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Musical Time in a Fast World

Oxford Handbook of Time in Music

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What Fredric Jameson (1991) calls the 'cultural logic of late capitalism' also manifests particular temporal logics—specific organisations of time, temporal arrangements of the everyday—that mediate experiences of time as lived. These are extended throughout a "24/7" existence explored more recently by Jonathan Crary (2013) and others. It is a truism that music is a temporal art form *par excellence*, and, furthermore, that it makes and marks time differently from everyday temporality. I would like to suggest

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that these two temporalities face one another: musical time informs everyday temporality, but each cannot be reduced to the other. This chapter focuses on how society's dominant temporal rationale—as manifested in day-to-day lived-experience—relates to the temporal experience forged or contoured by music in the context of a late stage of modernity. This is a relation that cannot be assumed; neither can it be assured, given the dynamism of musical temporalities, which are multi-layered and open to change, determined not only by compositional choices but also new contexts of performance and listening.

It is my argument that music and sound art are time-making activities in which sensitivity to, and experimentation with temporality—*in accordance with or deviation from aspects of the normative temporal logic of society*—might be practiced or exercised. To put this slightly differently: musical temporalities can problematise and bring attention to socio-temporal logics, from which they differ but are always related. Here I consider how music and sound art adopt and adapt the temporal conditions of late modernity.

It should be noted from the very beginning that while cultural and musical temporalities might contradict one another, late modernity itself provides contradictory temporal modalities. This view is taken against a widespread narrative of modern and postmodern life, described singularly as a quickening of lived temporalities, especially after 1970s neoliberalism. This "acceleration narrative"—and its revolutionary potential—was embraced many early twentieth-century modernists, for instance the futurists (see Highmore, 2005, pp. 140-145), and is more recently articulated in accelerationist politics that 'want to accelerate the process of technological evolution' and argue that the one should repurpose the 'material platform of neoliberalism' towards a revolutionary post-capitalism (Williams and Srnicek, 2014, p. 356 and 355).

The cultural theorist Ben Highmore argues that while speed and acceleration are undoubtedly aspects of modern life, to focus on speed alone is to miss something crucial. Highmore (2005, pp. 154-157) gives the example of air travel. This speeds up life, practically shrinking geographical space through speedy transport; for the passenger, however, the embodied experience of flight is characterised by queues, seated immobility, and tedium. Highmore calls attention to this idea through invoking Henri Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis. Lefebvre (2004) understood everyday life to trace multiple—often conflicting—forms of time; rhythmanalysis took account of this by bringing the observer's attention to the diverse and interacting rhythms and structures of time, such as the working day and the factory clock, the cycles of the seasons, dawn and dusk, fatigue and alertness, hunger and satiation. Highmore suggests that rhythmanalysis might most productively be understood as a critical sensitivity to the contradictions inherent in the structuring and living of time under modernity. As Highmore (2005, p. 154) puts it, '[rhythmanalysis] refuses to accept the rhetoric of acceleration as adequate to the experience of modernity.' While I am not performing rhythmanalysis here, I similarly do want to attend a methodological sensitivity to the contradictory temporality of the everyday, and a resistance to characterising modernity in the linear terms of acceleration. Indeed, I argue that these contradictions are made visible and made audible through artistic sonic practices that instantiate, highlight, co-opt, or transform the temporalities that bear their traces on bodies, history, and everyday sociality.

Perhaps the paradigmatic image of a hard and fast society—a culture of late capitalist speed, under the auspices of neoliberalism—is provided by New York City in

the 1980s.[2] The stock exchange, and the free market forces of Wall Street, typified this quality acutely. Technologically speaking, new computers and telematics allowed for rapid trades and lighting-fast commodities speculations, whilst the city typified a hub in a global finance system, 'a national turnstile', through which the forces of global finance 'move[d] megamonies… at blinding speed' (to borrow a phrase from Arjun Appadurai [1990, p. 298] on global finance in general); socio-politically, this was the era of Reaganomics, deregulation, and a time when the individual had to keep up or lose out. This city, this historical moment, are taken here metonymically, associated with some of the dominant cultural and temporal logics that were emerging more generally in the late twentieth century. It is the very fact that '80s New York evokes such an unambiguous image of speed and intensity that I hope to tease out through the temporal contradictions of this place/time.

Focusing on two works associated with the city and the year 1983, I argue that music and sound art explored varied and paradoxical modalities of time. In order to demonstrate this, I begin by briefly considering a work by the sound artist Bill Fontana and its temporal implications. The relationship between time and music is then explored more fully, before I turn towards my second example, Morton Feldman's String Quartet No. 2, and more substantially develop the critical themes introduced so far. The contradictory temporality of Feldman's quartet is then considered, with Fontana's work re-emerging as a counterpart to Feldman's towards the end of the chapter.

