (1923). *Style and Idea*, 138.

music' as carrying with it 'the intention of solving those profound problems which have confronted the consciousness of the individual'. This paved the way for Leibowitz to point to Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw* as an attempt to deal with the 'profound problem' of Jewish persecution that confronted the composer's own consciousness. The artistic commitment embedded in *A Survivor from Warsaw* lay in the 'decent distance' between Schoenberg's objective manipulation of the tone-row and his subjective desire to highlight the plight of the Jews. Thus, the social commitment in *A Survivor from Warsaw* is articulated by the text, a contention with which Sartre would have had no qualms. The fact that the text is able to reach beyond the words to 'the thing which they inhabit' – the persecution of the Jews – was made possible by virtue of Schoenberg's artistic commitment, which manifested itself in his innovative handling of the text. According to Leibowitz the composer's commitment to his technique effectively facilitated the transferral of the political commitment resident in the text to the music itself.<sup>39</sup>

Non-texted music, as Sartre then understood it, was incapable of performing the didactic function required of the committed artist because it was non-signifying, and yet this very quality and its appeal to the imagination alluded to a freedom beyond the written word. An *intentionally* non-signifying artform might therefore be sufficiently neutral as to be capable of confronting society with an unadorned image of itself, one that rose above the ideological expediency of commitment. That is, the artform might use the expressive freedom in which post-War society invested such faith in such a way as to confront that

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<sup>39</sup> It is tempting to speculate as to how a performer might articulate his commitment. Pablo Casals, a passionate and lifelong opponent of Franco and his regime, gave an indication of what commitment might mean to him in conversation with J. Alvarez Del Vayo in 1950, for the Leftist journal the *Nation*. After detailing Casals's commitment to the Republican cause, Del Vayo mentions a letter that 'keeps in a place of honor on [Casals's] table . . . it came from a man in a Spanish prison, who wrote, "Some day you will play in liberated Spain." Casals's eyes were luminous with feeling as he looked at it, and he said, "On that day I shall truly play well."' 'Pablo Casals – Freedom's Artist.' *Nation* 170.24 (17 June 1950): 592-3.



society with the consequences of its actions. It would, in effect, be both an expression of and a reaction to the condition of post-War society.

Sartre concluded his preface to Leibowitz's book by foreshadowing the possibility of such an art emerging:

Is it so impossible that an artist will emerge today, and without any literary intention, or interest in signifying, still have enough passion, to love and hate it, to live its contradictions with enough sincerity, and to plan to change it with enough perseverance, that he will transform even this world, with its savage violence, its barbarism, its refined techniques, its slaves, its tyrants, its mortal threats and our horrible and grandiose freedom to music? And if the musician has shared the rage and hopes of the oppressed, is it impossible that he might be transported beyond himself by so much hope and so much rage that he could sing today of this voice of the future? And if this were so, could one still speak of 'extra-aesthetic' concerns? Of 'neutral' subject matter? Of 'significance'? Would the raw material of music be distinct from its treatment? I ask these questions to you, my dear Leibowitz, to you and not to Zhdanov. His answer I know.<sup>40</sup>

Given its potential application to *Structures 1a*, the above will serve as the point of departure in Chapter Ten, which will seek to identify the possible social significance of Boulez's treatment of Sartre's 'raw material of music'.

Just as the Congress for Cultural Freedom was openly hostile to Sartre, so, too, was existentialism treated with derision by Stravinsky and Nabokov. Stravinsky in a letter written in 1948 to Nabokov commented that 'When one thinks about what Sartre did with existentialism, one cannot help recalling the anecdote about the peasant woman who saw a camel for the first time in Soviet Moscow [and remarked] "Look at what the Bolsheviks have done to horses!"'<sup>41</sup> The inference here is that Stravinsky was troubled by the way in which Sartre had been able to fuse existentialism with Marxist ideology and so to soften, to the point of reinventing, the more doctrinaire image of Marxism. Existentialism's emphasis

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<sup>40</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 222-3. Sartre reiterated this view in 1977, when he was challenged over his earlier assertion that music was incapable of communicating commitment. In this instance he stated that what he had meant was that music could not sustain a 'precise, concrete' commitment, but was capable of alluding to the profundities of life facing man at a given time. 'Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre: "La musique nous donne une possibilité de capter le monde tel qu'il fut".' *Le Monde* 28 July 1977: 11.

<sup>41</sup> Igor Stravinsky. Letter to Nabokov. *Stravinsky: Selected Correspondence*. Volume II, 374.

on the freedom of the individual directly contradicted the idea of responsibility to the political collective promoted by the Soviets and their NATO opponents. Existentialism in effect maintained that individual freedom served to guarantee social and political justice, the Cold War antagonists maintained the reverse. For them, collective political justice (however distorted its definition may have been) was the means through which individual freedom could be established or guaranteed.

For his part Nabokov, as Stravinsky's lieutenant, directly targeted his opposite number, Leibowitz, in the pages of the *Partisan Review*. Referring to Leibowitz's articles in Sartre's journal *Les temps modernes*, Nabokov suggested that Leibowitz was leading 'a two-fold campaign: (1) a defense of the dodecatonal system and its Master, and (2) an attack on Stravinsky and those composers (there are many) who do not attempt the dodecatonal system as a basis for composition'. According to Nabokov these articles are in general 'on a fairly high "cultural" level, though the spurious use of some Existentialist terms inapplicable to music occasionally obscures his otherwise clear but somewhat naïve line of reasoning'.<sup>42</sup> There is an element of truth in Nabokov's verdict in that, as was suggested earlier, Leibowitz chose a somewhat speculative way to criticise the Prague Manifesto and to demonstrate the social relevance of Schoenberg's artistic commitment.

In a letter to the editor of the *Partisan Review* Dika Newlin leapt to Leibowitz's defence by chiding Nabokov for suggesting that Leibowitz had demonstrated a 'detached attitude' in his defence of Schoenberg: 'Mr. Nabokov should know that the essence of the existentialist attitude towards life (which is, as practical experience has shown, as applicable to music as to any other field of endeavour) is *engagement total* – "total

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<sup>42</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'The Atonal Trail: A Communication': 581-2.

involvement” – which implies anything *but* detachment . . .’.<sup>43</sup> Leibowitz’s occasional lapses notwithstanding, there is much to commend his use of the terms *existent* and *essence* in relation to the tone row, because it allows for the possibility that the row as the *existent* constitutes a collection of ‘twelve tones which are related only with one another’ – it is the entity at the moment of its creation. The composer’s manipulation of the row in order to create its *essence* is a culturally determined act, which is in this case an act of creativity based upon an applied theory rather than, as is the case with tonal practice, a procedure based upon the knowledge and preservation of a natural phenomenon, the behaviour of the vibrating monochord.<sup>44</sup>

This chapter has shown how Leibowitz was able to argue the case for commitment in Schoenberg’s *A Survivor from Warsaw*. In treating the issues of social awareness and artistic innovation separately at first, and then merging them so as to arrive at his final conclusion in the affirmative, Leibowitz was more realistic (and certainly more pragmatic) than Sartre. Sartre in speaking of intentional non-significance in the above appears to have conceded the merits of Leibowitz’s argument that the music itself was capable of sustaining commitment. It will have become apparent, however, that Leibowitz’s astute observations regarding the broader potential impact of music arising from a composer’s unflinching belief in the necessity for change perhaps apply more to Boulez than they do

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<sup>43</sup> Dika Newlin. ‘Correspondence: “The Atonal Trail”’: 845. Newlin’s translation of *engagement* as ‘involvement’, while not uncommon, is inconsistent with the frequently used scholarly translation ‘commitment’. The sentiment is similar, however.

<sup>44</sup> These concepts will be pursued in the chapter concerning avant-garde compositional techniques as an outgrowth of scientific thought. It is nevertheless interesting to note that Sartre used the word ‘series’ in order to describe a group of people waiting at a bus-stop. Within this context a series is ‘a plurality of isolations’, because it is made up of unique individuals brought together for a unique and socially artificial purpose of catching a bus. Schoenberg’s series in this sense comprises twelve tones ‘related only to one another’ by the composer in order to create an artifice based not upon the natural primary subdivisions of the monochord but upon a technological intervention. Jean-Paul Sartre. *Critique of Dialectical Reason. Book I: Theory of Practical Ensembles*. Jonathan Rée ed., Alan Sheridan-Smith, tr. (London: New Left Books, 1976) 256.

Schoenberg. Certainly, if commitment were to be measured in terms of the composer's defiance in the face of his critics, then Boulez was the more committed. The overwhelming sense gleaned from Schoenberg's writings is that he tended to measure himself in terms of his own alienation from society, a verdict with which Adorno and Finkelstein, but for different reasons, would agree. Schoenberg's sense of alienation was an affirmation of Adorno's belief that truly progressive art is the product of a deliberate act of self-isolation. To Finkelstein, Schoenberg's alienation was an act of selfishness that betrayed the working classes, one that confirmed the decadence of the composer and his music.

Fred Goldbeck's rather ruthless appraisal of Schoenberg, delivered soon after the composer's death (and published during the month of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*), summarises the transition from Schoenberg's so-called Expressionist period to his deployment of the twelve-tone technique in a manner with which Finkelstein would concur. Goldbeck attenuates not only the Sartrean idea of commitment in art, but also appears to concur with Boulez's reservations regarding Schoenberg's aesthetic rationale:

To describe [Schoenberg] as a romantic traditionalist is an understatement . . . The message conveyed by his super-expressive music is the old message. Untiringly it tells the old tale of the musician who has no religious or social community to write for, and is at loggerheads with the world. A new message, though, is added: the tale of the haunted, introvert composer, pursuing his receding and disintegrating material, crushed by his romantic heritage, and desperately trying to squeeze, by means of the twelve-tone machine, a last bitter drop of sincerity out of dried up formulas and schemes.<sup>45</sup>

However uncharitable the above appears, Goldbeck's description of Schoenberg's supposed social alienation is consistent with the view that the composer was self-indulgent, not to say socially and politically indifferent. But more importantly within the present context, Goldbeck's suggestion that Schoenberg's 'twelve-tone machine' was part of an apparently forlorn attempt effectively to re-energise 'dried-up' compositional formulas and

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<sup>45</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'The Strange Case of Schönberg: Revolutionary Composer and Tradition-abiding Musician.' *The Score and IMA Magazine* 6 (May 1952): 38.

schemes, contrasts markedly with his description of *Structures Ia* as ‘a war machine devised to kill convention’. It also implies that Goldbeck viewed Schoenberg’s development and use of twelve-tone technique as a restorative act and, conversely, Boulez’s expansion of it as an innovation that carried a degree of the social and cultural significance.

If Schoenberg worried about the way society treated him (surely not the sign of a truly committed artist), Boulez’s polemics in support of his expansion of serial technique give the overwhelming impression that he felt he alone was right, and that the opinions of others were of little consequence to him. Furthermore, bearing in mind Leibowitz’s reference to commitment as involving the search for a language befitting the creator’s epoch, it was Boulez who was the more committed. Boulez had as his intention the development of the means with which to destroy tradition: ‘Utopias? Let us realise them . . . now is the time to smash some of our worn out habits’.<sup>46</sup> This appears to be an entirely reasonable aspiration given what has been shown in this study thus far of the way tradition was used as an offensive propaganda weapon by both East and West. Schoenberg was, by contrast, concerned first and foremost with enshrining in method what he saw as the logical evolution of tonality. Chapter Ten will argue that these and other ‘valuable and constructive messages’, demanded of committed music by Leibowitz, were present in *Structures Ia*.

Yet despite the noble aspirations expressed above, the fact remains that a work such as *Structures Ia* failed to satisfy one of Sartre’s more reasonable requirements with regard to committed art, which was that it communicate to its audience in a way that they could understand. The Cold War antagonists proved themselves adept at deluding actual audiences. The course of history confirms that the same could not be achieved by

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<sup>46</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Current Investigations.’ *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 19.

portraying the truth to an audience that did not exist. Chapter Nine considers the choice confronting audiences, which came down to one between blissful ignorance and unpalatable truth.

## CHAPTER NINE

## Illusion to an Actual Audience, or Truth to an Imaginary Audience?

For all of Sartre's reservations regarding *A Survivor from Warsaw* and its ability to "change the world," Leibowitz's account of its European première implied that the work, at least in terms of its impact, achieved what could reasonably be required of committed art:

It was the extraordinary newness of the work that so gripped my audience. Many of them came to me with tears in their eyes, others were so shocked that they could not even speak . . . But not only the audience were impressed in this way; from the first rehearsal onward, the entire orchestra and chorus were so moved that there was none of the usual resistance one tends to meet in rehearsing a new work of such difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

But irrespective of whether audience and performers alike were moved by the humanitarian aspect of *A Survivor from Warsaw*, it was thought by Sartre to be lacking the directness needed to transform sentiment into action. It has been shown that Leibowitz presented a convincing rebuttal of Sartre's position, one which maintained that Schoenberg's musical innovation – its 'extraordinary newness' – facilitated the transferral of the political commitment resident in the text to the music itself. According to Leibowitz, Schoenberg's artistic innovation was itself an act of commitment, one that articulated an anti-Fascist ideology. But the fact remained that although those who attended the première may have been shocked by what was presented to them, they were not given the opportunity to arrive at their own conclusion because, paradoxically perhaps, the meaning of the work, that faith in God allows the human spirit to triumph in the face of unspeakable evil, was presented as a *fait accompli*. It will be recalled that lack of ambiguity was also the principal determinant governing the choice of music celebrated by the Cold War foes in

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<sup>1</sup> Cited by Willi Reich. *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*. Leo Black, tr. (London: Longman, 1971) 223.

their efforts to perpetuate what many in France deemed to be political and ideological values that ignored the lessons of recent history.

Might not a greater challenge to the ideological status quo, as part of what Adorno termed ‘that which merely exists’, be present in an intentionally non-signifying work, such as *Structures Ia*, which allowed the audience to draw its own conclusion as to the ‘meaning’ of the work? Mitigating against this was the poor likelihood of finding an audience not just intellectually equipped to deal with *Structures Ia*’s aesthetic deviation – its foray into Meyer-Eppler’s ectosemantic dimension – but able also to understand the ramifications of what it had to say, which was that the time had come to dispense with outmoded values manifested in what Boulez considered to be equally outmoded musical aesthetics, and to start afresh.<sup>2</sup> Given that Chapter Ten argues that *Structures Ia* articulated truths that neither of the Cold War antagonists sought to countenance, in a manner that confronted them with the possible consequences of their actions, this chapter considers briefly the role of audiences (and audience reaction) within that equation.

If the effectiveness of committed art was to be measured in terms of its ability to confront an unsuspecting audience with an unexpected outcome, then perhaps one of the more successful examples is Hans Werner Henze’s *Boulevard Solitude* (1951). As will be discussed in the Conclusion, the fact that *Boulevard Solitude* was performed in 1954 at Nabokov’s Rome festival is telling not only in view of its subject matter, but also because its composer was a staunch Communist although, like Désormière, not a supporter of socialist realism. The opera apparently caused great offence to the audience, and Henze rejoiced in the fact that the opera was ‘at the time regarded as an outspoken attack on bourgeois values’, and that furthermore, ‘to *épater le bourgeois* came quite naturally to

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<sup>2</sup> Boulez described Schoenberg’s use of twelve-tone technique as a ‘chromatic’ neo-classicism, one that shared a similar historicist itinerary with Stravinsky’s ‘diatonic’ neo-classicism. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*. (London: Eulenburg, 1976) 31.



me'.<sup>3</sup> Henze described the work as 'the third operatic version of *Manon Lescaut*', one in which contrasting musical styles were juxtaposed with the intention of portraying the 'bourgeois capitalistic world [as] tonal; that of love (happiness, despair) atonal'.<sup>4</sup> Fedele d'Amico offered the following critique:

This opera is what one might call a photomontage of ostentatiously heterogeneous elements: Expressionistic idioms are placed right next to stylistic features typical of neo-Classicism, academic dance figurations are introduced in the midst of biting realistic scenes, and atonality of the twelve-tone variety is found side by side with jazz or *buffa* style . . .<sup>5</sup>

The compositional method behind the montage was, in d'Amico's estimation, an 'obviously surrealist procedure', one that sparked a good deal of controversy. While noting that the opera was a work of 'considerable artistic sensibility', Reginald Smith-Brindle, a staunch advocate of serial music, concurred with d'Amico: 'To present [*Manon Lescaut*] as a surrealist dish of pessimism, vice, and corruption, as Henze does, is to court disaster'.<sup>6</sup> A 'disaster' duly followed in the violent reaction of the audience, a reaction that Henze was himself only too pleased to acknowledge.

Reference to the surrealist procedure employed by Henze invites comparison with Leibowitz's comments (cited earlier) regarding Stravinsky's compositional approach to *Jeu de cartes*. Given that both *Jeu de cartes* and *Boulevard Solitude* were aimed at bourgeois audiences, the question needs to be answered as to why they engendered such contrasting reactions. In Leibowitz's estimation Stravinsky's collage, with its 'lack of any spiritual substance' offered an 'instant and cheap pleasure' that appealed to an 'ignorant and petty' section of society. In contrast to this obvious (but for Leibowitz, regrettable) audience appeal, *Boulevard Solitude* was greeted with widespread and ongoing audience

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<sup>3</sup> Hans Werner Henze. 'German Music in the 1940s and 1950s.' *Music and Politics*, 45.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Werner Henze. 'German Music in the 1940s and 1950s.' *Music and Politics*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Fedele d'Amico. 'Current Chronicle.' *Musical Quarterly* 40 (1954): 590-1.

<sup>6</sup> Reginald Smith-Brindle. 'Notes From Abroad – The Rome International Conference of Contemporary Composers.' *Musical Times* 95 (1954): 328.

disapproval. A possible justification for this apparent contrast can be gleaned by recalling Sartre's views on music – the sounds themselves – as a non-signifying art. As a piece of absolute music in which various styles of 'no intrinsic or extrinsic value' were juxtaposed, *Jeu de cartes* carried no significance in the Sartrean sense. Accordingly, it either represented what Leibowitz implied was a cheap diversion, or what Nabokov would have seized upon as an opportunity to confirm the ascendancy of Western, as opposed to Soviet, art. Henze's collage, containing as it does distorted references to *Manon Lescaut* (itself an opera which owing to its subject matter and its place in the operatic canon carries a strong socio-cultural significance), was seen to have acquired a significance which audiences, duly offended, took to mean *épater le bourgeois* – a purpose which Henze suggested was its original intention.

The fact that Henze's audience seems to have understood the composer's message confirms the relationship between two of Sartre's more critical imperatives regarding the ability of committed art to "change the world". The first of these was his belief in the necessity for committed art to be accessible, for its message to be unambiguous. The second was the need for the committed artist to take into account the ability of any potential audience to comprehend the relationship between the medium and the message. Henze achieved both of these outcomes by, firstly, presenting the bourgeoisie with a cherished bourgeois icon (*Manon Lescaut*) and, secondly, by putting that icon to the sword through distortion and pastiche.

Sartre in his response to Leibowitz made a series of very valid observations with regard to Schoenberg's music and its inability to change the world. Sartre was troubled by the limitations that an ever-increasing complexity would have upon music's ability to aid in the empowerment of the disenfranchised:

[Avant-garde music's] increasing complexity reserves it – as you yourself recognised – for a handful of specialists, found by necessity among the privileged classes.

Schoenberg is farther removed from the workers than Mozart was from the peasants. You will tell me that the majority of the bourgeois understand nothing of music, and this is true. But it is equally true that those who can appreciate it belong to the bourgeoisie, profit from bourgeois culture, bourgeois leisure, and in general practice a bourgeois profession . . . I don't ever recall seeing a worker at one of your concerts.<sup>7</sup>

Schoenberg was deemed to be further removed from the working class than was Mozart because the latter sought not to challenge the functional tonality then familiar to bourgeois audiences. In this regard Sartre held J.S. Bach in high esteem, because Bach 'held up the image of a freedom which, at the same time as it appeared to be contained within a traditional [harmonic] framework, transcended tradition towards new creations':

Against the tradition of little despotic courts, [Bach] opposed an open tradition: he taught how to find originality within established discipline; actually, how to live. He demonstrated the play of moral freedom within the confines of a religious and moral freedom within the confines of a religious and monarchical absolutism and depicted the proud dignity of the subject who obeys his king and the devout who worships his God.<sup>8</sup>

What Sartre neglected to mention was that the trend towards polyphonic complexity manifested in Bach's innovations was prosecuted, and presumably tempered therefore, by that same 'devout who worships his God.' The avant-garde, on the other hand, pursued complexity in what was (and is) the culmination of Enlightened thought, wherein Man replaced God at the centre of the Universe, and secular ideology increasingly prevailed over sacred belief.

Writing in 1953 Walter Dirks gave an indication of the extent of the debate surrounding the consequences of Enlightened thought for post-War society, one that also placed Sartre's existential freedom in close proximity:

The Enlightenment is, it appears, "to blame for everything"; it demolished and demoralised the old order, the consecrated laws, it turned man into a self-seeking individual avid for enjoyment, ostensibly liberated him, in reality made him solitary, shallow, and refractory: it bears the guilt first of individualism . . . It dried up men's hearts. It destroyed the "community", to say nothing of religious faith.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 208-9.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 220.

<sup>9</sup> Walter Dirks. 'The Enlightenment – Unfinished Business.' Willard Trask, tr. *Partisan Review* 20 (Sept-Oct 1953): 540.

