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Music of Peace and Protest: U.S. Composers and Musical Activism during the Vietnam War (1965-1971)

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the involvement of U.S. composers in Vietnam War protest. The Vietnam War period was a fraught time in U.S. history. Strongly held and antithetical opinions about American involvement in the conflict prompted widespread social unrest and protest. During these turbulent years, many art music composers voiced their opposition to the war through their musical works, through protest concerts, and through non-musical activities. By considering some of these composers and their works in the context of the antiwar movement, changing understandings of American national identity, and the cultural connotations of art music, this dissertation seeks to arrive at a deeper understanding of the experiences of U.S. composers during the Vietnam War. I expose the broad range of ways in which composers responded to this controversial conflict through a selection of case studies addressing specific composers, musical works, and protest events. By focusing on individual case studies grounded in archival research and musical and textual analysis, I explore the nuances of different types of art music protest as well as their role within the antiwar movement. In addition to exploring these specific examples of protest, the case studies in this dissertation illuminate larger themes at work within musical responses to the conflict: an understanding of music and politics as essentially intertwined; shifting conceptions of U.S. national identity; preoccupation with meaning and words; similarities and differences between the Vietnam War and prior U.S. military conflicts; and the implications of the cultural connotations of art music on its protest activities.

Keywords

Summary for Lay Audience

This dissertation explores the involvement of U.S. composers in Vietnam War protest. The Vietnam War period was a fraught time in U.S. history. Strongly held and antithetical opinions about American involvement in the conflict prompted widespread social unrest and protest. While the Vietnam War is most commonly associated with popular and folk music, many classical composers voiced their opposition to the war through their musical works, through protest concerts, and through non-musical protest activities. Through a selection of case studies focusing on specific composers, musical works, and protest events, I expose the broad range of ways in which composers responded to the Vietnam War as well as the nuances of different types of classical music protest. I consider these case studies within the context of the antiwar movement, changing understandings of American identity, and the cultural connotations of classical music, shedding light on the experiences of U.S. composers during the Vietnam War. In addition to exploring specific examples of protest, the case studies in this dissertation illuminate larger themes at work within musical responses to the conflict: an understanding of music and politics as essentially intertwined; shifting conceptions of U.S. national identity; preoccupation with meaning and words; similarities and differences between the Vietnam War and prior U.S. military conflicts; and the implications of the cultural connotations of art music on its protest activities.

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List of Abbreviations

LoC-AC
Aaron Copland Collection, ML31.K66, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

LoC-GC
George Crumb Papers, ML31.C87, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

LoC-LB
Leonard Bernstein Collection, ML31.B49, Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

NYPL-HLC
Henry Leland Clarke Papers, JPB 06-28, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York City, NY

NYPL-NDJ
Norman Dello Joio Papers, JPB 00-5, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, New York City, NY

NYU-MG
Malcolm Goldstein Papers, MSS.350, Fales Library and Special Collections, New York University Libraries, New York City, NY

SCPC-FRR
Fellowship of Reconciliation Records, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

YU-JT
James Tenney Fonds, F0428, Clara Thomas Archives, York University, Toronto, ON

Introduction

> My dear friends, here I am again, a musician talking politics. But, as
> I've said before, this is a time when everyone has to be in politics.[1]

At a rally in support of Senator Eugene McCarthy's bid for the Democratic

nomination in the 1968 U.S. presidential election, Leonard Bernstein spoke to the sense

of urgency felt by many Americans in response to the Vietnam War. The 1960s and early

1970s were fraught decades in the United States. Strongly held and antithetical opinions

about U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War incited widespread social unrest and protest.

The turbulent political climate and life-and-death stakes prompted many, like Bernstein,

to feel that they had a moral obligation to be politically active. McCarthy's presidential

campaign was characterized by vocal opposition to the war and to incumbent President

Lyndon B. Johnson's Vietnam policies. Bernstein was an active supporter of McCarthy's

campaign, as were other musicians. Folk group Peter, Paul and Mary recorded a song in

support of McCarthy's campaign entitled "Eugene McCarthy for President (If You Love

Your Country)," the chorus and first verse of which reinforce the sentiments of the

antiwar movement:

> If you love your country and the things for which it stands
> Vote for Gene McCarthy and bring peace to this our land.
>
> It robs us of the honor that our country's known before,
> When we will not pursue a peace to end an unjust war,
> We are all responsible for what's done in this war
> Democracy means we can decide, that's what our vote is for![2]

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[1] This text is handwritten at the top of Bernstein's typewritten speech for a rally in support of Senator Eugene McCarthy, Madison Square Garden, August 15, 1968. LoC-LB, Box 83, Folder 29.

[2] Peter, Paul and Mary, "Eugene McCarthy for President (If You Love Your Country)" was distributed as a promotional record during the 1968 McCarthy campaign. The B side of the record was a second version of the same song that was interspersed with recorded statements by McCarthy about the Vietnam War.

Peter, Paul and Mary's song not only explicitly links McCarthy's campaign to the war, but also highlights the moral concerns that many in the antiwar movement had with U.S. involvement in Vietnam by characterizing the war as unjust and asserting that involvement was harming the country's previously honourable reputation. Notably, the song also speaks to a sense of obligation to act, effectively holding all U.S. citizens responsible for the war and its impact. Evidently, Peter, Paul and Mary agreed with Bernstein that it was "a time when everyone has to be in politics."

While musical forms of Vietnam War protest are most often associated with popular and folk music, art music composers were similarly affected by the social tensions of the time, and many used their works to voice their objections to the war. Still more attended or performed at events, concerts, and rallies protesting U.S. involvement in the conflict. The late 1960s were just as pivotal a time for classical musicians in the United States as they were for the rest of the country. The antiwar activities of the art music community resulted in a large number of political compositions, including more than 115 anti-Vietnam War compositions written during U.S. involvement in the conflict.[3] Some composers had high hopes that their political music would make an impact. Elie Siegmeister, for example, describing one of his own anti-Vietnam compositions, said, "Obviously, I hoped that *The Face of War* would shorten the

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[3] The most complete list of Vietnam-related compositions can be found in Timothy P. Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam" (University of Washington, 2005), which lists 115 works written between 1965 and 1975, as well as many more written later in the century and into the early 2000s.

miserable Vietnam disgrace by at least one minute--maybe it did!"[4] For the most part, though, musicians seem to have recognized that, although their impact might be limited, they needed to do something.

In this dissertation, I examine the involvement of U.S. composers in Vietnam War protest during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Through case studies centered around composers, works, and performance events, I argue that members of the art music community were responding to the same protest impulse as other participants in the counterculture movement. Simultaneously, I demonstrate ways in which influences such as the cultural connotations of classical music affected high art responses to the Vietnam War, rendering them different from their popular music counterparts. By considering representative works and performance events within the context of the antiwar movement and changing attitudes towards war and national identity, this dissertation exposes the range of ways in which composers responded to this controversial conflict. Understanding these examples of art music protest within the context of interconnected cultural movements and social concerns provides a revealing perspective that can augment our understanding of the makeup of the antiwar movement and art music's role within it.

The Vietnam War and the Antiwar Movement

The war in Vietnam was a complex conflict with numerous turning points and interested parties. As this dissertation is concerned with the experiences and works of

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[4] Elie Siegmeister, letter to Ben Arnold, April 13, 1985. Quoted in Ben Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," *Musical Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (1991): 319.

U.S. composers, the most relevant aspects of the war for this study are those that significantly influenced the perception of the war from the perspective of the public in the United States. While the United States had some involvement in Vietnam starting in the mid-1950s, it was in March 1965 that U.S. combat troops first arrived in Vietnam. This was after Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in response to an alleged attack on two U.S. naval vessels in what has come to be known as the Gulf of Tonkin Incident in 1964.[5] In the United States, opposition to the war began almost immediately, particularly within existing social justice groups. As U.S. involvement in Vietnam dragged on, support for the antiwar movement grew and the country became increasingly polarized between "hawks" and "doves": those who supported and encouraged military action in Vietnam and those who felt that the U.S. should not be involved. The Tet Offensive, an organized attack by Viet Cong and People's Army of Vietnam forces against South Vietnamese command centres in January and February 1968, had a profound impact on public perception of the war in the United States. While the North Vietnamese did not achieve their tactical goals, the Tet Offensive had a devastating effect on South Vietnam and led many Americans to question whether the war was going as well as they had been told by the U.S. government.[6] Another significant moment in public perception of the war occurred in November 1969, when news of the March 1968 Mỹ Lai massacre was released in the American press. Hundreds of South Vietnamese

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[5] For a detailed historiography of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident and how it impacted U.S. involvement in Vietnam, see Tal Tovey, *The Gulf of Tonkin: The United States and the Escalation in the Vietnam War* (New York: Routledge, 2021).

[6] For a contemporary discussion of the Tet Offensive and its impact on public perception of the war, see Don Oberdorfer, *Tet!* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

civilians were killed during the Mỹ Lai massacre by members of Charlie Company, part of the American Division's 11th Infantry Brigade, who were on a search-and-destroy mission.[7]

The American public's perception of each of these events, and others, was profoundly shaped by technological developments over the twentieth century that allowed the war in Vietnam to become the first televised war. For the first time U.S. citizens at home were able to see for themselves the brutal realities of wartime carnage.[8] This exposure, in combination with suspicions about the motivations behind U.S. involvement in the conflict and controversial moments like the Tet Offensive, the Mỹ Lai massacre, and the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971 led many citizens to question traditional conceptions of American exceptionalism and the country's position of moral high ground. The effects of the Vietnam War were widespread and long-lasting, as indicated in Henry Kissinger's 1982 assertion that "Vietnam is still with us. It has created doubts about American judgement, about American credibility, about American power – not only at home, but throughout the world."[9] This assertion is particularly notable coming from Kissinger, who was Secretary of State during the conflict and was at least partly responsible for many decisions about U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

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[7] For a comprehensive account of the Mỹ Lai massacre and its impact, see Howard Jones, *My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). Charlie Company was part of the First Battalion of the 20th Infantry Regiment of the 11th Infantry Brigade.

[8] For more detail on media coverage of the war and how it compared to the official messaging from the U.S. government, see William M. Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media and Military at War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[9] Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 9.

Objection to U.S. involvement in Vietnam was motivated by a number of factors

and manifested in a broad range of protest events.[10] Some antiwar protesters were

pacifists who objected to the war on the same grounds as they did any violent action.[11]

Others took issue with specific aspects of the war in Vietnam that they believed made it

particularly morally objectionable, pointing to questions of whether the U.S. had the right

to involve itself in this conflict, or whether this was simply an act of imperialism. Reports

of civilian deaths and accounts of veterans' experiences in the war further compounded

these concerns about the United States' moral justifications for intervention. Also

objectionable to many were the draft system, which resulted in many young men publicly

destroying their draft cards as acts of protest;[12] the inequitable number of Black

Americans who were drafted and the morality of requiring Black soldiers to fight for their

country overseas when they were struggling for equal rights at home;[13] and, as the

conflict dragged on, belief that the war and its devastation was all in service of an

inevitable loss. At the local level, antiwar demonstrators held sit-ins, teach-ins, rallies,

marches, concerts, and draft-card burnings. Some protesters resorted to the extreme act of

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[10] For a discussion of the ways in which U.S. citizens have objected to wars up to and including the Vietnam War, see James M. Volo, *A History of War Resistance in America* (Santa Barbara and Denver: Greenwood, 2010).

[11] Pacifism itself incorporates a range of ideas regarding violence. See Duane L. Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism: A Moral Continuum*, 2nd Edition (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

[12] For a detailed analysis of race and class inequities in the draft system during the Vietnam War, see Amy J. Rutenberg, *Rough Draft: Cold War Military Manpower Policy and the Origins of Vietnam-Era Draft Resistance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), particularly ch.6 "'Choice or Chance': The Vietnam War, 1965-1973".

[13] Herman Graham III discusses the experiences of Black soldiers in Vietnam in *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003).

self-immolation.[14] Significant large-scale protest events included the March on the

Pentagon on October 21-23, 1967, which drew the participation of 100,000 protesters; the

Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam on October 15, 1969, which included

demonstrations in cities across the country; the March Against Death on November 15,

1969 in which over 250,000 protesters marched in Washington D.C.; and the May 1970

student strike, which began on May 1 but drastically increased in size and scope in

reaction to the Kent State shootings on May 4, 1970, when four students were killed and

nine were wounded at the hands of the Ohio National Guard.

Literature Review

During the late 1960s, the typical antiwar activist was portrayed in the media as

"a hairy, filthy, ragged youth with his arm and hand raised in an angry gesture [usually]

with a single raised finger."[15] However, this image does not accurately represent the

wide range of Americans who supported the antiwar cause. Scholars have pointed to the

diverse societal groups who participated in Vietnam War protest.[16] As Melvin Small

vividly describes, the protest movement was

> [an] ever-shifting coalition of pacifists, liberals, social democrats,
> socialists, Communists, and cultural radicals, many of whom were
> college students, working people, suburbanites, clerics, politicians,

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[14] Alice Herz, age 82, set herself on fire in protest of the Vietnam War on March 16, 1965 in Detroit, Michigan. Herz was the first person known to have self-immolated in the United States in protest of the Vietnam War, but at least nine others followed over the next ten years. See Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2002), 21.

[15] Small, 27.

[16] See for example Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984); Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*.

journalists, intellectuals, and even proverbial little old ladies in tennis shoes.[17]

This coalition was united in opposing U.S. intervention in Vietnam, but its members often disagreed on their motivations and on the ways in which they should demonstrate their opposition.[18] In recent years, scholars have become increasingly interested in investigating the movement's diversity. Randall B. Woods, for example, has demonstrated how opposition to the war appeared across diverse political groups, while Penny Lewis has challenged the way that the movement is usually remembered as made up of students and elite intellectuals by emphasizing the involvement of the middle class, presenting a countermemory of cross-class and multi-class protest.[19] Many scholars have also expanded the understanding of the antiwar movement by investigating the involvement of specific groups, including women's groups,[20] college students,[21] veterans

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[17] Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*, 3.

[18] Small, 3.

[19] Randall B. Woods, *Vietnam and the American Political Tradition: The Politics of Dissent* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Penny Lewis, *Hardhats, Hippies, and Hawks: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement as Myth and Memory* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2013).

[20] Jessica M. Frazier, *Women's Antiwar Diplomacy During the Vietnam War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

[21] Martin Klimke, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Robbie Lieberman and David Cochran, "'We Closed Down the Damn School': The Party Culture and Student Protest at Southern Illinois University During the Vietnam War Era," *Peace and Change* 26, no. 3 (2001): 316–31; Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement and the American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993); Paul Cronin, *A Time to Stir: Columbia '68* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018).

and the military,[22] and Asian Americans,[23] as well as interactions between the antiwar and civil rights movements.[24] In addition, some people who participated in the antiwar movement have written accounts of the movement that are informed by their personal experiences.[25]

In contrast to art music about the Vietnam War, popular and folk music responses to the conflict have been given much critical attention. Vietnam War-related works feature prominently in historical surveys of protest songs.[26] Some research focuses exclusively on music during the Vietnam War era or a span of years within it,

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[22] Elise Lemire, *Battle Green Vietnam: The 1971 March on Concord, Lexington, and Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021); Richard Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997); Richard R. Moser, *The New Winter Soldiers: GI and Veteran Dissent During the Vietnam War Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1996); David L. Parsons, *Dangerous Grounds: Antiwar Coffeehouses and Military Dissent in the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Wilbur J. Scott, *Vietnam Veterans Since the War: The Politics of PTSD, Agent Orange, and the National Memorial* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

[23] Karen L Ishizuka, "'Kill That Gook, You Gook,'" in *The Global 1960s: Convention, Contest, and Counterculture*, ed. Tamara Chaplin and Jadwiga E. Pieper-Mooney (London: Routledge, 2017), 217–35.

[24] Daniel S. Lucks, *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Lawrence Allen Eldridge, *Chronicles of a Two-Front War: Civil Rights and Vietnam in the African American Press* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2011).

[25] See for example Howard Ruffner, *Moments of Truth: A Photographer's Experience of Kent State 1970* (Ashland: The Kent State University Press, 2019); Bruce Dancis, *Resister: A Story of Protest and Prison During the Vietnam War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014); Tom Hayden, *Hell No: The Forgotten Power of the Vietnam Peace Movement* (Cumberland: Yale University Press, 2017); Franklin K. Bruce, *Crash Course: From the Good War to the Forever War* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018); Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*; Scott, *Vietnam Veterans Since the War: The Politics of PTSD, Agent Orange, and the National Memorial*.

[26] See for example Robin Deselow, *When the Music's Over: The Story of Political Pop* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990); Hardeep Phull, *Story Behind the Protest Song: A Reference Guide to the 50 Songs That Changed the 20th Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008); Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions Per Minute: A History of Protest Songs, from Billie Holiday to Green Day* (New York: Ecco, 2011); Ronald D. Cohen and Will Kaufman, *Singing for Peace: Anti-War Songs in American History* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

emphasizing the pivotal nature of the late 1960s not only culturally and politically, but also musically.[27] Numerous studies are dedicated exclusively to songs responding to the Vietnam War, the most comprehensive of which is James E. Perone's *Songs of the Vietnam Conflict* (2001).[28] Popular music about the Vietnam War is frequently linked not only to the larger protest movement, but also to 1960s counterculture more broadly.[29] Studies like Perone's *Music of the Counterculture Era* (2004) and Michael J. Kramer's *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (2013) reinforce the significance of popular music's role in the counterculture movement and include examples of Vietnam War-related songs.[30] Overall, the often-overlapping fields of literature on popular music, Vietnam War protest, and socio-political movements in

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[27] Charles Kaiser, *1968 in America: Music, Politics, Chaos, Counterculture, and the Shaping of a Generation* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988); Andrew Grant Jackson, *1965: The Most Revolutionary Year in Music* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2015); Victoria Broakes and Geoffrey Marsh, eds., *You Say You Want a Revolution?: Records and Rebels, 1966-1970* (London: V&A Publishing, 2016); Danny Goldberg, *In Search of the Lost Chord: 1967 and the Hippie Idea* (London: Icon Books Ltd., 2017). See also Riley Maynard, "Protest Music Lyrics, 1962-1975: Cultural Roles, Relationships and Impacts: 'This Machine Kills Fascists'" (Saint Louis University, 1995), which analyzes the lyrics from protest songs.

[28] James Perone, *Songs of the Vietnam Conflict* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2001). Other studies on this subject include H. Ben Auslander, "'If Ya Wanna End War and Stuff, You Gotta Sing Loud': A Survey of Vietnam-Related Protest Music," *The Journal of American Culture* 4, no. 2 (1981): 108–13; Duane Richard Fish, "Songs of the Sixties: A Rhetorical Examination of Song as a Protest Against the Vietnam War" (The University of Utah, 1994); David James, "The Vietnam War and American Music," *Social Text* 23 (1989): 122–43, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00014588; Markus Jäger, *Joan Baez and the Issue of Vietnam: Art and Activism versus Conventionality* (Stuttgart, Germany: Ibidem, 2003); Neill Clegg, "Anti-Vietnam War Protest Music," in *Sounds of Resistance: The Role of Music in Multicultural Activism*, ed. Eunice Rojas and Lindsay Michie, Volume 1: (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 145–61.

[29] 1960s counterculture was a youth-driven movement that challenged the structure and values of U.S. society and inspired a wave of protest songs, many of which are integral to cultural memory of the movements with which they are associated.

[30] James E. Perone, *Music of the Counterculture Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004); Michael J. Kramer, *The Republic of Rock: Music and Citizenship in the Sixties Counterculture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

the 1960s make evident their interrelatedness in a way that is notably absent from discussions of art music during the Vietnam War era.

Despite increased attention both to the ways in which different groups participated in the antiwar movement and in music's relationship to Cold War politics, the role of the art music community in Vietnam War protest has remained largely unexamined. The first published study dedicated to Vietnam War-related art music was Ben Arnold's 1991 "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era."[31] This brief article serves mostly to draw attention to the neglected repertoire of compositions written about the Vietnam War and some of the ways in which these works differ from previous wartime compositions. The content of the article is derived from Arnold's 1986 dissertation, "War, Peace, and the Apocalypse in Art Music Since World War II," which discusses the topic of war more generally and assesses trends in twentieth-century war compositions.[32] His 1993 book *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide* includes a similar discussion of Vietnam War works.[33]

The most comprehensive study of Vietnam-related repertoire thus far, along with an index of 178 works, is Timothy P. Kinsella's 2005 dissertation, "A World of

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[31] Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era."

[32] Cecil Benjamin Arnold Jr., "War, Peace, and the Apocalypse in Art Music Since World War II" (University of Kentucky, 1986). Arnold considers works from composers of many nationalities and responding to a variety of conflicts. The Vietnam War content in his dissertation is very similar to what is presented in his 1991 article.

[33] Ben Arnold, *Music and War: A Research and Information Guide* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam."[34] Kinsella groups the compositions

into categories, namely Lament, Memory, Outrage, Mockery, Shock and Awe, Peace,

Witness, and Empathy. Paul Cameron MacPhail's 1992 DMA monograph, "The

Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," is another

source that considers this repertoire. MacPhail discusses a small selection of U.S. vocal

works responding to the war, contextualizing them chronologically among major

developments of the conflict and events in the protest movement.[35] Both Arnold and

Kinsella are concerned with documenting the breadth of compositions responding to the

Vietnam War, and so include works written by composers of a variety of nationalities.

Kinsella's list of 178 works includes 133 by U.S. composers, 86 of which were composed

between 1965 and 1975 but some written as recently as 2005. Arnold's article lists only

60 works, most of which were composed during U.S. involvement in Vietnam but some

dating as late as 1985. While neither of these catalogues is complete (and it is unlikely

any such catalogue ever would be), the data these scholars have collected indicate

important trends both in when composers wrote music about the Vietnam War and in

compositional techniques and approaches. Kinsella's catalogue indicates that the earliest

Vietnam War compositions were composed in 1965, including James Tenney's tape

collage for *Viet-Flakes*.[36]

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[34] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam."

[35] Paul Cameron MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992).

[36] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 636. The other two works Kinsella lists in this year are both by Italian composers: Canzoniere delle Lame's *Grida de Vietnam libero subito dopo la fine del discorso* and Luigi Nono's *A floresta e joveme cheda de vida*. While Kinsella lists

Both Arnold and Kinsella describe some trends among compositions that respond to the Vietnam War, most notably their unanimous position of opposition to the conflict. Arnold emphasizes this as a significant change in the nature of war-related compositions, asserting that "composers no longer wrote compositions to support the war as [many did] during World War II; they openly protested the war and expressed antigovernment sentiments directly and to a degree unprecedented in history."[37] Kinsella likewise considers the repertoire of Vietnam War works to "[represent] a radical break from past tradition," but acknowledges its position within a trajectory "that transformed war music from formulaic depictions of glorious battle to horrifying indictments of man's inhumanity to man, and literally frightening depictions of gruesome carnage" over the course of the twentieth century.[38] Many of the other trends these scholars identify can be viewed as part of this trajectory. In their subject matter, Vietnam War works depart from earlier war compositions by calling for peace rather than rallying to victory.[39] Composers overwhelmingly demonstrate empathy towards all victims of the war, regardless of which side they fought on.[40] Foreign soldiers' lives are consistently considered as valuable as

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Viet-Flakes as a 1965 work, all other sources point to it being composed in 1966. However, Tenney's *Thermocouple #2*, which Kinsella does not include in his list of war-related works, was composed in 1965.

[37] Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 317–18. See also Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 78–79. For a study of pro-war American works written during the Second World War, see Annegret Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[38] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79 and 63.

[39] See Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 326.

[40] See Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 325 and Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 78. Arnold gives the example of Ned Rorem's *War Scenes*, which is dedicated "to those who died in Vietnam, both sides, during the composition: 20-30 June 1969." *War Scenes* is discussed extensively in chapter 4 of this dissertation. While

those of Americans, and moreover, Arnold notes, "numerous popular and art composers satirized their own troops."[41] Attempts to glorify the deaths of Americans and their allies as heroic or their sacrifices as noble, a facet common to previous war compositions, are absent.[42] Lastly, Kinsella notes a conspicuous lack of both nationalism and patriotism in U.S. composers' works and a trend towards placing direct or implied blame on the U.S. government.[43]

These changes to the nature of war compositions are similarly reflected in the compositional techniques used. Arnold and Kinsella agree that most of these works reject traditional forms and structures and embrace experimental and avant-garde techniques.[44] Some composers used realistic sounds of gunfire, explosions, or screaming to emphasize the horror of the war.[45] In fact, Kinsella asserts the "nightmarish" nature of this particular war necessitated a change in modes of composition:

> Composers of art music found traditional concepts of form, narrative, and technique… inadequate to convey their vision of the war. …. Composers marshaled a wealth of innovative and extreme musical techniques in order to express the particular anguish, brutality, and absurdity of the Vietnam War, a postmodern war which… strongly resists traditional narrative techniques.[46]

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neither Arnold nor Kinsella limits their discussion to exclusively U.S. composers, their conclusions are mostly based upon works by Western composers.

[41] Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 324.

[42] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79.

[43] Kinsella, 78.

[44] See Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 322; Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79-80.

[45] Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 322.

[46] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79-80.

My dissertation builds upon this foundational work on Vietnam War art music, but also significantly extends the existing literature in a number of ways. Firstly, my study combines musical analysis with examinations of the political beliefs and activities of these works' composers and the cultural contexts of each work's creation and performance. While Kinsella does discuss societal movements and changes to conceptions of American national identity while introducing the cultural climate of the time, he does not consider cultural trends when analyzing individual works themselves. Second, both my focus on a small group of illustrative works and the variety of case studies I have selected allows me to assess the nuances of different types of protest and the ways in which different works and performance events project different antiwar messages. The large scope of Kinsella's study (considering all Vietnam-related works) and his effort to categorize the compositions leave him unable to consider the multifaceted nature of musical Vietnam protest that comes to light through considering the interaction of diverse case studies. Finally, my dissertation uses a variety of lenses for examining these works, none of which are explored in any detail by Kinsella and Arnold, including conceptions of national identity, the cultural connotations of art music and its audience, protest and countercultural movements, and musical techniques and styles. The resultant analyses contribute new layers of meaning to our understanding of these Vietnam War works, their creators, and their involvement in the antiwar movement.

In exploring the experiences of U.S. composers during the Vietnam War, this dissertation contributes to broader conversations in scholarship on music and war and conceptions of American musical identity. The relationship between music and war is an increasingly popular area of study in recent years, resulting in studies on music in

specific conflicts such as the American Civil War,[47] World War I,[48] World War II,[49] and

the Iraq War.[50] Work that engages with music and war in an American context,

particularly art music, is particularly applicable to this dissertation. Annegret Fauser's

Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II (2013), for example,

asserts that the political and social climate of World War II was integral to defining and

consolidating U.S. national identity, and points to the significance of classical music to

wartime culture in the United States.[51] *Music and War in the United States* (2018), edited

by Sarah Kraaz, examines examples of music's role in American wars from the

Revolutionary war through to the twenty-first century. This edited volume includes two

chapters on Vietnam War music, "Vietnam: Popular Music in the Field" by Doug

Bradley and "Vietnam: Music of Support and Protest" by James Deaville, but both of

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[47] James A. Davis, *Music Along the Rapidan: Civil War Soldiers, Music, and Community during Winter Quarters, Virginia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); James A. Davis, *Maryland, My Maryland: Music and Patriotism during the American Civil War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

[48] Don Tyler, *Music of the First World War* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016); William Brooks, Christina Bashford, and Gayle Magee, eds., *Over Here, Over There: Transatlantic Conversations on the Music of World War I* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Emma Hanna, *Sounds of War: Music in the British Armed Forces during the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

[49] Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II*; Kelly Jakes, *Strains of Dissent: Popular Music and Everyday Resistance in WWII France, 1940-1945* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2019); Christina L. Baade, *Victory Through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); John Bush Jones, *The Songs That Fought the War: Popular Music and the Home Front, 1939-1945* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2006); Pamela M. Potter, Christina L. Baade, and Roberta Montemorra Marvin, eds., *Music in World War II: Coping with Wartime in Europe and the United States* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020).

[50] Johnathan Pieslak, *Sound Targets: American Soldiers and Music in the Iraq War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma, and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[51] Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II*.

these chapters focus exclusively on popular and folk music.[52] Music written in response

to wars also bears connections to other war-responding art, as Janis P. Stout explores in

Coming Out of the War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of World Wars (2005).[53] The

interaction between Cold War politics and music is also a flourishing area of study in its

own right. Scholars have explored the impact of the political tensions of the era on many

areas of musical activity, including musical style and cultural diplomacy.[54]

An important theme of this dissertation is that of identity. One of the research

questions that guided my exploration of how these composers responded to the Vietnam

War was "what did it mean to be an American composer during the Vietnam War?" The

answer is different for each composer that I discuss, but in each case the answer hinges

on how they perceive themselves, and therefore their identities—as musicians, as U.S.

citizens, and as members of the antiwar movement. The topic of U.S. national identity

and what it means to compose American music has been discussed by composers and

music critics since the eighteenth century. Recent scholarship on American music and

national identity in the United States reflects a continued effort to consider varying

definitions of what it means to be American. As Charles Hiroshi Garrett describes in his

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[52] Douglas Bradley, "Vietnam: Popular Music in the Field," in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. Sarah Kraaz (New York: Routledge, 2018), 194–210; James Deaville, "Vietnam: Music of Patriotism and Protest," in *Music and War in the United States*, ed. Sarah Kraaz (New York: Routledge, 2018), 211–27.

[53] Janis P. Stout, *Coming Out of War: Poetry, Grieving, and the Culture of World Wars* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2005).

[54] Studies on music in the United States during the Cold War include Danielle Fosler-Lussier, *Music in America's Cold War Diplomacy* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); Tim Smolko and Joanna Smolko, *Atomic Tunes: The Cold War in American and British Popular Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021); Emily Abrams Ansari, *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

aptly titled *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (2008), "the intellectual debates over how to define a nation's music persist to the present; shifting perspectives and competing answers to this question continually reconstitute the field."[55] While late twentieth-century scholarship on American music mostly focuses on classical music, more recent scholarship reflects a fresh interest in diversity and in centering previously unexplored or peripheral populations and their conceptions of America, as well as making the case for popular, folk, and jazz traditions as representative of an American national identity.[56] This dissertation's exploration of composers' identities is not limited to their national identities, however; the case studies I have chosen often reflect other aspects of these composers' perceptions of themselves. In *What Will I Be: American Music and Cold War Identity* (2017), Philip M. Gentry addresses the rise of identity as a concept in the 1950s, exploring ways in which music articulates different Cold War identities through a series of case studies.[57] In the vein of

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[55] Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 5.

[56] See for example Stephanie Shonekan, *Soul, Country, and the USA* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2015); Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Roberto Avant-Mier, *Rock the Nation: Latin/o Identities and the Latin Rock Diaspora* (New York: Continuum, 2010); Rachel Mundy, "The 'League of Jewish Composers' and American Music," *The Musical Quarterly* 96 (2013): 50–99; Deborah Ann Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Jennifer Fleeger, *Sounding American: Hollywood, Opera, and Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). For discussions of American music from the twentieth century, see Barbara A. Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980); Alan Howard Levy, *Musical Nationalism: American Composers' Search for Identity* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983); Barbara Tischler, *An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[57] Philip M. Gentry, *What Will I Be?: American Music and Cold War Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

Gentry, I understand identity as individual and personal, but also profoundly influenced by the political and cultural moment.

Methodology

Between October 2017 and July 2018, I conducted multiple archival research trips, the findings from which were instrumental in shaping the scope of this dissertation. Archival research at the Aaron Copland Collection, the George Crumb Papers, and the Leonard Bernstein Collection at the United States Library of Congress; the Norman Dello Joio papers and the Henry Leland Clarke papers at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts; the Swarthmore College Peace Collection at Swarthmore College; the Malcolm Goldstein papers at New York University; and the James Tenney Fonds at York University yielded unpublished writings and correspondence, concert programs and publicity materials, and musical scores and sketches, the analysis of which forms the basis of this study. In addition, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview composer Malcolm Goldstein over the telephone in September of 2020. This interview was conducted in compliance with Western University's Research Ethics Board. I draw upon excerpts from this interview in chapters one and three, and the full interview transcript is included as an appendix to this dissertation. My analysis of composers' antiwar works and activities also draws upon composers' published writings, musical scores, and in some cases recordings. Many of the chapters include musical analysis and discussions of text-setting, as well as comparison with source poetry.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation explores the involvement of U.S. composers in Vietnam War protest by focusing in on specific examples of composers, works, and performance events. Each chapter serves as a window into a different type of musical protest. My focus on a variety of case studies allows me to consider a broad range of ways in which musicians reacted to the protest impulse and to explore the nuances of different types of art music protest. The composers and works that I discuss all come from a position of opposition to the conflict in Vietnam, but the form that their protest takes and the message each portrays are ultimately influenced by personal and external considerations. While these chapters explore specific works, composers, and performance events, they also illuminate larger themes at work within musical responses to the antiwar movement: an understanding of music and politics as essentially intertwined; shifting conceptions of U.S. national identity; preoccupation with meaning and words; similarities and differences between the Vietnam War and prior U.S. military conflicts; and the implications of the cultural connotations of art music on its protest activities.

The first chapter of this dissertation introduces many of the themes that return in the following chapters. This chapter is an examination of the Vietnam War protest activities of James Tenney (1934-2006) and Malcolm Goldstein (b. 1936) within the context of their writings and statements on the relationship between politics and art, and by extension an exploration of the participation of experimental composers in the antiwar movement. Both Tenney and Goldstein were active members of the experimental music scene in New York City in the late 1960s, and both participated in the antiwar movement and composed antiwar works. This chapter is rooted in archival research at the James

Tenney Fonds at York University and the Malcolm Goldstein Papers at New York

University, as well as an interview I conducted with Goldstein in September 2020. I

demonstrate that both Tenney and Goldstein understood music and politics as

interrelated, making their participation in the antiwar movement and their Vietnam War-

related works a natural extension of their other musical and political activities. This

chapter also allows for exploration of the relationship between experimentalism and

politics more broadly, as well as the ways in which divisions and genre labels contribute

to the ways that protest music is understood and consumed. Tenney and Goldstein both

felt obligated to participate in the antiwar movement as they equated inaction with

complicity.

Chapter two delves into the ways in which conceptions of national identity

shifted for many U.S. citizens during the Vietnam War, analyzing the antiwar works of

Elie Siegmeister (1909-1991) as reflections of his changing understanding of American

identity through both his choice of source poetry and through his use of musical style.

Siegmeister was a dedicated musical nationalist who emphasized the importance of U.S.

national identity in his compositions. However, in the song cycle *The Face of War* and

song "Evil" (both 1967), Siegmeister departs from the tonal, lyrical style he usually

employed, a style that had long articulated his conception of American music. Using

evidence from Siegmeister's writings and interviews, I demonstrate how these works

reflect his experience as a Communist who fiercely opposed U.S. involvement in

Vietnam. I argue that the dissonant musical language Siegmeister employs in his Vietnam

War works is the product of his impulse to represent America musically at a time when

he perceived his country's international role to be destructive. These works present an

American perspective that is both tied to and eschews an earlier, idealized conception of U.S. national identity, now fractured and tainted by the nation's role in Vietnam.

The third chapter of this dissertation considers the phenomenon of musical works that use the transformation or erasure of word meanings to comment on the Vietnam War. I analyze Malcolm Goldstein's *State of the Nation* (1967), Salvatore Martirano's *L's. G. A.* (1967), and Roger Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time* (1968), three works that manipulate texts that are in some way symbolic of the United States, taking as my focus not the texts being manipulated, but the works' focus on the manipulation of word meanings. In so doing, I argue that these works are not merely examples of public disrespect or contempt for the war as they have previously been understood, but political commentary on the atmosphere of the United States in the 1960s and the ways in which the meanings of words were changing. While this chapter does touch on conceptions of national identity, its primary contribution to the dissertation is in demonstrating the interconnectedness between the antiwar movement and the broader context of social movements and the societal preoccupations of the time.

In chapter four, I analyze three examples of Vietnam War-related works that advocate peace by setting texts written in response to previous military conflicts: Henry Leland Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers" (1970), Norman Dello Joio's *Evocations* (1970), and Ned Rorem's *War Scenes* (1969). While these works react directly to the Vietnam War, their use of historical texts weakens their potential to address specific concerns about U.S. involvement in Vietnam. I argue that by situating themselves within a tradition of war-responding art, and within the history of U.S. military conflict, the composers of these works make poignant statements about the conflict they were

witnessing and about war and peace more broadly. These composers create works that carry the weight of the passage of time, pointing to the futility of war and advocating universal peace. In discussing the setting of texts from previous conflicts, this chapter also sheds light on ways in which conceptions of war and its morality shifted during the twentieth century.

Chapter five brings together many of the important themes in this dissertation as I discuss "Composers and Musicians for Peace," a May 1968 concert at Carnegie Hall. Dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr., the concert was organized by Elie Siegmeister under the auspices of the Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and it featured a number of prominent composers and performers. The program included two new Vietnam War works, Siegmeister's *The Face of War* (1967) and William Mayer's *Letters Home* (1968), as well as earlier twentieth-century works that take on new meaning in the context of Vietnam War protest. I explore the political motivations behind the concert and analyze the musical works and prominent figures associated with it, demonstrating ways in which the concert engaged with complex issues that include the morality of war, patriotism and national identity, racial tensions and civil rights, and the cultural connotations of art music. "Composers and Musicians for Peace" is a particularly compelling example of the ways in which different political issues and societal concerns interacted during the Vietnam War era. This concert also augments our understanding of the antiwar movement by providing an example of a protest concert that consciously marks itself as 'respectable' by invoking cultural authority. In doing so, "Composers and Musicians for Peace" contributed to a specific type of protest that rejected the image most commonly associated with Vietnam protesters at the time.

Finally, in my conclusion I reflect upon the themes that run through the chapters of the dissertation, considering the ways in which a range of cultural movements and societal concerns intersected and correlated in the United States during the Vietnam War era. I discuss Leonard Bernstein's *Mass* (1971) and George Crumb's *Black Angels* (1970), both of which are works often considered responses to the Vietnam War while being described by their composers only as reflective of the time in which they were composed. Crumb's dating of the *Black Angels* score as *in tempore belli* leads me to a broader contemplation of how these two works, and ultimately all the works considered in this dissertation, might be understood as an exploration of what it means to be a composer in a time of war—and, specifically, in the time of this particular war.

Chapter 1

1 Experimentalism and Activism: James Tenney and Malcolm Goldstein

From January 29 through February 5, 1967, members of the New York City arts community protested U.S. involvement in Vietnam through the "Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam." A full-page advertisement in the *Village Voice* on January 27 of that year described the week as follows: "the artists of New York speak through their own work to dissociate themselves from U.S. policy in Vietnam."[58] The week included forty-six different events, with representation from poets and writers, dancers, photographers, and filmmakers. Music played a significant role, with concerts accounting for over a quarter of the program. In addition to eleven concerts under the category "Musicians Dissent," which featured performances of canonical works such as Bach's E Major Partita for solo violin and the funeral march from Beethoven's *Eroica*, the week included a seven-hour "folk rock marathon," a jazz concert dedicated to draft-age boys, and two concerts under the category "Avant Garde Musicians Dissent." These two avant-garde concerts featured works and performances by Morton Feldman, Steve Reich, Malcolm Goldstein, Philip Corner, and James Tenney, among others. Francis Frascina has pointed to the relative consistency of the wording used in the Angry Art's schedule of events, particularly through its stress of the word "Dissent": "Dancers Dissent," "Folk

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[58] "January 29 – February 5: Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam," *Village Voice*, January 26, 1967, 17. Angry Arts advertisement.

Rock Dissents," and so on.[59] What is equally striking in this schedule of events, however, is the way in which it differentiates between categories of art. In the case of music's representation, the titles "Folk Rock Dissents," "Avant Garde Musicians Dissent," "Musicians Dissent," and "Jazz Concert" imply a certain understanding of who are considered 'musicians'—notice not only the addition of 'Avant Garde' as a qualifier, but also the absence of the word 'musicians' from the folk-rock and jazz categories. Furthermore, these titles raise questions as to the form protest takes within different styles and genres of musical expression, and the nature of these different types of protest.

The participation of experimental musicians in Vietnam War protest extended well beyond the Week of the Angry Arts against Vietnam; experimentalists organized protest concerts and events throughout the conflict and were responsible for numerous antiwar compositions. In this chapter, I examine the relationship between antiwar protest and the experimental music scene in New York City by considering the experiences of two composers, James Tenney (1934-2006) and Malcolm Goldstein (b. 1936). These composers both contributed to the antiwar movement through their musical works and performances and through participation in non-musical political demonstrations. Analyzing these composers' views on the relationship between music and politics as expressed in writings and interviews provides illuminating context through which to understand their antiwar activities.

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[59] Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics, and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), 116.

American experimentalism and politics have a complex relationship.[60]

Composers like Tenney and Goldstein were active in political activities including and

beyond Vietnam War protest. As Goldstein recalled, "that's what we did in those days….

[W]e were active in all the politics of war in Vietnam, the civil liberties activities in the

sixties, the women's rights activities, so we were all involved with these political focuses

at that time."[61] However, not all experimentalists were as explicitly concerned with socio-

political matters. John Cage, for example, rejected an association with politics, despite

pleas from his colleagues during the late 1960s, though David W. Patterson has argued

that Cage's relationship to politics is more complex than the composer expressed

publicly.[62] In *Experimentalism Otherwise*, Benjamin Piekut describes American

experimentalism as engaging with both the everyday and the potential otherwise:

> like any avant-garde, experimentalism performs not simply a return to
> daily life but an intensification of it—a peculiar mix of the
> commonplace and the singular. Experimentalism is both ordinary and
> extraordinary. It is the everyday world around us, as well as the
> possibility that this world might be otherwise.[63]

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[60] While Piekut uses the terms "experimentalism" and "avant garde" interchangeably, I am exclusively using "experimentalism" due to Goldstein's rejection of avant garde as a label. However, I do use "avant garde" in this chapter when referring to concerts or sources that included it in their title.

[61] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[62] David W. Patterson, "'Political' or 'Social'? John Cage and the Remolding of Mao Tse-Tung," in *Cage & Consequences* (Hofheim: Wolke, 2012), 51–65. Patterson provides examples of letters from Luigi Nono and Philip Corner encouraging Cage to participate in actions against the Vietnam War. Annegret Fauser discusses Cage's works *Credo in US* and *In the Name of the Holocaust* (both 1942) as responses to World War II, interpreting *Credo in US* in particular as an amalgamation of the American soundscape during the war. See Fauser, *Sounds of War: Music in the United States during World War II*, 269–71.

[63] Benjamin Piekut, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 2.

While this is not a prescriptive definition—and indeed, Piekut acknowledges that defining experimentalism is essentially impossible—Piekut's theorization of experimentalism as both ordinary and extraordinary provides a revealing lens through which to consider antiwar protest of this period and its implications for experimental music, and the work of Tenney and Goldstein in particular. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Vietnam War was a significant concern on the minds of Americans and, as we shall see from the statements of Tenney and Goldstein, concerns about the war and antiwar activities became part of daily life for some. Certainly Vietnam War protest was a part of "the everyday world around us" for most of U.S. society at that time. Just as the context of the Vietnam War can be considered "everyday" in this context, antiwar protest becomes an imagining for the "otherwise" (or "extraordinary"). The experimental musical works and the antiwar demonstrations discussed in this chapter all represent some sort of hope for the extraordinary, for a world in which war is not an everyday occurrence. In this context, I suggest, Piekut's theorization of post-war experimentalism in the United States provides an effective mechanism to understand the stakes of experimental musical activism.

Only two experimental composers are discussed in this chapter, so I offer here only some first steps in analyzing the complex relationship between experimentalism and Vietnam War protest—an area that has been little studied. However, Tenney and Goldstein provide fascinating examples of the ways in which some experimental composers understood their music and their political beliefs as conceptually intertwined.

1.1 **James Tenney**

> Guerillas do their thing, presumably, because they have nothing to lose. We do it, (why), because it must be done—is there a sense in which we have "nothing to lose"? or is it really different? [64]

James Tenney's private writings reflect his concerns about the Vietnam War and his views on politics more broadly. Documents held in the James Tenney Fonds at York University indicate that he was deeply preoccupied with U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the political and economic systems that he held responsible for the conflict, particularly in 1967. During that year he penned pages of notes and correspondence on the nature of different power structures, concepts of democracy, and strategies for how to most effectively disrupt the war effort. In addition to these personal writings and correspondence, Tenney protested the war openly, for instance by participating in the Confront the Warmakers March to the Pentagon on October 21-22, 1967. Some of the composer's most revealing statements on the Vietnam War can be found in handwritten notes from the days surrounding this march, wherein he contemplated the importance of such protest events and his role as an antiwar protester.

