

Tomorrow Is the Question

*New Directions in
Experimental Music Studies*

Edited by
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Introduction

New Questions for Experimental Music

BENJAMIN PIEKUT

THERE IS NO QUESTION more boring or persistent than "What is experimental music?" The most common answer is more of a demurral: "I'm more interested in actually examining the works of these composers," or "It's impossible to nail down experimentalism into a closed definition." But most often, the manner in which the question is framed reveals that the answer is already known, or at least assumed: "Experimentalism is the thing that all these experimental composers do." Indeed, definitions of *experimentalism* usually begin with a list of names: experimental music is *already* known, apparently quite well. It is *this* list of names and works!

The contributors to *Tomorrow Is the Question* begin with altogether more interesting questions.¹ What could experimentalism be? What can we gain by looking beyond the conventional wisdom about the experimental and suspending judgment about what is or isn't experimental? How can we tease out some common assumptions that have guided research into experimental music and offer historical, ethnographic, and analytical evidence that suggests other possibilities for formulating the category? The goal, to follow Ann Stoler's suggestion, is to transform *experimentalism* from a "summary statement," which precludes further analysis by posing as complete and self-evident, into a "working concept," which we use provisionally to track variations and suggest revisions.² This project is critically important to establishing a useable past for a contemporary experimental music scene that is global, multiethnic, and heterogeneous, drawing on a wider frame of reference than the Cagean tradition that has been the focus of so much important scholarship in the past. John Cage does not disappear entirely from these pages, but the individual essays together indicate

that moving out from under his shadow can yield valuable new histories of and insights about experimentalism in music.

Cynics might view this collection as a kind of “revisionist” project, wherein analyses of race, gender, sexuality, and nation are invoked to expose flaws in earlier scholarship and render it obsolete. That is not the case at all. To begin with, several pioneering scholars of experimental music (and its relations) have already examined many of these questions in the course of establishing their topic as a viable and vibrant one.³ Their work has established important chronologies, explained the significance of different compositional practices, and interpreted musical works according to the intentions of their authors. Recent scholarship has extended the inquiry to the generation of artists that followed Cage.⁴ Other, more critical approaches have emerged in concert with traditional musicological work, including examinations of race,⁵ nation,⁶ and sexuality.⁷ Gender studies continues to be a problematic lacuna for experimental music studies, but several works at least help to fill out a history of this music that has women in it.⁸

While much scholarship on experimental music has focused on scores and the techniques and aesthetics of composition, many of the contributors here concentrate instead on aspects of performance and recording. This is an important step in accounting for the many ways that experimentalism touches the world; it doesn’t simply exist as a kind of general tendency floating in abstract thought-space, but is made and remade in specific scenarios (concerts, recording sessions, interviews, lectures) and materialities (printed scores and journals, vinyl records, films, magnetic recording tape, compact discs, hard drives). These events and objects mark out the envelope of actually existing experimentalism, its emergence and elaboration through time and space. As Elizabeth Ann Lindau shows in her essay on Sonic Youth, Cage’s number pieces have touched worlds that were quite alien to the old man himself. (The influential epistemologist Donald Rumsfeld would call that “an unknown unknown.”) In 1999 the rock band released a double album of works from the American experimental tradition, including pieces by Christian Wolff, James Tenney, Takehisa Kosugi, Pauline Oliveros, and others. Lindau focuses on the band’s realizations of Cage’s *Six* and *Four*⁶, which evidence an approach that challenged the authority of established contemporary-music performance practice and exhibit a culturally flexible worldview informed by popular music and practices of improvisation. Sonic Youth’s interpretations involved aesthetic choices that the composer himself might not have made, but they have nevertheless endured and traveled widely as a recording, in the process

taking Cage’s ideas—however imperfectly—to new audiences. Lindau presents us with a slice of experimental music as it actually exists, complete with misunderstanding, compromise, and invention.