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[2] Marie Thompson has suggested that 'a distinction between "pre-" and "post-" neoliberal music cultures is, in at least some geographical locations,' an important historiographical distinction. The image of NYC is thus taken here as manifesting one moment in this culture's emergence. See Thompson's contribution to David Clarke, et al., 2018, pp. 411-462, at 455.

Fontana's *Oscillating Steel Grids Along the Brooklyn Bridge*

Bill Fontana's *Oscillating Steel Grids Along the Brooklyn Bridge* is an example of one of Fontana's 'sound sculptures'. In art-theoretical contexts this term conventionally describes sculptures that incorporate sound as a key element (see Grayson, 1975). However, Fontana's approach is more acute:

> Influenced by Duchamp's strategy of the found object, I began to realize that the relocation of an ambient sound source within a new context would alter radically the acoustic meaning of the ambient sound source. I conceived such relocations in sculptural terms because ambient sounds are sculptural in the way they belong to a particular place. (Fontana, n.d., c)

Fontana's sound sculptures are well-known for relocating live acoustic sound sources from one context to another. Elsewhere he has characterised this process very simply: "I take sound away from its context" (Fontana as quoted in Trebay, 1983); sounds produced in one place are broadcast in a new location. Fontana will treat a bridge 'like a giant Aeolian harp', as one reviewer put it of a later UK-based work (*Tyne Soundings*, 2009), placing microphones on a structure and relaying the output to another, remote environment (Hickling, 2009). Fontana himself has written of this interest in

> hearing the simultaneity of sounds in a natural landscape, a city, a structure such as a bridge, a train station, a harbor or a long stretch of beach. What is so compelling is the natural completeness of the live flows of musical events and patterns. That the live ambient sound constellations present such seemingly perfect

> relationships *makes this art form actualize an awareness of what is already present* [emphasis added]. (Fontana, 1990 & 2000)

This final phrase echoes a Cagean attentiveness to one's sonic environment, of which one becomes aware through its reframing and defamiliarization. Furthermore, Brandon LaBelle (2006, p. 233) suggests that Fontana's process of relocating and decontextualising sounds '[dislodges] us from a given visual referent and creat[es] a jag in the perceptual hierarchy of the senses'. This is to say that this awareness might stem from, and foreground, the sonic dimension of a field of activity (a landscape, a city) in which the audial is conventionally relegated as incidental.

New York's Brooklyn Bridge became the basis for one of Fontana's sound sculptures in 1983, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the bridge. As such, *Oscillating Steel Grids* was not a permanent fixture, but a temporary arrangement for actualising awareness of urban sounding. At this time, the bridge's roadway was formed partially by a steel grid.[3] This grid, to quote Fontana, '"sang" with oscillating tones whenever cars moved over its surface' (Fontana, n.d., a). In Fontana's work, which was in place from May until August, microphones attached below the bridge's roadway captured this 'singing'. The sounds received by the microphones were transmitted via 'equalized broadcast-quality telephone lines' to a new location, and a new context, the Austin J. Tobin Plaza (Fontana, n.d., c). This was the Plaza that was then directly below the Twin Towers. Sounds originally from the bridge emanated from eight speakers embedded in the façade of the World Trade Centre's Tower One. Loudspeakers were placed on the WTC's observation terrace, which overlooked the city and the East River. Fontana writes that

[3] In the late 80s this was paved over.

'[t[he Brooklyn Bridge was clearly visible from this vantage point and [this] was the first time I had explored in real time the idea of hearing as far as you could see' (Fontana, n.d., b).[4]

Highmore suggests that early twentieth-century modernism involved an experimentation with, and sensitivity to, questions surrounding time. I want to consider how this logic might be extended to artwork of a late modern or postmodern age. Fontana's work highlighted quotidian temporality and also—I suggest below—the historical marking of time. Cyclical rhythms of the urban everyday became musically perceived. As Fontana pointed out, times of day when there was less traffic on the bridge meant faster cars, resulting in higher pitches; by contrast, during rush hour, and periods of slower, denser traffic, different sonic qualities where effected (Fontana, n.d., c). "It's best in the early evening", Fontana told a newspaper reporter at the time, "there's less traffic on the bridge and the cars that are on it go faster. That creates greater variations of pitch" (as quoted in Trebay, 1983).

Alongside the everyday, the piece also clearly related to historical time—it was after all a work realized in honour of the bridge's centenary. But this connection to history was not merely abstract; the material dimension of the centenary celebrations and the disciplinary act of historical remembrance were emphasised. Richard Haw (2008, p. 193), in his cultural history of the Brooklyn Bridge, writes that,

[4] Fontana's webpage on his work (Fontana, n.d., b) includes an audio excerpt. One could also add here that, post-9/11, the work has come to mean something retrospectively different in its relation to the WTC and historical time.

> On the anniversary itself [the 24th of May] crowds headed to the East River in unprecendented numbers. Speeches were given were given, a parade was staged [....] In the evening, a massive fireworks display culminated the day's events.