His writings about the march include both practical details and intensely personal reflections. The first line of these notes, composed on the day before the march, is almost horrifyingly practical, as Tenney not only details the items he will pack for the day, but also acknowledges the possibility that he will have to defend himself if the march takes a turn towards violence: "take some food, and some sweaters (clothes) in my

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[64] James Tenney, excerpt from handwritten note "written the day before going to Washington Oct. 21 67." YU-JT, Box 1998-038/007, Folder 20.

briefcase (this can serve as a shield, if worse come to worse)."[65] The remainder of these

writings reflect Tenney's disjointed thoughts about the march, ranging from worries

about the welfare of his then-partner Carolee Schneemann to the connections between

guerrilla warriors and protesters. Tenney's reflections on the importance of the protest

movement in general and the march on the Pentagon in particular make evident the

strength of Tenney's commitment to the protest cause. He reflects on his belief in the

importance of action even at risk of personal harm, asserting that:

> (this the trip showed me) one's own death is not that important a thing.
> There are other things more important… and this includes both
> "positive" and "negative" actions, positive in the affirmation of
> creative processes, and in the negating (obstructing) of anti-creative,
> life-destructive processes.[66]

According to Tenney, it is important not only to contribute to the world through

"positive" actions that celebrate creation, but also through "negative" actions that

obstruct destruction. It is clear from the context of these sentences that Tenney considers

the "anti-creative, life-destructive processes" to be the Vietnam War and those

responsible for initiating and continuing U.S. involvement. He continues with a

clarification that inaction or passivity in such situations is the same as cooperation or

complicity: "just think how negative it is to be simply (passively) cooperating with the

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[65] James Tenney, excerpt from handwritten note "written the day before going to Washington Oct. 21 67." YU-JT, Box 1998-038/007, Folder 20. The information sheet about this march, which is also included in this folder, tells participants to bring food and provides guidelines for those who plan to partake in civil disobedience.

[66] James Tenney, excerpt from handwritten note "written the day before going to Washington Oct. 21 67." YU-JT, Box 1998-038/007, Folder 20. Parentheses in original.

life-destructive forces."[67] Tenney's belief that it was his obligation to act against the war

both by obstructing and creating is evident throughout his notes from this period. In his

notes from after the demonstration, Tenney asserts that "action must continue… and

needs to be both more continuous and more disruptive." He suggests a number of

strategies for the antiwar movement, including finding "the centers of power in each of

our cities—the loci of the war-making machinery—induction centers, embarkation points

for troops and materials, etc., and work[ing] constantly to disrupt their efficient

operation."[68] The composer also expressed his objection to the war effort through

bureaucratic mechanisms. In January of 1967, he wrote to the New York Telephone Co.

that he was "again" deducting a portion of the Federal Excise Tax from his bill, which he

describes as "a gesture of opposition to the illegal and inhumane war now being waged

by the U.S. government in Vietnam, since the increase in the tax rate from 3 to 10 percent

was specifically made to help finance the war."[69]

Evidently, Tenney believed fervently in the antiwar cause. His commitment to

opposing U.S. involvement in Vietnam was part of his everyday life in the mid-to-late

1960s, crystallizing in activities as disparate as his personal notes and reflections, his

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[67] James Tenney, excerpt from handwritten note "written the day before going to Washington Oct. 21 67." YU-JT, Box 1998-038/007, Folder 20.

[68] YU-JT, Box 1998-038/007, Folder 20. He also suggests avoiding arrests and personal violence, since these methods reduce available manpower and "moves money from our hands into those of the government", and avoiding methods that require official permits so that they can "take the establishment by surprise."

[69] James Tenney, handwritten note to the New York Telephone Co., January 9, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5. While this is the only such note included in his papers, the word "again" infers that this was a regular occurrence.

participation in organized antiwar events, and his objections to taxes on telephone bills.

Tenney expressed these same antiwar sentiments in his creative works, including some of

his collaborations with his partner at the time, visual artist Carolee Schneemann (1939-

2019).[70]

Tenney's musical works that respond to the Vietnam War are some of the

earliest examples of Vietnam War-related art music. In Tenney's *Thermocouple #2*

(1965), a male performer (Tenney) improvises at the piano while a female performer

(Schneemann) cuts off his shirt and paints on his back. In an interview with Eric Smigel,

Schneeman revealed that Tenney's original conception for this "anti-Vietnam War,

protest work" asked her to "cut Vs into his back with razor blades" instead of painting.[71]

Viet-Flakes, a 1966 collaboration between Schneemann and Tenney, makes its statement

about U.S. involvement in Vietnam through sonic and visual collage. Schneemann's film

consists of a series of black-and-white images portraying different aspects of the war in

Vietnam. Tenney's accompanying tape-collage combines brief sound clips, each only a

few seconds long, from a wide variety of sources. These sources include traditional music

from Vietnam, South China, and Laos, pop songs from the mid-1960s, and works by

Bach and Mozart.[72] The fragments of new and familiar sounds that have been dislocated,

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[70] The collaborative relationship between Schneemann and Tenney is explored in Eric Smigel, "'To Behold with Wonder': Theory, Theater, and the Collaboration of James Tenney and Carolee Schneemann," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 11, no. 1 (2017): 1–24.

[71] Smigel, 19–20.

[72] Timothy P. Kinsella provides a breakdown of the specific works and excerpts Tenney uses, as well as a textual analysis of the overall message conveyed by the lyrics of these musical fragments in "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 291.

juxtaposed, and interspersed with pregnant silences take the listener through a disconcerting auditory journey. This auditory experience mirrors the visual effect of Schneemann's film, which moves through out-of-focus images to suddenly clear flashes of blades of grass, disembodied appendages, and faces wracked with despair and anguish. The visual and auditory components combine to create an experience that is unnerving and disconcerting.

Another work of Tenney's with links to the Vietnam War is *Fabric for Che* (1967). This electronic work based around the processing of a single sound is dedicated to the memory of Che Guevera, but it also responds to the Vietnam War, as is clear in Tenney's description: "The atmosphere or character of this piece has something to do with my disgust for the war in Vietnam."[73] Tenney's presentation of *Fabric for Che* in a meeting at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute on December 6, 1967 sparked some controversy among his colleagues.[74] Tenney's colleague Rudy Drenick wrote a letter registering his "strong opposition" to the composer's statements on the work, complaining that the university was not an appropriate forum for "airing the political views of professors (or students), no matter how well-considered and sincere they may be," comparing it to his experience as "a dissenting member of a captive university audience" at German universities in the 1930s.[75]

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[73] James Tenney, letter to Professor Rudy Drenick, December 19, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5.

[74] Tenney was a faculty member at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn from 1965-1970.

[75] R.F. Drenick, letter to James Tenney, December 7, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5.

Tenney's lengthy response to Drenick's letter speaks to the composer's understanding of politics as intertwined with his art—and by extension, his belief in the responsibility scholars and universities have to concern themselves with socio-political issues. Tenney maintains that the majority of his fifteen-minute presentation was concerned with a description of the techniques of "experimental sound and music generation", the programmed topic, asserting that his brief comments about the Vietnam War were only to help the audience understand the work in question.[76] However, his letter continues with a more philosophical discussion of "what a university is, or should be," which reflects Tenney's understanding of the connection between the world of his music and scholarship and broader sociopolitical issues. In this discussion, Tenney questions the validity of a separation between "scholarly pursuits" and "politics." Pointing to missiles and nuclear explosives as examples of "fruits of scholarship" that bear significant real-world implications, Tenney asserts that

> This idea that politics should, or even <u>can</u> be a separate thing, isolated from all other aspects of our experience, seems to me to be potentially disastrous. And, as dangerous as it is when a politician holds this idea, it is even more dangerous when it is the rest of us who hold it to be so, and thus turn over to the politician certain crucial decisions that may determine the very course of our lives.[77]

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[76] James Tenney, letter to Professor Rudy Drenick, December 19, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5. According to Tenney's letter, he remembered the words he said "almost exactly" and they were as follows: "'I am now going to play for you a tape that I have just finished. If the music is to have any meaning for you, however, I must speak to you for a moment as a musician—as an artist—' (i.e., not as a computer programmer or an engineer). 'The atmosphere or character of this work has something to do with my disgust for the war in Vietnam. The name of the piece is 'Fabric', and it is dedicated to the memory of Che Guevara.' …. Period."

[77] James Tenney, letter to Professor Rudy Drenick, December 19, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5.

Further, Tenney explicitly rejects the idea of the university as an "ivory tower" and

asserts that "the reason behind the quest for knowledge" lies in "its progressive,

humanitarian, life-affirmative value that both justifies and motivates it."

In these statements, we see Tenney's belief in both creative and obstructive

action once more emerging, as he passionately questions: "Can we allow our sense of

responsibility to stop with the abstract 'truth' (or 'beauty') of our science (or our art)? Is

it even <u>possible</u> to stop there, when any silence on our part can so easily be interpreted as

acquiescence?"[78] Evidently, the political views Tenney expressed in his writings in the

days surrounding the March to the Pentagon carried through into his understanding of his

art and scholarship. At least one of Tenney's colleagues agreed on this point, writing in

response to the controversial presentation that the benefits of Tenney's message "that the

U.S. ought to get out of Vietnam"[79] outweighed the potential loss of financial support

from those who were visiting the Institute. This colleague concludes that "it may have

been bad manners, but it took a lot of courage. And the music was overpowering. I think

that the audience heard music history, if not political history, in the making."[80]

1.2   **Malcolm Goldstein**

> …a heightened awareness of the world we lived in and its
> politics/relationships of people – the civil rights movement, women's
> liberation, and war in Vietnam ……

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[78] James Tenney, letter to Professor Rudy Drenick, December 19, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5.

[79] This phrase does not appear in Tenney's own description of the event, so this may indicate that he said more on the subject than he included in his letter to Drenick.

[80] S. Deutsch, letter to Professors R. Drenick, A. Papoulis, E. Smith, and J. Tenney, December 26, 1967. YU-JT, Box 1998-038/001, Folder 5.

> All of this set the tone of artistic engagement, my music/art now as
> ever rooted in that time.[81]

Malcolm Goldstein's understanding of his music is also intertwined with the

political, but in different ways than Tenney's. In a 2020 interview, Goldstein asserted that

he participated in a number of protests during the Vietnam War, "mostly lots of

demonstrations," though he did not remember many of the specific events.[82] He recalled

one instance when he was walking near Wall Street and saw a small group of protesters

holding up signs. When he stopped to watch the demonstration, he was told by one of the

police officers at the scene to "'move along or join them'—so [he] joined them!"[83]

Goldstein's objection to U.S. involvement in Vietnam comes across not only in this

interview, but also in his writings. In "Blueberry Picking," a text from August 1968 that

is included in his book *From Wheelock Mountain: Music and Writings* (1975),[84]

Goldstein ruminates on the idea of concerts and concert halls in the context of the United

States' role in Vietnam, juxtaposing the ambivalence of Americans at home enjoying

modern comforts with the destructive effects of the war:

> I wonder about concert halls and all the stuff called culture, as we drop
> tons of bombs on people in homes without flush toilets or con edison,
> the fires lighting the straw wind blowing mud over, while the plush
> seats and cold concrete of our moon reaching society, dozes…….[85]

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[81] Malcolm Goldstein, *Early Electronic / Tape Collage Music*, Alga Marghen plana-G alga025, 2008, 33⅓ rpm. Liner notes.

[82] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[83] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[84] Malcolm Goldstein, "Blueberry Picking," in *From Wheelock Mountain: Music and Writings* (Maple, Ontario: Michael Byron, 1975).

[85] Goldstein.

Later in "Blueberry Picking," Goldstein hints at ways in which musical activity

and protest intersect, particularly when taken outside of the concert hall:

> As the composition class moved out-of-doors and into the streets, our whole perspective changed. We were no longer musicians but could now be charged with 'disturbing the peace.' Of course, if we got a permit from the city then it would be all right; but then again I didn't think that we could be too dangerous, compared to the organized murder that our government (silently, we) were inflicting all over the world. Music became something else; the concert hall only one of its outlets.[86]

Goldstein's assertion here that the American people are "silently" responsible for the

actions of their government is notably similar to Tenney's understanding of inaction as a

form of complicity, discussed above. It is also important to note that Goldstein considers

improvisation itself—a central aspect of all his work, which he describes as "structured

improvisational composition"—to be a political statement, as it puts the focus on the

agency of the performers.[87] In that way, he considers all his music to be political, since

politics "is really a relationship of people" and "this [relationship] is, has always been,

important to me in music."[88]

One instance when politics and art became particularly entwined for Goldstein

was in the composition of *"death: act or fact of dying"* (1967). In January 1967,

Goldstein participated in a demonstration at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City in

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[86] Goldstein.

[87] This understanding of improvisation as political is discussed in "Improvisation: People Making Music" (1986) in Malcolm Goldstein, *Sounding the Full Circle: Concerning Music Improvisation and Other Matters* (Sheffield, VT: M. Goldstein, 1988), 1.

[88] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

protest of Cardinal Francis Spellman's outspoken support of U.S. involvement in

Vietnam.[89] As Goldstein described in 2020, he and the other demonstrators were

apprehended by the F.B.I. and did not accomplish their goal of revealing pictures of

napalmed children:

> Someone called me and said 'hey, you wanna do this demonstration in this cathedral" .… and said we're just gonna go in there on Sunday morning Mass and have a picture of a napalmed child. All gonna be dressed up suits and ties. And we're gonna get up quietly, walk out, and just hold up the picture. I said that sounds fine, sure. Well, the F.B.I. knew every single one of us and they were sitting all around us [laughs] …. the minute I stood up, they were sitting right on either side of me and behind me, and very gently—they were very gentle people—took me by the elbow, guided me out so I never had …a chance to hold up the picture, and took us to jail.[90]

He spent the following nine months being regularly called to court for the charges related

to the demonstration. According to Goldstein, it was this lengthy trial process that

inspired him to write "death: act or fact of dying":

> That was the beginning of nine months. And you can sit there, I remember pretty much all day, just sit there and wait, and the District Attorney would say "oh, we're not ready now, come back in two weeks." So basically, you couldn't go anywhere for about nine months or so. And you're just sitting doing, well, nothing. Nothing. But I would go back home, and all of a sudden this piece came to me. I started off with the word death…. I started off with death because there I was sitting many, many—I remember Fridays—hours and I go home and I start— something bubbles up in me and—death. That was what it was all about. Finally, after it was all over, they threw the whole thing out. We just had to pay forty-five dollars or something for disturbing the peace, which we didn't do [laughs]![91]

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[89] Cardinal Spellman was Archbishop of New York from 1939 until his death in December 1967.

[90] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020. The protest, including the names of those arrested, were covered in the *New York Times*. See Will Lissner, "23 War Protesters Arrested in St. Patrick's After Disturbing a Mass," *New York Times*, January 23, 1967.

[91] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

"death: act or fact of dying," subtitled 'partial reflections on Vietnam', was completed in November of 1967. It can be performed by one or several readers, who intone interconnected definitions from the Webster New Collegiate Dictionary. All readers begin with the definition of death—"'act or fact of dying': 'in the act of dying; mortal; perishable'"—and each chooses their own path to the final page, as each definition splits into multiple definitions of the words contained within it. For example, after the "death" the reader can choose to proceed to "act," "fact," "mortal," or "perishable" (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1: First two pages of Malcolm Goldstein's *"death: act or fact of dying"*[92]

By expressing the horrific and violent subject matter of war through dictionary definitions, Goldstein's work creates a juxtaposition that in its seemingly dry objectivity calls for an emotional, compassionate response to the loss of human lives in Vietnam.

In discussing this work, Goldstein noted the violence that comes through in the dictionary's language, even in definitions of words that one would not normally consider violent. He recalled that "the important thing that came out of this piece as I was working on it is how violent is the dictionary," adding that language, and therefore the dictionary, are ultimately reflections of society.[93] At the end of *"death: act or fact of dying"*, all performers finish on the definition of either "existence" or "generation". The work's transition from death to either existence or generation could be read as a hopeful gesture, but the definition of existence is one of the definitions that incorporates violence in a surprising way. Two contrasting definitions of existence must be read, the second of which takes a disturbing turn towards war. As Goldstein describes:

> this shows how crazy the dictionary is…. I would never define existence this way. It says… "The fact or state of existing; specifically sentient being, continuance in life." That's nice. "Continued or repeated manifestation; actual occurrence, as, the existence of a state of war." Now, why does it end up state of war? I mean, this is the dictionary![94]

In addition to "death: act or fact of dying," Goldstein composed two other Vietnam War-related works: *Sheep Meadow* (1966) and *State of the Nation* (1967). Both works are closely tied to the performance events for which they were intended. "State of

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[93] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[94] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

the Nation," an audience-participatory experience involving the manipulation of a speech

by Lyndon B. Johnson was created for a series called "Evenings of Manipulation" that

was held at the Judson Gallery. "State of the Nation" is discussed in detail in chapter 3 of

this dissertation. *Sheep Meadow* was composed for a peace rally held at Sheep Meadow

in Central Park in 1966.[95] In its original conception, this tape collage piece would have

been played over a loudspeaker while Carol Marcy, a professional dancer and Goldstein's

wife, danced on the back of a flatbed truck. Unfortunately, the cost of mounting this

performance proved prohibitive and it was not performed at the Central Park rally, but

Sheep Meadow was presented at numerous concerts in the following years. *Sheep*

Meadow features two source pieces, a Korean court ensemble and a folk song for solo

flute, which are interlaced and distorted.[96] The fact that these works were composed for

specific events is not unusual for Goldstein; the composer asserts that he "[doesn't]

generally compose things up in the air," but rather when "there's an invitation, there's a

context, there's this moment and a place and time."[97] While Goldstein's tendency to write

works for specific situations is not unique to the time of the Vietnam War, it does

indicate a connection between art and politics. Writing works for demonstrations or

protest events made sense for Goldstein because he did not understand music and politics

to be distinct from one another. Of the Sheep Meadow rally, he asserted "I didn't want to

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[95] While Goldstein describes this rally as having taken place in 1966, all other materials point to it having taken place in April 1967.

[96] Program notes for *Sheep Meadow*. NYU-MG, Box 14, Folder 21.

[97] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

just go stand there and be present, I wanted to create something."[98] Even though it was

not ultimately performed, by composing a work for this rally Goldstein's art and his

politics were working in tandem.

While these works were written in response to the Vietnam War, Goldstein

makes it clear that "none of my pieces have an intention," and that they are, rather, a

reflection of his imagination and emotions at the time of composition:

> the intention in all these things then is not to tell people, "oh, you should
> vote this way, you should demonstrate against the war." No intention.
> It comes out of my need to create something which then makes an
> experience for people, and then people then let that digest within them
> and then maybe think about it or feel it, or maybe do nothing whatever,
> it's up to them.[99]

1.3   Tone Roads and Beyond

An exploration of Tenney's and Goldstein's involvement in the antiwar

movement would not be complete without some discussion of the concerts at which these

works were performed. As is clear from Goldstein's thoughts on music and politics,

performance is an integral element in the relationship between the two. Along with fellow

composer Philip Corner, Goldstein and Tenney were founding members of the Tone

Roads Ensemble, a group that aimed to present works by experimental composers who

were not being celebrated in concert halls at the time.[100] Named in reference to Charles

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[98] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[99] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[100] Goldstein refers to Ives, Varese, and Cage in his description of the founding of this group in "Some Glimpses of Jim Tenney," *Soundings* 13: The Music of James Tenney (1984): 4–14. The manuscript for this article is available in NYU-MG, Box 14, Folder 14.

Ives' compositions of the same title, Tone Roads Ensemble presented twelve concerts between 1963 and 1969.[101] While the first concert was comprised entirely of music by Ives, later concerts included more and more contemporary experimental works alongside those of earlier twentieth-century composers. Two of the Tone Roads concerts featured Vietnam War-related works: the December 15, 1967 program included both Goldstein's *"death: act or fact of dying"* and Tenney and Schneemann's *Viet-Flakes*, while the May 9, 1968 concert included Tenney's *Fabric for Che*, Goldstein's *Sheep Meadow*, and *Wound* (1968) by George Flynn (b. 1937). Flynn describes *Wound* as "a reaction to the violence in Vietnam and in the United States in the streets and on college campuses," made up of three sections that each provide "a microscopic scene of a raw wound in a body, and at the same time a macroscopic panorama of a wound in the body politic."[102]

The December 1967 Tone Roads program was most overtly oriented towards an antiwar message. Goldstein's *"death: act or fact of dying"* and Schneemann and Tenney's *Viet-Flakes* were not the only works presented at this concert, and the remaining works on the program were not explicitly connected to protesting the war in Vietnam. However, the program clearly brands itself as a protest concert through texts interspersed between the works on the program.[103] These texts include quotations from a

[101] A catalogue of the available details on these concerts is included as an appendix in Jay Michael Arms, "The Music of Malcolm Goldstein" (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013), 92–97.

[102] George Flynn, *Trinity*, with Fredrik Ullén (piano), recorded July 2004, BIS Records BIS-SACD-1593/94, 2007, compact disc. Liner notes. *Wound* eventually became part of the three-movement work *Trinity*, which explores concepts of violence and reconciliation.

[103] Jay Michael Arms' catalogue of the Tone Roads concerts describes the "theme" of the concert as "Vietnam War Protest." It is unclear if this description came from Goldstein or if it was implied from the political text on the program.

statement issued by Attorney General Ramsey Clarke and Director of Selective Service

Lewis B. Hershey regarding the prosecution of those evading the draft:

> The Department of Justice has established a special unit to coordinate prompt prosecution of offenses against the Selective Service laws …. [whose responsibilities] include the prosecutions of violations of provisions … making it unlawful knowingly to counsel, aid or abet others to refuse to register or serve, or knowingly to interfere by force or violence or otherwise with the administration of the system.[104]

This statement was released only six days before the concert, on December 9, 1967.

These quotations are interspersed with text describing the number of lives already lost to

the war in Vietnam and posing questions that challenge the validity of governmental

authority during wartime: "...and who shall say what it is to 'disturb the peace' while we

are at war?" "… and who shall create the law? …. And who shall dictate a law upon the

lives of others?"[105]

      This technique of using program design to emphasize the political message of

the works being performed can also be seen in the program for a "Music By" concert that

Goldstein participated in on November 6 and 8, 1968, along with fellow composer-

performers Philip Corner and George Flynn, and performers James Corwin and Lewis

Rowen. Presented at Columbia University and at the Broadway Presbyterian Church, the

program for this concert similarly used quotations interspersed with the list of works to

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[104] Program for Tone Roads concert, December 15, 1967, in NYU-MG, Box 3, Folder 18. This joint statement, released on December 9, 1967, was published in "Joint Statement on the Draft: Expedite Investigation Record Prosecutions," *New York Times* December 10, 1967. The statement can also be found on the U.S. Department of Justice website at https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ag/legacy/2011/08/23/12-09-1967.pdf

[105] In an interview with the author, Goldstein indicated that this text was written by him.

be performed in order to make the political message of the concert clear to audience members. In this case, the texts are excerpted from the Book of Revelations, T.S. Eliot's "First Coker" from *Four Quartets*, and a report on "Children in Vietnam" by William F. Pepper, published in *Ramparts* magazine in January of 1967. This particular report played a significant role in bringing attention to the horrors facing civilians in Vietnam, and was a factor in convincing Martin Luther King Jr. to speak out against the war in April of 1967. The quotations included in the "Music By" program are graphic descriptions of the effects of napalm:

> Luan, age eight, wore a muslin bag over what had been his face. His parents had been burned alive. His chin had melted into his throat, so that he could not close his mouth.
>
> Both arms of the mother had been burned off by napalm. Her eyelids were so badly burned that she could not close them, and when it was time to sleep her family had to put a blanket over her head. Two of her children had been killed in the air strike that burned her. Five other children also died.[106]

As concertgoers read these words on their programs, they listened to three works: Olivier Messaien's *Quartet for the End of Time*, Goldstein's *Sheep Meadow*, and Flynn's *Wound*. A previous "Music By" concert held on October 10, 1968 expressed a similarly political message. The October concert was comprised almost entirely of works for violin and piano performed by Goldstein and Flynn, but also included a presentation of Tenney's *Fabric for Che*.[107]

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[106] Program for "Music By" concert, November 6 and 8, 1968. NYU-MG, Box 27, Folder 22.

[107] This concert was part of a moratorium day at Columbia University in response to students being disciplined for protesting, according to a caption in the *Columbia Spectator* on October 11, 1968. This newspaper clipping can be found in NYU-MG, Box 27, Folder 22.

These are only a few of the protest concerts that Tenney and Goldstein participated in during the late 1960s and early 1970s. What is notable about these and other such concerts is the ways in which the antiwar message is so smoothly integrated into musical activity. These composers' creation of music that responded to their political context was not unique to the Vietnam War era, and they composed similarly political works throughout their careers for a variety of contexts. Likewise, it was not unusual to include antiwar works as part of their regular compositional and performance activities— and indeed, works that espoused other political and social causes were often featured on their concerts. Almost all of the antiwar works that were discussed in this chapter were frequently performed at concerts over the following years. *Sheep Meadow*, for instance, was performed at least eight times between 1966 and 1972, and as recently as 2013. Many of the concerts put on by the experimental music community that featured Vietnam War works were not explicitly advertised as protest concerts. Their stance of opposition to the war would have been obvious to anyone who attended the concerts and saw the program, but not necessarily beforehand. The poster for the November 1968 "Music By" concert, for example, does not make its position of protest evident and stands in opposition to the overtly political stance of the printed program (see figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Poster (left) and program (right) for November 1968 "Music By" concert. [108]

1.4 **Experimentalism and Protest**

In their writings and statements, James Tenney and Malcolm Goldstein make it clear that concerns about the Vietnam War were part of their everyday lives in the late 1960s, and therefore part of their musical works and performances. By expressing their concerns about this aspect of the everyday, they expressed a hope for the otherwise. Thus, these experimental composers' experiences with antiwar activism perform both the ordinary and the extraordinary, a duality that Piekut theorizes as essential to experimentalism in the United States.

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[108] The program and poster for this concert are available in NYU-MG, Box 27, Folder 22. These images are reproduced with the permission of Malcolm Goldstein.

In some ways, experimental music was particularly suited to expressing Vietnam War protest. Ben Arnold and Timothy Kinsella have asserted that most Vietnam War works reject traditional forms and structures and embrace experimental and avant-garde techniques.[109] In fact, Kinsella asserts that the "nightmarish" nature of this particular war necessitated a change in modes of composition "in order to express the particular anguish, brutality, and absurdity of the Vietnam War, a postmodern war which… strongly resists traditional narrative techniques."[110] While some composers adopted an uncharacteristic musical language to express their feelings about the war in Vietnam, as we will see in the following chapter, experimental compositions that respond to the conflict fit more closely with the composers' established styles. The unabashedly political works that Tenney and Goldstein created in response to the Vietnam War are fascinating examples of how experimental compositional methods can be particularly effective at expressing anti-establishment sentiments.

While the experimental techniques and political inclinations of experimentalists made their music and their performance spaces particularly amenable to Vietnam War protest, the relationship between experimental music and antiwar protest is not simple. This repertoire navigates numerous divisions and contradictions, revealing tensions between the establishment and the protest movement and between the elite world of academic art music and the public sphere of protest and counterculture. These concerts

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[109] See Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 322; Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79–80.

[110] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79–80.

were all seemingly 'accessible'—anyone was welcome to attend, and they were usually either free or by donation—and yet they were hardly flooded by the public. The limited scope of advertisement as well as the type of music being performed restricted their accessibility to a general audience. At the same time, while avant-garde music's perceived divergence from more traditional styles of art music (presumably the reason for it being considered separate from "Musicians Dissent" in the Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam) in some ways makes it seem suited to expressing anti-establishment sentiments, the cultural associations of art music more broadly make experimentalism's relationship to the establishment much more complicated. Ramsay Burt acknowledges this dynamic in discussing the Judson Dance Theater, an avant-garde performance group that Goldstein often participated in, asserting that "the dancers and artists involved with Judson Dance Theater… enjoyed a certain privilege as avant-garde artists while at the same time seeing themselves as marginal outsiders."[111] While Goldstein and Tenney were critiquing the establishment, they were doing so by performing an elite, inaccessible music.

Malcolm Goldstein, James Tenney, and their colleagues in the experimental music scene were responding to the same social and political tensions as the popular and folk musicians more widely associated with the protest and countercultural movements. The participation of experimental composers in Vietnam War protest extends well beyond these examples, resulting in a large number of war-related works and events, each

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[111] Ramsay Burt, "Before and After 1968: Dance , Politics , and the Avant-Garde," in *Judson Dance Theater: Performative Traces* (Routledge, 2007), 117.

of which provides insight into the complex relationship between music and politics during the fraught period of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Tenney's and Goldstein's approaches to political music are not only revealing examples of how some experimental composers engaged with the antiwar movement. They are also illustrative of the ways in which different styles and venues of musical protest represented diverse facets of the antiwar movement.

Chapter 2

2 A Crisis of National Identity: Musical Americanism and Elie Siegmeister's Vietnam War Works

> I make a distinction between nationalism as a political movement and nationalism as the root of art in each particular people. The greatest art comes from a writer, painter, poet or composer who responds to his own environment, people and tradition. This doesn't preclude an artist from being universal, but I think he must be rooted to a time and place.[112]

In a 1976 interview, Elie Siegmeister proclaimed the importance of nationalism as the basis of great art. According to the composer, great art is a response to the artist's situation and stands upon both temporal and locational foundations. This assertion is by no means surprising coming from Siegmeister, whose belief in the importance of developing a national music for the United States is a recurring theme in his published writings. This belief is equally evident in the composer's longstanding interest in promoting U.S. folk and jazz music through performances with the American Ballad Singers and through his own compositions and arrangements. Siegmeister frequently used his compositions as a way of responding to his own environment and time, setting poetry on political or social topics.[113] *The Face of War* and "Evil," two political solo-

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[112] Elie Siegmeister, 1976, quoted in Allan Kozinn, "Elie Siegmeister, 82, a Composer Rooted in American Idiom, Dies," *New York Times*, March 11, 1991.

[113] The frequency of these types of compositions in his oeuvre is such that David Lee Maze describes "poetry dealing with topics such as social injustice, anti-capitalism, civil rights, and political protest" as a common feature of the composer's solo-vocal works, and in an interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail Siegmeister approximated that a minimum of one third of his music was on a political or social topic. See David Lee Maze, "Cellular Organization and Cyclical Unity in Elie Siegmeister's 'The Face of War'" (The University of Texas at Austin, 1987), 17; MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 68. MacPhail cites an interview with Siegmeister, Great Neck, New York, 18 November 1989.

vocal works composed in 1967, both protest the Vietnam War. In responding to this particular situation, however, these two works encapsulate not only protest against the conflict, but also a complicated relationship with U.S. national identity and musical Americanism. The story these two works have to tell is not simply one of protest, but one of a particular time and place. Ultimately, *The Face of War* and "Evil" carry the distinct footprint of the turbulent circumstances in which they were created: a period of disillusionment and conflict for this Americanist composer, prompted by U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

2.1   **Siegmeister as Activist**

It was in the midst of the turbulent circumstances of the late 1960s, in September of 1967, that Siegmeister set some of Langston Hughes's poetry in a song cycle entitled *The Face of War*. The cycle's strong antiwar stance is described by the composer in his 1979 liner notes, in which he states that "Like Langston Hughes and many other artists, I hated the Vietnam War.…I simply had to voice my anger."[114] Siegmeister expressed his opposition to the war not only through this composition, but also through participation in protest events. On October 21st of the same year, he joined over 100,000 other protesters in marching on Washington, an event he described to his student Leonard Lehrman as "marvellous!":

> While it was not quite the storming of the Bastille or the fall of the
> Winter Palace, it had the feeling. The Hippies tried to levitate the
> Pentagon, and damn near succeeded (it's full of hot air as it is)…. One

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[114] Elie Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979.

student carried a sign reading 'Johnson, pull out like your father should have.' … Excellent advice, I think.[115]

In November, Siegmeister attended an antiwar poetry reading, "Poets for Peace," which prompted him to consider setting one of the featured poems to music. The result was the song "Evil," a work that represented, he said, a condemnation of the "Vietnam War and the State Department and their shenanigans in trying to make that a noble enterprise."[116] This November 13th event also inspired him to organize a similar event for musicians in the following year. The "Composers and Musicians for Peace" concert was held at Carnegie Hall on May 24, 1968.[117] *The Face of War* was performed at this concert along with works by eleven other U.S. composers, and Siegmeister added orchestral accompaniment to the song cycle specially for this event.[118] The concert was

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[115] Elie Siegmeister to Leonard Lehrman, October 23, 1967, quoted in Leonard J. Lehrman and Kenneth O. Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 78.

[116] Elie Siegmeister, interview with David Lee Maze, 17 July, 1987, quoted in Maze, "Cellular Organization and Cyclical Unity in Elie Siegmeister's 'The Face of War,'" 25.

[117] The "Composers and Musicians for Peace" concert and Siegmeister's role in organizing it is discussed in more detail in chapter 5 of this dissertation. "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was organized under the auspices of the Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship for Reconciliation, the same group that organized the earlier poetry event. Press coverage for the concert indicates that Siegmeister approached Raphael Gould, the director of development for the Fellowship, on the day after "Poets for Peace" (see Raymond Ericson, "Winner for Peace," *New York Times* May 19, 1968).

[118] Siegmeister's accounts of the concert and the composition of *The Face of War* are inconsistent. In his 1972 liner notes, he gives the impression that he composed the entire cycle a few weeks before the concert (to which he ascribes the wrong year of 1966). However, given the date of September 1-6, 1967, on the piano-vocal score it seems most likely that the work he did in the weeks leading up to the "Composers and Musicians for Peace" event was that of arranging it for the orchestral ensemble that was to be performing. Siegmeister's description is as follows: "In 1966 I simply had to voice my anger, and together with a dozen colleagues, including William Mayer, Ulysses Kay, George Rochberg, Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Ezra Laderman, I organized a concert, 'Composers for Peace,' in New York's Carnegie Hall. A few weeks before the concert I had read Hughes' poems, *The Face of War*, which struck me as among the most powerful indictments of man's brutality to man – especially to the black and brown man – I have ever seen. Working very quickly, I dashed off five songs of the cycle for voice and piano, then orchestrated them so

dedicated to the memory of Martin Luther King Jr. after his assassination on April 4th,

1968. Just a year earlier, King's famous denunciation of the Vietnam War affected the

premiere of Siegmeister's *I Have a Dream* cantata, when pro-war picketing prevented

King and other prominent figures from attending.[119] In May of 1970, Siegmeister

participated in peaceful protest activities organized in the wake of the Kent State shooting

as a professor at Hofstra University. Special events organized by Hofstra's Ad Hoc

Academic Freedom Committee included a lecture by Siegmeister on "Music and the War:

The Democratic Tradition in Music" as well as performances of two of his works.[120]

While Siegmeister was adamant in his opposition to the war and was involved in

public events protesting it, his Vietnam War compositions are scarcely represented in

literature on art music responding to the conflict.[121] *The Face of War* and "Evil" exhibit

many of the characteristics identified by Kinsella and Arnold as common in Vietnam War

works, including empathy to all victims, directing blame to the government and

warmakers, departure from traditional conceptions of honour and bravery in battle, and

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they might be performed at this anti-war concert." From Elie Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979, 7.

[119] Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 75.

[120] Lehrman and Boulton, 90. Interestingly the works performed were not his Vietnam War works, but the *I Have A Dream* cantata and his opera *The Plough and the Stars* (described as "An Anti-War Opera").

[121] *The Face of War* is mentioned by both Arnold and Kinsella but its music and text are not discussed, and "Evil" is mentioned only in Kinsella's index of compositions. The most detailed description of *The Face of War* occurs in Maze, "Cellular Organization and Cyclical Unity in Elie Siegmeister's 'The Face of War'" but Maze's detailed analysis is concerned with cyclical unity rather than the political context of the work. Both *The Face of War* and "Evil" are analyzed briefly in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War."

changes to musical style.[122] However, the implications of these characteristics become more significant when considered in the context of Siegmeister's attitudes to nationalism and politics in the United States.

2.2   **Siegmeister as Americanist**

While he never joined the Communist party, Siegmeister was outspoken about his socialist political views throughout his lifetime.[123] In September and November of 1933, the then twenty-four-year-old composer published two articles in *Modern Monthly*, "Social Influences in Modern Music" and "The Class Spirit in Modern Music."[124] These two articles, described by Carol Oja as "an intense Marxist-flavored polemic," advocated for a fusion of proletarian spirit with art music that came to be a feature of Siegmeister's own works.[125] He expanded on these ideas in his 1938 pamphlet *Music and Society*, the Marxist basis of which was criticized as "dangerous" by Kurt List.[126] The leftist views

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[122] For more detail on the characteristics of Vietnam War compositions that have been identified by Arnold and Kinsella, see the introduction to this dissertation.

[123] Siegmeister considered himself to be, like his father, "more radical than the Communists" and refused to join the Communist party because he did not believe in dictatorship. See MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 67.

[124] Elie Siegmeister, "The Class Spirit in Modern Music," in *Modern Quarterly 7 (1933)* (New York: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1968), 593–98; Elie Siegmeister, "Social Influences in Modern Music," in *Modern Quarterly 7 (1933)* (New York: Greenwood Reprint Corporation, 1968), 472–73. *Modern Monthly* was subsequently renamed *Modern Quarterly* and the contents have been published in reprint edition under that title.

[125] Carol J Oja, "Composer with a Conscience : Elie Siegmeister in Profile," *American Music* 6, no. 2 (1988): 160.

[126] *Music and Society* (1938) was reprinted in 1974 and translated into German (*Musik und Gesellschaft*, Berlin 1948) and Spanish (*Musica y Sociedad*, Mexico City, Siglo XXI 1980). List's response, "The Social Approach," was published in *Modern Music* 16:4, 285-7. Lehrman and Boulton described this pamphlet as "something of an embarrassment for him in the 1950s" but note that "he re-endorsed many of its concepts in the 1960s" and dedicated a signed copy to Lehrman in 1970. Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 13, 343.

that the young Siegmeister espouses in these early writings carried continued importance throughout his career. His proclivity for texts that emphasize the plight of the proletariat can be seen as early as his first published work, *The Strange Funeral in Braddock* (1936), which, through an evocative setting of poetry by Michael Gold, reinforces the workers' struggle by relating the story of a Bohemian factory worker who meets his untimely demise swallowed in a block of steel. While composing music for the masses was common to many composers during the 1930s and early 1940s, Siegmeister's particular situation is significant —and unusual amongst American composers — because this continued to be his focus through the 1950s and beyond. Siegmeister's belief that "music is one of the elements of a normal American existence, not apart from it," as he put it, inspired him not only to write music on proletarian themes throughout his career, but also to publish a number of books aimed at promoting music appreciation among the general public.[127]

Alongside his passion for accessible, socially useful music, Siegmeister was a dedicated musical nationalist. He published a number of annotated collections of U.S. folk music and spirituals, including *A Treasury of American Song* (1940, 1943, 1982), *Work and Sing: A Collection of the Songs that Built America* (1944), *Folkways U.S.A.* (1953-58), and *The Joan Baez Songbook* (1964). The American Ballad Singers, a vocal group Siegmeister founded in 1939, toured around the U.S. performing folk songs and

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[127] Elie Siegmeister, *The Music Lover's Handbook* (New York: W. Morrow and Company, 1943), 771. His music appreciation books also include *Invitation to Music* (Irvington-on-Hudson: Harvey House, 1961); *Harmony and Melody* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., n.d.); *The New Music Lover's Handbook* (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: Harvey House, 1973).

ballads rooted in the country's history, including many of his own compositions and arrangements.[128]

Furthermore, a number of his published articles focus on defining and promoting a particularly "American" music.[129] Through his writings and interviews he emphasizes the importance of U.S. national identity to his music, identifying himself along with composers such as Charles Ives and George Gershwin as part of an "underground indigenous musical line, always rejected by the Establishment."[130] Siegmeister's understanding of "indigenous" elements encompasses the range of musical traditions he considered native to the United States, including jazz, spirituals, and folk songs in addition to Native American music. The national identity he identifies within his own and other U.S. composers' music is linked to two things: the integration of these "indigenous" musical elements and a consonant, lyrical style. Firstly, Siegmeister considers the integration of folk and jazz elements into art music to be a central element of the "American" style of music. In his *Music Lover's Handbook*, for example, he asserts that "the ripening of our native musical consciousness" is essential to the future of U.S. music, "for there can never be any true music in a country until the great international traditions of culture are wedded to the local popular style – until one indivisible national

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[128] See Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 24–27; and Oja, "Composer with a Conscience : Elie Siegmeister in Profile," 170–71.

[129] Examples include "The Future of American Music," *Daily Worker*, October 13, 1939; "American Music from the Ground Up," *Musical Courier*, December 1, 1941; "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977, and "Somewhere near the essence (what is American music)," *Sonneck Society Bulletin* 4/1 (1978), 14-15.

[130] Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 110.

language, indigenous to the soil and the people, emerges."[131] Secondly, Siegmeister

considers American music to be associated with a particular musical style: the consonant,

lyrical style in which he is known for composing. Described by Oja as one who

"favor[ed] traditional musical attitudes and materials," Siegmeister continually indicated

these preferences not only through his own compositions, but also through his writings on

music.[132] In a 1977 article in the *New York Times* entitled "A New Day is Dawning for

American Composers," Siegmeister links his preferred style of composition to U.S.

national identity by referring to Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, and others as the "First

American School," responsible for creating "a distinctly native style."[133]

　　　　Siegmeister's writings and compositions encapsulate the two types of musical

Americanism described by Barbara A. Zuck in *A History of Musical Americanism*:

conceptual Americanism, which expresses a "pro-American-music stance," and

compositional Americanism. Zuck describes the latter as "the musical use of native

elements," but Emily Abrams Ansari's description of Americanist composers as

"[seeking] to create a specifically American sound in their music" more accurately

encompasses the many ways these composers worked towards this goal.[134] Zuck

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[131] Siegmeister, *The Music Lover's Handbook*, 660.

[132] Oja, "Composer with a Conscience : Elie Siegmeister in Profile," 158.

[133] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977. Siegmeister also notes a connection here to jazz and folk music, asserting that this style "caught the feeling of our country and people in works of larger scope and duration, as jazz and folk musicians had already done for many years in music of more intimate scope and duration."

[134] Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism*, 8; Ansari, *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War*, 1.

describes both conceptual and compositional Americanism as grounded in the same

impulse, a reaction to the class divisions in the U.S. that prioritized European musical

traditions.[135] This certainly rings true in the case of Siegmeister, who condemned the

"haughty cultural snobbism" that "considers the European way as the noble high road and

the American one the vulgar, low (and cheap) road" in his 1977 article, emphasizing the

difference between American music and "European-style music written by

Americans."[136] Indeed, Siegmeister's Americanism, both conceptual and compositional,

reflects his communist values. In using and promoting folk themes, the composer was

consciously tying his output to the music of the common people; he considered folk art to

be "the deepest, most democratic layer of our musical culture" because it "[stems]

directly out of common life."[137] Similarly, by employing a consonant, approachable style

Siegmeister argues against musical elitism. In 1943, Siegmeister described his

motivations in the early 1930s, stating that

> I found myself quite dissatisfied with performing for the narrow and
> oversophisticated audiences of the 'elite' organizations, and turned to
> making music for the wider audience of people who never came to
> modern music concerts – never even heard of them in fact.[138]

As musical trends in the U.S. changed over the course of the twentieth century,

Siegmeister maintained his emphasis on an approachable musical aesthetic, disparaging

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[135] Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism*, 8. See also Charles Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States," *American Quarterly* (1957): 281–94.

[136] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977.

[137] Siegmeister, *The Music Lover's Handbook*, 733.

[138] Siegmeister, *The Music Lover's Handbook,* 772.

the "abstruse calculation, cerebral patterns, machine-made sounds or, on the other hand,

mystical throws of the dice" that dominated during the Cold War.[139] In a 1977 interview

he emphasized the importance of composing for an audience, asserting that "I care very

much how the audience receives my work… if nobody wants to listen to your music,

what's the use of writing it?"[140] As Lehrman and Boulton note, this statement references

and directly challenges the elitist views espoused by Milton Babbitt in his well-known

"Who Cares If You Listen?" essay.[141]

Overall, Siegmeister understands American music as a combination of both the

proletarian spirit and a lyrical, approachable style that serves that spirit. In his 1977

article, Siegmeister associates American masterpieces not only with the style of the "First

American School", but also with "a humanist concern for the common and the low,"

indicating their interwoven nature.[142] While Siegmeister was a devoted cultural

nationalist, during the Cold War period he struggled to reconcile political nationalism

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[139] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977. Siegmeister is not the only composer to have commented on U.S. composers' turn away from tonality during the Cold War. The politicization of musical style and the prestige factor of serialist techniques in the U.S. at this time has been debated. Joseph N. Straus's argument in "The Myth of Serial 'Tyranny' in the 1950s and 1960s," *Musical Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (1999): 301–43, which used statistics to argue serialist techniques were not as prevalent or influential as we have come to believe, has been countered by Anne C. Shreffler in "The Myth of Empirical Historiography: A Response to Joseph N. Straus," *Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2000): 30–39, where she argues that Straus's statistics do not take into account the prestige value of serialism. Furthermore, Ansari argues in *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War* that while the anti-Communist climate of the Cold War United States meant few composers voiced their concerns at the time, there is contemporary evidence of the political environment engendering an oppressive polarization of musical styles.

