

# Nine Aspects of ~~Beauty~~ Appropriation

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### *Abstract*

*Quotation, Reference, Collage, Juxtaposition: the Post-modernist Era's tools of the trade have a long history in Western Art Music. This paper will explore a range of functions and readings of appropriation illustrated through works by composers from Berlioz through to Einstürzende Neubauten. The examples, including Ives, Berg, Berio, Zorn, Public Enemy and the author's own work, will demonstrate a complex interplay in the relationship between the music and its changing contexts, ranging from horror, to reverence and revenge.*

### **Introduction**

Quotation is a core musical technique. Like language itself, it assumes shared knowledge and usually implies that the listener both recognizes the quote and is able to contextualize it. Like language Quotation is usually also shorthand for communicating ideas. The only case in which the technique does not involve specialized knowledge or communication is the quasi-psychotic situation in which there is a deliberate intention that the reference is only to be understood by the referrer. Even in this case the power of quotation rests on the exclusivity of shared knowledge necessary to allow interpretation of the reference, albeit restricted to one person.

Quotation's effectiveness and power is dependent on the relationship between the understood quote's latent or intrinsic meaning and the context in which it is being presented. This relationship is not stable. It is, of course, in relation to shifting cultural changes in the meaning of both the quote and its context. Even when the meanings are relatively stable, repeated recontextualizations can render it ineffectual. This point is illustrated in one of the most reference-heavy vehicles in contemporary culture, *The Simpsons*: in the episode *Bart's Friend Falls in Love* (1992) in which Milhouse confides to Bart about his brief affair with 6<sup>th</sup> grader Samantha Stanky: "How could this happen? We started out like Romeo and Juliet, but it ended up in tragedy..." (Kogen and Wallace 1992)

This paper will explore a range of functions and readings of appropriation illustrated through works by composers from Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830) to my own works. It is by no means an exhaustive list, but will hopefully illuminate some of the explanations for the effectiveness of this technique.

### **The horror of transgression - Hector Berlioz: Symphony Fantastique (1830)**

Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* is a curious work: it is arguably a structurally malproportioned patchwork of unrelated pieces stitched together with a transparently autobiographical narrative that is, by today's standards, embarrassingly egotistical. On the other hand in many ways it is a remarkable achievement: audacious in its ambitions, brilliantly orchestrated and above all a crystallization of the concept of program music implied by the bucolic musical images of Beethoven's 6<sup>th</sup> *Symphony (The Pastorale)* (1807). *Symphonie Fantastique* is also a work with a sting in its tail: in the final movement it blasphemously quotes from the Catholic Mass. But first the story so far from Berlioz' own program note:

*Movement I. Reveries – Passions: A young musician, afflicted with that moral complaint which a celebrated writer [Chateaubriand] calls "undirected emotionalism," sees the woman of his dreams and falls hopelessly in love. Each time her image comes into his mind, it evokes a musical thought that is impassioned in character, but also noble and shy, as he imagines her to be.*

*Movement II. A Ball: The artist finds himself in the swirl of a party, but the beloved image appears before him and troubles his soul.*

*Movement III. Scene in the Country In the distance, two shepherds play a ranz des vaches in dialogue. The pastoral setting, the gentle evening breeze, the hopeful feelings he has begun to have--all conspire to bring to his spirit an unaccustomed calm, and his thoughts take on a more cheerful cast. He hopes not to be lonely much longer. But his happiness is disturbed by dark premonitions. What if she is deceiving him! One of the shepherds resumes his playing, but the other makes no response.... In the distance, thunder. Solitude. Silence.*

*Movement IV. March to the Scaffold: Convinced that his love is unrequited, the artist takes an overdose of opium. It plunges him into a sleep accompanied by horrifying visions. He dreams that he has killed his beloved, has been condemned and led to the scaffold, and is witnessing his own execution. The procession advances to a march that is now somber and savage, now brilliant and solemn. At its conclusion the idee*