Performance is also important to Ryan Dohoney, who bases his discussion of the gay sensibilities of Cage and Julius Eastman around a specific, controversial performance of *Song Books* given by Eastman in 1975. An African American composer and performer, Eastman presented a post-Stonewall gay identity that fit poorly with the more distanced and closeted homosexuality of Cage. Dohoney draws on documentary evidence and his own interviews to explain the ways in which Eastman contributed to a legacy of queer experimental culture that combined musical and sexual practices and highlighted what I have called the “limits” of Cagean experimentalism. His study builds on earlier work that seeks to explain techniques of Foucauldian self-fashioning in music generally and experimental music in particular.⁹

Eastman was part of a lively downtown new music community in the 1970s and 1980s. In his contribution to this volume, Tim Lawrence seeks to provide documentation of this scene as a “missing link” between the founding wave of minimalists (La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass) and a later, more diverse generation of experimental music that has been documented in such publications as *The Wire*. The composers and performers in this later milieu, Lawrence argues, became musically engaged with such popular forms as disco, hip-hop, and punk, and further challenged the boundary between “experimental” and “commercial” genres by programming acts—and performing themselves—in a wide range of concert spaces. Their example leads Lawrence to investigate the political import of cultural pluralism and to argue against Hal Foster’s dismissal of pluralism as a means of producing consent and erasing conflict.

Some ten or twenty years before Lawrence’s protagonists were forging affinity groups across ethnic, genre, and commercial borders, Fluxus was coming into existence as a globally situated and socially heterogeneous constellation of artists and performers. And yet, George E. Lewis argues, although champions of Fluxus have often pointed to that community’s ethnic diversity, sustained critical attention to the work of its central African American participant—the composer, performance artist, and bassist Benjamin Patterson—has been virtually nonexistent. Lewis therefore contextualizes his critical survey of the artist’s work with reference to the racial discourse of Fluxus and the specific circumstances of an expatriate artist of color who was establishing himself as a leading figure and spokesperson for the movement in Germany. He also finds reason to question the

extent of Cage's influence in this case. While that influence is undeniable in some works (such as *Variations for Double Bass*), there is little reference to Zen in Patterson's important collection of text pieces, *Methods and Processes*, and his overall affinity for intention and improvisation isn't consistent with Cagean aims. (Along with Dohoney, Lewis confounds the tired expectation that the only experimental tradition that attracted or included African Americans was that of free jazz.)

Although the US American context is a crucially important site, Lewis's subject demonstrates that experimental music has long been a global formation; this formation is uneven, compromised, and particular in all of its geographic manifestations. Amy Beal's work on the artistic and financial exchanges between the United States and Germany in the postwar period is a particularly good example of scholarship that pays attention to international flows, but studies of global experimentalism have otherwise remained scarce.¹⁰ This volume hardly offers a comprehensive survey of these international networks, but several authors give us some indication of what a globally minded, comparative experimental music studies might look like.

William Marotti, for example, calls attention to the fundamental matter of translation in his discussion of the origins of Tokyo's Music group. By consistently rendering the group's appellation as Group Ongaku, Marotti argues, anglophone commentary on this important early 1960s ensemble has linguistically limited the group's horizons to their nation's borders, even though its members chose the generic term for *music* as a self-consciously universal intervention into international avant-garde debates. Like Dohoney and Lindau, Marotti foregrounds the importance of performance, but performances come in many different kinds. By placing too much emphasis on the Music group's Sōgetsu Hall performance of September 1961, Marotti argues, many accounts subsume the particularities of the Japanese avant-garde into a larger story about the arrival of Cage's music on that island. Instead, Marotti looks at the group's public and private performances in the year before to show how deeply it was involved in both historical and contemporary avant-garde discourse. The specific experimentalism of the Music group, Marotti explains with copious reference to Japanese-language texts, was a special mix of free improvisation, surrealism, and ethnomusicology.