[140] Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 110.

[141] Lehrman and Boulton, 110. See Milton Babbitt, "Who Cares If You Listen?," *High Fidelity* 8 (1958): 38–40, 126–27.

[142] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977.

with his leftist views.[143] This conflict between his cultural and political beliefs comes to the fore in his two Vietnam War works. In the remaining pages of this chapter, it is Siegmeister's political values, his conception of national identity, and the role of these elements in shaping his music that will reveal the intricacies of this Americanist's experience of the Vietnam War.

2.3   **Setting Vietnam War Poetry**

For both of his Vietnam War works, Siegmeister selected pre-existing poetry that addressed the developing conflict. While the texts for *The Face of War* and "Evil" were written by Langston Hughes and Richard Eberhart respectively, Siegmeister's choice to set these particular poems makes the poetry itself an important element of his reaction to the Vietnam War. The source texts for each work were chosen and set without any alterations by Siegmeister, other than reversing the order of two songs within *The Face of War* and changing one of the song titles.[144] As mentioned above, Siegmeister heard the poem "Evil" at a "Poets for Peace" event in November of 1967. The protest event featured readings of a number of anti-war works, but Siegmeister chose this particular poem from among them. His selection of *The Face of War* was similarly purposeful; when his plans to work on a Vietnam War work with his friend and frequent collaborator Langston Hughes were abruptly cut short by the poet's death in May of

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[143] Ansari has pointed to a similar conflict between support for cultural nationalism and rejection of political nationalism for Leonard Bernstein during the Cold War era in *The Sound of a Superpower*, 164-169.

[144] In his setting of this cycle, Siegmeister reverses the order of the first two poems, placing "Listen Here, Joe" (originally titled "Without Benefit of Declaration" by Hughes) after "Official Notice."

1967, Siegmeister selected this cycle of five poems out of Hughes' forthcoming book, *The Panther and The Lash: Poems of Our Times*.

The texts of these two works represent different perspectives on the same conflict. *The Face of War* presents five vignettes that directly confront the reality of wartime through powerful images of the brutality and senselessness of war. Siegmeister describes the poetry as "among the most powerful indictments of man's brutality to man – especially to the black and brown man – I have ever seen."[145] The poems emphasize the perspectives of those who are directly affected by the fighting, namely the soldiers, victims, and their families. In contrast, "Evil" takes the perspective of an American citizen living at home in the United States. References to fighting and to the military are notably absent, and the only direct reference to the war is in a mediated form as "pictures." Instead, the focus of the poem is a dinner party at which the guest of honour is a personification of evil. The texts of both these works, shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.2 at the end of this chapter, engage with many of the common characteristics of Vietnam War works that Kinsella and Arnold have identified. For example, "Peace", the third song in *Face of War*, equalizes and shows empathy for victims on all sides of the conflict, since once they are dead neither winners nor losers care about the outcome. In "Listen here, Joe," the second song in the cycle, Hughes confronts the idea of heroism in battle by pointing to the emptiness of receiving a medal in exchange for a human life: "a medal to your family in exchange for a guy."

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[145] Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979, 7.

Particularly notable in these poems is a strong anti-government stance and placement of blame. "Evil" challenges the government's position on the conflict and the validity of U.S. involvement, ascribing blame to the politicians supporting the war in Vietnam. The poem describes Evil as the "ruler of the world" and points to discussions of "the affairs of state" in which the shame of "[losing] face" and "being weak" is considered worse than killing – a potent image at a time when it was already clear that the war in Vietnam was not going to end tidily.

Siegmeister's musical setting emphasizes this aspect of the text. In example 2.1, the music is marked with a *crescendo* and the instruction "get faster," leading to the accented, *fortissimo* first beat of measure 38. In addition, the phrase reaches its highest pitch at this point and the dotted rhythm in the vocal line adds insistence to the word "shame." This lends emphasis to the diners' justification for their actions – "that to lose face was a shame in being weak" – while pointing to the double meaning of the word "shame" in this context; that the actions perpetrated in fear of being seen as weak are in fact what the diners should be ashamed of.

Example 2.1: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," mm. 36-38

These texts do not only place the blame on the U.S. government, however. Both
"Evil" and *The Face of War* point to the culpability of human society in general and that
of the United States in particular, placing blame on the U.S. for the horrors of the war.
Both works call for the outrage and protest of the public by equating inaction with
complicity.[146] In "Evil", the poem repeatedly draws attention to ways in which the
character of Evil is similar to the narrator and his friends. At first Evil's "mannered
disguise" hides his true identity, seemingly excusing the other partygoers for considering
him one of them. However, as the poem develops none of those present at the dinner
party voice any disagreement regarding the atrocities of the war. Thus, Eberhart makes
all those who do not voice their objections complicit, extending the blame for the

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[146] This understanding of inaction as complicitly is markedly similar to some of Tenney and Goldstein's
views discussed in Chapter 1.

Vietnam War to all. Even the narrator, whose true feelings are revealed in the final line as he describes his desire to shoot his "imaginary bullet through [Evil's] throat," shares in the blame as he does not speak up or take any action. *The Face of War* presents a similar view, particularly through the final poem, "War." In the text that inspired the cycle's title, Hughes emphasizes the culpability of all parties through lines such as "The face of war is my face. The face of war is your face," and "It's hard to blame me, because I am here, so I kill you. And you kill me."

By assigning blame to U.S. society and government in "Evil" and to those on both sides of the conflict in *The Face of War*, these poems challenge the proclamations of exceptionalism and moral high ground that characterized the U.S. government's rhetoric on Vietnam. This challenge is also evident in "Evil" through the narrator's toast. The party guests drink first "to the nation," then "to freedom," "to the glory of the state," and "to individual aims," alluding to the ideals of patriotism, freedom, and individuality. These toasts, however, are tinged with irony and falsehood both through the presence and participation of Evil and through the implied connections to the atrocities of war mentioned earlier in the poem. The phrase "We drank to the glory of our state, none thinking this uncouth," for example, parallels the earlier statement that "None thought to kill was bad." Shown in example 2.2, Siegmeister's expressive direction to sing this passage in a "noble" way lends a sense of caricature to the already ironic lyrics.

Example 2.2: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," mm. 78-80

Ultimately the poems Siegmeister selected reflect not only his opposition to the war, but also his political views more broadly. Through their commentary on the Vietnam War, these two pieces draw attention to the plight of the proletarian victims of the war while simultaneously assigning blame to bourgeois society and the American government. As mentioned above, *The Face of War* and "Evil" present two very different perspectives on the war, one of which is directly impacted by the destruction while the other maintains an artificial distance. The vignettes in *The Face of War* draw attention to the lives being lost, depicting the soldiers as everyday people with parents and families at home. The first song, "Official Notice," speaks from the perspective of a grieving parent. The second song, "Listen Here, Joe," directly addresses a young "kid" soldier who will die the next day on the battlefield. Contrastingly in "Evil," the dinner party setting that is so welcoming to the eponymous guest places blame for the war not only on the United States, but more specifically on upper-class society. The polite conversation and ceremony of the banquet hall highlight the perceived distance between bourgeois

American society and the atrocities of war that are "somehow not to be mentioned."

These two perspectives come together to create a larger picture of society in the United

States, one that blames the government and the upper classes for the war that is

destroying the lives of working-class soldiers. However, it is not only Siegmeister's

choice of these texts that demonstrates his understanding of U.S. society during the

Vietnam War era. His setting of these texts emphasizes the stark contrast between the two

perspectives and indicates his judgement through a juxtaposition of the harshness of truth

with the empty veneer of falsity.

2.4   **Americanism in Crisis**

The musical language of *The Face of War* departs from the lyrical, consonant

style for which Siegmeister is known. While traditional in its instrumentation, the song

cycle embraces an aesthetic that is dissonant and jarring. The composer's liner notes

describe *The Face of War* as "an outcry, sometimes in harsh, almost atonal musical

terms, against needless, horrible death on the battlefield."[147] Maze considers the music of

the song cycle to be in some ways consistent with the composer's later period style,

particularly through its textural lightness and exposed inner structures.[148] Example 2.3

shows the sparse texture of the opening, a moment similar to what can be heard in some

of the composer's contemporary songs, such as the *Five Cummings Songs* composed in

1970.

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[147] Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979, 7.

[148] Maze, "Cellular Organization and Cyclical Unity in Elie Siegmeister's 'The Face of War,'" 12.

Example 2.3: Elie Siegmeister, *The Face of War*, "Official Notice," mm. 1-7

Particular to *The Face of War*, however, is the insistent and often aggressive use of dissonance. Diminished-octave intervals—such as the C-sharp and C-natural that articulate the first beats of the opening three measures—and their augmented-octave inversions can be found throughout the piano part. The strident dissonance of these intervals that are one semitone away from an octave—each a representation of interval class 1—becomes increasingly aggressive and exposed as the cycle progresses to punctuate the horrific imagery. In example 2.4 from "Listen Here, Joe," the repetitive, accented figures in the bass line again articulate this dissonance through an augmented octave, now spelled as a minor ninth, as the narrator tells the young soldier of his impending death on the battlefield.

Example 2.4: Elie Siegmeister, *The Face of War*, "Listen Here, Joe," mm. 35-40

By the final song of the cycle, the dissonant sound of augmented and diminished

octaves has become an overwhelming presence, from its repeated articulation in its most

basic form (example 2.5) to its prominent role in the insistent and aggressive

accompaniment of the melody (example 2.6).

Example 2.5: Elie Siegmeister, *The Face of War*, "War," mm. 1-3

Example 2.6: Elie Siegmeister, *The Face of War*, "War," mm. 8-12

Siegmeister's musical outcry can be interpreted as a way of depicting the horror of war. Indeed, the representation of horror is integral to the composer's artistic vision for this cycle and was his motivation for changing the order of the first two songs. In an interview, the composer describes the horrific imagery of the first poem as the ideal opening for this cycle:

I felt that the ironic horror of the first poem, when the mother is confronted that she's lost her son and she gets this notice she's supposed to feel great about it – that he's a hero – is quite a shocker or should be. I think that dramatically I had the feeling that it should be a shot between the eyes to start with and [when combined with] the more powerful explosion at the very end, these were two big pillars upon which the whole thing could rest. 'Listen Here, Joe' is pretty disturbing too, but it's not quite as ironic and quite as forceful an expression as the mother getting the notice from the State Department – the son is a hero. I just had that feeling it's a very strong opener.[149]

However, Siegmeister's choice of musical techniques is not simply a representation of horror in the vein described by Kinsella and Arnold. While this music would seem to contradict his established views on American music, he describes the style he employs in *The Face of War* as inherently national, calling it "American Expressionism." Siegmeister dismisses the association of expressionism with the Vienna school, asserting that "it belongs to all the countries and each one adds its own colour to it."[150] The American 'colour' of expressionism, which Siegmeister sees in the music of Ives as well as some of his own compositions, is characterized by "raw emotion, without any attempt to soft pedal at all or prettify or tone it down."[151] Siegmeister saw this raw emotion as an element of Hughes's poetry and reflected it in his musical setting, creating a cycle "in which the unrestrained extremes of emotions, really just hit you between the eyes."[152]

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[149] Elie Siegmeister, interview with David Lee Maze, 17 July, 1987, quoted in Maze, 38. Both the first and fifth songs are notable in their use of blood imagery, the first through the image of a letter signed and sealed in blood and the fifth through its metaphor of a broom of death sweeping and mopping the world with blood.

[150] Elie Siegmeister, interview with David Lee Maze, 17 July, 1987, quoted in Maze, 39.

[151] Elie Siegmeister, interview with David Lee Maze, 17 July, 1987, quoted in Maze, 38–39. In this interview, Siegmeister refers to an article he wrote, "Ives as an American Expressionist", which includes a discussion of "General William Booth Enters into Heaven." I have not been able to find the article referenced anywhere else and it is not included in Lehrman and Boulton's catalogue of his writings.

[152] Elie Siegmeister, interview with David Lee Maze, 17 July, 1987, quoted in Maze, 38.

While, as Maze identifies, the musical language of this song cycle partially reflects a larger trajectory within Siegmeister's works, the composer only mentions *The Face of War* and one of his earliest works, "The Strange Funeral in Braddock," as examples of this particular type of national style.[153]

In his 1977 *New York Times* article, Siegmeister describes the Cold War as a conflict that precipitated an artistic identity crisis, sparking a "sudden and violent transformation" in American music:

> The savage trauma of mass destruction, the deep anxieties produced by the bomb, the disillusionment with human ideals arising from the Cold War, and the vicious persecutions of the McCarthy period suffered by some of our best composers led to a severe 'identity crisis' that affected musicians as well as millions of ordinary citizens. Almost in one sweep, the bonds between the artist and his country and people were shattered and the humanistic values of the preceding decades thrown on the ash heap.[154]

According to Siegmeister, these events caused composers to throw out the consonant style associated with musical Americanism, in favour of "a cold esthetic of scientism."[155] Siegmeister's disdain for serialism, post-serialism, and avant-gardism—the

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[153] Maze, 6, identifies three stylistic periods in Siegmeister's works, of which the second period, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, is associated with "a more consonant approach" while the first and third "demonstrate the composer's keen interest in composing in a twentieth-century or new music vein." Kyle R Lynch, "Stylistic Change in the Music of Elie Siegmeister , 1940-1970" (University of Miami, 2011) discusses stylistic change across Siegmeister's works, viewing his compositional style in the 1960s as a composite of his past styles. Lynch acknowledges the impact McCarthyism had on composers during the 1950s, but his analysis fails to consider the significance of American identity to Siegmeister's compositional style in the latter half of the century.

[154] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977.

[155] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977.

compositional techniques he considers to be the results of this identity crisis—as contrary to the "American note in music" is evident throughout the article.[156] Siegmeister considers the humanistic values he and other American composers espoused before the Cold War to be in opposition to these types of musical language. However, when asked about his own stylistic shift that began in the late 1950s, a shift that embraced "a keen interest in composing in a twentieth-century or new music vein," according to Maze, Siegmeister uses surprisingly similar words.[157] In 1977 he blamed the atom bomb, the Cold War, and McCarthyism for turning composers away from the Americanist style of music, and in a 1987 interview the composer cites the same events as the cause of his own shift:

> It seemed appropriate to write light, simple music because it coincided with the sweetness and light of the 1940s and early '50s. America had been successful in its just cause of fighting for a better world with the defeat of Hitler. The '50s, on the other hand, were different. We dropped the bomb, endured McCarthyism, were in the midst of the 'Cold War,' and so forth, and it seemed fake to write in a style of sweetness and light.[158]

Although the 1977 article reads as a criticism of composers who turned to other compositional methods while Siegmeister himself remained faithful to the Americanist idiom, the composer's words in 1987 reveal that he in fact underwent a musical identity crisis of his own. The situation of the Cold War prompted him to employ different

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[156] Other examples of Siegmeister's disdain for these techniques can be seen in Lehrman and Boulton, *Elie Siegmeister, American Composer: A Bio-Bibliography*, 67.

[157] Maze, "Cellular Organization and Cyclical Unity in Elie Siegmeister's 'The Face of War,'" 6.

[158] Elie Siegmeister, telephone conversation with David Lee Maze, September 9, 1987, quoted in Maze, 11.

musical techniques to represent the socio-political environment. For Siegmeister, the consonant, Americanist style that was so suited to the 1940s and early 1950s, when the U.S. was justly fighting for a better world, was no longer appropriate in the context of the Cold War. The American expressionism of *The Face of War*, then, is the product of a similar impulse to represent U.S. national identity at a time when the country's role in global politics could no longer simply be defined as just.

While both Arnold and Kinsella have noted the prevalence of experimental and avant-garde musical techniques in Vietnam War art music written in the United States, these scholars fail to make a connection between the use of such techniques and the changes to American national identity provoked by the conflict. Siegmeister himself made plain that, for him at least, the Cold War's various conflicts were a key factor in his decision to explore new approaches. Indeed, it seems clear that his shift in musical style is a reflection of a changing understanding of what it meant to be American in the world of the 1960s. The musical techniques Siegmeister utilizes in *The Face of War* are not as experimental or shocking as those in many other Vietnam War works, but they are notable both in contrast to Siegmeister's other compositions, and in his own description of them as "harsh" and "atonal." *The Face of War* expresses Siegmeister's national identity, but his conception of this identity is no longer the same as it was twenty years earlier.

While *The Face of War* engages with Siegmeister's conception of national identity through American expressionism, "Evil" does so through juxtaposition and contrast. In the piano introduction, shown in example 2.7, the conflict of two musical styles encapsulates the contrast between the polite society of the dinner party and the

brutal violence of the war that is being swept out of view. The first two measures, to be

played "delicately," suggest a dancelike compound triple meter with the repeated pattern

of three eighth notes over a dotted-quarter-note pedal in the left hand of the piano.

However, the gentle, listing feel is sharply interrupted in measure 3 with accented

dissonances, marked *subito fortissimo* and to be played "roughly." The dancelike feel

tries to return in measure 4 with the same left-hand figure an octave higher, but the metric

change to 7/8 forces a prolonged second half of the measure, and it quickly disintegrates

into accented descending ninths. A third attempt to restore the atmosphere of the opening

in measure 6 is ill-fated from its unsynchronized beginning, and soon dissolves into

frenzies of aggression over a *triple forte* cluster. This representation of polite society

disintegrating into brutality emphasizes the juxtaposition Eberhart creates in his poem, in

which the civility of the dinner party guests masks the deaths for which they are

ultimately to blame.

Example 2.7: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," mm. 1-9

This dancelike false civility is a feature of the recurring melody as well, which is based in triplets and dotted figures. Example 2.8 shows the first instance of this melody, when the vocal line enters.

Example 2.8: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," vocal line mm. 10-12

EVIL
Composed by ELIE SIEGMEISTER
Words by RICHARD EBERHART
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Example 2.9: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," mm. 72-77

The melody also fails to fend off the aggressive impulse from the opening,

however. In example 2.9 the text "in our state of hedonism" is emphasized through the

use of a crescendo to *fortissimo*, as well as the expressive marking "ecstatic" and the

indication that the climax of the phrase, the first syllable of "hedonism," should be "half

shouted." The crescendo is reinforced by the melodic line, which rises by step before

abruptly leaping downward after the climax. The "ferocious" material that follows in the

piano is strikingly reminiscent of the aggressive disintegration of the introduction.

Siegmeister's extreme setting of this passage emphasizes the narrator's disgust at the way the party (himself included) selfishly disregard the plight of others.

The final measures, shown in example 2.10, end the song on a horrific image of the narrator's desire to send an "imaginary bullet through [evil's] throat," an image that is intensified through Siegmeister's musical setting. The singer's entrance in measure 90, suddenly faster and *subito forte* over a sustained *pianissimo* chord in the piano, mimics gunfire in its violent outburst, particularly through its sustained pitch and repetitive eighth notes. The impotence of this moment in his inability to follow through, however, is clear in the anticlimactic ending with its "held back" decrescendo to *pianissimo* and absence of piano accompaniment.

EVIL
Composed by ELIE SIEGMEISTER
Words by RICHARD EBERHART
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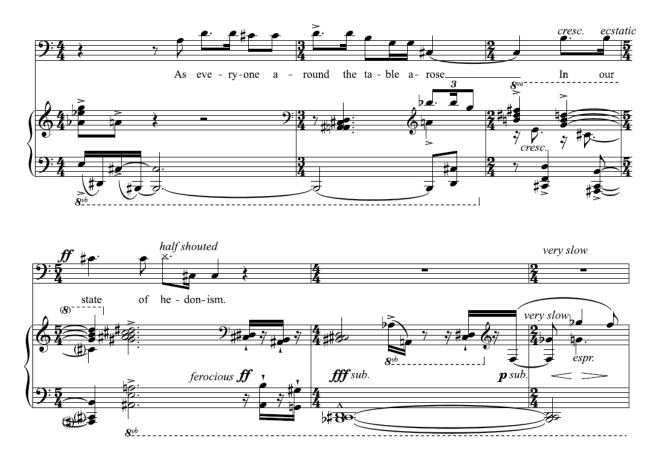Used By Permission of ALFRED MUSIC

Example 2.10: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil," mm. 88-92

Thus, in "Evil," Siegmeister's manipulation of musical techniques again responds to the political context of the Vietnam War. The song's attempts to maintain

lyrical melodies and consistent triple meter are repeatedly shattered by moments of horror

and aggression in order to reinforce the narrative premise of Eberhart's poem. This song

contains within it two contrasting styles representative of two conflicting images of the

United States: a juxtaposition of society and brutality, of the America that was and the

America that has come to be. Another U.S. composer, Robert Knox, describes a similar

musical technique in considering the issue of how to represent political content through

music:

> …there are some avant-garde techniques suggesting to me an
> equivalent of what in the theatrical terminology of Bertolt Brecht are
> termed 'alienation effect' (*Verfremdungseffektten*). For example,
> there are sudden wildly dissonant passages in basically tonal contexts
> that cause the listener to do a 'double take', and perhaps think about
> the larger issues involved in the world beyond the concert hall.[159]

While Knox was not referring to "Evil," his description of wild dissonances interjecting

into tonal contexts resonates with the effect of the juxtapositions in this song. The

moments of disintegration and aggression allow the atrocities of the war to creep into the

piece, even as they are "not to be mentioned."

Siegmeister believed that great art was the product of a time and a place. Traces

of his experience as an Americanist during the Vietnam War era can be heard throughout

The Face of War and "Evil", from his choices of source poetry to his use of musical

techniques. Like many other works written in response to this controversial conflict, these

two pieces reject traditional wartime narratives of bravery and patriotism. More than that,

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[159] Robert Knox, letter to Benjamin Arnold, quoted in Arnold Jr., "War, Peace, and the Apocalypse in Art
Music Since World War II," 536.

they reflect a very personal crisis of national identity through their interactions with the

composer's political and stylistic beliefs, which were integral to his conception of what it

meant to compose American music. In this way, Siegmeister's Vietnam War

compositions contain within them a contradictory 'American-ness.' Both despite and

through their condemnation of traditional Americanist values and of U.S. participation in

the conflict, Siegmeister's *The Face of War* and "Evil" represent an American

perspective that is very much a product of its time; a perspective that is both tied to and

eschews an earlier conception of American national identity, now fractured and tainted

by America's role in the Vietnam War. In the final paragraph of his *New York Times*

article, Siegmeister asserts that

> the groundwork seems set for a new birth of American music
> embracing every imaginable current technique, device, and style,
> different from that of 50 years ago but once more identifiable as an
> indigenous voice expressing our special accent and vision, not as
> narrow nationalism but with an enlightened self-awareness of the
> artist's place in today's world.[160]

The Face of War and "Evil," in both their embrace of new (to Siegmeister) musical

techniques and their altered perspective on Americanism, reflect some the elements of the

new birth the composer prophesizes. Perhaps in the music of his Vietnam War works,

composed ten years earlier, we can see some indication of the future that Siegmeister

envisioned for American music in a post-Vietnam world.

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[160] Elie Siegmeister, "A New Day is Dawning for American Composers," *New York Times*, January 23, 1977.

Figure 2.1: Elie Siegmeister, *The Face of War* (text by Langston Hughes)

1. Official Notice
Dear Death:
I got your message
That my son is dead.
The ink you used
To write it
Is the blood he bled.
You say he died with honor
On the battlefield,
And that I am honored, too,
By this bloody yield.
Your letter
Signed in blood,
With his blood
Is sealed.

*2. Listen Here, Joe (Poet's title is 'Without
Benefit of Declaration')*
Listen here, Joe,
Don't you know
That tomorrow
You got to go
Out yonder where
The steel winds blow?
Listen here, kid,
It's been said
Tomorrow you'll be dead
Out there where
The rain is lead.
Don't ask me why,
Just go ahead and die.
Hidden from the sky
Out yonder you'll lie:
A medal to your family –
in exchange for
    A guy.
Mama, don't cry.

3. Peace
We passed their graves:
The dead men there,
Winners and losers,
Did not care.
In the dark
They could not see
Who had gained
The victory.

4. The Dove
… and here is
old Picasso and the dove
and dreams as fragile
as pottery with dove
in white on clay
dark brown as
earth is brown
from our old
battle ground …

5. War
The face of war is my face.
The face of war is your face.
    What color
    Is the face
    Of war?
Brown, black, white –
Your face and my face.

Death, is the broom
I take in my hands
    To sweep the world
    Clean.
I sweep and I sweep
Then mop and I mop.
I dip my broom in blood,
My mop in blood –
And blame you for this,
Because you are *there*,
Enemy.
It's hard to blame me,
Because I am here
So I kill you.
And you kill me.
My name,
Like your name,
Is war.

Figure 2.2: Elie Siegmeister, "Evil" (text by Richard Eberhart)

When I entertained evil,
I played upon him as if he were good.
At my red banquet table
I set before him peppery food.
I thought he was the king of the world.
His elegance, his subtlety
Were without question in my mind,
His sensibility was exquisite.
Because of his mannered disguise,
He was so much like my friends, myself,
I saw him without surprise.
At a banquet table nothing offends.

We talked of the affairs of state.
Should one turn the other cheek?
The idea was that to lose face
Was a shame in being weak.
None thought to kill was bad.
The pictures of the lacerated Vietnamese
Were somehow not to be mentioned.
None thought any here was obese.
There is a certain delicacy
In what to say at a dinner party.
The idea is to accept man as he is,
And rejoice at eating hearty.

Now I opened a bottle of Rosé.
It was a symbol of relaxation.
We all were feeling well,
And I offered a toast to the nation.
I said, let us drink to freedom.
This seemed brightly reasonable,
As everyone around the table arose
In our state of hedonism.

We drank to the glory of our state,
None thinking this uncouth.
We drank to individual aims,
The complexity of truth
Our guest, recurrent ruler of the world
Was delightful, polite.
I saw his bloat,
My imaginary bullet through his throat.

<div align="center">Chapter 3</div>

3   "More Noise than Words": Making (Non)sense of a Nation at War

On Saturday October 14, 1967, audience members entered Judson Gallery in New York City, a space in the basement of Judson Memorial Church, to experience composer Malcolm Goldstein's *State of the Nation* (1967). Presented as one of twelve "Evenings of Manipulation,"[161] *State of the Nation* was an immersive, participatory experience that engaged with the series' theme of manipulation by inviting audience members to cut and splice tape loops of President Lyndon B. Johnson speaking about the war in Vietnam.[162] On the surface, this work—a destruction of a sitting President's speech about a controversial conflict—seems inherently political. However, in discussing this work in a 2020 interview, Goldstein rejects the idea of intention. His description of *State of the Nation* focuses on the process of speech becoming noise rather than the work's potential for political interpretation, though he acknowledges that some may interpret it as a political statement:

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[161] The 12 Evenings of Manipulations were held at Judson Gallery from 4-7pm between October 5-22, 1967. The other evenings were: Ralph Ortiz, "Destruction Room" (Thurs. Oct. 5); Bici Hendricks, "Deteriorations" (Fri. Oct. 6); Jean Toche, "Art Experiments in Sensory Deprivation" (Sat. Oct. 7); Allan Kaprow, "Rearrangement" (Sun. Oct. 8); Al Hansen (Thurs. Oct. 12); Geoffrey Hendricks, "Sky/Change" (Fri. Oct. 13); Steve Rose, "Art Demonstration: Heavy Yoga" (Sun, Oct. 15); Carolee Schneemann, "Divisions & Rubble" (Thurs. Oct. 19); L.B. Picard, "Construction-Destruction-Construction" (Fri. Oct. 20); Kate Millett, "No" (Sat. Oct. 21); Philip Corner, Fred Lieberman, Charlotte Moorman, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik ("Soft Transformations"), Thomas Schmit, and Ken Warner (Sun. Oct. 22). A copy of a booklet published by Judson Gallery about the evenings is included in NYU-MG, Box 17, Folder 10. At a second set of evenings, the Evenings of Destruction, Goldstein performed a version of *"death: act or fact of dying"*.

[162] The quotations came from the President's Address on Vietnam Before the National Legislative Conference, September 29, 1967. The transcript is available at http://www.lbjlibrary.org/exhibits/the-presidents-address-on-vietnam-before-the-national-legislative-conferenc.

there was no intention with [*State of the Nation*]. There was just a sound structure. One might say—now, I didn't think this—one might say "oh, you're trying to make Lyndon Johnson sound foolish." Well, that's your interpretation…. I had no intention. I had an experience I wanted to create.[163]

Goldstein's focus on process in this work that so easily lends itself to political interpretation is curious given that many aspects of it seem overtly political. However, I argue that it is actually this seemingly non-referential and objective transformational process that ultimately conveys the political message of *State of the Nation*.

Transformation and erasure of word meanings is the topic of this chapter, an approach to Vietnam-era compositions that I examine through three works. I begin with Goldstein's focus on the transformation of words into noise in *State of the Nation*, or as Goldstein says, the transformation from "word-sense to sound-sense," and demonstrate that this transformational process is in itself a political commentary on U.S. society in the 1960s. I then compare the transformational process in *State of the Nation* to the ways in which texts are manipulated and distorted in two other Vietnam War-related works: Salvatore Martirano's *L's. G. A.* (1967) and Roger Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time* (1968). At first glance these three works seem dissimilar, as they each use disparate musical language and techniques. Goldstein's *State of the Nation* is an interactive tape work from a composer who describes his approach as "structured improvisational composition;"[164] Martirano's *L's. G. A.* is a multimedia work that blends musical tape composition, video backdrop, and caricatured acting; and Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time*

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[163] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[164] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

is a choral work with orchestral accompaniment. In all three of these works, however, the composers manipulate and distort texts that are symbolic of the United States in order to comment on the state of their country.

Previous scholarship on these works has emphasized the political message expressed by the texts being manipulated, analyzing the resulting musical works as political statements akin to burning a flag. In his dissertation on art music responding to the Vietnam War, Timothy Kinsella includes both *L's. G. A.* and *Sayings for Our Time* as examples of "Music of Mockery, Appropriation, and Deconstruction," comparing them to works like Jimi Hendrix's iconic performance of "The Star-Spangled Banner" at the 1969 Woodstock Festival. Kinsella does not discuss Goldstein's *State of the Nation* in this or any other category, but it is similarly considered by Paul Cameron MacPhail as "a strong statement against the language of war employed by Lyndon B. Johnson in his State of the Nation address," with the "transformation of words from their intended sense into sounds without meaning" serving primarily to reflect the nonsensical nature of Johnson's speech.[165] These scholars are not remiss in addressing the significant political messages expressed by manipulating national texts like the Gettysburg Address or a speech by the sitting President. Evidently these works share a distortion of national symbols. Yet *State of the Nation*, *L's. G. A.*, and *Sayings for Our Time* share another common element that is not present in works like Hendrix's "The Star-Spangled Banner." In these three works, the manipulation of texts extends beyond the disrespect, mockery, and contempt Kinsella describes, providing commentary on the meaning—or rather, the altered meaning or lack

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[165] MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 99.

of meaning—of the words they employ. In fact, statements from the composers and those close to them make it clear that the manipulation of the meaning of words is the primary subject of these works, not the specific texts being manipulated. Goldstein, Martirano, and Hannay were responding not just to the political context of the Vietnam War, but more specifically to the ways politicians, media, and the military were manipulating the meanings of words to suit the agenda of the war, demonstrating through their works the ways in which words can lose or change their meaning. Ultimately, these works are not merely examples of public disrespect or contempt, but nuanced political statements that represent the contradictions and absurdity their composers were witnessing in late 1960s America.

3.1 *State of the Nation*

The presentation of *State of the Nation* at the October 1967 Evenings of Manipulation was its first and only performance to date. While this performance was not recorded, Goldstein created written and visual interpretations of the experience in the "score," which was included in Judson Gallery's publication about the series—though, as the composer acknowledges, "it's not actually a score" but rather "a visual representation of the experience" that was created after the event (See figure 3.1).[166] On the left side of the score pages, Goldstein includes a vivid poetic depiction of what the audience should experience upon entering the room: continuous droning of Lyndon B. Johnson's recorded voice while newspapers hanging from the ceiling and walls visually confront the

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[166] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

audience-participants. The right side of the pages provide more practical details, such as examples of text that is being recited and a description of the transformational process. As a poetic representation rather than a prescriptive guide to performance, this score lacks some of the details of the performance that come to light in discussion with the composer himself. Nevertheless, it is significant in its distillation of the performance into the elements that the composer deemed most important. As readers of this "score" we are introduced to the overbearing physical and aural space that Goldstein created within the confines of the Judson Gallery. The poetic and grammatical structure of the composer's description leaves it up to the reader whether the "thickness of garbage" is describing the sound of Johnson's voice or the hanging newspapers—or, perhaps, both. Notable in this description is how Goldstein emphasizes the physicality of the experience. Not only does he explicitly state and repeat—the only repeated text—that "the hands are important," emphasizing the role of the participant-performers' hands in the manipulative process, but he also describes listening as an intensely physical experience: echoes resonating, bones shaking, pores wide. In the final stanza of the score, the two columns dissolve and Goldstein leaves the reader with a concluding statement on the overall effect of the work:

> …. the transformation of Johnson's speech
> from grammatical "sense"
> to non-sense (NOISE, deep at its core, now realized.) "The State of the Nation."

As this concluding statement demonstrates, Goldstein's score reflects the importance he places on the transformational process from speech to noise, while simultaneously indicating the work's relationship to its political context. We are given to understand that the non-sense created by the participant-performers' manipulation of the tape loops is a

realization of what is at the core of Johnson's speech, and, ultimately, a representation of society in the United States more broadly: that is, the state of the nation.[167]

The second portion of the "score" is a visual representation of the work featuring a collage of photographs of Lyndon B. Johnson, maps of Vietnam, clippings from newspapers, and typewritten text. Over the top of this collage, Goldstein has handwritten words and phrases excerpted from Johnson's speech in black ink, using different sizes and writing styles to imitate the distorting effect of the manipulated tape loops. The words Goldstein chooses in this visual representation of "State of the Nation" emphasize violence, destruction, and death as well as the political and ideological factors at play in Vietnam. Most notable is the word "NO" scrawled in huge letters across Johnson's cheerful face. Despite its associations with a work that Goldstein describes as having no intention, this visual representation paints a decidedly political picture.

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[167] The title of this work is significant, particularly since this speech was not a State of the Nation address. The reiteration of the title at the end of the work seems to be indicating that it is, in fact, a commentary on the noise that is produced.

Figure 3.1: Word score for *State of the Nation* and accompanying visual collage[168]

[168] Goldstein's score for *State of the Nation* is available in NYU-MG, Box 8, Folder 22. These images are reproduced with the permission of Malcolm Goldstein.

In an interview I conducted with him in September 2020, Goldstein recalled the

performance of *State of the Nation* in vivid detail.[169] He first described the environment

participants faced as they entered the basement of Judson Gallery, including the visual

and sonic environment of the room. Goldstein's description concentrated on the

experience of the audience-participant. As in the score, the composer emphasized the

overbearing physical space, noting the "very concentrated" atmosphere in this low-

ceilinged basement. He also drew attention to the auditory effect of moving through the

performance space, as the sounds from different tape loops shift from foreground to

background depending on the participant's location:

> These three loops were going on, and also the room was decorated with
> newspapers hanging from the ceiling and so it was an environment of
> visual and sound. And the sound was Lyndon Johnson saying these three
> statements: "Are the Vietnamese right about us, no I think they're
> wrong." And I can't remember the exact number it was… "80, uh, 63
> thousand American soldiers wounded, 58 thousand return to action."
> And then there was a third one which I can't remember. Okay, so these
> are going on, and people will just—it's a very small space and the
> ceilings are very low, it's very… not claustrophobic, but very
> concentrated. People would come in and leave as they wish, and if they
> want to hear each one they can go up close to that machine. If they want
> to walk through the space, they can actually create a sound environment
> by the way in which they place themselves in the room.[170]

As Goldstein continued his recollection of the work's performance, he shifted his focus to

the process of transforming the sound of Johnson's speech into nonsense. The

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[169] These descriptions were in answer to me asking him to describe his motivations and creative process for *State of the Nation*. The full transcript of this interview is included as an appendix to this dissertation.

[170] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

significance of this transformational process is certainly evident in the score, but

Goldstein's enthusiastic recollection emphasizes this process even further:

> But, then, the fun thing was I had a sign, which I think is included in this so-called score, which said you can cut up the tape any way you want and piece it together again. And in many cases [I] had to help them because they didn't have the technology—not technology—the simple know-how how to cut a tape and splice it together and paste it together. And so after a while you got "are the Vietnamese right about us? No I think they're wrong." "Ah eee eh a ay ooh no wrong." And finally [nonsense syllables mimicking tape distortion]. As you chop it up more and more [laughs] it becomes noise [continues laughing]. And so, when you first walk in it is, um, well I guess you could say more-or-less sensible, depending where you place yourself or how you walk around, and as various people would cut the tape up it became less and less word-sense to sound-sense. And so you ended up with a room that was more noise than words. And that was the structure of the piece. I made no choices, didn't tell anybody how to cut it up. If they needed help, I helped them, but otherwise just let them do what they wanted.[171]

While Goldstein's score for *State of the Nation* describes the practical details of

how the tape loops could be distorted—by removing or moving pieces of tape, by

splicing together different sections of the same or different tape loops, or by altering the

speed or volume of the tape machines—his description in 2020 emphasizes the sonic

effect of these actions. Through his vivid mimicry of the process, he demonstrates how

the sound of Johnson's speech is transformed from "word-sense" to "sound-sense,"

creating a "room that was more noise than words." Goldstein repeatedly emphasizes in

his discussion of *State of the Nation* that the process of transformation was entirely

controlled by the choices of the audience-participants. While he did help participants that

did not have experience with manipulating tape loops, he did not want to impose his

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[171] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

authorial vision on the individual choices they made. Despite his attempts to relinquish control, however, the overall trajectory from words to noise was almost unavoidable—so long as the audience-participants continued to manipulate the tape loops, the words of Johnson's speech would become more and more obscured. In responding to a question about the role of the participant-performers in the work, Goldstein's response reflects this balance between relinquishing control of the specifics while still being aware of the work's overall trajectory: "I didn't want to control anything. I wanted—I knew it was going to go to noise."[172]

Distorting or manipulating a recorded human voice, and specifically the voice of a president, in *State of the Nation* can in itself be considered a political—even violent— act. This violence has also been a feature of discussions of other musical works constituted of manipulated recorded speech. In examining the use of recorded speech fragments as the central material in works by Steve Reich and by David Byrne and Brian Eno, Maarten Beirens has noted the importance of the speaker's identity in understanding such works. Beirens considers not only the textual content of these recorded speech fragments, but also the speaker's voice, asserting that elements such as pronunciation, phrasing, colour, and grain identify recorded speech with the person speaking: "if only through the idiosyncrasies of speech and pronunciation, these words remain inextricably bound to the speaker, who is audibly (although not physically) present."[173] Steve Reich

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[172] Malcolm Goldstein, telephone interview with author, September 2, 2020.

[173] Maarten Beirens, "Voices, Violence and Meaning: Transformations of Speech Samples in Works by David Byrne, Brian Eno and Steve Reich," *Contemporary Music Review* 33, no. 2 (2014): 212.

has similarly pointed to the importance of the speaker's identity in discussing his work *It's Gonna Rain*, stating that "using the voice of individual speakers is not like setting a text—it's setting a human being. A human being is personified by his or her voice."[174] As Beirens asserts, understanding these works as evoking the presence of the speaker has profound ramifications on our understanding of them and the ways in which the recorded speech is dealt with. For example, Beirens argues that Reich's later works based on speech samples, including *Different Trains*, treat recorded speech in a "respectful" manner, wherein the speech is always clearly perceptible and the speaker is "a privileged witness, included for its documentary value."[175] This stands in contrast to Reich's earlier phase-based works *It's Gonna Rain* and *Come Out*, which have been interpreted by Beirens and others as enacting violence or erasure on the recorded speech samples.[176]

The interpretation of *Come Out* as a form of violence is revealing when considered in comparison to the transformative process in *State of the Nation.* While the aesthetic processes and philosophies behind these two works differ,[177] both involve a

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[174] Steve Reich and Paul Hillier, *Writings on Music: 1965-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

[175] Beirens, "Voices, Violence and Meaning: Transformations of Speech Samples in Works by David Byrne, Brian Eno and Steve Reich," 217. Beirens considers Reich's *City Life* (1995) to be an exception.

[176] Scholars that have commented on the violence and erasure of speech in *Come Out* and *It's Gonna Rain* include Sumanth Gopinath, "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's Come Out," in *Sound Commitments: Avant-Garde Music and the Sixties*, ed. Robert Adlington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 121–44; Martin Scherzinger, "Curious Intersections, Uncommon Magic: Steve Reich's It's Gonna Rain," *Current Musicology* 80, no. 79/80 (2005): 207, https://doi.org/10.7916/D8BC3X6X; Lloyd Whitesell, "White Noise: Race and Erasure in the Cultural Avant-Garde," *American Music* 19, no. 2 (2001): 168–89; Mitchell Morris, "Musical Virtues," in *Beyond Structural Listening: Postmodern Modes of Hearing*, ed. Anthony Dell'Antonio (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 44–69.

[177] In *Come Out*, Reich employs his characteristic phasing technique: two tape loops of the recorded speech fragment play in unison before gradually shifting out of sync. Over the course of the work the loops are doubled to four and then eight. While much of *Come Out*'s structure reflects an overall sense of

recorded speech excerpt that is first played in its original state and is then gradually

transformed beyond recognition, losing both its textual meaning and the identifiable

characteristics of the speaker's voice in the process. With these similarities in mind, *State

of the Nation* can be interpreted as enacting a form of violence against the semantic

content of Johnson's speech and, by extension, the man himself. However, one important

difference between these two works lies in the identities of their speaking subjects. The

arguments that Beirens, Gopinath, Morris, and Whitesell have advanced regarding

violence and erasure in *Come Out* are partially predicated on the racial and social power

dynamics that are present in the manipulation of the voice of Daniel Hamm, a young

Black man falsely accused of murder, by a white composer. In *State of the Nation,* this

power dynamic looks quite different. The voice being transformed by a white, male

composer is a much more powerful one than his own—that of the President of the United

States. Thus, in this case any perceived act of violence, erasure, or distortion upon the

recorded speech is symbolic of rebellion and resistance, rather than oppression. Because

Goldstein is insistent that the participant-performers control the progress of the work, it is

they who are enacting this rebellion and resistance, realizing a physical act that

emphasizes their right to democracy, free speech, and mass organization to protest

government. In *State of the Nation,* the participant-performers work together to dismantle

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process, Reich's authorial presence is undeniable. Lloyd Whitesell has argued that in *Come Out* "the authorial 'voice' occupies a comparatively mute position, vaguely apprehended as a set of background assumptions and an unfolding structural matrix," and yet "it becomes clear that the true 'subject' of the music is the man behind the curtain; though the subject position he occupies is as reduced as possible" in "White Noise: Race and Erasure in the Cultural Avant-Garde," 176–77. Perhaps the process being the subject also makes this true of "State of the Nation," but it is also significant that it is not the composer who enacts this work. While Reich's work exists in an authoritative audio version, Goldstein's exists in its performance.

the speech of someone in political power, stripping his speech of its semantic meaning

and thereby symbolically stripping him of his power.[178]

While I have been focusing on the process of transformation in *State of the*

Nation, the specific speech that was chosen and its connection to the Vietnam War are

certainly significant. Goldstein strongly objected to U.S. involvement in Vietnam, as is

discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation. While he maintains the importance of the

transformational process and the role of the audience-participants as the people who

realize *State of the Nation*, when asked directly about why he chose the recording of this

particular speech he explicitly linked it to his feelings about the language Johnson used

and the impact of the war in Vietnam on the United States:

> AM: Do you feel there was a reason why you chose that particular tape?
>
> MG: Oh yeah! Well, that was very simple. That was, there was your war in Vietnam. That was Lyndon Johnson saying things that, um, [sigh] well, any way from absurd to terrible. Atrocious. Can you imagine saying that all these soldiers—well, I can't remember the number, I'll say 60— it was quite high—63 thousand [were wounded] and 58 thousand go back to fight again? It was actually the Vietnamese War which destroyed the United States.

It is clear from this statement that Goldstein took issue with the specific words and

phrases that Johnson used in this speech, making it particularly appropriate source

material for a work that was focused on the manipulation of word meanings.

