

Songs, Anti-Symphonies and Sodomist Music: Dadaist Music in Zurich, Berlin and Paris

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Songs, Anti-Symphonies and Sodomist Music: Dadaist Music in Zurich, Berlin and Paris

Paul Ingram

Introduction

This article explores dadaist interventions in the field of music, an area of its creative practice that is often overlooked in studies of the movement.¹ Published in 1957, Rudolf Klein and Kurt Blaukopf's "Dada and Music" was the first essay specifically dedicated to the topic, setting the tone for much of the scholarship that followed, which where it deals with music at all tends to echo their dismissive judgment:

In music dadaism did not play anything like the part it did in literature or the fine arts. One reason for this may have been, that among the initiators and propagators of the movement, there was not one single musician of note. On the other hand, of course, dadaists must have been aware of the fact that the work of destruction, the revolt against fossils and shopworn goods was nothing new in music. Whatever they put their hands to in music all they could do was continue what others had started before them. (53)

There are a few notable exceptions to this widespread neglect, writers who pay sufficient attention to the role of music in the movement, including the experimental forays into this realm by the painters and poets who made up its core membership, and the fleeting or tangential involvement of established composers not known primarily as dadaists. In this article, I am indebted to the research of others, summarizing and synthesizing their discoveries.

In particular, I rely on Jeanpaul Goergen, Ruth Hemus, Hanne Bergius, Austin Clarkson, Michel Sanouillet, and Steven Moore Whiting. In "The Big Drum: Boom: The Music of Zurich Dada," Goergen provides an overview of dadaist music,

¹ I would like to thank Esther Leslie and Edward Shipsey for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

limited in scope to this phase of the movement. His essay is especially useful for its material on Hans Heusser and Suzanne Perrottet. In *Dada's Women*, Hemus focuses on the contributions of female dadaists. She puts greater emphasis on singing and dance than is customary, in chapters on Emmy Hennings and Sophie Taeuber. In *Dada Triumphs!: Dada Berlin, 1917-1923*, Bergius does not directly address the question of dadaist music. Her monograph is however sufficiently in-depth that it contains information that is pertinent to the musical dimension, as in her discussion of Jefim Golyscheff. In addition, Clarkson deserves acknowledgment for his work shedding light on the participation of Stefan Wolpe, preparing for publication the forgotten "Lecture on Dada," and editing and introducing the collection *On the Music of Stefan Wolpe*. Sanouillet's *Dada in Paris* remains one of the most extensive and authoritative pieces of scholarship on the last phase of the movement, and once again the level of detail means that a serviceable account of its musical output can be extracted from his text. Whiting's *Satie the Bohemian* is my main source on Erik Satie. There are a number of other authors whose research is cited multiple times in the course of this article, among them Nicholas Slonimsky, Timothy O. Benson, and Michael S. Boerner.

The overview of dadaist music provided here does not claim to be exhaustive, being restricted to Zurich, Berlin, and Paris. I do touch on related activity outside these locations, but such digressions are generally kept brief, or else relegated to the footnotes. The most glaring omission is sound poetry, which might have been included on the grounds that it blurs the boundary between the literary and the musical. Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonata* is a particularly vivid illustration of this tendency, whether in its published version, the format of which recalls a score, or in his performance of it, released as a vinyl recording. The element of musicality is undeniable, but in both cases the literary bias of the sound poem is ultimately retained.² I choose to focus instead on productions that are clearly identified with

² Schwitters' *Ursonata* breaks down the distinction between the literary and the musical in a number of ways: the piece is identified as a sonata with its title; it is organized into four movements, bookended by a prelude and a finale; there are transitions, developments, variations, and recapitulations built into its structure, culminating in an improvised cadenza recombining elements of the composition; and the language of a score is adopted with instructions to the performer like "largo," "scherzo" and "presto" (52-80). In his essay "My Sonata in Primal Sounds," Schwitters gives an explanation of the symbols used in the text, and his equivocation underlines how the piece is situated between the literary and the musical: "When the rhythm is free, paragraphs and punctuation signs are used as in ordinary language; when the rhythm is strict, bar lines, or other rhythmic notational devices are used to divide the writing space into equal segments, but there is no use of punctuation signs" (234). However, *Ursonata* is usually identified as literature, rather than music. In any case, Schwitters only appears in passing in what follows, as he generally operated on the fringes of the movement in the locations covered by this article, being chiefly associated with Hanover Dada, the "Dada Congress" in Weimar, and the "Dutch Dada Tour" of the Netherlands.

the field of music, though the demarcation of separate spheres is sometimes difficult to maintain. The greatest challenge is that many of the musical contributions have now been lost, or indeed were by their very nature ephemeral, and such recordings as are available therefore have to be supplemented by contemporary reviews and the recollections of participants.

On Zurich Dada, Hugo Ball's *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary* is a first-hand account of events by one of the key figures, revised prior to its publication a decade later to make it conform to an overarching narrative of the spiritual development of its author, but still largely reliable on points of fact. In his editorial for the journal *Cabaret Voltaire*, Ball may have been concerned to present the fledgling movement in a positive light, but again there is no reason to suspect too much deliberate distortion on his part. Tristan Tzara's "Zurich Chronicle 1915-1919" is marked by his penchant for self-promotion and spreading misinformation, but it can nevertheless be drawn upon as an impressionistic account, especially where there is external corroboration. Relevant to Zurich and Berlin Dada, Richard Huelsenbeck's "En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism" is driven by a desire to establish the superiority of the second phase of the movement over the first, and to underline his own importance in its history compared to his rival Tzara. Huelsenbeck's *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* is used sparingly here because of his evident willingness to further modify his account, imposing his subsequent interests in psychoanalysis and existentialism. Wolpe's "Lecture on Dada" is a retrospective construction of an experience that the speaker believes himself to have superseded, and needs to be understood in that light. With regard to Paris Dada, André Breton's *Conversations: The Autobiography of Surrealism*, a series of radio interviews conducted in the 1950s, is colored by his ambition to distance himself from this phase of the movement, and to stake out a distinct identity for surrealism. Similarly, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes pursues his own agenda in his "History of Dada." A source on Zurich, Berlin, and Paris Dada, Hans Richter's *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* is reasonably even-handed in its attempt to keep above the fray, though the perspective of the author is still limited in important respects. These diaries, memoirs, and histories sometimes need to be treated with caution, but they are nevertheless an essential resource for the construction of an overview of dadaist music.

There is value in the wider applicability of the insights derived from this exercise, in particular those pertaining to the anti-artistic orientation of the dadaists. I take the articulation of that position to be integral to their project, consistent with one of the key strands of the critical discourse. Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* advances an influential interpretation of the movement as a whole, which informs my reading of dadaist music:

[W]ith the historical avant-garde movements, the social subsystem that is art enters the stage of self-criticism. Dadaism, the most radical movement within the European avant-garde, no longer criticizes schools that preceded it, but criticizes art as an institution, and the course its

development took in bourgeois society. The concept “art as an institution” as used here refers to the productive and distributive apparatus and also to the ideas about art that prevail at a given time and that determine the reception of works. (22)

Tzara styled the avant-garde self-criticism of the bourgeois institution of art as the destruction of art by artistic means, a formulation that presumably encompasses all of the disciplines subject to dadaist interventions. I aim to provide an overview of the musical output of the movement here, but also to begin the task of critically assessing it in these terms. This article concludes with a provisional typology of anti-art derived from the preceding discussion, the relevance of which, I hope, extends beyond the field of music.

Zurich Dada

Zurich Dada was the phase of the movement in which music was most prominent, perhaps unsurprisingly given that it emerged in the context of a cabaret, set up by Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings at the Holländische Meierei in 1916. The announcement in the local press advertising a new center for artistic entertainment indicates that music was key to the original conception of the Cabaret Voltaire: “The idea of the cabaret will be that guest artists will come and give musical performances and readings at the daily meetings” (qtd. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 50). In *Flight Out of Time* and “Cabaret Voltaire,” Ball records details of the early program, which in keeping with the format of a cabaret featured a variety of musical acts, also reflecting the international character of the enterprise. These included an impromptu balalaika orchestra organized by a group of Russians, dancing banjo and mandolin players from the Netherlands, and a revolutionary choir of socialists based in Switzerland (Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 51, 60; Ball, “Cabaret Voltaire” 20; Goergen 155). There were chansons, soldiers’ songs, and folk music from France, Germany, Denmark, Serbia, and Russia (Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 51, 54-55, 57; “Cabaret Voltaire” 20). “Negro Chants” were presented, to the beat of “exotic drums,” and melodies styled as “African,” for an evening of “black music” (Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 58; “Cabaret Voltaire” 20). Hans Oser and Arthur Rubinstein performed the first movement of Camille Saint-Saëns’s Cello Sonata no. 1 in c Minor (Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 56). Claude Debussy, Franz Liszt, and Sergei Rachmaninoff were among the other composers whose work was represented, as well as the modernist Aleksandr Scriabin and the writer of march music Andre Turlet (51-52, 55). In addition to his main role as a poet, Ball regularly played the piano, created tunes to accompany masked dances, and devised a nativity play incorporating a bruitist concert (Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* 9-10; Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 64-65). Tristan Tzara evokes the disjunctive shifts such a program entailed through the paratactic syntax of his “Zurich Chronicle”: “BRUITIST music, latest rage, song Tzara dance protests – the big drum – red light, policemen – songs cubist paintings post cards song Cabaret

Voltaire" (235). The musical output of the movement during this phase was extremely heterogeneous, involving the combination of canonical, popular, and radical elements. The anti-artistic orientation was as yet underdeveloped, but it manifested itself in the way in which these elements were combined.