This verdict was, according to Dirks, 'a huge reckoning', because it was difficult, if not hypocritical, to criticise Enlightened thought while at the same time enjoying its fruits, technological and moral. One cannot 'inveigh against the spirit of technique, but think nothing of driving to the hall in a car, reading by electric light, and even having [one's] words broadcast'. Dirks might well have argued that the bourgeoisie could not rail against the technical invention behind serial music, while at the same time as driving to a performance of it, or listening to a broadcast or a recording. As for the moral imperative, Dirks reminded readers that although Enlightened thought may have created the conditions under which totalitarianism could thrive, it was also instrumental in countering the totalitarian threat:

It is to be hoped that in Germany – after twelve years of relapse – we appreciate the fact that we can no longer be dragged out of bed at dawn, and tortured, and executed – and no questions asked: we owe that to the Enlightenment. Whoever defends human rights against the dictators, or against the power urges of bureaucrats, defends a part of the Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, a music that in Bach's hands celebrated God's omniscience evolved into one that in Schoenberg's celebrated the freedom of the individual. But to whom did it so appear? To Sartre's way of thinking avant-garde music was compromised because its potential audience lay in an elite section of society that was less than favourably disposed towards innovation. The elite, in exercising its right, preferred the reassurance offered by Stravinsky rather than an exhortation towards an unknown freedom that had the potential to undermine their privileged position.

But, as this study has been at pains to demonstrate, reassurance was not the sole preserve of the pro-NATO camp. Henze, like Sartre, was acutely aware that the avant-garde appealed predominantly to an 'audience of specialists'. Henze pointed out that the opportunities afforded him through a greater musical accessibility highlighted a

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<sup>10</sup> Walter Dirks. 'The Enlightenment – Unfinished Business': 541.

fundamental difference between his music and that of the Darmstadt school in the early 1950s. According to Henze, the difference between his aesthetic (and by extension the political activism that motivated it) and that of the Darmstadt school ‘resulted in a sort of division of labour: *they* got the electronic studios and the late-night [radio] programmes, *I* got the symphony concerts and opera houses’.<sup>11</sup> Recalling the adverse reaction by ‘the public to whose taste I was supposed to be pandering’ at the première performance of his opera *König Hirsch* (1952-5), Henze reported that the conductor Hermann Scherchen (‘the red dictator, as he was called by the orchestral players’) had his car tyres slashed in the theatre car park. ‘Needless to say’, said Henze, ‘that wouldn’t happen in a “night studio”’.

Henze’s righteousness needs to be tempered by the knowledge that he chose to confront the capitalist ideological enemy using an expressive means which was readily understood in relation to their own conservative cultural aspirations. This study has shown that Nabokov and Khrennikov chose similar *modus operandi*. The potential of Henze’s music to “change the world” was tempered therefore by the fact that, as was the case with *A Survivor from Warsaw*, the transparency of its message drew it into the same ideological discourse. Boulez doubtless would have pointed out that in both instances it was a case of *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. Such was the intimacy of the relationship between the music’s significance and its intended meaning that it lost its potential to appeal to individuals, other than those who were sufficiently self-assured as to be either receptive to it, or to disregard any temporary discomfort and enjoy it as a bourgeois diversion.

Sartre’s overall stance with regard to the ability of avant-garde music to act as a catalyst for social and political change is captured in the following passage, which could well be interpreted as a description of the chasm between the two tiers of *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*:

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<sup>11</sup> Hans Werner Henze. ‘German Music in the 1940s and 1950s.’ *Music and Politics*, 46-7.

It is certain that modern music is shattering forms, breaking away from conventions, carving its own road. But exactly to whom does it speak of liberation, freedom, will, of the creation of man by man – to a stale and genteel listener whose ears are blocked by an idealist aesthetic. Music says ‘permanent revolution’ and the bourgeoisie hear ‘Evolution, progress’. And even if, among the young intellectuals, a few understand it, won’t their present impotence make them see this liberation as a beautiful myth, instead of their own reality?<sup>12</sup>

Nabokov’s approach suggests that he was aware that as the ears of the Parisian bourgeoisie were ‘blocked by an idealist aesthetic’, they were more likely to embrace ‘progress’ as a by-product of the democratic traditions of the West through an exposure to neo-tonal music, which reassured them by leaving intact their idealist obstruction. Nabokov, in championing a conservative aesthetic, seemed to have preferred that the music attract to itself a sympathetic (bourgeois) audience that would be more likely to hear ‘evolution’ and ‘progress’; affirmations that they would link accordingly to pro-Western ideology. Conversely, there was little to be gained for the Congress in leaving open the possibility that, in their attempt to come to terms with a performance of avant-garde music, what Nabokov described as France’s ‘great disaffected middle layer’ might conclude that their own supposed liberation by the West was a myth. The strong possibility that this might be the case was highlighted in Chapter Six in the suggestion that structuralism’s atomisation of post-War society’s cultural artefacts was part of a general push by a socio-politically aware faction of the Parisian intelligentsia to denature the bonds through which what were believed to be increasingly outmoded institutions maintained power.

Certainly, Antoine Goléa, in his review of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, suspected that the scheduling of the chamber music series was part of a conspiracy to lower its profile, and effectively to cut it adrift from the first tier. An indignant Goléa reported that, by comparison to Pierre Monteux’s triumphant return performance of *Le Sacre du Printemps* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the première of *Structures Ia* was:

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<sup>12</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. ‘The Artist and His Conscience.’ *Situations*, 209.

performed in front of a considerably smaller public, with even less glamour, in a far smaller venue and, to Paris's supreme disgrace, not in the evening but at five-thirty in the afternoon, a time when the rich and fashionable, the snobs, do not attend concerts, and when those who work were unable to attend.<sup>13</sup>

Conspiracy theorists might well argue that this was a deliberate ploy by the festival organisers to ensure that the bourgeoisie had to modify their pattern of social behaviour in order to experience music that may have led them to conclude that the chamber music series was indeed Albert Richard's 'true festival', and that the first tier was a façade presented by those with vested ideological interests. Equally, the workers were denied the opportunity of coming to their own conclusions regarding the music's revolutionary potential because they were busy fulfilling their social role as Sartre's producers.<sup>14</sup>

The various accounts of the *mêlée* that erupted following the première performance of *Structures 1a* suggest that it had caused a reaction similar to the one that greeted the première of *Boulevard Solitude*. But it is entirely another matter to suggest that the woman who launched her handbag at the man whose enthusiasm for *Structures 1a* caused her offence did so out of a suspicion that the underlying agenda of the work was, as was the case with *Boulevard Solitude*, *épater le bourgeois*. By the same token, Guy Dumur's conclusion that Boulez's work marked the passing of the old Europe possibly identified the Congress's greatest fear – that *les jeunes français* were prepared to use culture in order to challenge the old world order.

The conflicting responses to *Structures 1a* were the result of the potential ambiguity that existed between its significance and meaning. The perennial problem for the avant-garde has been that the manner in which the ambiguity is negotiated has depended upon the individual listener. As Stravinsky observed with regard to the concerts of *musique*

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<sup>13</sup> Antoine Goléa. *Rencontres avec Pierre Boulez*, 165.

<sup>14</sup> In the interests of balanced reportage it should also be pointed out that during the period of the chamber festival its principal venue, the Comédie de Champs-Élysées, was in the midst of a season of Jean Anouilh's *La Valse des Torreadors*, which was advertised as beginning each evening at 9.15.

*concrète* that he had attended during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, the audience appeared divided between antipathetic 'professionals' and sympathetic 'revolutionaries'. The differing reactions can be explained in terms of Sartre's understanding of significance and meaning. If one were to consider Stravinsky's professionals if not as part of the Establishment, then at least as individuals who were secure within the existing socio-cultural framework, then it is likely that their antipathy towards *musique concrète* was based upon their ability to grasp the significance, but not the meaning, of the various studies presented. To these individuals the 'allusion to another object' requisite to Sartre's understanding of significance was that the definition of what constituted music and compositional technique had been altered, perhaps irrevocably. But to the revolutionaries, this development carried a meaning. That is, it reached 'beyond the thing signified' and heralded a new form of expression that was hostage neither to the need to be understood, nor to an obligation to sustain entrenched cultural values. Heinz-Klaus Metzger's recollection of Adorno's reaction to a performance at Darmstadt of Karol Goeyvaerts's Op.1 for two pianos (1951) suggests that Adorno, too, was an antipathetic professional uncomfortable in the absence of meaning. Adorno apparently reacted with derision when his inquiry to Goeyvaerts as to what the work was 'about' was met with the reply that its absence of meaning was in itself meaningful.<sup>15</sup>

Despite the circularity of the debate regarding meaning and meaninglessness in music, the verdict of the woman standing within earshot of Stravinsky that *musique concrète* was 'horrible' was, like the launching of the handbag during the première of *Structures 1a*, confirmation that the search for significance, let alone meaning, was itself governed by the idea of reassurance through predictability. In this respect, Nabokov's hearts-then-minds

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<sup>15</sup> Heinz-Klaus Metzger. 'Just Who is Growing Old?': 79. Metzger recalled that Adorno accused Goeyvaerts of being an existentialist, an accusation that the latter vehemently denied.



approach was better suited to advancing a set of ideological beliefs. Nabokov's choice of programme for the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was a recognition that the audience response to tonal, or neo-tonal, music could for the most part be anticipated. Those on the other side, ranging from socialist realists to Henze believed likewise. Conversely, the proscription of most serial music was based upon the premise that audience reaction to it could not be predicted. Nabokov could well have been articulating his own position when, in relation to Soviet cultural policy, he spoke of the Politburo's desire that composers 'write music that is pleasing and comprehensible' so as to keep them from participating in 'mysterious, unknown, and therefore subversive activities'.<sup>16</sup>

Sartre himself appeared to acknowledge that there was a considerable difference between the ideal audience for committed art, one that would understand and respond to the call, and the reality of the situation, which was that an audience free to contemplate either the medium or the message was probably not in need of salvation. Sartre, who had come to the realisation that he was a member of the bourgeoisie and was at the same time calling for art that would hasten its overthrow, attempted to overcome the paradox in such a way as to cast doubt upon his own confidence in the ability of committed art to change society.<sup>17</sup> He did this by addressing himself to what he called a 'virtual public'.<sup>18</sup> Sartre's virtual public was a classless society wherein presumably not only were the fruits of freedom enjoyed equally by all, but the committed writer would be freed from the necessity of addressing himself to the special interests of particular groups and 'would really have to write about the human totality'. In a manner reminiscent of Davenson's

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<sup>16</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. 'Russian Music After the Purge': 850 - 851.

<sup>17</sup> Sartre, in his lengthy and at times vitriolic reply to Camus's allegation that he (Sartre) had failed to denounce the Soviets over revelations as to the existence of prison camps in the Soviet Union, asserted 'you *are* bourgeois Camus, like me. What else could you be?' Sartre's essay marked the final rift between the two men. 'Reply to Albert Camus.' *Situations*, 80.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'For Whom Does One Write?' "*What is Literature?*", 137-8.

yearning for a more humanist music that would cushion the dire reality of France under Nazi occupation, Sartre called for an art:

Not about the abstract man of all ages and for a timeless reader, but about the whole man of his age and his contemporaries . . . Involved in the same adventure as his readers and situated like them in a society without cleavages, the writer, in speaking about them, would be speaking about himself, and in speaking about himself would be speaking about them. As no aristocratic pride would any longer force him to deny that he is in a situation, he would no longer seek to soar above his times and bear witness to it before eternity, but, as his situation would be universal, he would express the hopes and the anger of all men, and would thereby express himself completely . . .<sup>19</sup>

Adereth regarded this kind of utopian aspiration as a rationalisation of Sartre's own uneasy position as a critic of the bourgeois order who at that time could not bring himself to support the Communist Party.<sup>20</sup> This compromise was borne out by Sartre's own attempts at the time to establish a political party that aspired to non-alignment, the ultimately short-lived *Rassemblement démocratique révolutionnaire* (RDR). Sartre in word and deed appeared therefore to imply that complete freedom of expression could only come about in a society 'without cleavages', which was a utopian fantasy given the Cold War schism. Sartre's later defection to the PCF points to a realisation that he arrived at the decision that such a society was at that stage, and remains arguably, an unattainable goal.

If avant-garde music was to change the world it had to speak of the human totality to the musician's equivalent of a society without cleavages, a hypothetical audience that would not recoil (as had Adorno) when confronted with the absence of meaning, and would interpret the music as a clarion call for social change. But the reality was that avant-garde music attracted an audience of specialists, which in Boulez's case may have either divined a meaning from the music, or been comfortable with its absence of meaning.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'For Whom Does One Write?' *"What is Literature?"*, 137-8.

<sup>20</sup> Maxwell Adereth. *Commitment in Modern French Literature*, 42.

<sup>21</sup> In March 1951 Boulez wrote to Nadia Boulanger thanking her for her interest in his work: 'Your letter meant a lot to me. For even if I don't really have to be understood, a certain atmosphere of "understanding" plays a part in the development of one's own tendencies'. Jérôme Spycket. *Nadia Boulanger*, 127.

status accorded to Darmstadt suggests that it may have had the potential to expand beyond its specialist base, although Boulez has suggested that the image of the festival as a 'great fighting force' needs to be tempered by the realisation that during the early 1950s the audience rarely numbered more than one hundred and fifty.<sup>22</sup> What Boulez described as being akin to a small book fair was doubtless not the force for social change envisioned by Sartre. Boulez's later *Domaine Music* concerts may have come closer to realising the ideal audience. Certainly, Dominique Jameux's description of the four social groups that frequented the concerts resembles Sartre's society without cleavages. Jameux reports that the concerts attracted representatives of Paris's 'high society', intelligentsia, fervent young students, and professional musicians, including Boulanger 'who hated it, but came nonetheless' and Messiaen, 'whose support and participation to some extent protected the *Domaine* from accusations of musical Bolshevism'.<sup>23</sup>

That Nabokov may have been among the accusers is discounted by the fact that he, too, attended regularly. Nabokov's attendance could be taken to imply either that the *Domaine* concerts fulfilled the ideological imperative required by Sartre of committed art, or, that serial music was less of a threat than Nabokov had thought initially. A more balanced view, one addressed by way of conclusion, is that Nabokov by the time of the first *Domaine* concert on 14 January 1954 appeared to have reconciled the fact that, as Stravinsky had adopted serial technique, the polarisation of the musical world between conservation and innovation was coming to an end, and that a cultural ideology based upon a fear of the unknown was no longer tenable. The programme selected for that concert appeared not only to celebrate that possibility, but also that Boulez, like Goldbeck, was

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'From the *Domaine Musical* to IRCAM': 7.

<sup>23</sup> Dominique Jameux. *Pierre Boulez*, 65-67.

less narrow-minded in his programming than was Nabokov during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*.<sup>24</sup>

Even if Sartre's idea of commitment changed with the realisation that a society 'without cleavages' was a fantasy at the height of the Cold War, the fact remains that the existentialism that motivated it was symptomatic of what was a widespread questioning in France of the impact of creative endeavour upon society. As the distinguished art historian J.P. Hodin recalled in 1958:

When I first came to Paris as a youth, it embodied for me the great spirit of directness and *clarté* of the French. There the natural forms themselves were apprehended; they were not just pretexts for the beyond. In other words, one saw, one did not only think speculatively, as was the case east of the Rhine. Now, after so many years, we find ourselves confronted, even in Paris, with a world in which the prime motive power is not seeing, but knowing and feeling, the behind and the beyond, the vagueness or presumed precision of scientific or philosophical-aesthetic, or psychological, or Germanic, or Far Eastern notions. Innocence of vision no longer exists.<sup>25</sup>

Reinforcing Dirks's contention, Sartre as an individual who helped set this trend would no doubt have pointed out that the reason why 'innocence of vision' no longer existed was because Man, in the absence of a divine guidance, was doomed to be left to his own devices, and must therefore speculate as to the consequences of his actions. He was doomed to do so because, in the very exercise of his freedom, Man had created a world in which he himself felt alienated – hence the term 'existential angst'.

For the central character in Sartre's *La Nausée*, Antoine Roquentin, existential angst manifests itself in an overwhelming feeling of nausea brought about by his realisation of the absurdity of his own existence. Because there is no God to provide a justification for

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<sup>24</sup> Jameux lists the programme as follows: *The Musical Offering*, J.S. Bach; *Polifonica, Monodia, Ritmica*, Luigi Nono; *Kontrapunkte*, Karlheinz Stockhausen; *Concerto, Op. 24* for nine instruments, Anton Webern; *Renard*, Igor Stravinsky. *Pierre Boulez*, 71.

<sup>25</sup> J.P. Hodin. 'What is Modern Art?' *Modern Art and the Modern Mind*. (Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1972), 188. The contents of the special number of *Polyphonie 7* (1950), entitled 'La musique et les problèmes de l'homme' reinforce Hodin's view, especially 'La musique et l'inconscient collectif', by a Dr. Lauffenburger, and 'Autorité humaine de la musique', by Etienne Souriau.

the universe and everything in it, the temporal world and, by extension, Roquentin, are in effect superfluous, pointless. Roquentin discovers that the only thing that relieves his otherwise all-consuming nausea is to listen to Sophie Tucker singing ‘Some of these days’ – a song characteristic of what the Prague Manifesto categorised as ‘la musique légère américaine’. It finally dawns upon Roquentin that the reason why music is able to give him relief is that it is free of the absurdity and futility of everyday existence:

*It does not exist. It is even irritating in its non-existence; if I were to . . . snatch that record from the turn-table which is holding it and if I were to break it in two, I wouldn't reach it. It is beyond, always beyond something, beyond a voice, beyond a violin note . . . and when you try to seize it you meet nothing but existents, you run up against existents devoid of meaning. It is behind them: I can't even hear it, I hear sounds, vibrations in the air which unveil it. It does not exist, since it has nothing superfluous: it is all the rest which is superfluous in relation to it. It is.<sup>26</sup>*

Nabokov and Khrennikov would have viewed this assessment as confirmation that there was possibly no better propaganda vehicle than one that appeared in the first instance to be a blank slate – that just ‘is’. The fact that music is of itself ‘devoid of meaning’ was turned by the East and West to their own advantage by imposing their own meanings upon it. But not just any music, and certainly not avant-garde music that failed to provide the guarantees demanded by the power elite. Nabokov and Khrennikov appear to have applied to avant-garde music the old Soviet maxim: ‘I don’t understand it, and what I don’t understand is bad for the State’. By the same token Sartre was troubled by the idea that if avant-garde music was *incapable* of being understood it *could not* be bad for the State, and may therefore have been of little use in the struggle against the dominant ideologies of either hue.

But, as the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s Rome festival will be shown to demonstrate, it soon transpired that this position was untenable. To actively exclude, either by Soviet government decree or a Western ‘tribunal of taste’, certain musical types, caused

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<sup>26</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. *Nausea*. Robert Baldick, tr. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965) 248.

more problems than it solved, in that it exposed the hypocrisy of speaking of cultural freedom while not leading by example. As was the case with Stravinsky's subsequent fêting by Khrushchev, Nabokov's decision to mount a festival in Rome dedicated to the avant-garde, one that at the same time failed to include any music by Eastern European composers who two years earlier had been lionised as victims of Soviet persecution, suggests that the Cold War antagonists came to the realisation that too much had been demanded of music in the struggle for Europe's hearts and minds.<sup>27</sup> Perhaps, finally, the power elite came to realise the transparency of the grand deception they had hoped to perpetuate through music. To this end the final word should rest with Roquentin:

To think that there are idiots who derive consolation from the fine arts. Like my Aunt Bigeois: 'Chopin's *Preludes* were such a help to me when your poor uncle died.' And the concert halls are full to overflowing with humiliated, injured people who close their eyes and try to turn their pale faces into receiving aerials. They imagine that the sounds they receive flow into them, sweet and nourishing, and that their sufferings become music . . . they think that beauty is compassionate towards them. The mugs.<sup>28</sup>

It will be argued that their sufferings did indeed become music; a music that, while neither compassionate nor beautiful, was free of deception.

This chapter has further confirmed that the ability of music to alter or modify a given ideological position was contingent upon either its aesthetic appeal or the clarity and relevance of its message to the intended audience. The strength of *A Survivor from Warsaw*, for example, was that its anti-Fascist message was unambiguous. But this very lack of ambiguity meant that it had limited appeal beyond those who were receptive to its message. It has been argued that Henze's *Boulevard Solitude* was potentially a more effective tool for communicating Sartre's idea of commitment because it presented

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<sup>27</sup> There was a tinge of regret in Sartre's 1977 recollection in *Le Monde* that twenty years prior, at a time when he had become an active supporter of the Soviet Union, he had helped to reintroduce Stravinsky to Moscow audiences. But as the venue was not a factory floor, a venue that he (and no doubt Koechlin) would have preferred, he came to the realisation that all he was doing was helping reintroduce Stravinsky to an intellectual elite. 'Entretien avec Jean-Paul Sartre: "La musique nous donne une possibilité de capter le monde tel qu'il fut": 10.

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. *Nausea*, 246.

unsuspecting bourgeois audiences with a readily identifiable cultural icon, and then injured that icon in such a way as to leave the audience in no doubt as to the composer's message. The problem for *Boulevard Solitude* was, however, that as its anti-bourgeois message located it within the same ideological parry and thrust, it contributed to the maintenance of outmoded values that had fuelled the Cold War.

