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INTRODUCTION: LOOKING FOR DEMOCRACY IN MUSIC AND ELSEWHERE

Robert Adlington and Esteban Buch

Finding democracy

The inception and incubation of this book project has coincided with a period of global history in which democracy has become the subject of public debate as never before. In November 2015, when the editors of this volume first presented their work on democracy at the international conference 'Musiques en démocratie' in Paris,[1] it seemed that democracy, in a way, went without saying – for all that writers on political theory had begun to lament a decline in political participation, and the trespassing of neoliberalism on established democratic principles (Mair 2013; Gilbert 2014; Brown 2015). At least from the vantage point of a European cosmopolitan city, one could safely reflect on things like authoritarianism and dictatorship as aberrant, exotic and anachronistic phenomena, a perception strengthened by the hopeful (if short-lived) signs of the Arab Spring a few years previously. The Paris conference productively reflected upon historical periods when democratic values were either less established in general or had found less purchase within musical organizations, and on places in the contemporary world where basic freedoms were still to be won.

The political landscape had already decisively changed two years later, when the University of Huddersfield held a two-day conference, 'Finding Democracy in Music', which formed the basis for the present volume. Donald Trump's election was news, and so was the Brexit referendum, two issues that remain very much with us at the time of writing. Both have been interpreted as symptomatic of a wider acceleration of antidemocratic forces in the past few years, affecting Europe, the US, Latin America, and other parts of the world. Putin, Salvini, Orban, Erdogan, Maduro, and Bolsonaro, among others, have contributed to the impression of a global revival of strong-man politics in which a public vote is taken as mandate for the pursuit of policies that threaten key values of equality and freedom. The case of Bolsonaro's Brazil is one of

[1] See https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/activite/colloque/15774-musiques-en-democratie-acteurs-institutions-pratiques-discours.

the most concerning, because of the direct physical danger his government represents for several groups, from LGTBQ to Indian minorities, as well as for ecologically crucial zones like the Amazon. But apparent attacks on democracy are today everywhere to be seen. Prime Minister Boris Johnson's suspension of the UK parliament in September 2019 was ruled illegal by the country's Supreme Court, a decision openly lambasted by Johnson's supporters (including many members of parliament). Trump's transgressions of constitutional convention are now too numerous to itemize.

For many, the return of authoritarian leadership styles, combined with the infiltration of technology corporations into every aspect of people's lives, pose unprecedented threats to democracy in parts of the world that had previously taken it for granted. Yet the crux of the present conjuncture is precisely that, for others, the rise of such politicians is proof not of the suppression of democracy, but of its belated triumph. Fueled by economic insecurity and a pace of social change that challenges local identities, the new politics is read by some as the outcome of a power struggle in which 'the people' have finally wrested control from established interests – whether a privileged political caste, a metropolitan media, an unrepresentative judiciary, or a combination of all of these. It is little use to argue that the mechanics of a representative parliament, a free press, and established arbiters of the rule of law are fundamentals of a functioning constitutional democracy if, in the evolving popular imagination, all of these are seen as inimical to, rather than guarantors of, the popular will. As has been noted by many commentators, the particular nature of the crisis caused by the Brexit vote in Britain arose from the collision of two models of democracy – the interruption of a system of representative politics, with all its supposed checks and balances to ensure 'fair play', by a direct plebiscite – for which there was no adequate resolution (see Salter and Blick 2020). Whilst voices on all sides have, since the referendum outcome, claimed to be speaking up for democracy, what has really been taking place is a battle for the definition of democracy.

This emerges clearly from the sudden popularity, in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, of the term 'undemocratic' to condemn the stance of one's opponents. During this time, there was no stance on this exercise in national decision-making that escaped the accusation of being 'undemocratic'. For many, the failure of parliament quickly to enact the majority preference as recorded at the referendum was a fundamental betrayal of democracy; in this view, the plebiscite stood as the most direct expression of the will of the people, circumventing the vagaries and distortions of parliamentary representation. But the contrary argument, that the referendum was undemocratic,

became equally well rehearsed: the palpable impact of misinformation and lies upon the popular vote, the inadequacies of the question posed, and the impression of finality over an issue in which popular opinion continued to change after the vote, all raised legitimate questions about the process. As the ensuing parliamentary stalemate took hold, the contestability of any particular view of the democratic process became ever harder to ignore. Those who had claimed that Brexit would allow the UK parliament to 'take back control' from Brussels loudly decried as 'undemocratic' the actions of that very parliament. Contrariwise, complaints that government policy – especially after the election of Boris Johnson – was dedicated to overriding the preferences of a democratically elected parliament (and thus 'undemocratic') were frequently complicated by the tendency of members of parliament on all sides to allow the interests of their political parties to take precedence over answerability to their constituents.