On the centennial day, the sounds of these fireworks, and boats' celebratory foghorns—sonic traces of the concrete act of celebration—intermingled with other sounds from the contemporary everyday. A field of sonic activity emerged from both the everyday temporality and historical time, from the sounds of the city and their transmutation by Fontana's apparatus: the listener became sensitive to both sounds from urban life—normally passed by—and to the sonic traces of an act of remembrance, of a century-now-passed.

Fontana's sound sculpture involves a dislocation of localities—the transposition of one sound source into the space of another. It is perhaps pertinent that a bridge provided the original location of these sounds, a place which is by its very nature a zone of transition between different localities (here Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan). But different localities also bring with them different characteristic temporalities. This may recall Henri Lefebvre and Catherine Régulier's observation in their essay on 'The Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities', that, '[as a] link between spaces, [in many Mediterranean buildings] the stairway also provides a link between times' (in Lefebvre 2004, p. 97). 'Different times' here denote different rhythmic and temporal habits interior to a dwelling, and those of the street life outside. The stairway, for Lefebvre and Regulier, connects these two times.

Fontana's bridge is a site of a number of connections and contradictions: it connects up different "acoustic territories*",* to borrow LaBelle's (2010) term; different spaces in which noise is a meaningful element both experientially, and potentially, poetically. Each

of these territories imply particular sonic and temporal characteristics. It also connects and blends together the different temporal registers of the everyday and the historical. Furthermore, cultural and historical rhythms are connected and blended with natural ones —recalling Lefebvre's suggestion that everyday life is a place of overlapping and often conflicting rhythms; variously natural, social, economic, and bodily in origin. The relayed sound from the bridge, floating above its new setting, the Plaza, was 'mistaken sometimes for wind' by listeners, suggests Fontana (n.d., b). More literally, these sounds themselves captured the impact of day-night cycles on the sonic qualities of the bridge, which affected, as observed above, the sounds of traffic at different times of day. The Bridge—a reified object of adoration in the centenary celebration—also became a liminal space of transition, between different soundings and temporalities.

The 'problem of time' in Music and Culture

The relationship between time in music and time in culture is not self-evident. Benedict Taylor (2016, p. 49) has argued that the 'problem of time is… one of the central issues of the modern age':

> With the rise and acceleration of technological and social change, the decline of former religious certitudes and fixed points of reference, comes an ever greater awareness of the lack of immutability of everything contained within our world of experience.

As times were changing, the notion of time itself changed, and new forms arose. Capitalism's drive for accumulation, production, and consumption, the metanarratological trope of acceleration noted above—and indeed, modernity as such,

with its development of ends-focused instrumental reason—might all imply a characteristic *directedness,* integral to normative modern temporalities. One could mention here Lefebvre and Régulier's observation that under modernity linear forms of time (principally, the time of the working day, symbolised by the uniform ticking of the clock) came to predominate over—though never fully obscure—others forms of time, such as the cycle of sunrise and sunset, and the cyclical rhythms of the body (Lefebvre and Régulier in Lefebvre 2004). More recently, Jonathan Crary (2013, p. 15) has written of how the development of late capitalist society necessitates the promise of an "end of sleep": a minimizing of natural cycles such as those of rest and recuperation—times at which neither production nor consumption are possible—and their displacement by an experientially flat and temporally homogenous "24/7" existence.

Karol Berger has considered these notions of modern directedness and changing social rhythms in musical contexts. I turn to Berger's account here as he focuses particularly on a historically and culturally specific treatment of temporalities, as constituted in-part through European art musical practices. I acknowledge this as I move presently to consider Feldman's String Quartet No. 2, a work which, while nonetheless opening issues of temporal multiplicity in a twentieth-century North American context, is in its use of the quartet indebted to this Europeanist genealogy. Berger argues that a changing treatment of time in music was inherent to the development of musical modernity: foremost musical modernity, which crucially involved the historical ascendance of a linear model of time—the directedness is captured in the phrase "time's arrow" (Berger, 2005, pp. 18-19). This musico-temporal logic reiterated the linearity of instrumental reason and teleological thinking found in society at large; a new, teleological directedness typified in the sonata of the late eighteenth century (as encountered in much

of the music of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven). These sonatas reiterate a teleological logic in their drive towards dramatic closure, in the overcoming of the dramatic struggle. As such, the musical performance of linearity reflected a newly disciplined linearity of time in culture at large. This treatment of time is, for Berger, a crucial aspect of the advent of musical modernity. I do not dispute Berger's claims about the mediation of musical time by socio-historical forces (though it should be added that cyclical forms of time in music persisted, coming to mean something new).[5] I ask, instead, a supplementary question: what happens next, what does the driven, accelerated—though contradictory—temporal logic of a late twentieth-century context mean for then-contemporary musical explorations of time?