*fixe returns, like a final thought of the beloved cut, off by the fatal blow.*

Which brings us to the fifth movement *Dream of a Witches' Sabbath* in which the artist finds himself:

*in the midst of a frightful throng of ghosts, witches, monsters of every kind, who have assembled for his funeral...* (Berlioz 1830)

In a 'coup de horreur' Berlioz, after the first few rounds of diabolic dancing, introduces the ominous 'Dies Irae' sequence from the Requiem Mass. For the audience this was a sacrilegious broken taboo: the sacred melody had until that time, never been heard in a secular context. Berlioz was the first European art music composer to publicly "desecrate" a portion of the mass through substantial alteration. (Nelson 2002)

It is hard to think of a clearer example of the changing context of a cultural reference. Berlioz' quotation began a deluge of musical works "using this theme associated with death and the last judgment in its most terrible aspects" (Gregory 1953). In the first instance Berlioz himself took the first leaps towards stripping much of the complexity from the meaning of this cultural icon. Within the context of the funeral rite, the text of the *Dies Irae*, although initially unquestionably terrifying ("*The day of wrath, that day which will reduce the world to ashes, as foretold by David and the Sybil. What terror there will be, when the Lord will come to judge all rigorously!*") and later unquestionably penitent ("*My prayers are not worthy, but you, o Good One, please grant freely that I do not burn in the eternal fire. Give me a place among the sheep, separate me from the goats by placing me at your right*") is at the last comparatively hopeful and upbeat ("*That tearful day, when from the ashes shall rise again sinful man to be judged. Therefore pardon him, o God. Merciful Lord Jesus, give them rest.*") In the *Symphonie Fantastique* it is clearly already just "a grotesque and symbolic parody of a well-known religious theme meant to shock the audience. (Brooks, 2003 p.15)"

Since Berlioz' time *Dies Irae's* path towards one-dimensionality has been assisted by more than 20 other composers, starting with Liszt and continuing with composers as diverse as Khatchaturian, Mahler, Rachmaninoff, Saint-Saëns and Stravinsky (Boyd 1968). Thanks to the success of Berlioz' monochromatic evocation of evil, the 'Dies Irae' is now the favourite underscore for countless occult films and other Pop Culture manifestations ranging from Stanley Kubrick and Ingmar Bergman films to *The Bugs Bunny Show* and *The Simpsons*. But at the premiere of the work on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1830 it presumably filled the heart of God-fearing Parisians with fear and dread.

### **All embracing transcendentalism - Charles Ives: Putnam's Camp (1912)**

The strange case of Charles Ives involves quotation in a very different context. Ives, as is well known, was a 'clandestine' composer who ran an insurance company

because "if [a composer] has a nice wife and some nice children, how can he let the children starve on his dissonances?" (Swafford, 1998 p. 143). His 'discovery' by a younger generation roughly coincided with the end of his compositional activities (although he lived another 30 years). He was a Transcendentalist who, along with Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorn and Henry James believed "*the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision...all experience*" (James 1884)

This implied an equality in all things great and small and it was a frame of reference that Ives gained from his father George who was also apparently responsible for Ives' highly unusual musical tuition. This music pedagogy included learning to simultaneously transpose chorales on the organ into different keys in each hand and being placed in the centre of a field as two brass bands marched by, playing at different speeds. Ives memorably gives an indication of his father's turn of phrase in a quote in his *Memos*: *My Father used to say: "If a poet knows more about a horse than he does about heaven, he might better stick to the horse, and some day the horse may carry him into heaven"* (Ives, *Memos* p. 240).

Ives' music celebrates existence in all of its diversity. , *The fabric of existence weaves itself whole. You cannot set art off in a corner and hope for it to have vitality, reality, and substance. There can be nothing exclusive about substantial art. It comes directly out of the heart of the experience of life and thinking about life and living life.*

(Ives quoted in Swafford 1998 p.207).