On the basis of its challenge to those values, *Structures Ia* had theoretically a greater potential to confront an audience with the need for change. The difficulty was, however, that its intentional non-significance denied the possibility of meaning to all but those intellectually (and aurally) equipped to deal with the cultural ramifications of the underlying compositional method. Those unable to grasp its meaning, and who stood possibly to benefit the most from committed art were, like their well-heeled counterparts, more likely to dismiss it out of hand. A solution to the dilemma, one adopted by Sartre, was to direct the aspirations of committed art to a hypothetical audience in the hope that the strength of the aspirations would bring that audience to reality. Sartre's position, which implies a foresight on the part of the creator, and the benefit of hindsight on the part of the listener, was articulated as follows:

It is the artist who must break the already crystallized habits which make us see in the *present* tense those institutions and customs which are *already out of date*. To provide a true image of our time, he must consider it from the pinnacle of the future which it is creating, since it is tomorrow which will decide today's truth.<sup>29</sup>

Chapter Ten approaches the possible meaning and significance of *Structures Ia* from a hypothetical audience's perspective, one that with the benefit of hindsight is able to recognise the composer's foresight. Made up of specialists and *amateurs* who sought to understand the work rather than react against it, such an audience would be capable of identifying the truths that Nabokov and Khrennikov feared were embedded in the unknown

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<sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 219.

recesses of serial abstraction. Perhaps more so than the quality that Hanns Eisler admired in Schoenberg's music, *Structures Ia* would force bourgeois audiences to confront 'the chaos and ugliness of the world'.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Hanns Eisler . 'On Schönberg.' *A Rebel in Music: Selected Writings*, 75.



## CHAPTER TEN

### Serialism, Scientism, and the Post-War World View

This study has been critical of the bias shown against serialism by Western and Soviet cultural planners during the early days of the Cold War. But given the transparency of the propagandist aims pursued by Nicolas Nabokov and Tikhon Khrennikov, their appropriation of music that yielded affirmative qualities, such as accessibility and reassurance through predictable resolution, is understandable. Both men were motivated by the realisation that, on the basis of its aesthetics and its outcome, serial music was not an ideal vehicle for promoting an already established political ideology. Furthermore, each party appears to have concluded that serial music was an aberration, a cultural pursuit out of step with society and its aspirations at that time. In order to place the expansion of serial technique in its proper historical perspective, this chapter will explore the question of whether serial music reflected unpalatable truths that both Cold War antagonists were instrumental in maintaining, but which neither, at least until the Congress's second music festival, *La Musica nel XX Secolo* (Rome, April 1954), was prepared to countenance at a cultural level.

The chapter addresses two key areas. The first is that expanded serial technique was a manifestation of the increasing technologisation of post-War society. As such, the first section considers the possibility that serial music should be regarded as a expression of what Sartre described as the 'savage violence', 'barbarism' and the 'horrible and grandiose freedom' of the period. The second section builds upon what will emerge as the dual themes of abstraction and the apparently parlous state of post-War society. Bearing in mind the tendency among detractors of serialism from across the political spectrum (including Nabokov, Barraud, and Finkelstein) to establish a pejorative association between serialism and German Expressionism proper, the ensuing discussion locates serialism within a

revised reading of the role played by intuition in the musical Expressionist paradigm, and in Boulez's expanded serial technique. In sum, it is shown that the abstractionism underpinning *Structures Ia* was consistent with the scientific world view at the time, one that when coupled with the ideological sabre-rattling of the East and West, brought about widespread unease. It is further argued that the level of abstraction brought to bear in the composition of *Structures Ia* does not necessarily imply the complete absence of subjective or socially conditioned impulses on the part of the composer. On the contrary, these impulses are shown to be similar qualitatively to those whose presence is used to confirm the social relevance of the earlier musical Expressionist archetype.

Speaking in Paris in 1946, Emmanuel Mounier, formerly the editor of *Esprit*, brought these positions together in such a way as to suggest that the confrontation between abstract will and emotional agitation was not the sole concern of composers. According to Mounier, the 'modern world' as it then stood was possessed of two specific and interrelated passions.<sup>1</sup> The 'passion for the horrible' was linked to, and came to be articulated in, post-War society's 'passion for the abstract, which finds its outlet in the researches of pure mathematics, pure painting, pure music, pure economy, beyond metaphors, beyond forms that are prisoner to the imagination'.<sup>2</sup>

The most immediate and obvious parallel between abstract musical thought and what Mounier called 'the horrible' is the much discussed apparent synchronicity between Arnold Schoenberg's first steps in the direction of atonality and the publication of Albert

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<sup>1</sup> Mounier's lecture was one of a series given at the Sorbonne to mark the opening session of UNESCO. The series was published under the title *Reflections on Our Age: Lectures Delivered at the Opening Session of UNESCO at the Sorbonne University, Paris*. (London: Allan Wingate, 1948).

<sup>2</sup> Emmanuel Mounier. 'Reflections on an Apocalyptic Age.' *Reflections on Our Age*, 33. Mounier's reference to 'pure' music is best understood within the context of the view, promoted by Davenson and others in the pages of *Esprit*, that the composer of serial music abrogated his social responsibilities in favour of *art pour l'art*, an argument stoutly rebuffed by Leibowitz.

Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (1906).<sup>3</sup> This contiguity was further confirmed by Boulez, who noted that with the development and expansion of serial technique, music had now moved 'out of the world of Newton and into the world of Einstein' – a view given added impetus (and its implications made more confronting) by the fact that *Structures Ia* was given its première on the same day, 7 May 1952, as a nuclear device was detonated in the Nevada desert.<sup>4</sup> The artifices created as a result of these pursuits were no longer 'prisoner to the imagination' because the research was initiated with no real sense of where it might lead, or what might be produced as a result. In this sense each event could well be regarded as the pursuit of earlier innovations to ultimately untenable conclusions. In *Structures Ia* Boulez effected a realisation of the ultimate potential of Schoenberg's emancipation of the dissonance; the atomic bomb was a practical consequence of Einstein's theories regarding the behaviour of atoms.

The negative aspect of this experimentation was that, as Mounier lamented, 'our artifices have developed according to a rhythm that has turned out to be much swifter than our rhythm of assimilation'.<sup>5</sup> The bemusement and consternation that greeted the performances of *Structures Ia* and the various *musique concrète* studies during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* attest to the validity of Mounier's observation. When linked to the attitudes adopted towards serial music by the Cold War antagonists, these reactions highlight the way in which the gap between knowledge and understanding was exploited to ideological ends. Nabokov's stance prior to Stravinsky's adoption of serial technique was that the credence the technique enjoyed among the rebellious younger generation of composers

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Eugene Glickman, 'Tonality and Gravity.' *Current Musicology* 36 (1983): 113-124; and Jamie James, 'Schoenberg and the Revival of the Great Theme.' *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science, and the Natural Order of the Universe*. (London: Abacus, 1995) 212-228.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Boulez. Cited by Joan Peyser in *Boulez*, 25-6.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Mounier. 'Reflections on an Apocalyptic Age.' *Reflections on Our Age*, 34.

confirmed the urgency of the task of cultural and social regeneration that the Congress took upon itself to promote. To the Soviets, serial music was a manifestation of the bourgeois decadence of the West, a decadence that could be countered by embracing Stalin's supposedly egalitarian utopia. While previous chapters have focussed on the negative aspect of the exploitation of serial music, this chapter proposes that serial music may have been harshly dealt with by both camps precisely because, as Adorno for one was obliged to concede, it was indeed an accurate reflection of the condition of post-War society at a time when truth, or at least accuracy, was foremost among the casualties.<sup>6</sup>

A great concern to Mounier was that the spirit of research had itself become a destructive force, in that it appeared to be intended not so much to selectively modify existing conventions and practices, but to destroy them using means apparently no longer guided by social or historical constraints. Boulez appears to have embraced this approach when speaking of the significance of *Structures Ia* as a means of making 'a clean sweep of one's heritage, and start all over again from scratch . . .'.<sup>7</sup> Mounier regarded this as a kind of nihilism that differed greatly from the nihilism that is 'provisional and creative', one that is 'destructive only in appearance, for it does not annihilate anything and only asks that men should give Nothing in the name of Nothing and then move on to the next stage'.<sup>8</sup> The new nihilism was by contrast prepared to destroy 'whatever refuses to be dominated'. The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was evidence of the apocalyptic nature of the new nihilism, wherein the lust for the power, a lust fed by technological innovation, was in inverse proportion to any sense of social, or in this case, moral responsibility. For Mounier,

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<sup>6</sup> Adorno's view, which will be dealt with in due course, was that 'the general public . . . is alienated by the outward characteristics of such music'. This was because 'the dissonances which horrify them testify to their own conditions; for that reason alone do they find them unbearable'. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 56.

<sup>8</sup> Emmanuel Mounier. 'Reflections on an Apocalyptic Age.' *Reflections on Our Age*, 36.

as it was for Sartre, this became a negative aspect of freedom because for him it signified that post-War European society, which had only recently succeeded in reasserting the liberty of mankind largely through technological military superiority, had come to see the latter as the last line of defence in the maintenance of a moral high ground claimed in the name of political ideology. As President Truman reminded friend and foe alike, the United States would not hesitate to use the atomic bomb to defend its own vision of world 'peace'.

Leaving aside for the time being the possible relationship between Mounier's new nihilism and a resurgent Expressionism, an understanding of where avant-garde musical thought lies within what was a rapidly evolving technological conundrum can be grasped by referring to the positivist reading of scientific inquiry at mid-century offered by the American social scientist, Nathan Rotenstreich. According to Rotenstreich, scientific inquiry had in the twentieth century undergone a fundamental transformation from a knowledge-centred to a technological approach to the world.<sup>9</sup> Tonal practice is knowledge-centred, in the sense that its conventions are based upon knowledge arising from the observation of a natural phenomenon; namely, the behaviour of a vibrating monochord. As Jean-Philippe Rameau was able to demonstrate in his treatise, *Traité d'harmonie reduite à ses principes naturels* (1722), tonal harmony mimics the overtone series generated by the monochord as it moves unencumbered towards a state of rest.<sup>10</sup> The evolution of tonal practice towards Schoenberg's emancipation of the dissonance sought to build upon the potential inherent within that phenomenon without necessarily leading to its rupture, in the sense that extended dissonance was still measured in terms of

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<sup>9</sup> Nathan Rotenstreich. 'On Modern Society and World Outlook.' *Social Research* 27 (1960): 430.

<sup>10</sup> This aspect of Rameau's theories concerning the behaviour of the *corps sonore* is discussed by Thomas Christensen in his article 'Eighteenth-century Science and the *corps sonore*: The Scientific Background of Rameau's Principle of Harmony.' *Journal of Music Theory* 31.1 (Spring 1987): 23-50.

its distance from an ultimate, if delayed, point of resolution; as is the case with works such as *Verklärte Nacht* (Op. 4) and the *Erste Kammer-symphonie* (Op. 9). Twelve-tone technique offered itself as a means of formalising, of organising, what had become Schoenberg's subsequent apparently intuitive attempts, in his so-called expressionist oeuvre, to free horizontal and vertical pitch structures from any cadential obligation, and to dispense with any functional distinction between consonance and dissonance. Schoenberg preferred to describe these works as 'pantonal' rather than 'atonal', precisely because rather than being anti-tonal, as the latter term implies, he sought to make irrelevant the idea of consonance and dissonance.<sup>11</sup> As has been shown earlier, what troubled Boulez about Schoenberg's application of twelve-tone technique was that it left intact the tension and release generated by other parameters, rhythm in particular.

Expanded serial technique constitutes, at that point at which mechanisation takes over, a technological intervention intended deliberately to eliminate any trace of expressive melody or harmonic ebb and flow. Ligeti in his analysis of *Structures 1a* described this as automatism, the second stage in the serial compositional process during which the various parametric grids chosen by the composer are superimposed, or 'fed into a machine' so as to ensure that any compositional choice based upon possibly historically conditioned personal preference is eliminated.<sup>12</sup> The material result, that is, the work itself, is based therefore upon the idea of intervention, of actively negating tonality's gravitational force once and for all so as to open up what Boulez described as a universe of perpetual expansion.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, 'Opinion or Insight?' (1926). *Style and Idea*, 263.

<sup>12</sup> György Ligeti. 'Decision and Automatism in Structure 1a': 36. Ligeti was able successfully to demonstrate that the mechanistic intermediary stage is the only point during the compositional process when artistic control is taken out of the composer's hands. Ligeti argued that automatism is preceded by decisions as to the selection of the elements (the pitch, durational material, and so forth) and their disposition in the matrices. Automatism produces a crude structure, one that, if need be, can be finessed through adjustments (either controlled or aleatoric) to register, dynamics and timbre so as to create a formal structure more consistent with the composer's original conception.

<sup>13</sup> Pierre Boulez. Cited by Joan Peyser in *Boulez*, 26.

An awareness of the observation-versus-intervention dichotomy helps to locate serial explorations within post-War scientific endeavour, and the anxieties generated by it. If the lectures presented at the inaugural UNESCO conference are any indication, the amelioration of those anxieties in Europe in general, and France in particular, was among the organisation's more pressing tasks. Speaking at the conference, Frédéric Joliot-Curie, the French atomic scientist and noted communist (a link that caused the West considerable discomfort), described how in the past pure scientific knowledge had brought peace of mind because it delivered man from the uncertainty of the unknown. Joliot-Curie recalled that as recently as 1937, at the Popular Front's International Exhibition, scientists had expressed their confidence in the 'liberating influence of science'.<sup>14</sup> Not only had a fear of the unknown similar to the pre-Enlightenment fear of Divine retribution returned with the advent and deployment of the atomic bomb, but political ideology had intervened to put a connotation of power upon the development and application of technology.

Nabokov sought to capitalise upon that fear by appropriating neo-tonal music to the West's cause. Whether viewed as reactionary or eclectic, a work such as Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* reflected a knowledge-based (in the passive, non-interventionist sense described above) approach to composition and, as Nabokov was quick to realise, it accordingly stood as something of a beacon of reassurance in a sea of uncertainty. Of interest in this regard is the observation concerning the role of the dominant chord made by Ernest Ansermet, one of the high-profile celebrities featured during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, in his generally emotive and overtly racist critique of serial technique, and of Schoenberg, in particular. Ansermet suggested that the dominant, and the feeling of expectation that it engenders, acts as a bridge between the 'inner life' of the music (the subjective) and the emotional state of the listener:

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<sup>14</sup> Frédéric Joliot-Curie. 'Introductory Lecture.' *Reflections on Our Age*, 191.

. . . through the dominant, an anchor is dropped from the surface to the ocean bed, everything exterior takes on an interior significance, and we experience this as 'feeling'. From this moment, music is no longer organised for us from without, but from within; a musical structure is an internal event, a way of going directly or indirectly, easily or with difficulty, that is, in a certain dynamic mood, to the dominant.<sup>15</sup>

Given that Ansermet, like Sartre, argued that 'sounds carry no meaning, acquired or natural', the dominant acted to facilitate the projection of the listener's feelings onto (or into) the music. As these feelings were determined by external, that is cultural factors, the dominant served as a cultural weathervane which afforded an opportunity to gauge the ethical disposition of society at any given time. What the 'Juif bête' Schoenberg had done through twelve-tone technique, and his youthful followers through their quasi-scientific expansion of it, was to create a closed system that, in removing any sense of expectation engendered by the dominant, acted to exclude from music any possibility of cultural, and therefore ethical, determinants.<sup>16</sup> Without wishing to sound like 'that terrible man', Oswald Spengler, Ansermet was obliged nevertheless to concur with Spengler's thesis regarding the impending death of European civilisation, one in which musical culture was complicit unless it was rescued from the empiricist chaos that had been visited upon it by the serial manipulators.<sup>17</sup>

In Boulez's opinion chaos was the price that music had to pay if it was to regenerate itself. In conversation with Deliège he described the 'theoretical asceticism and the tough, sometimes arduous work' involved in his serial experiments as akin to that of a research scientist, albeit one 'hypnotised' for a time by the construction rather than its possible

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<sup>15</sup> Ernest Ansermet. 'Musical Experience and the World Today.' *The Score and IMA Magazine* 7 (December 1952): 34.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Ansermet. 'La musique contemporaine.' *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine*. (Neuchâtel: Editions de la Baconnière, 1961) 534. Irrespective of whether one translates 'Juif bête' as 'Jewish beast' or 'Jewish fool', the racist undertones are no less alarming.

<sup>17</sup> Ernest Ansermet. 'Musical Experience and the World Today': 49.



appeal to the listener.<sup>18</sup> As if to reinforce Mounier's concerns regarding the delay between innovation and its assimilation, Boulez in his expansion of serial technique was prepared to forgo temporarily the humanitarian aspect of what he called true research, wherein the researcher facilitates a 'continual interaction' between reality and the hypotheses upon which the research is based.<sup>19</sup> The reality with which the composer grappled was that serial technique undermined the cognitive aspects of the music, what Michel Foucault regarded as easily recognisable features.<sup>20</sup> Boulez's preparedness in *Structures 1a* to overlook listener sensibilities 'in search of a method', and to venture into Meyer-Eppler's ectosemantic dimension, is consistent with Mounier's idea of a destructive nihilism that, rather than giving 'Nothing in the name of Nothing', required an act of faith, if not acquiescence, on the part of the listener. Stravinsky's verdict following its première that *Structures 1a* was arrogant points to the possibility that Stravinsky felt that the listener's expectations had been deemed irrelevant by the composer, as does the apparently impromptu decision to immediately repeat it in the face of audience unrest. Boulez's suggestion to Nadia Boulanger that being understood was of little consequence to him moves the work closer to the realm of Sartre's intentional non-significance, a non-significance guaranteed by Ligeti's 'machine'.

Boulez was more concerned with the compositional system as a means of controlling the musical parameters, and their relationship to one another, than with the aural outcome.

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<sup>18</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 60.

<sup>19</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 60.

<sup>20</sup> In conversation with Boulez, Michel Foucault summarised these qualities in a way that earned Boulez's approval: 'Certainly listening to music becomes more difficult as its composition frees itself from any kind of schemas, signals, perceivable clues for repetitive structure. In classical music, there is a certain transparency from the composition to the hearing. And even if many compositional features in Bach and Beethoven aren't recognisable by most listeners, there are always other features, important ones, which are accessible to them. But contemporary music, by trying to make each of its elements a unique event, makes any grasp or recognition by the listener difficult.' 'Contemporary Music and the Public.' *Perspectives of New Music* 24.1 (Fall-Winter 1985): 9-10.

As such, the expansion of serial technique forms part of what Rotenstreich, among others, viewed as the purpose of modern science, which is ‘to reduce reality to a law-abiding system’, to a network of stable relations that could then be built upon or altered at will.<sup>21</sup> Taking *Structures Ia* as a case in point, it is apparent that its *raison d’être* rested with the establishment of a law-abiding system in the form of prepared compositional grids used to integrate the musical parameters across vertical and horizontal axes. The problem identified by Rotenstreich with this type of rationale was twofold. Firstly, it followed that technology as the practical application of modern scientific outlook was concerned less with a given object than with altering the relations between objects. Technology articulated Schopenhauer’s will to power, a desire to interfere with previously stable relationships; hence, the unease described by Joliot-Curie and Adorno, which finds its equivalent in the ongoing debate described in this study as to serial music’s social relevance. Secondly, the intellectual stance required to pursue this level of abstraction not only sounded the potential death knell of the spiritual in art, but pointed also to the possibility that Man himself was potentially reduced to an object within a nexus of inter-related objects. The existential Rubicon once crossed, the implication was, as Dirks had lamented, that the justification of Man’s position within this nexus became less the responsibility of religion and more the domain of ideology. Peyser’s recollection that Boulez, although never joining the Communist party attended its meetings – ‘he has said, as a substitute for church-going’ – suggests that the composer had reached his own conclusion as to where the ultimate power lay.<sup>22</sup>

In his opening address to the Congress for Cultural Freedom’s ‘Science and Freedom’ conference (Hamburg, July 1953), Denis de Rougement established the ideological

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<sup>21</sup> Nathan Rotenstreich. ‘On Modern Society and World Outlook’: 424.

<sup>22</sup> Joan Peyser. *Boulez*, 25.

imperative arising from this situation by asking ‘if science rules the world, who is to rule science?’<sup>23</sup> Despite venturing to speculate that ‘some new type of wisdom’ may emerge to fulfill such a duty, the reality of the Cold War situation meant that it would inevitably be the State, ‘. . . which means in practice the ideology of the political party in power’. Such was the immediacy of the ideological confrontation that ideology frequently intervened to dictate the course and nature of research. This was the case in French musical circles for two reasons. Firstly, as has been shown previously, Soviet apologists such as Kaldor were quick to claim a moral imperative that demanded that musical innovation was valid only insofar as it contributed to the greater good of society.<sup>24</sup> Nigg’s obvious discomfort in reconciling serial research with the humanitarianism demanded by Kaldor is a crucial example of an individual struggling to demonstrate that he possessed the necessary goodwill in the pursuit of innovation. Secondly, as the French mathematician Roger Apery argued at Hamburg, the ‘problem of neutralism’ amongst French researchers was allied to the Gallic predilection for a steadfast impartiality in scientific investigation.<sup>25</sup> To this *science pour la science* can be added the *art pour l’art* of Boulez. Boulez’s single-minded devotion to reshaping the language of music linked him to that stratum of French intellectuals and scientists singled out by the moderates in the Congress as being in need of

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<sup>23</sup> Denis de Rougement. ‘Opening Address’. *Science and Freedom*. (London: Secker and Warburg, 1955) 20. De Rougement was at pains to emphasise the similarities between the scientific conference and *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, which he described as being in ‘the spirit of the secular games of Roman times’. This type of superficiality rankled the Leftist French press.