Feldman's String Quartet No. 2

One answer is provided by the music of Morton Feldman, a composer associated with the New York School of artists and musicians. His late music in particular—many works of which are of great length—provides durational meditations on the problem of time. His String Quartet No. 2 was written for the Kronos Quartet in 1983 and premiered in Toronto in December of that year. Like much of his late music, this work is a very long,

[5] One should note that linearity is not the whole story of the historical emergence of modalities of musical time. While linear directness concretised in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music, in the later nineteenth century arose many cyclical treatments of time (Schumann, Mahler, etc.). Given my focus on music in the context of the temporal logic of the late twentieth century, narratives of acceleration, and driven capitalist speed, I foreground directedness in this discussion. On cyclical time and musical form see Chapter 5, 'La sonate cyclique and the Structures of Time' in Taylor, 2016.

generally slow and quiet piece. In fact, it can take five-and-a-half or even six hours to play. For practical purposes—initially, due to the need for a specific timeslot set aside for a live radio broadcast—early performances used a shortened (four hour) version of the score. The quartet was performed by Kronos six times during the 1980s (Cowperthwaite 1996; Villars, n.d.). An even shorter version was produced for the European premiere at the 1984 Darmstadt Summer Course for New Music (Feldman, 2006, p. 185).

The German music critic and theorist Heinz-Klaus Metzger, in discussion with the composer, told Feldman that '…there is a contradiction between your music and the world in which we live. The world is much louder' (Metzger in Feldman, Brown, and Metzger 1972).[6] I would like to suggest that something similar can be said of the temporal contradiction between Feldman's music and the world contemporary with it. Indeed, Feldman was himself interested in the problem of time, both "in itself" and in its relation to listeners. Specifically, he was not interested in controlling time, which in his view some composers wished to 'handle and even parcel out' (he cites Stockhausen as example); 'I am not a clockmaker,' Feldman writes. Instead, he purported an interest

> in getting to Time in its unstructured existence. That is, I am interested in how this wild beast lives in the jungle – not in the zoo. I am interested in how Time exists

[6] The transcript of Feldman, Brown, and Metzger's discussion was taken from a recording released in the four LP set 'Music Before Revolution' (EMI Electrola, 1C 16528954/957, 1972). Christian Wolff (quoted in Gottschalk, 2016, p. 24) has similarly stated of quiet music in general that, "To be with this music is to find a kind of refuge from the violence of the times. But then the real strength of quiet music would be to make that refuge a waystation (there are no refuges): to begin to undo and unmask that violence."

> before we put our paws on it—our minds, our imaginations, into it (Feldman, 2000, p. 87).

Despite a purported interest to look beyond human time, Feldman commented elsewhere on his interest in music's relation to society, and a society of listeners. Asked about the length of the second quartet, Feldman (quoted in Gottschalk, 2016, p. 135) stated "I think that the piece is so long because our attention span is so short! Five minutes is too long for most people – it's a serious problem." Feldman seems to respond here to what he saw as the then-contemporary conditions of perception, which I would suggest manifested the dominant temporal logic: transitory times promote transitory attention. The work's urgency derives not from echoing the urgent tempo of the cultural and temporal conditions around it, but instead derives from bearing a speculative and contemplative ear that stands in a differential relation with these conditions.[7]

Form, dialectics, and "unfixing"

The String Quartet No. 2 does not explore the driven directedness that one encounters in Berger's account of an earlier stage of musical modernity. The parts do not, for instance, synthesise into a linearly developing "whole". Feldman's own distinction between composition and assemblage, is enlightening on this point. He describes the different principals between

[7] One could argue that awareness to these conditions became only more urgent after Feldman's time, in which attention itself has become subject to new forms of economic rationality: 'In the late 1990s, when Google was barely a one-year old privately-held company… [future CEO] Dr. Eric Schmidt declared that the twenty-first century would be synonymous with what he called the "attention economy," and that the dominant global corporations would be those that succeed in maximizing the number of "eyeballs" they could consistently engage and control' (Crary, 2013, p. 75).

> constructing a "composition" and that of assemblage, which is more what this quartet is about. A "composition" for me forms sentence structures within a beginning, middle, and end [….] With assemblage there is no continuity of fitting the parts together as words in a sentence or paragraph. (Feldman, 2000, p. 196).

In the quartet one hears many elements of material repeated with minor alterations. Larger, static "fields" of material result from the assemblages of these elements, and these fields appear beside one another—assemblages in a larger sense—as static states without a beginning, middle, or end. Furthermore, these fragments do not that resolve in response to one another (nor is it implied that they should need resolving), and they partake of no commonly underlying musical grammar nor any unproblematic structuring of musical time (e.g. a conventional syntagmatic arrangement of beginning, middle, and end paradigms).

