Creative Indexing, TMI, and Anti-Language:
Making a Case for Musical Innovation

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PREFACE **(Slide #1)**

Like many good things at Kenyon this presentation began life at the VI, conversing with Yang over a beer.

Shortly, I will argue for an understanding of musical innovation that involves unlikely mixtures of musical signs heard as threshold or marginal events, and contend that musical innovation is often rightfully experienced as incomprehensible, unfamiliar, or uncomfortable. Along the way I will share with you musical examples that have profoundly impacted me, as well as many others, examples that include the principles of creative indexing, TMI, and anti-language.

Ok, let's start with… a pop quiz. **(Slide #2)** Please take out a sheet of blank paper and a pencil (BRING PAPER & PENCILS). I am going to ask you to listen to a short excerpt I prepared and write down the first 2-3 words that come to mind. Do this as fast as you can without taking much time to think or mull over your words. **(PLAY AUDIO)** Ok, what did you come up with? **(Slide #3)**

INTRO & SEMIOTICS

You just heard a three-note chord, **(Slide #4)** called an augmented triad, played four times, descending by step. But this description doesn't tell us why this particular chord, heard in this way, evokes a rather limited palette of words.

As a composer, at this late stage of our cultural addiction to Hollywood (speaking bluntly of course), I should not be the least bit surprised if the reaction to my descending augmented chord passage causes my listener to feel gloom and doom. This situation represents the opposite of musical innovation as I am defining it in this presentation. One could reasonably describe it as a kind of invariable fixedness. When a musical device is borrowed or appropriated, and used to evoke exactly what it has previously been used to evoke, and in the same or very similar manner, we are in the presence of persistent uniformity. If there were such a thing as a

Turnitin musical algorithm, it would easily detect the copy and sound the alarm. Like it or not, the augmented triad has become, through repeated cultural enforcement, a musical sign for gloom and doom.

But what is a sign? **(Slide #5)** For the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure signs have two parts: the form of the sign itself or signifier, and its meaning or signified. The relation between the signifier and signified is essentially arbitrary, determined only by social convention. Meaning in his system only takes place with the assistance of language, and is the result of formal linguistic characteristics rather than things that involve people, such as speech acts.

The science of signification and meaning is known as semiotics. Saussure's semiotic system works well for literary theory and textual analysis but I have found that another system is more applicable to music. The American philosopher, mathematician, and scientist Charles Saunders Peirce, defined a sign **(Slide #6)** as something that is determined by something else (called its Object), which determines an effect, or interpretant, upon a person. His sign has three parts and unlike Saussure's sign, includes the principle of human agency. The three parts are inter-related and take part in an infinite process of semiosis. In terms of meaning, an object can always become a sign for another object. Peirce's system is quite complex, a full explanation would be well beyond the confines of this presentation. **(Slide #7)** So, for the purposes of explaining how musical semiotics works, it has become more or less standard to first focus on the relationships between signs and their objects. Signs can be related to their objects in one (or more) of three ways. **(Slide #8)** If a sign resembles an object in some way, Peirce calls this an **icon**. **(Slide #9)** Examples include portraits and photographs, or an exponential curve and the sound of a glissando. If the relationship between a sign and its object is one determined through experience it is called an **index**. **(Slide #10)** Smoke can be an index of fire, a weathervane is an index of the wind's direction, the pointing finger of a conductor is an indexical cue. Finally, **(Slide #11)** if a sign is related to an object through an arbitrary convention Peirce calls this a **symbol**. Words are symbols in this sense.

Before Hollywood's appropriation of the augmented chord it would have been experienced as a disturbance of tonal hierarchy or function. Basically, Western tonal music has, functionally speaking, three types of chords – those with tonic function, pre-dominant function, and dominant function. The augmented triad (until recent jazz and contemporary compositional practice) is ambiguous with respect to chordal function. It has been referred to as "a special chord that touches on the atonal." Heard as ambiguous, a disturbance of our tonal function expectations (which is of course established indexically through practice), the augmented triad is heard as gloom and doom. **(Slide #12)**

AL – Anti-language MORE SLIDES?