In a contemporary review of the Cabaret Voltaire, Hennings is acclaimed as its "star" (qtd. in Hemus 27). She had more experience on stage than most members of the group, having worked as a singer, dancer, and actor for ten years in cities including Munich and Berlin (24). Her background in cabaret and skills as a hostess were apparently important in attracting visitors to the venue (26-27, 29). She performed popular ditties, folk ballads, and brothel songs, usually accompanied on the piano by Ball (Hemus 26; Richter 20). The most celebrated of their collaborations is "Dance of Death," Ball's bitter anti-war poem, parodying the drinking song "This is How We Live," sung to the jaunty military tune "The Old Dessauer" (Goergen 155; Hemus 31). The chorus is as follows:

This is how we die, this is how we die.
We die every day,
Because they make it so comfortable to die. (Ball qtd. in Hemus 31)

This jarring of registers, the satirical purpose of which is clear, demonstrates how the function of popular music was not simply to provide relief from the more challenging material presented at the Cabaret Voltaire. The overall mix of aesthetic seriousness with light entertainment was itself intended as iconoclastic, according to Ball: "The ideals of culture and of art as the program for a variety show – that is our kind of *Candide* against the times" (*Flight Out of Time* 67). The juxtaposition of high and low forms sought to diminish the status of the former through the elevation of the latter, in the process exceeding the limits of legitimate taste set by the bourgeois institution of art.

Hennings appeared as a dancer, most notably at the Zunfthaus zur Waag on 14 July 1916, presenting three pieces to music composed by Ball and wearing masks created by Marcel Janco (Rasula 29). Her impact as a performer is difficult to reconstruct with certainty, in part because the significance of singing and dance is usually downplayed in the memoirs of the other dadaists. She also receives little attention as a poet and playwright, but this is not the place to discuss her literary production. In *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, Richter offers a brief assessment of her musical contribution, couched in condescending language, which at least has the advantage of emphasizing her radical credentials, rather than her commercial appeal:

As the only woman in this cabaret manned by poets and painters, Emmy supplied a very necessary note to the proceedings, although (or even because) her performances were not artistic in the traditional sense, either vocally or as interpretations. Their unaccustomed shrillness was an

affront to the audience, and perturbed it quite as much as did the provocations of her male colleagues. (26-27)

In *Dada's Women*, Hemus criticizes the division between poetry and painting on the one hand, and singing and dance on the other, with the former gendered male and valorized, and the latter gendered female and derogated. However, Hennings is said to have adopted an unconventional style of performance, drawing on a repertoire of obscure gestures, in addition to her unsettling shrill voice (28). She thereby played with the expectations of the audience, defamiliarizing familiar forms through avant-garde experimentation, even as the critical force of populism was mobilized in opposition to a narrowly defined musical tradition. The effect of this approach was to collapse the hierarchical distinction between art music and popular music in such a way that both sides were transformed by their interpenetration. The anti-artistic orientation was expressed primarily through the destabilization of the canon, but it extended to a self-reflexive critique of the populist means used to secure that destabilization as well.

Tzara's "Zurich Chronicle" refers to "Negro Music and Dancing with Misses Jeanne Rigaud and Maya Chrusiecz, Masks by Janco" and "Cubist dance, costumes by Janco, each man his own big drum on his head, noise, Negro music" (236-37). The common co-occurrence of music and dance justifies speaking of them together here, but it is worth noting that there was often only a minimal accompaniment to performances, which were sometimes set to sound poetry instead (Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 102). Choreographer Rudolf von Laban, working with important figures in the field like Mary Wigman, pioneered a form of expressionist dance at the Labanschule in Zurich (McCaw 24-25). His establishment had an ongoing association with the dadaists after he made an early visit to the Cabaret Voltaire, according to Ball (*Flight Out of Time* 58; "Cabaret Voltaire" 20). Sophie Taeuber, while not a professional dancer, trained with the school and provided a connection. She was involved in many collaborations, devising pieces as well as performing herself, alongside her activity as a painter, sculptor, and textile artist (Hemus 63-65). Ball describes one of her dances at the successor to the Cabaret Voltaire, the Galerie Dada: "The narrative of the perspectives, of the lighting, of the atmosphere brings the over-sensitive nervous system to real drollness, to an ironic gloss. Her dance patterns are full of romantic desire, grotesque and enraptured" (qtd. in Hemus 65). The cubist and expressionist aspects of these productions, though arguably little more than nominal, are a further illustration of the diversity of influences that fed into Zurich Dada. The dadaists' primitivism was also prevalent among the wider avant-garde at the time, but in their case the practice was repurposed to fulfil a negative function with regard to the Western artistic tradition.

Ball became interested in the potential of dance, entering into a creative exchange with the Labanschule, as he records in *Flight Out of Time*: "I am rehearsing a new dance with five Laban-ladies as Negresses in long black caftans and face masks. The movements are symmetrical, the rhythm is strongly

emphasized, the mimicry is of a studied, deformed ugliness" (104). The frequent recourse to the grotesque and the ugly, which often had racist undertones, sought to undermine the ideals of grace and beauty associated with classical dance. Janco's costumes and masks, in part modelled on tribal iconography, reinforced the effect by restricting the mobility and obscuring the appearance of the dancers. The primitivist component was radical insofar as it attempted to violate Western aesthetic norms, though the construction of alien cultures to this end was based on dubious assumptions. Ball frankly professes the irrelevance of the specificity of these traditions to the dadaists, for whom they serve principally as a means of negating the dominant culture: "From the Negroes . . . we take only the magical-liturgical bits, and only the antithesis makes them interesting. We drape ourselves like medicine men in their insignia and their essences but we want to ignore the path on which they reached these bits of cult and parade" (*Flight Out of Time* 113-14). This emphasis on the critical potential of the material, harnessed to realize the destruction of art by artistic means, distinguished their primitivism from that generally exhibited by other avant-garde tendencies, which appeared instead to value non-Western art for positive attributes such as its imputed energy and immediacy. Ball strikes a similarly primitivist and anti-artistic note when recording the arrival of Richard Huelsenbeck at the Cabaret Voltaire in *Flight Out of Time*: "Huelsenbeck has arrived. He pleads for stronger rhythm (Negro rhythm). He would prefer to drum literature into the ground" (51).

An occasional presence at the Cabaret Voltaire, Hans Heusser has been referred to as the resident composer of Zurich Dada (Klein and Blaukopf 53; Elderfield xxxi; Goergen 157, 163). This reputation is based chiefly on his contributions to the soirées held at the Galerie Dada, most notably the "Hans Heusser Soirée" of 25 May 1917. He presented pieces for voice, piano and harmonium, described as strongly rhythmic but also shrilly dissonant in a contemporary review of the event, quoted by Goergen:

What saves Heusser's art from turning into formless sound combinations is its strong rhythm, which, however, oscillates rather exaltingly at times. We must not be surprised that Heusser avoids traditional harmonics and expresses his musical ideas in shrill dissonances; he only follows the art theories expounded by the Dadaists. (158)

He certainly seems to have shared their preoccupation with the "primitive," which once again is related to the preference for strong rhythm: "In his oriental dances he uses elements of rhythmic sound configurations borrowed from primitive peoples, and he is indeed capable of bringing the exotic, turbulent mood to a climax" (qtd. in Goergen 158). This is corroborated by the titles of his works from the period, most of which have not survived, for example "Oriental Dance," "Turkish Burlesques," and "Exotic Procession" (Goergen 158; Ball, *Flight Out of Time* 106, 113).