What emerges from this picture is that there are many ways of gauging popular preference, and that they are all susceptible to being regarded as, in some form, undemocratic. There is, in other words, no objective measure of the will of the people. This creates the opportunity for people to pick and choose in their definitions, as they seek to 'defend democracy' – and the spectacle of individuals choosing one definition at one moment, and a quite different definition at another in order to argue their case, has become very familiar in British politics of recent years. Democracy, in this view, is something imagined rather than real, often 'formulated' in practice in such a way as to suit the pursuit of certain interests. This perception is not new within political theory. On the contrary, democracy has long been regarded as a heterogeneous concept, comprising intrinsically contested territory. David Held's classic study *Models of Democracy* surveys ten different visions of democracy, each embodying different ideas of the relation of equality and freedom, and depending upon different assumptions about the nature of the demos, the scope of popular decision-making, and the respective primacy of individual and communal interests. For Held, 'the meaning of democracy has remained, and probably always will remain, unsettled' (2008: 2). Further elaboration on this heterogeneity and undecidability is offered in the writings of Chantal Mouffe, which argue that no basis exists for the organisation of democratic society that is independent of a particular, partisan standpoint; instead, democracy is best regarded as, in effect, a struggle for the meaning of democracy. Widespread acceptance of a particular democratic arrangement reflects only a temporary and contingent 'stabilisation', the product of hegemonic forces.

Consequently, for Mouffe, in a larger sense, 'the democratic character of a society can only be given by the fact that no limited social actor can attribute to herself or himself the representation of the totality and claim to have the "mastery" of the foundation' (2000: 100). In the words of Ernesto Laclau, Mouffe's close collaborator, 'democracy is the very placing in question of the notion of ground' (quoted in Keenan 2003: 103).

Such analyses raise both fears and hopes. Doesn't relativizing the idea of democracy play into the hands of the world's many tyrants, opening the door at a theoretical level for acceptance of their claims to be upholding the interests of the people? There's certainly much at stake in supposing that there can exist no objective measure for the quality of a democracy – and it is a supposition that sits in tension with such initiatives as the 'Democracy Index', which aims to offer a numerical indicator of the state of democracy in most of the world's countries.[2] For those who have struggled for emancipation from repressive and brutal dictatorships, hand-wringing over the difficulty of agreeing what democracy should look like risks like seeming an academic indulgence – although, as Violeta Nigro Giunta's chapter in the present volume shows, this is not to say that such debates were absent from public life following the overthrow of autocratic rule. Viewed more positively, it is by being drawn to the contingency of different models of democracy that one is better able to appreciate their respective weaknesses; following Jacques Rancière's prompt, we must ask what is 'the part that has no part' within a particular democratic dispensation (Rancière 2014)? Whose interests are left behind? Any of the temporary 'stabilisations' of democracy that might be imagined, Mouffe and Rancière both imply, entail a democratic shortfall. The exposure of this democratic shortfall remains an urgent task – no less so because it is an endless process. The rider for proponents of democratic renewal is to accept that their own visions are no less dependent upon exclusions and dependencies, and thus no more immune to future contestation.

If there is fundamental disagreement about what democracy looks like, that's not to dispute the continuing acceptance of democracy *in abstracto* as our common good and our common sense, perhaps on a wider and more consensual basis than any other political concept. Even extreme-right parties that by other standards constitute a threat to democracy do not openly express contempt for it. On the contrary, they claim to be democratically-minded, and they intend to seize power through

[2] https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index. The rival V-Dem project attempts more fully to take on board 'the complexity of the concept of democracy as a system of rule'; see https://www.v-dem.net/en/.

democratic procedures. There is undoubtedly political opportunism in this. Contempt for democracy is a quite common feeling among extreme-right activists, especially when they are openly racist, like white supremacists; and the exercise of power by extreme-right governments systematically deviates from democratic procedures. But the fact remains that they are not vocal about this. Indeed, they participate in democratic elections and present themselves as representatives of 'the people'.

At the left of the political spectrum, adjectives have been proposed implying a critique of liberal democracy, which is seen as the political façade of neo-liberalism: absolute democracy, real democracy, direct democracy, horizontal democracy, agonistic democracy, participatory democracy, and so on. The attachment to democracy as such, though, has remained unchallenged. A relative exception is Alain Badiou (2009), who in a provocative proposal to 'destitute the emblem' of democracy, called on 'true democrats' to embrace his version of communism. In a wider perspective, democracy is the common ground for theoretical discourses as different as Judith Butler's and Martha Nussbaum's, to name but a couple of influential thinkers (Nussbaum 2010; Butler 2015). But none of them felt the need of explaining why that should be the case, as if democracy went without saying. They rather explain why their particular conception of it is different, and of course better, than others.