Another kind of disturbance occurs when the sign is temporally prevented from coupling with an object, **(Slide #12)** an idea discussed at length by the German-American composer Herbert Brün with respect to what he calls anti-language. Brün's use of this concept was largely informed by the fields of cybernetics and information theory. According to Brün, we can "temporarily prevent the coupling of the sign with its object in order to retard the decay of information." In the field of information theory, the level of information is considered high where there are many possible outcomes for a message. As information is transmitted it often is changed to a lower state in order to maximize the efficiency of transmission. This is what he refers to when he uses the terms "decay of information."

Coming at this from another perspective, information is that which informs, an answer to a question of some kind. Information is conveyed as the content of a message or through direct or indirect observation of some thing, and may be encoded into a sequence of signs. We might also consider information in terms of value and the process of commodification. Here low information content would be equivalent to low value, or something that is cheaper to purchase or export, but easier to discard, disregard, and throw away. Innovative music in this context is music that refuses to accept a low value status. … Perhaps I am describing a utopian world, or one that seems impossible to grasp with current standards, in a country that prizes the importation of cheap goods from afar, ignoring the conditions of the manufacturing plant workers at the points of origin. Ah, but I digress…

The Talking Heads in their famous movie *Stop Making Sense* exhort us to explore unclear parts of ourselves in order to unleash newfound, perhaps illogical, creative impulses. As a composer if I simply stop making sense altogether, my composition may never be appreciated by anyone else. Most composers, not all, compose in order to share their handiwork with others… The kind of musical innovation that I am discussing here in relation to Brün's notion of anti-language is not premised on complete obfuscation but rather on a program of *delay and partial revelation*.

The delayed connection between a sign and its object can be said to open a space that encourages cognition, as opposed to re-cognition. If we consider the act of consumption as one in which the object of one's desire is re-cognized, engaged, and then exhausted, the delay in coupling between sign and object opens the way for new possibilities and coupling pathways.

The concept of **anti-language** has also been studied by many researchers in social semiotics (Hodge and Kress). But what they mean by the term is a little different from what Brün is getting at. They trace how

marginalized people such as prisoners employ secret codes to communicate, using currently available language, whereas Brün proposes an attempt to prevent 'communication' in order to bring about a not-yet available system. For Brün this is one of the primary reasons to compose music.

CI - Creative Indexing (Slide #13)

Besides anti-language, musical innovation can also involve creative indexing and signifier overload. Creative indexing refers to the act of juxtaposing two or more indexes in novel ways (Turino 1999, and Everett 2001). For example in Frank Zappa's music, twelve-tone and avant-garde indexes are combined to underscore contemporary cultural and political contradictions. To appreciate creative indexing in music you have to have heard the references before, or similar signs with similar objects, in order to understand that an indexical juxtaposition is novel.

SO – TMI

I use the term signifier overload to refer to the overloading of the form of the sign. So, it makes sense to use Saussure's term rather then Peirce's more general notion of the sign. Signifier overload can be found in the work of many composers including Ludwig Beethoven, Charles Ives, Igor Stravinsky, and Iannis Xenakis to name only four. The listener perceives that there is too much to consume or take in at one go. Signifier overload requires replaying and creates possibilities for additional epiphanies

Is music a language?

So now that we've discussed a few semiotic principles that will be used to track musical innovation, let's try to answer the question: Is music a language?

In short, current research indicates that it is not a language, strictly speaking, but rather a sign system. First of all it lacks important formal linguistic attributes and semantic capacity. There are no musical equivalents to phonemes, nouns, or verbs. One can't precisely say "please pass the salt" in music without the aid of words. The word for 'tree' could have been 'acorn' and so long as there is an agreement with respect to usage it would not make a difference. And although music can be meaningful, it pulls this off largely without the assistance of words or signs that are arbitrarily connected to their objects.

When positing that music is a language the person doing the positing usually means to imply that a certain music is akin to not just language, but a universal language. However, whereas language capacity may be universal, there is no universal language, even though attempts have been made such as Esperanto. Music itself, as the preeminent ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl has shown, is not universal. There are cultures that

do not have music as such, and others in which music is always experienced as attached to something else, such as dance. In fact the very definition of music has not yet been finalized or universally agreed upon. Composers of new, innovative music often create work that attempts to redefine what music is or can be.