Understanding *State of the Nation* as a manipulation of words and phrases that Goldstein

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[178] This violence is not always considered a negative force. Beirens, for example, considers the violent distortion of speech to "enable[e] more direct access to the expressive content, transmitted by the voice, but hidden behind the semantic system of the words." See Beirens, "Voices, Violence and Meaning: Transformations of Speech Samples in Works by David Byrne, Brian Eno and Steve Reich," 221.

considered "absurd," "terrible," and "atrocious" is revealing: this work is not simply a manipulation of a speech about Vietnam, but a manipulation of these particular excerpts from the speech and their implications and, ultimately, a form of public artistic violence in opposition to them.

Each of the recorded speech excerpts that Goldstein included in this work incorporate some sort of absurdity or manipulation of meaning. The specific excerpts that were used can be determined based on the score and Goldstein's recollection quoted earlier in this chapter. While Goldstein was unable to remember all of the excerpts that were used in this performance over fifty years earlier, he quotes two excerpts relatively accurately from Johnson's speech. The first is a summary of the number of U.S. casualties and those wounded in Vietnam: "Our casualties in the war have reached about 13,500 killed in action, and about 85,000 wounded. Of those 85,000 wounded, we thank God that 79,000 of the 85,000 have been returned, or will return to duty shortly."[179] In Goldstein's quotation above, he seems particularly incredulous about the large proportion of wounded soldiers who returned to active duty.[180] Indeed, Johnson's phrasing here begs the question whether this is something to be thankful for. The second excerpt is a rejection of the Premier of North Vietnam's statement that the North Vietnamese were sure to win the war: "Are the North Vietnamese right about us? I think not. No. I think

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[179] In his speech, Johnson went on to credit the helicopter and U.S. medical science for making this possible.

[180] While this is how this is interpreted by Goldstein, it doesn't seem that this is necessarily what Johnson meant by "have been returned."

they are wrong."[181] This rhetorical question is the sort one may expect to hear in a

political speech, and yet when isolated it begins to sound somewhat absurd, inviting

questions not only about who is in the right in this conflict, but, on a larger, more

philosophical scale, about the nature of right and wrong and what these words mean to

different people in different contexts. While Goldstein contends that three excerpts were

used, the score lists four excerpts from Johnson's speech. In addition to the two excerpts

Goldstein quotes in his recollection, the piece includes an excerpt of Johnson's

justification for continued U.S. involvement in Vietnam: "We abhor the political murder

of any state by another, and the bodily murder of any people by gangsters of whatever

ideology." This phrase is a particularly effective example of words having the potential to

convey multiple meanings. While Johnson intended these words as a criticism of the Viet

Cong and the effects of Communism in Vietnam, the phrase could easily be turned on its

head by those who believed the United States was acting as an aggressor, causing death

and devastation in the name of ideology. The final excerpt that is included in the score is

"the proportion of the population living under Communist control." This section of

Johnson's speech celebrated the impact of U.S. forces in Vietnam, asserting that this

proportion had significantly reduced since their intervention. What Johnson does not say,

however, is whether this was accomplished by liberating people from Communist rule or

through the loss of Vietnamese lives.

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[181] Johnson quotes the North Vietnamese Premier as having said "Americans do not like long, inconclusive war… Thus we are sure to win in the end," and asserts that "it is the common failing of totalitarian regimes that they cannot really understand the nature of democracy."

In *State of the Nation*, Goldstein encourages his participant-performers to cut, splice, and distort the sound of Lyndon B. Johnson's speech, transforming it from "sense" to "nonsense." By stripping this recorded speech of its semantic meaning and the identifying characteristics of its speaker, this work may seem to result in a sound that is meaningless—or perhaps, as Goldstein has described it in interview and the score, "noise," a term usually associated with sound that is unwanted or unpleasant. However, this absence of meaning is in itself meaningful, as the process of transformation from words to noise is the essence of this work, reflecting Goldstein's concerns with U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the manipulation of word meanings in service of the war effort. In 2008, Goldstein was asked by *American Music* to reflect on what it meant to him to be an American composer. In his reflection, he expresses concern

> for the state of affairs in the world, of the terrible consequences of the actions of our government to export 'democracy,' as defined by our government, to the world, of how words can be used/manipulated for various ends that go beyond the intentions of the words themselves.[182]

This statement is eerily reminiscent of the worldview he expressed in *State of the Nation* forty years earlier. In this work, Goldstein engages ordinary Americans in the process of removing the meaning from their president's words, challenging power structures by questioning who can take control of words, meaning, and meaninglessness.

3.2   *L's. G. A.*

Salvatore Martirano's *L's. G. A. for Gassed-Masked Politico, Helium Bomb, and Two Channel Tape* (1967) has gained some notoriety as a work of political art. It has

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[182] Malcolm Goldstein, "Some Anecdotal Evidence," *American Music* 26, no. 4 (2008): 502.

been described by the late composer's colleague John Melby as "perhaps [Martirano's] most important (certainly his most notorious) work."[183] *L's. G. A.* was "written after a wrinkled nose" according to Martirano—that is, as a reaction to a visiting lecturer who dismissed the potential of quality music for setting political texts.[184] As the full title suggests, *L's. G. A.* is a multi-media work that includes one live performer—poet Michael Holloway in the original performance—wearing a gas mask. The gas mask is connected to a "helium bomb" machine that eventually releases helium gas into the mask, altering the performer's voice. In addition to the live performer, there are two pre-recorded elements: a tape collage composed by Martirano and a film montage created by Ronald Nameth, which is projected onto three large screens.[185]

The text for *L's. G. A.* is made up almost entirely of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, with poetry from Michael Holloway's *Dance Wreck* added at the end. This speech from the U.S. Civil War, originally delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery on November 19, 1863, has become one of the most iconic and well-known speeches of U.S. history. Martirano's colleague Roger Reynolds described the significance of this speech, asserting that: "The text is one of the most basic

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[183] John Melby, "Sal's G. A.," *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 1 (1996): 192.

[184] Salvatore Martirano, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, August 24, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 33.

[185] The multi-media element of this work and the connections between the media has led John Melby to describe it as representative of the principle of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Melby, "Sal's G. A.," 192. Christopher Andrew Preissing has analyzed *L's. G. A.* in his work on artworks with mixed media components. Preissing focuses entirely on the relationship between the different parts and their role in the narrative structure, and so does not discuss the political implications of the work or the process of word distortion in any depth. Christopher Andrew Preissing, "Intermedial Relationships Among Component Arts in Combined Art" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008), 57–63.

documents that dictate the American child's abstract image of his country. Lincoln's

words are fixed in each of our minds…. His phrases are part of American mythology."[186]

In addition to its importance as a symbol of national values and patriotism, this text

carried particular significance for the State of Illinois, where Martirano lived and worked

at the University of Illinois in Urbana. Illinois' connection to the sixteenth U.S. President

is an important element of their state culture; "Land of Lincoln" is the official state

slogan and has graced Illinois license plates since the 1950s. Thus, in using the

Gettysburg Address Martirano was not only appropriating a national symbol, but also the

words of "the chief historical and political icon of Illinois—the man who comes about as

close as anyone possibly can to being Illinois's patron saint."[187] Beyond the symbolic

significance of the Gettysburg Address, its subject matter—the sacrifices of the men who

died in battle and the duty of the living to perpetuate freedom and a government of, by,

and for the people such that the dead "shall not have died in vain"—was particularly

appropriate to the political climate of the Vietnam War era. The significance of

Martirano's use of this particular text has been discussed by scholars and critics alike.

Kinsella asserts that *L's. G. A.* "leaves the listener with no doubt that the new dead in

Vietnam *have* died in vain, killed at the behest of a government run amok, a government

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[186] Roger Reynolds, ... "... Taste, Boundaries, Relevance, Purpose, Risk... (About Salvatore Martitano)," *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 1 (1996): 203.

[187] Melby, "Sal's G. A." 194-5. While he was originally from Yonkers, New York, Martirano was well aware of the importance of Lincoln to his adopted state—perhaps more so than one who was born and raised in Illinois. In an interview with MacPhail, he asserted that "Illinois and Lincoln are glued together in a way that only someone not from Illinois can understand!" Salvatore Martirano, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, August 24, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 33.

no longer, 'by, of, or for' the people."[188] A *New York Times* review of the work in 1968 similarly described the use of this text as ironic, asserting that "certainly it is literary irony to pick the Gettysburg Address as the key element in a work about man's destructiveness."[189] Evidently, the use of this symbolic text contributes to the way it has been understood as a political work. However, it is not only the text that Martirano uses that expresses a political viewpoint, but rather the process through which it is manipulated and distorted.

The Gettysburg Address is distorted in a number of ways in *L's.G.A.* The helium bomb that is used to raise the pitch of the performer's voice towards the end of the work is perhaps the most obvious of these distortions due to the immediate visual impact of the gas mask, but this is the last in a string of distortions that accumulate throughout the work. After a slow introduction, the text of the Gettysburg Address is delivered via musical and dramatic caricatures of Martirano and his composer-colleagues Lejaren Hiller (1924-1994), John Cage (1912-1992), Ben Johnston (1926-2019), and Herbert Brün (1918-2000). Each composer is depicted both through a stereotype of his musical style and through an exaggerated dramatic caricature.[190] Once each of the caricatures has

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[188] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 242–43.

[189] Theodore Strongin, "Lincoln Address Distorted in Poem: Electric Ear Offers Antiwar, Mixed-Media Assault," *New York Times*, July 30, 1968.

[190] Martirano is depicted with a low, ominous voice; Hiller as mechanical and robotic; Cage as a homosexual stereotype with an exaggerated lisp and effeminate hand gestures; Johnston with an exaggerated Southern accent, and Brün as a "Nazi" with aggressive shouting in a German accent. These caricatures would seem to be offensive by twenty-first century standards, but criticism of the work does not seem to judge them in this way and emphasizes them as "good-natured stereotypes." MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 35. The duration of these stereotypes is organized using the Fibonacci principle.

had their say, the final words of the Address are passed back and forth between the different characters, interspersed with vocalized animal sounds, belches, and other noises. Words and phrases from the last stanza of the Address are then arranged in new combinations as the pitch of the performer's voice rises from the effect of the helium. The final lines of text are by Michael Holloway, climaxing with insistent, frantic repetitions of "if it's sour, throw it out!"

By manipulating Lincoln's speech in these ways, Martirano was commenting on the ways in which politicians were using Lincoln's words to support a wide array of political agendas, which he believed "gave the actual words no meaning at all."[191] According to MacPhail, Martirano had been considering the differences inflection and delivery can make to the meaning of words and phrases before he began work on *L's. G. A.* In giving different sections of the speech to different characters, he intended them to "take on new meanings, completely separate from Lincoln's original intentions."[192] Not only do these manipulations draw out different meanings from Lincoln's words, but they also bring renewed focus to the text itself. As a text that is often repeated and quoted, the Gettysburg Address has taken on more symbolic meaning than literal meaning. Reynolds aptly points to this in his description of the work, asserting that the meaning of Lincoln's words "probably resides very little in their literal content by now." Reynolds notably credits the process of manipulation in *L's. G. A.* with the renewed focus on the words

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[191] Salvatore Martirano, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, August 24, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, 33.

[192] MacPhail, 33–34. MacPhail's description of this work is based on an interview with Martirano, but here he paraphrases rather than providing the composer's own words.

themselves: "Martirano has newly and ferociously etched Lincoln's words in the mind by modulating them with stereotypical accents."[193] In discussing the comprehensibility of text in theatrical music, Martirano has alluded to his strategy of "either choosing texts you could assume everyone knew or else a very simple format which then allows *inflection* to carry the burden of meaning, rather than the content of a specific word."[194] In *L's. G. A.* the composer employs both these strategies, choosing the particularly recognizable text of the Gettysburg Address and allowing the inflection of the different caricatures to alter the meaning of the words. According to Martirano,

> all you need to do is catch a few words now and then to understand what the meaning is. You hear 'government' and you hear 'people.' And thus I would hope that the person watching would create the framework of specific and exact meaning according to how he sees things.[195]

The way that this work plays with the intelligibility of the text also comes through in the work's title; the title *L's. G. A.* is not immediately recognizable as standing for Lincoln's Gettysburg Address until one begins to listen to it. At a 1968 performance of the work, the program listed it as "Lincoln's Gettysburg Address," leading the composer to announce that "the printed program was wrong" and "gave away his secret."[196]

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[193] Reynolds, ... "... Taste, Boundaries, Relevance, Purpose, Risk... (About Salvatore Martitano)," 203.

[194] Salvatore Martirano, in Richmond Browne et al., "Panel Discussion: Theater Music," *American Society of University Composers: Proceedings* 3 (1968): 43.

[195] Salvatore Martirano, in Browne et al., 43.

[196] Theodore Strongin, "Lincoln Address Distorted in Poem: Electric Ear Offers Antiwar, Mixed-Media Assault," *New York Times*, July 30, 1968. Paraphrases Martirano.

In the years following its composition, *L's. G. A.* was performed at protest events and considered by some to be the "quintessential anti-war intermedia piece."[197] Audience reactions ranged from stunned silence to heckling, and one reviewer noted that they heard an audience member remarking "they ought to show that in the White House."[198] Whether they considered it an insightful commentary on the Vietnam War or an outrageous desecration of a national icon, contemporary audiences and reviewers took *L's. G. A.* extremely seriously.[199] According to Martirano, the government also took the work seriously and he experienced a number of suspicious interviews that he thought were the result of *L's. G. A.*'s success:

> I was interviewed a couple of times by people purporting to be from the New Yorker Magazine, or this magazine or that, with a tape recorder, asking all kinds of questions that had to do with politics. And the interviews never showed up in publications. I was also interviewed on the pretext that certain students were applying for positions in intelligence. I was very paranoid at one point—I thought I was being followed.[200]

Despite the serious attention it garnered, Martirano intended *L's. G. A.* to be a humorous work. In a program note from 1974, he emphasizes the work's humour, asserting that "this piece is supposed to be funny, but there must be some important principle missing

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[197] Barnes Foster, "Review: Retrospective 1962-1992 by Salvatore Martirano," *Computer Music* 20, no. 4 (1996): 62.

[198] Jean Eichelberger Ivey, "Current Chronicle," *The Musical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (1969): 90–91. See MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 38 for Martirano's account of audience reactions.

[199] Barnes Foster's 1996 review of the audio recording reflects a similar understanding of the work, asserting that "Mr. Martirano takes on the absurdity of warfare with uncharacteristic seriousness." Foster, "Review: Retrospective 1962-1992 by Salvatore Martirano," 62.

[200] MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 38–39.

because nobody ever laughs." Continuing, the composer describes the work as "a joking imitation and caricature of the music of 4 composer friends" and "a soapy rendition of the Gettysburg Address."[201] This work is not pointlessly humorous, however; this humour forms an integral element of its political message. In refusing to take itself too seriously, *L's. G. A.* not only challenges the sanctity of a nationally significant text, as Kinsella has argued,[202] but also draws attention to and questions the ways in which such texts are used and manipulated.

Martirano's process of drawing attention to and manipulating word meanings in *L's. G. A.* differs from Goldstein's in *State of the Nation* both in performance methods and treatment of the words themselves. While Goldstein exclusively used recorded speech excerpts but enacted manipulation in the act of performance, Martirano's manipulations of the text occur during a live spoken performance at his specific instruction, using caricature and delivery. Unlike Goldstein, Martirano does not negate or destroy the words he uses, but rather explores different interpretations and, eventually, different word ordering. Despite these differences, both works reflect an impulse to explore and manipulate the meaning of words as a response to the Vietnam War, as does Roger Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time*. While Goldstein and Martirano manipulate words associated with national leaders, Hannay's text uses slang and jargon to comment on the language used in 1960s America.

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[201] Salvatore Martirano, program note for *L's. G. A.,* Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Urbana, Illinois, July 23, 1974. Quoted in Peter J. Roubel, "A Complete and Annotated Catalog of the Works of Salvatore Martirano" (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001), 8; as quoted in Preissing, "Intermedial Relationships Among Component Arts in Combined Art," 59.

[202] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 242.

3.3   *Sayings for Our Time*

While Roger Hannay (1930-2006) did not participate in non-musical aspects of the antiwar movement, he composed two works that reflect his opposition to the Vietnam War. In addition to *Sayings for Our Time* (1968), Hannay composed *America Sing!*, a tape-collage work, in 1966. In an interview with MacPhail in 1990, Hannay indicated that he was prompted to consider the actions of the U.S. government more carefully after a casual conversation in 1964 made him realize that he was uninformed on the topic of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. By 1965, he apparently considered himself squarely against the war, to the point that he told a student who said he would throw paint on war protesters, "Well, then you'll have to throw a bucket of red paint on me!"[203] Of his two Vietnam-related works, *America Sing!* most directly communicates the composer's anti-war views. Hannay describes *America Sing!* as "a vivid tape collage expressing my strong anti-Vietnam War sentiment."[204] While *Sayings for Our Time* also addresses the war in Vietnam, it only does so explicitly in its third movement. Rather, its primary focus is the manipulation of word meanings.

Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time* is a three-movement work for chorus and orchestra. Commissioned by the North Carolina Governor's School for the Arts, it was premiered by the school's chorus and orchestra with Hannay conducting on August 2,

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[203] Roger Hannay, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, July 18, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 156.

[204] Roger Hannay, *My Book of Life: A Collection of Autobiographical Essays* (Chapel Hill, NC: Author, 2000), 418.

1969.[205] A recording of this premiere performance is included on Hannay's 1999

compact disc *Two Choral Works with Orchestra*.[206] The score for *Sayings for Our Time*

was never published, and it does not seem to have been performed since its premiere.[207]

As the title suggests, *Sayings for Our Time* is explicitly concerned with the vocabulary of

1960s America. In his 1999 liner notes, Hannay states that

> Both the text and the music reflect the adventurous artistic climate of
> the time encompassing as it did radical changes in cultural values,
> speech, emerging technology, and the pervasive trauma caused by the
> American war in Vietnam. 'Pull out all the stops' was the wonderful
> phrase of Hugh Preble when he asked for the work, and the timely
> 'ultra-modernism' of the text and music are the result. The text is
> filled with contemporary references, and the music is chock-a-block
> with compositional leaps of fancy, including open improvisation,
> spatial notation, re-composition and quotation, octave displacement,
> and many other 'special effects', while the chorus parts are similarly
> conceived and contain speaking, shouting, choral glissandi, rhythmic
> ostinato, and asymmetrical rhythmic canonic imitation. Each of the
> three movements addresses a type of linguistic vocabulary
> characteristic of that volatile time.[208]

It is comprised of three movements, each of which addresses the topic of word meanings

from a particular theme.

The first two movements explore 1960s words and phrases that are not related to

the war in Vietnam. The first movement, "Getting With It," is made up of a string of

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[205] Performance date comes from Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in
Vietnam," 288.

[206] Roger Hannay, *Two Choral Works with Orchestra*, Aucourant Records AUREC 9901-1, 1999, compact
disc.

[207] The manuscript score for *Sayings of Our Time* is available at the University of North Carolina, Chapel
Hill.

[208] Roger Hannay, *Two Choral Works with Orchestra*, Aucourant Records AUREC 9901-1, 1999, compact
disc. Liner notes.

1960s slang words and phrases like "It's Wiggy!" and "Man, what a compy flick!". The majority of "Getting With It" is rhythmically spoken or shouted, but a sudden change in timbre occurs in the middle of the movement as the female voices sing "The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby," the title of a 1965 book by Tom Wolff. Wolff's distinctive writing style, replete with colloquialisms, technical jargon, and onomatopoeia, was part of the inspiration for Hannay to compose *Sayings for Our Time*.[209] The second movement, "Contextual Dynamics," employs technical and business jargon to explore the ways language was being manipulated in the business industry. The title of the movement comes from its closing phrase: "Mr. Hightower, you don't seem to understand the contextual dynamics of the Bronx."[210] This phrase is quoted from a *New York Times* article from August 1967, "Gibberish Tie-in Undergirding Contextual Dynamics of the Arts," which reports on John B. Hightower's work to create a Glossary of Meaningless Phrases.[211] A number of the meaningless phrases quoted in the article appear either verbatim or paraphrased in the text of "Contextual Dynamics," including "More tie-in with less carry-over," "These in-service programs will undergird the back-up that the teams need," "Major breakthrough with a new programing [sic.] thrust," "Educational-awareness experience," and "one-time teaser." The business jargon and

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[209] Hannay described this book as part of his inspiration in his inspiration in an interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, July 18, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 157.

[210] MacPhail notes that this is a quotation from a New York Times article, but does not specify which one. MacPhail, 157.

[211] Milton Esterow, "Gibberish Tie-In Undergirding Contextual Dynamics of the Arts," *New York Times*, August 12, 1967.

technical phrases eventually dissolve into strings of syllables and then into onomatopoeic

beeps and clicks before the final quotation from which the title is derived.

In both of these movements, the way that Hannay sets everyday words and

phrases—stringing them together in quick succession, overlapping them, deconstructing

them, and sometimes allowing them to disintegrate into bouts of free improvisation—

separates the words from their associated meanings. This sort of transformation of word

meanings is what inspired Hannay to compose *Sayings*. In *My Book of Life*, he describes

the role of language in this work, asserting that

> life in America had radically changed from placid conformity to
> energetic activity in all its aspects, social, political, and artistic. One of
> the striking aspects of the change was the sudden transformation of
> idiomatic language…. Most interesting and very disturbing was the
> new-Orwellian language of 'newspeak' in which reverse definitions
> were used to hide the chicanery of government.[212]

This most disturbing category of language transformation is explored in the third

movement, "Winning Hearts and Minds."

"Winning Hearts and Minds" interrogates the language used in describing

America's role in Vietnam, emphasizing the inherent contradictions in phrases such as

"Kill for Peace" and "Destroy to Save." Many of the words and phrases that Hannay

employs in this movement are drawn from media sources and statements by military and

government officials, including remarks by a U.S. army major regarding the destruction

of the village of Ben Tre during the Tet Offensive, who asserted that "it became

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[212] Hannay, *My Book of Life: A Collection of Autobiographical Essays*, 426.

necessary to destroy the town in order to save it."[213] Hannay's musical setting emphasizes

the absurdity and violence of the words and phrases, most notably through the delivery of

the text itself. Hannay draws attention to the manipulation of word meanings in this work

not through a process or the use of caricatures, but through different delivery techniques

(see figure 3.2 for a detailed organizational chart of the movement).

Throughout this movement, Hannay achieves a dramatic effect through insistent

rhythms, the building of tension through dissonance, instrumentation, and dynamic

increase, and moments of sudden silence. While some sections of the movement are sung

at specific pitches, there is little sense of overarching melody and the vocal pitches serve

mostly as elements in dissonant pitch clusters or as repetitive patterns. A number of the

musical techniques Hannay uses emphasize the sound of the words and phrases. For

example, after the opening shout of "KILL FOR PEACE!" following screams and

instrumental chaos, the choir chants a series of words and phrases that follow the same

rhythmic pattern and rhyme scheme: "Pacification Defoliation Pre-escalation De-

escalation Interrogation Troop Concentration War of Attrition." Sections of the choir

enter one by one on different pitches and maintain their respective pitch throughout the

section, creating a dissonant pitch cluster while also layering different words on top of

one another, so that once multiple voices have joined only the shared syllables at the end

of the words come through clearly to the audience. This technique of layering words and

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[213] This statement was reported in the media by Peter Arnett with the Associate Press on February 7, 1968. See Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, 151.

phrases with similar sounds recurs later in the movement when the choir chants different lines from a rhyming text instructing U.S. soldiers how to enact violence in Vietnam:

> "Strafe the town and burn the people;
> Drop napalm on the village square.
> Get out early in every morning,
> Catch them at their morning prayer.
> Throw some candy at the Arvn;
> Gather them around.
> Take your twenty mike-mike, and
> Mow the bastards down."

The nursery-rhyme style text combines descriptions of violent acts and slang terms with phrases that infantilize the enemy. Perhaps the most interesting instance of simultaneous verbalizing of multiple words is the final line of the movement, when the choir shouts both "TERROR" and "POWER" simultaneously, essentially conflating the two. Another technique that Hannay employs is the separation of words and phrases into syllables. The first word that we hear deconstructed into its syllables is "PACIFICATION," which, after a sudden silence, is shouted unaccompanied one syllable at a time, each with the same duration and without differentiation in inflection. Later, the same technique is used with "All the houses were bombed. All the villages burned." These sentences are chanted in unison over sparse accompaniment, and are punctuated with a single drum articulation at the end of each sentence. Hannay also makes use of the technique of repetition with the letters K.B.A., an acronym for the military term "killed by air." Hannay repeats either the acronym or the original term a combined total of seventeen times in a row, setting these repetitions to a continuous rhythm and a steady pitch, with the exception of a consistent semitone deviation on the word "air." This monotonous repetition gives this passage a mechanical feeling, even as it suddenly transitions to a higher register and builds to a climax on "Repeat, Over!"—

military jargon that directly references the repetitiveness of what has preceded it. Altogether these techniques invite the audience to consider these words more closely and to deconstruct them, draining them of their meaning. The instrumental accompaniment adds to the impact of this movement, particularly through judicious use of chaotic improvisatory passages and an allusion to the insistent rhythmic pattern from the first scene of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The penultimate phrases of the work recall the pop culture slang of the first movement, as the chorus shouts in unison "What's the matter?! Get with it!" In addition to this connection to the first movement, the ending also seems to directly address the audience, challenging them to form an opinion on the violent acts that have just been described to them.

Figure 3.2: Organizational Chart for "Winning Hearts and Minds"

Text as included in liner notes to *Two Choral Works for Orchestra* (Roswell: AuCourant Records, 1999)	Description of Hannay's musical setting
KILL FOR PEACE!!	*Opens with timpani roll followed by "KILL FOR PEACE" shouted. Then screams and extended instrumental chaos, drums, etc.*
Pacification Defoliation Pre-escalation De-escalation Interrogation Troop Concentration War of Attrition	*Repetitive, fast-paced monotone rhythmic chanting with no rests. Groups enter one at a time on different pitches, resulting in a tonal cluster. Instrumental accompaniment builds tonal cluster at the same time as voices are added.*
PACIFICATION!! BLAST SYNDROME!!	*Silence* *Pacification is yelled with all syllables separated & equal duration (unaccompanied)* *Onerous instrumental section initiated by the percussion section; Blast syndrome is yelled over the accompaniment, final syllable is held longer than expected. Dissonant improvisatory material in the orchestra leads directly into the next section.*
Search and destroy. Body count. Tortured by Arvn Security Police. Establishment of local security.	*Rite of Spring-inspired accompaniment* *Rhythmic chanting with little melodic motion. Mostly maintain the same pitch for a long time and occasionally move up/down by step. Jump up a fourth for "lice" and "killed"*

Pacified and secure. (repeats) Percentage of homes destroyed. Percentage of civilians killed.	*Ends in sudden silence*
All the houses were bombed. All the villages burned. (destroy-to-save)	*Unison chanting with sparse accompaniment-syllables detached from one another. Single drum articulation after each line.* *Destroy to save is spoken in a fluid, legato manner.*
K.B.A. (killed by air) Repeat, Over! K.B.A. KILL FOR PEACE!!	*Repeated 17 times* *4x just KBA* *3x KBA killed by air* *1x KBA killed by air at higher pitch* *5x just killed by air at higher pitch* *In 4-part harmony with little melodic motion: monotone with semitone movement on the word 'air', shift to higher pitches part way through. Last statement of "killed by air" leads into held pitches for "repeat over" in the same high register.* *Orchestral accompaniment joins for "KILL FOR PEACE!!", this time sung at a high register*
Beautiful! It's a Matter of Principle! Completely Impersonal. Totally Rational. Bombs, Napalm, Rockets, Flares, Cannon, Grenades, Mines, Strafing Shells, TONNAGE OF EXPLOSIVES Destroy! Smash! Cut! Burn! Bomb! Strafe! Blast! Maim! Kill! DESTROY EVERYTHING!!	*Rhythmically spoken over chaotic instrumental accompaniment* *Last "Destroy everything" is extended.*
"Strafe the town and burn the people; Drop napalm on the village square. Get out early in every morning, Catch them at their morning prayer. Throw some candy at the Arvn; Gather them around. Take your twenty mike-mike, and Mow the bastards down."	*Shouted unaccompanied chanting with overlapping text (different groups have different lines)* **not all of these lines are audible in the recording*
What's the matter?! Get with it! TERROR – POWER!!	*Unison unaccompanied* *Terror and Power are shouted simultaneously by different groups over dissonant orchestral accompaniment*

Kinsella has argued that the first and second movements of *Sayings for Our Time* are also intended as responses to the Vietnam War. He considers the popular phrases in "Getting With It" to be commentary on the conflict, asserting that

> Obviously, the "it" referred to [in "Getting With It"] is the war in Vietnam, most definitely "where the action is." In that context, the seemingly innocuous words acquire very disturbing connotations. In the parlance of the war, "birds" in Vietnam referred to helicopters, as opposed to pretty girls. "Gassy?" U.S. troops routinely used CS gas in Vietnam, in clear violation of the 1925 Geneva Protocol. No doubt the war will "blow your mind!" In a counter-culture context, having one's mind blown was generally a positive, liberating experience often induced by the ingestion of various psychotropic drugs. The phrase connotes expanded perception and ecstatic enlightenment. The "Multi-media total environmental Theater experience of the Absurd kind of Happening" that was the war in Vietnam, however, blew people's minds in a much different way—that of neural fuses burning, of the delicate circuitry of the psyche overloaded and melting down.[214]

While the words used in the piece could take on an ominous quality if considered to be about the Vietnam War as Kinsella argues, there is no evidence that Hannay intended or supported such an interpretation, nor is it likely that an audience would come to such a conclusion when the only text that has a clear connection to the war is in the third movement. Kinsella likewise links "Contextual Dynamics" to the Vietnam War response, describing it as "an assault on the defense contractors such as General Dynamics, whose wartime profits rose in direct proportion to the rising numbers of dead."[215] Yet again there are no strong grounds for such a direct connection. The only part of this movement

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[214] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 284.

[215] Kinsella, 285–86.

that points to a link to war is the phrase "Alice's Restaurant," a reference to Arlo

Guthrie's 1967 song of the same title protesting the draft.

Hannay's descriptions of the premiere of *Sayings for Our Time* support the

separation of the movements by subject, as they make it clear that the third movement

was the most political of the three due to its direct treatment of the topic of the Vietnam

War. The political statement that comes across in *Sayings for Our Time* is clear in

Hannay's account of the audience reaction to the premiere, which he has noted was

particularly chilly:

> After the great, last, crashing, monstrous improvisation at the end, where the roof is coming off and the piece comes to a slamming end, there was hardly any applause. There was hardly enough to get me off the stage!... It was a direct assault on their values, in a sense, in every movement, and certainly in the last one. So one couldn't expect a great positive response.[216]

As Hannay notes, it was the last movement, "Winning Hearts and Minds," which was the

most controversial, as it directly confronted the war in Vietnam. Significantly, one or two

of the high school students refused to perform the third movement, though they still took

part in the first two. Hannay stated that he "respected their decisions" to do so, asserting

that "this was a very traumatic thing to ask these students to do. When you look back on

it, some of them undoubtedly had brothers, possibly even fathers, who were over there,

fighting the good fight for democracy."[217]

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[216] Roger Hannay, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, July 18, 1990, quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 161, 163.

[217] MacPhail, 161.

Of the three works discussed in this chapter, *Sayings for Our Time* is most explicitly concerned with word meanings. Kinsella considers this work "an interesting explication of the power of language,"[218] drawing attention to Hannay's efforts to "reactivate" the language used to describe war.[219] However, his analysis focuses on the way its language expresses mockery or contempt, disregarding the significance of its exploration of word meanings in the context of 1960s America.

3.4 Conclusion

In Goldstein's *State of the Nation*, Martirano's *L's. G. A.*, and Hannay's *Sayings for Our Time*, the manipulation of word meanings takes on significance in itself, beyond the significance of the text being manipulated. These works each interact with and distort words and their meanings in distinct ways, but they reflect similar impulses and goals. By focusing on the process of manipulation rather than only the texts being manipulated, these works can be understood as more than merely acts of disrespect or mockery, but rather as political commentary on the atmosphere of 1960s America. While my own analysis departs from Kinsella and MacPhail's by decentering the potential symbolism of the texts that are used in these works, changing conceptions of national identity still play an important role in my interpretation. The three works' manipulation or erasure of word meanings is a commentary on society and on the state of the United States, demonstrating one way in which composers grappled with the question of how to represent a time and a place where areas of life that hitherto had seemed stable were undermined and began to

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[218] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 288.

[219] Kinsella, 286–87.

seem nonsensical. These composers saw the meaning of words changing around them: politicians, military officials, advertisements, and pop culture introduced new language and employed words in conflicting and nonsensical ways. These changes in meaning can also be extended to an understanding of national identity more broadly. As I explored in chapter two of this dissertation, many U.S. citizens altered their understanding of what it meant to be American and what their country stood for as a result of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The late 1960s were a turbulent time in American society, and the antiwar movement was influenced by and intertwined with broader societal and artistic concerns. In his analysis of Steve Reich's *Come Out*, Sumanth Gopinath refers to the historical moment of the mid-1960s in the context of a historical framework "in which violence is done through and onto speech and text in various ways," pointing to the examples of Jacques Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction, Fluxus performances expressing violence through text, and electroacoustic compositions incorporating human voices.[220] Just as the three works discussed in this chapter are responses to the Vietnam War, they are equally part of this larger preoccupation with and violence against language and its meaning.

In his introduction to the booklet that the Judson Gallery published about the Evenings of Manipulation, Jon Hendricks wrote about the relevance of the destructive works performed at the series, including Goldstein's "State of the Nation." He links these events and their relevance in society to street riots, protest marches to Congress, and violent attacks in the area, before concluding that:

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[220] Gopinath, "The Problem of the Political in Steve Reich's Come Out," 135.

> The events are relevant. It is important that they happened. They are relevant to a state of mind that says I don't give a shit, it doesn't concern me, I'm removed, I don't want to get involved. They are relevant too to a condition of art that says pure/considered/constructed/classic. The destructionists are an opposition; they are a romantic movement. They are messy and aren't very polite. It would be kind of hard to show them at Castelli's this year. Not much to buy, either. Maybe they are anti-American.[221]

Hendricks describes destructionist art not only as inherently relevant to a range of socio-cultural issues, but also as an opposition to art that is disconnected from society, and even as overtly critical of the nation-state. While not all of the works discussed in this chapter are truly destructionist in the vein Hendricks describes here, they all reflect this understanding of relevancy. Through their manipulation and exploration of words and their meanings, these works are not only responses to the conflict in Vietnam, but also to the experience of living in the United States in the 1960s more broadly.

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[221] Jon Hendricks, "Some notes, December 1967," included in Judson publication about the Evenings of Manipulation. NYU-MG, Box 17, Folder 10.

Chapter 4

4 Composing Peace through Military History: Vietnam War Compositions and Historical Texts

> What history can ever give (for who can know) the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies?[222]

In 1969, Ned Rorem set text from Walt Whitman's *Specimen Days*, written during the U.S. Civil War. In transplanting these words to the context of the war in Vietnam, Rorem demonstrated connections between history and the present—the armies in1969 knew all too well "the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies" that Whitman had described (see above). Rorem was not the only composer to choose to advocate peace during the Vietnam War by setting texts that were written in response to earlier conflicts. By choosing to set such texts, these composers created works that spoke to a desire for universal and everlasting peace, and so avoided some of the potential controversy that could come from composing a work overtly protesting U.S. involvement in Vietnam. These works' use of historical text weakens their potential to address particularities of the context of the Vietnam War or the many specific concerns about its morality that helped to ignite a widespread protest movement that differed so greatly from the pacifist movements associated with previous wars. However, by situating themselves within a tradition of war-responding art, and within the history of U.S. military conflict, these composers made statements about the conflict they were witnessing and about war and peace more broadly.

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[222] Ned Rorem, *War Scenes* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1971). Adapting text from Walt Whitman.

This chapter focuses on three compositions: Henry Leland Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers" (1970), Norman Dello Joio's *Evocations* (1970), and Ned Rorem's *War Scenes* (1969). Each of these composers uses a historical text to make a personal statement about the Vietnam War, often making small—or not so small—revisions to make the texts suit the contemporary situation. Beyond this, moreover, each composer uses his text's links to U.S. military history to bring out powerful messages that might have been lost in a setting of a contemporary, overtly anti-Vietnam War text. Ultimately, these three works remind Americans of the lessons that should have been learned from their history, emphasizing the futility of war and the circular nature of history.

4.1   *"We leave you our deaths: give them their meaning"*

Henry Leland Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers" (1970) is a work for mixed or unison chorus, with solo medium voice and piano accompaniment. Clarke sets a poem of the same title by Archibald MacLeish (1892-1982), which was written during World War II, inspired by the poet's service in World War I. In setting this historical text, Clarke creates a work with a clear political message—a call for universal peace. Clarke's setting of "The Young Dead Soldiers" accentuates the voices of the dead soldiers and their message of peace to resonate with his conception of epic music, a type of music he believed held potential for political resistance and social action. In this case, the use of a historical text adds weight to these voices and their message, since the poem's roots in U.S. military history imply a connection to generations of dead American soldiers.

In selecting MacLeish's poem, Clarke chose a text with a poignant message of peace as well as a link to U.S. military history. MacLeish's text is a haunting description of the voices of young dead soldiers, voices that are amplified by their absence: it is the

empty spaces and the silent passing of time that speak with the voices of the dead.

MacLeish's dead soldiers express a call to action for the living, imploring society not

only to remember those who died, but also to give their deaths meaning through "peace

and a new hope." MacLeish wrote this poem during his time as the Librarian of

Congress, a post he held from 1939-1944.[223] As the poet describes it, "The Young Dead

Soldiers" was written "in seven minutes at my desk" in response to a request from the

Treasury for a piece of writing to be used in a propaganda operation.[224] However, the

poem was never sent on to the Treasury department and was eventually published in his

collection *Actfive and Other Poems* in 1948. In *Actfive*, the poem is dedicated to

Lieutenant Richard Myers, the son of MacLeish's friends Richard and Alice-Lee

Myers.[225] The boy's death, according to biographer Scott Donaldson, contributed to the

"tangle of ideas" that led the poet to pen "The Young Dead Soldiers" during "one of the

darkest hours of World War II."[226] Donaldson connects MacLeish's feelings about the

tragic death of this young pilot to the death of the poet's brother Kenneth, also a pilot, in

World War I. While it is unclear whether Donaldson came to this comparison on his own

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[223] In addition to this post, MacLeish served in the government as Director of the U.S. Office of Facts and Figures (1941-1942), Assistant Director of the U.S. Office of War Information (1942-43), and Assistant Secretary of State (1944-1945).

[224] Archibald MacLeish, *Archibald MacLeish: Reflections*, ed. Bernard A. Drabeck and Helen E. Ellis (The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 172–73. The Library of Congress holds the original typewritten version of the poem, which bears the instructions "[This text will be used by the Treasury Department. It will be published anonymously. I should appreciate it if it were treated as a private document until that time. Archibald MacLeish.]" https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.24204400/

[225] Archibald MacLeish, "The Young Dead Soldiers," in *Actfive and Other Poems* (New York: Random House, 1948), 60.

[226] Scott Donaldson in collaboration with R.H. Winnick, *Archibald MacLeish: An American Life* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), 374.

or through guidance from the poet, it is possible that the sense of loss and the obligation to give meaning to lives lost in battle that MacLeish expresses in these verses was informed by his own service as a soldier and by his experiences losing friends and family in World War I.

Clarke did not need to make any revisions to the text of "The Young Dead Soldiers" to make it suit the context of the Vietnam War. The composer's only revision to the source text is a repetition of the words "we were young" in the final phrase, a minor change which completes the chorus' restatement of their opening text.[227] Despite its historical roots, MacLeish's poem does not reference any specific times or locations, making it easily transferable to another conflict. The poem calls for peace and new hope, but the only overt indication of a war, either ongoing or past, is in the identification of the dead as soldiers.[228] While the lack of temporal or locational markers makes "The Young Dead Soldiers" easily translate to the context of 1970, the universality of this work's message simultaneously prevents it from directly addressing any of the antiwar movement's specific concerns about the Vietnam War.

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[227] In William Schuman's setting of the same text as a lamentation for soprano, French horn, eight woodwinds and nine strings (1976), he makes the same repetition in the final phrase. Schuman generally takes more liberties with repeating words throughout his setting.

[228] MacLeish's first version of the poem includes additional text in the second-last line, including the words "give them an end to the war and a true peace: give them a victory that ends the war and a peace afterwards." MacLeish did not include these words when he published the poem in 1948, removing the only reference to an ongoing war that must be ended. This could have been due to the war having ended by the poem's publication. Simultaneously, however, the removal of the call for victory helps to make this version of the text more applicable to the context of the Vietnam War. By 1970 it had become clear to most U.S. citizens that there was to be no victory in Vietnam, so including such a reference would have clearly marked the poem as a relic of an earlier war, or at least of a pre-Vietnam mindset.

This work's message of universal peace takes on additional poignance when considered through the lens of Clarke's understanding of musical communication and of "epic" music. In 1952, Clarke published an article entitled "The Basis of Musical Communication," in which he theorized how different categories of communication can be distinguished within musical compositions.[229] Taking his cue from poetry, Clarke points to three fields of communication, namely: the lyric, which expresses individual emotions; the dramatic, which portrays interaction and conflict between characters; and the epic, which "affirms the voice of the people."[230] While these categories are not mutually exclusive, Clarke argues that each work is dominated by one of the three at its most basic level. The composer's conception of epic music expresses an aspirational message on behalf of a group of people. As Clarke asserts, "the criterion of the epic here is the oneness of the creative artist with those for whom he speaks."[231] In the context of modern art music he connects the epic to the use of a chorus. For example, when discussing *Boris Godunov* he asserts that "it is the leading role of the chorus which makes this work profoundly epic. The people becomes the true hero of the opera."[232] Clarke finds similar examples of the modern epic, in which the chorus "speaks for all the people," in the choruses of Palestrina and Lassus, in Handel's *Israel in Egypt*, and

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[229] Henry Leland Clarke, "The Basis of Musical Communication," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 10, no. 3 (1952): 242–46.

[230] Clarke, 242.

[231] Clarke, 242. While the epic in poetry is often associated with the journey of a hero, Clarke states that the aspiration of epic music is not necessarily associated with a particular hero or particular deeds.

[232] Clarke, 243.

ultimately, unsurprisingly, in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9.[233] Clarke's discussion of

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, however, brings to the fore an additional element of epic

art music. As Clarke sees it, this work is an example of epic music not only because the

"epic drive" compelled Beethoven to use a chorus at the end of his symphony to clearly

express the "epic affirmation" of his text, but also because of the musical material he

uses: "[Beethoven] makes no mere mechanical adaptation of a theme derived from the

people, but rather a highly artistic development of a theme which bespeaks his integration

as one of the people. This, too, is a powerful ingredient in the creation of thoroughly epic

art music."[234] Through this statement Clarke makes it clear that "thoroughly epic art

music" not only expresses an aspirational message on behalf of the people, but also does

so through a complex artistic medium that allows the composer to express his oneness

with the people for whom he speaks. Clarke's concept of epic, then, is in some ways a

combination of the idea of epic as a narrative tool and the idea of epic as monumental in

scale. The importance of these two elements becomes clear in his discussion of works

that fail to be fully epic according to his criteria. For example, Mahler's Symphony No.

8, while it incorporates choruses and "epic texts", "fails to achieve [Mahler's] epic plan"

due to "want of a close identification with the people."[235] Conversely, Clarke points to

recent American attempts at epic music that "lacked the finely wrought musical artistry

necessary to a major work," despite their "deeper sense of the oneness of the people."[236]

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[233] Clarke, 243.

[234] Clarke, 244.

[235] Clarke, 244.

[236] Clarke, 244.

Clarke does not mention any of his own works in his discussion of categories of

musical communication, but "The Young Dead Soldiers" resonates with some aspects of

his conception of the musical epic. Indeed, clear parallels can be seen between Clarke's

composition and a Munich performance of Albert Talhoff's *Totenmal* in summer 1930,

which he describes as "the most impressive epic I have witnessed."[237] This "tremendous

communication of the cry for world peace and world brotherhood" featured solo,

orchestra, chorus, dancers, and "voices reading the letters of dead soldiers from the

darkness of every corner."[238] "The Young Dead Soldiers," a brief work of only 74

measures, likely lacks the complexity to make it a truly epic work by Clarke's

parameters, and yet the work's aspirational message of world peace and the composer's

choice to amplify this message through his use of a chorus arguably resonate with the

narrative aspects of epic music.

