

a detailed index. The research done by the authors does not merely consist of poring over dusty tomes housed in libraries and archives, but rather includes actively visiting the sites where Alice lived, interviewing living relatives, and discovering some of the letters and correspondence kept by these relatives. Ultimately, this research resulted in the Alice Morgan Person Collection housed at East Carolina University where Hursh is head music librarian. (Research was supported in part by the Music Library's Dena Epstein Award, which Hursh received in 2006.)

This book holds interest for a number of disciplines besides music: women's studies, historical medicine, North Carolina history, North Carolina social life and customs, diseases and treatments, and American history in general. Alice Person's life touched on all these disciplines and more; no small accomplishment for someone who wanted

only to put food on her family's table. It is difficult for me to pinpoint the specific audience for whom this book is intended. One thing is for sure: her music and musicianship, consisting of piano arrangements of spirituals and popular "Old South" melodies, was almost an afterthought to Alice, a means to an end which was to connect with people in order to make sales of her remedy. Perhaps the intended audience is the general public at large, but also audiences as specific as ethnomusicologists, biologists, medical personnel, and others. David Hursh and Chris Goertzen should be congratulated for producing a very worthwhile book, exhaustively researched, and one which, I think, Mrs. Joe Person would have been very proud.

MICHAEL BONNARD
Georgia College & State University

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSICS

The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music. Edited by James Saunders. (Ashgate Research Companions.) Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009. [xviii, 394 p. ISBN 9780754662822. \$144.95.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

Mills College has long been recognized as a bastion of experimental music performance and pedagogy, going all the way back to John Cage's summertime stints there in the early 1940s. (The list of former Mills students and professors includes Henry Cowell, John Cage, Lou Harrison, Darius Milhaud, Luciano Berio, Leon Kirchner, Pauline Oliveros, Morton Subotnick, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Robert Ashley, David Rosenboom, Laurie Anderson, "Blue" Gene Tyranny, Peter Gordon, Miya Masaoka, Alvin Curran, Anthony Braxton, Fred Frith, and many more.) But did you know that Mills is a women's college? Only the graduate programs are coed. When the college's Board of Trustees decided to begin admitting male undergrads in 1990, students and staff at the institution staged a two-week strike in protest of the decision, a political action that was widely reported in the American press and that eventually led the Board to back down from its decision, preserving

Mills as a single-sex undergraduate institution to the present day.

Suppose that one of these young women at Mills today was interested in composing and performing music, and suppose she opened *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*. What would she find? Would the book offer her a world of experimental music that she could imagine someday joining? Would this musical world—a world that, for whatever reason, is often considered to be an "alternative" to the mainstream concert music system—appear to be populated by strong women composers? Would women's voices be prominent or even evident among those of the theorists, critics, musicologists, and performers who enact and interpret experimental music? Would the volume describe a contemporary world far more diverse than that of the gray-suited smokers of the 1950s?

If you haven't figured it out by now, the answer to these questions is no. I thus

scanned the table of contents of *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music* with a sense of disappointment. Although the volume does a satisfactory job of presenting an array of experimental music practices happening right now, I couldn't help but wonder: Is experimental music really the work of (white) men, commented upon by more (white) men? Maybe so, maybe so. The editor, James Saunders, has commissioned nine chapters of commentary on topics like notation, soundwalking, performance, and field recording, and adds to them fourteen interviews (by telephone and email) with current practitioners in the field. One of these—Jennifer Walshe—is a woman, and it is the context of her interview that we encounter the only overt reference to gender in the volume:

When I was lecturing at Darmstadt in 2002, I was talking about this topic, and I played one of my pieces and one of the students, a man, commented aggressively "That piece was in the structure of a male orgasm!" He felt this because the piece had a climax. I don't have the medical training to outline the extremely similar climactic structures of the male and female orgasm here; suffice to say that for me, the male student's making that sort of ridiculous comment told me a lot more about his feelings about women composers, gender and sexuality than his musical thinking. (p. 346)

I'll return to the contents of the book in a moment, but first I'll offer a few more thoughts on this peculiar matter of gender and its disappearance from critical and scholarly texts on experimental music.