So, music is not a language, but a sign system that includes pre- and post-linguistic signs. Some philosophers and writers have even suggested that language may be *a music* (Rousseau, Sachs, Lidov). The philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau thought this, as did the late Oliver Sachs, who once said that he thought that "we are an essentially, profoundly musical species" and that for all he knew "language piggybacked on music" (2007). The argument for language as music proposes that language developed from musical and emotional sound making activities. Shortly thereafter our ancestors combined word-like sounds and gestures to garner more control of the communicative act.

EXAMPLES (Slide #14)

It is by now a well-known story. A new piece of music is first rejected as incomprehensible noise, only to become part of the canon, years later. Sometimes, however, a work remains outside a canon, on the margins, for a long, indefinite period of time. And sometimes we encounter the exact reverse – a work is almost immediately accepted into a canon and wildly popular during a composer's lifetime but then fades from view after the composer dies.

There are many ways to achieve musical innovation. All are context-dependent, related to musical, societal, and cultural norms. In the following musical examples, selected from a 168 year period of time, I will only have time to briefly discuss how each one relates to principles of creative-indexing, signifier overload, and anti-language.

1) Grosse Fugue

We begin in the year 1825 with a notoriously difficult work by Ludwig Beethoven. Much of Beethoven's late work, after he was almost totally deaf, is characterized by information overload. This is especially true with respect to repetition, development, and textural velocity. In the last movement of his string quartet, op. 130, known as the *Grosse Fugue*, wave after wave of material wash over the listener in what was heard by the contemporaneous listener as an impenetrable surface, or an overwhelming experience. The music is overwrought. We lose the sense of phrase proportion or cadence – which is commonly referred to as the musical equivalent of a period or significant comma. Even though, as I've said, music is not a language, it is telling to continue down this metaphorical path. The continuous, seamless, and repetitive nature of this piece

is akin to a run-on sentence but not one that partakes in free association. It is instead like certain novels by the Austrian writer **Thomas Bernhard (Slide #15)** in which he dispenses with punctuation, effectively allowing him to repeat, vary, and overlap meanings and signifier content. Similar devices can be found in the work of **Gertrude Stein**. **(Slide #16) (Slide #17)**

The signifier overload that you will hear in this work involves page after page of what in other pieces might be called 'transitional' material, that is, material that is intended to serve as transitional from one thematic area to another. In the *Grosse Fugue* this material takes on a life of its own, becoming thematic. Also, there is much about this piece that is uncomfortable and chaotic. We hear awkward, dissonant leaps, rhythmic displacements, and unresolved chords. Finally, it should be mentioned that standard baroque fugal procedure first introduces the main theme or subject, unadorned, whereas in the *Grosse Fugue*, Beethoven presents his subject already varied, and goes on to showcase it in a multitude of ways.
Here's an excerpt from the Grosse Fugue from one of the densest passages.

2) Rite of Spring

Let's fast-forward 88 years. **(Slide #18)** It's May 29, 1913. An audience is waiting for the curtain to open and the orchestra to play the first notes of Igor Stravinsky's new work *Le Sacre du Printemps*, the *Rite of Spring*, a ballet composed in collaboration with the choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky. Unbeknownst to many in the audience they were about to be treated to a ferociously new work that in many fundamental respects broke new ground in the world of Western concert music. According to the by now mythological account of the premiere performance, the music was so controversial and disturbing that it caused a riot. Some say that the scantily clad and lewdly gesturing dancers caused the riot. Whatever the case, the music is often raw, harsh, and loud, and was composed using, often juxtaposing, some innovative techniques such as asymmetrical and changing meters, polymeter, and extreme dissonances such as cluster chords. Other composers had previously used some of these devices but nobody had used all of them in one piece before. Furthermore, this piece developed the long neglected parameter of timbre, sometimes utilizing rarely heard instrumental ranges such as the very first notes of the piece, which feature a bassoon solo in its highest range. All these things come together in another instance of signifier overload. Here is an excerpt from one of the more tumultuous, and one of my favorite, sections in the piece.