In some way or another, we are all committed to democratic values, even if the question of what these actually are remains always an open one. One might think first of freedom of speech, equality of opportunities, acknowledgment of differences, self-determination of the people, and so on. At another level, we might have in mind elections, political representation, majority rule, collective deliberation, or parliamentary institutions. But there is no single view of democracy that might apply to every political situation. To some extent, as already suggested, democracy is a floating signifier. Vagueness and adaptability are inherent to its capacity to have strong normative value.

That implies that we are always positioned in some way or another towards what democracy represents in contemporary life, as the varied arguments accompanying the Brexit vote aftermath attest. Such positioning may be regarded as an intrinsic aspect of democratic life, in which arguments about the shortfall of democratic arrangements are advanced, not in order to do away with democracy, but rather further to 'democratize' it (De Sousa Santos 2007; Balibar 2015). This motivation has been central to the feminist critique of democracy, for instance – quite explicitly so in the case of Andrea Cornwall and Anne Marie Goetz's essay 'Democratizing

Democracy', which argues that 'engendering democracy' needs to extend beyond the quantitative increase in women entering political institutions, to address 'historically and culturally embedded forms of disadvantage' that precede and condition the functioning of those institutions (Cornwall and Goetz 2005: 783). Other feminist critics have noted the disparity between liberal democracy's assumption of the capacity of the individual to make choices, and feminism's emphasis upon the constraints on women's choices and the degree to which women have regarded their agency as inseparable from the familial and local contexts to which they belong (Higgins 1997). As Georgina Born demonstrates in Chapter 9 in this volume, feminist theorizations that complicate ideas of selfhood and the dichotomy of individual and society prove fruitful in deepening our understanding of the kinds of 'democratic' empowerment that can play out in musical performance. More generally, recent activism against gender violence and structural discrimination against women, which has begun to bring notable consequences in the musical world in terms of equal representation on concert programmes, can be regarded as a globalized social movement on behalf of democratic values.

One thing is certain: democracy is not something we can study at a distance, as an historical object to be considered only in its own terms, without giving some thought to what it means for us. It is an essential dimension of the epistemology of the humanities and the social sciences as we know and practice them, which is to say, as a collective intellectual exercise based on freedom of speech and egalitarian access to it, coupled with the prevalence of the better argument in a rational debate. Research on democracy necessarily implies commitment to democratic values, as does, for that matter, research on authoritarianism and totalitarianism, two historical formations defined by opposition to democracy. Democracy is arguably the ground for a scholarly book such as this to exist in the first place.

Looking for democracy in music

While our book surveys musicians' investments in the idea of democracy spanning the past 100 years, a number of the issues confronting our present-day situation affect the readings offered herein – including the multiplicity of models of democracy, and the inevitable limitations and shortcomings affecting any of them. But what has been the relation of music and democracy? A wider glance at music history shows that democracy was generally *not* a keyword. Even amongst musicians sympathetic to democracy, it has been unusual to find democracy itself treated as a topic within

musical works. Songs with the word democracy in the lyrics are quite rare; Leonard Cohen's 1992 'Democracy' is an exception, even if a most significant one. Classical works that invoke democracy in the title or in its paratext are also scarce, and in them it is not always easy to distinguish between the word being a cipher for a nationalist or patriotic message, rather than the signal of a concern about democracy *per se.* Cases in point are orchestral works written by American composers during World War Two, such as William Grant Still's *In Memoriam: The Colored Soldiers Who Died for Democracy*, which clearly linked democracy to civil rights and fighting race inequalities in general, and Aaron Copland's claim about *Lincoln Portrait*'s embodying 'the spirit of American democracy' (Fauser 2013: 54, 229-232).