Andrew C. McGraw likewise researches a non-Western manifestation of experimentalism, concentrating on intercultural exchanges between Indonesian and American artists and arts foundations. In the specific circumstances of the Indonesian twentieth century, he explains, the western

ideology of development provided the conditions of possibility for ideas of tradition—as an essential expression of national culture that must be preserved in the face of creeping westernization—and its partner, experimentation—as the Western European/US avant-garde language necessary to counteract the communist aesthetics of social realism in a nonaligned state. These twin imperatives for cultural politics, McGraw argues, motivated organizations such as the Rockefeller and Ford foundations in their funding efforts before and after the violent installation of a pro-US government in 1965. After the coup, foundation support fostered educational exchanges for Indonesian and American artists, exchanges that would lead to a host of intercultural collaborations, but McGraw wonders if critical debates over cultural imperialism have changed anything about the persistent power differentials in these intercultural projects. He argues that, despite writing radically innovative works that challenge fundamental structures of traditional composition, the Balinese composers in these collaborations are continually represented through an orientalizing frame, and the economic terms of their interactions with western collaborators underscore their subaltern position.

Virginia Anderson returns to Michael Nyman's influential text on experimental music as a historical document from a specifically British context.¹¹ Far from manifesting a timeless quiddity, experimentalism—as Anderson describes it—acquired its particular attributes through historical connections in a national setting. Philosophical and discursive, British experimental music expressed an ironic approach to music history and a love for its “minor” figures, an eagerness to mix art and vernacular registers, and an attraction to games and humor. Anderson traces all of these traits through the 1970s and 1980s in the work of the “Leicester School,” the informal association of Gavin Bryars, Christopher Hobbs, John White, and Dave Smith, centered around Leicester Polytechnic. In addition to filling in the historical picture of this important group of composers and performers, she makes a case for why the distinction between an anglophonic experimentalism and a continental avant-gardism is still useful.

But what about an experimental music institution that is, like the examples discussed by Marotti and McGraw, neither anglophonic nor continental? In her essay on the Grupo de Experimentación Sonora (Group for Sound Experimentation, founded in 1969), Tamara Levitz documents the ways in which musicians framed the idea of experimentalism within the context of the Cuban revolution, a markedly different context from the one assumed by most treatments of (North) American experimental music. Domestic debates about the place of culture in a society undergoing radi-

cal change led the Grupo's members to combine abstract sonic exploration with clearly referential folk and popular music styles. In detailing these projects, Levitz highlights the differences between a materialist, Marxist position within the rigid framework of a postrevolutionary government transitioning toward communism and the liberal-leftist position of Cagean experimentalists in Western Europe and North America, where revolution was understood to lie somewhere in the future and individuals enjoyed a measure of free choice about how to get there.

In her essay on the soundtrack to Vicki Funari and Sergio De La Torre's 2006 film *Maquilapolis*, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton examines the musical resonances of the relationship between the United States and another southern neighbor, namely, Mexico. The film tells the story of two labor and environmental activists who work in factories along the border, where they are paid a pittance to assemble products for multinational corporations (the film was made after implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement). Created by Pauline Oliveros in collaboration with the Tijuana-based electronic-music collective Nortec and Argentinean heavy metal band Reynolds, the soundtrack combines drones and dance beats with a rumbling, heavy bass. Jensen-Moulton hears in Oliveros's philosophy of Deep Listening an analogue to contemporary forms of activism that have been theorized by global feminism and put into practice by the women activists who are the subjects of the film. The simultaneous cultivation of diffuse awareness and focused attention, Deep Listening is expressed in the film through the integration of environmental sounds into the musical interactions of human performers.

Jensen-Moulton's contribution helps to fill out a picture of experimental music that is enacted through a variety of media—not simply in scores and onstage. In "Imagining Listeners through American Experimental Music: NPR's *RadioVisions*," Louise E. Chernosky likewise examines a new media context for experimentalism and, in the process, considers one aspect of the music that has previously received little or no attention: its audience.¹² National Public Radio aired *RadioVisions* in fifteen episodes in 1981; the work of over fifty composers was presented, making this one of the most ambitious productions in the history of American experimental music. In her narrative of the program's production history, Chernosky pays close attention to how NPR constructed experimental music as a product intended to attract elusive "new listeners." These listeners, she argued, were imagined not only by the choice of which pieces to broadcast but also by the framing discussions, interviews, and introductions that accompanied each episode. As a marginalized, noncommercial musical

network, experimental music offers few examples in its history of such large-scale media events.