His rare gift is to present, for example in his often epigrammatic songs, a reality where irony, sarcasm and compassion are all able to all co-exist: a caged tiger, the memory of a younger brother going off to war, a vogue for vampire tales or the empty exuberance of Broadway are all just varied facets of the world.

Ives' Transcendentalist stance towards the world prefigured contemporary critical theory concerning Popular Culture and notions of High and Low art. It was a stance that emanated from a fundamental desire to recreate 'Reality' in art. John Bruccato (Bruccato 1996) flags this as a reaction to the 'fantasy' inherent in Romantic Era ideals, and raises the subsequent problem of whose 'Reality' it is that Ives is recreating.

Ives' program notes for *Putnam's Camp*, the middle movement his Symphonic work *Three Places in New England* (1916)<sup>1</sup> "*tell of a young boy who falls asleep amid the ruins of Putnam's Camp during a Fourth of July picnic and dreams about Revolutionary War soldiers*" (Sudik). In it we can hear a distant echo of George Ives' musical experiments and an audacious realization of Ives' transcendentalist beliefs in the form of a scored-out sound collage of brass band music.

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<sup>1</sup> For an illustration of the difficulty in accurately dating Ives' works see "A Descriptive Catalogue of The Music of Charles Ives" in the Irving S. Gilmore Music Library of Yale University available on-line at <http://webtext.library.yale.edu/xml2html/music/ci-d.htm>

The artist (and human) is never free from subjectivity with the self-evident result that the signifier is not the same as that which is signified. This was an important preoccupation for Ives. It was a theme would continue in American music culminating in Cage's revolutionary work *Tacet* (1952) (also known as 4'33"), where by restricting the performer(s) from making any action at all, he attempts to get as close as possible to a condition in which "Reality" and "art" are the same: the signifier = the signified.

### Reverence or secret code - Alban Berg: Violin Concerto (1935)

Berg's Violin Concerto is one of those curious works that - like Mozart's Requiem - is a consideration of death written in the last months of the composer's life. It was completed on August 11, 1935 five months before Berg's untimely death 'in memorium' for the short life of Alma Mahler and Walter Gropius' daughter Manon. It contains two very contrasting quotations: the first a Carinthian folksong (supposedly portraying the girl's young life) in the first movement; and other the almost unbearably beautiful Bach Chorale Es is Genug in the last movement that will be the subject of this section.

Typically for Berg the Bach quote is rich in symbolism and numerical significance, some of it overt and some of it arguably operating at a subconscious or at most liminal level. Unlike Berlioz' almost obscene appropriation of the culturally familiar *Dies Irae*, Berg chose a Bach Chorale that is almost never performed. To the listener it is recognizably the cadence and tone of a sacred work by Bach and as such clearly functions to invoke an air of reverence. Berg's reason for choosing this obscure work rather than a more commonly known work is probably also the reason for its obscurity: its first four notes, all tone steps, constitute another musical taboo, - the tritone, also known as the 'diabolus in musica' (the devil in music.)

These four notes probably prohibited this chorale from entering the Lutheran Hymnal (Braatz 2001), yet when we listen to them today they sound (as Berg understood) like a potent musical symbol of the soul's striving upwards after death.

In Berg's music there is a remarkable marriage of form and function - his opera *Wozzeck* (1925) uses a range of formal structures (the suite, the symphony, the invention) to reinforce the dramatic structure of the work in a way that is in all likelihood not consciously apparent to the audience<sup>2</sup>. It arguably acts liminally on the audience, strengthening their associations between the characters and already existing musical archetypes.

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<sup>2</sup> For example the suite, formally a set of character pieces, underpins the introduction of the *Wozzeck*'s characters in the first act (ie *Wozzeck* as a soldier is underpinned by a March).