This is in part achieved through a peculiar treatment of musical time, of—put simply—the (expected, established, apparent) relation of musical moments to one-another. Feldman detaches gestures and elements of musical material from an unfolding temporal process. He "unfixes" these elements from established patterns of composition and from normative musical-temporal logic. As Feldman put it in 1965,

> only by "unfixing" the elements traditionally used to construct a piece of music could the sounds exist in themselves – not as symbols, or memories which were memories of other music to begin with. (Feldman, 2000, p. 35)

Feldman's unfixing also speaks to the work's dialectical engagement with the dominant temporal conditions of the time: his music unfixes musical elements from their

standardised arrangement in time, in microcosm defamiliarising normative temporal discipline. As he has stated elsewhere in reference to his music in general (in 1972, prior to the second quartet): 'The music seems to float, doesn't seem to go in any direction, one doesn't know how it's made, there doesn't seem to be any type of dialectic, going alongside it, explaining it.' (Feldman in Feldman, Brown and Metzger 1972)

Needless to say, Feldman's temporal experimentation differs radically from time-making in music of the earlier twentieth and, indeed, that of the nineteenth century. And this has implications for musical expressions of a distinctly late twentieth-century subjectivity. As discussed above, Berger, considering historical changes in musical temporality, illustrates that a teleological drive comes to predominate presumptions about the role of time in music ("time's arrow"). It should be added here that, crucially, this linear temporality veiled music's embodiment of then-contemporary crypto-dramas of overcoming and subjective self-determination. Beethoven's "Heroic" works provide paradigmatic examples of this function (e.g. the third and fifth symphonies): through the temporal duration of these works, they deliver an unfolding process connoting the struggle and ultimate mastery over the interior world of the bourgeois post-Enlightenment subject (Burnham 1995; Schmalfeldt 2011). That linear time and a teleologically determined subjectivity were interlinked should come as no surprise: it is a connection that is deeply rooted in the classical alignment of time with interiority and space with exteriority. As Fredric Jameson (2003, p. 697) puts it, in this view 'time governs the realm of interiority, in which both subjectivity and logic, the private and the epistemological, self-

consciousness and desire, are to be found.' Coextensive dialectics, of both music and the self, here unfold temporally.[8]

Surfaces, moments, and 'The End of Temporality'

Given this association between temporality and subjective interiority, Feldman's rejection of conventional temporality suggests that the quartet disinvites a hearing of subjective interiority as expressed temporally. Instead, in the sense of exteriority, the work also becomes a space from which one listens "outwards".[9] Furthermore, Jameson has diagnosed late capitalism's treatment of time as a reduction of experience to bodily immediacy in the moment, an 'End of Temporality'.

> This situation has been characterized as a dramatic and alarming shrinkage of existential time and the reduction to a present that hardly qualifies as such any longer, given the virtual effacement of that past and future that can alone define a present in the first place (Jameson, 2003, p. 708).

Feldman's quartet, as with much of his music, expands moments of time outwards through varied repetitions of musical elements unfixed from a linearly directed temporal logic. Feldman's musical temporality is situated within the experiential-temporal

[8] Daniel Chua (2011) has further considered this issue of space and time, and objective exteriority and subjective interiority in Beethoven's music.

[9] As Jameson (2003, p. 697) points out, it is never simply the case of the one strategy or the other (*either* time-interiority *or* space-exteriority): 'such descriptions are clearly predicated on the operative dualism, the alleged historical existence, of the two alternatives'.

conditions diagnosed by Jameson - however, I argue that his music does not merely reproduce Jameson's postmodern 'reduction to a present' unproblematically.

In addition to his technique of unfixing, what allows Feldman to achieve this is a mimesis of the surface. By surface, I mean traces of musical material that have become abstracted forms, that resist a simple reading in terms of symbolic or historical depth, or which act affirmatively as markers of a fixed structure beneath them. This surface evokes a depthlessness famously suggested by Jameson and others to be characteristic of the postmodern. At the same time, this surface conjures something akin to the "flatness" Clement Greenberg (2003) famously identified in modernist painting.[10] (Although, unlike Greenberg's aesthetics, this is committed to an experience beyond a neo-Kantian appreciation of form—as explored below, this has implications for things like the body). Feldman's mimesis is constituted by a tracing of elements of gestures and materials that recall but never fully embody their historical associations, for example could-almost-be-tonal pitch collections and fragments of repeating motivic material. And as noted above, Feldman unfixes these mimetic traces from their established patterns of composition and hearing.