Dana Reason Myers coined the term "myth of absence" to refer to the ways in which magazines, journals, and edited volumes like this one (or, one might add, Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner, eds., *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* [London: Continuum, 2006]) omit mention of women experimentalists and improvisers, thus reinforcing rather than questioning the assumption that women have not been a part of these cultural networks in the past or the present. Her dissertation goes some of the way toward ameliorating this unsatisfactory and frustrating cycle (Dana Reason Myers, "The Myth of

Absence: Representation, Reception and the Music of Experimental Women Improvisors" [Ph.D. diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002]).

And there is other important recent work. The volume *Ruth Crawford Seeger's Worlds: Innovation and Tradition in Twentieth-Century American Music*, edited by Ray Allen and Ellie Hisama (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2007), builds impressively on Judith Tick's excellent biography *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of this pioneering figure. In experimentalism's cognate field of electronic music, we can also turn to Tara Rodgers's book of interviews, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) to enlarge the usual cast of characters (see also Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States: Crossing the Line* [Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006]).

Research in progress will eventually illuminate further corners of experimental music history. Charlotte Moorman plays a major role in my own *Experimentalism Otherwise* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011, forthcoming), and is the subject of a fine biography soon to be published (Joan Rothfuss, *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, forthcoming]). Louise Chernosky's Ph.D. dissertation on American experimental music and public radio (Columbia University, in preparation), includes in-depth discussion of the work of Brenda Hutchinson, Laurie Anderson, and Joan La Barbara. In Bernard Gendron's study-in-progress on the New York downtown scene from 1970 to 1985, readers will encounter the voices and stories of Laurie Spiegel, Maryanne Amacher, Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk, Elaine Summers, Elodie Lauten, Arleen Schloss, Annea Lockwood, and Mary Jane Leach.

There is a danger that gender in experimental music studies might become synonymous with Pauline Oliveros studies. Which is not to say that important work cannot result from this area: Martha Mockus's *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality*, for example, is one of

just two or three studies in American experimentalism that consider sexuality *at all* (London: Routledge, 2008; Oliveros is also the subject of a large study in preparation: David Bernstein, *Resonances in the Sound Field: The Music of Pauline Oliveros* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press]). But we still need detailed examinations of a host of significant figures: Monk, Amacher, Lockwood, Mildred Couper, Pamela Z, Diamanda Galas, Marina Rosenfeld, Joelle Leandre, Zeena Parkins, Susie Ibarra, Anne LeBaron, Cathy Berberian, Kim Gordon, Björk, Yoshimi P-We, and Mutamassik, to name just a few.

As Sherrie Tucker points out in her pioneering article on gender in jazz studies, “[A]sking ‘Where are the women?’ is not only a useful question for uncovering ‘lost’ or ‘hidden’ histories of women’s achievements, but it is a useful question for finding out how gender structures a field” (“Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies,” *Current Musicology* 71–73 [Spring 2001–Spring 2002]: 396). A critically informed approach to gender in experimental music studies would likewise not only address lacunae in historical narratives, but would also develop explanations for the masculinist slant of the network as it is represented in the volume under discussion. Indeed, in a contemporary moment of global, hybridized, and media-saturated musical production, such an apparently homogeneous cultural formation is so anomalous that it would seem to demand the initiation of a theoretical model to interpret it. Critical studies of gender in experimentalism would also investigate the ways in which masculinity emerges in relation to race in this context. Indeed, the missing discussion of race, and of whiteness in particular, was another disappointment of *The Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music*—the small but significant literature on race and experimentalism or avant-gardism (by such authors as Lloyd Whitesell, George E. Lewis, Jon Panish, Fred Moten, and Michael Dessen) is completely absent from these pages, as is any mention of the possibility that contemporary improvisation owes as much to twentieth-century jazz as it does to John Cage.

In addition to crucially important recuperative studies and broader theoretical approaches to gender and race, a certain criti-

cal attention to gender has the potential to reveal new areas of inquiry in experimental music studies. In other words, asking “Where are the women in experimental music?” can lead us down new, unexpected paths. A look at the role of Betty Freeman, for example, might unearth surprising information about the circuits of formal and informal patronage that supported experimental music in the twentieth century, a project virtually without precedent (though certainly related to Jann Pasler’s wonderful study, “The Political Economy of Composition in the American University, 1965–1985,” recently published in English for the first time in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture and Politics* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008], 318–65).