Berg delighted almost to the point of obsession in these kinds of 'secret' structures, codes and cyphers. His *Lyric Suite* (1927) apparently musically encodes the whole of his illicit affair with a servant Hanna Fuchs-Robettin with whom he had an illegitimate child. Their initials HF and AB<sup>3</sup> being the source of important motivic material. The use of this particular Bach Chorale in his *Violin Concerto* is yet another example. Berg ingeniously structures the work around a 12-tone row in which the open string of the violin are outlined, alternating with notes that form common harmonic chords, and in which the final four notes form the first contentious phrase of *Es ist genug*.

Reinforcing the 'secret' nature of the quote is the fact that the text appears in the score, but remains unknown to all but the Bach or Berg scholars in the audience. Berg's genius is to transmogrify the ascending motive into a sublime expression of yearning towards the release (Ausspannung) of death, first springing for the quotation and then spiraling even upwards in fewer and fewer instruments until it is at last reached only by the solo violin.

### Knowingness - Luciano Berio: Sinfonia (1969)

Berio *Sinfonia* is in many ways the acme of the quotation work. It revels in excess, taking musical quotation to an unheard of climax, in which references, allusions and appropriations are piled upon one another in a wild frenzy.

At the most fundamental level are (nearly) complete quotations of the second movement of Mahler's *Second Symphony (The Resurrection)* (1894) and Samuel Beckett's *The Unnameable* (1958). Mahler's work serves as a bed or more accurately a river in which many hundreds of smaller quotes bob up and down in the current, while Beckett's acts as a comment and context for the proceedings.

At the next level are hundreds of passages, some extremely short and obscure, from works by composers from Bach to Stockhausen. There is also self-quotation and additionally (in the first performance and recording) musical quotes from the conductor's own works (Pierre Boulez). There is a chamber choir articulation of a wide range of language fragments including songs, solfège, radical slogans (it was 1968 after all), clichés of 'Classical-Orchestral-Audience' conversation, as well as grunts and noises. Finally there are self-referential asides apparently to the audience "*You can't leave, you're afraid to leave, you make the best of it*", and places to fill in details about the current performance. These include speculations about its reception in the press, a jazz-style '*thankyou*' to the vocal soloists, and in the last bar a '*thankyou*' to the audience and conductor.

*Sinfonia*'s excess takes the quality of knowingness and 'in-joke' inherent in quotation to its absurd extreme. The

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<sup>3</sup> 'H' is German for the note 'B' and 'B' for the note 'Bb'.

form and function of its quotations are diverse. Some references are obvious to the uninitiated - such as the asides to the audience and 'thankyou's. Other references are probably readable by the initiated - such the quote from Debussy's *La Mer* (1905) that bubbles up following the line 'the sea'. While others remain obscure and inexplicable to all but the most obsessive allusion hunter. It is a true 'tour-de-force' encapsulating the inner-sanctum knowingness and in-jokery of the Avant Garde along with absurdist self-referentiality of The Goons and Monty Python's Flying Circus that was such a key feature of the late 60s. At the same time *Sinfonia* captures the zeitgeist of the early Postmodernist period bursting of the ideological levy banks of the then Avant-Garde lingua franca Serialism.

### **Digital sampling: the industrialisation of appropriation**

The industrialization of musical recording processes has taken quotation into new territory. The first *original* works to explore this new medium were in the field of experimental music. John Cage used turntables as sound sources almost as soon as they became publicly available in pieces such as *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939) (for two variable speed turntables) and *Credo in US* (1942) (for live instruments and turntable or radio). Works involving the editing of sounds on magnetic tape followed shortly afterwards: Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry's *Symphonie pour un Homme Seul* (1950) and Cage's colossal *Williams Mix* (1951). However such experimental work rarely ruffles the feathers (jangles the coins) of international capital.