<sup>24</sup> Confirmation of this approach, and of the French Communist Party’s enthusiasm in supporting it, can be gleaned from the report carried in *Les lettres françaises* of the Soviet Union’s detonation of its first nuclear device. Jean Cabrerets reported that the Soviet bomb was intended only to ‘fertilise the desert, and not for waging war.’ Jean Cabrerets. ‘Changeant le cours des fleuves et transformant la nature: La bombe atomique explose en Asie centrale soviétique.’ *Les lettres françaises* 286 (17 November 1949): 1, 4.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Apery. ‘The Problem of Neutralism.’ *Science and Freedom*, 244. This kind of single-mindedness was exploited by Charles de Gaulle as he sought to reassert France’s power and influence, most notably through the development of an independent nuclear arsenal, the *force de frappe*. See Robert Gilpin, ‘Research and National Independence: The French View.’ *France in the Age of the Scientific State*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) 2-16.

salvation, and by hard-liners such as Koestler and Hook, as being unworthy of it.

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to speculate as to whether the difficulty in reconciling the social implications behind the expansion of serial technique may have been because on the one hand it appeared, in terms of its outcome, to reaffirm the bourgeois ideal of *art pour l'art*, but on the other it appears, from a methodological perspective (and paradoxically perhaps), to have a great deal in common with the Marxian dialectical materialist approach to science. For Boulez, one of the overriding purposes of *Structures Ia* was to assert his own individuality by reversing what he called the 'material/myself relationship', wherein the composer grapples with the legacy of presumably unyielding historicist compositional practices, which in spite of localised disturbances at the foreground and middleground, emerge intact at Schenker's *Ursatz* in the form of irresistible cadential pressures. By exploiting the tension between creative choice and automatism, Boulez achieved such a dominance over the musical parameters that by his own account the order became 'myself/material'.<sup>26</sup> Boulez used a technological approach based upon mechanical manipulation at the second stage of the serial compositional process to reduce what might be described as the tyranny of cultural distance between the composer and his musical material. By executing a 'reduction of style to the degree zero' the expansion of serial technique freed music's constituent elements from any residual cultural affectations.<sup>27</sup> This action had the effect of closing the gap between the composer and the musical material in its elemental, or what Adorno called pre-artistic, state.<sup>28</sup> In so doing Boulez went some way to fulfilling Sartre's prediction of a new mode of expression wherein the elemental qualities of the raw material were preserved in their treatment.

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<sup>26</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 56.

<sup>27</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 55.

<sup>28</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 110.

In terms of his art alone, this course of action was seen as necessary by Boulez in order to negotiate his way through what he regarded at the time as a period of uncertainty in the evolution of music, wherein art music appeared to be polarised between Schoenberg's compromised twelve-tone technique and Stravinsky's neo-classicism. But in the context of the ideological ferment of the period, it can be seen that Boulez's method (but not its outcome) approaches the more socially inclusive theoretical Marxian scientific model, which held that the distance between the ruler and the ruled (the cultural) upon which coercive socio-economic relations were based could be negated by reducing the distance between man and nature (the natural).<sup>29</sup> Using a highly abstract compositional approach that centred upon the material, Boulez purged music of its historical, and therefore cultural burden. Ansermet, for one, was quick to make a connection between serial thought and Marxism, both of which, he claimed, were linked to the 'ancient Jewish' idea of seeking to change the temporal world through material manipulation, rather than spiritual transcendence.<sup>30</sup> Just as a fundamental restructuring of economic relations was pivotal to Marx's revolution, so, too, was the manipulation of the relationship between predetermined parameters (pitch, duration, dynamics and attack) the principal determinant in the serial revolution. In each case the means sought justification through the ends. This led Ansermet to conclude that the Communist party and the serial composer were alike in that both performed a coercive function predicated on the idea of obligation rather than choice, a verdict with which Francis Pinguet later concurred.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In theory this meant that, rather than subjugating his fellow man, Man could achieve equality through technological means which not only created the material conditions favourable for an egalitarian society, but also acted ostensibly to divert man's dominant urge into controlling inanimate objects rather than his fellow man. In practice, history tells us that the reverse was the case. Pol Pot's agrarian policy in Kampuchea (Cambodia), in which the cities were emptied and the inhabitants banished to rural collectives in an attempt to create a 'year zero' was based upon this idea.

<sup>30</sup> Ernest Ansermet. 'La musique contemporaine.' *Les fondements de la musique dans la conscience humaine*, 526.

<sup>31</sup> Francis Pinguet. 'Le retour au classique: Interrogation – Perspective.' : 16.

Adorno and Claude Lévi-Strauss viewed serial technique as an aggressive act predicated on the desire to strip music of its inherited acculturations. For Adorno serialism was an attempt to return music to its ‘pre-musical . . . pre-artistic tone’.<sup>32</sup> This, he said, explained why many of its adherents also dabbled in *musique concrète*, because both types were concerned with challenging cultural perceptions, rather than with ‘the goal of qualitative freedom and release’, an aspiration that to Adorno’s way of thinking needed to be omnipresent if art was to retain its validity.<sup>33</sup> Lévi-Strauss concurred, although he was careful to distinguish between the two. *Musique concrète*, for Lévi-Strauss, was in ‘an immediate communion with the given phenomena of nature . . . its first concern is to disrupt the system of actual or potential meanings of which these phenomena are elements’.<sup>34</sup> This was achieved by dislocating or juxtaposing sounds, whether natural or man-made, thereby removing them from what the listener regarded as their original (which according to Lévi-Strauss’s paradigm was their naturally occurring) context. Serial music was in Lévi-Strauss’s opinion potentially more threatening because, rather than forcing a rupture between Man and his cultural environment, it operated at the very boundary between the cultural and the natural: ‘It is as if one were trying to find the lowest level of organization compatible with the retention of a series of sounds handed down by tradition, or, more accurately, to destroy a simple organization, partly imposed from without (since it results from a choice among pre-existing possibilities), to leave the field open for a much more supple and complex, [as] yet undeclared code’.<sup>35</sup>

Adorno, for his part, pointed to the ‘narrowness and limitation of technological development’, rather than technology *per se*, as the culprit. More significantly, the

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<sup>32</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 110.

<sup>33</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 110.

<sup>34</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss. ‘Overture.’ *The Raw and the Cooked*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss. ‘Overture.’ *The Raw and the Cooked*, 22-23.

destructive intent behind the application of technology to the compositional process was seen by him as being indicative of 'the paralysis of all free initiative in this over-managed world'.<sup>36</sup> Not only do Adorno's criticisms capture something of the anxiety that these processes engendered, but the way in which the ideological focus of his criticisms appears to have been further misconstrued by individuals linked with the Congress suggests that he may have been uncomfortably close to the realisation that the Cold War ideological confrontation possibly bore a good deal of the burden of responsibility for the loss of freedom, and with that, of initiative.

The purpose of this section is not to unravel Adorno's negative dialectics, which allowed him to adopt the seemingly contradictory position wherein art is at once an affirmation and a negation, but rather to consider the historical context in which he arrived at this conclusion with regard to the expansion of serial technique. The following summarises Adorno's position regarding what he saw as the paradox that was the premature ageing of avant-garde music: 'The forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do documents themselves. Every ossification of form insists that it be interpreted as the negation of the severity of life'.<sup>37</sup> Adorno regarded the course of music history, and the validity of its musical forms, as something of a sedimentary process, whereby each successive layer was comprised of the metaphorical alluvium generated by the composer's clash with his musical material. This sedimentary process was exposed to erosion through serial technique. Rather than clashing with his musical material, the serial composer chose to manipulate it using a technocratic compositional method that to Adorno's way of thinking was both the purpose behind the work (the subject) and its outcome (the object). In so doing the serial composer robbed modernist music of the

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<sup>36</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 115.

<sup>37</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 43.

critical momentum that it had hitherto enjoyed and, having ‘stabilised’, it began to show signs of ageing in relation to other expressive media. This stasis was for Adorno reflected in the music itself: ‘the static pattern of notes is confused with the event that the notes signify’ – the ‘event’ being what had previously been the critical tension between the composer and his material.<sup>38</sup> The serial composer’s preoccupation with the material (what Adorno termed a ‘fetishism of the means’) was in this regard no different from Stravinsky’s neo-classicism.<sup>39</sup>

But more significantly, this preoccupation, while reactionary in its effect, was seen as apolitical in its intent. This was because in failing actually to confront the musical material at his disposal, the composer produced a work of art ‘that is content to be a fetish, an idle pastime for those who would like to sleep through the deluge that threatens them, in an apoliticism that is in fact deeply political [because] no one is any longer exempt from the conflict between the two great blocs’.<sup>40</sup> Thus Adorno, while concurring with Apery’s statement regarding the need for the Congress to counter a neutrality that stemmed from the French predilection for pure research, went further and suggested that, given the immediacy of the Cold War confrontation, the serial composer’s apparent indifference bordered on a political act. The crime of indifference, it will be recalled, was also an accusation levelled by Nabokov upon France’s ‘disillusioned’ middle-layer. But while the latter suspected that serial composers were part of a push to sabotage Europe’s efforts at cultural rejuvenation, in ‘The Aging of the New Music’ their preoccupation with the compositional process was seen as an act of self-preservation:

. . . young people no longer trust in their youth. Anxiety and pain have grown to an extreme degree and can no longer be controlled by the individual psyche. Repression

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<sup>38</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 103.

<sup>39</sup> Theodor Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*, 172.

<sup>40</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Commitment.’ *Aesthetics and Politics*, 177.



becomes a necessity, and this repression . . . stands behind the idiosyncratic rejection of expression, which is at one with suffering.<sup>41</sup>

According to Adorno's rationale the extension of scientific techniques into the realm of art was an indication of an all-consuming anxiety and one of the root causes of the rejection of expression he detected in such art.<sup>42</sup> Science and technology had combined to dominate nature, and man therefore stood increasingly isolated in what was previously his domain. But whereas art arising from the confrontation between subjectivity and objectivity had previously acted to 'preserve in memory' those elements of a higher consciousness beyond the reach of a rational reality, the rationalisation of the musical materials closed off any 'exalted terrain of the unconscious' that gave art its validity. Given that Adorno believed that genuine artistic content resided within this exalted terrain, he arrived at the conclusion that 'the aesthetic rationality of the [serial] materials neither reaches their mathematical ideal nor dominates reality: it remains the mimesis of scientific procedures, a kind of a reflex to the supremacy of science . . .'.<sup>43</sup>

Adorno was and continues to be criticised for his idealistic, emotional view of the importance of the artist's struggle with his material, a position that saw him point to Schoenberg's Expressionist oeuvre as the model to which the serialist malcontents should aspire. While this idealism allowed him to detect a 'shudder' in Webern's dissonances, Schoenberg's 'most recent followers' led, according to Adorno, by Boulez, 'blithely short-circuit the antinomy that [Schoenberg] rightly tried to deal with'.<sup>44</sup> There is an element of

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<sup>41</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 107.

<sup>42</sup> J.P. Hodin also saw the rejection of expression arising from the encroachment of science into art in terms of a de-spiritualisation of art. 'Science and Modern Art'. *Modern Art and the Modern Mind*, 177-270.

<sup>43</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 108-9.

<sup>44</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 100, 102. Adorno used the word 'antinomy' to describe the tension between subjectivity and objectivity. Boulez, for his part, was of the opinion that Adorno, although 'a man of extraordinary intelligence', came from a generation 'that had not known how to go beyond its predecessors'. 'From the Domaine Musicale to IRCAM: Pierre Boulez in Conversation with Pierre-Michel Menger': 9.

perspicacity in Adorno's assessment that the serial composer's methodology constituted a form of political appeasement to the two great blocs, whose supremacy rested, for all of their propagandising to the contrary, upon the ascendancy of the objective (technological superiority) over the subjective (the quality of individual freedom). Bearing in mind what was described earlier of the subtle shift in emphasis employed by the translators of 'The Aging of the New Music', their interventions suggest that Adorno may have articulated what was an unpalatable truth for the Congress, dedicated as it was to the task of cultural rejuvenation during a period of great social tension.

Adorno's position, as articulated in the scholarly translation of 'The Aging of the New Music' that here serves as the primary source, was that the rise of scientific compositional technique was the product of an erosion of artistic initiative brought about through the general contraction of individual freedom in post-War European society. But in very subtle, yet highly significant ways, Goldbeck and Myers (the latter in particular) in their subsequent translations of 'The Aging of the New Music' managed to shift Adorno's emphasis so as to make it appear that the parlous situation of music made the task of ideological renewal all the more pressing. As was noted earlier, Goldbeck, a supporter of serial music, wrote in the preface to his translation of Adorno's essay of its pessimistic but nonetheless refreshing outlook. While Goldbeck's editorial interference appeared to be intended to reconcile the anti-totalitarian agenda pursued in the Congress's journal *Preuves* with what was, post-Rome (April 1954), a newly found preparedness to discuss the implications of serialism, Myers took this interference to another level. This distinction is apparent even in the translations of Adorno's title, 'Das Altern der neuen Musik'. As is the case with Goldbeck's translation, 'Le vieillissement de la musique moderne', the inference is that external forces were responsible for modern music's 'aging'. Myers's translation, 'Modern Music is Growing Old', shifted the burden of guilt to modern music itself.

According to Adorno: ‘The symptoms of the aging of the New Music are in social terms those of the contraction of freedom, the collapse of individuality that helpless and disintegrated individuals confirm, approve, and do once again to themselves’.<sup>45</sup> The key point here, and which is sustained throughout Adorno’s essay, is that expanded serial operations reflected a social reality blighted by the loss of freedom, a loss characterised and struggling to be overcome by the disaffected. Society therefore carried at least some of the burden of guilt for the ageing of new music. This ran counter to the position promoted by Nabokov as the secretary-general of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. Recalling Nabokov’s linkage of serialism and Communism in France, the Congress’s argument was that serialism was the product of disaffected individuals, who when linked to the ‘great layer of intellectuals, the politically homeless who have lost faith in the creative forces of the West’, were themselves partially responsible for Stalin’s propaganda victories in Western Europe.<sup>46</sup> This sense was preserved in Myers’s translation, which in this passage adhered closely to Goldbeck’s. Myers turned the emphasis away from society and towards the composers: ‘The symptoms of the ageing of modern music are, sociologically, the reduction of freedom and the disintegration of the individual, which are accepted, endorsed and copied in private life by people who have lost their sense of direction and their individuality’.<sup>47</sup> The serial composer, who for Adorno was unable to rise above social calamity, was for Myers wilfully complicit in that calamity.

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<sup>45</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 114-115. As was mentioned earlier, this scholarly translation was based on the version of Adorno’s essay as it appeared in *Dissonanzen*. Goldbeck’s translation was based on the version as it appeared in *Der Monat*. The relevant passage is the same in both German versions: ‘Die Symptome des Alterns der Neuen Musik sind gesellschaftlich solche des Schrumpfens der Freiheit, der Zerfalls der Individualität, die hilflosen und desintegrierten Individuen selbst nochmals von sich aus bestätigen, unterschreiben, wiederholen’. (*Dissonanzen*, 157-8).

<sup>46</sup> Nicolas Nabokov. ‘This is Our Culture’: 13.

<sup>47</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Modern Music is Growing Old’: 28.

Adorno believed that there was an urgent need to ‘understand the present situation of what now attracts the disgruntled and the rebellious: twelve-tone technique’ – to comprehend what had happened socially that led to the increased popularity of twelve-tone technique.<sup>48</sup> The Congress’s position was made apparent in the way in which this passage was translated, firstly by Goldbeck: ‘Il n’est que plus urgent de se demander où en est l’école opposée [to neo-classicism] – celle qui attire les insatisfaits et les anti-académiques: le *dodécaphonisme*’.<sup>49</sup> In the hands of Myers this became: ‘It is all the more urgent to ask ourselves what is happening in the opposite camp which attracts the unsatisfied and anti-academic school, the partisans of the twelve-note technique . . .’.<sup>50</sup> In both of the above translations the emphasis was shifted from the overall social situation to the composers themselves. That serial composers may have been part of the problem emerges in the transformation of Adorno’s ‘rebellious’ to ‘anti-academic’, which carried anti-establishment overtones, particularly to Myers’s English language readership. Myers completed a picture of cultural degradation, and its ideological culprits, by identifying serial composers as ‘partisans of the twelve-tone technique’, an invention that carries not only a barely disguised anti-communist sentiment, but which evokes the image of isolated cultural brigands sniping at the Establishment.<sup>51</sup>

Adorno reckoned that the subjective, ‘whose freedom is the precondition of all advanced art’, was in serial music driven out by ‘a violent and external totality, hardly

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<sup>48</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 99. In *Dissonanzen*: ‘Um so dringender aber ist die Frage nach dem Stand dessen, was nun gerade die Unzufriedenen und vom Etablierten Abweichenden anzieht, der Zwölftontechnik’ (140).

<sup>49</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Le vieillissement de la musique moderne’: 27.

<sup>50</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Modern Music is Growing Old’: 21.

<sup>51</sup> This is not the only instance of Myers inventing a catch-phrase. Another notable example is his reference to ‘constructivism run amok’ (p. 24). Nothing resembling either the qualitative or quantitative connotations of this phrase appeared in Adorno’s original in *Der Monat* or, more crucially, Goldbeck’s French translation upon which Myers’s was at least nominally based.

different from political totalitarianism'.<sup>52</sup> This again underscored Adorno's idea that the serial composer was more sinned against than sinning, that external reactionary forces were responsible for the loss of subjectivity. Myers communicated the opposite by re-interpreting the above passage so as to equate serial technique itself with totalitarianism. Subjective freedom was, for Myers, exorcised 'when an artificial and tyrannical mania for integration at all costs – not, after all so very different from other forms of totalitarianism – is in complete command'.<sup>53</sup> Here it was the technique itself, or more properly, the 'artificial and tyrannical mania' that fuelled the expansion of serial technique, that was totalitarian.

An awareness of this background adds a further dimension to Stephen Walsh's observation that the first English translations of a number of Boulez's early essays revealed an 'element of *précis*' intended 'presumably' to soften the impact of the composer's 'belletristics' for the sake of English readers.<sup>54</sup> Although the translator is unacknowledged, the stylistic similarities between 'Modern Music is Growing Old' and what was the first of Boulez's essays to appear in English, 'Schoenberg is Dead', make it highly likely that Myers was also responsible for the latter. This contention is further reinforced by the knowledge that the edition of *The Score* in which Boulez's essay was published also featured a translation from the French of a somewhat rambling essay by Myers's Parisian confrère Fred Goldbeck ('The Strange Case of Schönberg'). Both were published during the month of the festival, at a time when Myers as one of England's pre-eminent

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<sup>52</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 111. In *Dissonanzen: '... das Subjekt, dessen Freiheit die Bedingung avancierter Kunst is, ausgetrieben wird; wo eine gewalttätige und äußerliche Totalität, gar nicht so unähnlich den politischen totalitären Systemen, die Macht ergreift'* (154).

<sup>53</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'Modern Music is Growing Old': 26.

<sup>54</sup> Stephen Walsh. 'Translator's Preface.' In Pierre Boulez, *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, vii. Robert Piencikowski in his introduction (xiii-xxix) offers an authoritative account of the genesis of many of Boulez's essays from the period, and of the musical climate in France at the time.

authorities on French music would also have been busy in his role as cultural attaché to the British consul in Paris. To Walsh's suggestion that this and other early translations were at times unnecessarily severe should also be added the observation that, by contrast to the more reasoned assessments in the same edition of the recently deceased Schoenberg's legacy, Boulez's declaration that 'Schoenberg is Dead!' appears at best strident, at worst, disrespectful. The inclusion of Boulez's essay which, stripped of its Gallic subtlety, appears excessively polemic, may have been an effective way of marginalising a young composer who proclaimed vehemently the redundancy of cultural values dear to those in power. At the very least the action was potentially no less duplicitous than Myers's later attempt to misrepresent the thoughts of Adorno, a respected cultural commentator, so as to overstate the perceived threat posed to those cultural values by expanded serial technique.

Irrespective of whether Myers's editorial flights of fancy were motivated by an allegiance to the British diplomatic corps, he could be forgiven for struggling to come to grips with the dilemma underlying serial technique, a technique he had elsewhere described as a 'rather alarmingly bloodless and cerebral type of musical mathematics'.<sup>55</sup> The dilemma was that at the same time as asserting an individual's creative freedom, the composer, in exercising that creative freedom, arrived at a technocratic compositional method based upon manipulation, and in so doing came uncomfortably close to modern scientific thought and political ideological practice. Myers in his report to The Royal Musical Association ventured to suggest that the reason for the increased popularity of serial music among Left Bank intellectuals in Paris was that a recourse to mathematics allowed them to formulate a calculated, rational response to what he believed was a fundamental problem, one felt keenly among young French composers. This was the feeling that 'everything has been said already, every style, every mode, every technical

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<sup>55</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Notes From Abroad: France.' *Musical Times* 95 (March 1954): 150.

device has been tried out, and that, short of inventing a new language, there is nothing left for [the young composer] to do'.<sup>56</sup> While this was in Myers's opinion an understandable feeling, he made it clear that what troubled him was the 'narrow sectarianism' and fanaticism of French serialism's most vociferous defender, Pierre Boulez.<sup>57</sup> Denis de Rougement went a step further in his assessment and accused Boulez of being deliberately confrontational. Boulez and his fellow serialists were, as far as de Rougement was concerned, 'a good deal more animated by the resistance they foresee than by joy in their discoveries. They make these discoveries *against* their opponents'.<sup>58</sup>

Myers's assessment was fair, in that Boulez's polemics in support of his compositional rationale are evocative of Sartre's 'obsessions', and reinforce the Sartrean notion of *homo faber* as an expression of individual freedom. Even if the composer's pseudo-scientific justifications of the expansion of serial technique are a shining example of what Mel Powers later described as a contemplative musician explaining 'exactly only exactly what does not matter' – meaning that he was more concerned with justifying the music's theoretical foundations than its aural outcome – they also have a good deal to do with the Sartrean idea of the composer, in acting as an agent for change, making others aware of the implications of their actions.<sup>59</sup> Boulez's rhetorical flourishes in support of serial technique proclaimed the significance of the technological innovations brought to bear upon the musical material, and the work itself, its morphology, stands as evidence of the impact of those innovations upon the 'perceptible evolution' of Boulez as the creator.