There is an urgent and persistent need for panels and symposia dedicated to women in experimental music, but even these types of events have the potential to unravel. A roundtable discussion titled “An Evening with Fluxus Women,” organized by art historian Midori Yoshimoto in 2009 ended up oddly focused on Fluxus “patriarch” George Maciunas. Artist/scholar Mina Cheon commented from the audience at the event, “Much of today’s discussion was on Maciunas. I am more interested in Alison [Knowles]’s work, Carolee [Schneemann]’s work, and Sara [Seagull]’s work. I came here today to hear your stories, not stories about him” (“An Evening with Fluxus Women: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 19, no. 3 [November 2009]: 387).

Cheon’s point is well taken, but surely there is also great value in those narratives that come from women’s perspectives. Though unable to escape completely the shadow of Maciunas, the *Women & Performance* discussion nonetheless raised a number of questions, memories, and observations that seemed to pivot on an awareness of gender in the downtown experimentalist scene. My favorites included Schneemann’s recollection of Letty Eisenhower teaching Schneemann how to wire her raw Soho live/work space, or Sara Seagull’s description of Maciunas as the “den Mother” of Fluxus. Would we have been led to this memory or this metaphor without an all-female panel? I doubt it. (Seagull’s remembrance of Maciunas reminds me of Carolyn Brown’s interpreta-

tion of Cage and Cunningham's relationship, that Cage was the permissive, loving mother to the Cunningham Dance Company while Cunningham remained its aloof, moody father; see Carolyn Brown, *Chance and Circumstance: Twenty Years with Cage and Cunningham* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007]).

Paying attention to the important work of Yoko Ono, Shigeo Kubota, Mieko Shiomi, Yayoi Kusama, Takako Saito, and such later artists as Ikue Mori, Sachiko M, or Miya Masaoka could also force experimental music studies into a wider frame of global circulation, a frame explored by David Novak in his dissertation on Japanese noise music ("Japan Noise: Global Media Circulation and the Transpacific Circuits of Experimental Music" [Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2006]). At the very least, paying attention to the first generation of postwar Japanese composers and artists—many of whom were women—might productively dislodge the predominant view of Fluxus as a North Atlantic cultural formation. Even Andreas Huyssen, surely among the most critical and sophisticated writers on Fluxus, describes it as "a chance montage of European-American incompatibilities and approximations" ("Back to the Future: Fluxus in Context," in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* [New York: Routledge, 1995], 194). What of Gutai, Hi-Red Centre, Group Ongaku, and Tokyo Fluxus? (On these latter, see Sally Kawamura, "Object into Action: Group Ongaku and Fluxus" [Ph.D. diss., University of Glasgow, 2009]. See also Kawamura's "Appreciating the Incidental: Mieko Shiomi's 'Events,'" *Women & Performance* 19, no. 3 [November 2009]: 311–36; and Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 2005].)

The *Ashgate Research Companion* provided me with a valuable reminder that English composers following in the footsteps of Cardew and Bryars never thought of this music as "American" experimentalism, regardless of the formative roles of Cage, Wolff, Feldman, and Brown. But once we shift the spotlight to the UK, where are the women? In experimentalism's cognate field of electronic music, one institution towers above all others: the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, which employed at least nine-

teen women composers and technicians during its existence. Some, like Delia Derbyshire and Daphne Oram, occupied powerful positions in the institution. Oram invented her own sound synthesis machine (Oramics) that generated music by passing hand-painted 35mm film through beams of light (see the undergraduate dissertation of Kerrie Robinson, "'Wee Have Also Sound-Houses': Daphne Oram and the Development of Electronic Music in Britain," University of Southampton, 2010; as well as Louis Niebur, *Special Sound: The Creation and Legacy of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2010]).