Mimesis of the surface comes through in the 'degrees of stasis' explored; unfixed elements are given time/space in which to speak (although, given their unfixing from codified ways of hearing, one cannot be sure what they are saying). In his essay on 'Crippled Symmetry', date two years before his quartet, Feldman noted that he discovered this idea of stasis—the temporal kin of space's "flatness"—through painting:

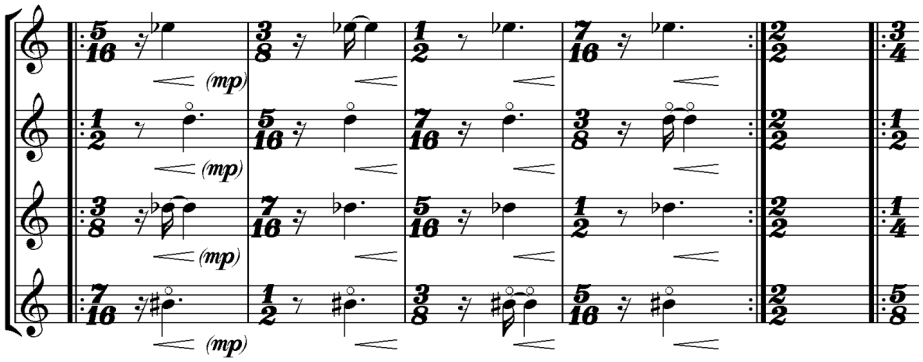
[10] I am reading Greenberg's (2003) idea against the grain; Greenberg identified this characteristic flatness, or at least its possible limit, as unique to painting.

> Stasis, as it is utilized in painting, is not traditionally part of the apparatus of music. Music can achieve aspects of immobility, or the illusion of it: the Magritte-like world Satie evokes, or the "floating sculpture" of Varèse. The degrees of stasis, found in Rothko or a Guston, were perhaps the most significant elements that I brought to my music from painting. (Feldman, 2000, p. 149)[11]

Elsewhere Feldman (quoted in Gottschalk, 2016, p. 137) stated something similar of his *Frank O'Hara* (1973): "My primary concern (as in all my music) is to sustain a 'flat surface' with a minimum of contrast." Sustaining a "flat surface" and an intense focus on unfixed musical elements somewhat evacuates Feldman's musical materials of their conventional significance, both in terms of paradigms (and their deviations) and the ways they ("should") fit together syntagmatically. As a result, unlike the processual unfolding of works that articulate themselves temporally around some (albeit illusive) teleological objective, a desired-for goal is not evoked; neither through directed musical motion nor a dialectical struggle for affirmation. This brings an intense, almost meditative focus on the moment, chiming with Heinz Knobeloch's characterisation of another of Feldman's late works, *Neither* (1977); he suggested that instead of hearing an unfolding, large-scale form, we experience something more akin to the turning of the pages of a diary (Knobeloch quoted in Johnson 2006).

[11] Furthermore, Catherine Laws (2009) has explored connections between Feldman's music and the painting of Jasper Johns.

Ex. 1, Feldman: String Quartet No. 2, page 60, beginning of the second system



Morton Feldman "String Quartet No. 2"

Ex.1 provides an excellent example: a passage in which an unfixing of elements and focus on the surface is explored in explicitly temporal terms. The same time signatures appear across all four instruments simultaneously, as they do conventionally. However, their placement deviates from the norm. Within this static field, each instrument takes its own time signature; although, given that each takes varying combinations of the *same* four time signatures, on completing the field they reconvene into a mutually held common time (a silent two-two bar). Note that in the score, despite the bars being of differing lengths, the spacing of the bar lines (and the notes within them) on the page do not reflect the sonic result produced, in which the players do not begin and end their bars at the same time. A sense of temporal depth in the score is lost as each bar, in each instrumental part, signifies a framing of time that is removed from the temporal flow at large. The time signatures do not frame the temporal flow but rather exists in the space of this larger assemblage, this

static field. Furthermore, in a painterly sense, the score itself becomes a surface written on, a surface on which temporal elements are unfixed and then distributed, rather than developed so as to unfold temporally.[12]

Feldman's music embraces duration through minute variations and repetition. Feldman himself has contrasted the concepts of variation and repetition (reiteration), and considers his music as exploring a synthesis of the two (see Gottschalk, 2016, p. 143). These have a direct impact on the listener's perception, on how one hears any moment as relating to another. Feldman commented directly on this perceptual implication in relation to the compositional process of the quartet:

> In my [second] string quartet I often do things to alienate memory. For example, I might have something return, but it returns in a different ordering. It seems only a little familiar. Like when you see someone for the first time after five years and she looks like the same person but … [….] So I put things into a different ordering. Some material might even return in another key, god forbid, which is evoking the whole idea of modulation. (Feldman, 2006, p. 186; also see Gottschalk, 2016, p. 144)

As is evident from Feldman's allusion to modulation, there is a tension in his accounts of unfixing and variation/repetition.[13] On the one hand, unfixing suggests as a liberation of surface materials from their tethering to normative temporal logic: they exist to be heard

[12] This notion of score as space of distribution recalls Theodor Adorno's (1995, pp. 67-68) suggestion that in some music, 'Time […] is planned, disposed of, organized from the top down as a whole, as only visual surfaces once where'.