The orientalist flavor to these compositions was not the only way in which he attempted to go beyond the accepted boundaries of artistic production. In addition to his “wild dances,” Heusser wrote pseudo-ecclesiastical accompaniments to recitative chants, as well as fusing traditional sources with modern music, according to the same review: “Heusser here uses the style of ancient church music and oratory, while he attempts to combine extremely futuristic with archaic elements in his lyrical piano pieces” (qtd. in Goergen 158). There is also a first-hand report of a performance incorporating improvisation and chance, witnessed by the writer Friedrich Glauser. Goergen identifies the unnamed composer in this passage as Heusser:

A composer [Heusser] had a harmonium placed at a right angle to the piano on which he was playing. And while he was frolicking around on the piano, he put his right forearm on any of the harmonium keys he could reach while stepping energetically on the bellows with his foot. (Glauser qtd. in Goergen 158)

Finally, “Sumatra: Ragtime – One Step,” one of his few surviving works of this period, shows how the preference for strong rhythm extended to jazz and other forms of contemporary dance music from North America (Goergen 158). The juxtaposition of heterogeneous styles, the reliance on chance, and the predilection for jazz all recurred throughout the development of dadaist music. The dominant themes of the musical output of the movement during this phase were however populism and primitivism, imbued with an iconoclastic spirit, and supplemented by other experimental techniques.

The references above to “shrill dissonances” and “futuristic . . . elements” are suggestive of the “new music” pioneered in Vienna by Arnold Schönberg. His work was introduced to the public in Zurich by Suzanne Perrottet, a musician, dancer, and teacher connected to the Labanschule: “Previously, in Germany, I had become acquainted with Arnold Schönberg’s music, which, however, was little known in Switzerland. I was so enthusiastic about this new dissonant music that I talked the Dadaists into performing it” (qtd. in Goergen 162). This tentative association continued beyond the life of the Galerie Dada. Ball’s record of the celebration for the opening of the gallery notes “Mme. Perrottet: new music”; the program for the third soirée has her performing “Compositions by Schönberg, Laban and Perrottet”; and at the ninth soirée she played Schönberg’s *Three Piano Pieces* and *Six Little Piano Pieces* (*Flight Out of Time* 102, 110; Goergen 162). The last of these events was the largest in scale, taking place at the Salle zur Kaufleuten on 9 April 1919.³ Goergen reports that the program also included Erik Satie’s *Childish*

³ After Tzara relocated to Paris at the end of 1919, Walter Serner, who is credited as the producer of the soirée at the Salle zur Kaufleuten in “Zurich Chronicle,” organized a similarly ambitious “Great Dada Ball” at the Plainpalais in Geneva on 5 March 1920 (Tzara,

Chatter (162). This confirms the idiosyncratic account in Tzara's "Zurich Chronicle": "Suzanne Perrottet plays Erik Satie (+ recitations), musical irony non-music of the jemenfoutiste goofy child on the miracle ladder of the DADA MOVEMENT" (240). While Satie's "non-music" is situated squarely within the movement by Tzara, Schönberg's early experiments in free atonality were reportedly received without much interest, and certainly there was no serious or sustained engagement with "new music" within Zurich Dada (Goergen 162-63). In addition to Schönberg and Satie, Cyril Scott's music was also performed, and there were original compositions by Heusser as well as Perrottet (Dayan 161). That such different styles of avant-garde music were accommodated is in keeping with the ethic of inclusivity established from the outset of the movement, which was always inflected by the critical consciousness of an anti-artistic orientation.

Berlin Dada

As the "Dada Drummer," Huelsenbeck accompanied himself on a large tom-tom while reciting his "Fantastic Prayers," a collection of poems first published in Zurich in 1916, with a second edition in Berlin in 1920 (Tzara, "Zurich Chronicle" 236; Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* 71; Huelsenbeck, "Fantastic Prayers"). He relocated from one city to the other, launching the movement in Berlin in 1918. This phase did not have as overt an emphasis on music as its precursor, but neither was its contribution to the field limited to the banging of a drum. Dubbed the "Music-Dada," Gerhard Preiss was photographed going through the motions of a marionette-like dance called the "Dada-Trott," presented as a sequence in three panels of the third issue of the magazine *Der Dada* (12). There is no necessary relation between dance and music here, beyond what is suggested by his pseudonym. His position in the group was apparently marginal, and he is rarely mentioned in the memoirs of the dadaists. Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, who was given the title "Music-Dada II," participated in the First International Dada Fair at the Otto Burchard Gallery in July and August 1920 (Béhar and Dufour 692). He was involved in the November Group, the membership of which overlapped with the dadaists, regularly attending its private musical evenings, along with notable composers including Hans Eisler and Kurt Weill (Clarkson 7). He was most associated with new music over the course of his career as a

"Zurich Chronicle" 240; Sanouillet 117). This project was conceived in Paris in collaboration with the local dadaists (Sanouillet 117). There were a number of musical elements announced in the program and reported in reviews, including an "orchestra of pans, pots, and cymbals with Dada accompaniment (bells, automobile horns, sirens, and gongs)"; a "jazz band"; a "ballet of three feathered sardines"; a "[o]ne-step, danced by two mating locomotives"; and "musical compositions for slide xylophones, stringed drums, pianos both concert and upright but deprived of keys" (qtd in Goergen 162; qtd. in Sanouillet 117-118). The "Great Dada Ball" was to some extent a continuation of Zurich Dada, but it also anticipated the spectacular performances of Paris Dada.

composer and a critic, later writing an important biography and study of Schönberg (Stuckenschmidt). Like Preiss, Stuckenschmidt seems to have been a fringe figure in Berlin Dada. The most prominent feature of the musical output of the movement during this phase was the use of noise, which was also a key component of the repertoire of Zurich Dada. However, Huelsenbeck claims that the function of bruitism was transformed over time, in the context of the developing anti-artistic orientation.

In addition to his literary activity, Huelsenbeck was an enthusiastic champion of bruitism, as he recalls in "En Avant Dada": "I spoke on the significance of bruitism at a number of open Dada gatherings" (25). He presents himself as the leading proponent of the use of noise, but many in the group participated in performances, which were usually improvised and rarely documented in detail. This type of music originated with the Italian futurists: Luigi Russolo's "The Art of Noises" advocates extra-musical sources of sound over conventional instrumentation, setting out a scheme for a bruitist orchestra based on families such as "Rumbles / Roars / Explosions / Crashes / Splashes / Booms" (86). Filippo Tomasso Marinetti assimilated bruitist elements into his poetry, and is cited as the key influence by Huelsenbeck:

"Le bruit," noise with imitative effects, was introduced into art (in this connection we can hardly speak of individual arts, music or literature) by Marinetti, who used a chorus of typewriters, kettledrums, rattles and pot-covers to suggest the "awakening of the capital"; at first it was intended as nothing more than a rather violent reminder of the colorfulness of life. ("En Avant Dada" 25)

These innovations were adopted by Zurich Dada, and subsequently transferred to Berlin Dada, where particular prominence is given to the "BRUITIST poem" in the "First German Dada Manifesto," later reissued as the "Collective Dada Manifesto" (Huelsenbeck, "Collective Dada Manifesto" 244). The same text announces with regard to the field of music: "Dadaism . . . disseminated the BRUITIST music of the futurists (whose purely Italian concerns it has no desire to generalize) in every country in Europe" (245). The use of noise became more than a simple affirmation of life, explicitly counterposing life to art at the expense of the latter. As with primitivism, the dadaists repurposed a practice of the wider avant-garde and gave it a distinctively negative character.

"En Avant Dada" attempts to define bruitism for Berlin Dada against the meaning it is alleged to have had in Zurich Dada. Huelsenbeck, who was involved in both phases of the movement, is here concerned to differentiate them polemically: "The Dadaists of the Cabaret Voltaire took over bruitism without suspecting its philosophy – basically they desired the opposite: calming of the soul, an endless lullaby, art, abstract art" (26). He rejects the imputed interpretation of bruitism as a mode of abstraction, arguing that it is in fact

radically concrete, incorporating the sounds of everyday existence, without imposing an aesthetic structure on them:

While number, and consequently melody, are symbols presupposing a faculty for abstraction, noise is a direct call to action. Music of whatever nature is harmonious, artistic, an activity of reason – but bruitism is life itself, it cannot be judged like a book, but rather it is a part of our personality, which attacks us, pursues us, and tears us to pieces. (26)

He underlines the opposition to abstract art, in favor of material concerns: “Wagner had shown all the hypocrisy inherent in a pathetic faculty for abstraction – the screeching of a brake, on the other hand, could at least give you a toothache” (26). Huelsenbeck implies that bruitism is ultimately opposed to art as such, beyond its critique of musical categories like melody and harmony and beyond its cancelling of a contemplative attitude through the provocation of the audience into action. According to “En Avant Dada,” Zurich Dada remained invested in an aesthetic disposition, while that perspective was superseded by the more thoroughgoing anti-artistic orientation of Berlin Dada.