The *Ashgate Research Companion* may not represent the most up-to-date critical models for interpreting and historicizing experimental music, and it may not have taken the extra steps necessary to ensure that women do not disappear from the story it tells, but the volume *does* provide a compelling snapshot of one scene in contemporary experimental music by means of the fourteen interviews that make up its second half. By "one scene," I'm referring to Saunders's explanation that "all the interviewees have created music which is important to me, and on that basis were chosen to be involved in the project. Their selection is therefore unashamedly subjective" (p. 222). Some might think that this is an odd way to approach compiling a Research Companion, the aim of which, according to the dust jacket, is to provide a "comprehensive and authoritative state-of-the-art review of current research in a particular area."

The list he has put together includes Antoine Beuger, Laurence Crane, Rhodri Davies, Christopher Fox, Bernhard Günter, Bryn Harrison, Philip Jeck, Alvin Lucier, Phill Niblock, Evan Parker, Tim Parkinson, Jennifer Walshe, Manfred Werder, and Christian Wolff. Saunders is a capable and focused interviewer, and he keeps the conversation close to issues of creative process and aesthetics, rather than biography and pedagogy. Certain themes emerge: notation, performance and performers, and titles. One gets the sense that these are conversations about something called "experimentalism" *right now*, such that even the interviews with older composers like Lucier and Wolff contain fresh themes, filled out by discussions of recent works.

I found some moments to be astonishingly insightful—for example, Beuger’s explanation of his compositional choices in *landscapes of absence* (2) (2001–02), which set nine different poems of Emily Dickinson in pieces of 100 minutes each for two performers (one speaking voice and one instrumentalist). The texts are short, so Beuger surrounds each syllable—spoken aloud but softly, as if to oneself while writing—with vast silences. The (limited) notes of the instrumentalist never occur at the same time as the spoken text. This is a severe experience. Beuger explains, however, that because letter writing seemed to be Dickinson’s preferred manner of relating with the world—especially with those she loved most—a respectful interpretation of her poetry would never involve declamation or even musical setting. This was, after all, a person who refused to sit in the same room and talk with others. “To me,” Beuger writes, “this means she wanted all her relationships to have the intensity of a love relationship. She avoided sharing, she forced separation. Two was her number. . . . I tried to find a voice for the poems, which stays as close as possible to the hand-writing and is not searching for communication. Could this be the way a hand writing a letter sounds? As you see, Emily Dickinson has taught me most I think to know about ‘two’” (p. 236). Now that’s what I call commentary! I found the interviews with Günter and Walshe to be just as revelatory, and many of the other conversations include surprising ear-openers.

Some of the interviews, especially those conducted on the telephone, could have used a stronger editorial hand. (Jeck’s, in particular, is quite ragged.) I also wish the editor had included real introductions to each of these musicians, instead of the more memoirish group introduction he places at the beginning of the entire section (“Fourteen Musicians”). In place of general descriptions of each composer’s work and how Saunders first encountered it, I would have greatly preferred some more specific biographical detail, a good works list, a discography, and a bibliography for each. Isn’t that what a “sourcebook” (as the editor describes his volume) should contain?

The essays in this volume examine a variety of topics related to experimental music,

some familiar and some new. Christopher Fox contributes a curious chapter providing a few observations about British experimentalism before launching into an extended artist’s statement. In his contribution on different notation systems in this music, Michael Pisaro offers examples from American, British, and Continental European composers. His wide-ranging sources are often fascinating, though I found myself wishing in many cases that I could get a look at the entire scores, rather than the excerpts printed here. The sense was that readers will already be familiar with many pieces, such that fuller descriptions—of Pisaro’s own *ricefall* (2004), for example—were unnecessary (p. 40). Nonetheless, the chapter would work well in an undergraduate class on contemporary or twentieth-century composition, and it ends with a fascinating suggestion: “What writing music comes down to, in the end, is care. We create situations. We care about them and take care of them. And we care for the people involved” (p. 76). Now that’s what I call music! Were I to encounter this closing “small manifesto” on a student paper, I would circle and star it. I would then prod the author to begin another essay with this thought and develop it further.