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<sup>56</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Music in France in the Post-War Decade.' *Proceedings of the Musical Association – 80<sup>th</sup> Session, 1953-54*, 98.

<sup>57</sup> Rollo Myers. 'Music in France in the Post-War Decade,' 99.

<sup>58</sup> Denis de Rougement. 'There is no "Modern Music".' *Encounter* 11 (August 1954): 51. The essay, with a preface by Goldbeck, first appeared in *Preuves* under the title 'Il n'y a pas de «musique moderne».' 41 (July 1954): 75-77.

<sup>59</sup> Mel Powell. 'A Note on Rigor.' *Perspectives of New Music* 1.4 (Spring 1963): 124.

That the minute gradations of duration, dynamics, attack, or intensity, exercised upon the raw material were theoretically distinguishable but rarely aurally comprehensible was, for Boulez, an unfortunate casualty of the need to question existing musical methodologies. Meaning arising from artistic expression apparently would take care of itself if the significance of the compositional method was grasped. And yet for all of the composer's subsequent reservations regarding its musical qualities, the significance, and the meaning of *Structures Ia* was characterised by the original title that Boulez had intended for it, 'At the limit of the fertile land'.<sup>60</sup> Irrespective of whether the fertile land lay in front of him or behind him, Boulez, like many of his generation, was more concerned with a possibly perfect future in which he had a say, rather than a decidedly imperfect past and an equally problematic present in which he had no say at all. What set Boulez at loggerheads with Nabokov and Khrennikov was that the significance of the pursuit of innovation lay in the possibility that it pointed the way forward to a sonic 'Promised Land or Babel' beyond the reckoning or control of either ideological parties.<sup>61</sup>

Sartre offered Leibowitz a summary of the choices confronting artists in the Soviet Union; a summary which details how the known past was imposed by Zhdanovian decree upon a potentially fractious present in order to ensure a supposedly perfect future:

Since the artist is to have his concept of the future imposed upon him, instead of being allowed to find it himself, it makes little difference, politically, that this future is still to be created: for the musician, it is ready-made. The entire system founders in the past; Soviet artists, to borrow the expression so dear to them, are *passéistes*. They sing the future of Soviet Russia the way our romantics sang the past of the monarchy . . . Today, the Golden Age has been displaced by projecting it ahead of us, But, in any case, this shifting Golden Age remains what it is: a reactionary myth.<sup>62</sup>

Based upon the evidence presented, Sartre's verdict can be applied equally to the West in 1952. The Congress for Cultural Freedom, for its part, sang the future of capitalist

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<sup>60</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 55.

<sup>61</sup> Pierre Boulez. 'Current Investigations.' *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 16.

<sup>62</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Artist and His Conscience.' *Situations*, 223-4.



democracy by appropriating to its cause a musical style that echoed the past. The fear of an unknown future, as articulated by what Ansermet argued was a closed compositional system, one devoid of meaning but laden with significance, was undoubtedly what motivated Nabokov and Khrennikov to proscribe serial music in its experimental, that is pre-Stravinsky, phase. The expansion of serial technique therefore approaches, both in its cause and effect, the Sartrean idea of a committed art based upon confrontation rather than exhortation, which Sartre outlined as follows:

What are the relationships between ends and means in a society based on violence? The works deriving from such preoccupations cannot aim first to please. They irritate and disturb. They offer themselves as tasks to be discharged . . . They present us with experiences whose outcomes are uncertain . . . If our results turn out successful [sic], they will not be diversions, but rather obsessions. They will give not a world 'to see' but to change. On the other hand, this old, used, sore, snivelling world will lose nothing thereby.<sup>63</sup>

Sartre's observations appear to characterise Boulez's outlook as reflected in *Structures 1a*, in that the composer was mindful that the work was the product of a task to be discharged so that music could 'begin again from scratch', irrespective of the sensibilities it might offend in so doing. The author of 'Possibly . . .' was in the thrall of a magnificent obsession, albeit one that he was quick to acknowledge was not an end in itself but a potential catalyst for change. Like Mounier, Sartre saw this tendency as an outgrowth of a potentially threatening nihilism that thrived in a society threatened by the spectre of what appeared at the time to be an inevitable and potentially apocalyptic Third World War. But unlike Mounier, Sartre detected an affirmative quality capable of alerting a 'sore, snivelling world' as to the consequences of its actions.

Charles Micaud was less prosaic and more specific in his description of the cause of post-War France's anxiety. According to Micaud, France's humiliation during the War had led to a deep pessimism, 'a profound mistrust of man's ability to control himself and his

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<sup>63</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre. 'The Situation of the Writer in 1947.' *What is Literature?*, 192-3.

environment'.<sup>64</sup> This pessimism had become destructive, that is to say nihilist, in light of the optimism enjoyed by France's allies and saviours, who had not only emerged victorious, but were enjoying conspicuously the moral, cultural, and economic spoils of victory. The fact that France as one of the victorious was unable, or at least invited only conditionally, to share in those spoils led to a crisis of values: 'all values – metaphysical, intellectual, and moral – are questioned, torn apart, and rejected . . . The result is a deep sense of anguish and purposelessness, a feeling of drifting away in a meaningless world'.<sup>65</sup> Boulez's insistence upon expanding serial technique in order to destroy what was for him a moribund musical tradition appears consistent with the actions of one who fits Micaud's description. Peyser's profile of the young composer repudiating Catholicism, spouting Latin obscenities, and flinging epithets at France and its leaders, further confirms the targets of his militancy.<sup>66</sup>

It is difficult to escape the impression, both from the work itself and Boulez's various commentaries on *Structures 1a*, that the work may have been a response to, and an expression of, what Micaud portrayed as a French society struggling to find meaning and purpose in the post-War world order. *Structures 1a* is a work in which a strong sense of purpose at the conceptual level gives rise to a meaningless aural outcome. That is, one that neither explicates the underlying rationale (as does sonata form, for example) nor is capable of being understood on the basis of an awareness of it (fugal technique, for example). In this regard Adorno thought that those who sought to expand serial technique were deluding themselves: 'Something purely irrational is hidden in the midst of rationalization, [and that is] a confidence in the meaningfulness of abstract material, in

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Micaud. 'French Intellectuals and Communism': 289.

<sup>65</sup> Charles Micaud. 'French Intellectuals and Communism': 289.

<sup>66</sup> Joan Peyser. *Boulez*, 25.

which the subject fails to recognize that it, itself, releases the meaning from the material'.<sup>67</sup> The serial composer, as represented by Boulez, was deluded by the hope that others would realise that the 'meaning' of a serial work was in reality its own meaninglessness.<sup>68</sup>

*Structures Ia* offered itself as a nihilistic experiment wherein, as Boulez noted, 'a surfeit of order [was] equivalent to disorder'.<sup>69</sup> That is, an excess of order in the compositional method, which itself appeared to run counter to the notion of compositional choice based upon creativity, resulted in disorder in its aural outcome. For Boulez, the resultant destruction had the potential to act as a regenerative force upon Western culture and Western society at large. It is in the following declaration from Boulez that the equivalence between serialism and the quest for renewal in which France, by virtue of its mixed ideological allegiances, found itself at the front line in the early Cold War ideological struggle, merge into a manifesto that would have sat uncomfortably between those penned by Zhdanov and the Congress for Cultural Freedom:

I believe that a civilisation which tends towards conservation is a declining civilisation because it is afraid to go forward and ascribes more importance to its memories than to its future. Strong, expanding civilisations have no memory: they reject, they forget the past. They feel strong enough to be destructive because they know they can replace what has been destroyed. From this viewpoint our musical civilisation shows very distinct signs of decay since at all levels its emphasis on reclamation . . . shows that it has too many memories. I once pointed out . . . that our Western civilisation would need Red Guards to get rid of a good number of statues or even decapitate them. The French Revolution decapitated statues in churches; one may regret this now, but it was proof of a civilisation on the march.<sup>70</sup>

Boulez's misplaced faith in Stalin's praetorian guard notwithstanding, the sentiments expressed in the above declaration are undoubtedly what troubled Adorno in relation to Boulez and his expansion of serial technique. This was because, in theory at least, the

<sup>67</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music.': 105.

<sup>68</sup> Heinz-Klaus Metzger in his withering critique of 'Das Altern der neuen Musik' suggested that Adorno's exposure to expanded serial music was at that time limited to works such as Karol Goyvaerts's *Opus 1*, for two pianos (1951), and that Adorno had substituted (quite unfairly) the name Boulez for Goyvaerts. 'Just Who is Growing Old?': 79.

<sup>69</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 57.

<sup>70</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 33.

constructivist ethos underpinning serial operations should have fulfilled the utopian social aspirations that Adorno reckoned were set in motion by Schoenberg during his Expressionist period, when Wilhelmine society was facing crises similar to those later to confront post-Second World War France.

The crucial difference was that in Adorno's opinion Schoenberg's aspirations were embedded in a futuristic constructivist aesthetic, whereas Boulez in effect employed a *modus operandi* based upon contemporary modes of scientific thought, a trend that Messiaen, for one, thought 'quite in keeping with our age . . . almost necessary and even inevitable'.<sup>71</sup> Schoenberg articulated the noble, bourgeois Romanticist ideal of creative secessionism in the hope that an enlightened, yet resolutely bourgeois future humanity might one day discover the virtue of his art and, by extension, their own salvation. Boulez, on the other hand, confronted that same bourgeoisie with a vision of a future created in its own image, in the belief that if bourgeois society was as strong and secure as it purported to be it would be able to withstand the destruction of its memory, its past. Recalling Sartre's archetype of the committed artist, it is Boulez rather than Schoenberg who qualifies as committed because, although aspiring to a 'pinnacle of the future', Boulez operated from Sartre's imperfect present rather than a utopian, perfect future.

Thus, it would appear that Boulez forced two ruptures in Adorno's critique. Firstly, Boulez pursued Adorno's belief in the autonomous work of art as the sublime expression of bourgeois self-isolation to the point at which autonomy threatened the very foundations of bourgeois art. In response to claims by those who sided with Berthold Brecht (and which included Hanns Eisler) in attacking Expressionism's desertion of the working class and embrace of forms and processes more relevant to the middle classes, Adorno in 1931 anticipated the problems later to confront the serial composer:

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<sup>71</sup> Olivier Messiaen. Claude Samuel, *Conversations with Olivier Messiaen*, 122.

[The Left] charge that the new music, or in any case, a certain direction of it, becomes incomprehensible by driving its technical demands to their final consequences; becomes intelligible only to the author or exclusive groups of connoisseurs; and thus allies itself with romantic individualism and the belief in the autonomy of the work of art in spite of all the material changes . . . at the present the real relationships of power prevent people from reaching collectively the level of consciousness which is proclaimed in the most progressive music . . . In the face of the ideological disposition of the audience, the question of the social justification of the works is not to be answered on the basis of their effect, but of their objective structure. It may be presumed that a future enlightened state of humanity would certainly possess a truly enlightened music, no matter what position the benighted audience of today assumes. But the most illuminated music is that which is seized completely by the principle of construction . . . its social justification is objectively comprehensible, and not to be measured here and now against reality.<sup>72</sup>

The key point here is that Adorno charged that ‘the real relationships of power’ had conspired to prevent the general populace from reaching the level of consciousness required to fully grasp the significance of Schoenberg’s music. A similar situation confronted the serial composer, who drove the technical demands of twelve-tone technique to its final consequences under the noses of the Cold War foes and their antagonistic cultural policies. But although the incomprehensibility surrounding Schoenberg’s twelve-tone works was, according to Adorno, society’s problem, the incomprehensibility surrounding expanded serial procedure was in his view the composer’s problem. This was because while Schoenberg sought recourse in a self-centred and, in the eyes of the Left, bourgeois higher spiritual consciousness that went some way to validating the elitist musical outcome, Boulez designed and deployed a machine that, in Adorno’s estimation, devoured not only traditional bourgeois values that had hitherto extended new music a lifeline by in effect giving it the benefit of the doubt, but also the spiritual in art.

The second rupture forced by Boulez upon Adorno’s rationale resides at the level of the creative process itself. Adorno’s belief was that the autonomous work of art was valid if it was the product of a triumph of intuition over objectivity. This is why Adorno in ‘The

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<sup>72</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘Widerlegungen.’ Cited by Jost Hermand in ‘Expressionism and Music.’ Carol Poore, tr. *Expressionism Reconsidered: Relationships and Affinities*. Gertrud Bauer Pickar and Karl Eugene Webb, eds. (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1979) 71.

Aging of Modern Music' pointed to Schoenberg's 'heroic', post-*Erwartung* Expressionist period, during which the composer identified with Wassily Kandinsky and *Der Blaue Reiter* as the ideal to which the young, disaffected composers should aspire.<sup>73</sup> Adorno's subjectivist hermeticism maintained that Schoenberg during this period surrendered rational control in the belief that the intuitive liberation of the material from pre-existing forms and structures constituted the crystallisation of a creative spirit that sought to retreat from the greed and materialism of Wilhelmine Germany. Where this position becomes relevant to Boulez is that Adorno's criticism, one shared by the majority of commentators during the post-War period, was that the serial compositional process replaced any intuitive handling of the materials with a mere manipulation of them. In so doing expanded serial technique precluded apparently the possibility that anything of social relevance could be embedded in either the technique or the music.

Adorno's tendency was to overstate Schoenberg's claims regarding the 'elimination of conscious will' as a means of articulating 'the artist's cry of distress'.<sup>74</sup> If Jost Hermand is correct, then Adorno was not alone in this approach. Hermand argues that in the immediate post-World War One period, when the validity of Expressionism was keenly debated in Germany and Austria, the supposedly ecstatic, or cathartic qualities of Schoenberg's Expressionist explorations were exaggerated both by his supporters, in order to champion the restoration of humanist ideals following the horrors of the war (and so to keep the Expressionist flame alight), and by his right-wing detractors as evidence of the contamination of German culture by degenerate races.<sup>75</sup> A preoccupation with the intuitive continues to be a misapprehension under which music historiography has laboured in its

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<sup>73</sup> Theodor Adorno. 'The Aging of the New Music': 103.

<sup>74</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. Letter to Wassily Kandinsky, dated 24 January 1911. *Arnold Schoenberg–Wassily Kandinsky. Letters, Pictures and Documents*. Jelena Hahl-Koch, ed., J.C. Crawford, tr. (London: Faber, 1984) 23.

<sup>75</sup> Jost Hermand. 'Expressionism And Music.', 58-65.

championing of musical expressionism as a triumph of the irrational (the subjective) over the rational (the objective).<sup>76</sup>

But Schoenberg's cry of distress should not be mistaken as a cry of desperation, rather it is the cry of an individual galvanised into action. For him, art is 'the cry of distress uttered by those who experience at first hand the fate of mankind. Who are not reconciled to it, but come to grips with it. Who do not apathetically wait upon the motor called "hidden forces", but hurl themselves in among the moving wheels, to understand how it all works'.<sup>77</sup> As was the case with Boulez some years later, Schoenberg recognised the need for socio-cultural renewal, and realised that outmoded compositional techniques needed to be discarded if his music was to remain relevant. Kandinsky acknowledged that in this respect the needs of the visual artist were distinct from the composer's need to jettison pre-existing musical conventions.<sup>78</sup> This distinction was doubtless based upon the premise that as music was already an abstract (in the sense of being non-representational) art form, any equivalence between visual and aural non-significance could only be measured in relation to a conceptual negation, the overthrow of what Kandinsky termed 'the eternal laws of

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<sup>76</sup> This view tends to colour the judgement of John and Dorothy Crawford, who assert the following: 'the linguistic realm of twentieth-century expressionism lies between the abandonment of tonality and composers' adoption of formulations . . . such as symmetrical constructions and the twelve-tone system . . . If tonality (the objective) offers a system of laws suggested by the overtone series in nature, and if the twelve-tone system (the abstract) offers a virtual dictatorship by the composer, it is the anarchic (subjective) area in between which is the linguistic area of expressionist music. Neither objective or abstract, this music is governed by expressive necessity'. The problem here is that the Crawfords' paradigm, the objective – the subjective – the abstract, contradicts the customary polarity between objective and subjective. According to their own argument abstraction is objectivity rarified, that is, further removed from the subjective urge. The paradigm should therefore be, the subjective – the objective – the abstract. In this way constructivist techniques such as twelve-tone technique preserve the momentum away from subjectivity without necessarily implying that subjectivity has been subsumed in the push towards abstraction, as appears to be the case with the Crawfords' paradigm. *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 13.

<sup>77</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. Cited by Willi Reich. *Schoenberg: A Critical Biography*, 56-7.

<sup>78</sup> See Kandinsky's letter to Arnold Schoenberg, dated 22 August 1912. *Arnold Schoenberg–Wassily Kandinsky. Letters, Pictures, and Documents*, 57.

harmony'.<sup>79</sup> Schoenberg, like Kandinsky, was aware that in order to break with tradition the artist had deliberately to overcome the natural tendency to draw upon pre-existing conventions, the lessons of history.

As to why the eternal laws of harmony needed to be overthrown, Kandinsky in the following established not only what motivated Schoenberg and him, but also set a precedent that later cast serial music in opposition to the propagandistic aims of the Cold War antagonists:

Perhaps with envy and with a mournful sympathy we listen to the music of Mozart. It acts as a welcome pause in the turmoil of our inner life, as a consolation and as a hope, but we hear it as the echo of something from another age long past and fundamentally strange. The strife of colours, the sense of balance we have lost, tottering principles, unexpected assaults, great questions, apparently useless striving, storm and tempest, broken chains, antithesis and contradictions – these make up our harmony.<sup>80</sup>

Schoenberg's elimination of the conscious will afforded him the opportunity to free himself from what he viewed as the historical obligations inherent in tonal practice. He was later at pains to point out that his formulation and adoption of twelve-tone technique was not so much a departure from what had previously been an intuitive need to confront tonal practice, but a concentration and maturation of his subjective urges.<sup>81</sup> In this regard the composer must, in Schoenberg's view, be aware of the interplay between intuition and deduction in the creative process; he must 'know *consciously* the laws and rules which govern the forms which he has conceived "as in a dream". . . he must find, if not laws or rules, at least ways to justify the dissonant character of these harmonies and their successions'.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Wassily Kandinsky. Letter to Arnold Schoenberg, dated 22 August 1912. *Arnold Schoenberg–Wassily Kandinsky. Letters, Pictures, and Documents*, 57.

<sup>80</sup> Wassily Kandinsky. *Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular*. Michael Sadlier, et al., tr. *The Documents of Modern Art: Volume 5*. (New York: George Wittenborn, 1966) 65-66.

<sup>81</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. 'Composition with Twelve Tones (I)' (1941). *Style and Idea*, 218.

<sup>82</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. 'How One Becomes Lonely' (1937). *Style and Idea*, 30.



In his discussion with Deliège regarding the scientism underpinning the expansion of serial technique, Boulez described in detail his understanding of the interplay between intuition and rational thought in the scientific process, one that although more positivist (and understandably so in light of the dominant role played by scientific thought in post-War society) bears striking similarities to that offered by Schoenberg:

Intuition plays a much greater part than is generally believed. It is often thought that scientists are simply people who deduce consequences from the results of their experiments in a fairly logical fashion, and gradually arrive at a conclusion. In point of fact, however . . . at a given moment [the scientific mind] will also be open to a phenomenon of an almost irrational kind that will still be a deduction but an intuitive one. This can be seen not only in the field of science but in all the expressive media too. Of course, the ground has to be prepared, for there is nothing accidental about intuition; but when the ground has been prepared for intuition, when every possible conclusion has been drawn from the facts, then comes the hypothesis that is almost entirely intuitive. There is an illuminating interplay between the hypothesis and the previously-prepared ground . . . This procedure is fundamental to human thought, and to creative thought in particular.<sup>83</sup>

Thus it would appear that Schoenberg and Boulez differed only by degree in their belief in the importance of intuition in the formulation of new means of expression. Schoenberg considered his development of twelve-tone technique to be a sophistication of what was in his Expressionist period an intuitive, but by no means irrational, creative urge. Boulez regarded the expansion of twelve-tone technique as a means for creating a conceptual *tabula rasa* upon which music could ‘begin again from scratch’. The evolution appears therefore to have been quantitative rather than qualitative, in that both composers were driven by the same desire to challenge pre-existing modes of expression, modes that carried a socio-cultural significance not in keeping with the condition of society as it then stood. Where the two differ, however, is that Schoenberg appears to have measured his art in terms of its proximity to a historical cultural continuum, whereas Boulez aspired ultimately to distance himself from that same continuum.