Clarke's setting of "The Young Dead Soldiers" makes use of the division

between the chorus and the soloist to highlight the work's aspirational message. The

composer exploits the sonic difference between the soloist and the chorus to clearly

delineate the voices in the poem, with the soloist (marked in italics in figure 4.1) taking

on the narrative voice and the chorus (marked in bold) singing as the voices of the dead

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[237] Clarke, 244. Albert Talhoff's *Totenmal: Dramatisch-Chorische Vision fur Wort Tanz Licht* was choreographed by Mary Wigman, who also danced one of the roles. This production has been discussed in Susan Manning, "Ideology And Performance Between Weimar And The Third Reich: The Case Of Totenmal," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 2 (1989): 211–23; Barbara Hales, "Waking the Dead: Medium as Therapist in Albert Talhoff and Mary Wigman's Totenmal," *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film* 40, no. 1 (2013): 58–73; Elizabeth Kattner, "From Totenmal to Trend: Wigman, Holm, and Theatricality in Modern Dance," *Dance Research Journal* 50, no. 3 (2018): 19–37.

[238] Clarke, "The Basis of Musical Communication," 244.

soldiers. The soloist and the chorus never overlap or sing together. After the soloist

establishes the context in the opening measures, the chorus, and therefore the voices of

the dead soldiers, take prominence throughout the rest of the work. The voices of the

dead are responsible for the majority of the poem's text, but this is not the only way that

they dominate the texture of the piece. The chorus also take musical prominence through

the complexity of their lines relative to those of the soloist. The soloist's repeated text,

"they say," is consistently articulated with two dotted-half-note D5s, although the piano

accompaniment to these pitches varies slightly (see examples 4.1 and 4.2).[239]

Figure 4.1: Text of "The Young Dead Soldiers" by Archibald MacLeish, as set by Henry Leland Clarke

<p align="center">The Young Dead Soldiers
by Archibald MacLeish</p>

The young dead soldiers do not speak
Nevertheless they are heard in the still houses: who has not heard them?
They have a silence that speaks for them at night and when the clock counts.
They say, **We were young. We have died. Remember us.**
They say, **We have done what we could but until it is finished it is not done.**
They say, **We have given our lives but until it is finished no one can know what our lives gave.**
They say, **Our deaths are not ours: they are yours: they will mean what you make them.**
They say, **Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say: it is you who must say this.**
They say, **We leave you our deaths: give them their meaning.**
We were young, they say. **[We were young.] We have died. Remember us.**

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[239] This resonates with the technique of 'wordtones' that formed an important element of Clarke's musical style at this point in his career. This technique involves assigning specific pitches to words of the text and returning to those pitches whenever the word repeats. Clarke's use of wordtones in this piece is also evident in mm. 67-68, when the soloist's repetition of the chorus' text "we were young" is set to the melody from example 2, but metrically transposed to 3/4 time.

*Text sung *by the soloist* and **by the chorus** in Clarke's setting are marked in italics and boldface, respectively. Clarke's [added text] is noted in square brackets.

Example 4.1: Henry Leland Clarke, "The Young Dead Soldiers," mm. 17-18, solo voice and piano[240]

Example 4.2: Henry Leland Clarke, "The Young Dead Soldiers," mm. 47-48, solo voice and piano

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[240] Best efforts were made to obtain copyright permission for Henry Leland Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers." Neither the original publisher, American Composers Alliance, nor the archive holding the composer's papers, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, hold the copyright for this work or are aware of anyone who holds this copyright.

The chorus sections of the work are written in three-part harmony with variety in pitch, rhythm, and melodic contour, standing in direct contrast to the soloist's repeated statements of "they say." The expressive importance of the chorus is maintained in Clarke's suggestions for performance variations. On the front cover of the score, the composer provides ways in which the parts could be altered to reflect the abilities of the performing forces, stating that "The soloist, instead of singing his part, may recite it, following roughly the time-values of the printed notes. The chorus, instead of singing all three parts, may all sing the top part in unison."[241] The fact that the soloist has the option to recite his part clarifies his role as supportive to the primary expressive force, the chorus.

As the representatives of the dead soldiers, the chorus is given lines with expressive and structural importance throughout the work. The first entrance of the chorus acts as a defining statement for the work, asserting the chorus' role as the young dead soldiers and urging remembrance. They articulate three simple statements: "We were young. We have died. Remember us." Clarke sets this text with a largely homorhythmic passage that expands from, and returns to, a unison G (see example 4.3). These defining sentences are restated in the final line of the work, where they are set to the exact same music but *fortissimo* and with an extended duration of the final note.

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[241] Henry Leland Clarke, *The Young Dead Soldiers for Mixed Voices (S.A.B.) or Unison Chorus with Solo for Medium Voice and Piano* (New York: American Composers Alliance, 1970).

Example 4.3: Henry Leland Clarke, "The Young Dead Soldiers," mm. 19-21

The chorus is also responsible for the textual and musical climax of the work, which further demonstrates their dominant role in expressing the aspirational message of this epic. In measures 49 through 60, shown in example 4.4, the chorus intones their most explicit invocation of memory: "Whether our lives and our deaths were for peace and a 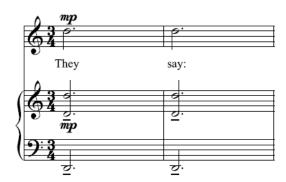new hope or for nothing, we cannot say; it is you who must say this." This constitutes the work's only direct reference to peace, as well as the chorus' longest statement. It is also the chorus' longest musical passage, lasting twelve full measures while all other chorus passages are between four and seven measures in length. Clarke distinguishes this passage musically in several ways. From the outset, Clarke's use of a triplet rhythm provides a sense of urgency and stands in stark contrast to the rest of the chorus' passages, which all begin with durations of at least a full quarter note. This triplet begins on a minor seventh chord with the melody intoning the third, B flat. This further differentiates the passage as significant since it is the only chorus passage in which the melody does not begin on a G, and up to this point the chorus has only entered on unison

G or on an E minor triad. The inclusion of the seventh interval here adds tension and

builds the sense of urgency that comes from the triplet rhythm. Together, these elements

confront the audience in preparation for the most significant section of the text: the

aspiration that the soldier's deaths can still be "for peace and a new hope" if the living

make it so.

Example 4.4: Henry Leland Clarke, "The Young Dead Soldiers," mm. 49-60

Clarke's setting in measures 50 through 53 uses high notes in the soprano voice, imitative entries, and rising melismatic eighth notes to set this aspirational text. The vibrancy and movement of this passage is set in stark contrast to its ominous textual alternative, "or for nothing," which is characterized by a soft dynamic, a sparse texture, and a slow melodic descent.

Overall, Clarke's setting uses the texture of the choir as a narrative tool to emphasize the poem's message of universal peace, a technique with clear parallels to his conception of epic music. In the context of Clarke's theory of musical communication, this setting of MacLeish's aspirational text, and in particular the use of the chorus to express this message, take on new significance as the composer's attempt to speak for the people within the political context of the Vietnam War era.

Clarke's choice to express his message of peace in this way resonates with his belief in the political potential of epic music. Clarke was no stranger to political compositions, and often expressed his beliefs through his music. Many decades earlier, during the 1930s, Clarke had been a member of the Composers' Collective of New York, composing under the pseudonym J. Fairbanks. In his 1952 article, Clarke connects the communicative power of epic music with a potential for political resistance and social action. Such action is something that he considered more and more important in the context of the mid-twentieth century, and he asserts that "the need for epic music is greater than ever today."[242] Clarke's choice to compose "The Young Dead Soldiers" in

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[242] Clarke, "The Basis of Musical Communication," 244–45.

1970 responds to this need, using the expressive power of the chorus and the aspirational message of MacLeish's text to advance a message of peace during the turbulent years of the Vietnam War. In this instance, the historical text allowed the composer to respond to his contemporary situation with a suitable aspirational message of peace that does not speak to a particular time and place, and yet bears the weight of generations of dead soldiers through its implied connection to U.S. military history. His use of epic narrative techniques further compounds this message, voicing his hope for universal peace on behalf of all people.

4.2 *"Can spring come again? Tell us, you whose life is now done."*

Norman Dello Joio's *Evocations* (1970), a work for mixed chorus and orchestra, is comprised of two movements, "Visitants at Night" and "Promise of Spring," which set poems by Robert Hillyer and Richard Hovey respectively. Like Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers," *Evocations* features the voices of those who died in war, particularly in the first movement which tells of a visit from the spirits of the narrator's young friends who lost their lives in World War I. Where Dello Joio's work differs from Clarke's is in its focus on the tragic impact war has on those who survive, rather than the deaths that occur in battle. Through modifications to the historical source texts, Dello Joio creates a work that resonates with the context of the Vietnam War by grappling with this tragic impact and casting youth as the hope for the future.

Dello Joio selected the source texts for *Evocations* in response to the work being commissioned for the Generation '70 arts festival in Tampa, Florida. *Evocations* was premiered at the festival on October 2nd, 1970. In selecting these two poems, Dello Joio

aimed to create a work with "some meaning for the young people involved in the festival."[243] He describes his choice of source texts in the comments he supplied to Generation '70 for inclusion in the program notes:

> In accepting the invitation of the Arts Council of Tampa to write a work for Generation *70, the initial problem was finding a text that seemed to have a relationship to what Generation *70 implied. I found in Robert Hillyer's poem 'Visitants to a County House at Night' a pertinent commentary on the tragedy of war, and the guilt that the poet felt at still being alive. A key line, 'Can Spring come again?,' that he puts to his young departed friends, led me to seek a poem that suggests an answer. I found this in 'Spring' by Richard Hovey. The poet's appeal is, 'O children just born, you who have life and love to spare, travel the highway before you and seek a new day beyond the guess of any long ago. Sing new songs that you may reveal that no new sense can be in us grown old, but that we enter the lives of our fellow-men.[244]

These two texts appealed to the composer for their potential to provide a message that would speak to the young people of 1970, both through the texts' commentary on war, which corresponded to contemporary concerns with the conflict in Vietnam, and through their appeal to youth as the hope for the future. As the composer explains, the first movement of *Evocations* comments on the tragic effects of war on both the living and the dead through a work inspired by of Hillyer's "Visitants to a Country House at Night." In this poem about World War I, the narrator is visited by the spirits of his friends who died during the war. The second movement of *Evocations* is based on "Spring: an Ode" by Richard Hovey, expressing hope for a joyful future brought on by

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[243] Norman Dello Joio, quoted in Judith Costello, "Dello Joio Conducts 'Evocations' Premiere," *Oracle-U. of South Florida*, September 29, 1970. In NYPL-NDJ, Box 46, Folder 34.

[244] Program notes for Generation 70: Curtis Hixon Hall, October 2,3,4, 1970, in NYPL-NDJ, Box 14, Folder 15.

the promise of youth. The majority of my discussion of this work will focus on the first movement due to its use of text about an earlier conflict, but "Promise of Spring" serves an important function in the work as a whole by envisioning a positive way forward.

While the source texts for *Evocations* were chosen for their suitability to a festival celebrating the promise of the generation coming of age in 1970, Dello Joio made extensive revisions to these texts to enable them to project his feelings about the Vietnam War. Notably, the textual excerpts he quotes in his program notes are all his own additions to the original poetry. The second movement is only loosely based on Hovey's "Spring: An Ode," incorporating some of the poet's imagery but rewriting the majority of the text, including the "poet's appeal" that Dello Joio quotes in the program notes.[245] Dello Joio's version of "Visitants to a Country House at Night" in the first movement also includes significant changes from Hillyer's text, but maintains the general structure.[246] Hillyer's and Dello Joio's texts are included as figure 4.3 for reference. The line "Can Spring come again?," which Dello Joio cites as the reason for choosing the second poem, was in fact an addition by the composer. Another significant revision occurs in the third stanza, where Dello Joio adjusts the words to fit the context of the Vietnam War, changing "that hill at Verdun" to "that hill at Saigon."[247] In so doing, he indicates that he sees parallels between World War I and the war in Vietnam and overtly marks the piece as a musical work that addresses the current conflict.

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[245] Hovey's original poem, "Spring: An Ode" is published in *Poet-Lore* 10 (January 1898), 1-8.

[246] Robert Hillyer, "Visitants in a Country House at Night," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1961), 89–91.

[247] Thomas A. Bumgardner, *Norman Dello Joio* (Boston: Twayne, 1986), 39.

Figure 4.2: Norman Dello Joio's "Visitants at Night" and Robert Hillyer's "Visitants in a Country House at Night"

"Visitants at Night"

Alone, I sit through the night.
I listen to a distant music that trembles 'round me.
My ears are alert to sounds from afar,
Fear strangles my heart, my nerves pull taut.
You, O you, who loved, I ask why, why are you dead?
Back, back comes a whisper: "You and you, you too are dead."

Who said that? What was it that moved?
I dare not move my head. I sit here silent thru the night.
I dare not turn my head. Where I centered my life from the world.

Noiselessly entered those others, floating, silent.
Those others who swirled, floating like mist on the wind of a night that is still.
Hushed, hushed is the air.

What sound is that? Is it a creak on the stair?
O God! Is that you, young friend?
Is that you, young friend, who died in the war?
Is that you, dear friend? Is that you almost visible there at the door?
Young friend, is that you who died in the war?

What sound is that? Is that you, young maid?
Is that your step on the stair, O maid?
The gun in your hand, the blood in your hair,
The bullet that tore through your brain, gentle girl, was it avenged?
O gentle maid, O maid, your love denied to the boy,
Was it avenged when your love died in the war?

O girl! O boy! O death! O God! O world!
Was it avenged when their love, their dreams died in the war?
Do you rest well, gentle maid? Do you rest well, dear boy?
Killed on the hill, that hill at Saigon.

Memories drift upward from fathoms of darkness to me
And I too am dead, young lovers,
As is all that you once knew of me.
We were children, we ranged half in cloud, half in sun.
Can spring come again? Tell us, you whose life is now done.

"Peace be to you, to you who are living."
Back come those voices from beyond as I sit through the night.
"Peace be to you, to you, the living."
The shadows departing. Deep in the silence.
O God, let me sleep.

"Visitants in a Country House at Night"

My ears are alert
For a sound thin as thought;
Fear strangles my heart,
And my nerves pull taut.

You are dead, you who loved.
("And you, too, are dead.")
Who said that? Who moved?
I will not turn my head.

Here where I centered
My life from one world
Noiselessly entered
Another, and swirled

Like mist in the air
When the air stands still.
Creak goes the stair,
Creak goes the sill.

Is that you, Walter Darrel,
Who died in the War?
Is that you, almost visible
There by the door?

Is that you, Johnny Wilson,
Who drowned in the sea,
Drifting upwards from fathoms
Of darkness to me?

Is that you Martha Fennel,
Your step on the stair,
The gun in your right hand,
The blood in your hair?

Peace to you, Walter,
On the hill at Verdun;
Drift back with the tide
Of forgetfulness, John.

Peace to you, Martha,
The bullet that tore
Through your brain was avenged
When he died in the War.

And your lover is dead,
He was drowned in the sea.
And I, too, am dead,--
All you once knew of me.

We were children, we ranged
Half in cloud, half in sun;
But now I am changed,
And you must be gone.

("Peace to *you*, Robert,")
Who said that?
               O deep
In the night, through the night,
Let me sleep.

Dello Joio's commentary on and interviews about *Evocations* consistently portray it as a deeply personal work. He states in the program notes, "'Evocations' is the most personal statement of my beliefs that I have done heretofore."[248] Newspaper coverage of concerts featuring the work frequently quote this statement as well as emphasizing the personal aspect of the work in other ways. For example, an article in the *South Bend Tribune* advertising a concert put on by the South Bend Symphony describes *Evocations* as "a personal commentary on the futility of war and the hope which springs eternal among those who never waiver in their belief that man can do better than he has."[249] This statement is not a direct quotation from Dello Joio, but the article is informed by an interview with the composer and includes quotations that reinforce this perspective. When asked whether the work would have been composed if it had not been commissioned, Dello Joio responded, "That's hard to say, but possibly since it has a lot of my own personal philosophy."[250] The most explicit explanation of the composer's personal connection to the work is included in an article in the University of South Florida's *The Oracle* in the days before the Tampa premiere. There, Dello Joio is quoted as saying "I believe strongly in what the poet was saying about the futility of war…. This

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[248] Program notes for Generation 70: Curtis Hixon Hall, October 2,3,4, 1970, in NYPL-NDJ, Box 14, Folder 15.

[249] Beverly Welsh, "Dello Joio to Conduct 'Evocations' Tonight at Notre Dame's ACC," *South Bend Tribune*, May 16, 1971. This newspaper clipping is available in NYPL-NDJ, Box 46, Folder 34.

[250] Norman Dello Joio, quoted in Beverly Welsh, "Dello Joio to Conduct 'Evocations' Tonight at Notre Dame's ACC," *South Bend Tribune*, May 16, 1971. This newspaper clipping is available in NYPL-NDJ, Box 46, Folder 34.

is both a personal conviction, because I have three teenage sons, and a philosophical belief. I tried to express this belief musically."[251]

According to Dello Joio, then, *Evocations* was shaped not only by its commission for Generation '70, but also by his personal and philosophical beliefs. Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that Dello Joio's textual and musical choices place the focus of the work primarily on the effect of war on those left behind, rather than the violence that occurs in battle. *Evocations* was not a work for soldiers, but for the soldiers' loved ones at home and the young people who would grow up to either fight or stop the fighting. The message that *Evocations* conveys hinges on three themes: the tragedy of war, the guilt of survival, and the promise of youth.

The tragedy of war, an important aspect of Hillyer's poem, takes on a different meaning in Dello Joio's version. Hillyer's original poem tells of three named friends who died during World War I: one on the hill at Verdun, one drowned in the sea, and one who takes her own life in response to her lover's death. In Dello Joio's version, the friend who died at sea is removed and the two others remain unnamed, marked only as "young friend" and "young maid." The narrator is visited by each of the departed lovers, but the boy's death is described in a matter-of-fact manner: "Is that you, young friend who died in the war?" The young maid's death, contrastingly, is described in gruesome detail—the only violent imagery to be found in this work: "The gun in your hand, the blood in your

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[251] Norman Dello Joio, quoted in Judith Costello, "Dello Joio Conducts 'Evocations' Premiere," *Oracle-U. of South Florida*, September 29, 1970. This newspaper clipping is available in NYPL-NDJ, Box 46, Folder 34. As mentioned above, the statement that "the poet" was making about the futility of war is largely shaped by Dello Joio's own modifications to the text.

hair, the bullet that tore through your brain, gentle girl, was it avenged?" These shocking and unanticipated descriptions are emphasized in Dello Joio's ferocious and intense musical setting, in which forceful, rhythmic statements alternate between the upper and lower voices of the choir over octave tremolo in the upper strings and aggressive interjections from the brass, winds, and lower strings (see example 4.5). By cutting back the text about the men who died fighting and prominently featuring the death of the loved one at home, Dello Joio sets up the girl's death as the most tragic element of the story.

Example 4.5: Norman Dello Joio, *Evocations*, "Visitants at Night," mm. 130-134
Reproduced with permission from Keiser Southern Music.

The original poem by Hillyer and the actual text that Dello Joio used present divergent concepts of what is tragic about war, and whether this tragedy can be justified. While both Dello Joio's text and Hillyer's original poem use similar descriptions of the girl's death—the gun, the bloody hair, and the bullet through the brain—they disagree on the after-effects of her death. For Dello Joio, this event is tragic not only because someone has died, but because of its futility. His interpretation emphasizes that it was not only a loss of lives but also a loss of love, and poses the rhetorical question "was it avenged?" Contrastingly, Hillyer's poem describes the dead girl as at peace, stating decisively that "the bullet that tore through your brain was avenged when he died in the war."[252] This difference comes to the fore in the next stanza of Dello Joio's version, the only stanza that is composed of almost entirely new text.[253] Here, it becomes clear that the deaths of the young lovers in Dello Joio's version are not as easily put to rest as they are in Hillyer's. The narrator cries out in despair and asks whether their loss has been avenged and whether they are able to rest well.

> O girl! O boy! O death! O God! O world!
> Was it avenged when their love, their dreams died in the war? They died in the war.
> Do you rest well, young lovers? Do you rest well, young friends?
> Do you rest well, gentle maid? Do you rest well, dear boy?
> Killed on the hill, that hill at Saigon.

Of particular significance are the words "They died in the war" at the end of the second line, an addition that forms a major climax in Dello Joio's musical setting. As shown in

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[252] While both Hillyer's original poem and Dello Joio's version imply that the girl's suicide is a reaction to her lover's death in battle, the use of the word 'avenge' confuses the causality in both.

[253] The only text with some similarity is "on the hill, that hill at Saigon," which is a modified version of "On the hill at Verdun," but the message of these two lines is entirely different; the full clause in Hillyer's version reads "Peace to you, Walter, on the hill at Verdun."

example 4.6, Dello Joio sets this text emphatically in homorhythm over an *allargando crescendo* that leads into a new *a tempo* section.

Example 4.6: Norman Dello Joio, *Evocations*, "Visitants at Night," mm. 144-145 Reproduced with permission from Keiser Southern Music.

The words "They died in the war" point to the number of things that were, in fact lost—that "died": not only the boy, but also the girl, their young love, and their dreams for the future. Similarly, the final line of the stanza infers that both lovers were killed on the hill at Saigon, even if only the boy physically lost his life there.

Guilt at being alive is another theme that reinforces this work's focus on the war's impact on those left behind. This theme becomes particularly evident in the character of the narrator of "Visitants at Night," whose survivor's guilt forms the

backdrop for the entire scene.[254] The narrator's torment is evident not only in the visits of

his departed friends—visits that, in Dello Joio's version, cause severe emotional distress,

evident in his cry of "O God!" when the first spirit enters—but also in his sleepless state.

In both the original poem and Dello Joio's revised text, the frenzied and fearful account

of the night ends with a plea to "let me sleep." Dello Joio sets this plea to a dramatic

decrescendo as the phrase repeats with fewer and fewer words until it becomes only

"sleep." As these musical cues suggest the narrator's relaxation into sleep, calls from the

offstage French horn and trumpet mimic the departure of the visiting spirits (see example

4.7).

The final theme that this work explores is that of youth as the hope for the

future, a theme that is most explicit in the second movement, "Promise of Spring," in

which spring serves as a metaphor for youth. This joyful movement envisions a way

forward from the tragedy and guilt of "Visitants at Night." The composer's emphasis on

the importance of youth is accentuated by the addition of a children's chorus and a

playful refrain set simply to the syllable 'La.' While this children's chorus is labelled as

optional in the score, Dello Joio spoke to the symbolic importance of the children's choir

in the program notes, asserting that "The use of a young people's group seemed a fitting

way to convey my own feeling in the form of a dialogue between the adult choral forces

and the young."[255]

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[254] In the original poem it seems that the narrator is Hillyer himself, since the spirits address him as Robert.

[255] From program for Genesee Community College Concert Choir and Concert Band Spring Concert, May 7, 1972. NYPL-NDJ, Box 10, Folder 35.

Example 4.7: Norman Dello Joio, *Evocations*, "Visitants at Night," mm. 189-202
Reproduced with permission from Keiser Southern Music.

While the second movement more explicitly confronts this theme, youth is also an important component of Dello Joio's message in "Visitants at Night." Dello Joio consistently uses terms that emphasize the youth of the deceased, either describing them as "young" or using the youthful terms "girl" and "boy." All of these terms are absent from the original version of the poem, which refers to the spirits only by name. One line about youth that is shared by both Hillyer's and Dello Joio's versions is the narrator's description of memories from the past: "We were children, we ranged half in cloud, half in sun." However, Dello Joio's choice to alter the end of this stanza drastically changes the tone of this text. Hillyer's text reads as a lament on the innocence of childhood that has been lost to him forever, but Dello Joio uses this stanza to insert a connection to the promise of spring in the second movement. While the narrator of "Visitants at Night" still laments the loss of his childhood in *Evocations*, there is still hope for the future to be found in the new generation of youth.

Original (Hillyer)	*Evocations* **(Dello Joio)**
We were children, we ranged	We were children, we ranged
Half in cloud, half in sun;	half in cloud, half in sun
But now I am changed,	Can spring come again?
And you must be gone.	Tell us, you whose life is now done.

In setting these historical texts in *Evocations*, Dello Joio made significant modifications, shaping the poetry to fit the personal message he wanted to convey and the circumstances of the Generation '70 festival. Though the texts as Dello Joio sets them differ substantially from the original poems, the use of historical texts is evidently important to the composer's vision of the work and is mentioned repeatedly in program notes and press coverage. In this case, the use of historical texts not only allows the composer to comment on the present and to forge a connection to past anti-war opposition, but also to propose a vision for the future. In the first movement in particular,

Dello Joio modifies Hillyer's poem about World War I to make it suit the context of the

Vietnam War, both explicitly through a reference to "that Hill at Saigon" and implicitly

through a perspective that emphasizes war's futility. While Dello Joio's choice of this

historical text established a link to earlier anti-war artists, the way in which the composer

manipulates the source poetry to emphasize the impact of war on loved ones and

survivors through the themes of tragedy, guilt, and youth makes a clear statement about

his opposition to the war he was currently witnessing. This differs substantially from the

approach of Clarke in "The Young Dead Soldiers" discussed above, which promotes a

generalist anti-war stance rather than a specific message of opposition.

4.3 *"Future years will never know the seething hell of countless minor scenes"*

While Clarke's "The Young Dead Soldiers" and Dello Joio's *Evocations* use

historical texts that feature the voices of the dead, Ned Rorem's *War Scenes* (1969) uses

historical text to speak from the perspective of someone witnessing the devastation of

war. In this song cycle for low-medium voice and piano, Rorem uses text from the U.S.

Civil War to create a work with an enduring message about the futility of war. The

historical source text for *War Scenes* contributes to a work that speaks to the specific

context of the Vietnam War while also being marked by the passage of time. Kinsella

analyzes *War Scenes* in his dissertation, describing it as an example of music that uses

empathy as a call to action.[256] My analysis extends beyond Kinsella's by explicitly

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[256] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 528–48. MacPhail also discusses this work, mostly considering performance-related concerns, in "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 141–55.

considering Rorem's use of historical text and the role the passage of time plays in the work. This element of time allows *War Scenes* to convey a pacifist message that is both specific and universal. Through the words of a historical observer, the audience is forced to confront the gruesome reality of their contemporary conflict and, ultimately, the circular nature of history.

As a self-avowed pacifist, Rorem is no stranger to anti-war sentiments, and he has penned several musical works about war and peace in addition to *War Scenes*.[257] The composer's diary entries from the 1960s expose his vehement opposition to the war in Vietnam, an opposition which seems to extend beyond his pacifist philosophy. His statement in 1967 that "one assumes one's friends—indeed all thoughtful people—stand against Johnson's Vietnam policy" speaks to his belief that war in Vietnam was a conflict all people should oppose. [258] Despite his pacifist stance and his numerous anti-war or pro-peace compositions, Rorem places little faith in the potential for political music to influence audiences. In discussing his 2001-02 work *Aftermath*, written as a response to 9/11 and the war on terror, the composer asserted,

> As with *War Scenes*, I don't think that *Aftermath* can change people…. It can make us more of what we already are. It can't change

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[257] Rorem was born into a family of Quakers, and while he does not hold to all of their theological views he is dedicated to their pacifistic philosophies. He speaks about this in an interview with Rich Grzesiak (1986, http://www.axiongrafix.com/rorem.html). His war- and peace-related works include "Reconciliation" (1946, in *Five Poems of Walt Whitman*, 1957), *Poèmes Pour la Paix* (1953), *Pilgrim Strangers* (1984), *Swords and Plowshares* (1991), and *Aftermath* (2001-02).

[258] Ned Rorem, *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem: 1961-1972* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 215. Diary entry from June 5, 1967.

someone from a warmonger into a pacifist, or from a Republican into a Democrat, but it can heighten the way we feel.[259]

Rorem's war works, then, are not intended to change the minds of his listeners, but rather are offered primarily as an expression of his own feelings. In a letter to Ben Arnold in 1985, Rorem asserts that these works "were composed as statements to myself, written out of anxiety, and flung as burnt offerings to a music-loving public. That public, alas, with all its supposed intelligence, is not, by and large pacifist."[260]

Rorem's diary entries and writings reveal that multiple factors influenced his choice of text for *War Scenes*. Rorem composed the cycle as a commission for renowned French baritone Gérard Souzay, who premiered the work in Constitution Hall, Washington D.C. on October 19th, 1969. One of the composer's primary criteria for a source text was that it needed to suit the particularities of Souzay's voice, including not only his French accent but also the texture of his voice, which had grown less smooth as the singer matured and according to Rorem was now most suited to "a steely wail through which some tough sad words could make a sharp point."[261] His second concern was finding a text that would allow him to respond to the war in Vietnam while still being "good literature." As Rorem asserted, "I wanted to use something to express my concern for this mess we're in. Yet I cannot set current news items to music about bloody injustices. Lots of young poets go on the assumption that 'to know where it's at' makes

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[259] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 547–48. Quotes Rorem, quoted in Whitney Smith, "Rorem Sums Up Life in Music," *Indianapolis Star Library*, July 20, 2003.

[260] Ned Rorem, letter to Benjamin Arnold, March 10, 1985. Quoted in Arnold Jr., "War, Peace, and the Apocalypse in Art Music Since World War II," 546–47.

[261] Rorem, *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem: 1961-1972*, 265–66. Diary entry from March 25, 1969.

them poets. That war is bad and peace is good does not of itself make literature."[262] His

interest in "good literature" reflects a similar impulse to his statements regarding political

music. As evidenced in his assertion that "honest political ideas in art does not of itself

make honest art," Rorem considers aesthetics and politics to be separate considerations.

For Rorem, good art can express a political message, but art's quality is not dependent on

the justness of its political motivations.[263]

Rorem found the text he was looking for in Walt Whitman's *Specimen Days*

(1882), a prose account of the poet's experiences serving as a nurse during the Civil

War.[264] In his diaries, Rorem describes his compositional process and his choice of text:

> [Gérard Souzay] had written last March asking me to provide
> something new for his November recital and ensuing American tour.
> He wanted "dramatic" songs, his voice having grown more
> "interesting" than before. I fulfilled the commission in ten days,
> composing to five fevered extracts torn pell-mell from Walt Whitman's
> war journal. Since, *en principe*, I never want to set the French language
> to music again (it sabotages my inner nature), the choice of Whitman's
> depressing text served two functions: the words, being a century old,
> automatically contain archaisms which won't sound strange on
> Souzay's tongue, as would the poetry of, say, John Ashbery; and those
> words are otherwise timely, being vital descriptions of battle: the gore
> and poignance, ferocious anxiety and placid passion, are as close to
> Vietnam as to the Civil War.[265]

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[262] Ned Rorem, in Winston Leyland, ed., "Winston Leyland Interviews Ned Rorem," in *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, Vol. 2 (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1978), 198.

[263] Ned Rorem, in Leyland, 208–9. Just because they are separate does not mean that art should always take precedence over politics - in the same interview he states that "If I could write a piece that would inspire an army to turn around and walk away, I wouldn't care whether it was art or not."

[264] Rorem set Whitman's poetry many times throughout his career, starting with the song "Reconciliation" in 1946, which he describes as "an appeal to my pacifism in the time of war." Ned Rorem, *Critical Affairs: A Composer's Journal* (New York: Braziller, George, 1970), 37–38.

[265] Rorem, *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem: 1961-1972*, 291. Diary entry from after midnight, October 6, 1969.
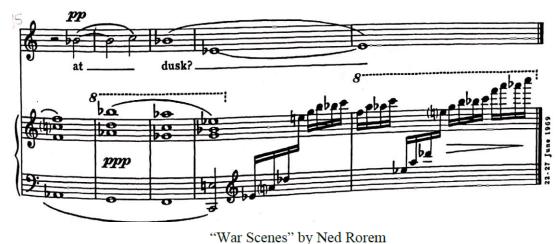
As Rorem describes, Whitman's Civil War journal not only served the practical purpose of responding to current events while fitting with Souzay's distinctive voice and accent, but also paints a graphic depiction of wartime that can resonate with almost any conflict and yet feels eerily specific to the context of the Vietnam War. The composer chose five excerpts from Whitman's journal, and freely excised the text of each. The full text of this song cycle is included as figure 4.4 at the end of this chapter. Apart from a single reference to "one of the fights before Atlanta," Rorem removes references to specific locations or historical details, focusing instead on devastating vignettes of death and destruction and philosophical musings on the futility of war. In so doing, Rorem creates a text that speaks to any wartime experience. In a 1973 interview, the composer attributes this characteristic to Whitman's words, stating that they "could apply not only to the Civil War, but to the Trojan War or to Vietnam, or as we sit here today, to the war in Israel. Walt's words are not about *the* war, they're about *a* war."[266] Through his setting of this historical text, Rorem creates a work that seems to speak directly about the conflict in Vietnam while still maintaining the text's ability to apply to any wartime conflict.

Rorem's setting of this historical text speaks to the contemporary conflict in Vietnam from a decidedly nonpartisan viewpoint, despite the historical and national roots of the text's Civil War origins. *War Scenes*' dedication, "to those who died in Vietnam, both sides, during the composition: 20-30 June 1969," establishes the work as a response to the Vietnam War. More than that, however, it considers American and Vietnamese lives to be equally worthy of commemoration. Performers face regular reminders of this

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[266] Rorem, in Leyland, "Winston Leyland Interviews Ned Rorem," 198.

dedication, as each song in the cycle is marked at its close with the dates of its

composition. While the dates themselves are innocuous (see example 4.8), their

unavoidable connection to the dedication reinforces the sombre sentiment as the work

takes on the weight of new deaths that occurred during the work's composition.

Example 4.8: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "A Night Battle," mm.135-139

Rorem's equal treatment of American and Vietnamese deaths, made explicit in

his dedication, is accentuated through the textual excerpts he chose. The text for the final

song in the cycle, "The Real War Will Never Get in the Books," points to the equal

importance of the deaths on both sides of the conflict. The use of prose about the Civil

War adds a layer of meaning to the importance of "both sides." In the context of the Civil

War, the opposing sides were both made up of U.S. citizens. While Whitman's

sympathies lay with the North, the text resists an 'us versus them' narrative and instead

emphasizes the importance of lives lost on each side and the significance of the young

soldiers' character over the politics: "To me the main interest was in the rank and file of

the armies, both sides, and even the dead on the field. The points illustrating the latent

character of the American young were of more significance than the political interests

involved." Rorem emphasizes the words "both sides" in his setting, separating them from the rest of the phrase with a breath mark and an unaccompanied rest lasting one and a half beats (see example 4.9).[267] By presenting this text in a response to the Vietnam War, Rorem similarly eschews a one-sided narrative, speaking to the equivalence of both American and Vietnamese soldiers and dismissing the political motivations behind the conflict as insignificant in comparison to the lives and character of those who were fighting. Rorem's emphasis on "both sides" is somewhat more radical than that of Whitman, since the "sides" in Rorem's context of the Vietnam War were not both American. By deciding to maintain this line of text and to emphasize it musically, Rorem displays an empathy for people from a far-away country and a foreign culture and demands the same from his audience.

Example 4.9: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "The Real War Will Never Get In The Books, mm.10-12.1

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[267] This is the only time Rorem uses a breath mark in the entire song cycle, and one of the longest measured durations of silence.

In many instances, the prose Rorem has chosen seems to speak directly about Vietnam, despite the text's Civil War origins. In "The Real War Will Never Get In The Books," Rorem chooses text that explicitly references the North/South divide, an element common to both the U.S. Civil War and the war in Vietnam: "The whole land, North and South, was one vast hospital." Another parallel can be found in the second-to-last song, "Inauguration Ball," in which the narrator's experience of the celebratory event is interrupted by memories of a previous visit to the same location.

Inauguration Ball

> … At the dance and supper room I could not help thinking, what a different scene they presented to my view a while since, fill'd with a crowded mass of the worst wounded of the war. Tonight, beautiful women, perfumes, the violin's sweetness, the polka and the waltz; then the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of blood, and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away untended there…

Whitman's text refers to his experiences at the Patent Building in Washington, D.C. In 1863 the building housed wounded soldiers as a temporary hospital, and in 1865 it was the location of Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural ball. In the context of 1970, however, Rorem's choice of text has been interpreted by Kinsella as a reference to Nixon's six controversial inaugural balls held just six months earlier in 1969.[268]

Despite speaking to the contemporary context of the Vietnam War in these ways, *War Scenes* is marked by the historical roots of its source text and the century that had passed since it was written. The passage of time comes to the fore especially in "The

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[268] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 543.

Real War Will Never Get in the Books." This final song, based on text from the final

entry in *Specimen Days*, looks back to consider the experience of the war generally,

unlike the first four songs which describe specific events. "The Real War Will Never Get

in the Books" is set almost as a recitative, with a flexible, declamatory vocal line that is

mostly *a cappella* or accompanied by long, held chords in the piano. This recitative-style

setting puts the focus on the text and its message. In measure 22, the audience's attention

is suddenly drawn to the passage of time with the text "Future years will never know the

seething hell of countless minor scenes." This significant line is heralded by loud chords

in the piano that suddenly interject into the tapering off of an extended *a cappella* section

(see example 4.10).

Example 4.10: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "The Real War Will Never Get In The Books," mm. 21-26

In this line of text, the time that has passed since the Civil War adds an ironic poignance.

The Civil War scenes Whitman has described over the course of the poems set by Norem

sound entirely at home in the world of 1969; future generations evidently know all too

well this hell Whitman thought was over. Thus, the use of a historical text strengthens

this work's message about the futility of war and the circular nature of history, raising the question of whether society has learned anything at all from the past. Rorem's setting of Whitman's words emphasizes the importance of the myriad of individual lives and experiences lost in war over the politics that motivate any particular conflict. This loss that has compounded over time comes across in the final line of the work: "Think how much, and of importance, will be, has already been buried in the grave" (see example 4.11). Here, the music parallels the text, gradually slowing and softening until it dies away. Again, the passage of time adds a century's worth of loss to this statement, as the audience is reminded not only of those lost in the Civil War, or in Vietnam, but also in all the conflicts that took place in between.

"War Scenes" by Ned Rorem
© 1971 By Boosey & Hawkes, Inc.

Example 4.11: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "The Real War Will Never Get In The Books," mm. 40-46

Thus, the historical text used in *War Scenes* brings out a complicated relationship with time, creating a work with a timeless message that is simultaneously marked by time through the text's historical roots, the contemporary time of the song

cycle's creation, and the years that have passed between. This historical text is also significant due to its observer's perspective, another aspect that is influenced by the passage of time. While both "The Young Dead Soldiers" and *Evocations* set texts that featured the voices of the dead, *War Scenes* speaks from the perspective of an observer of the dead and dying. In transplanting this historical text to the Vietnam War era, Rorem creates a narrator who has observed decades of death.

This observer's perspective is particularly evident through the many horrific descriptions of wounded and dying soldiers that form an integral part of *War Scenes*. These gory vignettes, which fit as well with the graphic depictions of battle in Vietnam available in the media at the time as they do with their Civil War origins, shock the audience with their frankness and paint a vivid picture of the horrors of war. The opening line of the work questions the humanity of the death and destruction that will be described: "What scene is this? – is this indeed *humanity* – these butcher's shambles?" These opening words connect the devastating vignettes that will follow with the overarching message, begging the question of how humanity has allowed itself to perpetrate such violence. The importance of the graphic text to *War Scenes*' message is evident in the composer's diary entry after viewing a performance on May 5, 1970, the day after the Kent State massacre: "at tonight's performance *War Scenes* made more sense than when I composed it, with texts on needless murder and the pain of the very young."[269] While Rorem occasionally employs aggressive and violent-sounding passages

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[269] Rorem, *The Later Diaries of Ned Rorem: 1961-1972*, 325. As is mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the Kent State Massacre was a significant moment for the antiwar movement. The deaths of

to punctuate the horrific scenes, more often he uses music that sounds emotionally disconnected to set up a contrast with the gruesome text that reflects the observer's perspective.[270]

Rorem first uses contrast to emphasize the narrator's role as an observer of violence in the first song of the cycle, "A Night Battle." Here, Rorem enhances the contrast in Whitman's text between panicked accounts of the gruesome sights and sounds of the battlefield and contemplations of the moon and stars watching over the scene. He does so by differentiating the 'frantic' A sections, made up of loud, disjointed musical material, from the 'calmer' B sections, with largely stepwise melody and slow, consistent accompaniment. The violent imagery and bombastic music of the A sections has drawn more interest from scholars interested in the portrayal of war, but the material of the B sections bears significant interest when considering the narrator's role as an observer. Not only does the stillness of the B-section material exaggerate the tumultuousness of the A material; by shifting the perspective outwards, these sections, and their calm musical setting, make clear the insignificance of the battle in the larger context of the universe. The listener is left with the despair of knowing that these harrowing battle scenes and the lives that are lost during them will have little consequence. As Kinsella describes it, "Nature, it would appear, is wholly indifferent to the folly of humankind."[271] Rorem

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young American protesters at the hand of the Ohio State Guard fanned the fires of protests across the nation.

[270] One instance of violent text painting occurs in "A Night Battle," when a barrage of 'brittle' sixteenth notes accompanies the text "some bullets through the breast" in measure 27.

[271] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 535.

achieves this tranquil stillness using *pianissimo* whole-note chords that descend over groups of three measures. The solo voice floats over these chords, softly bouncing between four pitches. The melody centres on the interval of a perfect fifth between B flat and E flat, with the falling perfect-fifth interval punctuating the ends of phrases throughout. Cs and D flats also regularly interject, but always function more as decorations to the B flat than as their own pitch centre.

Example 4.12: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "A Night Battle," mm. 54-61

Rorem similarly creates a feeling of detachment to contrast with the gruesome imagery in the third song, "An Incident," which describes the disturbing scene of a young man with a head wound who survives for days lying on the battlefield but dies within "a few minutes" of being moved. In addition to instructing the singer to perform the song "uninvolved, like a reporter," Rorem sets the disturbing text to a repetitive melodic pattern of F-Bb-C-Ab-F (see example 4.13).[272] The use of this repeated contour

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[272] This stands in contrast to the piano which is to be "subjective, neurotic, illustrative." Ned Rorem, *War Scenes for Medium-Low Voice and Piano* (New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1971).

throughout most of the song reinforces the given performance instruction; the singer, and therefore his melodic contour, is unaffected by the text he delivers.

a reb - el sol - dier, of large____ size,

Example 4.13: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "An Incident," mm. 4-6

However, the contour's repetition makes it immediately noticeable when the vocal line does deviate from the established pattern for a few moments, moments that betray the narrator's horrified emotions. Both Kinsella and MacPhail have written about the use of this melodic pattern with only slight variation throughout the movement, but neither fully explores the significance of these deviations beyond text painting. The first such instance occurs in measure 14, shown in example 4.14. Here the addition of E and Db at the end of the phrase causes the word "exuded," in the grotesque image of the soldier's brains bulging from his head wound, to literally extend beyond the established melodic contour. Measures nineteen and forty-one also include deviations from the contour at the ends of phrases, but both of these merely include a quick deviation to the E before returning to the final pitch of F, leaving the first example as notable not only as the first instance, but also as the furthest extension for reaching the Db.

so that the brains par - tial - ly_____ ex - ud - ed.

Example 4.14: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "An Incident," mm. 12-14

This extension takes on additional significance in measures 23 through 30, where the descending pitches F-E-Db become a new repetitive pattern, this time eerily representative of the wounded soldier's heel insistently grinding a hole in the ground (see example 4.15).

After two more repetitions of the established contour, subjectivity again begins to creep into the vocal line when in measure 41 the words "night and day" are set to just the second half of the melodic pattern, with an unprecedented extended duration on the C and A flat shown in example 4.16. This forlorn call devolves into a section dominated by the piano accompaniment, giving the impression that the narrator has been overcome by emotion. This piano section prominently features the flurry of sixteenth notes that has been described by Kinsella as representing the soldier's twitching heel digging in the ground. After a long pause, the singer's next line of text, "some of our soldiers then moved him to a house," is set to new melodic material that sounds foreign to the repetitive pattern realm of the song, before the opening objective pattern returns for the final time on the text "but he died in a few minutes."

Example 4.15: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "An Incident," mm. 23-30

Example 4.16: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "An Incident," mm.41.3-48

In the fourth song, "Inauguration Ball," Rorem again uses contrast to emphasize the narrator's role as an observer, in this case one who is observing two scenes simultaneously. Here, the contrast between the joyous setting of the ball and the horrific memories of the wounded and dying are emphasized using different musical styles which sometimes bleed into one another. The song is set in 3/4 time with melodic and accompanimental patterns that are reminiscent of the music one would hear at a civilized evening of dancing. The piano part stands out from the other songs in the cycle, taking an active role and accentuating regular beats throughout. Here there are no unaccompanied sections with illustrative interjections from the piano or sustained slow-moving chords to set the mood; rather, the piano sets the scene of the busy whirlwind of dancing. This waltz, however, eschews the dance's association with grace and elegance since it is played "crude and fast," and so as MacPhail describes "it is clear that something is horribly wrong with the scene."[273] While the descriptions of the ball are set to an expressive, legato melody with a traditional waltz accompaniment in the piano's left hand (see example 4.17), there is a distinct shift in measure 49 where Rorem sets the narrator's gruesome remembrances to a quiet, declamatory melody, before recalling the alternating Ab-G dissonances from the first song to accompany the text "the glassy eye of the dying," shown in example 4.18. These alternating dissonances appear again in measures 68-77 of "Inauguration Ball" to accompany another sad detail: "and many a mothers' son amid strangers, passing away untended there."