Recording technology and electronically mediated musical experience are likewise the focus of musicologist Joanna Demers's essay on contemporary sound art. The artists Miki Yui, Celer (Danielle Baquet-Long and Will Long), Otomo Yoshihide and Sachiko M, and Kevin Drumm create sound art at the edge of disintegration—into noise, silence, or flat drones. Their work offers challenging questions for an ontology of sonic experimentation: What is the essence of the sonic work of art—its material or its concepts? Can sound exist only as an idea, or must it be heard? Demers addresses these questions not through the lens of history, but through the insights of aesthetic philosophy, particularly that of G. W. F. Hegel. Like Chernosky, she is concerned with understanding listening as an important aspect of experimentalism's envelope. Her analysis provides one of the few philosophically grounded theorizations of experimental music aesthetics, and also brings to scholarly attention the work of several particularly important contemporary sound artists.¹³

By now readers should get the idea that *Tomorrow Is the Question* is intended to be suggestive, not comprehensive. If a "critical" study, to gloss Michel Foucault, reflects on its own behavior in order to delimit a part of itself as the object of inquiry, then this book is critical in the most generative sense. It is not intended to fill holes in a canon (or to critique the one we've ended up with), but rather to play around with different possibilities for extending the network. Exasperated by the continuing absence of Africa from histories of the musical avant-garde? Me too. Hopefully, one of these essays will serve as a model for how one might pursue a topic like this one. Critique, then, can be a far more constructive practice than is conventionally understood. The critical studies collected here search for fresh corners of experimental music history, with the hope of turning up new possibilities for formulating the experimental.

Another corner that I would like to see further illuminated is that of disability, and I'll bring this introduction to a close with a few observations about experimental corporeality. If, among other things, experimentalism intensifies the quotidian, then how has it handled our daily struggles with our own bodies and their environments? Three examples come to mind. It is already well known that one experimental classic—Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1970)—grows out of the speech impediment of its creator.¹⁴ By electronically extending his own marked speech, Lucier buries his voice in a wash of resonant acoustical frequencies; although I've heard the composer's stutter described as the "in-joke" of this composition, I am more

inclined to hear *I Am Sitting in a Room* (as Nyman does) as a poignant expression of a desire we have probably all had at one point or another: to lose the idiosyncrasies of our individual bodies and disappear into a kind of disembodied anonymity. Many of Lucier's other works support an interpretation of this work as a meditation on corporeality rather than space. The early piece *Action Music* (1962), for example, is more choreography than musical notation, and emphasizes the embodiment of the musician by directing him or her to do *this* now, on *that* part of the piano, with *that* limb. *Music for Solo Performer* (1965), on the other hand, translates the performing body into a series of transducers controlled directly by brainwaves—no arms necessary.¹⁵

Given Oliveros's long-standing commitment to activism, it should come as no surprise that she has pioneered the use of electronic musical instruments for students with limited mobility and other impairments. In collaboration with the occupational therapist Leaf Miller and a team of programmers and designers gathered under the auspices of the Deep Listening Institute, Oliveros created a software interface called Adaptive Use Musical Instruments (AUMI); the first iteration dates to 2007, but it has been constantly updated and improved in the years since. Using visual tracking software, AUMI enables even severely disabled musicians to participate in musical improvisations by triggering percussion samples and playing scalar melodies on a virtual keyboard. How might this project be viewed as not only a musical venture but an especially *experimental* one? In addition to the plain fact that more kinds of sounds and sonic combinations are "allowable" in experimental music, there is also the uncertainty, or open-endedness, of experimental inquiry: Oliveros and her collaborators investigate what music can do, or what kinds of sound communities a musical experiment can produce.¹⁶