3) String Quartet 1931

(Slide #19) Turning now from the raw, exposed innovation of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, my next example is the subdued third movement of Ruth Crawford's *String Quartet 1931*. The entire movement is dedicated to

exploring timbre, or rather texture as timbre, a concept that was to have great influence on both the French spectral school of composition (Gerard Grisey and Tristan Murail) and sound mass composers, three decades later. But whereas the spectral school utilizes the overtone series, Crawford's composition focuses on the development of a single chord or harmony and its temporal prolongation. Her work is not without precedent. For example, Schoenberg in the third movement of his *Five Pieces for Orchestra,* op. 16 created an unusual static texture that challenged his Western listeners' senses of time and development.

Crawford accomplishes something similar, employing what is essentially **the flipside of signifier overload.** At the beginning of the movement the use of stasis indexes the structural notion 'introduction'. After several minutes it becomes clear that the introduction is all we are going to get. The instruments move over the top of each other, upward, en masse, in register as they get louder. Although static, this trajectory adds a dynamic element that is easy to track by ear. The composer has conjured a sign of stasis but prevents it from coupling with the object 'introduction' or the object of the introduction, which normally serves as a way to segue into the thematic meat and potatoes of a work.

Like large sections of the *Grosse Fugue*, this movement dispenses with a standard string quartet hierarchy in which the 1st violin leads the group playing the most important melodic materials. The indexical sign of string quartet 'discourse' as it would have been understood immediately prior to WWII, is attached to a new non-hierarchical context.

Here now is an excerpt from the beginning of the piece.

4) CAGE

My next example requires no audio playback. **(Slide #20)** It is John Cage's famous piece 4'33", a piece that does not include any intentionally composed sounds, only a timeframe in which to listen. A performer is instructed to remain silent during three precisely timed movements that add up to 4'33". Hence, it is known as the silent piece. Paradoxically, one of Cage's intended aims was to demonstrate that there is no such thing as silence. The premiere in 1952 took place in a barn in upstate New York. Cage left the windows and doors open, so one can imagine some of the sounds that might have been heard in this environment. But what is heard will be different each time it is performed, and for each person listening. And that was also Cage's point.

Buried in the laughter and astonishment that this piece sometimes elicits, is a radical move in which the index of *a piece itself* is emptied of intended sound (part of any definition of music prior to 1952). This is **creative indexing** at the meta level, effectively redefining music from the listener's perspective.

Cage said that the purpose of music (and art) has changed, and he argued for music as a means of changing the mind especially in the following statement:

"I saw art not as something that consisted of a communication from the artist to an audience but rather as an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds be themselves. And, in being themselves, to open the minds of people who made them or listened to them to other possibilities than they had previously considered" (Kostelanetz). This simple idea is underneath much innovative music."

For Cage, musical innovation involves the composer's willingness to widen the listening experience to include all sound, thereby changing the listener from someone who consumes sound by attaching signs to their objects, to someone who, we might say, is consumed *by* sound.

5) Thernody

Eight years after Cage rocked the world with 4'33" Krystof Penderecki composed his *Thernody for the Victims of Hiroshima* for 52 string instruments. **(Slide #21)** It was by many accounts "like nothing else before it" (www.culture.pl) and is a pure example of the sound mass technique, a 20th century TMI technique in many composers' toolboxes. A large number of instruments contribute to a collective texture wherein individual instruments are intentionally rendered indistinguishable.

Penderecki's piece also employs various indeterminate approaches to notation. For example, horizontal lines represent duration, while the thickness of a line represents the amount of separate pitches played together known as a cluster. In addition to its use of new types of notation this piece laid the foundations for what would eventually become known as 'sonorism', a compositional style (mostly Polish) characterized by a focus on timbre or raw sound (Topolski 2010).