[13] Indeed, as is probably apparent already, Feldman made numerous contradictory statements about his music.

for themselves, on their own terms. On the other hand, the compositional organisation (or assemblage) of these same materials seem to echo pre-established musical processes, resonating associations, for instance, of (tonal) harmonic practices (in a post-tonal context). Put another way, unfixed materials seem to be foregrounded as existing self-evidently for themselves; at the same time, their temporary—not fixed—organisation in work, evokes traces of older musical practices of organising music's elements in time (the logic of exposition and return, modulation, and so on).

One could reflect on how these dialectics of surface material and temporal logic, transitory presentness and past associations, relate to the normative temporal conditions of the late twentieth century. I suggest that Feldman's focus on unfixed moments is a strategy *not* of a postmodern reduction of experience to the moment, like that diagnosed by Jameson in contemporary society in general. It is, instead, a lengthy meditation on the postmodern reduction of experience to the moment. The kind of experiential context found in the "throwaway" society of late capitalism—where the temporariness of consumer products seems itself to become an atemporal truth; the way things are, will be, and should be—is symbolically resisted in the creation of a sonic time/space antithetical to the temporal logic here implicit. This is a time/space that eschews the dominance of administered experience through an unfixing of its materials from their standardised arrangement, one in which the depthless surface becomes critical resource for bringing to into focus the very cultural logic that they normatively manifest. Zygmunt Bauman (2012) suggests that crucial to this period of recent modernity—what he calls liquid modernity —is a feeling and embrace of transitoriness. Feldman's music engages this situation dialectically: Feldman's sustained musical meditation negates the transitory; yet, without committing to anything solid and unchanging, the music at the same time embraces it. A

paradoxical sustained transience results. 'Marking and measuring the dimensions of its own vanishing, insistently demarcating a disappearance, the music might finally, ephemerally, be heard as the sedimented sound of time, time itself sounding', as Clark Lunberry (2006, p. 25) put it. As such, Feldman's quartet provides a different timeframe —a different framing of time—from those of the prevailing temporal conditions of that of the hard-and-fast capitalism of '80s New York, a time and place that metonymically captures broader social, aesthetic, and temporal modernist trajectories.

Contrasts and conclusions

Sonic heterochronies

In a characterisation that has implications for music and sound art beyond merely Feldman's and Fontana's 1983 works, one could productively frame these examples in relation to terms offered by Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault. These thinkers each reflected on time/space and its relation under forms of sociality contingent on the historical and material development of modernity.

Specifically, Lefebvre and Régulier recognise a temporal category that they label *appropriated* time, a time created or gifted, not a time that one is obliged to follow through its imposition:

> Whether normal or exceptional, it is a time that forgets time, during which time no longer counts (and is no longer counted). It arrives or emerges when an activity brings plenitude, whether this activity be banal (an occupation, a piece of work),

> subtle (meditation, contemplation), spontaneous (a child's game, or even one for adults) or sophisticated. (Lefebvre and Régulier in Lefebvre 2004, p. 76)[14]

Importantly, however, Lefebvre and Régulier suggest that this is a time that '*is* in time: it *is* a time, but does not reflect on it' (in Lefebvre 2004, p. 77, emphasis in the original). This is where critical artistic practices might enter: what these share with Lefebvre's appropriated time is that, for the time that they are ongoing, the normal rules of time seem not to apply. However, in contrast with Lefebvre's appropriated time, music *can* thereby become a relatively autonomous time/space of reflection on time's appropriation for purposes outside the normative. Rather than appropriated time—a time outside time—which is 'in harmony with itself and with the world' (Lefebvre and Régulier in Lefebvre 2004, p. 77), dialectic appropriations of time, such as Feldman's, might both trace effects of normative time (perception, attention, memory) while simultaneously asserting a time sometimes harmonious and sometimes dissonant to dominant temporal logics.

Complementing this view of "another" time, one might also consider the temporal dimension of what Foucault calls *heterotopias*, spaces "other to"—held in relation to—the norms of society: these heterotopias either 'create a space of illusion that exposes every real space' or 'create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled' (Foucault, 1986, p. 27). As Foucault (1986, p. 26) also notes, heterotopias 'are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies.' In Foucault's view, some such spaces, for example museums

[14] In fact, it could be added here that music often fulfils description of appropriated time: 'a time that forgets time, during which time no longer counts (and is no longer counted)' (Lefebvre and Régulier in Lefebvre 2004, p. 76).

and libraries, accumulate time, gathering pasts into a present moment of understanding. In contrast, others posit 'time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect', such as vacation spaces and mobile fairgrounds (Foucault, 1986, p. 26).