In the history of music, the word 'democracy' was sometimes deployed as a term of abuse, rather than as a positive attribute, as when, in 1907, a Viennese music critic attacked Arnold Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony* by calling it *Demokratengeräusch*, 'democrats' noise' (Buch 2006: 138). By so doing, he expressed his contempt for both the aesthetic qualities of Schoenberg's music, and for the principle of political democracy. This clearly resonated with the ongoing debate on the extension of the voting franchise for male citizens, a democratic improvement of the Austrian political system to which this conservative critic was obviously hostile. It also connected to the foundational years of classical music practice, when we find authoritarian rather than democratic values being put forward as a normative basis for it. In 1807, the German music critic and jurist Gottfried Weber favorably compared the orchestra conductor to a dictator, in the ancient, Roman sense of the word:

> During the performance of a music piece, the conductor is the representative of the general will, as a sovereign is in his state; since in an emergency it is impossible for the musical sovereign to gather during a performance his private council or the Great of the Kingdom, only a monarchic or a despotic constitution is viable for the Kingdom – at least as long as the performance goes on. The conductor must decide alone, given the impossibility to debate and discuss who is right and who is wrong on a particular issue.
>
> (Weber 1807: 51-52)

For this German author writing during the Napoleonic Wars, it is not only the Republican organization of the state that should be rejected as a model for the orchestra, but also the principle of collective deliberation. His praise of the conductor

as a dictator would be impossible today, even if the practical conditions for the performance of classical music have not changed much. It is worth reminding ourselves that a very large proportion of the repertoire of European music was created within oligarchic or autocratic regimes, and even today one does not have to travel far to find classical music practice being invoked in terms of a nostalgia for such pre-democratic orders of government. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that while Weber aptly quoted Rousseau's general will as a source of legitimacy (even for monarchies), the word democracy did not appear in his text (Buch 2002: 1004).

The rarity of the word democracy in music is no accident. Democracy is the only political system that admits, and indeed encourages, its own critique. One of its consequences is to undermine exalted, epic visions of itself. The democratic subject is no hero, and it is not supposed to be one. As much is implied by the idea of negative democracy, epitomized by Winston Churchill's motto, 'democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time'. Contrary to revolution, revolt, or resistance, democracy is not based in heroism, and it contradicts the idea of exceptional merit or fate. Nor does the idea of democracy hold a comparable appeal for musical treatment to that of revolution. True, many revolutions are democratic in spirit, both in art and in politics, as they promise some kind of collective emancipation. Yet, revolution implies an interruption or a radical transformation of historical time. Revolution is an event, that often signals a before and an after in history. This is different from the historicity of democracy, which is rather a system, a lasting experience. In Pierre Rosanvallon's words, democracy is 'the regime of permanent deliberation on the conditions for the constitution of a society of equals' (Rosanvallon 2012a: 146; Rosanvallon 2012b). It is a normative basis for political events to have ethical meaning, but it is not an event itself. Formally speaking, it is less a peak than a plateau. This is why it is hard to mobilize it for an artistic imaginary arguably defined by intense eventfulness, rather than by permanent deliberation. For artistic purposes, it is a concept with weak metaphoric power.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that many musicians with strong political convictions have focused less on democracy per se, and more on music's capacity to advance a particular cause or constituency within democratic debate, or to act as a tool for claiming democratic rights in non-democratic contexts, or to offer a propagandistic symbol of freedom of expression. Such emphases are reflected in the existing literature on music and democracy. Perhaps the leading voice has been the political scientist Nancy Love, whose book *Musical Democracy* (2006) pairs an analysis of the musical

metaphors used by democracy theorists with an appraisal of the democratic contribution of activist musicians. A second volume, *Trendy Fascism: White Power Music and the Future of Democracy* (2017) extends these themes to an analysis of the musical cultures of white supremacists. Love's work was preceded by Sam Richards' *Sonic Harvest: Towards Musical Democracy* (1992), which comprises an extended personal memoir charting the author's attempt to negotiate the worlds of the experimental avant-garde and the folk revival in the name of musical democracy – here defined in rather general terms as a concern for social equality and connectedness. Recent books on music featuring democracy in their titles focus upon the role of musicians in political change (Buchanan 2005), the subversive public spaces opened up by music radio (Fairchild 2012; Weisbard 2014), and music piracy as popular resistance to corporate power (Cummings 2013). The field of Cold War music studies has brought scrutiny of the ways in which music and musicians were instrumentalized in the Allied Powers' attempt to advertise 'democracy' as a more attractive path than Soviet communism. Avant-garde music was sponsored by the US State Department during this period because of the way its radicalism and iconoclasm appeared to symbolize the freedom of the individual under American democracy (Carroll 2003; Brody 2014). Jazz also proved a useful tool within the 'cultural Cold War', this time because of the centrality of the 'freedoms' of improvisation, and as an attempted corrective to the negative impression lent by continuing racial segregation and discrimination in the American south (Von Eschen 2009; Fosler-Lussier 2015). Scholars have also turned to the role of music in present-day American politics, with the use of music in US political campaigning proving particularly fruitful territory (Barone 2017; Patch 2019).