Originally the title for this piece was going to be 8'37" in tribute to Cage's 4'33" (Topolski 2010). But after hearing his piece rehearsed the composer changed the title to better represent the extreme intensity of the piece. The new title symbolically evoked "a kind of terror hitherto unknown by mankind, that of nuclear annihilation" (ibid. 14). A threnody is a song or poem of mourning composed as a memorial to the dead. In

addition to the Hiroshima reference, some say that the title is also part autobiographical, as Penderecki's lament for his dead friends and comrades who were murdered by the Nazis when they occupied Poland in WWII.

Just like the augmented triad, Penderecki's Threnody has been used in film scores. Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* is one such prominent example. But in 1960, when the piece was composed, the power of this music would have had less to do with indexes of film music than with timbral icons that resemble screams and such, due to extremes of register, tone, timbre, and dynamics. Simply put, the effect of many instruments simultaneously playing glissandi at once simulates iconic and indexical signs for the sound of human voices screaming and wailing in agony.

Here now is an excerpt from the beginning of Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima.*

6) The Beatles: Revolution #9

Now we move on to the tumultuous year of 1968. **(Slide #22)**

Under the guiding influence of Yoko Ono and her pioneering work with the Fluxus movement, cognizant of the political events and protests in early 1968, and inspired by Karlheinz Stockhausen's electronic music, John Lennon, created a tape collage that stands out even today as arguably the Beatles most far reaching venture into the avant-garde. And at over eight minutes in length, was the longest Beatles release. This piece is of course *Revolution #9*. According to Lennon, it represents an attempt to depict "a picture of revolution using sound." We hear indexical signs of chaos and shouting, orchestral loops and samples, speech, baby sounds, and the ubiquitious "number nine" which is repeated many times throughout.

This piece also represents an indexical celebration of new technologies that had become available to the Beatles, namely: the 8-track tape recorder. This new device made bouncing (in which one had to mix down in order to free up new tracks) unnecessary, thus, encouraging the kind of **textural overload** that is so characteristic of this piece.

Revolution #9 combines many musical signs into a more or less contemporaneously standard avant-garde format first heard in *musique concrete* pieces from the late 1940s. What makes the Beatles foray innovative is that at various points there are too many simultaneous sounds to decipher *at once.* The piece overloads the senses at least by 1968 standards. But many of the sounds repeat and are used thematically within the formal structure. So, paradoxically it sounds both rambling and thematic. Also, it is not trivial that is was created by

the Beatles, directly resulting from their desire to explore more than just the standard 32-bar song form. We have an instance of the world's most popular rock band creating an experimental piece that indexes the work of academic and avant-garde electronic music composers. This by itself represents a bold, courageous anti-commercial move that had enormous pedagogical potential. At another level this can be seen as a **forestalling** of the pop music *sign* from the *object* of the pop music group.

Presumably the majority of the Beatles fan base either rejected or ignored *Revolution #9*, but it should be kept in mind that this same fan base, just a few years previous, was full of screaming and swooning prepubescent girls. Perhaps, like the *Grosse Fugue*, there will come a day when it finally gains widespread acceptance. Or perhaps like certain pieces by Arnold Schoenberg it will always be hard to digest. Here now is a short excerpt in which you will hear the number 9 tape loop, and samples of choral music, glass breaking, shouting, traffic sounds, and background speech.

7) Carla Bley

In Carla Bley's *Musique Mecanique III*, **(Slide #23)** released in 1978 on the Watt/ECM label, we encounter an interesting case of **creative indexing**, functioning as a kind of sonic *trompe l'oleil*. At various points in the music it sounds as if you are listening to a skipping record. Bley has transcribed a real-world event (the skipping record) and adapted this index into her compositional framework. Although this happens several times in the piece, each instance catches the listener off-guard, convinced that she or he is hearing a skipping record.

The experience of hearing this piece on an LP will, of course, be very different than hearing it on a digital remaster. In fact I first heard this piece on an LP and kept looking at the record player each time I heard the composed skipping, so it had the intended effect. But even now one can still recognize the index of a skipping record thanks to her compositional techniques. Briefly, the musical flow is unexpectedly delayed, becoming 'trapped' in an incessantly repeated two-measure packet in an asymmetrical meter, which sounds out of place in the context of the simple meter she employs for the rest of the piece. It sounds like a beat is missing due to this skipping effect.