In popular culture it wasn't until the early 1970s that young musicians in South Bronx began to use rhythms and melodies from existing records to create the first Hip-Hop and still another decade until the appearance of groups such as *Afrika Bambaataa and the Soulsonic Force* whose *Planet Rock* (1982) used digital processes to create new works from two songs by German the industrial group *Kraftwerk*. (Brooks 2004). The use of sampling has quickly proliferated sprouting sub-genre after sub-genre (ie Acid House, Drum n Bass, Dhol n Bass, House, Gabber, Jungle, Lounge, Progressive, House, Techno, Trance, Hi-NRG, Eurodance, Goa, Happy Hardcore, IDM (Intelligent Dance Music), Trip-Hop, Rave etc.) The use of quotation via sampling quickly became the modus operandi for a significant portion of the music industry.

Self-proclaimed sonic outlaw John Oswald points out that the situation for sound quotation is significantly more problematical than for written forms where quotations can be clearly indicated.

*Musical language has an extensive repertoire of punctuation devices but nothing equivalent to literature's " " quotation marks. Jazz musicians do not wiggle two fingers of each hand in the air, as lecturers often do, when cross referencing during*

*their extemporizations, because on most instruments this would present some technical difficulties - plummeting trumpets and such. Without a quotation system, well-intended correspondences cannot be distinguished from plagiarism and fraud. But anyway, the quoting of notes is but a small and insignificant portion of common appropriation.* (Oswald, 1985)

Ethically, quotation has a history of fairly well-established if somewhat blurry principals:

*Piracy or plagiarism of a work occur, according to Milton, "if it is not bettered by the borrower".*

However, like quotation itself they are always vulnerable to redefinition:

*Stravinsky added the right of possession to Milton's distinction when he said,. "A good composer does not imitate; he steals."*

(Oswald, 1985)

But in many legal and industrial areas many of the implications are still being worked through. The proliferation of sampling is playing tag with developments in the legal system. It is only since 1976:

*ninety nine years after Edison went into the record business, the U.S. Copyright Act was revised to protect sound recordings in that country for the first time.* (Oswald, 1985)

And in an even more recent development the San Francisco based "situation-leftist audio collagists" Negativland won a dispute in 1998 with the Recording Industry Association of America. The ruling recognized the genre *Audio Collage* and the artistic legitimacy of its practice of recontextualizing samples from other people's music. (Schalit and Sterne 1998).

The recording industry is also racing to try and keep apace with the explosion of sampling. Polygram Records for example now have a department "solely for the purpose of listening to records to check for unlicensed use of James Brown samples" (Brooks 2004) And the job description 'samples clearer' is becoming a ubiquitous part of corporate dance music culture. Brooks believes a watershed is quickly being approached in which there is no longer even a balance between original material and sampled material.

*We appear to have reached a creative ground zero, in which the samples themselves are being sampled* (Brooks 2004)

The Australian band *The Avalanches* for example boast of not using a single original waveform in their album *Since I Left You* (2001). The inside cover of the box is completely covered with attributions for the over 900 samples employed.

Experimental music is still in some respects setting the pace in the field of audio quotation. John Oswald again has been at the vanguard, initially exploring completely anonymous formats:

*First there was the Mystery Tapes, where nothing at all was revealed to indicate what the sounds were. (Oswald, 2000 P. 9)*

Then choosing music that was impossible to keep anonymous, creating audio-amalgams of multiple scantily disguised Popular artists with titles such as *Bing Stingspreen* and *Marianne Faith no Morrissey* that he calls *Plunderphonics*:

*Plunderphonics is the radical transformation of very familiar music. In keeping with the obvious familiarity it doesn't make much difference whether I credit the sources or not; but when I started to conspicuously cite my sources there was a tendency elsewhere in the music business not to reference obvious quotations. (Oswald, 2000 P. 9)*

Oswald sometimes justifies his sampling as humour through parody, in the same way that a cartoonist may caricature known images, as 'part of the validity of life in the public arena... a healthy sort of cruelty.' (Oswald, 2000 P. 10).