There were three trained composers who attempted to apply an anti-artistic orientation to the field of music during this phase of the movement: Jefim Golyscheff, Erwin Schulhoff, and Stefan Wolpe. Golyscheff was briefly at the center of Berlin Dada, co-authoring the manifesto “What is Dadaism and What Does It Want In Germany?” (Bergius 55). He exhibited drawings, collages, and assemblages of found materials at the first dadaist exhibition at the Graphisches Kabinett in April 1919 (Benson 148, 153). He split with the group shortly afterwards, leaving to found the rival Aismus (Bergius 98-99). He also invented his own system of atonal notation, and developed a form of dodecaphonic music in which the twelve tones of the chromatic scale are arranged in thematic structures without repetition. These experiments with twelve-tone technique were apparently conducted independently of Schönberg, who presented his breakthrough *Serenade for Septet and Baritone Voice* on 1 March 1924, predating by a year Golyscheff’s *Trio for Violin, Viola and Cello* on 30 March 1925 (Slonimsky 260, 1117, 1125). There are claims that the author of the latter wrote a piece containing protoserial passages as a teenager, a decade before the publication of his collection *Twelve-Tone Music* (Slonimsky 1125; Benson 152; Kostelanetz 253). His interest in this area does not seem to have figured much in his dadaist activity, though it was presumably sustained alongside it. In any case, Golyscheff devised some of the most ambitious musical productions staged by the movement during this phase, integrating bruitistic effects into large-scale works, of which few traces now remain.

Anti-Symphony: Musical Circular Guillotine, which provided the climax to a dadaist evening held at the Graphisches Kabinett on 30 April 1919, featured an ensemble of performers improvising with kitchen utensils and toys, among them Hannah Höch (Roberts 174; Rasula 76). Golyscheff deployed cacophony to

confront the symphonic form with its negation, in three movements called "Provocational Injections," "Chaotic Oral Cavity, or Submarine Aircraft," and "Clapping in Hyper F-Sharp Major." This was followed by *Wheezing Exercise: Chaoplasma for Two Timpani and Ten Rattles, with the Assistance of Ten Women and a Postman*, which premiered at the same venue on 24 May 1919. "Chaoplasma" is a neologism that resurfaces as a simultaneous poem by Raoul Hausmann, published with instructions for its performance utilizing musical terminology in the fourth issue of Kurt Schwitters's *Merz* (38-39). Hausmann probably collaborated on the original, as a version of his text was included in the program notes (Benson 152). The elaborate names given to these pieces, in which the descriptive information is overwhelmed by absurdist elements, satirize the blandly literal titles usually associated with art music. The music itself was by all accounts erratically atonal, unmelodic, and disharmonious, with the excess of linguistic content perhaps functioning as an ironic compensation for its lack of worked through compositional complexity. With *Anti-Symphony* and *Wheezing Exercise*, Golyscheff mounted aggressive interventions, paradoxically dependent for his impact on the received artistic conventions with which he engaged critically.

Schulhoff was active as a dadaist in Dresden and Berlin. His career encompassed a number of overlapping phases, and combined elements from different avant-garde tendencies. He was affiliated with the circle around Schönberg, corresponding regularly with Alban Berg (Hall 40-41). He is remembered as an early exponent of the jazzification of art music who later produced socialist realist works characterized by explicit political commitment, such as his oratorio adapting *The Communist Manifesto* (Katz). His interest in jazz and his allegiance to the radical left were shared with other members of Berlin Dada. He displayed the same appetite for confrontation and penchant for antagonistic rhetoric as well. *Bass Nightingale: Three Recital Pieces for Contrabassoon* is a grotesque solo prefaced with the provocative statement: "While all others sob on the fiddle in dulcet tones, then I – take note – always do the opposite in order to whip up you puny marionettes, religious dandies, hornrimmed bespectacled salon intellectuals, you pathological teaplants and putrified Expressionists" (Schulhoff qtd. in Stees 75). *Cloud Pump* sets to music poems by Hans Arp, a key figure in Zurich and Cologne Dada. These are two of a number of surviving works by Schulhoff, produced after he had relocated to Berlin in 1922. There are also recent recordings of pieces written while he was still based in Dresden in 1919.

The most characteristically dadaist of these are "Symphonia Germanica," "Sonata Erotica for Solo Mother-Trumpet," and "In Futurum." "Symphonia Germanica" consists of a voice wailing and growling "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles . . .," accompanied by miscellaneous noises and a shambolic stop-start rendition of the "Deutschlandlied." The radical character of the piece inheres in its form as much as in its deflation of nationalism, though the latter is strongly thematized and would have had an obvious resonance in the context of post-World War I Germany. There is a further negation of the idea of the symphony as

a sophisticated construction in several movements written for a full orchestra, achieved through the use of dissonant and bruitistic effects, the brevity of the composition, and the paucity of its instrumentation. Similarly, "Sonata Erotica," lasting only a few minutes, is manifestly contrary to the sonata in the general sense of an extended work, and also inverts the literal meaning of a piece played rather than sung, with an unaccompanied soprano mimicking the sounds of sexual intercourse, and thereby functioning as the "Mother-Trumpet." Finally, "In Futurum" is a piece for piano comprised wholly of rests, the middle part of a suite dominated by jazz-influenced music, "Five Picturesques." In this context it effectively functions as an interruption, while the excessively notated score plays on the discrepancy between its textual complexity and the resulting silence. Schulhoff targeted specific aspects of the musical tradition, conducting his critique on the terrain set by the bourgeois institution of art.

Wolpe's oeuvre contains atonal and dodecaphonic compositions, as well as simple choral music and popular political songs. Clarkson describes how he drew on a wide range of influences, among them his participation as a young composer in the Bauhaus, the November Group, and Berlin Dada (4-5, 7-8). He eventually became director of music at Black Mountain College, after a period researching and teaching at the Palestine Conservatory (12-14, 21). He combined elements from Western and Eastern musical heritages during his mature period, synthesizing highly differentiated material in complex constructions. Delivered at Long Island University in 1962, Wolpe's "Lecture on Dada" reflects on the legacy of his involvement with Berlin Dada in 1920:

Once one has incorporated into one's art certain obsessions of the Dadaists of forty years ago – for example, extreme positions of suddenness, of extremely unforeseen turns of events – once one has incorporated into one's art extreme contradictions as a feasible form of sequence of the movement of thought, once one has incorporated into one's art the simultaneities of all kinds of similar though unrelated happenings, incidents, or dissimilar, though related happenings, moves of tones, moves of voices, then one has ceased to be a Dadaist, because one has learned to make use of these things, which then were enormously new and radical, in a rational way. (202-03)

Wolpe maintains that he has surpassed the movement he associated himself with in his youth, while subsuming some of its innovations into his compositional practice. He acknowledges that integrating such effects into a new whole goes against their original intent, which was to break up aesthetic structures. He categorizes the techniques he has retained as the adjacency of opposites, simultaneity, and unforeseeability, pointing to instances of their application in the dadaist music he produced at the time, of which in many cases no other record exists.

Wolpe recounts a formative experience with the adjacency of opposites, which he contextualizes as a reaction against his strict musical education, not an attack on art as such: "I took the *shoddiest* kind of tune, a gutter tune, and combined it with a fugue of Bach. It was an act of violation, a kind of act of vengeance, which satisfied me terribly much" (207-08). He also elaborates on an example of the principle of simultaneity in action, emphasizing the constructive side of the experiment, rather than its destructive force:

I had eight gramophones, record players, at my disposal. And these were lovely record players because one could regulate their speed. Here you have only certain speeds – seventy-four [*sic*] and so on – but there you could play a Beethoven symphony very, very slow, and very quick at the same time that you could mix it with a popular tune. You could have a waltz, then you could have a funeral march. So I put things together in what one would call today a multifocal way. (209)

He continued his association with the movement, supplying music for a screening of Richter's *Film is Rhythm: Rhythm 21* at the "Dada Congress" in Weimar in September 1922.⁴ Clarkson states that it was probably improvised, and on that basis it might be said to embody unforeseeability (7). This value is in evidence across his entire oeuvre, for example in his setting for voice and piano of Schwitters's *To Anna Blume* from 1929. The piece was conceived for a tenor seated on a bicycle and dressed as a clown, though its melodic range extends to falsetto, much as its rhythm is uneven throughout (Roman 52). Like Golyscheff and Schulhoff, Wolpe invoked aesthetic norms in order to violate them, while the destruction of art by artistic means generated new techniques, which could themselves be repurposed positively by the network of institutions and practices comprising the dominant culture.