In “A Prescription for Action,” Philip Thomas counters the prevailing tendency to approach and explain experimentalism through the words and activities of composers by instead focusing on the performance of this repertoire. A gifted pianist, Thomas gets down to the dirty details in several well-chosen examples. Although its title—“Open Sources: Words, Circuits, and the Notation/Realization Relation in Live Electronic Music”—promises something else, Ron Kuivila’s chapter is an informed discussion of David Tudor’s electronic music, preceded by some important yet familiar observations about Cage in the 1950s and 60s. There were moments that begged for more thorough description (readers unfamiliar with Tudor’s *Rainforest* might scratch their heads, for example). Edwin Prévoost contributes the usual: “Free Improvisation in Music and Capitalism: Resisting Authority and the Cults of Scientism and Celebrity.” In “Beyond the Soundscape: Art and Nature in Contemporary Phonography,” Will Montgomery surveys the fascinating world of aes-

thetic field recordings, describing the work of six prominent male artists. Montgomery's dedication to the work of contemporary figures (such as Chris Watson, Kiyoshi Mizutani, and Jacob Kirkegaard) apparently isn't shared by John Levack Drever, whose chapter provided a more philosophical and historical meditation on soundwalking that culminates with the World Soundscape Project of the 1970s. This thirty-page chapter would have benefitted from some editing, and I also would have preferred more discussion of contemporary artists mentioned only in passing: Teri Rueb (not Reub, as spelled here), Janet Cardiff, Sarah Peebles, or Christina Kubisch.

Overall, the essays shy away from what I would call argument, in favor of something more like "typology." Pisaro, for example, discusses experimental music writing in terms of dots, lines, grids, lists, and so on. Andy Keep explores the many ways in which musicians creatively abuse instruments, how they assess an object for playability, and how musicians use "sound-shaping techniques" to facilitate, influence, and impose upon a given sound's morphology.

Most of the authors contributing chapters to this volume are either composers or performers (Fox, Pisaro, Thomas, Keep, Kuivila, Prévost). By training and inclination, they excel at describing the newest trends in a certain slice of musical life. By the same token, however, they are not the best representatives of *scholarship* on experimental music, and seem oddly out of touch with trends in music studies toward critical theory and cultural studies. The *Ashgate Research Companion to Experimental Music* is thus misleadingly titled, because, with the exception of Ron Kuivila (who cites a few items in the David Tudor papers at the Getty), there isn't any research in this volume. The contributors work with plenty of secondary sources, but can you imagine a useful volume on experimental music research that does not include in its bibliography books and scholarly articles by David Bernstein, David Nicholls, George Lewis, Amy Beal, Leta Miller, Keith Potter, David Patterson, Branden Joseph, Marjorie Perloff, and Kyle Gann? I can't.

That leaves us with the question of audience. Who is the readership of the volume? Apart from the interviews, scholars will not find much that is new here, and yet the of-

ten incomplete descriptions of works, artists, or movements—for example, David Ryan's sketchy discussion of Tacita Dean's *Foley Artist* (in his chapter on experimental music and the visual arts) or Kuivila's passing mention of the Bay Area computer-networked improvisation ensemble, the Hub—seem to be directed at an insider audience already familiar with the subject matter. For this reason, student readers might get lost. That said, the interviews would work well in undergraduate courses in contemporary art music or composition, though the price tag might present some complications.

BENJAMIN PIEKUT
University of Southampton

Musical Modernism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century. By David Metzger. (Music in the Twentieth Century.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. [x, 254 p. ISBN 9780521517799. \$90.] Music examples, illustrations, bibliography, index.

Metzger's study sets out to demonstrate, above all else, the "obstinacy of modernism" (p. 1). Indeed, his introduction argues that, far from the decaying corpse it might have seemed likely to become in a world after the much vaunted "end of history," musical modernism remains vital, while musical postmodernism has fallen by the wayside, a victim perhaps of its own prophecies of pluralism. Metzger broadly falls into line, in this context, with the theorizations of a "second modernity," as promoted by Claus-Steffen Mahnkopf, or of a sort of neo-modernism, as theorised by Alastair Williams, beginning around 1980. Metzger's approach is twofold. The first strand of his enquiry, which dominates the volume structurally, examines four of what Metzger terms "compositional states"; the second considers the ways in which late modernist music approaches expression and, indeed, expressivity. Four of his five chapters are principally devoted to compositional states, examining purity, silence, fragments, and "sonic flux," with one, on the lament, taking expression as its central theme, though it should go without saying that expression is hardly ignored in those chapters concerned with "states."