In his more recent *Plexure* works he takes another opposite tack by "scanning a whole genre." In which "Each source fragment is blended with other similar fragments." Again in these works he claims the right not to reference the source sounds, but this time his rationale is made through excess "I'm not providing references to all sources...there are approximately a thousand songs being referred to. There are several thousand morphs; each with reference to a composite of pop hooks". (Oswald, 2000 P. 10). Oswald's latest batch of *Plexure* works combine multiple recordings of the same work: 24 different versions of Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1896) for example. He has now even begun to receive invitations to make similar *Plexure* remixes by *The Grateful Dead* and recording labels.

### Political Action - Public Enemy: Incident at 66.6 FM (1990)

*Public Enemy* were part of a wave of hip-hop artists who extended the weight and cultural significance of the form at the beginning of the 1990s. Their album *Fear of a Black Planet* (1990) has been praised as the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) of its time (Kastner undated). Like *Sgt Pepper's* the album was a vital and creative response to a period of extreme professional pressure. For many reasons fans and the general public were anxious to see if the group could match the immense success of their album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (1995). Firstly *Public Enemy* had attracted intense media pressure for their championing of Black Rights. The had also been a split in the group caused by "Professor" Griff's (Richard Griffin) widely publicized

antisemitic remarks<sup>4</sup>. The period between albums had also seen the rise of a number of new and potent forces on the scene. Groups like *De La Soul* and *The Jungle Bros* threatened to render *Public Enemy's* sound 'old-school' and politically *NWA* had captured the spotlight with more direct incitements to violence (ie *Fuck tha Police* (1990).)

In *Fear of a Black Planet*, *Public Enemy* were able to harness the controversy and negativity that they had attracted in the popular press to propel a political message that was savage in its honesty. The targets of their searing critique ranged from attitudes to interracial dating (*Pollywanacraka*), the stereotyping of African-Americans in film (*Burn Hollywood Burn*), the treatment of Black stars by the American Taxation department - the IRS<sup>5</sup> (*Who Stole the Soul?*) and women's rights (*Revolutionary Generation*). But one of the most effective songs on the album uses the voices of *Public Enemy's* detractors to drive its message home. *Incident at 66.6FM* takes samples about *Public Enemy* from callers on talkback radio. The comments range from amusing negative descriptions (by someone with an archetypically 'white'-sounding voice "it was one of the most appalling things I have ever seen" to callers parading their own prejudices and worse through comments like "who puts these monkeys on?" and "go back to Africa". The talkback remarks are rendered all the more powerful through the absence of comment from the group.

### Grim Satire - Einstürzende Neubauten: Headcleaner (1993)

German industrial rockers *Einstürzende Neubauten's* approach to music making, which often includes building their own instruments from industrial junk, is normally antithetical<sup>6</sup> to the sampling culture of hip-hop groups like *Public Enemy*. However in *Headcleaner*, the concluding song from their 1993 album *Tabula Rasa*, songwriter Blixa Bargeld uses samples from *The Beatles'* anthem *All You Need is Love* (1967) to create what might be termed a powerful ideological 'absent echo'. In the final section of *Headcleaner* we hear snippets of *La Marseillaise*<sup>7</sup> which we quickly recognize is in fact the introduction the *Beatles* song. A kind of parody -in the truest sense of the word - follows in which Bargeld sings lines that are clearly a 1990s Thatcher-Reagan Era rewrite of Lennon's original lyric.

ALL YOU NEED IS...

LOVE

There's nothing you can do  
that can't be done  
nothing you can sing

ALL YOU NEED IS

HEADCLEANER

'Cause nothing has been done  
that can't be done  
and nothing has been sung

<sup>4</sup> "The Jews are evil. And we can prove this" as quoted by MusicWeb Encyclopaedia of Popular Music. <http://www.musicweb.uk.net/encyclopaedia/p/P122.HTM>

<sup>5</sup> Rendered by PE as the "Intentional Rape System".

<sup>6</sup> The example discussed may in fact be 'the only song by Bargeld, where he has been inspired by another song AND the original participates on (sic) the recording' (Lilicea)

<sup>7</sup> Like the *Dies Irae*, one of the most quoted melodies on the last 200 years.