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<sup>83</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 61.

Schoenberg and Kandinsky during their *Blaue Reiter* period, and Boulez during his period of serial expansion, were united in the need to confront socio-cultural values that they regarded as being in need of regeneration. The earlier Expressionists sought a radical re-evaluation of those values, and for them the most direct way of expressing this was to present society with recognisable artefacts whose constituent elements were re-ordered in such a way as to strip them of their inherited acculturations. The results shocked because the observer was able to recognise the distance between himself and the object. That distance was effectively one between the immediacy of the observer's actual social existence, and the metaphysical future utopia into which the artist had retreated, ostensibly in the hope of illuminating the path for those that suffered the privations of the present. Boulez used a contemporaneous, quasi-scientific approach that had the effect of metamorphosing the constituent elements themselves, of denying the acculturations from the outset. Presented with new (or at least raw) materials, critical attention turned to the construction process itself, which was, at least in a cognitive sense, recognised as being incapable of sustaining the intended artifice. Thus, a sense of destruction is implicit in the rebuilding process itself, a destruction that presented the observer with not so much as a utopian hope for the future but the clear and present danger of their actual existence.

Bearing in mind Will Hofmann's premise that the evolution of the twelve-tone method formed part of a *Spätephase* of Expressionism proper, one characterised by what Hofmann describes as an 'awkward confrontation between abstract will and emotional agitation', it is possible that Boulez's expansion of serial technique represented the final triumph of objectivity over subjectivity in the face of social calamity.<sup>84</sup> If this is the case, a proposition to invite further research is that expanded serial technique was a crowning

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<sup>84</sup> Will Hofmann. 'Expressionismus'. *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*. Vol. 3. Friedrich Blume, ed. (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1954) column 1671.

achievement of the pure abstractionism advocated by Gottfried Benn, the self-styled 'unreconstructed Expressionist'. Benn's prestige and perceived social relevance were at their height from around 1948 until his death in 1956. This was chiefly because he was seen to have continued to attempt a reconciliation between artistic creativity and a nihilism brought about by the combination of declining morality and increased technologisation. Benn's popularity and his mode of address were acknowledged by Edouard Roditi, who in his regular letter to the *Partisan Review* noted dryly that 'to [Benn's] mystical or obscurantist confusion . . . the reorientation programs of the Western Allies have, so far, opposed but confusions of their own'.<sup>85</sup>

Benn was linked initially to the *Sturm* poets, who eschewed the utopian and messianic aspects of Expressionism and focussed instead upon the abstractionist ingredient of the movement.<sup>86</sup> In contrast to the stream-of-consciousness emotionalism of rhetorical Expressionism, the *Sturm* poets stripped language of its syntactical structure and reduced it to its basic elements; that is, verb and noun.<sup>87</sup> This was done in the belief that the essence of a given age can be divined only if, and when, language is purged of syntactical, and with that, expressive qualities that reveal themselves as forces of habit built up over time. Walter Sokel has suggested that this highly disciplined and intellectual abstractionism 'emerged clearly as the permanent core of Expressionism', one that, save for a hiatus forced upon it by Nazism, persisted until the death of Benn, its surviving advocate.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Edouard Roditi. 'Letter From Germany.' *Partisan Review* 17 (1950): 388.

<sup>86</sup> The various strains of Expressionism are examined in Walter Sokel's *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

<sup>87</sup> The distinction between the constructivist approach of *Der Sturm* and the quasi-anarchic 'sound poems' of Dada is outlined by Victor Lange in 'Expressionism: A Topographical Essay.' *Review of National Literature* 9 (1978): 25-46.

<sup>88</sup> Walter Sokel. *The Writer in Extremis*, 112-113. Expressionism had, although not to the same extent as Futurism, an ambivalent relationship to Fascism. Benn for his part had a brief flirtation with Nazism in 1933, for which he was castigated by many of his fellow artists, and he was in 1937 banned from publishing by the Nazis. But rather than leaving Germany, as did many of his contemporaries (and whom he criticised for doing so), Benn chose what he called 'the

It will be apparent from what has been examined in this chapter that Boulez through the expansion of serial technique sought to purge music of anachronisms that he deemed irrelevant to his generation. It has been argued that the way in which Boulez sought to achieve this was not anti-expressive, in the sense that it represented a triumph of objectivity over subjectivity, but rather that manner in which the artist's intuition was articulated was itself subjected to rational thought processes consistent with the rise of scientific thought. But whereas Adorno resolutely rejected the notion that anything beneficial to art, and with that, society, could arise from the rationalisation of the materials and of the creative process, Benn sought an accommodation between the negative aspects of technologisation and creativity.

Benn linked the rise of nihilism to what he called the 'progressive cerebration' of twentieth-century man. 'Have we still the strength' he asked, 'to maintain a free creative ego in the face of a scientifically determined universe; have we still the strength to break through the materialistic, mechanical order of the world . . . and to draw up images of more profound worlds from an individually established ideality and in an individually regulated order?'<sup>89</sup> The answer as Benn saw it was 'no' as long as man attempted to mask his despair and impotence in the face of nihilism through creative acts based upon subjective expression.

The solution for Benn lay in the realisation that as the human mind was responsible for the spiritual anguish that mankind had visited upon itself, only the 'constructive mind' (*konstruktiver Geist*) could lead the way out of the morass:

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aristocrat's form of emigration' and, as he had done in the First World War, enlisted in the German army medical corps. Upon Germany's defeat Benn was forbidden from publishing by the American-dominated Allied Military Government because of his failure to criticise the Nazis during the War. The ban was lifted in 1948. See 'Gottfried Benn' in Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957) 275-312.

<sup>89</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'Nacht dem Nihilismus' (1932). Translated as 'After Nihilism,' (translator unacknowledged). *Origin* 10 (1953): 93.

Thus we set the mind today not in the health of the biological, not in the ascending line of positivism, nor do we see it either in an eternally languishing tragedy with life, but we *set it over and above life*, constructively superior to it, as a forming and formal principle: intensification and condensation – this seems to be its law. From this entirely transcendent attitude perhaps then comes a conquest, and artistic exploitation of nihilism; it could teach us to see [nihilism] dialectically, that is, provocatively. To let all the lost values remain lost, all the worn-out themes remain worn-out, and all the power of nihilistic experiences be put into the formal and constructive forces of the mind . . .<sup>90</sup>

Benn in the above appears to be pushing in a similar direction as Sartre, who was later to argue that nihilism could have something positive to offer, that it could be a catalyst for change. Benn was more specific as to a possible solution. The socio-cultural tensions that gave rise to nihilism were for Benn, as they were for Adorno, embedded in the artist's struggle with his (culturally determined) materials. But whereas Adorno saw the struggle as the means through which the artist could express his vision of a utopian ideal, Benn argued that the artist in his struggle to overcome the resistance offered by those materials succumbed to the very nihilistic forces he sought to resist. Nihilism could therefore only be overcome, or at least its demise articulated artistically, if the artist eschewed expressive content and the values carried with it, and focussed instead upon the formal structure of the work. Thus, the constructive mind concerned itself with 'intensification and condensation', with the mental organisation of the construction process itself. These activities are most effectively articulated in the expansion of serial technique.

Writing in 1932, Benn had argued that the trend towards the primacy of the constructive mind was already underway, and that modern technology, with its emphasis upon function as opposed to matter, was abetting the shift 'from within to without, of substance into form'.<sup>91</sup> Benn maintained that the earlier Expressionists of his milieu, who were the most disciplined because they were 'the most dislocated of them all', understood

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<sup>90</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'After Nihilism': 103. The last sentence concluded with an exhortation that Benn's detractors considered to be a rallying call to Nazism: '. . . constructively to breed an entirely new moral and metaphysic of form for Germany'.

<sup>91</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'After Nihilism': 103.

clearly 'the profound technical mastery that art demands, its craft ethos, the moral of form'.<sup>92</sup> But just as the constructivist ethos survived, in Benn's estimation, the politicisation of the movement that followed World War One, so, too, (and crucially so if it was to transcend nihilism) would it survive the political and ideological pressures that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. The abstractionism practised by the post-War generation of artists, and the apoliticism that Benn, like Adorno, detected in their art, led him to conclude that European culture was enjoying a second stage of Expressionism, one characterised as a confluence between Expressionism and high modernism.<sup>93</sup> What Adorno had derided as the serial composer's 'fetishization of the materials', wherein method replaces, or indeed *becomes* content, would have for Benn indicated that the composer had overcome the alienation brought about through an unholy alliance of technology and ideology. What invites further exploration, therefore, is the possibility that Boulez's serial experiments articulated Benn's idea of the *konstruktiver Geist*. The value in doing so would be to locate serialism within Sokel's 'permanent core of Expressionism', and to further reinforce the proposition that creative abstraction and social relevance are not mutually exclusive.

But perhaps more significantly, it is possible that through Benn a justification can be found for what were in France during the early 1950s the seemingly contradictory developments wherein the infusion of German metaphysics into French intellectual life, so bemoaned by Hodin, was accompanied by rationalism in creative endeavour in general, and music in particular. This study has shown how Boulez's expanded serial technique could be accommodated within Sartre's existentialist view of committed art, one in which a metaphysical introspection was used in order to foster a broader social *engagement*. A

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<sup>92</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'A Confession of Faith in Expressionism.' J.M. Richie. *Gottfried Benn: The Unreconstructed Expressionist*. J.M. Richie, tr. (London: Oswald Wolf, 1972) 104.

<sup>93</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'Phase II.' *Merkur* 4 (January 1950): 23-29.

work such as *Structures Ia* could be included within Sartre's paradigm if its absence of meaning, when meaning was itself thought to be defined by an increasingly bankrupt socio-political order, was to be interpreted as a political act. What Benn was proposing, and what appears to have alarmed those on the French Left who were critical of his appearance during *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, was what Robert Minder described as 'une littérature non engagée' – the diametrical opposite of Sartre's *littérature engagée*.<sup>94</sup> Minder reminded his readers that the idea of the artist's inner transcendence championed by Benn was part of a Germanic tradition not only increasingly at odds with the rest of European society, but 'astounding' given the calamity of Germany's partition. According to Minder, Benn's 'passivity' in the face of such an upheaval was little different to the obsequiousness practiced by the socialist realists.

But with the benefit of the hindsight called for in Chapter Nine, there was a degree of social commitment in Benn's vision of art for art's sake, which he called *Artistik*, that takes the absence of meaning beyond Sartre's affirmation and into the realm of transcendence.

Writing in 1952, Benn described *Artistik* as:

the attempt of Art to experience itself as a meaning within the general decay of all meaning, and to form a new style out of this experience; it is the attempt of Art to oppose the general nihilism of values with a new kind of transcendence, the transcendence of creative pleasure. Seen in this way, the concept embraces all the problems of Expressionism, of abstract art, of anti-humanism, atheism, anti-historicism, of cyclicism, of the "hollow man" – in short, all the problems of the world of expression.<sup>95</sup>

While Benn was clearly overstating the potential for *Artistik* to serve as a panacea for all 'the problems of the world of expression', the significance of the above is that it ties Sartre's idea of creativity as an expression of existential freedom to the notion that the balance between meaning and meaninglessness in creative endeavour ebbs and flows with

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<sup>94</sup> Robert Minder. 'Une littérature non engagée : Gottfried Benn.' *Combat* 8 May 1952: 7.

<sup>95</sup> Gottfried Benn. 'Probleme der Lyrik' (1952). Cited in Michael Hamburger, *Reason and Energy*, 293.

changing social conditions. Equally importantly, and irrespective of whether future research validates or negates Benn's position, it can be taken as an important attempt to give the doctrine of *art pour l'art* a greater social immediacy. That Benn attempted to do so at a time when there emerged what music historiography regards as one of the more extreme manifestations of high modernism, *Structures Ia*, points to a potentially fertile area for further research. This is particularly so given the fact that although Boulez may have stepped back from the rationalist chasm, in France musical constructivism continued through a number of other less celebrated attempts to reduce music to Rotenstreich's law abiding system. Claude Ballif's attempt to forge a 'métatonalité', and Ivan Wyschnegradsky's continued attempts to systematise his 'principle of non-octavian spaces' offer themselves as topics for future research into the rather eccentric mix of metaphysics and rationalism set in motion by Pierre Schaeffer during the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>96</sup>

In summary, Chapter Ten has shown that Boulez's rationalist approach was damaging to the cultural positions adopted by the dominant political ideologies. This was not simply because his method shared the technological world view through which both parties sought empowerment, but because it threatened to present an unadorned image of where the pursuit of an apparently unholy alliance between technology and ideology could lead – that an excess of order could lead to disorder. Boulez's rationalism challenged the quasi-romanticist ideal as to the restorative properties of music from which both Cold War antagonists sought to benefit.

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<sup>96</sup> Claude Ballif's attempt to fashion a solution to the 'problem of atonality' was the subject of an entire issue of *Polyphonie*. 'Introduction à la métatonalité: Vers une solution tonale et polymodale du problème atonale.' *Polyphonie* 11-12 (1956): 1-117. Wyschnegradsky's ultrachromaticism, and his at times rather fanciful defence of it, were the subject of considerable attention in French musical and philosophical circles in the late 1940 and 1950s. See, for example, 'Préface à un traité d'harmonie par quartes superposées.' *Polyphonie* 3 (1949): 56; and 'Problèmes d'Ultrachromatisme.' *Polyphonie* 9-10 (1954): 129-142.



Adorno appears to have clung to this ideal in his rejection of serialism as a cultural aberration, albeit one caused by what he accurately judged to be a contraction of social freedom. Boulez, in his over-arching rationalism and his desire to dominate the musical material, may have appeared at best sympathetic, at worst, complicit with the *modus operandi* of dominant political ideologies. Just as both sought to curb individualism in favour of collective responsibility to a State ideology, so, too, did serial technique in the rather jaundiced view of a good many critics, negate individual creativity. Composers, for their part, viewed the 'chains' of serial technique as an assertion of individual freedom in the face of what in the early 1950s in France appeared as a potentially catastrophic contraction of freedom brought about by the Either-Or mentality imposed upon the country from without.

Ligeti in his analysis of the dialectic between what he called decision and automatism in *Structures 1a* offered an assessment that most effectively captures the essence not only of the serial compositional process, but of the ideological choices confronting the composer as a member of a French society faced with unpalatable choices imposed from without: 'You stand before a row of automata, and are free to choose which one to throw into; but at the same time you are compelled to choose one of them; you build your own prison as you please, and once safely inside you are again free to do as you please. Not wholly free, then, but also not totally compelled'.<sup>97</sup> Ligeti's assessment strikes at the very essence of the reasons as to why the cultural mandarins of both ideological persuasions were critical of serial technique. Firstly, the image of a prison, whether actual or metaphorical, carried negative connotations clearly of little or no propagandistic use. Secondly, the idea that once inside a prison of his own making the composer was free to do

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<sup>97</sup> György Ligeti. 'Decision and Automatism in Structure 1a': 36.

as he pleased introduced a potentially subversive cultural unknown into their efforts to win the hearts and minds of Europe.

But just as Sartre's vision of a future utopia based upon the Neither-Nor foundered in the harsh realities of the Cold War, so, too, did Boulez's vision of a Promised Land free of an historical or cultural obligation to tradition succumb to irresistible pressure in the form of the commodification, in Adorno's sense of the word, of serial technique itself. This commodification, which was rendered complete by Stravinsky's adoption of the technique and its subsequent entry into the cultural mainstream during the Congress's Rome festival, effectively negated what was for Boulez its most valuable asset, its lack of allegiance to a pre-existing cultural code.

## CONCLUSION

### The Aftermath of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*

*L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was equivalent to the pedagogical enterprise that Nicolas Nabokov recognised in the Soviet Union, although he would have vehemently denied it. Serialism fell sufficiently outside the Congress's own pedagogy as to evoke an alternative that was at the time, and at least at the political level, unconscionable to either of the Cold War antagonists; namely, the freedom of individuals to pursue a cultural agenda that failed to yield readily to ideological exigency. For France, the path pursued subsequently under Charles de Gaulle resonated with the same combination of righteous self-belief and dogged determination that saw serialism establish a legitimacy in its own right. By 1966 France had withdrawn from NATO and was well on the way to developing its own nuclear arsenal. That same year serialism was the subject of a wide-ranging enquiry in the pages of *Preuves* (see below).

Sidney Hook in his memoirs was highly critical of the choice of Nabokov as secretary of the Congress, and of Nabokov's handling of the Paris exposition. In Hook's estimation the festival did nothing to counter the Neither-Nor position prevalent in Europe in general, and France in particular:

When the executive committee voted to set up the international festival, it was assumed that it would all be ancillary to the ideals and values of the Freedom Manifesto. What Nabokov did was to turn his back on this . . . [The festival] had not the slightest perceptible effect in altering the climate of political opinion in Europe, especially in France . . . The whole premise of the undertaking was oversimplified, if not false. Since art flourished even under political tyrannies, there was nothing the festival presented that could not have been offered to the world under the aegis of an enlightened despotism.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from appearing not to appreciate the value of the publicity generated by linking an ideological movement (which the Congress most surely was) with a cultural spectacular,

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<sup>1</sup> Sidney Hook. 'The Congress for Cultural Freedom.' *Out of Step*, 445-446.

Hook seems also to have failed to realise the relevance to the debate as a whole of Soviet attempts to control the output of its composers. The point apparently either ignored by or lost on Hook was not that 'enlightened despotism' could have produced any or all of the cultural events on display during the festival, but that the Congress's emphasis on the official suppression of art produced under such conditions reduced the debate to a common denominator readily understood by even the most politically uninitiated.

Hook's suggestion that *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* did nothing to alter the political balance in Europe is nevertheless undoubtedly correct. As he quite rightly pointed out, although the festival may have highlighted the wealth of Western culture, it failed to demonstrate the poverty of Soviet culture. This view was shared by Colin Mason, although Mason, like Henri Barraud, appeared to have had a somewhat naïve understanding of the Soviet system. Mason suggested that:

What the Communist Party demands from artists genuinely reflects the taste of the ordinary people of Russia, and hardly differs from what commends itself to the taste of the average English, French or American family . . . When such demands are not self-imposed, but are made by a modern State, they seem more disagreeable, but the State is only forcing the artist to do what he must sooner or later force himself to do if he is not to die of uselessness to the society to which he lives.<sup>2</sup>

Thus it would appear that Nabokov's festival fell upon at least three pairs of deaf ears.

Events subsequent to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* confirm both its significance and the validity of certain aspects of Hook's criticism. In 1953 Stalin died, to be replaced by an individual whom history has come to portray as one of Hook's enlightened despots, Nikita Khrushchev. Although the Cold War ideological and military confrontation continued unabated under Khrushchev, the official Soviet attitude towards Stravinsky softened to the extent that in 1962 he was honoured with an official invitation to visit the Soviet Union. That the eighty-year-old composer was fêted by both President Kennedy and Khrushchev in the same year serves further to confirm his proximity to Ringer's power elite. But any

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<sup>2</sup> Colin Mason. 'The Paris Festival': 18.

suspicion that the bi-partisan accolades showered upon the by-now twelve-tone composer undermine Dahlhaus's observations regarding the antipathy for serial music among the political elite can quickly be laid to rest. No serial (or religious) music was performed during the Soviet visit, and politics and music apparently were not discussed.<sup>3</sup>

This development does, however, represent something of a *dénouement* to an episode of cultural history that witnessed the appropriation of a musical aesthetic for ideological ends. Stravinsky's adoption of serial technique was to have far-reaching ramifications for the aesthetic stance adopted by Nabokov, and the use of that stance as part of the Congress's cultural policy. Nabokov's cultural endeavours on behalf of the Congress shifted subsequently from the aggressive defence of the supposed nobility of Western culture to a policy of cultural enrichment, which came to include in its efforts the dissemination of knowledge concerning serialism. The shift was confirmed at the festival of twentieth-century music organised by Nabokov and presented at Rome under the title *La Musica nel XX Secolo*, which was staged during 4-15 April 1954.<sup>4</sup> As was the case with *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, Stravinsky figured prominently, although, possibly as a measure of the difficulties his new-found aesthetic created for Nabokov, he attended in order to present awards for a composition competition, and his music featured at only one performance. Allen Hughes in his review of the Rome festival for *Musical America* noted that the festival's emphasis on twelve-tone music confirmed that the 'sharp lines of demarcation between the tonal and the atonal camps [were] definitely disappearing'. Hughes was also aware of the problems that Stravinsky's actions had created for individuals such as Nabokov:

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed, if circumstantial, account of Stravinsky's visit to the Soviet Union see Lillian Libman, *And Music at the Close: Stravinsky's Last Years*. (London: Macmillan, 1972) 146-157.

<sup>4</sup> The Rome festival was co-sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, the European Centre for Culture, and the Italian Radio Network.