The first time this happens we hear a sharp percussive sound (the kick drum) at the beginning of each measure of the two repeated. Besides directing our focus to the missing beat, it also is an iconic sign of the sound made by the record needle as it is returned to the beginning of the scratched music, physically speaking it is returned to a previous groove in the record.

Now I'll play 2 short excerpts from *Music Mecanique III*, each one culminates in the skipping record effect. The second excerpt is quite humorous since it occurs in the middle of a clarinet solo. The clarinetist has to repeat a large, awkward leap the same way each time in order to sound like a skipping record.

8) Art Ensemble of Chicago

The Art Ensemble of Chicago **(Slide #24)** is an ensemble that grew out of the AACM (the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music) located on the south side of Chicago. The AACM was founded in 1965 as an alternative music school tasked with providing music lessons for poor African-American children, and giving concerts. The Art Ensemble create a hybrid form of jazz-classical music that is grounded in what they call Great Black Music: Ancient to the Future, European contemporary music, and the 20th century American experimental tradition of Harry Partch and John Cage.

In 1980 they won the Downbeat Record of the Year Award for their album entitled *Nice Guys*. *Downbeat* is one of the best-known mainstream jazz magazines, whose awards carry a lot of weight. So I went out to a record store (!) and bought a copy of *Nice Guys*. The first time I played the record I felt bewildered and overwhelmed in less than 90 seconds. The music was unlike anything I had heard before, and it especially didn't sound like the jazz I had heard up to that point. For some reason, a few months later, I tried to listen to it again. What once had sounded to me like an incomprehensible, undifferentiated mass of sound was now heard in exactly the opposite way. Every note triggered physiological reactions in my body and deeply moved me, literally and metaphorically speaking.

My experience listening to *Nice Guys* the second time was exhilarating, since I had discovered new music that was nearly impossible to find on any commercial radio station at that time, but also painful, since it was clear that none of my existing friends shared my enthusiasm. If we accept the prevailing view that one of the primary functions of music is to supply shared fodder for social or cultural group cohesion, then interestingly I had stumbled upon an accoutrement of a group in which I already 'belonged' but from which I had not yet met anyone else. Thus, the experience, upon hindsight, can be seen as a transcendent token, or index of an unknown group, a beacon of light shining the way to a formerly unknown group of kindred spirits. It wasn't until a year or two later that I would meet people who shared my enthusiasm for the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

To put this into context, when the AEoC performed in their hometown of Chicago they routinely drew audiences of about a dozen people – I know this from firsthand experience. When they toured Europe

thousands showed up. The reasons for this are larger than the deleterious effects of what one might call the 'hometown effect' in which musicians are only appreciated outside their hometowns. Certainly the hometown effect played a role here, but I would like to suggest that two larger reasons are responsible.

First, the advanced stages of commercialization that most of us take for granted and accept without question, encourage us to parcel our experience into tidy categories. So, we don't know what to do with a hybrid music that indexes blackness, African-American jazz, avant-garde classical music and the American experimental tradition. Second, generally speaking, European countries have higher tolerances for marginal types of expression. It is as if Europeans are not only comfortable with delayed connections between musical signs and objects or sign overloads, but also they seem to thrive on such things.

If we had an extra 42 minutes I would play for you the entire album, which for years I could only listen to in its entirety. It was very difficult for me to select only one excerpt from one of the 6 masterpieces that make-up this recording. So, I have selected the opening two minutes from the very first piece entitled *Ja*. You will hear indexical signs of melodies performed as a ritualistic incantation and color and timbral shifts produced with long, held notes and matching percussion instruments.

9) ZAPPA – The Yellow Shark

Frank Zappa **(Slide #25)** was an iconoclast, American maverick composer who created more than three decades of work beginning in the early 1960s with his band the Mothers of Invention, in a large variety of acoustic and electronic genres and styles, including so-called advanced, highly challenging compositions to chart topping hit songs.