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[273] MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 151–52.

Example 4.17: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "Inauguration Ball," mm. 1-9.1

Example 4.18: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "Inauguration Ball," mm. 56-59

However, at times the distinction between these two perspectives becomes

blurred, further demonstrating the experience of the narrator for whom these two images

are intertwined. In both measures 23-28 and measures 60-64, Rorem uses the opening

melody to set text describing his memories of the building as a hospital. While these

phrases employ the same melody, it is extended through repetition—in example 4.19,

measures 26 and 27 repeat the pitches from measures 24 and 25 before the melody

resolves to the final A—and it is transplanted onto a completely different

accompaniment. The text in measures 23-28 is the first mention of what the "different

scene" he remembers is: "fill'd with a crowded mass of the worst wounded of the

war."[274] The overlap between the two scenes and their musical material serves to

illustrate the experience of the narrator, as the two bleed into one another and cannot be

fully separated.

Example 4.19: Ned Rorem, *War Scenes*, "Inauguration Ball," mm. 23-28

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[274] The text in mm.60-64 is "the clotted rag, the odor of blood." This later example follows the melody and accompaniment of its earlier counterpart exactly, but without the final G#-A.

In these ways, Rorem's use of historical text in *War Scenes* builds additional layers of meaning through the work's relationship to time. Rorem emphasizes the role of the narrator, and by extension, the audience as observers. Through Rorem's setting of Whitman's words, the audience confronts the violence occurring in their own time by observing the violence of the Civil War. This observer's perspective, in combination with the text's links to U.S. military history, reveals the recurrence of violence and the futility of war.

Clarke, Dello Joio, and Rorem each took their own approach to finding and setting a historical text to protest the war in Vietnam, and thus the three works discussed in this chapter encompass different messages, perspectives, and degrees of license with the source material. However, all three of these works engage with historical texts with a relationship to the U.S. military. Through their use of these texts, these composers incorporate history into their reactions to the Vietnam War, creating works that express universal messages but are also marked by the passage of time. By using the weight of history to speak as the voices of the dead, with the guilt of the survivors, or as observers of timeless violence, these works point to the futility of war, advocating for a universal peace that will stop the circle of history.

Figure 4.3: Text from Ned Rorem's *War Scenes*

"A Night Battle"

What scene is this? – is this indeed *humanity* – these butchers' shambles? There they lie, in an open space in the woods, 300 poor fellows, the groans and screams mixed with the fresh scent of the night, that slaughterhouse! O well is it their mothers cannot see them. Some have their legs blown off, some bullets through the breast, some indescribably horrid wounds in the face or head, all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out, some mere boys, they take their turns with the rest… Such is the camp of the wounded, while over all the clear large moon comes out at times softly, amid the crack and crash and yelling sounds. The clear-obscure up there, those buoyant upper oceans, a few large placid stars beyond, coming languidly out, then disappearing, the melancholy draperied night around. And there, upon the roads and in these woods, that contest, never one more desperate in any age or land.

What history can ever give (for who can know) the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies? Who knows the many conflicts in flashing moonbeam'd woods, the writhing squads, the cries, the din, the distant cannon, the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths, the indescribable mix, the officers' orders, the devils fully rous'd in human hearts, the strong shout, *Charge, men, charge?...* And still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all. Who paints the scene, the sudden partial panic of the afternoons, at dusk?

"Specimen Case"

Poor youth, so handsome, athletic, with profuse shining hair. One time as I sat looking at him while he lay asleep, he suddenly, without the least start, awaken's, open'd his eyes, gave me a long steady look, turning his face very slightly to gaze easier, one long, clear, silent look, a slight sigh, then turn'd back and went into his doze again. Little he knew, poor death-stricken boy, the heart of the stranger that hover'd near.

"An Incident"

In one of the fights before Atlanta, a rebel soldier, of large size, evidently a young man, was mortally wounded top of head, so that the brains partially exuded. He lived three days, lying on his back on the spot where he first dropt. He dug with his heel in the ground during that time a hole big enough to put in a couple of ordinary knapsacks. He just lay there in the open air, and with little intermission kept his heel going night and day. Some of our soldiers then moved him to a house, but he died in a few minutes.

"Inauguration Ball"

… At the dance and supper room I could not help thinking, what a different scene they presented to my view a while since, fill'd with a crowded mass of the worst wounded of the war. Tonight, beautiful women, perfumes, the violin's sweetness, the polka and the waltz; then the amputation, the blue face, the groan, the glassy eye of the dying, the clotted rag, the odor of blood, and many a mother's son amid strangers, passing away untended there…

"The Real War Will Never Get In The Books"

And so goodbye to the war. I know not how it may have been to others. To me the main interest was in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and even the dead on the field. The points illustrating the latent character of the American young were of more significance than the political interests involved. Future years will never know the seething hell of countless minor scenes. The real war will never get in the books, perhaps must not and should not be. The whole land, North and South, was one vast hospital, greater (like life's) than the few distortions ever told. Think how much, and of importance, will be, has already been, buried in the grave.

Chapter 5

5 Performing Peace: "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 1968

> The house was packed, it was fabulous. We felt that we were human
> beings. We were doing our thing for people, for life against death.[275]

At eight-thirty in the evening on Friday, May 24, 1968, the main stage at

Carnegie Hall rang with the sounds of protest as members of the art music community

joined together to express their opposition to the war in Vietnam. The forty-nine-piece

orchestra, full chorus, and soloists performed works by contemporary U.S. composers

including Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, and George Crumb. This concert, entitled

"Composers and Musicians for Peace," was one of the earliest instances of art music

protest against the Vietnam War, and the only such event to bring together so many

prominent musical figures.[276] Composer Elie Siegmeister, whose opposition to U.S.

involvement in Vietnam is covered in chapter 3, was the organizational impetus behind

the event, ultimately serving as its artistic director. In discussing the concert with Paul

Cameron MacPhail in 1989 (see quotation above), Siegmeister draws attention to the

exhilarating effect of this event for its participants, referencing not only to the packed

house but also the concert's political activism. According to Siegmeister, by speaking out

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[275] Elie Siegmeister, interview with Paul Cameron MacPhail, November 18, 1989. Quoted in MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 104–5.

[276] Some experimental composers and musicians were organizing protest concerts as early as 1965, as is discussed in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. However, art music involvement before 1968 was limited in its reach. Both Kinsella and MacPhail cite The Week of the Angry Arts Against the Vietnam War in January-February of 1967 as the first major instance of art music's involvement in the protest movement, including Composers and Musicians for Peace as the second such concert in their respective discussions. See Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 101–2; MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 57–58, 104–5.

against the war, "for life against death," the participating musicians felt themselves to be activists working on behalf of humanity.

The Vietnam War elicited several art music protest concerts, none of which have been explored in detail by scholars.[277] These concerts advanced a political agenda by advocating peace in a time of war, yet they were often marketed in the media as non-political in nature. Newspaper coverage of the 1967 "Week of the Angry Arts Against the War in Vietnam" discussed in chapter 1 quotes the group's chairman, Robert Reitz, who describes the event as motivated by the fact that "many artists have wanted to voice their dissent nonviolently and nonpolitically against the war in Vietnam."[278] The November 1967 "Poets for Peace" event that would eventually inspire "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was similarly marketed as "not political" by its organizers: a review of the event in the *New York Times* asserts that "although the theme was peace, especially peace in Vietnam, a spokesman for the Fellowship [of Reconciliation] stressed the fact that the reading was not political in any sense, and that the participants were agreed upon no common course for stopping the war."[279] While Timothy Kinsella quotes excerpts from

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[277] Timothy Kinsella briefly mentions a few notable examples of peace concerts, but he does not explore them in depth. In addition to "Composers and Musicians for Peace," the concerts he references include a 1967 concert of orchestral music presented "without conductor to symbolize the individual's responsibility for the brutality in Vietnam;" January 1973's "A Plea for Peace," a free concert conducted by Leonard Bernstein in the Washington Cathedral that was organized as a deliberate opposition to a concert in honour of Nixon's second inauguration held that same evening. Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 101–4. MacPhail also reports on the details of a number of protest concerts, including "Composers and Musicians for Peace," but is mostly concerned with establishing a timeline of the protest movement and music's involvement in it. MacPhail, "The Composer Speaks Out: Vocal Art Music of Protest Against the Vietnam War," 104–5.

[278] "Artists to Exhibit as Protest in War," *New York Times*, January 26, 1967.

[279] Thomas Lask, "18 Leading Poets and Writers Give Reading Stressing Peace," *New York Times*, November 13, 1967. Since "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was also organized under the auspices of

both of these descriptions in his discussion of peace concerts,[280] he does not acknowledge the strangeness of these claims—surely voicing dissent and opposition to government actions is always and inevitably a political act, regardless of whether the dissent is expressed through nonviolent means or whether the parties involved agree on a course of action. Nor does Kinsella acknowledge the fact that this claim to apoliticality muddies his own assertion that such concerts "bespeak strong opposition to the war from members of the art music community, and remind us that rock music had no monopoly on protest."[281]

The tendency to market these events as apolitical speaks to the complex, sometimes contradictory of goals of classical musicians engaged in antiwar activities in the United States. When these artists describe their events as non-political, they are not indicating that their concert is taking a neutral position on the war—a rhetorical move that, obviously, would make no sense. Rather, in so doing, they are actively trying to distance themselves from a specific, stereotyped understanding of the Vietnam War protester. An article for the *New York Times* in 1968 by music critic Raymond Ericson, titled "Even Their Beards Will Go," speaks to this anxiety in the classical music community. He is quick to emphasize that a "Musicians for Peace" concert series at the Eastman School of Music should not be lumped together with "belligerent" protests: "Not all those who protest against the war in Vietnam do so belligerently, but the latter get the most attention. So a 'Musicians for Peace' movement that is being conducted quietly and

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the Fellowship of Reconciliation, this statement about "Poets for Peace" is particularly notable. It is plausible that the Fellowship's spokesperson quoted here was Raphael Gould.

[280] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 101.

[281] Kinsella, 104.

harmoniously deserves notice."[282] Ericson's description plays into cultural assumptions

about art music and its audience. Ericson emphasizes that the art music protest he is

describing is different from the protest methods of common protestors. Notably, he uses

music-associated adjectives to set this protest apart from its "belligerent" counterparts,

despite the fact that many war protest events featured musical elements: his rhetoric

seems to be suggesting that it is the genre of music that makes this concert series a

socially acceptable, polite, and, one infers, straightforwardly middle-class form of

protest. Like the events discussed above, this concert series is described as "casual and

nonpolitical," and yet Ericson quotes "a formal statement" from the musicians that

projects a clearly political message: "The arts embody the good in man, and we, as

musicians, are responsible for an artistic expression of a plea for peace and an end to all

war. In presenting a series of concerts we hope to convey these beliefs."[283] The

description of music to be performed, which includes "new antiwar pieces," such as a

work that "juxtaposes a speaker reading a Vietnam casualty report from the *New York

Times* and a soprano singing an 'Agnus Dei,'" makes these concerts seem even more

political in nature.[284] Most interesting, however, is that this article explicitly mentions—

and highlights in its title—the musicians' choice to shave their beards. This choice, which

the article's author considers "one of the most appealing aspects of the movement," is a

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[282] Raymond Ericson, "Even Their Beards Will Go," *New York Times*, February 18, 1968.

[283] Raymond Ericson, "Even Their Beards Will Go," *New York Times*, February 18, 1968. It is notable that this statement emphasizes "an end to all war" rather than targeting the Vietnam War specifically. Earlier in the article, one of the organizing musicians is quoted as being against "all war, not just the Vietnam war."

[284] Raymond Ericson, "Even Their Beards Will Go," *New York Times*, February 18, 1968. The article does not include the title of this work (unless the title is "Agnus Dei"), but it is listed as being composed by Alan Oettinger.

conscious effort on the part of the musicians to distance themselves from an undesirable type of protest: "They feel that [beards] are associated with protesters too intent on calling attention to themselves and thereby obscuring their message."[285]

The organizers of many other classical music protest concerts that marketed themselves as non-political seem also to have been hoping to appear respectable by distancing their event from the image commonly associated with protesters. During the late 1960s, as scholar of the antiwar movement Melvin Small describes, the typical antiwar activist was portrayed in the media as "a hairy, filthy, ragged youth with his arm and hand raised in an angry gesture [usually] with a single raised finger."[286] However, this image does not accurately represent the wide range of Americans who supported the anti-war cause. As I discuss in the introduction to this dissertation, scholars have pointed to the diverse societal groups who participated in Vietnam War protest.[287]

"Composers and Musicians for Peace" provides a particularly effective case study for exploring the ways in which art music protest can augment our understanding of the multifaceted nature of the protest movement and the diverse societal groups that participated in Vietnam War protest. After exploring the political motivations behind the organization of the concert, this chapter considers how the event engaged with key political issues of the time, particularly debates about the morality of war, shared conceptions of patriotism and American identity, and racial tensions and civil rights.

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[285] Raymond Ericson, "Even Their Beards Will Go," *New York Times*, February 18, 1968.

[286] Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*, 27.

[287] See for example Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*; Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*.

These themes interact and overlap, revealing some of the complexities of Vietnam War
protest. Ultimately, art music's cultural connotations, the reputations of the musicians
involved, and the specific works performed at this concert contributed to a particular type
of protest, one that eschews the anti-American, anti-establishment, hippy image
associated with the antiwar movement and emphasizes cultural authority and patriotism.

5.1   Setting the Stage

The idea for "Composers and Musicians for Peace" took some months to
develop into the eventual May 1968 concert, but its political motivations were evident
from the outset. Siegmeister was inspired to organize the concert after attending a protest
event entitled "Poets for Peace" in November of 1967, put on by the Compassionate Arts
of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.[288] This prompted him to contact Raphael Gould,
director of development for the Fellowship, to organize a similar event for musicians.
While Siegmeister and Gould began discussing the concert in November 1967,
correspondence indicates that many details were not finalized until April 1968.[289] On

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[288] The Fellowship of Reconciliation is an international, interfaith organization that was founded in 1914
"to cultivate the roots of true peace." During the 1960s it worked to raise funds for medical aid for victims
on both sides of the Vietnam conflict. The Compassionate Arts was just one arm of the organization,
designed to provide an avenue for artists of all types to "channel their interest in nonviolence and peace."
Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box
14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians." For
more information on the Fellowship of Reconciliation, see https://www.forusa.org/forusa-timeline/.

[289] Correspondence from January 1968 indicates that Gould and Siegmeister communicated with Benjamin
Britten about the concert, and that Britten was the one to suggest Aaron Copland. Siegmeister also
suggested Leonard Bernstein due to his participation in "Broadway for Peace," but it is unclear if they ever
reached out to Bernstein. Gould suggests to Siegmeister that folk singing duo Steve Addiss and Bill Crofut
would be interesting additions to the concert since they had recently visited Vietnam, stating that "it would
be a tremendous addition to the program we are developing to include music of that genre" and asking
Siegmeister if he agrees. Siegmeister's response is not included in the correspondence, but there is no
evidence that this suggestion was followed. SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder
"Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

April 8, George Crumb sent Siegmeister the score for his *Night Music I*, suggesting that

its fifth movement, "Gacela de la Terrible Presencia," would be an appropriate repertoire

choice for the event.[290] By April 15, Siegmeister had sent a tentative program to Gould,

and yet the performing forces were still unconfirmed at that point.[291] This April 15 letter

also makes clear that personal politics were an important factor in choosing who would

appear at "Composers and Musicians for Peace." Gould turned down Siegmeister's

suggestion of Pablo Casals due to the cellist's political views, asserting that "the idea of

Pablo Casals does not really appeal to me as I have read, with great sadness, some of his

pro-Johnson and pro-war views. He is not, by any means, a dove."[292] The conductors and

soloists for the concert were also still being organized late in the planning process.

Letters written on April 19 to the participating composers reveal that Leopold Stokowski,

who had agreed to conduct a number of works on the program, had withdrawn due to

personal circumstances and would be replaced by Izler Solomon,[293] and it was not until

April 25 that Siegmeister wrote to Crumb to confirm that Adele Addison had agreed to

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[290] LoC-GC, Box 12, Folder 6.

[291] Gould asserts that "Twenty-five or twenty-six members of the New York Philharmonic have signed up to the extent of expressing intent and interest subject, of course, to their personal schedules." SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

[292] SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians." This is in response to Siegmeister writing that "Isidore Cohen's wife, Judy, suggested inviting Pablo Casals to attend the concert and say a few words – possibly to receive a presentation of some kind." It is notable that Casals was not considered an appropriate choice politically, since in his later years he was known for his pro-peace activities, particularly in association with the United Nations. He composed the "Hymn of the United Nations" and in 1971 was awarded the U.N. Peace Medal.

[293] LoC-AC, Box 367, Folder 17.

sing his piece.[294] A particularly important detail that was added in the month leading up

to the concert was its dedication to the memory of Martin Luther King Jr., who was

assassinated on April 4, 1968. The dedication to King established a connection to the

Civil Rights movement while simultaneously reinforcing the concert's antiwar message,

since the activist had publicly opposed U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

In his liner notes for *The Face of War*, written over ten years later in 1979,

Siegmeister speaks to the anger that motivated him to organize the event:

> Like Langston Hughes and many other artists, I hated the Vietnam
> War. In 1966 I simply had to voice my anger, and together with a
> dozen colleagues, including William Mayer, Ulysses Kay, George
> Rochberg, Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Ezra Laderman, I
> organized a concert, 'Composers for Peace,' in New York's
> Carnegie Hall. A few weeks before the concert I had read Hughes'
> poems, *The Face of War*, which struck me as among the most
> powerful indictments of man's brutality to man – especially to the
> black and brown man – I have ever seen. Working very quickly, I
> dashed off five songs of the cycle for voice and piano, then
> orchestrated them so they might be performed at this anti-war
> concert.[295]

This section of Siegmeister's notes contains many inaccurate details about the concert,

but it is worthy of attention for a number of reasons.[296] Notably, Siegmeister's

recollection explicitly labels the concert as anti-war. Yet publicity for the concert took a

less confrontational approach, exclusively describing the organizers' motivations as being

"for peace." A quotation from Gould in the *New York Times* the week before the concert

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[294] LoC-GC, Box 12, Folder 6.

[295] Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979.

[296] Siegmeister incorrectly dates the concert to 1966, two years earlier. He also states that he composed *The Face of War* in the weeks leading up to the concert, but other sources point to it being composed in September 1967 (see chapter 2 for more detail).

describes his conversation with Siegmeister following "Poets for Peace," emphasizing the

peace-promoting angle of the concert while also indicating the popularity of the concert's

message among composers:

> The next morning Elie Siegmeister called me and wondered if the same kind of program couldn't be arranged by composers. Weren't composers and other musicians just as much for peace? Actually, we agreed, it just hadn't occurred to them that there was anything specific they could do. Once the idea was started there was no trouble getting them to take part. Our problem now is to apologize to those composers who won't be represented.[297]

It is possible that Gould's description of the many composers clamoring to be represented

may have been exaggerated for publicity purposes. Nevertheless, a large number of

musicians clearly supported the cause; eleven composers donated their works and

services, as did all of the many professional performers.

The program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was made up of

twentieth-century compositions by twelve U.S. composers. Correspondence between

Siegmeister and George Crumb suggests that the composers were each invited to

participate and then suggest a work of theirs that they considered appropriate.[298] An

obvious exception is Charles Ives' "They Are There!" (1943), the only work on the

program written by a composer who was no longer living. "They Are There!" seems to

have been a late addition to the program, as it is not included on the tentative version

distributed at the end of April.[299] Figure 5.1 provides more information on the works that

were performed at the concert.

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[297] Raymond Ericson, "A 'King' for Atlanta," *New York Times*, May 19, 1968.

[298] LoC-GC, Box 12, Folder 6.

[299] LoC-AC, Box 367, Folder 18.

Figure 5.1: Works performed at "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968[300]

Title (composition date)	Performers	Composer
Greetings read by Roger Sessions		
They Are There! (1917/1943)	Izler Solomon conducting	Charles Ives (1874-1954)
A Short Overture (1946)	Elie Siegmeister conducting	Ulysses Kay (1917-1995)
Let Us Remember (1965) *(text by Langston Hughes)*	Herbert Beattie, bass-baritone Hugh Ross conducting	David Amram (1930-)
Letters Home (1968)	Herbert Beattie, bass-baritone Martin Bookspan, narrator Hugh Ross conducting	William Mayer (1925-2017)
Second movement, *Andante ma con morbidezza*, from Concerto for Oboe and Small Orchestra (1963)	Henry Schuman, oboe Izler Solomon conducting	Benjamin Lees (1924-2010)
Excerpt from Night Music (1948-49)	Izler Solomon conducting	George Rochberg (1918-2005)
The Face of War (1967) *(text by Langston Hughes)*	William Warfield, bass-baritone Henry Lewis conducting	Elie Siegmeister (1909-1991)
INTERMISSION		
A message from Coretta King read by James Farmer		
Gacela de la terrible presencia, from Night Music I (1963) *(text by Garcia Lorca)*	Adele Addison, soprano	George Crumb (1929-)
Aria of the Fishwife, from The Trial of Lucullus (1946) *(text by Berthold Brecht)*	Adele Addison, soprano Henry Lewis conducting	Roger Sessions (1896-1985)
Second movement, *Adagio*, from Symphony no. 1 (1963-64)	Henry Lewis conducting	Ezra Laderman (1924-2015)
Prayer for Peace (1960)	Hugh Ross conducting	David Diamond (1915-2005)
Two Choruses from The Tender Land *(text by Horace Everett)* Stomp Your Foot! The Promise of Living	Aaron Copland conducting	Aaron Copland (1900-1990)

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[300] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

The resulting program included works by many prominent U.S. composers expressing diverse messages. Half of the works chosen for the program directly addressed themes of war and peace, including two new compositions about the Vietnam War that were premiered that evening: William Mayer's *Letters Home* (1968) and Elie Siegmeister's *The Face of War* (1967). The remaining six works did not address the topic of war directly, but many express a solemn or pensive mood that seems appropriate given the seriousness of the cause that the event was supporting. The excerpt from George Rochberg's *Night Music* (1948-49), for example, is described by the composer as representing "whatever is dark, unknown, awesome, mysterious or demonic."[301] The Adagio from Ezra Laderman's first symphony presents a similarly sombre mood, and the program notes explicitly link it to U.S. politics through the statement that it "was written in the weeks following the death of President John F. Kennedy."[302] These works and the way in which they were performed at "Composers and Musicians for Peace" contributed to the distinctive tone of this concert's protest message, particularly through their engagement with the themes of war, national identity, and race.

5.2   War and Morality

While not all the works performed at "Composers and Musicians for Peace" were written in response to the Vietnam War, through their presence on the program each of the works can be understood to make a statement regarding the conflict and contributes

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[301] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians.".

[302] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians.".

to the concert's political message. War and peace were key themes on this program, and yet the war-related compositions presented a variety of perspectives on the nature and morality of war. The implications of these perspectives become especially significant when considered in the context of the late 1960s, a time when conceptions of war, its morality, and the international role of the United States were intensely politicized.

In this section, I discuss three categories of works that address the subject of war: compositions written in response to the Vietnam War, earlier works with antiwar messages that easily translate to the Vietnam War context, and one work, Ives' "They Are There!", with a perspective on war that is ambiguous. While at first glance these works present a range of perspectives, when considered together they result in a nuanced and calculated protest message that combines contemporary criticism with nostalgia for a time when questions of war's morality were less complicated.

The two new compositions that were premiered at "Composers and Musicians for Peace," William Mayer's *Letters Home* (1968) and Elie Siegmeister's *The Face of War* (1967), both reflect the experience of the Vietnam War in their perspective on war's morality. These works represent changing attitudes towards war during the 1960s, falling in line with trends that Ben Arnold and Timothy Kinsella have both observed within the repertoire of Vietnam War works. These trends include a common stance of opposition and protest—a significant change from earlier war compositions which often supported the war effort.[303] In line with this general position of protest are other trends identified by

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[303] This is, of course, not the case for all earlier war compositions. For more detail on the characteristics of Vietnam War works and the changes from earlier war compositions, see the Introduction to this dissertation. See also Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 317–18, 326; Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 78–79.

both Arnold and Kinsella, including empathy towards all victims of the war, regardless of which side they fought on,[304] an absence of attempts to glorify the dead as heroic or their sacrifices as noble,[305] a conspicuous lack of nationalism and patriotism, and a trend towards placing blame on the U.S. government.[306]

Mayer's dramatic choral work *Letters Home* raises questions about the morality of war by focusing on the devastating and traumatic effects it has on soldiers. In a letter to Ben Arnold in 1986, Mayer specifically notes the suffering young soldiers face as his motivation for composing this work, stating that he wanted to bring attention to "the personal anguish war brings to such very young men on both sides and how hollow, slick and obscene the propaganda clichés sound when measured against the staggering price these young men must pay."[307] The text for *Letters Home* is largely made up of excerpts from real letters written by soldiers fighting in Vietnam.[308] Mayer includes letters by both American and Vietnamese soldiers, but all of the text is in English. Graphic accounts of violence are punctuated by two poignant refrains. The first, a choral refrain on the text "we are young, our bodies are young," articulates the perspective of the soldiers as a group and undergoes a disturbing change to the past tense near the end of the piece. The

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[304] See Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 325; Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 78. Arnold gives the example of Ned Rorem's *War Scenes*, discussed in chapter 4 of this dissertation, which is dedicated "to those who died in Vietnam, both sides, during the composition: 20-30 June 1969."

[305] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 79.

[306] Kinsella, 78.

[307] William Mayer, letter to Benjamin Arnold, 22 July, 1986. Quoted in Arnold, "War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era," 319.

[308] These letters were sourced from Glenn Munson, ed., *Letters from Viet Nam* (New York: Parallax Publishing Company, 1966).

second is a solo refrain of the words "My parched eyes can shed no more tears," a line

from a poem by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh. Mayer's inspiration for

the work came from two letters, which were included in the program notes for the concert

and are reprinted in the published score:

> Dear Brother Minh, how devastating and poignant the war is! It has stolen
> the vernal spring of all our lives, fledglings who know nothing about life
> except school books. (From a captured enemy letter)

> I am a regular combat veteran now, and I am only nineteen years old. I have
> just grown up too fast. I wonder when it is all going to catch up with me and
> kick me in the teeth…. (From a letter written by a U.S. Marine June 2,
> 1965—killed in Vietnam February 14, 1966)[309]

Letters Home paints an image of war that is strikingly raw, graphic, and intimate. The

letters Mayer quotes relate stories of horrific but intensely personal moments in battle.

Rather than describing heroic acts, victories, or defeats, these soldiers' stories focus on

moments of guilt, of helplessness, and of personal reckoning between morality and duty.

In listening to these moments of violence and devastation the listener is forced to

face the uncomfortable reality of war and question its morality. The most graphic

accounts occur in the middle section of the work, which includes excerpts of soldiers

retelling the violence they have perpetrated and the moral struggles they face as a result.

For example, the Young American Soldier in measures 75-82 sings about burning a

Vietnamese village to the ground and the guilt he felt when encountering a villager trying

to save his home:

> We were ordered to burn ev'ry hut to the ground. An oldish man
> (about your age, Dad) came out of one of them. He didn't say
> anything, just kept bowing, begging me not to burn his home.

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[309] William Mayer, *Letters Home: A Dramatic Choral Work for Mixed Chorus (SATB), Soloists, Speakers, and Orchestra (or Piano)* (New York: MCA Music, 1968), 3.

> Dad, it was so hard for me to turn and look at him in the eyes,
> but I did. I wish I could have cried, but I just can't anymore.[310]

Mayer sets this excerpt in a recitative-like style, which creates an intimate atmosphere and foregrounds the meaning of the text. Expressive directions in the score indicating "sudden anguish" in the final sentence and a "tiny hesitation before singing 'can't'" create a heightened impression of the young soldier's fraught emotional state. The other graphic excerpts in this section are similarly sung in a recitative style or spoken over sparse accompaniment, and they are interspersed between iterations of the Buddhist Monk's chant-like refrain of "My parched eyes can shed no more tears." A Marine Sergeant tells a particularly harrowing tale of killing a young girl who is holding a grenade in measures 85 through 99, shown in example 5.1. This traumatic experience leaves the sergeant questioning the morality of his actions, describing himself as "bitter hurt and so damned twisted up inside I don't know what to think anymore." Mayer's setting exploits the strained sound at the upper reaches of a singer's range to depict the emotional strain of the character. While the composer provides the option to sing down an octave on the words "but what in hell right did I have to kill a little child," he indicates that "if the singer can produce the high F and Gb, these should be sung, for whatever strain shows up in the voice would fit in well with the words at this point." In a spoken excerpt in measures 100 and 103, a Teenaged American Soldier relates the most explicit account of the after-effects of these traumatic experiences in battle, asserting that "now

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[310] William Mayer, *Letters Home: A Dramatic Choral Work for Mixed Chorus (SATB), Soloists, Speakers, and Orchestra (or Piano)* (New York: MCA Music, 1968), 12-13. Throughout *Letters Home*, different characters (to be sung by different chorus members) are identified not only by a character name and vocal range, but also by descriptions of their vocal style or accent. The Young American Soldier, sung by a tenor or high baritone, is described as having a "young vibrant quality" to his voice.

Letters Home
Words and Music by William R. Mayer
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Example 5.1: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, mm. 85-99

whenever I see a person who is Vietnamese, I start shaking, and I don't know if I should kill them or what."[311] These graphic accounts of violence foreground the moral struggles of war, portraying the soldiers as traumatized victims of the war rather than heroic vanguards of freedom.

The Buddhist Monk's refrain carries particular significance in *Letters Home*'s interrogation of the morality of war. *Letters Home* includes some passages from Vietnamese perspectives: a Village Elder speaks about his village being bombed because Vietcong soldiers had passed through it the day before, for example, and a North Vietnamese Soldier tells his mother to wait patiently and not be sad. The most prominent Vietnamese presence in this work, however, is that of the Buddhist Monk.[312] The monk's refrain, "My parched eyes can shed no more tears," acts as the moral compass of the work. At the first instance of this refrain in measures 73-74, the composer requests it be sung "with a profound sadness mixed with deep calm." As the refrain recurs between accounts of traumatic and guilt-ridden moments in battle, it remains unmodified other than changes in key. The Buddhist Monk's profound sadness models an emotional reaction for the audience: he does not judge the soldiers for their actions, he simply

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[311] The full excerpt reads as follows: "Hi, Gram. Say, do you know when I got shot I cried? Then I started to yell and cry and stood up. I was shooting all over. Then he shot back, and I saw where he was at. I killed him. When I saw him I don't know what came over me, but I emptied all I had in him, some eighty-seven holes they found in him. After an hour or so I was okay. It's no fun shooting a person, and now whenever I see a person who is Vietnamese, I start shaking, and I don't know if I should kill them or what. [My parched eyes can shed no more tears.] Say, how I wish I was home. It's no fun out here. I feel lost and all alone out here so far from home. I am not doing too good. Please take care of yourself, okay Gram? And please say a prayer for me that I get back okay. I tell you it's bad out here…"

[312] The Buddhist Monk is not explicitly a Vietnamese character, but the program notes make it clear that his refrain text is drawn from a poem by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh.

mourns for the losses on all sides. In the final measures of the work, it is the Buddhist

Monk who has the last say, leaving the audience with a final iteration of his refrain. Here,

the melodic contour and harmony of the refrain are altered to lend a sense of finality,

with the last note as the tonic of a G-flat major triad (see examples 5.2 and 5.3).

Example 5.2: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, first iteration of Buddhist Monk's refrain, mm. 73-74

Example 5.3: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, last iteration of Buddhist Monk's refrain, mm. 134-138

While most of the text in *Letters Home* is made up of authentic letters from soldiers, one of the most emotionally jarring moments in the work comes from text added by the composer. In measure 120, an American Soldier's tender message to his wife is violently interrupted as a drum roll introduces a sudden fortissimo chromatic cluster in the accompaniment and the upper voices of the choir (see example 5.4). This interruption is followed by insistent sixteenth-note Cs in the basses, intoning the disturbing text "You're dead soldier." This phrase repeats as the bass section crescendos to a triple forte, then abruptly cuts off mid-clause to career into stifled silence. When the music returns after seven beats of rest, it is with the tenors singing the choral refrain heard earlier in the work, but now, chillingly, in the past tense: "We were young, our bodies were young." In his program notes for *Letters Home*, Mayer describes this moment as "a fatal ambush."[313] The refrain's tense is not the only aspect of the work that changes to reflect the death of the soldiers; no further excerpts from soldiers' letters are shared after this dramatic climax. By focusing on the intimate and raw details of war in *Letters Home*, Mayer projects an image of battle that is not glorified, but disturbing, horrifying, and emotionally fraught. In doing so, he invites listeners to question the morality of war alongside the soldiers whose letters he quotes.

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[313] William Mayer, *Letters Home: A Dramatic Choral Work for Mixed Chorus (SATB), Soloists, Speakers, and Orchestra (or Piano)* (New York: MCA Music, 1968), 3.

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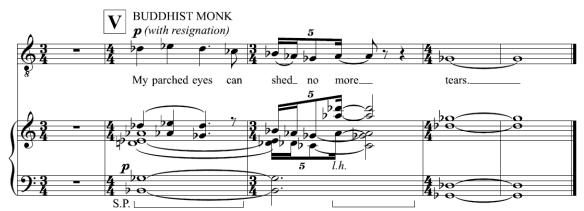All Rights Reserved   Used by Permission
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Example 5.4: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, mm. 120-126

Siegmeister's *The Face of War* also emphasizes the horror and destruction of

war rather than portraying traditional conceptions of honour in battle. The poetry by

Langston Hughes that Siegmeister chose for this song cycle directly confronts the reality

of wartime through images of the brutality and senselessness of war, prioritizing the

perspectives of those who are directly affected by the fighting, especially soldiers and

their families. These poems evoke the horror of war not only through their description of

the battlefield—in "Listen Here, Joe" the battlefield is described as a place "where the

steel winds blow" and "where the rain is lead," metaphors for the bullets the young

soldier will face—but also through the use of blood imagery. In both "Official Notice"

and "War," blood is used as a metaphor for the destruction war causes. In "War," a

section of the poem describes the disturbing image of a broom of death sweeping and

mopping the world with blood, symbolizing the widespread and indiscriminate

destruction of war: "Death, is the broom I take in my hands to sweep the world clean. I

sweep and I sweep then mop and I mop. I dip my broom in blood, my mop in blood."

"Official Notice" is written from the perspective of a parent who has received notice of

their son's death, a poignant moment made particularly disturbing by the parent's

assertion that the letter is written, signed, and sealed in the son's blood.

Official Notice
Dear Death:
I got your message
That my son is dead.
The ink you used
To write it
Is the blood he bled.
You say he died with honor
On the battlefield,
And that I am honored, too,
By this bloody yield.
Your letter
Signed in blood,
With his blood
Is sealed.

In its description of this bloody letter, "Official Notice" not only points to the horrific effects of war, but also challenges the idea of honourable death in battle. It is clear from the parent's reaction that this letter is an empty gesture that brings them only distress. The news that their son died honourably—and that they too should feel honoured—does not seem to bring them any comfort. A similar moment occurs in "Listen Here, Joe," when a young soldier is told that his family will receive a medal in exchange for his life: "a medal to your family in exchange for a guy."

Both *The Face of War* and *Letters Home* offer perspectives that reflect changing attitudes towards war and its morality during the Vietnam conflict, eschewing traditional narratives of honour and bravery in favour of graphic descriptions of trauma and loss. "Composers and Musicians for Peace" also featured a number of war-related works that were composed before U.S. involvement in Vietnam. These works varied in the degree to which they explicitly condemned war, but in each case their previously assumed meaning would have taken on new layers of signification in the context of a concert reacting to the Vietnam War.

Roger Sessions' "Aria of the Fishwife" (1946) addresses the issue of war's morality by confronting questions about what it means to understand war. This aria focuses on loss as the true meaning of war: not only the loss of life, but also the loss of self and the long-lasting effects of wartime trauma on soldiers. "Aria of the Fishwife" comes from Sessions' one-act opera *The Trial of Lucullus*, which is based on a play by Bertolt Brecht. After his death, the soul of Roman general Lucullus is being judged by a farmer, a courtesan, a baker, and a fishwife, none of whom are impressed by his feats in battle. The fishwife's aria is a response to Lucullus, who asks "how can war be judged by

those who do not understand it?"[314] The resulting aria is a chilling condemnation of the

effects of war not only on the soldiers who fight, but also on their loved ones at home.

The fishwife recounts how she grew sick and died while searching at the harbour for her

son who did not come home from the war. Even in the afterlife she continued to search,

only to find that the sons sent into battle no longer know their names, "which only served

to line them up in the army and are no longer needed," and that they do not want to see

their mothers "because they let them go to the bloody war."[315] Ultimately war has

destroyed the fishwife's family and changed her son irreversibly, such that "[she] desires

no longer to look upon [his] face."[316] As she makes plain in the first line of the aria, she

understands war very well, though from a different perspective than that of the deceased

general.

      In the context of the Vietnam War and "Composers and Musicians for Peace,"

this aria's depiction of a mother losing her son—indeed, losing him twofold: first the loss

of his life, and second the loss of his identity—takes on new layers of significance. This

story, set in Ancient Rome, written by Brecht in 1938-1939, and composed by Sessions

in 1946, draws attention to the impact of war at home, mirroring the experience families

across the United States faced every day during the conflict in Vietnam. The son's loss of

identity shows marked parallels to the many soldiers returning from Vietnam with mental

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[314] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

[315] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

[316] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

trauma, which was a significant part of the cultural conversation on veterans' issues

during the late 1960s. The mental impact of exposure to traumatic events was not a novel

concept, but the Vietnam War and its veterans had a profound influence on the cultural

understanding of mental trauma and contributed to the development of the Post-

Traumatic Stress Disorder diagnosis.[317] While accounts of psychological casualties

during the Vietnam War and the welcome veterans faced when they returned to the

United States are mixed, media coverage of the war and the vocal activism of veterans

led to a prevailing conception of Vietnam veterans as troubled and mentally disturbed. As

Allan V. Horwitz has described, this image of Vietnam veterans was in many ways

symbolic of the turbulent cultural and political atmosphere: "Veterans' problems became

entangled with the moral revulsion that many people felt toward the war."[318] A

particularly influential force was the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War

(VVAW), which was active starting in 1967. VVAW lobbied for their cause through

prominent media outlets in the late 1960s, spreading their message of "soldiers as

traumatized victims of an unjust war."[319] This cultural conversation around veterans and

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[317] Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) was first included as an official diagnosis in the third edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-III*), published in 1980. Over the course of the twentieth century, the understanding of this disorder grew out of diagnoses like railway spine, hysteria, and shell shock, which were often considered to reflect pre-existing mental vulnerabilities in addition to a specific traumatic event. During the 1950s and 1960s, psychiatrists' understanding of the aftereffects of trauma began to prioritize environmental trauma over pre-existing vulnerability, in part due to studies of Holocaust survivors. What is notable in the PTSD diagnosis in DSM-III is both its focus on traumatic cause and its incorporation of long-lasting or delayed effects of traumatic events. For more on the development of the PTSD diagnosis, see Allan V Horwitz, *PTSD: A Short History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), chap. 4.

[318] Horwitz, 87.

[319] Horwitz, 88. For more on the VVAW, see Scott, *Vietnam Veterans Since the War: The Politics of PTSD, Agent Orange, and the National Memorial*.

the traumatic mental impact of war would have shed a new light on this element of "Aria of the Fishwife," which would not have been so prominent when Sessions first composed the opera in the 1940s. Additionally, the soldiers' placement of blame on their mothers for letting them go to war in the first place reads as a call to action. By allowing their sons to be sent to war, the mothers—and, by extension, U.S. society—are deemed responsible for what their sons have faced.[320] At "Composers and Musicians for Peace" the message of this aria would have been clear: we let this happen, and so we are to blame. The program notes for "Aria of the Fishwife" emphasize the contemporary relevance of the text, quoting Sessions' declaration of the play's "insistence on those values which are necessary not only for a decent human life but, ultimately, in terms of today, for our very survival as a species."[321]

David Amram's "Let Us Remember" (1965) a movement from the cantata of the same name, also echoes the concerns of the 1960s antiwar movement, in this case by resonating with those questioning the morality of the United States' involvement in Vietnam. The text by Langston Hughes recalls situations of oppression throughout history, from Biblical Egypt through Tsarist Russia to twentieth-century examples like Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald. The work's calls to remember are interspersed

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[320] This is reminiscent of Siegmeister's "Evil," discussed in chapter 2, in which society is complicit in the war by not acting against it, as well as some of the statements by Tenney and Goldstein discussed in chapter 1.

[321] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians." The program notes for this work read as follows: "Concerning his reaction to the Brecht play, Sessions declared: 'What attracted me most deeply to it in the beginning and what still moves me profoundly is its insight into and its vision of human nature, not in schematic or oversimplified terms but in all its complex subtlety, and in its first insistence on those values which are necessary not only for a decent human life but, ultimately, in terms of today, for our very survival as a species.'"

with an insistent refrain: "let not the oppressed become the oppressors," urging listeners

to learn from history and foster forgiveness "lest the circle repeat, repeat, repeat." While

this work does not specifically mention Vietnam, in the context of "Composers and

Musicians for Peace" its refrain would arguably speak to U.S. citizens who were

concerned about their country's role as an aggressor.

In the context of a peace concert in the late 1960s, even works that call for peace

without explicit references to war can be considered political statements. One such work

performed at "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was David Diamond's "Prayer for

Peace" for unaccompanied four-part chorus, composed in 1960, which sets a traditional

text asking God to grant peace. This work's message is less pointed than that of some of

the other repertoire chosen for the concert as it does not condemn or even explicitly

mention war. Nevertheless, on the program of a concert that was explicitly reacting to the

war in Vietnam, this work's call for peace would arguably be interpreted as a

commentary on the contemporary conflict. While a call for peace was a less controversial

statement to make than an outright condemnation of war or of the United States' role,

voicing such a call during the late 1960s—during a time of war and in the throes of an

outspoken antiwar movement—invited associations with the contemporary conflict.

Charles Ives' "They Are There!" presents a more complex perspective on war

and on the United States' international role, one that can be interpreted as antiwar but that

is nevertheless grounded in the nostalgic sounds of traditional war songs. Originally

composed during the first world war as "He Is There!" and revised in 1942, this song

paints an optimistic picture of "our soldier boys" who are fighting for the just cause of

freedom and democracy. The program notes for "Composers and Musicians for Peace"

describe "They Are There!" as a "war protest song."[322] Indeed, the text, written by Ives

himself, does disparage war as "cursed" and speaks idealistically of "the people's new

free world" that will emerge after the war is finished. However, the song's text arguably

supports the conflict as a morally just pursuit: the "brave boys… are fighting for the

right." This pro-war message is reinforced in the musical setting, a lively march. "They

Are There!" and its predecessor, "He Is There!", have often been taken at face value as

enthusiastic expressions of patriotism and support for the war effort. In *The Charles Ives

Tunebook*, Clayton W. Henderson draws attention to the march rhythms of "He Is

There!", its quotations of patriotic songs, and its "unabashed enthusiasm for taking on the

enemy," asserting that it "strikes the contemporary listener by its wide-eyed optimistic

spirit."[323] Henderson does not describe "They Are There!" in as much detail as it is so

heavily based on the earlier work, but he does consider it "a patriotic song for World War

II."[324] A 1963 review by James A. Reyes following the 1961 publication of "They Are

There!" provides an example of similar reception from the 1960s. Describing it as "a

'war song march' [the genre included in the score] written in the mood of spirited

indignation characteristic of America in 1917," Reyes compares it to George M. Cohan's

"Over There," inferring that it was only the circumstances of the works' promotion and

publication that made "Over There" so successful as an inspiration for the troops when "a

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[322] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

[323] Clayton W. Henderson, *The Charles Ives Tunebook* (Warren: Published for the College Music Society by Harmonie Park Press, 1990), 64.

[324] Henderson, 64.

more wonderfully extravagant and appropriate march can hardly be imagined than ['They Are There!'']."[325] Taken at face value, "They Are There!" seems to be a surprising and somewhat contradictory choice for an antiwar concert.