*that can't be sung  
nothing you can say  
but you can learn how  
to play the game  
it's easy!*

*that can't be sung  
and nothing has been said  
so forget how we play  
the game  
it's easy!*

(Bargeld 1990)

Bargeld states: *"I actually have written the complete contradiction of one of their songs. I took every line and turned it around 180 degrees"* (Lilicea).

*All You Need is Love* was originally heard, and was written for, the first worldwide<sup>8</sup> broadcast by a global satellite (MacDonald, 1997 P. 229). Its simple exultation that *"love is all you need"* coupled with the world-shrinking wonders of this new technology could not have been more appropriate on the eve of the 'Summer of Love'.

In *Headcleaner*, named after the fluid cleaner for cassette tape machines, again we see the song and the sentiment through the lens of technology, but here it has become part of the flotsam of Popular Culture and Capitalism. It is now literally a broken record repeating phrases that sound bitterly hollow to a group whose name is taken from the 'Fallen Down New Houses' built in post-war Germany as a promise of its new future as a Liberal Democracy. It is a particularly grim satire suggesting that in such a state not only is *Love* not needed, it is totally irrelevant. All that is needed in 1990s Germany is a continuously blank slate (Tabula Rasa) - a societal head-cleaner to maintain the content consumption of the masses.

### **Post-Industrial exuberence - John Zorn: Snagglepuss (1994)**

John Zorn's opus is particularly broad even for an archetypal Postmodernist composer. Much of it employs referential material, taking the split second juxtapositions of sampling and realizing them in a live context – sometimes great quantities of references at dizzying speeds. Speed is a crucial factor for Zorn.

*I believe that in a technological situation like the present one, where we are exposed to thousands of stimuli and in which information moves faster and faster, it is necessary to keep up with these things: it is a way of life and of thinking and we have to come to terms with it.'*

(Zorn in Rovere and Chiti 1998 P. 11)

His initial notoriety was based on a particularly energetic and rigorous approach to Free Improvisation, however apparent disenchantment with the paradoxical boundaries of *Free Improvisation*<sup>9</sup> led him towards methods for stimulating the performers and a broader range of musical materials.

<sup>8</sup> to 24 countries

<sup>9</sup> By the late 1970s the genre had arguably attained a particular sound and range of approaches that it still maintains today.

He developed methods for creating formally and dramatically varied improvisations through so called "Game Strategy" pieces such as *Klarina* (1974), *Hockey* (1978), *The Sand's Share* (1992). Simultaneously he was working on an approach using file cards to collect blocks (in the Stravinskian sense) of musical material. These are arranged into particular sequences into 'File Card' compositions: *Godard* (1985) and *Spillane* (1986) are probably the best examples. In these works textures and musical ideas are collected on file cards and arranged into a text composition which is then painstakingly recorded<sup>10</sup>.

Zorn is an ardent Cinefile, and these works clearly reflect his passion for film, and importantly Soundtracks<sup>11</sup> especially where the such as those of Jean Luc Godard in which the narrative and visual innovations are matched in Sound. It is not surprising then to find Zorn creating an 'aural film' tribute to the French New Wave director. In fact Godard could well be describing Zorn when he defines the idea of the author as:

*a center for the aggregation of citations... according to which images, discourses, ideas, words and sounds... seem to have been taken elsewhere and reproduced without any alteration are used as elements of discourse that face and clash with each other.*

(Grignaffini 1977 17-18)

Zorn has himself drawn attention to the porous boundary between image and sound *'acoustic effects that often leave in our memory a visual rather than an aural trace'* (Zorn quoted in McGonagal 1987, p.25)

Zorn's crucial work *Cobra* (1984) combines the two strands referencing different musical styles to provide signposts for formal differentiation. For example the sudden emergence of a Speedcore section in the middle of a Webernian atonal passage creates a formal contrast comparable to other modes of typical contrast such as dynamics, register, tempo etc.