This move has obviously put some of Stravinsky's more slavish and fanatic idolators and imitators in an embarrassing position. Not yet ready to approach the sea of technique they have been ignoring and condemning for so long, they are in danger of being left behind if they do not enter it, and, what is worse, of being left to flounder in it without protection if the master should suddenly change his mind and return to the strictly tonal shore.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps it was an acknowledgement of the inevitability of the spread of serialism and the futility of continuing to champion neo-classicism as a bulwark against Soviet ideology that led Nabokov to extend an invitation to Boulez to participate in the Rome festival – an invitation which Boulez apparently gleefully rejected and which led to the ‘mercenary lackey’ jibe reported earlier.<sup>6</sup> But by 1954 Boulez had in any case realised that the expansion of serial technique constituted a ‘completely sterile cul-de-sac’.<sup>7</sup> The outcome of what had for him been an experimental phase in his evolution as a composer had been adopted slavishly by those less able, who produced works of ‘lunatic sterility’ which betrayed the avant-garde ethos that had been the initial motivation behind the expansion of twelve-tone technique. Thus in ‘Current Investigations’ Boulez proclaimed the redundancy of strict serial technique, and advocated ‘a concept of discontinuous time made up of structures which interlock instead of remaining in airtight compartments’.<sup>8</sup> This same general trend was articulated musically in *Le marteau sans maître* (1953-55), wherein what the composer regarded as the dialectic between strict overall formal control and areas of ‘local indiscipline’ marked a paradigm shift in his poetics, a shift consummated in works such as the *Third Piano Sonata* (1956-57) and *Pli selon pli* (1957-62).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Allen Hughes. ‘Rome Conference Selects Prize Scores.’ *Musical America* 74. 7 (May 1954): 20.

<sup>6</sup> Pierre Boulez. Letter to John Cage. Letter 44, dated 18 June 1953. *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, 145. Frances Stonor Saunders cites an excerpt from Boulez's response to Nabokov, which is held at the Congress archive at the University of Chicago. In this passage Boulez ridiculed Nabokov for encouraging ‘a folklore of mediocrity’ based upon an obsession with the number twelve; ‘A Council of Twelve, a Committee of Twelve, a Jury of Twelve’. ‘Music and Truth, ma non troppo.’ *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War*, 224.

<sup>7</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 64.

<sup>8</sup> Pierre Boulez. ‘Current Investigations.’ *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, 19.

<sup>9</sup> Pierre Boulez. *Conversations with Célestin Deliège*, 66.

Aleatory was to become the ‘new God’ that Joliot-Curie in 1946 feared would emerge to replace the disappearance of the old one at the hands of science.<sup>10</sup> It is possibly because of the Boulez–Cage–New York Abstract Expressionism–Museum of Modern Art–New York Establishment nexus that music based upon chance operations presented nowhere near the threat to pro-Western Cold War ideology posed by serial music prior to Stravinsky’s adoption of the technique.<sup>11</sup> But it is equally likely that aleatory as a quasi-Dadaist corrective action did not, at a conceptual level, sustain the destructive intent of expanded serial technique. Recalling Mounier’s description of the two types of nihilism, aleatory gave ‘Nothing in the name of Nothing’ in the hope that Man would move one to the next social and cultural phase, one in which the issues of ideology and the defence of culture were simply of no consequence.

But none of this is to suggest that Stravinsky stands accused of single-handedly neutralising serialism’s subversive potential. Rather, the biggest contributory factor to its declining relevance to the Cold War debate was that it had become what Adorno termed ‘Music Festival music’.<sup>12</sup> Once it was in effect marked ‘for display purposes only’ and its revolutionary momentum sapped, it was rendered sufficiently docile to be included in the Congress’s cultural program, which was precisely what happened at Rome. During *La Musica nel XX Secolo* serial music moved from the periphery to centre stage. Young composers were invited to submit compositions on the basis of recommendations made by the Congress’s Music Advisory Board.<sup>13</sup> The Board included the core of composers featured during *L’Oeuvre du XXe siècle*’s first tier programme; Stravinsky, Benjamin

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<sup>10</sup> Frédéric Joliot-Curie. ‘Introductory Lecture.’ *Reflections on Our Age*, 195.

<sup>11</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders has detailed the alleged links between the patrons of the New Abstract Expressionist scene, including, for example, Nelson Rockefeller, the CIA, and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. ‘Yanqui Doodles’ in *Who Paid the Piper?*, 252-278.

<sup>12</sup> Theodor Adorno. ‘The Aging of the New Music’: 97.

<sup>13</sup> Anon. ‘Twentieth Century Masterpiece Music Awards.’ *The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Australian Bulletin* 10 (15 June 1954): 11.

Britten, Samuel Barber, Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud, Frank Martin, Arthur Honegger and Virgil Thomson. Composition categories included works for chamber ensemble with solo voice (won by Lou Harrison), violin concerto (Mario Peragallo), and short orchestral works (Vladimir Vogel and Giselher Klebe, joint winners). Goldbeck in his account of the competition appeared eager to report that 'even though none of the judges was biased in favour of the serial technique (or aesthetic)' each of the prize-winning works was the product of serial operations.<sup>14</sup> In Goldbeck's estimation, this development confirmed firstly, that 'the serial genre is therefore a [compositional] type . . . not an exclusive code or musical credo'; and secondly, that the serial composer was no longer 'an imitator of the early dodecaphonic works of the Viennese school'.

But the cynical way in which the festival and the outcome of the competition were manipulated seems to bear out Adorno's contention that serial music had indeed become 'Music Festival music'. Not only were specific composers invited by the organisers to compete in specific categories, but the awarding of prizes was manipulated in a flagrantly political manner and, according to Hughes, often against the current of critical acclaim, so as to 'protect the pride of as many nationalities and individuals as possible'. The jury, as far as Hughes was concerned, 'should not be blamed for the pointlessness of its decision. Caught in a cross-current of . . . personal and political pressures . . . its members simply sought to extricate themselves in the manner least likely to produce serious consequences'.<sup>15</sup> In the face of such a misappropriation of art, it is scarcely surprising that Boulez suggested to Nabokov that the Congress for Cultural Freedom's next outing should be a conference on 'the role of the condom in the twentieth century'.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Fred Goldbeck. 'La musique du XXe siècle à Rome.' *Preuves* 40 (June 1954): 78.

<sup>15</sup> Allen Hughes. 'Rome Conference Selects Prize Scores': 3.

<sup>16</sup> Cited by Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?*, 224.



Irrespective of his personal aesthetic preferences and their anticipated salutary effect on Europe's politically homeless, Nabokov had little choice but to acknowledge that serialism had come of age. *La Musica nel XX Secolo* had, according Nabokov, demonstrated that 'the future of cultural freedom must not be restricted by the limitations which young composers face in getting their works to an audience, to the best and broadest of audiences'.<sup>17</sup> As was noted in Chapter Nine with regard to Nabokov's attendance at Boulez's early Domaine Musical concerts, this statement suggests that Nabokov had come to the realisation that either his earlier antipathy towards the avant-garde was misplaced, or that the avant-garde was no longer the threat to NATO's cultural agenda that he had imagined previously. Nabokov's Pauline conversion was rendered complete when, in June 1967, he visited the Soviet Union as a guest of the Soviet Ministry of Culture, and his own ideological nemesis, the Union of Soviet Composers.<sup>18</sup>

The delicious irony of Nabokov's apparent volte-face is perhaps nowhere more keenly illustrated than in the staging at the Rome festival of Hans Werner Henze's opera *Boulevard Solitude*. As was noted earlier, had the same ideological fanaticism been in force at Rome as was at Paris, Henze's passionate communist beliefs would have surely led to his exclusion. Fedele d'Amico, who reported the opera's stormy reception in Rome, noted that '*Boulevard Solitude* certainly seems to indicate that [Henze's] problem is not musical, but by now concerns solely moral alternatives; it is one of choosing a poetic, human world, real rather than fictitious'.<sup>19</sup> Henze would have been flattered by the suggestion that he was seeking to portray a real as opposed to fictitious world. The composer's subsequent justification of the episodic nature of *Boulevard Solitude*

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<sup>17</sup> As reported by an anonymous author in 'Congress News and Views: Young American and French Composers Win International Music Award.' *The Congress for Cultural Freedom: Australian Bulletin* 21 (May 1954): 12.

<sup>18</sup> See Dorle J. Soria. 'Artist Life.' *High Fidelity/Musical America* 18.4 (April 1968): 6-8.

<sup>19</sup> Fedele d'Amico. 'Current Chronicle': 590-1.

encapsulates one of the central hypothesis of this study, which is that neo-classicism (and Stravinsky's in particular) was earlier deemed by Nabokov to represent a set of affirmative, if contrived, values that were coincident with the ideological aspirations of the Congress, whereas 'atonal' music was at best an unknown quantity, at worst a negation of those aspirations. It was noted earlier that, at least in Henze's estimation, the bourgeois capitalistic world was tonal, while atonal music lay in the domain of unhappiness and despair.<sup>20</sup> Nabokov would undoubtedly have preferred that it remained that way, as would Moscow's ruling elite. Given that both the East and the West sought to exhort society towards a future utopia which each argued only their side could provide, there was little to be gained in championing music that in its experimental phase had presented a potentially unsettling reading of the present. Boulez's actions suggest that, as far as he was concerned, once serial music became Adorno's 'Music Festival music' it lost not only the unknown qualities that both Cold War antagonists feared, but also the potentially regenerative effect upon Western society that Boulez believed was its intrinsic value.

With hindsight, *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* can be seen to have been the product of Nabokov's desire to link two of his principal preoccupations; neo-classicism and Cold War politics. But the festival's lasting legacy is that by paying lip service to the avant-garde it effectively established a momentum that sought to redress the avant-garde's conspicuous absence from what were increasingly wide-ranging discussions of culture, society and ideology, discussions most notably conducted in the pages of *Preuves*. One of the most important of these from the musicologist's perspective, one that is little known and largely ignored, is the enquiry published in *Preuves* in late 1965 and early 1966. The enquiry was conducted by Goldbeck's successor at the journal, the avant-garde composer (and

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<sup>20</sup> Hans Werner Henze. 'German Music in the 1940s and 1950s.' *Music and Politics*, 45.

biographer of Stravinsky), André Boucourechliev.<sup>21</sup> The enquiry, which, by virtue of the fact that it is an extraordinarily rich source of purviews of serialism given by a wide cross-section of key individuals in the avant-garde, should be the focus of future examination.<sup>22</sup>

The broader contextualisation pursued in this study has been motivated by the belief that our understanding of the early post-War challenge to musical conservatism (as represented by Stravinsky's neo-classicism) by high modernism (as represented by serialism) has remained incomplete in the absence of a detailed consideration of the position of both within the early Cold War cultural and ideological confrontation. The study has demonstrated that a critical analysis of the discourse pertaining to music, ideology and society as it was then prosecuted is crucial to establishing the broader historical context for that challenge. One of the principal benefits in this approach is that it has helped to expose nuances that might have otherwise remained undetected. It is in these nuances, rather than the at times excessively subjective accounts offered in hindsight by composers, or the objectivity exercised by commentators who have sought to intervene after the fact, that one begins to understand that the validity of music as the 'language' of a given epoch rests with assessing its impact upon its contemporaries, rather than its position within a grand historiographical scheme predicated upon justification rather than illumination. An overview of the findings serves, paradoxically perhaps, to bear out Schoenberg's contention that '... in all political matters [it] seems to me the only form of

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<sup>21</sup> André Boucourechliev. 'Enquête: La musique sérielle aujourd'hui.' *Preuves* 177 (November 1965): 20-38; 178 (December 1965): 27-42; 180 (February 1966): 30-46; 181 (March 1966): 37-47.

<sup>22</sup> Boucourechliev's correspondents included, in no particular order, Xenakis, Pierre Schaeffer, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Olivier Messiaen, John Cage, Gilbert Amy, Abraham Moles, Elliott Carter, Bruno Maderna, Henri Pousseur, Luciano Berio, René Char, Jean-Louis Barrault, Maurice Le Roux, Claude Samuel, Earle Brown, and Eric Salzman.

behaviour worth recommending to musicians as in keeping with the times – *post festum*. Music then arrives just in time for the feast'.<sup>23</sup>

Chapters One and Two exposed the way in which neo-classicism, Stravinsky's in particular, was appropriated by Nabokov as a cultural weapon in the Congress for Cultural Freedom's anti-Soviet propaganda thrust. It became apparent that Nabokov, in spite of his statements to the contrary, gauged the suitability of the music for promoting the Congress's vision of cultural freedom according to the reassurance and predictability of its aural outcome, rather than the freedom enjoyed in the creative process itself. It was noted that the security afforded by a conservative musical aesthetic was an attribute also used to good effect by the Soviet architects of socialist realism, a cultural policy well understood by Nabokov.

Reference to the debate between Nabokov and Leibowitz as to the relative virtues of Stravinsky and Schoenberg succeeded not only in establishing the conservation versus innovation polarity that underpins the study, but also exposed Nabokov's antipathy towards serialism and his preparedness to link serial music with what he regarded as political and social disaffection in France. The implications of Nabokov's position were further enhanced by the knowledge that his championing of neo-classicism as a cultural weapon in the Cold War struggle for the hearts and minds of Europe occurred at the very time when young French composers, represented in the first instance by Boulez, were reacting against neo-classicism as an articulation of outmoded social and cultural values. It was argued that as serial music was held by Nabokov to be the antithesis of the political and cultural values that the Congress sought to promote through the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*, then the more inclusive and less doctrinaire chamber-music component of the festival should be interpreted as a manifestation of the Neither-Nor sentiment that

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<sup>23</sup> Arnold Schoenberg. 'Does the World Lack a Peace-Hymn?' (1928). *Style and Idea*, 501.

sought to remove France from its precarious position at the epicentre of the Cold War schism.

Nabokov's choice of France as the target of his anti-Soviet cultural crusade was shown to be more justifiable when, in Chapters Three and Four, the impact of socialist realism in French musical circles was exposed. The findings of the Prague Manifesto were shown to have been the catalyst for a broader debate in France as to the social relevance of avant-garde music. It emerged that what had been a pre-War value judgement articulated by the FMP, one which questioned the ability of twelve-tone music to sustain affirmative socio-cultural values, provided the precedent for the post-War rejection of serial music by the French socialist realist Progressiste movement, which enjoyed an intimate link to the FMP. The inference drawn from the rejection was that, as serial technique was effectively abandoned by those on the Left who might reasonably have been expected to defend its right to challenge the outmoded values as typified by the style and idea of Stravinsky's neo-classicism, composers who recognised the regenerative potential of serial technique (Boulez in particular) may have felt accordingly no compunction to temper their aesthetic development with any sense of social or ideological commitment. What Paul Griffiths has described as the withering of the 'happy alliance between socialism and serialism' in the early post-War years, and Boulez's abstention from politics 'in the pursuit of his musical revolution', becomes more understandable in light of these developments.<sup>24</sup> The dilemma endured by Serge Nigg, and his contrition in hindsight, suggests that Boulez may have been wise to separate his aesthetic pursuits from the ideological morass. By the same token, the moderating role played by Roger Désormière, both in his championing of choral music and his desire to temper the authoritarian excesses of socialist realist policy, helps to

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<sup>24</sup> Paul Griffiths. 'Europe 1: Commencement, 1945-1951.' *Modern Music and After: Directions Since 1945*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 7.

account for the upsurge in choral music in the years immediately preceding the staging of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Désormière's deliberate exclusion from *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* because of his communist sympathies served to confirm the gulf between Nabokov's vision of cultural renewal and the French version of the same.

Chapters Five and Six described how that gulf came to be articulated in the two tiers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. Chapter Five began by offering an overview of the domestic political scene in France, one which confirmed that the strength and depth of support for Communism among the French appeared to have been matched only by their suspicion of American foreign and economic policy. It was shown that the stylistic grandeur of the first tier of the festival touched a raw nerve among those in France with still fresh memories of the Fascist *modus operandi* during the War. The petrified cultural façade through which, according to Adorno, the ruling elite sought to entrench or extend its power, was articulated forcefully in an overview of the programme performed on 8 May 1952 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, which was staged in the presence of the French president and one of his more controversial ministers. The content of that concert, and of the closing ceremony, were shown not only to have typified Nabokov's aesthetic and ideological preoccupations, but served also to highlight the French loss of cultural sovereignty in the face of the dual thrusts of American foreign and, through the Marshall Plan, economic policies. Attention was drawn to the historical precedent set for the style and idea of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* with the establishment by General Pershing of the Conservatoire Américaine after the First World War, which marked the beginning of Nadia Boulanger's career as the 'high-priestess' of French neo-tonal music. As if to confirm the perception of a linkage between aesthetic conservatism and American foreign policy objectives, it was argued that in both instances neo-tonal music was used in order to extend an American cultural presence in Europe following the signing of treaties that altered the balance of

power in favour of American interests – Versailles following the conclusion of the First World War, and the NATO Pact after the Second World War.

Whereas the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* gave every appearance of being a festival 'for Americans by Americans', Chapter Six argued that the chamber-music series was more concerned with exposing contemporary modes of cultural expression, than with any perceived ideological imperative. The content of the chamber series was, with a few notable exceptions, evocative of the search for social and cultural alternatives that was being prosecuted by a significant proportion of French artists and intellectuals, who were themselves viewed with suspicion by Nabokov (and derision by Congress hard-liners such as Hook), and for whom socialism, but not Stalinism, had a certain appeal. *Structures 1a* was in this respect shown to be consistent with the belief among politically motivated structuralists that the bourgeois order could be challenged by deconstructing cultural artefacts through which the bourgeoisie enjoyed empowerment. Outmoded tonal practice was shown to have been among those artefacts. Sartre's idea of culture defended as opposed to created, and Meyer-Eppler's description of music's semantic and ecto-semantic dimensions, were invoked in order to reinforce the fundamental differences between the two tiers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*. The difference between the two, one that reinforces this study's description of the appropriation of culture for propaganda purposes, turned upon the reassurance through predictability offered by neo-classicism, and the perceived absence of those qualities in a work such as *Structures 1a*. From Nabokov's perspective, the former stood for an affirmation of pro-Western values, the latter, a negation of the same. The way in which key points made by Adorno in his important essay 'Das Altern der neuen Musik' were misconstrued by Rollo Myers highlighted the veil of misunderstanding surrounding the expansion of serial technique, and revealed a potential ambiguity that

rendered understandable the Western suspicion and Soviet hostility towards the avant-garde.

Chapters One to Six measured the avant-garde in terms of its lack of amenability to the propaganda requirements of both East and West. Further to this, the two tiers of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* were shown to have articulated what in France were keenly felt tensions between obligation and choice in political ideology, and conservatism and innovation in art. Chapters Seven and Eight then detailed an indigenous French attempt to resolve the art versus ideology conundrum, an attempt which sought to reconcile creative freedom with social responsibility. The Sartrean idea of committed art maintained not only that the artist had a duty to society rather than to political ideology, but that art could actually point the way forward to a better, more just, society. Commitment in art was shown to have been grounded on the belief that art had to do more than bring social injustice to the attention of the observer (its significance), it actually had to offer solutions as to how that injustice might be overcome (its meaning). In the process of arguing that music as a non-signifying artform could not perform such an act of commitment, Sartre highlighted its susceptibility to subversion by third parties. As Sartre pointed out: 'By changing the words, a hymn to the Russian dead of Stalingrad will become a funeral oration for Germans fallen before the same city. What do the sounds contribute? A great blast of sonorous heroism; it is the word which will speak'. To Nabokov, Stravinsky's *Symphony in C* was an expression of the nobility of Man. To the Soviets, works such as the *Symphony in C* were little more than gratuitous attempts to recall an earlier decadent and resolutely bourgeois age, a longing that confirmed the social, moral, and political bankruptcy of the West.

Leibowitz's position, that artistic innovation was a valid form of commitment because it was an expression of individual freedom, was traced to his pre-War contributions to



*Esprit*, wherein there also emerged his antipathy towards Stravinsky. Chapter Eight outlined Leibowitz's argument in favour of the presence of Sartrean commitment in Schoenberg's *A Survivor from Warsaw*. Sartre, possibly on the strength of Leibowitz's argument, flagged in his preface to *L'artiste et sa conscience* the possibility that an intentionally non-signifying artform could, on the basis of both its ability to confront a sore, snivelling (and presumably complacent) world as to the consequences of its action, and the reformist zeal of its creator, be capable of carrying commitment. Chapters Nine and Ten pursued the possibility that *Structures Ia* may have, on account of the perceived lack of distinction, at least in terms of its aural outcome, between the raw material of the music and its treatment, and of the revolutionary fervour of its creator, fulfilled those requirements.

That *Structures Ia* failed to change the world was, in Chapter Nine, traced to the recognition that, as was the case with Sartre's society without cleavages, a hypothetical audience capable of divining its meaning (as opposed to its significance) and of responding accordingly, failed to become a reality. Clement Greenberg's description of the 'umbilical cord of gold' through which the avant-garde was simultaneously nurtured by, and cuckolded to the ruling elite, suggests that the failure of such an audience to materialise was inevitable.<sup>25</sup> That this could never have been otherwise begged the question, duly answered in Chapter Ten, as to the nature of the possible damage capable of being inflicted by *Structures Ia* upon the cultural ideologies of the Cold War antagonists. Chapter Ten argued that the expansion of serial technique constituted a technological intervention that sought to challenge what had hitherto been a passive, that is to say non-interventionist, application of musical knowledge. It was shown that the potentially destructive applications of technology became, in the period of heightened Cold War tensions, a

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<sup>25</sup> Clement Greenberg. 'Avant-garde and Kitsch.' *Art and Culture*, 8.

source of anxiety to those who believed that the rise of scientific thought constituted a form of nihilism that flourished in the absence of moral restraint. Boulez's declarations as to the destructive intent behind his expansion of serial technique located *Structures Ia* within that general nihilism, and the anxieties engendered as a result. The inference drawn from this was that Nabokov and Khrennikov may therefore have been justified in excluding serial music from the grand deceptions that they had hoped to perpetuate in the name of their respective political ideologies. Further evidence was furnished as to the way in which Adorno's uneasiness regarding what he saw as the dire sociological implications of the increased popularity of serial technique was misconstrued by Rollo Myers, an individual linked to a Western government that stood to benefit from the Congress's propaganda initiatives, in order to argue that serial technique was a contributory factor to, and not a symptom of, social malaise. It was pointed out that this verdict was not all that distant from the Soviet position. Bearing in mind the dual themes of heightened abstractionism and widespread social unease, a case was mounted for including expanded serial technique within a revision of the musical expressionist paradigm. Such a revision would lessen the emphasis on catharsis and recognise that abstractionism constituted a maturation but not a negation of earlier intuitive responses to social upheaval. It was suggested that, his dubious political affiliations notwithstanding, Gottfried Benn's *konstruktiver Geist* offers itself as a model for further study into the relationship between musical constructivism and early post-War European society.