One of the ways his music was innovative was through the use of creative indexing, musical exaggeration, and contrasts. Many of his pieces also include creative indexical relationships with his lyrics, which are of course symbolic signs. *The Yellow Shark*, released just 2 months before Zappa died in December of 1993, was the last recording he made. Zappa worked with the Ensemble Modern, a well-known new music ensemble from Germany.

Like most of his recordings, *The Yellow Shark* includes examples from a wide swath of the Zappa spectrum. The piece from which I'll play an excerpt, *Welcome to the United States*, features many typical Zappa sign plays. For the text, Zappa used part of the US Department of Naturalization and Immigration Immigrant Form, which foreigners are required to complete upon entry into the US. First you will hear the vocalist ask "have

you ever been involved with espionage?" At this point the music presents an index of old school morse code tapping. Then as the vocalist utters the word "sabotage" we hear indexes of chaos and collapsing objects. Next after the words "terrorist activities" we hear part of the song *Louie Louie*, which Zappa paradoxically viewed as one of the most unoriginal songs ever made, yet he covered it in a myriad of different ways throughout his career. Finally, after some heavenly harp music and hissing gas sounds to accompany the word "genocide", we hear the vocalist ask the question "where you involved with persecutions associated with Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945, yes or no?" Someone flatly says "yes" and the vocalist enthusiastically answers "Thank you very much and Welcome to the United States!" Here Zappa is making a reference to the well-known fact that our country happily let in many Nazis in order to hire them for military, space, and other projects.

Conclusion (Slide #26)

In President Decatur's *Notes from Ransom Hall* January 13th entry "Turn to Face The Strange" (January, 13, 2016) he pays tribute to the late singer-songwriter David Bowie, invoking the lyrics: "turn to face the strange," from the chorus section of Bowie's popular song *Changes* and goes on to remind us that standard definitions of strange include "surprising in a way that is unsettling or hard to understand" and "not previously visited, seen or encountered." He continues: "We all face the temptation to stick close to the familiar – yet it is the strange that challenges us, that indeed provokes the changes within us all. The act of facing the strange is a central and essential part of a liberal arts education. We are here, on campus, to engage with that which we have yet to encounter, to grapple with thoughts and ideas that we may find unsettling or difficult to understand, to take in the surprise of discovery."

This is exactly what musical innovation is all about. If our approach to integrating innovative music is not simply to make sense of our experience by placing it into what used to be known as record bins, thereby encouraging a consumptive assessment, but instead we prize the unfamiliar, or the alien, for being what it is and seek to protect it from the incursions of familiar business as usual, then it has the possibility to retain its use value for a longer period of time than those experiences that have already been tucked neatly away into bins. This principle, by default, respects the otherness of anything it encounters, and expands our scope of knowledge, empathy, and experience of the world, and ultimately our willingness to move beyond habits and the status quo.

A Few Words about the New

What is truly new, that is new for a given person at a given time (not absolutely new), will be, by definition, experienced as not-yet comprehensible or perhaps painful and disturbing. Sometimes the person will need to come up with a new set of ideas, concepts, or expectations in order to process the experience. For example, if one listens to atonal music expecting to hear functional chords such as the tonic and dominant, one will inevitably feel thwarted or frustrated. In order to engage this music on its own terms you need to hear it with respect to its historical and compositional contexts. Perhaps the listener will need to do a little research to accomplish this in addition to being open to sign-to-object delay or suspension. The question of hearing new music boils down to one of mutual responsibility. The composer should, if she or he wants listeners, compose work that entices listeners to take the plunge. Listeners, for their part, should be ready and willing to take the plunge.

Being able to hear musical innovation creates a context for empathetic listeners willing to explore the marginal or periphery, as they become more caring persons. In fact studies have shown that people trained in listening to new music scored higher on empathy tests than ordinary people. Additionally, they were better able to deal with challenges, difficulties, and ambiguities of all kinds. Listening to innovative music can be compared to taking a vitamin supplement since we are not getting it from our daily iTunes, or now Apple Music, dosage. **(Slide #27)**

I would like to thank Hans and Yang for inviting me to give this presentation. Preparing for it allowed me to think more completely about issues and questions surround the composition and perception of innovative music. Thank you.

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