But what about those musicians who have wished to reflect through their practice upon democracy itself? Democracy has been a preoccupation for many musicians over the past 100 years, notwithstanding the challenges it presents as 'subject matter' for musical treatment. This was perhaps most visibly evident during the 1960s, when protest movements and an antiauthoritarian counterculture combined to encourage musicians to pursue democratising agendas, a development manifested variously in polystylism, free improvisation, audience participation, and the formation of new egalitarian ensembles. But, as this volume demonstrates, composers, performers and critics chose to position music in relation to democracy for many decades before then, even before the spread of mass suffrage. Democracy has continued to be a central value for more recent musical practices, finding expression

in networked online music performance, new models of composer-performer collaboration, the growing field of community arts, and theories of music education.

Often important across these fields of activity and experiment has been a tendency to emphasise democracy's moral values and ideals, rather than their institutional embodiment in standard democratic practice. The distinction between 'democracy as a social idea and political democracy as a system of government', put forward by John Dewey in *The Public and Its Problems*, can be helpful here. 'The idea of democracy', writes Dewey, 'is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best. To be realized it must affect all modes of human association, the family, the school, industry, religion' (Dewey 1946: 143). Even if the arts are not mentioned, Dewey would surely have included them on the list. When talking about democracy musicians frequently invoke it as a social idea rather than a system of government. Musical practice invites comparison with democracy by virtue of the central position it gives to such social values as expression, listening, collaboration, negotiation, compromise, trust, sympathy and solidarity. Here we should remind ourselves that while political science is undoubtedly valuable when it comes to discussing democracy in music, many musicians' conceptualizing of the democratic aspects of their activities have relied on common-sense definitions, rather than the distinctions and nuances that have preoccupied theorists.

When common sense itself is disoriented, as is arguably the case now, studying the ways in which musicians historically dealt with the notion of democracy becomes a particularly timely endeavour. This is doubly so for those musicians who have gone beyond general values and ideals, to explore more specific ways in which their practice might embody kinds of democratic process (and here Dewey's 'systems of government' are of greater relevance). If democracy is understood as a set of rules and principles governing associational life, then music lends itself to 'modelling democracy' in a variety of ways: for instance, through the relationship of constituent elements within a compositional structure; through the relationships between individual musicians forged by a musical work or genre; through the working relationships of particular performers as they plan, rehearse and perform; through the relationships that music constructs between performers and other parties, such as the composer, audience, employer and patron; and so on. Most potently, music is an arena for many kinds of decision-making, and thus for the negotiation of power. It is such parallels that have attracted the attention of many musicians, who have seen in their

practice the possibility of modelling new or ideal kinds of democratic social arrangement.

In surveying musicians' efforts in this area – as our volume does – a basic dichotomy may be perceived between democracy modelled through musical performance, and democracy modelled through composition. The former has perhaps been most tenaciously pursued in the areas of jazz and improvisation, although classical chamber music has not been immune from investigation in this regard either (e.g. Ford and Davidson 2003). In jazz, influential musicians have regarded jazz performance as reflecting the structure of democracy itself. Within this reading, the succession of improvised solos characteristic of traditional jazz is seen as granting 'freedom of speech' to the individual musicians of an ensemble. Each musician is granted an opportunity to express themselves whilst others listen, and successive solos may engage in flexible dialogue with what has gone before. Importantly, though, the freedom granted to individuals is constrained by ground rules accepted by all, in the form of a piece's key, metric structure, chord changes, swung rhythm, and other given elements of musical structure. Jazz critics such as Ralph Ellison, Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and more recently Sehgal (2008) and Clark (2015) have elaborated upon these perceived structural parallels between traditional jazz performance and the relation of individual and community within American democracy. As Ben Givan notes in Chapter 3 in this volume, such conceptualisations have not been without their romantic idealisations of jazz practice, but they do at least register how, when musicians invoke democracy in relation to their work, they often do so because they perceive parallels between the relational processes of their music and those they feel should pertain in democracy. Similar tropes have become common in recent writing on improvisation, where attention has often focused upon the capacity of improvised group performance to model new kinds of social relationship characterised by freedom, equality and respect (e.g. Fischlin, Heble and Lipsitz (eds) 2013; see also Adlington 2019).

In composition, democratic relationships may be instantiated in the configurations forged between different materials within a work. There is a long tradition of regarding compositional textures in this way. Percy Grainger's 1931 essay 'Democracy in music' – discussed in more detail in Ryan Weber's chapter in this volume – laid emphasis upon the independence of individual voices in polyphony, asserting boldly that

> the value of all existing art music depends on the extent to which it is intrinsically many-voiced or democratic – that is to say, the extent to which the harmonic texture is created out of freely-moving voices, each of them full of character, or vigor, or melodic loveliness.