The musical output of the movement during this phase was more diverse than a narrow focus on brutism allows, especially when the peripheral activities of core

⁴ The question of so-called "visual music" should be addressed here. Through his participation in Zurich Dada, Richter met fellow painter Viking Eggeling in 1918. After briefly linking up with dadaists in Berlin, Richter and Eggeling worked together in Klein-Kölzig from 1919 to 1921. They experimented with techniques for dynamizing their geometric abstraction, for example producing serial sketches on scrolls. This led to a move into filmmaking, introducing the element of temporality. The association by analogy of visual art with music was commonplace, but the possibility of playing with rhythm or tempo strengthened that connection considerably (Mollaghan 45; Cook 211, 214-15). Dating from 1921, Richter's *Rhythm 21* makes a rhetorical allusion to music, but arguably its engagement with that field does not go much beyond this titular reference. Completed in 1924, Eggeling's *Diagonal Symphony* develops a more sophisticated temporal organization for its abstract imagery, although its status as visual music remains debatable. In any case, Richter's and Eggeling's experiments in this area are not within the scope of this article, being for the most part conducted away from the centers of Zurich and Berlin.

members are taken into account. These include other points of continuity with Zurich Dada: dadaists in Berlin maintained the interest in dance and the inclination towards populism and primitivism. Hausmann, known for his collages and photomontages as well as his poetry, combined dynamic motions and grotesque facial expressions in his experiments with dance (Bergius 56; Benson 178). George Grosz, principally a visual artist, tap-danced to jazz, cakewalk, and ragtime, and recited poems based on their rhythms and vocal styles, which he called "Sincopations" (Bergius 56; Brill 94). Walter Mehring, who published texts and appeared in sketches with the group, was separately a successful writer of cabaret lyrics, describing some of his chansons as "Language-Rag-Time" (Jelavich 146; Brill 94). These productions were predominantly literary in their outlook, notwithstanding the allusions to music. Mehring's *Simply Classical! An Oresteia with a Happy Ending* featured puppets designed by Grosz and a score by the popular composer Friedrich Hollaender (Jelavich 143). The action was interrupted by a gramophone playing songs commenting satirically on the founding of the Weimar Republic, which functioned as an alienating chorus anticipating the kind of distancing devices developed by Bertolt Brecht (Appignanesi 171). The premiere was held at the cabaret venue Schall und Rauch on 8 December 1919, to coincide with a production of *The Oresteia* upstairs at the Grosse Schauspielhaus (Jelavich 141). The spoof was itself disrupted by a protest by Grosz and Huelsenbeck, in which they wore iron crosses and shouted sarcastically from among the audience: "Long live art!" (Appignanesi 172). This self-destructive display is typical of the more extreme form of the anti-artistic orientation that became increasingly dominant with Berlin Dada.

Paris Dada

André Breton remarks parenthetically in *Conversations*, "Tzara, Picabia, and Ribemont-Dessaignes (the only true 'Dadas,' when you get down to it)" (50). He minimizes his own involvement, seeking to differentiate Dada and surrealism. After arriving in Paris, Tzara led this branch of the movement in a spirit of nihilistic negation, in practice largely restricted to assaults on art. Written in Zurich, "Unpretentious Proclamation" contains one of the few references to music in any of his manifestos, in which he deploys typically iconoclastic rhetoric: "MUSICIANS SMASH YOUR BLIND INSTRUMENTS" (16). His main preoccupation was literary experimentation, on occasion extending to the threshold of the musical realm. *Vaseline Symphony*, which featured twenty voices utilizing ascending scales to alternately cry "Cri" and "Cra," was an elaboration of the simultaneous poem and the sound poem, with the basic musical format corresponding to the reduction of the phonetic material (Germaine Everling qtd. in Sanouillet 555; Schiff 151-52). During his appearance at the mock trial of the writer Maurice Barrés, Tzara gave evidence from behind a music stand, and disrupted the proceedings by breaking into a rendition of his "Dada Song"

(Sanouillet 189, 192). This poem has subsequently been set to music multiple times: “the song of a dadaist / who had dada in his heart” (Sanouillet 579; Tzara, “Dada Song” 46). In addition, Tzara championed different avant-garde composers in his role as an impresario of Dada soirées in Zurich and Paris. Breton was indifferent, if not hostile, towards music, and it played little part in surrealism. Paris Dada was likewise predominantly literary and artistic, though its musical output did include significant forays into the field by the other figures identified as “true ‘Dadas’” in *Conversations*.

During his first visit to New York for the Armory Show in February 1913, Francis Picabia often referred to an affinity between painting and music, and made their comparison a central motif of his article “Cubism by a Cubist” (Thompson 15-16; Picabia, “Cubism by a Cubist” 32-33). Dating from 1915, *Music is Like Painting*, an apparently non-representational watercolor in fact based on a scientific diagram of the effects of a magnetic field on alpha, beta, and gamma particles, is a transitional work lying between his earlier abstraction and the mechanomorphic drawings he produced as a dadaist (Rothman). The precedence given to painting in the title reflects how music was a secondary consideration throughout his career, but it nevertheless remained a feature of his artistic life, perhaps stimulated by his relationships with Gabrielle Buffet and Edgar Varèse, both of whom were involved in New York Dada.⁵ Written in Paris in 1920, *American Nanny*, which he described without explanation as “sodomist music,” consists of three notes repeated in sequence ad infinitum, and may have been influenced by the extreme minimalism of his other friend Satie’s *Vexations* (qtd. in Sanouillet 554). The speed and duration of the piece are variable, and we do not know how it was interpreted for its first performance. The antagonistic nature of the gesture would in any case have been clear, attacking the myths of the creative genius and the virtuoso performer. This piece also constituted an assault on the model listener, with the reductive and repetitive nature of the composition forestalling the possibility of an immersive experience. Picabia had moved beyond the analogical association of painting and music to make a substantive intervention in the latter on its own terms.

According to Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes: “Dada disregarded music and I was the only one to involve it in the movement” (qtd. in Boerner 102). He consciously devalued the role of the composer by employing a chance-based procedure, in which he selected notes with a pocket roulette wheel, for his pieces “Dance of the Curly Endive” and “Interloping Bellybutton” (Boerner 81-82). He

⁵ Buffet and Varèse had previously studied composition together, becoming enthused by the possibilities of new technology, and looking forward to the development of electronic music (Hugill 16). Varèse, who emerged as a pioneering figure in this area, subsequently sought to dissociate himself from New York Dada (Landy 132). There is nevertheless a case to include him among the participants in the movement, on the basis of a brief but intense engagement with it in 1917.

allowed himself discretion in determining the irregular meter, rhythm, and pitch of both works, developing the randomly generated harmonic and melodic material through repetition, growing complexity, and additional layers of dissonance (Boerner 82-100). He also parodied established musical styles and incorporated notational peculiarities into his scores, for example marking the most precisely delineated section "Approximately," and labelling an especially unexpressive sequence "Passion" (Boerner 90; qtd. in Boerner 94, 98). For his "Frontier Dance," Ribemont-Dessaignes remained immobile inside a cardboard tube, the elimination of motion in the field of dance corresponding to the self-imposed restriction on creative freedom that he adopted as a compositional principle (Sanouillet 127; Ribemont-Dessaignes, "History of Dada" 113). These musical productions were obviously intended as an affront to aesthetic sensibilities, and further undermined the ideas of artistic mastery and attentive listening. Ribemont-Dessaignes, principally a painter and writer, may have exaggerated in claiming that he was the only one to involve music in the movement, but he certainly made a more concerted effort to apply the anti-artistic orientation to this field than the any of the other core members of Paris Dada.⁶

Paris Dada became notorious for its spectacular performances, which often had a musical component, being "patterned after cabaret shows," according to Breton

⁶ A key figure in New York Dada, Marcel Duchamp had previously experimented with music in pre-World War I Paris. Unfinished in 1912, "The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even: Musical Erratum" is an aleatory and indeterminate work for player piano, mechanical organ, or any other automated instrument. The capacity for expression is further constrained by a system in which numbered balls are randomly distributed into toy wagons passing underneath a funnel. The balls correspond to different pitches, while the wagons represent time periods. The concentration of balls in each wagon affects the space between the notes proportionately. The chance-based procedure determines the combinations that must be used, but the order in which the results are presented is left open. The piece is a companion to Duchamp's *Large Glass* (Landy 134-35). Written in 1913, "Musical Erratum" and "Musical Sculpture" are also related to his major work, with the scores included in his notes accompanying it known as the *Green Box*. Devised in collaboration with his sisters Yvonne and Magdeleine, "Musical Erratum" is another aleatory and indeterminate work in which pitches are drawn from a hat based on the number of syllables in a dictionary entry and assigned to three voices permitted a degree of approximation in their delivery (Landy 133-34). Finally, "Musical Sculpture" is a conceptual work consisting of a brief description that reads in its entirety: "Sounds lasting and leaving from different places and forming a sounding sculpture that lasts" (qtd. in Landy 134). Duchamp's musical productions may have predated the movement, but he anticipated many of its concerns, in particular the interest in chance and indeterminacy, and the repudiation of authorial control and aesthetic order, highlighted by Leigh Landy: "The Dada spirit is reached in this work ["The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even: Musical Erratum"] as the local decisions are made by the falling balls (the ones that miss the wagons are not played) and as musical expectation is lost due to the combination of the antivirtuosic instrumental approach as well as the lack of any form of development" (Landy 135).