In summary, this study has provided documentary evidence to confirm the accuracy and validity of Boulez's description, cited by way of introduction, of the key issues confronting those French composers who came of age in the immediate post-War period. Boulez and Nigg were attempting to tackle aesthetic conservatism at the very time when the Cold War confrontation demanded artistic conformity as a means for ensuring that

music, despite the widespread recognition that it was a non-signifying artform, could be drafted into the ideological propaganda struggle. Conservative aesthetic conformity delivered to the Cold War cultural antagonists a uniform absence of meaning, a blank slate upon which could be imposed a given ideological position. An *intentional* non-significance of the kind called for by Sartre, and offered by *Structures Ia*, was, as has been demonstrated, simply beyond their reckoning. That expanded serial technique was resistant to the ulterior propagandist motives of those with vested ideological interests, at a time when the French political scene was, like Europe in general, polarised between the two blocs, suggests a socio-cultural legacy more profound than its historical position at the high-water mark of modernism in music.

Finally, and in answer to the question posed in the introduction as to why *Structures Ia* was premièred at a festival that appeared to contradict the values that its composer championed over and above its aural outcome, two equally valid explanations have emerged. The first and most significant is that its inclusion was consistent with the prevailing mood among the Parisian cultural and political intelligentsia that France should be the master of its own destiny. The second is that its inclusion was either a gratuitous attempt by the Congress for Cultural Freedom to compromise the reputation of one of the Parisian avant-garde's more belligerent and articulate defenders by linking him to the Congress's anti-Soviet thrust, or to bring Boulez into the fold. Either way, the overwhelming weight of evidence suggests that Congress failed.

The events of Rome April 1954 and the Congress's subsequent role in the dissemination of knowledge concerning the avant-garde in general, and serialism in particular, offer final confirmation of the significance assigned to *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* throughout this study. *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* was staged at a time when the aesthetic confrontation between those who sought to defend tradition and those who pursued

innovation was coincident with the ideological confrontation between the Cold War antagonists – a confrontation that had, by virtue of the Korean War, the Berlin Blockade and the establishment of NATO, entered a critical stage. The fact that *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* brought together these aesthetic and ideological concerns in France, a country where the tensions arising from both concerns were most keenly felt, has ensured that the festival will remain one of the more pivotal moments in the history of post-War European cultural politics.

## APPENDIX A

The musical programme for *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle*

## The First Tier

Among those composers, conductors, and performers to participate in the first tier of *L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle* were Igor Stravinsky, Charles Munch, Bruno Walter, Igor Markevitch, Georges Enesco, Pierre Monteux, Ernest Ansermet, Benjamin Britten, Virgil Thomson, George Balanchine, and Jean Cocteau. The orchestras, opera companies, and dance troupes to perform included the Vienna Philharmonic, the Vienna State Opera, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the St. Cecilia Academy of Rome, the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Berlin RIAS (Radio in American Sector) Orchestra, the Strasbourg Chorale St. Guillaume, and from Paris, the Orchestre du Conservatoire, Orchestre Nationale de l'Opera, and Orchestre de la Radiodiffusion Française. The Royal Opera of Covent Garden and The New York City Ballet performed outside their home countries for the first time. Below is the first tier programme as it appeared in *Preuves* 14 (April 1952): 62-63.

Wednesday 30 April  
21.00 Hours

Inaugural Concert  
Église Saint-Roch

*Magnificat*

J.S. Bach

*Cantate No. 6*

J.S. Bach

*Stabat Mater* (Première audition in Paris)

Francis Poulenc

Chorale Saint-Guillaume de Strasbourg.

Orchestre des Concerts Lamaureux under the direction of Fritz Munch.

Friday 2 and Saturday 3 May  
21.00

Opera  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Wozzeck*, opera in three acts, story by Georg Büchner, music by Alban Berg.

Staging by Oscar Fritz Schuh.

Design by Caspar Neher.

Interpreted by Christl Goltz, Eleanor Gifford, Marjan Rus, Joseph Hermann, Hans Beiner, Heinrich Bensing, Peter Klein, Karl Doench, Harald Proeglhoef, August Jaresch.

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Chorus of the Vienna Opera, under the direction of Karl Boehm.

Monday 5 May  
21.00

*Don Juan*  
*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*  
*Das Lied von der Erde*

Soloists : Kathleen Ferrier and Lorenz Fehenberger.  
Orchestre du Théâtre National de l'Opera, under the direction of Bruno Walter.

Symphony Concert  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Richard Strauss  
Claude Debussy  
Gustav Mahler

Tuesday 6 May  
21.00

Overture from *The School For Scandal*  
*Symphony No. 2*  
*Toccata*  
*La Mer*  
*Daphnis et Chloé, Suite No. 2*

Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Charles Munch.

Symphony Concert  
Théâtre National de l'Opera

Samuel Barber  
Arthur Honegger  
Walter Piston  
Claude Debussy  
Maurice Ravel

Wednesday 7 May  
21.00

*Cordélia*. Ballet in one act (première)  
Concept and music by  
Design and costumes by Jacques Dupont.  
Choreography by John Taras.  
Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas.

*Don Perlimplin*. Opera in one act (première)  
Story by  
Music by  
Staging by Yves Robert.  
Design by Antoni Clave.

*Coup de Feu*. Ballet in one act (première)  
Musique by  
Concept by A.M. Cassandre.  
Choreography by Aurélio Milloss.  
Design by A.M. Cassandre.  
Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas.

Opera and Ballet  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Henri Sauguet

F. Garcia Lorca  
Vittorio Rieti

Georges Auric

Thursday 8 May  
21.00

*Symphony No. 3*  
*Protée, Suite No. 2*  
*Symphony No. 3*  
*Le sacre du Printemps*

Boston Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Pierre Monteux.

Symphony Concert  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

William Pyper  
Darius Milhaud  
William Schuman  
Igor Stravinsky

Friday 9 May

21.00

*Coup de Feu*  
*Don Perlimplin*  
*Cordélia*

Grand Ballet du Marquis de Cuevas.

Opera and Ballet

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Georges Auric  
 Vittorio Rieti  
 Henri Sauguet

Saturday 10 May

21.00

*Swan Lake*

Music by

Choreography by George Balanchine, after Lev Ivanov.

*La Valse*

Choreography by George Balanchine.

*La Cage*

Music by

Choreography by Jerome Robbins.

*Bourrée Fantastique*

Music by

Choreography by George Balanchine.

New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.

Conductor: Léon Barzin.

Ballet

Théâtre National de l'Opera

Peter Tchaikovsky

Maurice Ravel

Igor Stravinsky

Emmanuel Chabrier

Sunday 11 May

21.00

*The Four Temperaments*

Music by

Choreography by George Balanchine.

*La Cage**L'Oiseau de Feu*

Music by

Choreography by George Balanchine.

*La Valse*

New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.

Conductor: Léon Barzin.

Ballet

Théâtre des Champs Élysées

Paul Hindemith.

Igor Stravinsky

Igor Stravinsky

Maurice Ravel

Monday 12 May

21.00

*Till Eulenspiegel*

Music by

Choreography by George Balanchine.

*The Four Temperaments*Ballet

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Richard Strauss

Paul Hindemith

*Les Jardin aux Lilas*

Music by Ernest Chausson  
 Choreography by Annany Tudor.  
 Design by Cecil Beaton.  
 New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.  
 Conductor: Léon Barzin.

Tuesday 13 May

21.00

Ballet

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Till Eulenspiegel**Le Jardin aux Lilas**L'Oiseau de Feu**La Valse*

Richard Strauss  
 Ernest Chausson  
 Igor Stravinsky  
 Maurice Ravel  
 New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.  
 Conductor: Léon Barzin.

Wednesday 14 May

21.00

Ballet

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*The Prodigal Son*

Music by Serge Prokofiev  
 Choreography by George Balanchine.  
 Design by Georges Rouault.  
 Under the direction of Léon Barzin.

*The Pied Piper*

Music by Aaron Copland  
 Choreography by Jerome Robbins.  
 Under the direction of Léon Barzin.

*Orphée*

Music by Igor Stravinsky  
 Choreography by George Balanchine.  
 Design by Isamu Naguchi.  
 Under the direction of Igor Stravinsky.  
 New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.

Thursday 15 May

21.00

Ballet

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*The Pied Piper**Le Jardin aux Lilas**Orphée*

Aaron Copland  
 Ernest Chausson  
 Igor Stravinsky  
 New York City Ballet. Artistic Direction: George Balanchine.  
 Conductor: Léon Barzin.



Friday 16 May

21.00

*Symphony No. 5*  
*Nobilissima Visione*  
*Sonate di Camera*, for violoncello and orchestra  
 Soloist: Henri Honegger

*Rhapsodie Espagnole*

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, under the direction of Ernest Ansermet.

Symphony Concert

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Arthur Honegger  
 Paul Hindemith  
 Bohuslav Martinu

Maurice Ravel

Saturday 17 May

21.00

*Suite en fa*  
*Concerto for violin and orchestra*

(première audition in Paris) Soloist: Joseph Szigeti.

*Trois Images*

Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, under the direction of Ernest Ansermet.

Symphony Concert

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Albert Roussel  
 Frank Martin

Claude Debussy

Monday 19 May

21.00

*Oedipus Rex*

Opera-oratorio by Igor Stravinsky, for speaker, six soloists, male chorus and symphony orchestra.

Texts by Jean Cocteau, after Sophocles.

Speaker: Jean Cocteau.

Soloists: Patricia Nevvay and Léopald Simoneau.

Orchestre National et Choeurs de la Radiodiffusion Française, under the direction of Igor Stravinsky.

Soirée Stravinsky

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Tuesday 20 May

21.00

*Erwartung*

Opera-oratorio by Arnold Schoenberg for solo voice and symphony orchestra.

Soloist: Patricia Nevvay.

Soirée Schoenberg-Stravinsky

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Oedipus Rex*

Opera-oratorio by

Igor Stravinsky

Orchestre nationale et Choeurs de la Radiodiffusion Française, under the direction of Hans Rosbaud.

Thursday 22 May  
21.00

Concert Stravinsky  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Symphony in C*  
*Caprice for piano and orchestra*

Soloist: Monique Haas.

*Symphony in three movements*

Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, under the direction  
of Igor Stravinsky.

Friday 23 May  
21.00

Concert Bartók  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Two Portraits*  
*Divertimento for chamber orchestra*  
*Concerto No. 2 for piano and orchestra*

Soloist: Géza Anda.

*Suite de Danse*

Orchestra of the RIAS, West Berlin, under the direction of Ferenc Fricsay.

Saturday 24 May  
21.00

Symphony Concert  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Variations on a theme by Paganini*  
*Scythian Suite*  
*Concert Suite from the opera 'Yekaterina Izmailova'*  
(*Lady Macbeth of Minsk*)  
*Métamorphoses*

Boris Blacher  
Serge Prokofiev

Dmitri Shostakovich  
Paul Hindemith

Orchestra of the RIAS, West Berlin, under the direction of Ferenc Fricsay.

Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 May  
21.00

Opera  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

*Billy Budd*, opera in four acts

Story by E.M. Foster and Eric Crozier, after Herman Melville.

Music by Benjamin Britten.

Staging by Basil Coleman.

Royal Opera of Covent-Garden, under the direction of Benjamin Britten.

Wednesday 28 May

Concert and Choral  
Performance  
Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

21.00

*Paganiniana*  
*Canti di Prigionia*  
*Suite du Tricorne*

Alfred Casella  
Luigi Dallapiccola  
Manuel de Falla

*Les Choéphores* and finale from *Euménides*, oratorio by Darius Milhaud, for speaker,  
soloists, mixed choirs and symphony orchestra.

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. Orchestra and choirs under the direction  
of Igor Markevitch.

Thursday 29 May

21.00

*Turandot**La Terra**Bacchus et Ariane**Concerto for piano*

Soloist: Michelangeli.

*Psalmus Hungaricus*

Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. Orchestra and choirs under the direction of Igor Markevitch.

Concert and ChoralPerformance

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Ferruccio Busoni

Francesco Malipiero

Albert Roussel

Maurice Ravel

Zoltán Kodály

Friday 30 and Saturday 31 May

21.00

*Four Saints in Three Acts*, opera in four acts.

Story by Gertrude Stein. Music by Virgil Thomson

Presented by The American National Theater and Academy, and Ethel Linder

Reiner Productions.

Opera

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Sunday 1 June

21.00

*Carnaval Romain**Symphonie classique**Alborada**Salon Mejico**Fontaines de Rome**Chevalier à la Rose*

With the assistance of Nicole Henriot.

Pierre Monteux, conductor.

Closing Concert

Palais de Chaillot

Hector Berlioz

Serge Prokofiev

Maurice Ravel

Aaron Copland

Ottorino Respighi

Richard Strauss

## The Chamber-Music Series

The following programme is based on an advance notice published in the weekend edition of *Combat*, dated 26-27 April 1952.<sup>1</sup>

Wednesday 7 May

Suite for violin and piano	Elsa Barraine
Chorale and variations for piano	Henri Dutilleux
Pièce for solo flute	Charles Koechlin
<i>Structures</i> (1a) for two pianos <sup>2</sup>	Pierre Boulez
<i>Mélodies</i>	Yves Baudrier
String Quartet	André Jolivet

Friday 9 May

<i>Les Visions de l'Amen</i>	Olivier Messiaen
<i>Syrinx</i>	Claude Debussy
Sonata No. 10 for piano	Alexander Scriabine
Concerto for clavecin and six instruments	Manuel de Falla

Tuesday 13 May

Five variants of <i>Dives and Lazarus</i>	Ralph Vaughan Williams
Three Sonnets to <i>Orphée</i> . Words by R.M. Rilke	Roman Palester
<i>Little Gidding</i> , four intonations for tenor and instruments on a poem by T.S. Eliot	Arthur Lourié
Suite in the Spanish style, for clavecin, oboe, bassoon and trumpet	Roland Manuel

<sup>1</sup> 'L'Oeuvre du XXe siècle: Musique.' *Combat* 26-27 April 1952: 2.

<sup>2</sup> The fact that the première of *Structures 1a* took place on 7 May contradicts the often cited date 4 May. For example, to an edition of a letter written by Boulez to John Cage, dated 'before' 21 May 1952, in which Boulez informed Cage that 'We played one piece from "Structures" with Messiaen on first piano and myself on second. There was some rumpus and a little irritation', Jean-Jacques Nattiez in *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence* appends the footnote 'To be exact, on May 4 1952'. *The Boulez-Cage Correspondence*, 128. Mitigating against the earlier date, and the possibility that there was a press preview on 4 May, are the number of reviews that mention the irritation to which Boulez referred – the inference being that the press were in attendance *en masse* on the day when the fracas occurred. The following account by Richard Repass, published in the *Music Review*, is noteworthy in that it linked the unrest to a specific date: 'At the first chamber-music concert on 7th May 27-year-old Pierre Boulez (the youngest composer represented at the Exposition) and Olivier Messiaen played twice through Boulez's short two-piano work, *Structures*, and there was a demonstration by a few members of the restive audience who nearly came to blows over the strange sounds that emanated from the pianos'. 'Paris: Exposition of Twentieth-Century Masterpieces.' *Music Review* 13 (1952): 215.

Thursday 15 May

Concertino for piano and six instruments	Leos Janáček
Five pieces for string quartet	Anton Webern
Sonata for piano	Samuel Barber
Quintet No. 2 for piano and strings	Gabriel Fauré

Wednesday 21 May

Double variation for violoncello and strings	Jean Françaix
<i>Concord</i> Sonata	Charles Ives
Concertino for piano and string orchestra	Constant Lambert
<i>Socrate</i>	Erik Satie

Saturday 24 May

String Quartet No. 2, Op. 10, with soprano solo	Arnold Schoenberg
Septet for strings, voice, and instruments	André Caplet
<i>Façade</i>	William Walton

Thursday 29 MayReligious music for choirs, *a cappella*:

Un-named works by Ildebrando Pizzetti, Michael Tippett, Alexander Tansman, Henk Badings, and Anthony Hopkins

*Chôros* for three horns and trombone

Heitor Villa-Lobos

Secular music for choirs, *a cappella*:

Un-named works by Anton Webern, Claude Delvincourt, Georges Auric, Sem Dresden, Henry Zagwin

*Ionisation*

Edgard Varèse

*Le Testament de François Villon*, for voice, clavecin and chorus

Henri Barraud

## APPENDIX B

## The Congress for Cultural Freedom's 'Freedom Manifesto'

The manifesto was read out by Arthur Koestler at the closing session of the Berlin Congress on 30 June 1950 to reportedly unanimous approval. It was reproduced in full in an undated (but possibly 1952) pamphlet outlining the Congress's first two years of activity.<sup>1</sup>

1. We hold it to be self-evident that intellectual freedom is one of the inalienable rights of man.
2. Such freedom is defined first and foremost by his right to hold and express his own opinions, and particularly opinions which differ from those of his rulers. Deprived of the right to say 'no', man becomes a slave.
3. Freedom and peace are inseparable. In any country, under any regime, the overwhelming majority of ordinary people fear and oppose war. The danger of war becomes acute when governments, by suppressing democratic representative institutions, deny to the majority the means of imposing its will to peace. Peace can be maintained only if each government submits to the control and inspection of its acts by the people whom it governs, and agrees to submit all questions immediately involving the risk of war to a representative international authority, by whose decision it will abide.
4. We hold that the main reason for the present insecurity of the world is the policy of governments which, while paying lip-service to peace, refuse to accept this double control. Historical experience proves that wars can be prepared and waged under any slogan, including that of peace. Campaigns of peace which are not backed by acts that will guarantee its maintenance are like counterfeit currency circulated for dishonest purposes. Intellectual sanity and physical security can only return to the world if such practices are abandoned.
5. Freedom is based on the toleration of divergent opinions. The principle of toleration does not logically permit the practice of intolerance.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Congress for Cultural Freedom*, np. As is the case with the majority of pamphlets published by the Congress, the issue is virtually devoid of publication details. The National Library of Australia (from whence copies were obtained) lists 'The Congress for Cultural Freedom, Paris', as the publisher. The date of the pamphlet in question can be reasonably assumed to be after June 1952 but before July 1953 owing to the fact that it details Congress activities up to and including the Paris exposition, but makes no mention of the 'Science and Freedom' conference held in Hamburg in July 1953.

6. No political philosophy or economic theory can claim the sole right to represent freedom in the abstract. We hold that the value of such theories is to be judged by the range of concrete freedom which they accord the individual in practice. We likewise hold that no race, nation, class, or religion can claim the sole right to represent the idea of freedom, nor the right to deny freedom to other groups or creeds in the name of any ultimate ideal or lofty aim whatsoever. We hold that the historical contribution of any society is to be judged by the extent and quality of the freedom which its members actually enjoy.

7. In times of emergency, restrictions on the freedom of the individual are imposed in the real or assumed interest of the community. We hold it to be essential that such restrictions be confined to a minimum of clearly specified actions; that they be understood to be temporary and limited expedients in the nature of a sacrifice; and that the measures restricting freedom be themselves subject to free criticism and democratic control. Only thus can we have a reasonable assurance that emergency measures restricting individual freedom will not degenerate into a permanent tyranny.

8. In totalitarian states restrictions on freedom are no longer intended and publicly understood as sacrifice imposed on the people, but are on the contrary represented as triumphs of progress and achievements of a superior civilization. We hold that both the theory and practice of these regimes run counter to the basic rights of the individual and the fundamental aspirations of mankind as a whole.

9. We hold the danger represented by these regimes to be all the greater since their means of enforcement far surpasses that of all previous tyrannies in the history of mankind. The citizen of the totalitarian state is expected and forced not only to abstain from crime but to conform in all his thoughts and actions to prescribed pattern. Citizens are persecuted and condemned on such unspecified and all-embracing charges as 'enemies of the people' or 'socially unreliable elements'.

10. We hold that there can be no stable world so long as mankind, with regard to freedom, remains divided into 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The defence of existing freedoms, the reconquest of lost freedoms, and the creation of new freedoms are parts of the same struggle.

11. We hold that the theory and practice of the totalitarian state are the greatest challenge which man has been called upon to meet in the course of civilized history.

12. We hold that indifference or neutrality in the face of such a challenge amounts to a betrayal of mankind and to the abdication of the free mind. Our answer to this challenge may decide the fate of man for generations.

13. The defence of intellectual liberty today imposes a positive obligation: to offer new and constructive answers to the problems of our time.

14. We address this manifesto to all men who are determined to regain those liberties which they have lost and to preserve and extend those which they enjoy.

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