This was in contrast to music in which a primary melody was accompanied by 'subservient unmelodic chords and basses', which came 'closer to musical feudalism, aristocracy or high-priest-craft than to democracy' (Grainger 1999: 218). Compositional projections of democracy tend to rely upon the articulation of several clearly distinct musical identities that are allowed to interact in such a way that each may be fairly heard and none attain a position of continuous dominance over the other. The emancipatory political resonances of the musical principle of counterpoint have proved equally attractive to composers (e.g. Carter and Restagno 1991), political theorists (e.g. Maduro 2003), literary theorists (Said 1993), and writers (e.g. Kundera 1988), among others.

There is an irony, undoubtedly, in the fact that much of the music conceived along these 'democratic' lines – whether in terms of performance relations, compositional structure, or a mixture of both – has remained stubbornly 'unpopular'. Free improvisation and the rigorously argumentative textures of Elliott Carter, to single out two examples, have never enjoyed a large audience. Georges Aperghis's *Situations* (2013), which explores the potential for a music ensemble to diffract democracy through both its inner functioning and its performative impact, is also bound by the social and aesthetic codes of avant-garde music.[3] For some musicians, this disparity reflected a situation in which the vision of democracy embodied in their musical practice did not yet prevail in society at large: the lack of a large audience for their music indicated the distance still to be travelled in bringing about the vision of equality and freedom that they envisaged.

For others – including those working in concert hall traditions – the preoccupation with democracy was a means to address their sense of the gap between their personal political commitment and the undemocratic or exclusive aspects of the musical world in which they worked. It is perhaps no surprise that interest in the possibility of 'democracy in music' has manifested itself especially prominently in art music practice – and here one can extend our purview to the rhetoric that has been

[3] See the film by Momoko Seto and Esteban Buch, *Aperghis démocrate*, CRAL/EHESS, Paris, 2018, http://cral.ehess.fr/index.php?2552.

advanced around the democratic credentials of the symphony orchestra – for the claims of inclusiveness and relevance are here harder to make in other regards. Among leading musical figures, Daniel Barenboim's theorizing of this issue is particularly well known:

> If you wish to learn how to live in a democratic society, then you would do well to play in an orchestra. For when you do so, you know when to lead and when to follow. You leave space for others and at the same time you have no inhibitions about claiming a place for yourself.
>
> (Barenboim and Said 2004: 173).

Now, Barenboim's idealized picture of the orchestra as a model for political democracy ignores its being based on hierarchies and traditions, to say nothing of his downplaying his own role as charismatic leader. A classical orchestra is a collective organism where most people always follow, and never lead; where the majority expresses the will of one single individual, namely the composer, through the mandatory instructions given by another individual, the conductor. On the other hand, the success of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra shows that audiences are sympathetically inclined towards a classical music performance that, as a kind of moral supplement to the aesthetic experience, contains the *promise* of democracy. A similar observation can be made about *El Sistema*, the famous Venezuelan 'system' of classical orchestras, developed by José Antonio Abreu for favouring the participation of children and young people of disadvantaged backgrounds, and sometimes criticized for its authoritarian components (Baker 2014).

As we have seen, the eagerness to display democratic credentials is often especially evident in relation to music whose commitment to codes of abstraction and autonomy prevented the more overt kinds of political engagement found in more popular musical genres. By comparison, in popular music and folk music genres an organic connection with the people seems more easily assured, even if the music-making itself pays no special concern to the spinning of democratic relationships – even revelling in the showcasing of the 'special' talents or allure of individual star performers. Such examples remind us that the principle of representation has arguably played an important role in music history, given how often musicians in all genres have been portrayed as representing a people, a nation, an ethnic group, or some other kind of collective identity. Even if this is rarely couched explicitly in terms

of democracy, the idea of a musician 'representing' a nation (or other group), which goes back at least to Romantic theories on classical composers, remains today a common cliché, still often used by journalists and other taste-makers. In his chapter on films of pop concerts, Alessandro Bratus dissects a contemporary version of this 'representative claim', in which constructions of authentic community are authored by the film makers.