(50). During a “Dada Manifestation” at the Maison de l’Œuvre on 26 March 1920, Marguerite Buffet, a professional musician and the cousin of Gabrielle, played aggressive music composed by Picabia (Sanouillet 119). This accompanied a reading of his “Dada Cannibal Manifesto,” which addressed the audience directly and was delivered in near-darkness by Breton: “I will tell you again that you are all suckers. In three months my friends and I will be selling you our paintings for several francs” (204). Marguerite Buffet also performed Ribemont-Dessaignes’s “Dance of the Curly Endive,” as described by Malcolm Green:

This had been composed by choosing notes entirely at random and was played with stony-faced expertise by Marguerite Buffet, a professional concert performer. The composer was seated beside her turning the pages of his masterpiece and later recalled being swamped in an indescribable uproar in which the music, the shouts, cries and whistles of the audience united into a discordant harmony like the smashing of glass: “curiously effective,” he thought. (88)

Hania Routchine, a professional singer, was engaged to close the show. The program announced that she would sing a manifesto, but her contribution was in fact far more conventional. She attempted a rendition of Henri Duparc’s “Sad Song,” after earnestly entreating the audience: “I hope you will do me the honor of listening” (Sanouillet 120). Sanouillet speculates that it is testament to the extent to which the preceding entertainment had confused the aesthetic preferences of the crowd that it reacted by booing her off the stage (120-21). The confrontation between performers and spectators, in which the latter actively participated as antagonists, was an integral aspect of the large-scale events put on by the dadaists in Paris. This was a means of rousing the audience from its usual state of passivity and eliminating the aesthetic distance on which the appreciation of works was supposed to depend.

The “Dada Festival,” held at the Salle Gaveau on 26 May 1920, is credited as the “climax of the Paris Dada movement” and an “enormous *succès de scandale*” by Richter (181-82). The subversive intent of the choice of venue, associated with culturally prestigious music, was underlined by an impromptu performance during the interval, as noted by Ribemont-Dessaignes in his “History of Dada”: “The Gaveau family, which attended the festival, turned deathly pale at hearing the great organs, accustomed to Bach, resound to the rhythm of “Le Pélican,” a popular fox-trot” (113). As at the “Dada Manifestation,” Marguerite Buffet presented pieces by Picabia and Ribemont-Dessaignes, on this occasion “American Nanny” and “Interloping Bellybutton.” In comments echoed by Richter, Ribemont-Dessaignes recalls that tensions were already emerging within Paris Dada, in relation to the final item of the evening, Tzara’s “Vaseline Symphony”: “[T]hough scarcely very musical, it encountered the open hostility of André Breton, who had a horror of music and suffered from being reduced to the role of an interpreter” (113). According to Ribemont-Dessaignes, “Frontier Dance,” which

was also performed, met with protest in the febrile atmosphere that had been created: "Tomatoes splashed down on a big cardboard funnel in which the author of these lines, executing a "Danse frontière" of his own invention, was hidden. But they also fell elsewhere and one hit the post of a loge, splashing Mme Gaveau herself" (113). Richter reports that despite the controversy generated by the event, "[n]ot only Mme Gaveau, but Breton and even Ribemont-Dessaigues were not entirely pleased with the performance" (182). This dissatisfaction reflected a shared sense that the shock tactics of the group were quickly becoming predictable, with anti-art neutralized as an aesthetic taste in its own right.

Breton and Picabia did not participate in the "Dada Salon," an exhibition mounted at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées, which opened with a show on 10 June 1921. The publicity material announced: "As everyone knows, the orchestra will be conducted by Mr. Jolibois, a porcelain repairman from the 6th district of Paris" (qtd. in Sanouillet 205). This street singer was pushed onto the stage during the first item, an unsuccessful attempt to sing the exhibition catalogue, set to popular music in a dadaist arrangement played by a "Mrs E. Bugaud" (Sanouillet 205; qtd. in Sanouillet 583). Jolibois's amateurish renditions of familiar tunes were so well-received that the audience noisily demanded an encore during a satirical sketch by Louis Aragon (Sanouillet 205-06). Valentin Parnak's "Dance of the Poultry," the next item to be performed, combined an absurd costume with graceful movements to popular music (Sanouillet 206). Phillipe Soupault's "Diableret" featured an ensemble of performers baiting the audience, with a musical accompaniment provided by "Mrs. Pirouelle and Mr. Émile Sab at the piano" (qtd. in Sanouillet 583). The response of the crowd is detailed in a contemporary press report, quoted by Sanouillet: "There was then a great uproar. Idiots, morons, filthy wops! The entire theater was about to hurl itself upon the frauds when Jolibois finally appeared, a new Orpheus in Hell, who with his joyously off-key singing charmed the angry Cerberus" (206). Jolibois appeared again at the end of the evening to belt out the *Marseillaise* (Sanouillet 206). There were supposed to be two further matinees in the course of the exhibition, but these were cancelled due to conflicts with other avant-garde tendencies sharing the space, specifically an incident in which members of the group disrupted a performance of a bruitist concert by Russolo on 17 June 1921 (Sanouillet 207). The distance travelled in such a short time from provoking the audience to themselves acting as hecklers is instructive, as it illustrates the logic of escalation that was built into their approach. Jolibois's importance is that he was inserted into the entertainment in order to violate the accepted professionalized standards of artistic practice, but instead of being outraged by his inclusion the audience received him with ironic enthusiasm and indeed deployed him against the dadaists.

For the "Bearded Heart Soirée" at the Théâtre Michel on 6 July 1923, Tzara apparently experienced some difficulty filling the program after his acrimonious breaks with Breton and Picabia. There was a greater reliance on music, with piano

recitals of Igor Stravinsky's "Three Easy Pieces for Four Hands," Satie's "Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear," Georges Auric's "Adieu, New York (Fox Trot)," and Darius Milhaud's "Soft Toffee (Shimmy)." George Antheil, who had been loosely affiliated with New York Dada, provided accompaniments to screenings of Richter's *Rhythm 21*, Man Ray's *Return to Reason*, and Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's *Manhattan*. The field of dance was also represented, though once again without music, through an interpretation of a zaum poem performed by Lizzia Codréano (Sanouillet 280, 609). This was added to a staging of a play by Tzara, described in scathing terms by Roger Vitrac:

If Mr. Tristan Tzara thought he ought to clothe this play in Mrs. Delaunay's costumes and cubist set, if he wanted to present it to the public in a potpourri of works by so-called "modern" celebrities, it was with an indisputably artistic aim, which his old friends could not support. They had only one means at their disposal: sabotage not only the performance, but make their dissension public and irreversible. (Qtd. in Sanouillet 280-281)

Jean Cocteau, reading his poetry, proved the most contentious choice from outside the core membership of the group, given the hostility with which he was regarded by many of the dadaists. Paul Éluard was so appalled that he attempted to disrupt the proceedings and ended up punching Tzara. This followed a violent intervention from Breton, who earlier had stormed the stage and physically assaulted Pierre de Massot. The evening descended into chaos, with more fights taking place in and around the venue (Sanouillet 278-81). The episode is often cited as the conclusion of this phase of the movement: Paris Dada pursued the destruction of art by artistic means, bringing its contradictions to the point of crisis, and turning on itself as it sought to prevent alleged backsliding from an uncompromising anti-artistic orientation.

The musical contributions to the program included trained composers who warrant further discussion. Stravinsky's "Three Easy Pieces," comprising a march, a waltz, and a polka, is written in the style of "international light music," according to James Leonard. The left-hand parts are designed to be as simple as possible, while the right-hand parts are fully elaborated. The suite was originally conceived as "use music," composed primarily for its pedagogical value, and it would probably have sounded trivial in the context of a concert performance (Leonard; White 237). However, Stravinsky's name still conferred some prestige on the "Bearded Heart Soirée." This belated coming together of the composer and the movement has an extensive prehistory. In an article for the American *Vanity Fair* in 1922, Tzara associated him with Dada, praising his comic opera *Mavra*: "This little man, his eyes and features sharpened by a subtle intelligence, is already ranked as one of the great composers" ("News of the Seven Arts in Europe" 40). In Mantua, Italy, *Bleu* announced in its third issue, released in 1921: "J. Evola and Christian Schaad [*sic*], Dadaists, are organising a "Jazz-band Dada ball" event in

Rome in January and February with the involvement of the best aristocracy and with music by Stravinsky, Casella, Auric, Defosse, etc" ("Either It is Well or It is Not Well" 260). In Geneva, Walter Serner fabricated an incident dramatizing the affinity between Dada and Stravinsky in a mock report of a performance of *The Song of the Nightingale* at the "First Dada World Congress" in 1919, at which he claimed to have elicited a hostile response from the audience by shouting "Vive Stravinsky! Vive Dada!": "The evening ended in street fights which Serner and Stravinsky escaped only by making a hasty exit by car" (qtd. in Goergen 162). In the winter following the "Bearded Heart Soirée," the 1923 "Dutch Dada Tour," which presented itself as anti-dadaist, featured piano recitals by Nelly van Doesburg, whose repertoire included "Ragtime" from *The Soldier's Tale* (Berg 155). Stravinsky's apparent appeal to the movement, in a number of its incarnations, was partly due to his jazzification of art music, but the main motivation was most likely his reputation for scandal, arising from the uproar which had greeted the first performance of *The Rite of Spring* at the Théâtre de Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913 (White 214-15).