*This idea of mixing different musics and putting them together in your own way is something that all the great composers of this century have done*

(Zorn interviewed by Walter Rovere in *Dolce Vita* no 8 may 1998 p.24)

The success for the *Cobra* format led to Zorn creating a small group of elite improvisers to realize his work. In his group *Naked City* each player is expected to respond in real-time to fairly simple but usually evocative instructions that range somewhere between the visual or filmic images of the Card File Pieces and the musical structures of *Cobra*, within the context of a 'Band'

<sup>10</sup> *Spillane* reportedly used 60 cards as the basis for 25 minutes of music.

<sup>11</sup> Zorn has to date release 14 CDs of his own film Soundtracks.

consisting of Saxophone, Guitar, Keyboards, Bass and Drums (with occasional appearances by a vocalist). Here Zorn capitalizes on the quality of improvisation to add up to more than the sum of its parts.

*Each Musician has his own musical world in his head so that, as soon as he gets involved, is interested and excited, he's going to add his world to it. That makes my piece, my world, deeper.* (Zorn in Rovere and Chiti 1998 P. 13)

In the *Naked City* work *Snagglepuss* (1989) the band flips through 26 changes in the Space of 2 minutes and 14 seconds.<sup>12</sup> Their performance takes in a minimum of 15 styles of ranging from Curtis Mayfield, to TV themes, Thrash and the “visual” instruction ‘Drunk falls Downstairs’.

The players must use all of their skill to make live transitions that are both abrupt and smooth, contrasting but homogenous. They are taking the sample culture made possible through electronic manipulation and drawing it back into the human domain. *Naked City* celebrates a kind of Pop culture exuberance or Culture Jamming at its most virtuosic.

### Revenge: Vickery - Hey Jazz Fans! (2003)

Charlie Parker probably looms large in the lives of most saxophone players. His short but massive contribution has been a frequent source of inspiration in quite varied ways for my own works. *Savoy Trifle* (1988) is a fully noted collage principally of Parker and Alban Berg. *A-Synchronous Au-Privave* (1989) uses the Parker transcription as the source for a musical version of a William Burroughs Cut-up, itself then the source materials for improvisers. *Chase the Bird* (1991) applies a rapidly changing scheme of tempos and styles to the original material and *entropology* (2002) squeezes a Bird transcription through the distorting mirror of fully notated LP approximations of record and CD-like glitches - blips, scratches, hung notes, failing motors and so on. *Hey Jazz Fans!* continues this line of investigation into the field of interactive sampling.

The motive for this work arrived many years ago when a friend gave me a record called *Devil May Care* (or maybe I gave it to him and then ‘borrowed’ it back) of cheesy jazz songster and self-confessed hipster Bob Dorough. (Dorough’s finest hour was singing the sycophantic *Nothing like you has ever been seen before* on Miles Davis’ album *Sorcerer*.) One of the tracks on *Devil May Care* was a scat-style vocal version of Parker’s *Yardbird Suite* featuring banal lyrics to every note of Parker’s legendary solo from the LP *Bird Symbols*.

In *Hey Jazz Fans!* the notes used in the original transcription are mapped to bites of Dorough’s *Yardbird* recording. The performance of a live solo Alto Saxophone player is made to trigger 30 or so samples of Dorough in

real-time. In effect just by playing the original Parker solo the performer can, like a vengeful and caring devil, rip Dorough’s version apart phrase by phrase.

So we complete this survey with one of the oldest motivations: Revenge.

### Conclusion

Quotation has undergone some major changes in the last 50 years. Intriguingly the use of digital technology to bring quotation into the industrial age was met with its almost immediate absorption back into the realm of live performance. Importantly its range of functions as a musical technique remains as flexible as ever, finding new contexts with each societal change. Since the function of Quotation and language are so closely linked it should not be surprising to find its meaning and purpose proliferating which each new generation.

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<sup>12</sup> The shortest *Naked City* work *Hammerhead* (1989) lasts only 8 seconds.

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