Nonetheless, a specific concern for embodying democracy in music has often emerged in the context of doubt regarding music's capacity to contribute constructively and substantively to people's lives, and in relation to genres that are marginal or specialist. With this in mind, one might ask whether such a concern amounts to more than a minor footnote in the history of musicians' engagement with the larger contexts in which they work. In short: why spend time trying to find democracy in music? One answer to this question returns us to the observation made earlier in this introduction: namely, that democracy doesn't pre-exist its myriad invented forms, but rather is imagined, equally by politicians, public, and actors in the public domain. Our volume highlights the role of musicians as producers of models of democracy. In turning to democratic analogies for their practice, they become participants in this process of imagining: their work makes claims for the virtues of particular models, and perhaps reminds alert onlookers too of the openness and heterogeneity of the concept. As such, musicians participate directly in the political debate, as much as politicians do when they lay claim to the 'true' values of democracy, or when members of the public contest those assertions with definitions of their own. Any attempt to imagine democracy is a fundamentally ideological exercise, contributing to an antagonistic battle over what it means to enable the power of the people. Musicians who imagine democracy through their practice are, in this respect, political actors, not just commentators on the sidelines. Aside from being an important thread in the history of music of the past century – one that hasn't been thoroughly appraised until now – we see a preoccupation with the forms taken by democracy as a primary means by which musicians have contributed to the political debates of the past century.

The structure of the book

Our volume charts a broadly chronological progress through the past 100 years, beginning and ending with expanded versions of the two keynote papers delivered at the Huddersfield conference. Tina K. Ramnarine takes as her point of departure

Finland's 1917 declaration of independence as a nation state, which took place as a direct consequence of the overthrow of the Tsarist regime by the Bolshevik Revolution, and was quickly approved by Lenin. Tracing throughout her chapter the distinct but interconnected paths taken by the idea of people's rule in Finland and Soviet Russia, she offers a nuanced reading of the diverse ways in which orchestral music-making channels both the conflict and collectivity intrinsic to democratic life. Particular attention is paid to the association of democratic governance with borders, and with the tensions that borders often entail; Ramnarine is especially interested in the ways that orchestras, through their mobilisation of large forces, are connotative of power as well as social harmony, and thus resonate with the biopolitics of modern statehood.

In Chapter 2, 'Dismantling Borders, Assembling Hierarchies', Ryan Weber discusses Australian-born Percy Grainger's 'idea of democracy', by focusing on his *Marching Song for Democracy,* premiered in 1917, one year before becoming an American citizen, and his 1931 article 'Democracy in Music', where he writes that 'art music is an essentially democratic art'. Whereas Grainger's early ideas on democracy were influenced by Walt Whitman and the American liberal tradition, Weber shows that they also connected with the composer's later interest in eugenics, and his lasting belief in the superiority of the 'Nordic race'. Thus, he throws a disturbing light on an often-disregarded aspect of the history of democracy, namely the fact that it was sometimes seen as compatible with overtly racist thinking. While it can be safely assumed that such an intellectual constellation is unlikely today, at least in the realm of art music, Grainger's case is a valuable reminder of the plasticity of the concept, especially when applied to formal procedures in specialized fields such as music composition.

The title of Ben Givan's chapter asks a simple question: 'How Democratic is Jazz?' As Givan reminds us, there is a rich and extensive history of regarding jazz as 'the sound of democracy' (as in Clark 2015: 13), spanning almost a century. It is an interpretive trope sustained by the idea of jazz as a domain for achieving racial justice, but also by the centrality of improvisation, which appears to foreground the freedom of the individual and afford the potential to forge collective arrangements accommodating the preferences of all. Givan subjects this reading of jazz to a long overdue critical analysis. Citing from an impressive array of literature, Givan demonstrates that power distribution in ensemble jazz performance is frequently far from egalitarian, both in terms of how a group is run and the nature of the music-

making. Additionally, he takes issue with the pervasive romanticization of improvisation in terms of egalitarian and humane values, noting how spontaneity and the extemporaneous are as often the characteristics of tyrants and the self-obsessed. None of this is to deny jazz's impressive history of advancing progressive political causes, but Givan urges vigilance regarding the distinctions to be drawn 'between *what* jazz expresses and *how* it does so'.

It is instructive that parallels with democratic process have been made in relation to music of very differing kinds – a fact that points to the kinds of selectivity that such interpretations usually entail. Robert Adlington's chapter on 'Elliott Carter and Democracy' examines a strand of American music concurrent with but quite separate from jazz. Carter's reputation for the crafting of formidably complex instrumental works that make no concessions to the preferences of ordinary concert-goers hardly marks him out as an advocate of democracy. Yet the idea of democracy appeared regularly in his writings and interviews, especially as a means to explain his distinctive approach to counterpoint, which pits together multiple distinct musical identities that (as Carter expressed it) 'don't keep step together'. At the same time, though, he expressed fears about the consequences of democracy for serious art. Adlington navigates these apparent contradictions in Carter's outlook by placing them in the context of Cold War reception of the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, which offered a basis for the mid-twentieth-century liberal advocacy of certain kinds (and only certain kinds) of difference.