Satie's "Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear" subverts a title in a conventional format with an absurdist flourish. The suite incorporates popular elements into its ternary structure, quoting a cabaret chanson in the middle section (Whiting 474-75). There is a sense of going nowhere that is reflected in the subtitles of the full version, in which the three pieces are bracketed by the introductory sections "A way of beginning" and "More of the same," and the addenda "What's more . . ." and "Rehash" (Whiting 263). Composed twenty years before the "Bearded Heart Soirée," *Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear* was undoubtedly innovative then, but would have been familiar by 1923, having become something of a standard of Satie's. His work had already featured in a dadaist soirée in Zurich, though at that stage he had not yet met Tzara. He was more directly involved with the group in Paris, despite the difference in age between him and most of the dadaists. His writings appear in a number of their publications, and his music was played at the "First Friday of *Littérature*," a precursor to the dadaist performances in Paris, held at the Palais des Fêtes on 23 January 1920 (Sanouillet 545). Satie was perhaps best known for the ballet *Parade*, which had scandalized its audience at the Théâtre du Châtelet on 18 May 1917. Cocteau, the instigator of that project, inserted extra-musical sources of sound, such as a foghorn, a typewriter, and milk bottles, against the wishes of the composer. These bruitistic elements are not really germane to the score, which proceeds symmetrically through a tripartite structure within a double frame, with the central movement, itself ternary in form, quoting a popular song, as in *Three Pieces in the Shape of a Pear* (Whiting 474-75). "Ragtime Parade," excerpted from the ballet and renamed "Ragtime Dada," was also performed on the "Dutch Dada Tour" (Berg 155). Satie's mixture of populism, playfulness, and provocation, and his marginal status in relation to the bourgeois institution of art, brought him closer to the practice of the dadaists.

Auric's "Adieu, New York" and Milhaud's "Soft Toffee" are typical of the jazz-influenced works they created at this time, which were radical to the extent that they violated the sanctity of art music through the introduction of popular elements, but were also a fashion within the wider avant-garde that was now on the wane. The program announced that the music was to be performed either by the composers or by Marcelle Meyer, a pianist associated with the group Les Six (Sanouillet 545). With Francis Poulenc, Auric and Milhaud made up half of this loose grouping of musicians, specifically the portion that overlapped with Paris Dada. They regularly appeared in the pages of its journals, and contributed to the musical interlude at the "First Friday of *Littérature*" (Sanouillet 545). Sanouillet suggests that their involvement was based mainly on personal relationships, rather than any serious creative exchange, notwithstanding a shared preoccupation with popular forms (86). Cocteau was an enthusiastic promoter of Les Six who formed an experimental jazz band with Milhaud and Poulenc, playing popular music on an unconventional drum kit which included glasses, a kazoo, and a horn (Sanouillet 166). He also devised a ballet with music by five of Les Six, including Auric, Milhaud, and Poulenc: *Wedding on the Eiffel Tower* premiered at Théâtre des Champs Élysées on 18 June 1921 and was disrupted by a company of dadaists, protesting the closure of the Dada Salon (Sanouillet 207-08). Alongside Cocteau, Satie was an important influence on Les Six. Between the acts of a play by Max Jacob at the Galerie Barbazanges on 8 March 1920, Satie and Milhaud presented their concept of "furniture music," with an accompanying notice urging the audience to take no notice of the simple refrains played on instruments distributed about the hall (Templier 45). The critical content of the experiment was that it refused the concentrated engagement usually demanded for artistic productions, by attempting to make the music part of the background. This self-effacing gesture, in diminishing the status of an elevated medium, was paradoxically a provocative act, akin to the anti-artistic stunts perpetrated by the dadaists.

Following the dissolution of Paris Dada, Satie and Picabia collaborated on a ballet, billed as the first public manifestation of instantaneism, a new movement launched in reply to Breton's surrealism. Premiering at the Théâtre des Champs Élysées on 4 December 1924, *Respite: Instantaneist Ballet in Two Acts, a Cinematic Intermission, and a Dog's Tail* was a sustained exercise in provocation. *Relâche*, the title in French, is also the term used to announce that a theatre is temporarily closed, and the cancellation of the public dress rehearsals led to rumors that the whole enterprise was in fact a hoax (Whiting 535-36). The choreography was extremely minimal, with the dancers often simply wandering about, sitting down, and smoking cigarettes (Whiting 536). The sets included such features as a wall of blinding lights directed at the audience, and the graffiti "Those who are dissatisfied are authorized to fuck off" and "Erik Satie is the greatest musician in the world" (Whiting 536). The music draws on popular sources, reworking familiar melodies in incongruous ways, within a tightly wrought structure in

which only one of its twenty-two sections is not recapitulated elsewhere (Whiting 537-39, 552-54). In the integrated score for René Clair's "Cinematic Intermission" *Entr'acte* (*Cinema: Between the Acts*), Satie closely matches his music to the action, using a limited number of musical fragments, arranged around abrupt transitions, and characterized by deadening repetition (Marks 250-66). Unlike surrealism, instantaneism was never really a distinct movement, and this ballet remained the sole exemplification of its precepts, apart from a final issue of Picabia's 391, labelled the "Journal of Instantaneism" and bearing the subtitle "Dadaism" (Picabia, cover). This included an advertisement for *Respite*, which explicitly invited the disruption of the premiere by "Ex-Dadaists" (Picabia, advertisement). With instantaneism Satie and Picabia responded to the alleged exhaustion of shock tactics with a further escalation, pushing the spirit of nihilistic negation to its self-destructive extreme. With surrealism Breton advocated more insidious forms of demoralization, and insisted on the necessity of a constructive moment. These divergent tendencies represent the anti-artistic orientation playing itself out in the immediate aftermath of Paris Dada.

Conclusion

Based in Ferrara, Italy, Alberto Savinio had only limited involvement in Zurich Dada, conducted via correspondence with Tzara (Hentea 87). Savinio was a writer, painter, and composer who had previously participated in the avant-garde scene in Paris, reportedly smashing up his instrument during a piano recital on 24 May 1914, organized under the auspices of the journal *Les Soirées de Paris* by Guillaume Apollinaire (Peterson 7). Apollinaire records his reaction to the performance: "I believe that within two years he will have broken all the pianos existing in Paris, after which he might leave to traverse the world and break all the pianos existing in the universe. This will perhaps be a good riddance" (qtd. in Schiff 166-67). For the first issue of Tzara's *Dada*, Savinio contributed a short text entitled "A Musical Puking":

I have never been able to hold back the spasms of the most pressing nausea each time I find myself face to face with Euterpe [the muse of music]. My stomach is still refractory to the company of this artistic figurative representation of sounds, the very presence of which sets off in my intestines the same effects and consequences as the most swaying heave of our childhood's swung vertigo. (Savinio 30)

Later, in the third issue of *Dada*, Savinio compared music to diarrhea (Dayan 157). He continues in the same polemical vein here, rejecting basic components of the musical tradition: "I must confess a natural aversion for anything touching the chromatic world"; "I now easily resist any titillation that comes from harmony or melody"; and "I blush when I see myself placed in the shady tableau of makers of sharps and flats" (Savinio 30). The rhetorical repudiation of his discipline, which

has an affinity with the iconoclastic gesture referred to above, is also a forceful articulation of the anti-artistic orientation that would become one of the defining features of the movement. Drawing on my overview of dadaist music, I can provisionally identify three types of anti-art, which cut across its different phases: *the incorporation of non-canonical elements; the destruction of established forms of expression; and the disruption of dominant modes of attention.*

The principal examples of the incorporation of non-canonical elements are populism and primitivism. The former is a common theme of the musical output of the movement in its various incarnations: Zurich Dada's connections to cabaret and jazz were maintained by Mehring and Grosz in Berlin and by Satie and Les Six in Paris. The Cabaret Voltaire's heterogeneous program included both art music and popular music, collapsing the hierarchical distinction between them. Wolpe exhibited the same iconoclastic impulse when he aggressively combined a so-called gutter tune with a fugue by Bach. The "Dada Festival" likewise exploited the critical potential of a foxtrot sullyng the great organs of the Salle Gaveau. The juxtaposition of high and low forms was radical primarily in that it transgressed the boundaries of legitimate taste. However, Hennings further complicated the treatment of popular music with her alienating style of performance. Schulhoff advanced avant-garde experimentation in this context as well, interrupting a suite of jazz-influenced pieces with his silent composition "In Futurum." The "Dada Salon" also played on the tension between the accessible and the antagonistic, setting its more challenging material against the crowd-pleasing antics of the porcelain repairman Jolibois. The approach to popular music was therefore doubly subversive, utilizing its oppositional power with regard to the canon, while undermining its own familiarity and stability.

