

Imagining Together: Éliane Radigue's Collaborative Creative Process

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines Éliane Radigue's collaborative compositional practice as an alternative model of creation. Using normative Western classical music mythologies as a backdrop, this dissertation interrogates the ways in which Radigue's creative practice calls into question traditional understandings of creative agency, authorship, reproduction, performance, and the work concept. Based on extensive interviews with the principal performer-collaborators of Radigue's early instrumental works, this dissertation retraces the networks and processes of creation—from the first stages of the initiation process to the transmission of the fully formed composition to other instrumentalists. In doing so, I aim to investigate the ways in which Radigue's unique working method resists capitalist models of commodification and reconfigures the traditional hierarchical relationship between composer, score, and performer.

Chapter 1 traces Radigue's early experiences with collaboration and collective creativity in the male-dominated early electronic music studios of France in the 1950s and 60s. Chapter 2 focuses on the initiation process behind new compositions. Divided into two parts, the first part describes the normative classical music-commissioning model (NCMCM) using contemporary guides for composers and commissioners and my own experiences as an American composer of concert music. The second part examines Radigue's performer-based commissioning model and illuminates how this initiation process resists power structures of the NCMCM. Chapter 3, which is centered on the role of the composer, score, and performer, is divided into three parts. The first details the relationship between composer, score, and performer in the mythologies of

nineteenth-century Western classical music. I again draw from both primary sources and my own personal experiences as a composer to explore these normative frameworks. The second details the procedures of Éliane Radigue's creative process in her earliest collaborative instrumental compositions (*Elemental II*, *Naldjorlak I*, and *OCCAM I* for solo harp) and the *Occam Ocean* series as a whole. Using these as a point of departure, the third part explores the role of the composer, score, and performer in Radigue's collaborative process, examining the ways in which these roles are reconfigured to create new, more equitable relationships between creative actors.

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Introduction: Reimagining Resistance through the Social Formations of Music Making

“It is in collectivities that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism.” –Angela Davis¹

Direct Political Engagement

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, composers of experimental music have responded in various ways to the sociopolitical struggles of their time. In the early 1930s, Ruth Crawford Seeger addressed the harsh working conditions of contemporary immigrant workers in her song “Chinaman, Laundryman” (1932).² During the height of the Vietnam War, the film *Collage #2 “Viet-Flakes”* (1966), a collaboration between Carolee Schneeman and James Tenney, made audible the atrocities of the war through juxtapositions of Western classical and pop music fragments with Vietnamese folk songs, interlaced with screams and moans.³ Steve Reich’s *Different Trains* (1988), through recorded interviews with Holocaust survivors, makes tangible the fear of Jewish people en route to concentration camps during WWII.⁴ And more recently, a number of composers have directly addressed police brutality against unarmed Black Americans. Courtney Bryan’s *Sanctum* (2015), for example, features the voice of police brutality survivor Marlene Pinnock and recorded chants from demonstrators in Ferguson,

¹ Davis and Barat, *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle*, 49.

² Allen and Hisama, *Ruth Crawford Seeger’s Worlds*, 73–75.

³ Smigel, ““To Behold with Wonder,”” 19.

⁴ Cumming, “The Horrors of Identification,” 129–31.

Missouri, protesting the 2014 murder of Michael Brown—an unarmed Black teenager—at the hands of a white police officer.⁵

While these works are admirably explicit in their responses to the injustices of their times, some argue that such direct political messaging may actually limit music’s potential to appeal to future audiences and meaningfully address sociopolitical issues in different contexts.⁶ In a 2019 panel discussion hosted by New Music USA, American composer Samuel Adler voiced this concern saying, “I’m worried about doing something too of the moment, because the moment is here and then it’s lost.”⁷ Adler uses Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass* (1971) as a case study. Composed at the height of the Vietnam War, the work was widely interpreted as being both anti-war and anti-Nixon, especially through the insertion of vernacular English texts like “Half the people are stoned / Half the people are waiting for the next election / Half the people are drowned / And the other half are swimming in the wrong direction”—penned by politically-minded folk singer Paul Simon.⁸ Adler remarks, after a recent relistening that, “while there are some stunning musical moments” in Bernstein’s eclectic *Mass*, “it’s completely dated and doesn’t have the effect that it was supposed to have. *Mass* was a bombshell of a piece. Today, it’s ho-hum.”⁹ If a musical composition communicates a certain political message, Adler’s critique goes,

⁵ Craft, “Key of Social Justice.”

⁶ Cross, “The Enduring Culture and Limits of Political Song,” 7–11.

⁷ Adler, “Political Music, Musical Politics.”

⁸ Duff, “How Bernstein Came to ‘MASS.’” In 1971 Leonard Bernstein was also under investigation by the FBI for his leftist activities and beliefs. The FBI thought Bernstein was plotting to insert subversive anti-war messages into the mass texts. They even advised President Richard Nixon to avoid the premiere at the opening of the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, as a result.