While Carter regarded democratic relations as embodied in his musical scores – whose highly prescriptive notation typically afforded musicians very little in the way of choice or co-authorial agency – other American composers took more interest in the possibility of sharing decision-making with those who realised their music in performance. The early exponents of indeterminacy often publicised their experiments in democratising terms, ostensibly signalling a move away from the master-slave relationship that had gained a kind of ascendancy in mid-twentieth-century thinking about the relation of composer and performer. As Emily Payne and Philip Thomas make clear in Chapter 5, however, the actual consequences of experiments in indeterminacy can be complex and ambiguous. In their examination of 'Ensemble relations in Christian Wolff's *Exercises*', Payne and Thomas conduct a fieldwork investigation of the rehearsal and performance processes that arise from Wolff's open notations, which were explicitly intended to disperse authority between all those involved. It becomes clear that successful performance practice of this

repertoire hinges significantly upon processes of discussion and individual judgement, but also the implicit leadership structures that spring from the history of a group and the known specialisms of particular performers. The authors point out that the lack of uniformity in the distribution of decision-making authority, whilst not consistent with a purist democratic ideal, is in fact extremely common in democratic arrangements, often with the assent of all involved.

Artists feel a particular responsibility to respond to the theme of democracy when working in social contexts that are transitioning from authoritarian to democratic regimes. In Chapter 6, 'Defining audible democracy', Violeta Nigro Giunta describes such a situation as it emerged in Argentina after the overthrow of military rule in 1983. Her account illustrates how debates quickly emerged regarding how democracy should 'sound' in new Argentine music of the 1980s. The leading composer Gerardo Gandini urged a stylistic pluralism which seemed to resonate with the new democratic state's 'politics of archives and memory', which aimed at fuller recognition of the injustices of the past under dictatorship. Yet against this, other young composers were drawn to the contrasting vision of Luigi Nono, who visited Buenos Aires in 1985, and whose work (and track record of social engagement) suggested a more bravely experimental path. In this way, two distinct visions of a democratic music were drawn into direct confrontation.

Christopher Haworth's chapter 'Network music and digital utopianism' describes the democratic impetus of the rise of virtual collaborative jamming and composition techniques during earlier phases of the internet revolution. His specific focus is the Res Rocket Surfer Project, which ran for nearly a decade from the mid-1990s onwards. Haworth highlights successively the role of DIY discourse in the rapid expansion of the platform, and the impact of personal interests, both economic and reputational, which eventually caused its inglorious dismantling. By so doing, he suggests how new technological developments constantly reshape the arguably oldest problem of democratic thinking, namely the question: who decides?

A similar concern regarding the 'production' of democracy by particular interests threads through Alessandro Bratus's chapter, 'As the band hit full throttle'. Bratus's title quotes from a comment inserted in The Chemical Brothers' *Don't Think* DVD booklet, which underlined the capacity of live concert films to arouse in the spectator a 'rush of intense euphoria', allegedly amounting to a feeling of agency and participation. His critical approach to such claims about audiences' democratic agency builds on a corpus of works by rock stars Sigur Rós, Talking Heads, Frank Zappa and

the Rolling Stones. Democracy mostly emerges here as a quite opportunistic discourse, aimed at sidestepping the concrete problem of authority, and expressive instead of the cultural industries' production of authoriality.

In Chapter 9, Georgina Born extends the concern with audiences in an absorbing meditation on the question – which has preoccupied creative artists of all kinds over the past 100 years – of what a democratised audience might look like. Taking issue with the idea that an audience experience can be predicted in advance from the formal qualities of an artwork, Born extends her existing work on the interrelation of music and politics to enquire into pervasive present-day ideologies of listening, and how these tend to disavow considerations of the collective aspect of audiencing. Drawing from the writings of Mouffe and Rancière, and introducing examples from popular music and from sport, Born attempts to retrieve the idea of the mass audience from the negative diagnoses of cultural critics since Adorno, suggesting ways in which audiences, too, may be considered reflexive, agential, experimental – and in what kinds of circumstances such radically democratised audiences might emerge. By taking audiences seriously in this way, Born reminds us that no music-making takes place in a vacuum, entirely detached from the politics of everyday life: in trying to find democracy in music, we are never – can never – be confining ourselves to the purely musical.

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