However, Ives' perspective on war as presented in his war-related compositions is not always as straightforward as it seems. Alan Houtchens and Janis P. Stout have argued that questions raised by elements of "He Is There!", including "the exaggerated degree of… martial enthusiasm" and the "cartoonish quality" of the action, "may hint at a sly ridiculing of jingoistic zest for the game of war."[326] Further, their analysis of the textual differences between "He Is There!" and "They Are There!" demonstrates that the latter version is more than simply an update for the context of World War II, but rather takes a more visionary approach to the morality of war as a concept, shedding doubt on "the (not unmixed) militant patriotism of its predecessor."[327] Ives' text for "They Are There!" portrays the war as a means to achieve lasting freedom and peace in a "people's world nation" and repeatedly demonizes politicians and warmakers, both of which point to the role that the common people must play in forming a new free world.[328] In particular, Houtchens and Stout point to the second verse, which criticizes the political leaders responsible for inciting war, as "voic[ing] much more directly and forcefully than

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[325] James E. Reyes, "Review: Choral Music," *Notes* 20, no. 4 (1963): 565–66. Reyes also draws attention to the many patriotic songs that are quoted in "They Are There!".

[326] Alan Houtchens and Janis P. Stout, "'Scarce Heard Amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs," *The Journal of Musicology* 15, no. 1 (1997): 87.

[327] Houtchens and Stout, 91–92.

[328] This is strikingly reminiscent of Ives' political writings, particularly "A People's World Nation," published in Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (London: Calder and Boyars, 1969), 225–31.

the lyrics of any of his earlier war songs a hatred of the present war and a hope for a future free of war."[329] Gayle Magee has also detailed a transition towards the "war to end all wars" mantra in her analysis of Ives' works from the World War I era, including "He Is There!", though "They Are There!" lies outside of the scope of her argument.[330] Evidently, connections between the Vietnam antiwar movement and "They Are There!" can be found. A 1943 recording of Ives performing "They Are There!" supports a reading of this work as antiwar. In addition to the exaggerated accompanimental dissonances and liberal interjections of phrases like "goddamn them!" noted by Houtchens and Stout,[331] Ives significantly emphasizes the words "and the people *not just politicians*" when he himself sings the song.[332] Nevertheless, the martial quality of the music for "They Are There!'" and its textual emphasis on justly fighting for freedom, while common to war compositions from its own time, make it an incongruous inclusion on the program of a Vietnam War protest concert. While the program organizers clearly intended this work to resonate with the antiwar message of the rest of the concert, its ambiguities may have

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[329] Houtchens and Stout, "'Scarce Heard Amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs," 94.

[330] Gayle Magee, "'Every Man in New York,'" in *Over Here, Over There: Transatlantic Conversations on the Music of World War I*, ed. William Brooks, Christina Bashford, and Gayle Magee (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 37.

[331] Houtchens and Stout, "'Scarce Heard Amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs," 96. Houtchens and Stout also consider this performance to "[lend] credence to an anti-war reading" while also "undercut[ting] the conventions of the war song as a musical genre."

[332] Charles Ives, *Ives Plays Ives: The Complete Recordings of Charles Ives at the Piano*, New World Records 80642, 2008, digital content. Originally issued on compact disc in 1999 through Composers Recordings, Inc. as CRI CD 810. Tracks 38, 39, and 40 are all performances of "They Are There!" recorded on April 24, 1943, at Mary Howard Studio in New York City.

allowed for it to be interpreted differently by different audience members, particularly as it was the first work on the program.

Overall, the war-related works on the "Composers and Musicians for Peace" program conveyed an antiwar message. However, the individual works approached the topic of war and its morality from a range of perspectives. *Letters Home* and *Face of War* are decidedly Vietnam War-era works; their graphic descriptions of wartime trauma focus on the experiences of soldiers and their families, pitting the tragedies faced by individuals against traditional conceptions of honour and duty. Many of the older war-related works on the program took on new significance in the context of this concert, resonating with contemporary cultural conversations and the concerns of the antiwar movement. "They Are There!" presents a more ambiguous treatment of war and its morality. While it can be interpreted as an anti-war work, it nevertheless incorporates an understanding of war as sometimes necessary, even if only as a means to achieve lasting peace. Taken together, these works conveyed a complex protest message that was critical of war as a concept and of the present war specifically, while still allowing nostalgia for a time when questions of war's morality were less fraught.

5.3   **Patriotic Protest**

Another feature of "Composers and Musicians for Peace" that contributed to its political message is its portrayal of the United States and American patriotism. As discussed in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, during the Vietnam War social unrest led many U.S. citizens to reconsider what it meant to be American. "Composers and Musicians for Peace" did not project a singular image of U.S. national

identity; rather, it presented a wide array of perspectives on the United States and patriotism, encouraging its audience to think critically about their identity as Americans.

In *Letters Home*, Mayer uses symbols of the United States, evident both in the music and in the staging, juxtaposing them with the soldiers' tragic letters to demonstrate a connection between the United States and the effects of the war. Early in the work, the sudden interjection of "Pop Singer" to entertain the troops feels strange and out of place sandwiched between the soldiers' lamenting refrains of "we are young." Described as "vulgar and 'seedy'," she offers a pin-up of herself and some coy sexual innuendo (see example 5.5). Her jazz-tinged music and her repartee with "Straight Man" presents a caricature of U.S. popular culture, and she is touted as "topflight, stateside entertainment" by an American Official with an "exaggeratedly folksy accent," who asserts that "Nothing's too good for our boys." The Pop Singer's brief interjection and the American Official's commentary on it create a sense of irony in combination with the remainder of the work, as the quality of the entertainment offered to the soldiers is contrasted with the traumatic experiences they must endure.

The jazzy music that accompanies the Pop Singer recurs in measures 129-133, just before the Buddhist Monk's final refrain marks the end of the work (see example 5.6). Here, the music accompanies Announcer No. 2 reading from the *New York Post*: "KILL A CONG WIN A PRIZE: American soldiers who kill one or more Vietcong in 'Operation Will to Win' are rewarded with three days of sunbathing at the seashore." The disturbing nature of this headline is emphasized in its delivery. The announcer delivers his text "with nauseating brightness," and once he has spoken is instructed to "[hold] a hard bright smile until the music is cut off."

Letters Home
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Example 5.5: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, mm. 33-41

ANNOUNCER No 1:   Portland Press Herald, Sunday Edition: "Vietcong soldiers who manage to shoot down a helicopter win a month's leave, a watch, a ballpoint pan and a bicycle."

ANNOUNCER No. 2 *(with nauseating brightness)* *:

New York Post, Reuters dispatch: " KILL A CONG, WIN A PRIZE:

No. 2   American soldiers who kill one or more Vietcong in 'Operation Will to Win' are rewarded with three days of

No. 2   sunbathing at the seashore." *(announcer holds a hard bright smile until the music is cut off)*

Enters before Announcer No. 1 is finished.

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Example 5.6: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, mm. 127-134

This delivery, in combination with the music previously associated with the pop singer's

vulgar commerciality, brings disingenuity and unpleasantness to the line. While this

description of the United States rewarding soldiers for killing Vietcong soldiers

immediately follows a complementary statement by Announcer No. 1, who reads from

the *Portland Press Herald* asserting that "Vietcong soldiers who manage to shoot down a

helicopter win a month's leave, a watch, a ballpoint pen and a bicycle," this first

announcer's statement carries no delivery instructions and is set with no accompaniment.

Thus, the description of American soldiers being rewarded for killing is the only one that is marked.

Another character who portrays a negative image of the United States is the American Officer's Wife, who delivers two of the spoken lines in the opening section. Her lines come across as self-centred and blind to the experiences of others. Her first statement, "Ungrateful is the word for these people - - when you think of all our country's done for them," takes on dramatic irony following the preceding statements by the American Official, who speaks with pride about the "kill ratio" being "on an upward curve" and considers the devastating effects of napalm gas to be positive. Her second statement, which closes the spoken introduction, complains about the prices in Saigon, a complaint that seems completely out of touch and unimportant in the context of the devastation of war.

While Vietnamese and American soldiers are portrayed equally sympathetically in Mayer's *Letters Home*, a number of the other American roles are portrayed as morally questionable. Notably, most of these roles reflect text written by Mayer – the words of the soldiers come from letters, but the words of the Pop Singer, the Officer's Wife, and others were added by the composer. In the case of Announcer #2, which uses text from newspaper headlines, it is Mayer's musical setting that differentiates it from its counterpart speaking from the Vietnamese perspective. Mayer also brings the United States to the forefront in his costuming directions. In his production notes Mayer suggests that "The Pop Singer and Officer's wife may wear red and blue respectively, while the Monk wears a white robe. Located at different points on the stage, they give a 'red, white

and blue' effect."[333] It is significant here that the Pop Singer and the Officer's Wife are responsible for creating this effect through the colours of their costumes, since these characters present vulgar, commercial, self-centred perspectives on their nation.

Siegmeister's *The Face of War* also has a complex relationship with American national identity. As I argued in chapter two of this dissertation, the musical language Siegmeister employs in *The Face of War* reflects his changing understanding of national identity and what it meant to be American during the Vietnam War. Despite his allegiance to musical Americanism, in this work the composer eschews the consonant, lyrical style he had employed throughout his career, opting instead for an atonal language which he termed American Expressionism. Through its interaction with Siegmeister's established musical style and political beliefs, *The Face of War* presents a disillusioned composer's personal reckoning with his national identity and what his country had become.

Ives' "They Are There!" projects a perspective on U.S. involvement in war as inevitably just and honourable that would have felt dated at the time of this event, as discussed above. In addition, however, this song speaks from a distinctly American perspective, emphasizing the country's position of moral high ground: the soldiers, "conscious always of their country's aim, which is Liberty for all," are portrayed as vanguards of freedom. This patriotic message is reinforced through musical quotations. Musical and textual quotations of Civil War songs such as "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground" and "The Battle Cry of Freedom" root the song in American military history,

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[333] William Mayer, *Letters Home: A Dramatic Choral Work for Mixed Chorus (SATB), Soloists, Speakers, and Orchestra (or Piano)* (New York: MCA Music, 1968), 3.

and the closing measures emphasize patriotism through a quotation of the U.S. national anthem.[334] While, as mentioned above, some have taken these patriotic quotations at face value in interpreting this work, the relationship between "They Are There!" and patriotism is just as ambiguous as its position on the war. The fragmentary and distorted nature of these quotations leaves ample room for interpretation.[335] Certainly, however, their presence is significant when it comes to discussing the role of this work on the program. Equally important is the significance of Ives as a composer. The concert organizers chose to include Ives as the only non-living composer whose work was performed at this concert, and as a late addition to the program. As David C. Paul has explored, Ives' reputation was transformed in the period after the second World War, due in no small part to the publication of Henry Cowell's and Sidney Robertson Cowell's *Charles Ives and his Music* and the prominent presence of Ives' compositions in the repertoire performed abroad on diplomatic tours.[336] By the 1960s, Ives' music had secured a place in the canon and he was considered an icon of American music who symbolized individualism, autonomy, and freedom of expression.[337] In considering this concert's relationship to patriotism and national identity, it cannot be ignored that the

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[334] Ives quotes patriotic songs, particularly those connected to the U.S. Civil War, in many of his works. David Thurmaier has argued that these quotations constitute one of the musical topics Ives draws from. "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," which Thurmaier uses as his primary example, is quoted in the melody of "They Are There!" at the opening of the chorus. David Thurmaier, "'When Borne by the Red, White, and Blue': Charles Ives and Patriotic Quotation," *American Music* 32, no. 1 (2014): 46–81.

[335] Houtchens and Stout, "'Scarce Heard Amidst the Guns Below': Intertextuality and Meaning in Charles Ives's War Songs," 68.

[336] David C. Paul, *Charles Ives in the Mirror : American Histories of an Iconic Composer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 83. Henry Cowell and Sidney Robertson Cowell, *Charles Ives and His Music* (New York; London: Oxford University Press, 1969, 1955).

[337] Paul, *Charles Ives in the Mirror : American Histories of an Iconic Composer*, 106.

program was designed to open with a work by Ives and close with works by Aaron Copland, essentially bookending the concert with respected icons of American musical identity.

The two choruses from Aaron Copland's 1954 opera *The Tender Land* that closed the concert contribute to the concert's message of protest grounded in a sense of patriotism. One of these choruses is "Stomp Your Foot!", a choral square dance. This chorus's jaunty melodies and the text encouraging jubilant dancing at first glance seem entirely out of place on the "Composers and Musicians for Peace" program. The second chorus is "The Promise of Living," a lyrical thanksgiving song which closed the concert. Its harvest-related text encourages working together and sharing with one's neighbor, evident in the divided bass section's early statement of "we're ready to work, we're ready to lend a hand." This could be interpreted as encouraging audience members to join the protest movement, a message that is reinforced by the men's homophonic declaration near the end of the work explicitly mentioning the concept of peace: "The promise of ending in right understanding is peace in our own hearts and peace with our neighbor." Aside from these tenuous textual connections, this work is a surprising repertoire choice for a war protest concert. These two choruses project an image of idyllic rural America through their subject matter and the composer's characteristic musical language.

However, Copland's music, and *The Tender Land* in particular, have a more complicated relationship with American national identity and patriotism than first meets the ear. While Copland's musical aesthetic has come to be considered emblematic of American exceptionalism and, in some cases, jingoistic patriotism, Emily Abrams Ansari has demonstrated that this association is at least partially due to the ways that Copland

and his music were branded by the U.S. government and by the composer himself

between the 1950s and the 1970s.[338] The approachable, folk-inspired musical aesthetic

with which Copland composed throughout much of his career was a product of his

progressive politics, and was intended to take a critical view of U.S. national identity. As

Ansari asserts, "to the extent that he was a nationalist, his nationalism was forward-

looking, often critical of the status quo, and inspired by a distinctly leftism-inspired

vision of a fairer country to come."[339] The choice to program music from *The Tender*

Land rather than another work from Copland's oeuvre also may reflect a political

message that is more subversive than it seems. Elizabeth B. Crist has argued that *The*

Tender Land reflects the oppressive atmosphere cultivated by McCarthyism and fears of

Communist infiltration in the early 1950s.[340] The music and setting of the opera may

seem to be a nostalgic representation of an idyllic past, but Crist asserts that its plot

reflects the suspicions and anxieties of the 1950s.[341] In particular, Crist points to "The

Promise of Living," the second of the two Copland choruses performed at "Composer

and Musicians for Peace," as conveying a left-wing political agenda that directly

confronts anti-Communist sentiments through "a musical model of social solidarity, of

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[338] Ansari, *The Sound of a Superpower: Musical Americanism and the Cold War*, chap. "The Principled Brand Strategist: Aaron Copland," 128-161. See also Ansari's conclusion, which explores ways in which Copland's music has been used to express disparate interpretations of American identity.

[339] Ansari, 160. The influence of Copland's progressive politics on his music in the 1930s and 1940s has become generally accepted, but was first demonstrated in Elizabeth B. Crist, *Music for the Common Man : Aaron Copland during the Depression and War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[340] Elizabeth B. Crist, "Mutual Responses in the Midst of an Era: Aaron Copland's The Tender Land and Leonard Bernstein's Candide," *The Journal of Musicology* 23, no. 4 (2006): 485–527.

[341] Crist, 501–2.

individuals working in concert."[342] By performing these choruses from *The Tender Land* at "Composers and Musicians for Peace," the concert organizers were not simply referencing a nostalgic image of rural America, but they were doing so through Copland's critical lens. The program notes for the concert do not provide enough description of the plot to make audience members who did not already know *The Tender Land* aware of the suspicious atmosphere of the opera's idyllic setting or the fact that Copland's librettist compared the false accusations made against Top and Martin to McCarthyism.[343] However, Copland's challenge to anti-Communism and McCarthyism in *The Tender Land* reflects similar goals and values to the antiwar movement's challenge to the anti-Communist roots of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

There are certainly practical reasons that these choruses might have been programmed as well as these political ones. As the concert program involved full orchestra and chorus, it makes sense from a programming point of view that the organizers chose to include large chorus numbers at the open and close of the program. One could also understand why the concert organizers may have wanted to surround the more directly political or aesthetically challenging works, like *Letters Home* and Crumb's "Gacela de la terrible presencia" (1963) with more approachable works. However, the

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[342] Crist, 510. Crist considers this to be similar to "Make Our Garden Grow" in Bernstein's *Candide*.

[343] Erik Johns, the librettist of *The Tender Land* (under pseudonym Horace Everett), explicitly linked these accusations to McCarthyism, stating that "When Grandpa Moss says to the boys, 'You're guilty all the same,' we were thinking about all the false McCarthy accusations and the effect they had on innocent people." Erik Johns, interview, in Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: Since 1943* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 219. Johns has also remarked on the path that is set for Laurie at the end of the work, remarking that "I can imagine she might have gone on to become a 'flower child,' a war protester, or a worker in a civil rights campaign." Johns, quoted in Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland : The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999), 474.

fact that Copland himself conducted the choruses from *The Tender Land*, and that

Copland was most likely responsible for choosing which of his works was presented,

lends more credence to the hypothesis that a political message was intended by selecting

these choruses. The prominent placement of the choruses from *The Tender Land* at the

close of the program, and of "The Promise of Living" in particular, left the audience with

an aspirational message of working together to build a better future.

Ultimately, the works by Ives and Copland, both programming choices that

seem strange at first, not only help to place the concert within a U.S. musical tradition:

they also mark the concert's protest message as patriotic. Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald

Sullivan have denounced the misconception of the antiwar movement as anti-American,

asserting instead that "it was a movement arising from profound patriotism [whose]

members cared deeply about their country."[344] Zaroulis and Sullivan's passionate defense

of the movement does not necessarily encompass the views of all antiwar protesters.

However, the case of "Composers and Musicians for Peace" provides one example of

anti-Vietnam protest strongly rooted in patriotism. In a press conference statement

written in the weeks prior to "Composers and Musicians for Peace," George Crumb

spoke to his own motivation for participating in the concert and the importance of the

antiwar cause:

> In the dark times in which we are living it is necessary that every
> American search his conscience and become clear about his
> responsibilities as a human being. It is not enough that we remain passive
> and uncommitted - we must somehow communicate our feelings to
> others in the hope that justice will ultimately prevail. As an American

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[344] Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?: American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975*, xiii.

> and as an artist I feel honored and privileged to be identified with this musical tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King.[345]

Crumb indicates that he considers it a moral duty to express his objection to the war, a duty that he links to his identity as an American, as a human being, and as an artist. This perspective was not an isolated one; a similar sentiment was expressed by Reitz at one of the "Week of the Angry Arts" events, asserting that "It is not a disloyal, but an extremely patriotic thing to do… It is the right and duty of any American citizen to get up and protest when he doesn't like something that is going on. Artists have no more right to do this than plumbers—but no less right, either."[346]

While the works discussed in this section present diverse conceptions of U.S. national identity, they each depicted America in their own way when performed in the context of this concert. *Letters Home* presents symbols of U.S. identity and commercialism in juxtaposition with the violence in Vietnam. *The Face of War* struggles with its national identity, depicting an America that is no longer what it used to be. "They Are There!" roots the concert in American musical history, through a link to a highly esteemed U.S. composer, and American military history, through its depiction of a time when the United States' international role was less morally suspect, and Copland's choruses paint a picture of idyllic rural America through the critical lens of progressive politics. Taken together, these works present a protest that is grounded in U.S. national

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[345] George Crumb, statement for press conference in connection with *Composers for Peace Concert* (May 24, 1968), LoC-GC, Box 12, Folder 6. This document contains a note that it was "transmitted by phone to Mr. Elie Siegmeister, May 15, 1968." This statement is notably quite vague and could easily be interpreted as supportive of the Civil Rights movement as well as an antiwar statement.

[346] Dan Sullivan, "'Village' Begins Antiwar Festival: Actors, Artists and Films Part of Angry Arts Week," *New York Times*, January 30, 1967. This was quoted from an announcement at the beginning of the "Broadway Dissents" concert.

identity and the belief that in some cases, the most patriotic action is to speak out about your country's actions.

5.4   Racial tensions, civil rights, and Vietnam

"Composers and Musicians for Peace" also engaged politically with ongoing racial tensions and the Civil Rights movement, particularly through its connection to Martin Luther King Jr. The concert was dedicated to the memory of King, who had publicly opposed U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and who was assassinated the month before the concert on April 4, 1968. Correspondence leading up to the event indicates that Siegmeister and Gould asked Coretta Scott King, the late activist's widow, to attend and speak at the event. She did not ultimately attend the concert, but civil rights activist James Farmer did, reading a statement on her behalf. The concert's dedication to King was emphasized in press coverage of the event. Advertisements before the concert, such as the one shown in figure 5.2, prominently

Figure 5.2: Advertisement for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," *New York Times*, **May 12, 1968.**

describe it as "A tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr.," and note that proceeds will benefit

King's Poor People's Campaign as well as the Fellowship of Reconciliation.[347] A brief

review of the concert published in the *New York Times* on May 25, 1968, the day after the

concert, also highlighted the concert's connection to King. The article, titled "Dr. King is

Honored in Carnegie Concert," speaks about the concert's dedication to King and the

works that were performed, but avoids any mention of war other than the titles of

works.[348]

Some of the works performed at "Composers and Musicians for Peace" contain

explicit references to race and the ongoing struggle for racial equality, including Mayer's

Letters Home, Siegmeister's *The Face of War*, and Amram's "Let Us Remember." In

Letters Home, Mayer includes an excerpt from a poem by Alexander Chin, a Private First

Class in the U.S. Marine Corps who died in combat on February 22, 1968. Chin's poem

speaks to his experience as a Black soldier who is ordered to fight overseas for his

country. Mayer sets only the first four lines of this poem, which focus on the soldier's

strange predicament of fighting in a war that does not make sense to him. In the

remainder of the poem, as best I have been able to determine, Chin speaks directly about

the struggle for racial equality and civil rights for Black people in the United States,

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[347] The advertisement in figure 1 was published in the *New York Times* on May 12 and twice on May 19, 1968. Advertisements listing James Farmer as a special guest were published in the days leading up to the concert, on May 22 and 24, 1968.

[348] "Dr. King is Honored in Carnegie Concert," *New York Times*, May 25, 1968. This is not true of all press coverage for the event. An earlier article about the concert focuses exclusively on the peace angle and the involvement of recent Pulitzer winner George Crumb, avoiding any mention of King. See Raymond Ericson, "A 'King' for Atlanta," *New York Times*, May 19, 1968.

asserting that he would rather be home in the United States fighting the battle for civil rights and equality. [349] The excerpt that Mayer sets in *Letters Home* reads as follows:

> I am a soldier and black is my skin,
> I must kill a man who could be my friend.
> I am fighting for something I can't understand,
> Dear God, why am I in this unknown land?

The second line, "I must kill a man who could be my friend," alludes to the sentiment expressed by many Black people protesting the war, that the Vietnamese had done nothing to harm or oppress them.[350] Mayer's setting, shown in example 5.7, emphasizes the soldier's racial identity, repeating the word "black" in measure 58 and setting it to expressive ascending melismas.[351] Later in the passage, Mayer uses the highest reaches of the bass range to express the soldier's cry of "Dear God" as an anguished outcry, marking that it is preferable for the soloist to sing the high pitches as written rather than dropping down an octave, "even if his voice is strained."[352]

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[349] Mayer indicates that the poem was "written shortly before [Chin's] death in Vietnam" on page 9 of the score, but I have not been able to determine how Mayer knew of this poem. Since he makes special mention of the source of this text, it is unlikely to have come from the same source as the other letters (the other letters were sourced from Munson, *Letters from Viet Nam*.), but I have not been able to access this source to rule that possibility out entirely. The only full version of the poem that I have been able to find is in a post from a family member on Pfc. Chin's page on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund's "Wall of Faces" webpage: https://www.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/8956/ALEXANDER-S-CHIN/page/5/ On January 20, 2000, Emmanuel Muhammad Chin posted the poem.

[350] See Graham III, *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience*.

[351] The "heavier timbre" noted for this soloist could be an example of acousmatic blackness. See Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound : Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).

[352] This is not the only place in *Letters Home* where Mayer makes such a marking. In multiple places he uses high, strained-sounding pitches in particularly emotional moments (like the earlier example with the little girl).

*From a poem by Pfc. Alexander Chin, U.S.Marine Corps, written shortly before his death in Vietnam.

*If singer has high Gb and F in his range, it is preferable that he sing them even if his voice is strained.

Letters Home
Words and Music by William R. Mayer
Copyright (c) 1968 UNIVERSAL MUSIC CORP.
Copyright Renewed
All Rights Reserved   Used by Permission
Reprinted by permission of Hal Leonard LLC

Example 5.7: William Mayer, *Letters Home*, mm. 56-64

Mayer's choice to include this poem excerpt in *Letters Home* is notable in two ways. First, it explicitly recognizes the presence of Black soldiers in Vietnam, a demographic that made up a significant portion of the U.S. forces and casualties. Second, this excerpt speaks from the perspective of one of these soldiers, acknowledging some of the moral struggles they faced.

Siegmeister's *The Face of War* and Amram's "Let Us Remember" both set text by Black poet and social activist Langston Hughes. Both works touch on the issue of racial inequality, though neither does so as directly as Mayer does in *Letters Home*. Siegmeister's liner notes for *The Face of War* assert that this poetry by Hughes speaks out against the violence suffered by racial minorities, describing it as "among the most powerful indictments of man's brutality to man – especially to the black and brown man – I have ever seen."[353] However, while Hughes' poetry emphasizes the horror and brutality of the war, it does not explicitly point to a particular racial group as victims or perpetrators of this violence. The only explicit mention of race is in the final song, "War," which references different skin colours as a way to illustrate equality of blame—that all parties are responsible for allowing this violence to happen: "What colour is the face of war? Brown, black, white – your face and my face." "Let Us Remember" also engages with race in a less explicit manner. Using a repetitive poetic structure, Hughes urges the audience to remember various places and names associated with oppression throughout history. The pattern is established by the first two lines, which read

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[353] Siegmeister, *Music of Elie Siegmeister*, Composers Recordings Inc. CD 814, 1999, compact disc. Liner notes by the composer written in 1979.

> Remembering Egypt,
>
> Let not the oppressed become the oppressors.[354]

The final place names listed are Montgomery, Selma, and Savannah, cities associated with the Selma-to-Montgomery Voting Rights Marches held in March 1965.[355] The inclusion of these city names highlights the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement as explicitly as its references to Auschwitz, Dachau, and Buchenwald recall the atrocities of the Holocaust.

The concert's engagement with civil rights-era racial politics was further compounded by its prominent inclusion of Black musicians both onstage and on the program. Black musicians onstage included: soprano Adele Addison (1925-), who performed George Crumb's "Gacela de la terrible presencia" from *Night Music I* and the "Aria of the Fishwife" from Roger Sessions' *The Trial of Lucullus*; bass-baritone William Warfield (1920-2002), who performed Siegmeister's *The Face of War*; and Henry Lewis (1932-1996), who conducted *The Face of War* and "Aria of the Fishwife" as well as the Adagio from Ezra Laderman's Symphony No. 1. Addison and Warfield were two of only three vocal soloists featured in the concert. The soloists and conductors each had a biography included in the concert program, and Henry Lewis's biography explicitly references his race, asserting that he was the first Black music director of a U.S.

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[354] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians."

[355] These three marches were held in 1965 as a demonstration against discriminatory voting requirements. Media coverage of the marches and violence against the demonstrators helped to hasten the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

orchestra.[356] The concert also included works written by Black artists. Ulysses Kay's "A Short Overture" was included on the program, as were the two works with text by Langston Hughes discussed above, though neither of these men performed at the event.[357] In the case of "Let Us Remember," Langston Hughes' race is explicitly mentioned in the program notes.[358]

Despite the geographical context of the Vietnam War, "Composers and Musicians for Peace" engages with racial identity almost exclusively within the context of a Black-White racial binary.[359] While Mayer's *Letters Home* does include Vietnamese perspectives, it does not engage with the racial identity of the Vietnamese soldiers in the way that it does that of Black U.S. soldiers. Further, while the performing forces of the concert prominently featured many Black musicians, the same cannot be said for

[356] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians." Siegmeister and Copland, who each conducted one of the works on the program, did not have their biographies included with the other soloists and conductors.

[357] Langston Hughes died on May 22, 1967, so he was in no way involved in "Composers and Musicians for Peace." Kay was listed on a promotional flyer soliciting patrons as "appearing" at the concert: "The Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship of Reconciliation Presents Composers and Musicians for Peace" in folder Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, SCPC-FRR, Section 2, Series C, Alfred Hassler Files - General Correspondence 1966-1968. A copy of the concert program is present in the personal papers of Ulysses Kay, suggesting he was either sent it for his records or attended the concert. Ulysses Kay Papers, Box 4, Folder 72, Archival Collections, Columbia University Libraries, New York, NY.

[358] Program for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," May 24, 1968, SCPC-FRR, Accession 2016-085, Box 14, Folder "Compassionate Arts 1967-1968 – Poets for Peace – Publicity/ Composers and Musicians." The program notes state that this work was: "Commissioned by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, it is a truly ecumenical work, with a text by a Negro poet – the late Langston Hughes – based on *Yitzkor*, the old Hebrew prayer of remembrance, and music by a Jewish composer."

[359] Racial discourse in the U.S. is often reduced to a Black-White racial binary, excluding the experiences of other racial groups including Asian Americans. For more on Asian-American experiences and the Black-White racial binary, see Angelo N. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, second edi (Piskataway: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

musicians of Vietnamese or other Asian heritage. The concert program does not indicate

who sang or spoke the roles in *Letters Home*, but it seems likely that the Vietnamese

characters, particularly the Buddhist Monk, were voiced by white or Black singers.[360]

The fact that "Composers and Musicians for Peace" engaged with discussions of

anti-Black racism and civil rights for African Americans reflects the connection that

formed between the antiwar and Civil Rights movements during the Vietnam War era.

Both movements drew upon similar political demographics, and many considered both

movements to be motivated by common goals of human decency and equality.[361] Martin

Luther King, Jr. was partially responsible for the two movements becoming so

intertwined, making this concert's dedication to his memory even more significant. On

April 4, 1967, one year before his assassination, King delivered his well-known "Beyond

Vietnam" speech, his most controversial public denunciation of the war in Vietnam.[362] In

the year that followed, King attended and spoke at numerous antiwar rallies and marches,

solidifying himself as a symbol of the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, and

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[360] While the performers for this work are not indicated in the program, it is likely that the significant solo roles were sung by the concert's soloists.

[361] This is, of course, not true of all members of either movement. Both the antiwar movement and the civil rights movement included numerous subgroups with varied motives and means. The relationship between these movements is discussed in more detail in the introduction to this dissertation. For more on the interrelated and conflicting aspects of the civil rights and antiwar movements, see Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*; Jonathan Rosenberg, "'I've Seen the Promised Land': Triumph and Tragedy in the 1960s," in *How Far the Promised Land?: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 214–28.

[362] He had previously spoken about the dedication of resources to the war when civil rights issues went unchecked in the United States, but the "Beyond Vietnam" speech decried the atrocities being committed in Vietnam and urged the government to end it non-violently and withdraw. See Martin Luther King Jr., "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence," in *Landmark Speeches on U.S. Pacifism*, ed. Susan Schultz Huxman (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2015), 167–89.

the connections between the two. In Coretta Scott King's statement for "Composers and Musicians for Peace," which was read by James Farmer, she emphasized the interrelated nature of these two movements by referencing her husband's connection to Thich Nhat Hanh.[363] King had nominated Thich Nhat Hanh for the Nobel Peace Prize the year previous, and Coretta asserts that "the two men met and drew inspiration from each-other."[364] She evokes both King and Hanh, and the movements they stood for, in her aspiration that "their pleas for peace find answer in the deeds of all of us, who must persevere in the work of peace making until the last gun is silent."[365]

5.5 'Respectable' Protest

An article published in the *New York Times* in the week leading up to the concert opens with a statement from George Crumb, who had only a few weeks earlier been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his orchestral suite *Echoes of Time and the River*: "Please play down the Pulitzer award, I'm here on behalf of the 'Composers and Musicians for Peace' concert next Friday."[366] While the majority of the article does focus on details about the concert, opening with this quotation arguably does the opposite of its

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[363] It is unclear whether she knew that Thich Nhat Hanh's words were being used in Mayer's *Letter's Home*, or if she references this connection simply due to the Buddhist monk's association with the peace movement.

[364] By making his nomination public, King went against the established Nobel guidelines. No Peace prize was awarded.

[365] "Message from Coretta King to Composers and Musicians for Peace," in folder Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, SCPC-FRR, Section 2, Series C, Alfred Hassler Files - General Correspondence 1966-1968. Coretta King's statement also addresses anti-Black racism in the classical music organizations, and points to the connection between her husband and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, of which he was a member and which had supported the movement "from the early days in Montgomery."

[366] Raymond Ericson, "A 'King' for Atlanta," *New York Times*, May 19, 1968.

expressed intention. The article goes to explain to the reader that Crumb had, in fact, just won the Pulitzer award a few days prior, and the segment is titled "Winner for Peace," a reference to the composer's recent reception of the award. Whether Crumb's statement about his Pulitzer was a reaction to questions from the media or if it was brought up pre-emptively is unclear. The result, however, was an association between the two events in the press: "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was an important event for this Pulitzer-winning composer, so important that he would rather talk about the upcoming concert than discuss his recent accolade.[367]

This article is a particularly clear-cut example of how the protest message of "Composers and Musicians for Peace" was set within a context of cultural authority. The main stage at Carnegie Hall provided a backdrop steeped in the history of U.S. art music. The involvement of composers like Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, and Elie Siegmeister, by this point part of an older generation of American composers and well respected in their field, as well as recent Pulitzer-winner Crumb, added to the prestige of the event. The performing forces were equally impressive: most notably, acclaimed singers William Warfield and Herbert Beattie were featured as two of the soloists. In addition to the location of the concert and the prominent musical figures who contributed, as an art music concert "Composers and Musicians for Peace" voiced its protest through the respectable mode of high-brow culture, and therefore made a different kind of

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[367] The fact that this article seems to be about a discussion with just Crumb and Gould makes it plausible that they were intentionally drumming up attention for the concert using Crumb's Pulitzer, but the situation that precipitated the article is not clear – maybe the press reached out to Crumb and he turned it into a thing about the concert instead.

statement than similar protest events featuring popular music. Kinsella describes this and

other art music peace concerts as having a legitimizing influence on the anti-war

movement:

> Because art music in the United States has traditionally been associated
> with – and connected to – the privileged sectors of society, the fact that
> these renowned orchestras, composers, and performers chose to utilize
> it as a mode of protest confers a sort of 'legitimacy' upon the opposition
> to the war (at least to those who care about such things).[368]

Kinsella goes on to assert that endorsement by the elite classes, while not desired by the

protest movement, would not have hurt the movement's viability in the eyes of the

public. Arguably the gathering together of so many prominent and senior U.S. composers

and performers at the prestigious venue of Carnegie Hall lent authority to a protest

movement largely associated with youth culture and popular music. As Melvin Small

describes, by this time unbalanced media attention meant many Americans had come to

conflate antiwar protestors with the hippie, counterculture lifestyle, often to the detriment

of the cause.[369] A high-profile art music event such as "Composers and Musicians for

Peace" contributed to a very different image of Vietnam War protest, one that would

appeal to the middle- and upper-class middle-aged and older demographic alienated by

the antiwar movement's hippie image as projected by the media. While those involved in

"Composers and Musicians for Peace" did not alter their facial hair like the Eastman

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[368] Kinsella, "A World of Hurt: Art Music and the American War in Vietnam," 104.

[369] Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds*, 81.

musicians described in "Only Their Beards Will Go," the concert's image of cultural

authority ensured that its protest was perceived as respectable.[370]

The political message expressed by "Composers and Musicians for Peace"

incorporates a number of interconnected themes. Its message was affected not only by its

invocation of cultural authority, but also by the messages of the individual works on the

program and the people who were involved. These elements project a complex protest

message: one that is grounded in patriotism and "respectable" political action, that is

attuned to the specific concerns voiced by the antiwar movement and reinforces

connections to the Civil Rights movement, and that is nostalgic for a time when war and

its perceived morality were more straightforward. "Composers and Musicians for Peace"

is a prime example of one of the least-explored facets of the diverse antiwar movement.

Its story demonstrates not only the range of the movement but also the ways in which the

cultural connotations of the art music community allowed it to engage in protest activities

in a way that was deemed more socially acceptable. Further, the nuance of its political

message reflects how intertwined the antiwar movement was with the struggle for civil

rights and conceptions of national identity and patriotism.

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[370] In some ways, the image of respectable protest that was cultivated by "Composers and Musicians for Peace" calls to mind the concept of respectability politics wherein members of marginalized groups seek to distance themselves from negative stereotypes, thereby proving themselves to be respectable. The term "respectability politics" was coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Harvard University Press, 1993). However, I do not consider the term respectability politics to apply to "Composers and Musicians for Peace" since the antiwar movement, while it was often viewed in a negative light, was not a historically marginalized group facing systemic discrimination. As Margot Dazey has asserted, describing the activities of groups that "[do] not face entrenched presumptions of social inferiority or systemic disadvantage in the economic hierarchy" "runs the risk of thinning out the notion." Margot Dazey, "Rethinking Respectability Politics," *British Journal of Sociology*, no. January (2021): 4.

On May 28, 1968, Siegmeister wrote to Gould thanking him and the Fellowship for making "Composers and Musicians for Peace" possible. In this letter, he speaks enthusiastically about the concert's success, and considers it to be the return of "the human note in music" that he considered to have been missing for a generation. The composer's reaction makes it clear that the political motive of this concert is what made it such a dazzling success from his perspective. As Siegmeister asserts, "this was not just an evening of fine music-making, wonderful as that may be. It was a statement, an act of commitment to an ideal."[371]

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[371] Elie Siegmeister, letter to Raphael Gould, May 28, 1968. In folder Compassionate Arts of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, SCPC-FRR, Section 2, Series C, Alfred Hassler Files - General Correspondence 1966-1968.

Conclusion: *in tempore belli*

On September 8, 1971, Leonard Bernstein's *Mass: A Theatre Piece for Singers, Players, and Dancers* premiered at the opening of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. This new theatre work was surrounded by controversy in the months leading up to its premiere, as rumours swirled about how this outspoken antiwar composer would express his political views on stage.[372] The F.B.I., suspecting a plot to embarrass the President through secret antiwar messages within the work, encouraged Nixon not to attend the premiere.[373] *Mass*, a theatre piece using the Catholic mass with additional text by Bernstein and Steven Schwartz, portrays outrage, anger, and loss of faith, and ultimately calls for peace. To audiences in 1971, connections to the United States in the Vietnam War era were apparent. Nevertheless, while some scholars and members of the press have similarly interpreted this work as a response to Vietnam, it lacks overt political references and leaves much to interpretation.[374] Barry Seldes points to this issue in asserting that

> [the character of] Bernstein's celebrant offers nothing from his pulpit that echoes… Bernstein's own speeches – nothing about napalm, massive bombings, and other atrocities and war crimes; and nothing

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[372] Bernstein was politically outspoken throughout his career. For more on his involvement in Vietnam protest, including his involvement in Senator Eugene McCarthy's 1968 campaign his participation in the Vietnam Memorial Reading, and his conducting a peace concert to rival Nixon's inaugural gala in 1973, see Paul Boyer and Burton Bernstein, "Leonard Bernstein: Humanitarian and Social Activist," in *Leonard Bernstein: American Original - How a Modern Renaissance Man Transformed Music and the World During His New York Philharmonic Years (1943-1976)* (New York: Collins, 2008), 35–37.

[373] Robert C. Lagueux, "'Screaming Gets You Nowhere': Bernstein's Mass and the Politics of Peace," in *Leonard Bernstein and Washington, DC: Works, Politics, Performances*, ed. Daniel Abraham, Alicia Kopfstein-Penk, and Andrew H. Weaver (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), 167.

[374] Helen Smith, *There's a Place for Us: The Musical Theatre Works of Leonard Bernstein* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 177; Anthony W. Sheppard, "Bitter Rituals for a Lost Nation: Partch's *Revelation in the Courthouse Park* and Bernstein's *Mass*," *The Musical Quarterly* 80, no. 3: 482-483.

about the military-industrial complex that Bernstein believed had committed the United States to war in Vietnam.[375]

The controversial premiere of *Mass* makes clear just how intertwined music and politics were in the fraught years of the Vietnam War era.

Bernstein's *Mass* does not express the direct antiwar message that some expected, but it does respond more generally to the cultural context of the early 1970s.[376] The message that it expresses is primarily one of faith: of a crisis of faith, but also a journey of finding faith through community. The liner notes to the 1971 recording assert that "the composer believes that the crisis of faith is the principle crisis of our century."[377] In the program from the premiere performance, Bernstein reinforced this message of faith, asserting that "the intention of MASS is to communicate as directly and universally as I can a reaffirmation of faith."[378] Audience questionnaires from a 1973 performance of *Mass* show that some audience members in the early 1970s felt it

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[375] Barry Seldes, *Leonard Bernstein: The Political Life of an American Musician* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 126.

[376] There is much at play in the relationship between *Mass* and the political landscape of the early 1970s. Two recent chapters in *Leonard Bernstein and Washington* have explored some of these connections. Lagueux uses archival documents to reveal that Bernstein did "consider turning *Mass* into a bold, overtly political statement that would condemn specific individuals for the state of the country in 1971," but argues that *Mass* in its final form "offers a different kind of radical message" through the use of group singing that expresses a "Communion of community." Lagueux, "'Screaming Gets You Nowhere': Bernstein's Mass and the Politics of Peace," 154, 184. Baber examines Bernstein's stylistic eclecticism in *Mass* in the context of the controversy of "radical chic" and Tom Wolfe's criticisms of him in *New York Magazine*. Katherine Baber, "Bernstein's Politics of Style: Listening for 'Radical Chic' in Mass," in *Leonard Bernstein and Washington, DC: Works, Politics, Performances*, ed. Daniel Abraham, Alicia Kopfstein-Penk, and Andrew Weaver (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2020), 121–52.

[377] Leonard Bernstein, *Leonard Bernstein's Mass*, CBS Masterworks CBS M2 31008, compact disc.

[378] Leonard Bernstein, program notes dated 8 September 1971. Program for premiere performance of *Mass* (September 1971), in LoC-LB, Box 339, Folder 8.

resonated with their experiences. Not all questionnaire answers were positive, but some

expressed intensely personal reactions to the work:

> I felt personally moved by the performance. In an era of growing skepticism and despair, its message of brotherhood and hope is indeed an uplifting one. As a college student, I think I can say fairly accurately that the piece effectively voiced the disenchantment of today's college-attending youth.
>
> I was profoundly moved by *Mass*, as an outstanding statement of my own personal beliefs. My interpretation of God's word has led me into direct conflict with the U.S. Government. Last August, I reported for induction into the Armed Forces and refused to step forward. I am now facing a prison sentence of up to 5 years, and all I can do is simply wait to see if they will prosecute me or not. And this seems to me to be the kind of faith Bernstein is crying for in *Mass*; one that will dare to be human, one that will see the imperfect in the world, and will try to do something about it rather than sitting back and waiting for an act of God.[379]

I have come to Bernstein's *Mass* in the conclusion to this dissertation because of

its complex position as a work that is entwined with Vietnam-era antiwar politics but is

also commentary on so much more. *Mass* is not explicitly an antiwar work, and yet it is

tied up in the cultural moment of the late 1960s and early 1970s when the antiwar

movement, civil rights, counterculture, second-wave feminism, and other societal

movements were inextricably intertwined. In this way, *Mass* is similar to another work

that is unavoidable in any discussion of art music responding to the Vietnam War:

George Crumb's *Black Angels: Thirteen Images from the Dark Land* (1970).

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[379] Excerpts from audience questionnaires from preview performances of Mark Taper theatre, December 1973. LoC-LB, Box 18, Folder 23.

Crumb's score for *Black Angels* is dated "in tempore belli, 1970"—in time of war.[380] A reference to Haydn's *Missa in tempore belli* of 1796, this inscription has invited many to interpret *Black Angels* as a primarily war-related work. Crumb himself has avoided directly describing *Black Angels* as a protest of the Vietnam War, emphasizing instead the work's reflection of society in 1970 more broadly. He has described it as "a kind of parable on our troubled contemporary world,"[381] and has said of the time of its composition that "Things were turned upside down. There were terrifying things in the air... they found their way into Black Angels."[382] While the composer has gone so far as to concede that *Black Angels* is "a protest against war generally," this was in answer to the question of whether it was written in protest of the Vietnam War, and so it seems to reflect his attempts to keep discussions of the work's intended subject as general as possible.[383] In other statements, he has emphasized that the label of *in tempore belli* is an illustration of the human condition more broadly rather than commentary on a specific war, asserting that, for him, "war represents the advent of evil and the 'imperfection' latent in the human spirit."[384]

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[380] George Crumb, *Black Angels (Images 1), Electric String Quartet* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1971).