The primitivist tendency was especially prominent in Zurich Dada. During the first phase of the movement, "Negro" music accompanied poetry and dance, with the performers often wearing masks and costumes inspired by tribal iconography. The dadaists were motivated chiefly by a desire to repudiate the dominant culture, rather than a positive investment in other cultures, of which their knowledge was at best rudimentary. There was a marked preference for strong rhythm, also reflected in the orientalist compositions of Heusser. He drew on a wide range of sources, including church music and contemporary dance music, in order to exceed the confines of the canon. In *Flight Out of Time*, Ball argues that the main value of non-Western traditions derived from their introduction as an antithesis, a claim borne out by the diversity of means employed to the same end. The appropriation of the popular and the "primitive," executed with varying degrees of sophistication, in neither case amounted to a negation of the aesthetic as such, being restricted to a violation of the norms of the aesthetic as currently constituted. This act of violation was predicated on a validation of marginalized tastes, whether in the form of a nuanced populism or a repurposed primitivism.

The case of bruitism presents a classificatory dilemma, and not merely because the practice traversed Zurich and Berlin Dada. On the one hand, I am tempted to

identify it as an instance of the incorporation of non-canonical elements, extended to the incorporation of non-artistic elements. In "En Avant Dada," Huelsenbeck at times seems simply to affirm the sounds of everyday life, which are granted aesthetic legitimacy, without having to conform to an aesthetic structure. On the other hand, I recognize the role played by bruitism in enacting the destruction of established forms of expression, which it did precisely by occupying such a structure. Golyscheff's *Anti-Symphony* explicitly positioned itself as a negation of the symphony, but relied for its impact on maintaining a minimal relation to that form through its organization of improvised noise into movements. Schulhoff's *Symphonia Germanica* was itself a sort of anti-symphony, designed to hollow out the form by giving it the crudest possible realization, which involved the use of bruitistic effects. The destruction of established forms of expression was secured in a number of ways, for example the parodic titles devised by Golyscheff and the ramshackle orchestration deployed by Schulhoff. The dadaists operated within the existing musical tradition, remaining immanent to the object of their critique, even when assimilating material from outside.

The destruction of established forms of expression is most identified with Berlin Dada, but it is also a crucial aspect of Paris Dada. This is connected to the tension between professionalism and amateurism, which we have seen exploited from different sides in relation to the singers Rouchine and Jolibois. Marguerite Buffet's professional skill no doubt served to accentuate the crassness of the material she presented on the piano, written by amateur composers Ribemont-Dessaignes and Picabia. They extended the destructive approach to the dominant ideas about art in circulation at the time, including the figures of the creative genius and the virtuoso performer. While Ribemont-Dessaignes countered these entrenched stereotypes by adopting chance as a compositional principle, Picabia's "sodomist music" relied on the reductive repetition of a single note to render such ideological productions untenable. The irony is that their anti-art stunts anticipated aleatory, indeterminate, and minimalist tendencies in the subsequent history of avant-garde music.⁷ Similarly, Wolpe's experiments were conceived as a reaction against his formal training, but he nevertheless contributed to the store

⁷ While dadaist music has received relatively little critical attention, Dada in general is often invoked as an inspiration for or an antecedent to the musical productions of John Cage, Neo-Dada, and Fluxus. Cage rediscovered the forgotten compositions of Duchamp, and staged the first full performance of all eight-hundred-and-forty repetitions of Satie's *Vexations* (Lotringer; Orledge 259). Schulhoff's "In Futurum" might appear to anticipate Cage's 4'33". I would argue that its silence takes on a different meaning in the context in which it appears, interrupting a suite of jazz-influenced pieces. Tzara's *Vaseline Symphony* is reworked as an event score in the subsequent "Fluxversion": "Microphone, hands, vaseline" ("*Vaseline Symphonique*, 1921 Fluxversion" 101). These instructions imbue the title with programmatic significance, which was deliberately lacking in the original. On the whole, Dada's influence on the neo-avant-garde does not come through its interventions in the field of music, but instead consists in its transgression of the borders between disciplines.

of techniques available to the composer, subsequently codifying these innovations as the adjacency of opposites, simultaneity, and unforeseeability. The destruction of established forms of expression generated new forms of expression.

Paris Dada sought to disrupt the dominant modes of attention, adapted to established forms of expression. The dadaists made extensive use of shock tactics, intended to eliminate aesthetic distance and shake the audience out of its passivity. At the "Dada Manifestation," Picabia's "Dada Cannibal Manifesto," the text of which insulted the spectators, was given a suitably aggressive accompaniment; Ribemont-Dessaignes's "Dance of the Curly Endive" provoked by the arbitrariness of its method of composition and by the disordered and dissonant result. The success of these pieces in disturbing the taste of the crowd is evidenced by the reaction to a request for a sympathetic hearing of Duparc's "Sad Song." At the "Dada Festival," Picabia's "American Nanny" denied spectators the opportunity of an immersive experience, bluntly refusing the subtlety and complexity that would have facilitated it; Ribemont-Dessaignes's "Interloping Bellybutton" frustrated their expectations in a similar way, undermining the faith in artistic mastery that is the complement of pretensions to connoisseurship. "Frontier Dance" was met by a shower of tomatoes, once again highlighting the active participation of the audience; but the disruption of dominant modes of attention was not wholly limited to shock tactics. There were also attempts to repudiate the kind of concentrated engagement generally considered appropriate for art music through self-effacing gestures, such as the "furniture music" of Satie and Milhaud.

The disruption of dominant modes of attention has been discussed here mainly in relation to Paris Dada, but it is also relevant to Zurich and Berlin Dada: Huelsenbeck describes bruitism cancelling the contemplative attitude by inciting the audience to action, in addition to extending the incorporation of non-canonical elements, and enacting the destruction of established forms of expression. The most notable feature of the final phase of the movement was the rapid exhaustion of the shock tactics adopted by the dadaists. The scandals initially generated by their large-scale events soon became an expected part of the entertainment, and for that reason the attempt to destabilize the reception of works was checked. The spectators apparently purchased missiles to throw at the performers in advance of arriving at the auditorium, attending in anticipation of a confrontation and entering into it with obvious enthusiasm. The disruption of dominant modes of attention generated alternative modes of attention, just as the destruction of established forms of expression generated new forms of expression, while the incorporation of non-canonical elements never really sought to go beyond aesthetic concerns in the first place. The critical force of the movement was therefore effectively contained by the bourgeois institution of art once again.

In this article, I have sought to redress the imbalance of previous scholarship that understates the role of music in dadaist activity, but it is important to reaffirm the peripheral status of that field relative to literature and visual art. The core

members of the movement were primarily poets and painters, though some experimented with musical composition, and many were involved in improvised performances. The trained composers who contributed to the movement were for the most part fringe figures, attaching themselves to it for a brief period, or collaborating with it while maintaining a distinct artistic identity. The overview provided here nevertheless shows that the development of dadaist music included a number of substantive works and serious attempts to translate the anti-artistic orientation into musical terms. This provisional typology of anti-art is no doubt incomplete, but it still has wider applicability for the interpretation of the movement, including the failure of the project that is frankly admitted in Richter's *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*:

Dada's anti-art tirades, although seriously meant, were impossible to put into practice. A work of art, even when intended as anti-art, asserts itself irresistibly as a work of art. In fact, Tzara's phrase "the destruction of art by artistic means" means simply "the destruction of art in order to build a new art". This is precisely what happened. (164)

The incorporation of non-canonical elements was reflected in the embrace of minor arts such as embroidery and puppetry, as well as in the parodies of journalistic prose and advertising slogans and the use of "primitive" imagery and found materials. The destruction of established forms of expression was evident from chance-based experiments in other media, as well as from the typographical innovations of the journals and magazines and the cut-and-paste techniques of collage and photomontage. The disruption of dominant modes of attention extended to the realm of performance more generally, as well as to the more radical methods of distribution adopted for publications and curatorial strategies pursued at exhibitions. Finally, I would suggest that the assimilation of anti-art by the institutional framework it set itself against, which was not restricted to the field of music either, arose from the specific limitations of these strategies for realizing the destruction of art by artistic means rather than from an intrinsic tendency towards aestheticization as claimed by Richter. In this way, I hope that my overview of dadaist music might contribute to a consideration of these broader issues.

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