For the rock improviser Charles Hayward (of This Heat and Massacre, among others), making music in mixed-ability arts groups necessitates the kind of responsiveness that is associated with free improvisation. Along with bassist John Edwards, Hayward worked in the late 1990s with the group Entelechy, which was organized by fellow improviser Ros Williams and enrolled the participation of children, seniors, and musicians with physical and cognitive impairments. For Hayward the experimental space of improvisation requires one to take every sound in the group seriously; instead of hearing disability as a flubbed attempt to play a straight tune, he interprets every gesture as "absolutely intended material. . . . And people love that because with some of the people with 'learning disability' their intelligence is in a different part of the body," he told an interviewer in 2000.¹⁷ As an improviser, Hayward is already primed to suspend disbelief,

to accept and work with whatever outcome the sonic situation produces. These all too brief examples from Lucier, Oliveros, and Hayward present a few ways in which one might pursue questions of embodiment in relation to experimental music studies.¹⁸ There are surely others that I cannot even imagine, and I for one look forward to reading them.

Cage often said that he transformed the responsibility of the composer from making choices to asking questions. Doing so, he promised, led one to embrace the uncertainty of experimental actions, the outcomes of which are unforeseen. One might be skeptical about how far Cage put this program into practice, but it certainly works as a starting point. The authors collected here ask innumerable questions in a Cagean spirit, questions about popular music (Lawrence, Lindau, Levitz), identity (Dohoney, Lewis, Lawrence), politics (Lawrence, Levitz, Marotti, Jensen-Moulton), media (Chernosky, Jensen-Moulton, Lindau, Demers, Levitz), aesthetics (Demers), empire (Levitz, Marotti, McGraw, Jensen-Moulton), and historiography (Lewis, Anderson). They ask these questions in a manner that respects uncertainty: what kind of futures might they hold? Asking new questions leads to researching new materials, new individuals, new historical connections, and, eventually, to the new critical paradigms that are necessary to interpret these new relationships. *Tomorrow Is the Question*, then, aims to generate future research directions in experimental music studies by way of a productive inquiry that will sustain and elaborate critical conversations rather than simply closing them down by providing "answers."

NOTES

1. The title of the volume is borrowed from Ornette Coleman's landmark 1959 album.
2. Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 206.
3. David Bernstein and Christopher Hatch, eds., *Writings through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); David W. Bernstein, ed., *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); William Fetterman, *John Cage's Theatre Pieces: Notations and Performances* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996); Michael Hicks, *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Richard Kostelanetz, ed., *Writings about John Cage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Gayle Sherwood Magee, *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Leta E. Miller, "Henry Cowell and John Cage: Intersections and Influences, 1933–1941," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (2006): 47–111; Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison: Composing a World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); David Nicholls, *American Experimental Music, 1890–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 1990); David Nicholls, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); David Nicholls, *John Cage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007); David W. Patterson, ed., *John Cage: Music, Philosophy, and Intention, 1933–1950* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, eds., *John Cage: Composed in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Christopher Shultis, *Silencing the Sounded Self: John Cage and the American Experimental Tradition* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

4. Jeremy Grimshaw, *Draw a Straight Line and Follow It: The Music and Mysticism of La Monte Young* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Branden W. Joseph, *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts after Cage* (New York: Zone Books, 2008).

5. Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village, 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1993); Sumanth Gopinath, "Contraband Children: The Politics of Race and Liberation in the Music of Steve Reich, 1965–1966" (PhD diss., Yale University, 2005); George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); George McKay, *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Jon Panish, *The Color of Jazz: Race and Representation in Postwar American Culture* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1997); Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ronald Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Lloyd Whitesell, "White Noise: Race and Erasure in the Cultural Avant-Garde," *American Music* 19, no. 2 (2001): 168–89.

6. Amy C. Beal, *New Music, New Allies: American Experimental Music in West Germany from the Zero Hour to Reunification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); David Novak, *Japanese: Music at the Edge of Circulation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013).