Feldman's and Fontana's works seem to hold converse relations under Foucault's figuration of the heterotopia/heterochronia. As argued above, Feldman's *is* fleeting (present tense), though in a manner that demands attention to this very condition of fleetingness, defamiliarising musical time. Paradoxically, the String Quartet No. 2 is, at the same time, repeatable and reperformable. Fontana's work *was* (past tense) quite the opposite: it drew attention to the daily rhythms of the city and historical memory, in a manner that naturalised and celebrated these things. But, unlike, Feldman's quartet, as a singular temporary installation attached to a specific historical moment the work is itself unrepeatable.

It should also be remembered here, in light of the Foucauldian heterotopia, that holding a relation to the normative is not to escape normative time-making in an absolute sense. Crucially, times and spaces "other to" the dominant might, potentially, only supplement and strengthen it. This is clearest when the—temporary—freedom they offer is instrumentalised as belonging to a time/space of recuperation, rest, or carnivalesque ecstasy, from which one might later emerge refreshed to fulfil one's normative duties with renewed energy. The classical music tradition, as Ian Biddle has noted, is a relationally constituted category, a field measured in its difference to other sets of musical (and implicitly socio-political) practices. It has 'always been (and imagined as being) a kind of island or nature reserve in which delicately sanctioned musical practices and rituals must be preserved, held in place, against the thump and roar of a brash modernity' (Biddle, 2011, p. 3).

Employing a quintessentially classical medium in the string quartet, Feldman's music bears traces of this lineage. His music provides a sanctuary from the temporal logic of late capitalism. While this is true, at the same time this other space is anything but unproblematic. His island bears modernity's temporal debris on its shores; questions of attention, memory, and the transitoriness of liquid modernity are explored sonically, through, for example, a mimesis of the surface and an unfixing of musical materials. Furthermore, one is always unsure of the stability of this island underfoot: its materials are fragments comprising assemblages rather than a wholeness arrived at teleologically—denying listeners the illusion of ever treading solid ground. This perhaps recalls Daniel Chua's reading of Adorno's dialectics as *drifting*: that the immanence of Adorno's critique highlights that 'there is no vantage point from which to philosophize', and that 'to drift is to loose all bearings' (Chua, 2006, p. 2). In similarly eschewing a unitary whole, confirmed by a culminating moment of desired-for arrival, Feldman grants no privileged position or vantage point at which perception might become retrospectively concretised and solidly grasped.

Performance/city, times/spaces

Feldman's and Fontana's different times also manifested through different audience and performer experiences in the case of each, experiences themselves related to the temporal and material conditions of then-contemporary modernity. Further, this experiential dimension also points to the body's place within performance/city times/spaces. In accordance with the concert tradition, in Feldman's work an audience gathers together in an act akin to ritual. The performers are physically present; their bodies are present—and bodies tire over the hours of performance. Indeed, the Kronos Quartet

had to cancel their performance of the quartet at the Lincoln Center Festival 96. A press release (Cowperthwaite 1996) states that in Feldman's work 'the musicians never rest or put their instruments down: they play continuously for the duration of the piece. In preparation for this performance, members of the Quartet have experienced serious physical side effects as a result of the unusual nature of this work' (also see Lunberry 2006). The music requires repetitive musical gestures constituting intense physicality and extremes of bodily self-discipline.

Fontana's work, by contrast, does not gather together an audience or performers as such. It does not draw individuals into a delineated performance space. Sound is heard within public spaces, the Plaza and the WTC observation deck, yet not contained within these spaces. As noted already, the problematic of locality is crucial to the conception of Fontana's project. Individual listeners do not constitute an audience proper, contrasting with Feldman's music, in which he gives us a quartet of performers towards which an audience collectively directs its attention. The dispersal of individual listeners in Fontana's work is perhaps true to the spirit of the modern city, and in particular the experience of a specific form of urban space as found in the case of the Plaza. Bauman refers to spaces such as these as 'public yet non-civil space[s]' (Bauman, 2012, p. 97); individuals pass one another—yet they do not engage one another—in a space that is nonetheless public. Lefebvre and Régulier (in Lefebvre, 2004, p. 75) similarly emphasise the temporal in this modern yet public solitude: 'In one day in the modern world, everybody does more or less the same thing at more or less the same times, but each person is really alone in doing it'. Each experiences the temporal complexities of city life, simultaneously though separately. Further, whereas human physicality—and embodiment of repetitive gestures—is crucial to the significance of temporality in Feldman's quartet, it is the forces of both human and

non-human materialities (also see Wilson 2017 and Wilson 2018) that produce the sonic outcomes in Fontana's piece: the transport of commuters and commodities across the Brooklyn Bridge, and their fluctuation and rhythming dependant on the daily repetition of business hours, commuter traffic, and natural cycles of day and night.

To make time in music is to manifest contested notions of temporality—notions related to but distinct from the society in which this music is made. Music renders sensible time and its contradictions. To borrow the words of Jacques Attali (1985, p. 4), 'Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world.' And, as a means of perception, I suggest that it is both a record of and reaction to historically changing temporal conditions.

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