[381] George Crumb, notes written for the CRI recording of BLACK ANGELS (recorded performance by the New York String Quartet, CRI SD 283), included on inside cover of George Crumb, *Black Angels (Images 1), Electric String Quartet* (New York: C.F. Peters, 1971).

[382] George Crumb, *Kronos Quartet: Black Angels*, Elektra Nonesuch 9 79242-2, 1990, compact disc. Liner notes.

[383] George Crumb, interview with Robert Vernon Shuffett, September 10, 1977, quoted in Robert Vernon Shuffett, "The Music, 1971-1975, of George Crumb: A Stylistic Analysis" (Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, 1979), 471.

[384] George Crumb, letter to Benjamin Arnold, January 21, 1985, quoted in Arnold Jr., "War, Peace, and the Apocalypse in Art Music Since World War II," 528.

Both *Black Angels* and *Mass* therefore exist in a grey zone between explicit commentary on the war and more general expressions of the cultural crises that Americans were facing in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While these two works are not explicit condemnations of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, they are, certainly, reflective of being composed *in tempore belli*. But what does it mean to be composing in time of war? Perhaps this entire dissertation could be considered an exploration of that question. In Crumb's statements about *Black Angels*, he describes the time of war both as the specific experience of the Vietnam War era and as universal concepts of tragedy and the human condition:

> That was, of course, a very dark time. One lives in the world, and these things influence the music one writes. I tried to make the work reflect a more universal sense of tragedy…. Perhaps it's not one war, that war, but war in general, the human condition."[385]

My discussion of Vietnam War-related art music focuses more on the former; over the course of this dissertation, I have explored some of the ways in which other U.S. composers in the late 1960s and early 1970s understood themselves and their music as existing in a time of war, and specifically in this particular war.

Each of the preceding chapters sheds light on an element of the experience of being a composer in the United States during the Vietnam War era. In chapter one, I explored the relationship between antiwar protest and the experimental music scene, demonstrating how James Tenney and Malcolm Goldstein understood politics and music

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[385] George Crumb, quoted in Nicole V. Gagne and Tracy Caras, *Soundpieces: Interviews with American Composers* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1982): 125-126.

as intertwined. Chapter two examined shifting conceptions of U.S. national identity during the Vietnam War through the use of musical style in works by Elie Siegmeister. Works by Goldstein, Salvatore Martirano, and Roger Hannay that focus on the manipulation and erasure of word meaning provided an avenue to explore perceptions of U.S. society during the Vietnam War as nonsensical in the third chapter. In chapter four, similarities and differences between Vietnam and prior U.S. military conflicts were highlighted in works by Henry Leland Clarke, Norman Dello Joio, and Ned Rorem that set historical texts. Finally, chapter five explored how a performance event was able to convey a specific type of protest message through the works and people involved, and through the cultural connotations of art music.

Altogether, these chapters contribute to a more nuanced picture of art music's role in Vietnam War protest, and the broad range of ways in which U.S. composers chose to express their antiwar sentiments. Opposition to the war meant different things for different people, but in all the works explored here this opposition was tied up with these composers' understandings of who they were and their role in society as Americans, as musicians, as activists, and as humans. One of the overarching themes in this dissertation is that music about the Vietnam War is never *only* about the Vietnam War. The war was intimately connected with different social movements, aesthetic undertakings, identities, and cultural moments, and these considerations can all contribute to our understanding of Vietnam War-responding art and the experiences of musicians living in this time of war.

***

I began my research into the music of the Vietnam War in 2017. Over the past

the few years, in discussing this research with colleagues and friends, I have been struck

by the number of people who pointed to similarities between the socio-political landscape

of the United States during the Vietnam War era and today. In the late 1960s and early

1970s, as I have demonstrated over the course of the preceding chapters, many

composers felt it was their duty to contribute to the antiwar movement in some way,

whether that be by marching on the streets of Washington, organizing a protest concert,

or composing antiwar works. This was "a time when everyone has to be in politics," as

Bernstein said in 1968, a time when many felt it was the duty of every American to stand

up, and a time when inaction was equated with complicity.[386] In North America today we

are faced with a similar political urgency. We may not be *in tempore belli*, but we are in

the midst of a similarly polarizing cultural and political climate.

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[386] Handwritten text at the top of Bernstein's typewritten speech for a rally in support of Senator Eugene McCarthy, Madison Square Garden, August 15, 1968. LoC-LB, Box 83, Folder 29.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Transcript of Telephone Interview with Malcolm Goldstein, September 2, 2020

Malcolm Goldstein: Let me just throw out some things to you. One is, well, you do what you want, but I would appreciate instead of calling it the Vietnamese War, which makes like the Vietnamese were the troublemakers, I would suggest the war in Vietnam because it was actually the United States' war in Vietnam. So, I would suggest the war in Vietnam rather than Vietnamese War.

April Morris: Oh, absolutely. I totally understand that. It's an interesting thing because that conflict is known by totally different names depending on where you are, right. My husband actually was in Vietnam a couple years ago and over there they all call it the American War.

MG: Of course! That's what it is. [Laughs] And the other small thing is that you had the right date for Sheep Meadow, which was in my list of pieces in my archives, however it's wrong [laughs].

AM: [laughs] Okay.

MG: Yeah, 'cause I've been looking, and the recordings actually have the right date, which is actually 1966.

AM: Oh, okay.

MG: That's when the event took place in Central Park.

AM: Okay, that's very good to know. Alright. So, to start out then, I'm interested in these three works that you composed in response to the war in Vietnam, "*death: act or fact of dying," Sheep Meadow*, and *State of the Nation*. I noticed that you composed these all in, well you mentioned that *Sheep Meadow* was actually composed in 1966, but they were all around the same time period and the conflict stretched out for a much longer time than

that, so I'm wondering if there was something that prompted you to write them around that particular time and not in the surrounding years.

MG: Well, there were specific occasions, but also I should say that my son was born at the end of '68, and I was playing with the orchestras in New York at that time and the contractor said "who wants to leave New York City and go work in Puerto Rico with the orchestra." Of course I did [laughs], because you can't bring up a child in New York City. So I left in the beginning of '69. That's why it was all within that time. And then the activities that were taking place in New York were in the mid-late sixties, and so these were written for very specific occasions, like the thing in Central Park with "Sheep Meadow," or other performance situations, which I can explain for each piece.

AM: So, let's talk about the pieces individually then. The first one I have down here is *Sheep Meadow*. What motivated you to compose this work?

MG: Well, there was a huge demonstration in Central Park, and Sheep Meadow is a part of Central Park. It's that big open field. And so that's why it's called *Sheep Meadow*. I wanted to do something, I didn't want to go and stand there and be there present. I wanted to create something, and so I created a piece with the idea of a dancer, Carol Marcy, being on a big flatbed truck with a loudspeaker and blah blah blah. The only trouble is that costs lots of money [laughs]—way beyond my budget. And so that never happened. But the piece has been performed, like probably at the Angry Arts, which was—I'm pretty sure there was—within New York University, NYU, at a big hall where various pieces of other people were performed. And at that time just the collage by itself was performed. In general that doesn't interest me, that's why it's had many different other performances.

AM: Could you tell me about your creative process for putting this work together?

MG: Yup, well, first of all I'm an improviser, and all of my music is structured improvisational composition. That'll be interesting, there's this side issue that I think is important. One is what is the relationship of art and politics. That actually you're touching on in your questions when you ask about intention and message and everything.

It really is, I think, uh, looped up in all the questions you're asking me. And also with improvisation, I didn't think about it when I first began doing structured improvisation compositions in the sixties, but in time I realized it's also a political statement, not against the war, but in general. That kind of way of organizing a piece of music and having people participate and making choices within the framework, that's also a political statement. So in many ways—you know politics is not Democrats and Republicans and Liberals and Conservatives. It really comes from the idea of *polis*, which goes back to the Greek word, which has to do with people. And so, it really is a relationship of people, but we think of it in terms of its manifestation as parties, but it's actually a relationship of people. So, this is, has always been, important to me in music. So, going back to—the motivation was because I felt like doing something [laughs]. The creative process was improvisation. Nobody knows this machine, but it's called Wollensak, it's a German small tape recorder. It's a very cheap machine. And so, I don't know why I chose the Korean music, probably because I had access to it and didn't have recordings of Vietnamese music, and of course most people wouldn't know the difference. But I chose two pieces from Asia, one which was a court piece, obviously the upper echelon, rich context and the other was folk music, the people of—the music of ordinary people. And the machine would—I didn't know what I was doing. I mean everything I do is through improvisation, so I was trying to record stuff on this machine, and I though "okay well maybe I'll try this louder," because I was just trying to see how the machine worked and what I could do with it, making different levels of loudness and so on, and all of a sudden, if you go beyond a certain loudness on this very cheap machine, which probably no one else has ever used [laughs], cause the whole piece was composed on one little machine, it starts to distort. So it'll sound like [imitates sound of tape distortion]. The sound just breaks up and becomes a noise texture. So I said, "that's fantastic, okay." And then I began to play with that, and so the whole piece then is a collage of the court music and the folk music, juxtaposing one against the other, but also when the machine breaks down that way sometimes it just breaks down to silence. I said "oh that's fantastic, okay, so we can have the noise and it just transcends noise into silence." And so, the whole thing then was an improvisation of putting these two things together, recording different sections, and essentially it goes through both pieces, the

court music and the folk music, and you end up with the folk music. And in the process, you get distortions and silences, and it was all a process of just playing with the sound of recording. It was also—nowadays people use it all on computer. In those days, in the 50s and 60s, like my first job was working at the Columbia-Princeton electronic music studio, at the end of the 50s, and so I would work with my own music but also teaching other people, other composers. And all it was, was you have just tape recorders with old fashioned tape, which people don't use now, and then you have a process of splicing, cutting the tape and putting it together any way you want. And you have other things you can do. I didn't do that in this piece—you can do echo techniques and all kind of things—so it's a method of, it's called splicing, you cut and you paste it together with a piece of tape that holds it together, and you just keep cutting and slicing and cutting and splicing. And I went through both pieces that way, making choices. There was no intention to anything except to go through and choose what I happened to like and get to the end of both pieces. And that was it. And I knew the material, I knew the pieces, so I knew I was going to get to the end.

AM: So, how did audiences respond to this work at the time?

MG: I have no idea [laughs]. I didn't go and ask people. The thing at the Angry Arts at New York University, I don't remember it. I don't even remember the performance. But I can tell you, um, you've heard it now with the violin. It's actually on two different recordings, both of which I'm sure are sold out. They're on LP recordings. One was produced in Italy, it's Alga Marghen recordings, and that is a whole overview of pieces that were electronic pieces of my 1960s. That's all electronic plus one vocal piece. The other recording is the one that you've come across, the Kye recording which is the performance in New York. Now, the reason why that happened—to go back a step, I'm not interested in most electroacoustic music now. I won't get into that. A lot of it is my prejudice. It's very easy to make it now and I think this needs more thought, whatever. So, up here in Montreal there was this performance by this group called the Ratchet Orchestra and they did several of my new pieces and some old pieces, and then the organizer, the director, said "oh, why don't you do this piece." And I said, "oh, I don't just want to put it on," I said, "well how about I put it on so it's coming through the

speakers, and I improvise live with it?" "Oh, that's a great idea." So, that's the first time I did that, and then in New York City at the concert in New York I said "well, I'd like to do it again." Cause I thought it was appropriate given what's happening in the world. So that's the recording that you've heard, or you've come across. I think there's a video of me doing it too.

AM: Yes, I've seen the video.

MG: Yeah, well the thing is that, in that recording, you don't really get the balance. I mean the collage is sort of background. In live performance it's a better balance, but the microphones they put were just placed in very focused on me and you get the collage sort of—not muffled, but not clear in the background.

AM: So, does it feel different performing this work in a more recent time? How does it feel for you being there with this work that is from the sixties and performing it now?

MG: Well, first of all the audience you perform for with improvisation affects the music that you're thinking about. It affects the presence and the concentration. If the audience doesn't have the capacity to focus, if they're thinking "what is this crazy stuff," I mean I don't hear that, but it comes across by the presence of the audience. So, I cannot give you a specific answer to that, but the tape collage sets up a situation, and each performance I'm a different person and different aspects of it catch my ear, just like when you're improvising with someone else, and I'm following my own mind but I'm also in the context of the sounding of the collage. So, the two improvisations—I've done it twice that way now—I think are on the surface similar, but very different second by second. I've done the same thing now with a piece that Ornette Coleman wrote for me. I was going to do a whole program dedicated to him then he died, and I had a recording with this piece *Trinity* that he wrote for me. So, what I did is I had them play back the recording and I improvised with that. It's fun. It brings out different dimensions for me to work with but also for the audience to experience the original music.

AM: You spoke a little bit already about the peace rally that *Sheep Meadow* was written for. I know it didn't actually end up being performed. Was that because of what you mentioned about it being expensive, or were there other influences?

MG: Honestly it was a question of money! I mean, I think I made about $4000 a year in those days. I don't go on too much more now, but [laughs]. I'll pick up on your word intention which I think is very important. Applied to all these pieces, there's the question of—I mentioned how improvisation already is a political statement, that is, you're valuing the performers. When I was a director of a new music ensemble in Germany for a while with the Hessen Radio Orchestra in Frankfurt, I remember the first performance they had me as the director. And I said "no, no, no, we have performers, I want every single person's name to be listed." That's the way it is all the time for me, so that the people who are improvising within the context of a composition are bringing something within from their own perspectives, their own approaches, their own experiences in life to a framework which I as a composer have set up which is then so-called composition. So, it's not a through-composed composition. None of these things that we are discussing now are really through composed, they are processes, and I say they are processes of discovery. That's what improvisation is about. And so, going back to the word *polis* and politics, none of my pieces have an intention. They set up—they come out of my imagination, my emotional framework working on that piece, but I'm not trying to tell people "oh, go out and demonstrate against the war." By the way, that's what we did in those days. We get to that with *"death: act or fact of dying"* where I went to jail. So, we were active in all the politics of war in Vietnam, the civil liberties activities in the sixties, the women's rights activities, we were all involved with these political focuses at that time. So, the intention in all these things then is not to tell people "oh, you should vote this way, you should demonstrate against the war." No intention. It comes out of my need to create something which then makes an experience for people, and then people then let that digest within them and maybe think about it or feel it, or maybe do nothing or whatever, it's up to them. Music—no music says something. Even when Beethoven says the Pastorale Symphony. It doesn't really say that, that's just, well, a game. If you think of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, I'm sure when you listen to it you don't see the program that he has written with it. I don't. I don't think anybody does, but it's a fantastic

piece of music. And then if you want to read the thing, okay, that's interesting, but even knowing the program I don't see it. If you're interested in more ideas about this you can refer to Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata*. It just makes it very clear there's no such thing as program music that is with intention, or abstract music, which has no intention. It's somewhere that floats in between, and everything is both abstract and program. So, that's where the politics is very important. For me it's more a matter of I'm creating something out of something that I—you know, no composer knows—no artist knows what they're doing. We can talk about it and, you know, make up all kinds of philosophical stuff, but, in fact, the depths of it we don't know. We just do it because we need to do it, and the focus grows out of, sometimes, like these, a context. And so therefore, yeah, you know it was performed, and then people know *Sheep Meadow* has to do with—or they might not know actually [laughs]—with Sheep Meadow in New York in 1966. But, even that doesn't exist anymore, that was what, 40, maybe 50 years ago. So that's important to me just to clarify when you ask about intention. Everything I do is without intention. It just *is*. Yeah. And then the audience makes of it what they want to make of it.

AM: So, this first performance of *Sheep Meadow* that didn't end out happening: I know you planned to have a dancer. Was it ever actually performed with dancing?

MG: No, never with dancing. Not that I wouldn't want it to be, but a lot of it, like, now all of us are doing nothing [laughs]. Well, I shouldn't laugh, because of the COVID virus. The context always makes a difference. I left New York City, and I worked with dancers, but usually they wanted me to play violin with them or something like that, and I didn't suggest to them to dance to *Sheep Meadow*. It would be interesting, though.

AM: *Sheep Meadow* was performed in one of the concerts in the Music By concert series. Can you tell me some about that series? I think you were involved in organizing the whole series if that's correct.

MG: The Angry Arts you mean?

AM: The programs that I've found all say Music By on them in big letters so that seems to be what they're called. It was the November 1968 concert. I don't think it was connected with the Angry Arts.

MG: Oh my goodness, you know more than I know! [laughs] … Music By… Oh! Sure, now I remember. I think was organized by a composer who was at Columbia University, I think. Music By I'm pretty sure was George Flynn. I think. I don't know if I organized anything, I don't remember anything about it, but Music By—I remember that title. Columbia University at that time, as you might know, was a hotbed of revolutionary activities through the SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. This was not involved with that, but they were doing some very radical activities, so Columbia was—I went to Columbia, by the way, that's my college and graduate school—um, it was very active, I did several things at this Music By. I uh, I don't even know, I didn't remember I did this. And it's just, again, it's context. These things were taking place and I was invited to do something and I did it. Yeah. I don't generally compose things up in the air. I generally—I mean there are some pieces—but generally, there's an invitation, there's a context, there's this moment and a place and time—it's just something like that, yeah.

AM: So then probably you won't know the answer to this question. I've noticed that some of the programs for these concerts have quoted text around them, sometimes from news stories, sometimes from relevant poems and that sort of thing, which is really fascinating. I was wondering if you had anything to do with that.

MG: It's probably all my doing. [laughs] Can you read one of them to me that you have in front of you?

AM: I saw two different programs that have this. There's the Music By concert, which has quotations from the Book of Revelations, excerpts from T.S. Eliot's First Coker, and there are quotations from an article from Ramparts magazine. It has descriptions of the effects of napalm, which I could read to you if you want. They are quite graphic.

MG: Yeah, those are not mine. Those are probably the other person.

AM: Okay. I think there is one of the Tone Roads concerts also—

MG: Yeah, the Tone Roads are probably from me.

AM: There was a quotation from a statement by Attorney General Ramsey Clarke on the prosecution of people evading the draft which had come out just a few days before the concert, and there were also texts that I can't find a source for so it might even be original, which is "And who shall say what it is to disturb the peace while we are at war—"

MG: Yeah, that's mine.

AM: That's you?

MG: Yeah, John Cage included that in one of his books, yeah [laughs].

AM: Okay! It seemed really interesting to me that this text is included in the program.

MG: Tone Roads concerts was myself, and Jim Tenney, and Philip Corner. We all did those. But I always did like to do stuff like that [laughs]. The other stuff, the more, uh, "out front" as you say with the napalm, that wouldn't be my choice. That's saying something more direct.

AM: Okay, those are the questions that I had that were specific to *Sheep Meadow*, so we can move on to *State of the Nation*. Tell me a bit about what your motivations were there, your creative process, and that sort of thing.

MG: Okay, uh, Jon Hendricks with two other people… *sigh*… I can't remember the name of one. Ralph Ortiz I think was the other one. They did two events. This was down in the basement of Judson Church. And that's where also the Judson Dance Theatre took place and the Hall of Issues where once a week we discussed politics. It was a very wonderful, active place. A community of artists working together. Judson Dance Theatre was my basic education. [It] opened up to me new ways of thinking and improvisation and everything else. Jon wasn't involved with that, but he—well he was from the art world, the visual art world. He's a curator. And he invited me and people like Carolee Schneemann to do things on… I think the first one was Evening of Manipulations— Evening of Destruction? Is that when the *State of the Nation* was done?

AM: I've seen it written down as Evenings of Destruction and also as Evenings of Manipulation, so I'm not sure.

MG: Okay, there were two different evenings, and the second evening actually I did another version of *"death: act or fact of dying,"* but we can talk about that when we come to it. So, what I did for—each person had an evening—what I did for my evening was again working with tape recordings. I had recordings of Lyndon Johnson, which I then chose—made a tape loop. In other words, in the old days, you could make a recorded, repeated sound or repeated something, by making a loop of the tape and passing that through the head of a playback tape recorder. And I had three different loops going at the same time. You've probably seen what I say is the score (yeah). It's not actually a score. It's actually—after it was over, I like to do visual things too, so I made what I can imagine to be a visual representation of the experience. But it was just my fun. These three loops were going on, and also the room was decorated with newspapers hanging from the ceiling and so it was an environment of visual and sound. And the sound was Lyndon Johnson saying these three statements: "Are the Vietnamese right about us, no I think they're wrong." And I can't remember the exact number it was… "80, uh, 63 thousand American soldiers wounded, 58 thousand return to action." And then there was a third one which I can't remember. Okay, so these are going on, and people will just—it's a very small space and the ceilings are very low, it's very… not claustrophobic, but very concentrated. People would come in and leave as they wish, and if they want to hear each one they can go up close to that machine. If they want to walk through the space, they can actually create a sound environment by the way in which they place themselves in the room. But, then, the fun thing was I had a sign, which I think is included in this so-called score, which said you can cut up the tape any way you want and piece it together again. And in many cases [I] had to help them because they didn't have the technology—not technology—the simple know-how how to cut a tape and splice it together and paste it together. And so after a while you got "are the Vietnamese right about us? No I think they're wrong." "Ah eee eh a ay ooh no wrong." And finally [nonsense syllables mimicking tape distortion]. As you chop it up more and more [laughs] it becomes noise [continues laughing]. And so, when you first walk in it is, um, well I guess you could say more-or-less sensible, depending where you place yourself or

how you walk around, and as various people would cut the tape up it became less and less word-sense to sound-sense. And so you ended up with a room that was more noise than words. And that was the structure of the piece. I made no choices, didn't tell anybody how to cut it up. If they needed help, I helped them, but otherwise just let them do what they wanted.

AM: That's such a vivid depiction, I love the way you made the sounds of the tape! So obviously there's a lot of audience participation, or I guess, perhaps there is no audience and everyone is part of the improvisation experience.

MG: Yeah, the audience is actually making the music. [laughs] They weren't musi—well, maybe some musicians, but they were just… people.

AM: And so was there a conscious choice that this—

MG: Oh, I don't know, I didn't ask them. I didn't want to control anything, I wanted—I knew it was going to go to noise. And the process—there was no recording made of this [laughs]. That's the other thing, back in the sixties a lot of the things we did we just did. Nowadays everything is recorded and analyzed and catalogued. No, most of the stuff we did was just done. Which also is interesting in terms of thinking about art and even archives. I mean archives are kind of foolish, but it's important for people like you! [laughs] Yeah, so there was no intention with that. There was just a sound structure. One might say—now, I didn't think this—one might say "oh, you're trying to make Lyndon Johnson sound foolish." Well, that's your interpretation. Or you might want to make—all kinds of things. I had no intention. I had an experience I wanted to create, and from there on each person—this is true of everything, even when you listen to Beethoven or Bach each person really makes the music. They hear it differently, and five years later they're older and more experienced they hear it differently. They hear it in different spaces, different ensembles. Music is not a static thing. It's a living process, you know?

AM: Do you feel there was a reason why you chose that particular tape?

MG: Oh yeah! Well, that was very simple. That was, there was your war in Vietnam. That was Lyndon Johnson saying things that, um, [sigh] well, any way from absurd to

terrible. Atrocious. Can you imagine saying that all these soldiers—well, I can't remember the number, I'll say 60—it was quite high—63 thousand [were wounded] and 58 thousand go back to fight again? It was actually the Vietnamese War which destroyed the United States. The United States in the World War II reached their peak. We were always an imperialist country, I mean they've put their stamp of power over the whole world, for a long time. South America with the Monroe doctrine in the beginning of the nineteenth century said basically to the Europeans "get out of here, this continent is ours. South, Central, and North America is ours." Very nice [laughs]. So yeah, World War II, we were not—North America was not touched by it, and yet it did devastation to Europe, and the United States came out on top of the world. And the Vietnamese, well, they showed the United States that they could win a war. And the poor American soldiers—I mean, this is all interpretation. I know nothing. I talk a lot. A huge number of people got turned onto drugs in the sixties, and specifically horrible situations that the soldiers in the United States encountered. They weren't used to fighting with people working with such guerrilla tactics. It really had a terrible impact upon soldiers who went to fight in Vietnam. And for me, since that war the United States has been disintegrating. That's my interpretation.

AM: I noticed that in your papers there was a *State of the Nation Revisited* concert that's from later on in the eighties, which was not the same work but it seems it was responding to similar impulses.

MG: Did it have live performers or something? I don't remember this.

AM: It was in 1987 at the Experimental Intermedia Foundation. Three new intermedia performance pieces. In the program notes it describes it as recalling the earlier installation performance.

MG: No I don't remember it, sorry. I did the edition of the Ives second string quartet and I quote Ives because it's related. He did so many things at the same time—his fourth symphony, second string quartet, some of the Concord piano sonata, the Browning overture. I don't know how the man did it. I can't work like that. And he says there are materials that come in and out of all those pieces. They're woven together, each in

different—not all in the same way, very very different ways. He says some pieces, they can take on a different life—I'm making this up now because I can't remember the exact quote—take on a different life as they get woven into different contexts. So yeah, I didn't think about that when I did whatever I just did there, the *State of the Nation*, but just like with the violin improvisation with *Sheep Meadow* and as we'll talk about *"death: act or fact of dying"*, in different contexts it makes sense to adjust the performance as appropriate.

AM: Alright, well let's move on to *"death: act or fact of dying"* then.

MG: Okay, well, now we get into real politics [laughs]. As I said, they used to do demonstrations. And I don't plan to do these pieces, they just—things happen to me, and the piece appears to me. I'm not like Stravinsky who sits down to compose, I just—things come out of me, you know? Someone called me and said "hey, you wanna do this demonstration in this cathedral." And the main cathedral, Cardinal Spellman who was the Cardinal of, maybe not the United States, but one of the upper positions in the Catholic church [was] totally in favour of the Vietnamese War. And said "we're just gonna go in there on Sunday morning Mass and have a picture of a napalmed child. All gonna be dressed up suits and ties. And we're gonna get up quietly, walk out, and just hold up the picture." I said that sounds fine, sure. Well, the F.B.I. knew every single one of us and they were sitting all around us [laughs]. 'Cause this one person—this happens all the time, by the way. Everything that's happening now with these riots—people who are planted to intentionally stir up things beyond the quiet intentions of people who just want to demonstrate. Like breaking a window, or smashing a car or something, and then the police come in and start cracking heads. So, that's what—they didn't crack our heads—but, yeah, they were surrounding—the minute I stood up, they were sitting right on either side of me and behind me, and very gently—they were very gentle people—took me by the elbow, guided me out so I never had a picture to—a chance to hold up the picture, and took us to jail. And that was the beginning of nine months of being called back continually to be tried for disrupting the public, disorderly conduct, I can't even remember the things they threw at us. Actually when I applied for my residency—I'm a dual citizen now of Canada—I had to give—you have to give all your police records of

every state in the United States you lived in, so I did everything and then the FBI records which should have been thrown out from 1967—this was now 1991 or 2 or so—they didn't, they had all my records there. So I wrote a letter to the immigration office explaining what it was, and typical of Canada they said eh, don't worry about it [laughs]. So anyway, that was the beginning of nine months. And you can sit there, I remember pretty much all day, just sit there and wait, and the District Attorney would say "oh, we're not ready now, come back in two weeks." So basically, you couldn't go anywhere for about nine months or so. And you're just sitting doing, well, nothing. Nothing. But I would go back home, and all of a sudden this piece came to me. I started off with the word death. You've seen the score. There's no intention to the specific words except for death. Specific words I chose. So each definition then, engenders other words to be defined. Each person—the original performance was up at a state college in Vermont. I've done it in Germany actually in German. I've done it in different situations in this form. The readers, there might be about five, six, seven people, are following their own line. Nobody's telling them which word—out of each definition usually there's more than one path to be explored to the next definition. And it again depends upon the physical context. I don't know if this has happened to you at a restaurant. If you are seated and people are at different distances and different directions, it's possible to pick up different parts of conversations simultaneously. There's a wonderful piece or pieces of Glenn Gould that does something like that. So there's textures going on, and one thing I did do as a composer is that you'll notice some pages have more things on it and some pages have less. So you'll get different levels of intensity. It isn't high intensity all the time. That's part of the compositional plan. And sometimes there are long lines. Each line is—I forget how long, but each line is proportional to a certain duration of silence. So it's also a compositional device, the length of the line and the silence of each performer will set up different densities of how many people are reading at the same time. So the piece will go in and out of very complex things to very simple things. And if you, like in a restaurant, put the readers all around the space, it becomes more clear. I've done many pieces like this: more clear as the audience can move their attention from one to the other. The other way is to have them all up on a stage in front of the audience, more just a dense mesh of sound. So that's important for the composition. The important thing that came

out of this piece as I was working on it is how violent is the dictionary. It's amazing! I actually had forgotten, but, in the beginning, even the definition of death is an absurd definition. It doesn't really tell you about death. How can you define death? We don't know what death is [laughs]. So "act or fact of dying" –oh–what does that tell you? And "the act of dying: mortal, perishable." And then you go from there and you define act, perishable, mortal, and the piece goes through them. The first pages are very, very dense. But as you go through, it's amazing how much violence there is. If you go to, let's see, on page six has the word "attack". And then, the definition is just, well it's wild, it gets so excited. It goes through this whole paragraph of synonyms. There is amazing violence in the dictionary to focus on things that are within our culture. The dictionary is a reflection of our culture. It's terrifying! [laughs] So, uh, one thing I did do, is when I reached a certain point, for no reason—I mean it was all improvisation. I would just do this and draw the lines and do that. But I would, as I said, use different lengths of lines and different spacing on the page and things. But you'll notice at the very ending there are two definitions. And this shows how crazy the dictionary is. One is defining existence. I would never define existence this way. It says—you have it in front of you, but I'll just read it. "The fact or state of existing; specifically sentient being, continuance in life." That's nice. "Continued or repeated manifestation; actual occurrence, as, the existence of a state of war." Now, why does it end up state of war? I mean, this is the dictionary! I would get more into life, and maybe children coming into the world and the beauty of a flower [laughs]. And then the other possibility ends up more positively. It's, uh, the word "generation." And it's very simple: "act or process of producing offspring; procreation." And each person, either by chance or by intention, ends up with one of those two and then they stop reading. But what I'm getting at is the terrible truth of the dictionary reflecting our society. And I wonder—I've done different pieces, [like one] regarding the Tower of Babel in Germany. It's a similar piece but with musical instruments as well as speaking. And in the German dictionary, well I'll give you a simple example: *Entshuldigung*. That means, uh, when we say in English as "I'm sorry," or "pardon me," or something. But, *Entshuldigung* is saying "I have guilt, take it from me." That's pretty wild. So, language really reflects a society. And the dictionary is filled with it, so it's a wonderful reflection of our culture. So the piece in German is very different, and the

piece in French. I've done it in three different languages. Sometimes in two languages—well, I could do it in many languages simultaneously [laughs]. I didn't plan the piece to be this way. I started off with death because there I was sitting many, many—I remember Fridays—hours and I go home and I start—something bubbles up in me and—death. That was what it was all about. Finally, after it was all over, they threw the whole thing out. We just had to pay forty-five dollars or something for disturbing the peace, which we didn't do [laughs]! But yeah, the piece grew out of that one word. And it wasn't planned how, the direction or anything, I just was planning it as a composition with silences and different things, but not with the intention of saying or making people think anything, or make them to do something, or be afraid of death, or not want to die, or—I don't know what people will make of these things, I never do. I've done that in many versions. As I said different languages, but also at the second Evening of Manipulation that Jon Hendrix organized, I did a performance—now why I do these things I don't know, I just have an impulse to do it. I had a cheap dictionary, one of those pocket dictionaries, in front of me. And I sat on the floor and people sat on the floor and there was this one candle lighting up the room—again, it was a very small space. And when I reached in, I kept going, and finding new words, and every time I would find a new word I would rip that page out of the dictionary and burn it. And I did this for a while. I don't remember how long. It might have been the whole thing lasted an hour or two hours, I don't know. And it was just the process of continuing the piece, and once you had that word, it was just made into ash. So what was my intention? I don't know [laughs]. Now when you listen to *Sheep Meadow* with the violin, I mean, if you want to, you don't have to, you can tell me about your experience. That's what the piece is. It's not what I do. It's just come out of my need and I can't tell you what my needs were. It just came out of a context of living. To me, music is an abstraction. It comes from your life. When I improvise, I'm playing my life up to that moment. Obviously it's not that simple, it's a little more complex. And so, it's the people who are hearing it that you get the meaning.

AM: Can you speak about indeterminacy and the role of that in *"death: act or fact of dying"*?

MG: I would not use the word indeterminacy because that is a specific intention. So John Cage, he says "no intentions," that was his intentional way of getting removed. He removes—the composer removes themselves from the music and the chance operations and Cage's indeterminate activity with no intentions. The funny thing is [laughs] that was his intention, to remove himself. [laughs] I love John, so I'm not making fun of him. So indeterminacy had nothing to do—there's no intention like that with my music. What interests me is setting up contexts in which there is a lively interchange of multiplicities, of many different activities. Could be tonal, it could be noises and tonal, it could be anything. I mean, you'd have to know a lot of my music, but—oh, the pieces I did called *The Seasons Vermont* did, with many performers and recordings, a collage of each season. So, the framework is there, but the interaction of the performers is left unto them, and what I find is that the music is always enriched by the specific musicians who were playing it. So it was not indeterminate, it was—let's put it this way, my analogies are very simple. If you go out into the park, or into the street, doesn't matter, and you hear multiple things taking place, they're not indeterminate, they are happening within the context of a certain period of time. If you're on a street corner, you're probably going to hear different kind of car sounds, different kinds of people walking by talking, if you were in a park you'd hear different things, maybe hear a bird. So each context is like when I say the framework of my pieces, and then the specifics would be the specific noise that you hear. Indeterminate is really [when] you're setting up a system of making sure that there is no control of these things. And I don't control, but I do set up the framework. It could be overall or it could be section by section, and that varies. So, I don't enjoy titles like indeterminate. I don't have a title to define what I do, but I would say it's a framework of activity, and that, to me, improvisation is a process of discovery. And so the audience and the musicians are in that process of a very focused listening experience, music-making experience, and it's not indeterminate and it's not determinate [laughs]. I don't know what to say! Do you have a word? [laughs]

AM: No, I mean not really. You know, it's interesting, in this conversation with you I've been really struck by the way you think of improvisation, which is so different from how I've always thought of it. What you are talking about as improvisation, like when you were talking about splicing the tapes together in *Sheep Meadow*, that isn't something that

I would have thought of as improvisation. But it makes sense—improvisation doesn't have to be you holding a violin.

MG: Right, that's right. I'll tell you—life is an improvisation. [laughs]. Yeah, if you want, my book is online, *Sounding the Full Circle*, and it's not a technical book. It's talking about all these things, and the very first article, which I thought was obvious, but I found out "Malcolm you're naïve!" is improvisation: people making music. That's making a political statement. I didn't think about that, but I do know people—and that's why, I think, a lot of people are having a hard time now. They're realizing how social is our living. You can't simply go and embrace a friend. You have to, you know, have six feet between you and maybe wear a mask, maybe not. And so, that very first article, Pauline Oliveiros asked me to write something about improvisation, and I said "well that's obvious. Improvisation is people making music, with the word *people* coming first." And then I realized [laughs] "no, Malcolm"—and that was realized to me in the last ten years, fifteen years—it's not people making music. It's I am playing my music, and I am great, and I have something to say. [laughs] So, I still stand by my—it's a one-page article—and that's why I put it at the beginning of my book, [because] I thought that was very important. And then years later, I realized it wasn't true for everybody. So everything is improvisation. Oh, there's also [laughs] there is an article, which is written for a live performance in… I can't remember… it was Vienna, maybe it was Cologne, I can't remember. It's called "The Politics of Improvisation." And again, that doesn't mean political parties. And it is a whole bunch of questions. And so I would say: "what would happen if a violinist in an orchestra started to improvise? Or played the music the way he felt?" 'Cause I've played in orchestras, and you don't play the way you feel. You play what the conductor tells you and the bowings and the phrasing the way the first violinist tells you. Everybody tells you what to do and you do it that way. I played in Radio City Music Hall, and it's even crazier than that. You have to have all your upbows and downbows exactly the same, just like when the Rockettes are kicking their legs together. So, it says "what if a musician played the way they felt? What would happen to the other musicians?" I'm making this up now, I can't remember it. "What would happen to the orchestra? What would happen to the audience?" The whole thing is I ask these questions and I stand there. And then if someone wants to discuss it, okay, I'll ask more questions.

The people were German but they all spoke English. I'd just go through questions. I didn't get through the whole thing, but in the book it's "The Politics of Improvisation," and it's all asking questions about people and their relationship to music making. And then, the crazy thing is, it was published in Germany. And everything was—a friend of mine did all the translations, did a beautiful job—well, I can't read German, but I would that I could, and knowing his work. But the editor changed the title to the *Regeln*, which is the *rules* of improvisation. I said "Nooo!" but it was already done and published that way [laughs]. So, that happens. [laughs]. Yeah, I think you'll enjoy that, "the Politics of Improvisation."

AM: At this point I just have these broader questions, some of which we've already talked about. While these works express antiwar messages, I noticed that a lot of the concerts where they were being performed weren't advertised as protest concerts. I wonder if you could speak about how you decided where these works would be performed, and perhaps whether it was normal to have political works interspersed with nonpolitical works?

MG: If someone invites me and I like what they're doing I just say yes. Like, there was something here in Montreal that had to do with the situation in Israel-Palestine. Now, my politics are quite obvious. I'm against the government of Israel, especially the prime minister right now. He can shake hands with Harper. Anyway, and so I did a piece that came out of *Fragments of the Wall*, which had to do with walls. Not just that wall in Israel-Palestine but all kinds of walls. Also the walls between people. Also the great wall of China. I chose texts that came out of different—like a Chinese poet, things like that. And it's called *Fragments of the Wall*. So, he invited me to do something, and I don't remember if this was part of that piece or not, but what I did is I played—it was on YouTube, I don't keep track of these things—it was at a very small bar, I think maybe it could hold forty people or so. Maybe I even did an introduction—ah yes, I do remember, I played an introduction. So I played a folk song from Bosnia-Herzegovina which is in a larger piece of mine called something else, which I can't even remember, but was of course a reaction to the war in what used to be Yugoslavia. And it uses a lot of Bosnian-Herzegovinian folk songs. And this one was a folk song sung by a young woman—these

are all transcribed by Bartok, by the way, in a work that was published by Columbia University, which I bought when I was a student. I still have it on my shelf here. It's a fantastic collection. And he notates as close as he can to all the microtonal, rhythmic switches in folk song, which is pretty impossible but he does the best he can. And I played a folk song that was a young woman, who obviously would be Muslim, singing "mother, why did you marry me to this old man? I want to be married to a young man." And she goes through all that, and finally she wants to go out to the garden and the old man says, "Get back in here, the men are going to steal you" and she says "yeah, I want them to steal me." And what does that have to do with the horrible stuff taking place in Israel-Palestine? Well, to me it's the same dimension of a woman being confined by a certain structure, which is a wall, and, you know, the audience can try to figure out this strange mind of mine, how I see the relationship. But there's a relationship—how women are treated, and how this relates to the way the Palestinians are treated or how the Inuit people here are treated or whatever. And so that's what I did on that evening and—well, the applause said that people liked it. [laughs] So that I remember.

AM: So as is coming up, you've composed quite a few works with political and social messages. Is there anything else you want to say about how you view the relationship between music and politics, or music and activism?

MG: Well, that goes back to why someone writes music in a political context. You know, some people do write pieces which are propaganda. Russia is filled with that. Like a symphony of Shostakovich which in his subtle way is trying to be critical. Stalin was all "that was great! That shows how great Russia is!" Well, [laughs], that shows how a person interprets something just the opposite of what the composer supposedly was doing—I don't know what he was really doing, but this is just biographies. Again, I have no intention, it grows out of a certain context, which could be a war, which could be racism, it could be walls, it could be the way women are treated, it could be anything. For some reason, all of a sudden I have to write something. I write it. And it has—my emotional tone of it—like *Sheep Meadow*, I don't think it's, if I may say so, a pleasant piece to sit back and listen to. It's a piece that I think throws itself at you with it's—well especially when you hear it with the tape collage straight, where it bursts, the sound

bursts suddenly and then goes away into silences and things. When I play the violin with it… I'm trying to recall what I do. I don't go around listening to these. I would say it's more of a meditation on the tape collage. I'm just taking a guess at that. I don't know if that's correct or not. So, there's no specific intention. These pieces create a context in which people experience something. Hopefully it also stirs them, their feelings, and from there on it's their business.

AM: I was wondering if you could tell me anything about—you've spoken a little about the Angry Arts—there was this week of the Angry Arts in 1967, and you participated in the Avant Garde Musicians Dissent portion. So I—

MG: I'll stop you again. I never use the word avant garde. Do you know what it means? It's a military term. I never use the word. My music is very of the present. Right now. I'm not trying to change anything. I'm not leaning forward, and I definitely don't want to have a war where I'm out in front. [laughs]

AM: I know you were involved and your works were performed and you participated in it, but were you involved enough that you know where that name for this portion of it came from?

MG: Probably the organizers whoever they were.

AM: Can you tell me anything about that experience and how it happened?

MG: Oh… I cannot, I'm sorry. I was just invited, that's all I remember. I'm eighty-four, I'm sorry! [laughs] It's funny how the mind works, there are some things I can actually see from a long time ago or recently, and it can be completely silly things. Like I'm on tour with a friend and he's cleaning out his razor blade, and he says "see that's how I wash out my razor blade." I remember that from like, that's about 1969. And it's a completely useless memory [laughs]. More substantial stuff like what you're asking me I remember certain things and some I don't remember.

AM: You've already spoken about some of the antiwar activities you were involved with, like the protest where you were arrested, were there any other antiwar activities or protest activities you were involved in?

MG: A lot of it was just demonstrations. I remember so many demonstrations, like watching—I don't know if you know New York City that well—by Wall Street there are these small areas and there was this group of maybe oh fifteen people are walking around in a circle, they're surrounded by at least ten cops. And I stand there looking at them. And the cop says "Move along!" I said, well, I have a right just to stand here. "Move along!" and he has a baton in his hand, by the way. "Move along or join them"—so I joined them! [laughs] It was totally peaceful, just these people, and there were all these policemen assigned to watch this completely—and it was way downtown, there were not even that many people passing by—if it had the intention of making a statement, the intention was completely a failure. [laughs] 'Cause all we did was take up some time of some policemen rather than catching some people who were real thieves or something. And I've been involved in many different—like a whole thing to celebrate Martin Luther King, some pieces that grew out of there, oh all kinds of things.

AM: Alright, well the last question I have written down is is there anything else you would like to say about your experience as a composer during the Vietnam War? [laughs]

MG: [laughs] Okay, now for the next hour [laughs]. No, I think I've said everything that I can remember, and I just wish you well.

Appendix B: Western Research Ethics Board Approvals

Western Research

Date: 12 May 2020

To: Emily Ansari

Project ID: 114382

Study Title: Musicians Talking Politics: U.S. Composers, 1960s Counterculture, and Vietnam War Protest (1965-1971)

Short Title: Musicians Talking Politics

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: June 5 2020

Date Approval Issued: 12/May/2020

REB Approval Expiry Date: 12/May/2021

Dear Emily Ansari

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Musicians Talking Politics Email Script	Recruitment Materials	27/Apr/2020	2
Musicians Talking Politics Interview Guide	Interview Guide	25/Mar/2020	1
Musicians Talking Politics Letter of Information and Verbal Consent	Verbal Consent/Assent	27/Apr/2020	2
Musicians Talking Politics Letter of Information and Written Consent	Written Consent/Assent	27/Apr/2020	2

Documents Acknowledged:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Musicians Talking Politics Research Plan	Protocol	27/Apr/2020	2

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Kelly Patterson, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Date: 27 April 2021

To: Emily Ansari

Project ID: 114382

Study Title: Musicians Talking Politics: U.S. Composers, 1960s Counterculture, and Vietnam War Protest (1965-1971)

Application Type: Continuing Ethics Review (CER) Form

Review Type: Delegated

Date Approval Issued: 27/Apr/2021

REB Approval Expiry Date: 12/May/2022

Dear Emily Ansari,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board has reviewed this application. This study, including all currently approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Office of Human Research Ethics

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	April Morris
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	University of Ottawa Ottawa, Ontario, Canada 2009-2013 B.Mus.
	The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2013-2015 M.A.
	The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2015-2021 Ph.D.
Honours and Awards:	Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship 2014-2015
	Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2015-2016
	Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowship 2016-2020
	Society for American Music Mark Tucker Award 2020
Related Work Experience	Lecturer The University of Western Ontario 2021
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