7. Michael Hicks, "The Imprisonment of Henry Cowell," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44, no. 1 (1991): 92–119; Thomas S. Hines, "Then Not Yet 'Cage': The Los Angeles Years, 1912–1938," in *John Cage: Composed in America*, ed. Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 65–99; Jonathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence; or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse," in *Writings through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, ed. David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 41–61; Martha Mockus, *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

8. Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States: Crossing the Line* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006); Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Dana Reason, "The Myth of Absence: Representation, Reception, and the Music of Experimental Women Improvisors" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002); Tara Rodgers, *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 1997); Midori Yoshimoto, *Into Performance: Japanese Women Artists in New York* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

9. See Judith A. Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); and Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise*.

10. But see Steven Feld, *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); Robin D. G. Kelley, "Ahmed Abdul Malik's Islamic Experimentalism," in *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 91–119; Luiz Costa Lima Neto, "The Experimental Music of Hermeto Paschoal e Grupo (1981–93): A Musical System in the Making," *British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 9, no. 1 (2000): 119–42; Denise Seachrist, *The Musical World of Halim El-Dabb* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2003); and *An Anthology of Chinese Experimental Music, 1992–2008*, Sub Rosa SR265, 2009, 4 compact discs.

11. Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1974] 1999).

12. But see Lorraine Plourde, "Disciplined Listening in Tokyo: Onkyo and Non-intentional Sounds," *Ethnomusicology* 52, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2008): 270–95.

13. On aesthetics and experimental music, see Lydia Goehr, "Werktreue: Confirmation and Challenge in Contemporary Movements," in *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 243–86; and several essays in Lydia Goehr, *Elective Affinities: Musical Essays on the History of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

14. Lucier recorded himself reading a prepared text, then played it back into the room, recording again, and so on, until the voice is lost in a blur of drones pulled out of the resonances in the room.

15. On the wider context of this last example, see Branden W. Joseph, "Biomusic," *Grey Room* 45 (October 2011): 128–50. On Lucier's works, see Alvin Lucier, *Reflections: Interviews, Scores, Writings, 1965–1994*, ed. Gisela Gronemeyer and Reinhard Oehlschlägel (Cologne: Musiktexte, 1995).

16. For more on AUMI, see the Deep Listening website, <http://deeplisting.org/site/adaptiveuse>.

17. Charles Hayward, "Absolutely Intended Material" (interview with Phil England), *Resonance* 8, no. 1 (2000): 9.

18. See also Tracy McMullen, "Subject, Object, Improv: John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, and Eastern (Western) Philosophy in Music," *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation* 6, no. 2 (2010), www.criticalimprov.com.

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Goodbye 20th Century!

Sonic Youth Records John Cage's "Number Pieces"

ELIZABETH ANN LINDAU

ALTERNATIVE ROCK BAND Sonic Youth have been at the forefront of experimentation in rock since their 1981 debut at the East Village's Noise-fest, where they used drumsticks to beat detuned guitars with screwdrivers jammed between their strings. For nearly three decades, the group has distilled punk, hardcore, free jazz, experimental electronica, and mainstream pop into an unmistakable musical language marked by innovations in guitar tuning and technique. In addition to their well-known roots in US punk and its offshoots, Sonic Youth have a more surprising connection to experimental composition. Perhaps the most obvious example of the band's interface with "high art" music is the 1999 release *Goodbye 20th Century!*, a double album consisting not of original songs, but of conceptual, graphic, and indeterminate works of new music performed in collaboration with percussionist William Winant, composers Christian Wolff and Takehisa Kosugi, and sound artist Christian Marclay. *Goodbye* prominently features works by John Cage, a composer regarded as a father figure by a new generation of experimental musicians in not only "classical," but also jazz and rock music.

This essay examines *Goodbye 20th Century!*'s popularization of experimental composition and Cagean aesthetics. I am interested in how Sonic Youth have used their renown as an alternative rock band to disseminate what is typically regarded as esoteric music to new audiences. Through analysis of its renditions of Cage's "number pieces," I argue that *Goodbye* demonstrates a compelling new performance practice of indeterminate scores. These scores, which are often portrayed as democratic or open to people