⁹ Adler, “Political Music, Musical Politics.” Interestingly, American conductor Marin Alsop arrives at a completely different assessment: “Some pieces feel very much of their time. But while it has references to the ‘60s and ‘70s in it, ‘MASS’ really is timeless. It translates even more to the time we’re in now.” See Smith, “Bernstein’s ‘Mass’ Returns to Baltimore, as Provocative as Ever.”

it might reduce relevant points of entry for listeners, whose current sociopolitical realities may demand something else.

Theodor Adorno had a different take on the limits of direct political statements in art. In his critique of the culture industry, Adorno assailed all forms of easily digested messaging, but not because of the work's potential relevance (or lack thereof) to future audiences. Rather, he believed that interpretive ease would “impede the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide for themselves, [qualities that] would be the precondition for a democratic society.”¹⁰ In “leading the listener” with easily consumable messages, Adorno is suggesting that composers could fall prey to the dangers of consumer capitalism—something that could ultimately degrade democracy.¹¹

Political Engagement Through Sound

How might a politically conscious composer today respond to these critiques? Of course, one could simply rest easy in the words of Toni Morrison, that “all good art is political,” making the question itself moot.¹² In other words, every creative act is in some way responding to (or accepting) the sociopolitical status quo of its time and is thus political. But this point of view necessarily circumvents the question of intention and impact. Are *all* politically-minded interventions in art equally impactful? I would suggest first that the answer here is “No.” But then this would require deeper inquiry into the resistant potential of certain creative approaches over others and therefore a more detailed response to Adorno and Adler's critiques.

¹⁰ Adorno and Rabinbach, “Culture Industry Reconsidered,” 19.

¹¹ Many twentieth-century composers, especially in America, would use this same idea as a rallying cry to justify more abstract and impenetrable music. See Brody, “Music For the Masses,” 180.

¹² Toni Morrison [in interview], Kevin Nance, “The Spirit and the Strength: A Profile of Toni Morrison.”

So, then, how might a composer communicate a political message that remains relevant for potential audiences in the future, offers multiple avenues for interpretation, and encourages critical thinking? Helmut Lachenmann offers a compelling answer. When asked in a 1998 interview about the explicit political messages in the music of his teacher, Luigi Nono, Lachenmann suggests that despite the direct communist messaging embedded in Nono's works—found especially in his titles, text sources, and program notes—these political interventions had little broader significance.¹³ Rather, it was the “sonic adventures” Nono crafted that ultimately had the most impact. By creating music that is sonically diverse, that constantly provokes the ears in new ways, Lachenmann suggests that Nono prevents what audiences hear from becoming homogenized, and thus broadens their ability to take in new experiences.¹⁴ This awakening of perception, he would argue, is much more significant than any concrete political message that Nono attempted to communicate.

But all of these ways of addressing sociopolitical struggles are operating under certain assumptions about how music is, and can be, created. Even in Lachenmann's reading of Nono's work, there is a top-down communication of ideas, from the composer down to the audience. On the surface it might seem trivial to even articulate these processes of musical creation and transmission, largely because many of them are so ingrained in Western norms about how music composition operates. But acknowledging these normative views is an important first step to imagining potential alternatives.

Before proceeding, it must be said that there are many divergent ideas of what constitutes a “traditional” or “normative” musical composition, even in Western classical music culture.

¹³ Lachenmann, “Composer in Interview,” 20.

¹⁴ Lachenmann, 20.

These views are based on each individuals' personal experiences, backgrounds, and identities. As an American composer of concert music, I have come to understand one traditional Eurocentric conception of musical composition informed by my own professional, educational, cultural, creative, and interpersonal experiences (primarily in the United States and Western Europe). The view of normative composition that I have internalized represents a collection of (largely unspoken) understandings about how music can and *should* be made, based on my own encounters with people and institutions across a wide range of media and platforms in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.¹⁵

In this normative model, the composer imagines a sound (or a broader message through sound) and notates it. The performer, in turn, interprets the notation as a means to recreate the composer's original imagined sounds or message. And the audience sits passively, in hopes of receiving a glimpse into the composer's "genius" mind. Any direct political messages, in this traditional framework, are thereby communicated from the composer's sonic imagination through notation to the performer, and through sound, to the audience. In Lachenmann's view, the "sonic adventures" he references originate in the composer's imagination, are transmitted to performers through notation, and are communicated in sound to (ideally actively engaged) audiences that interpret them.

Third Way: Social Formations of Musicking

This is missing, in my view, the potential power of social configurations built *into* the music-making process to address sociopolitical issues. How can the hierarchies that underlie

¹⁵ People including family, friends, peers, mentors, professors, curators, publicists, instrumentalists, and scholars; institutions including universities, conservatories, arts organizations, publishing houses, ensembles, and residencies; media including music journalism, concert programs, classical music marketing, books, articles, talks, seminars, educational materials; and platforms including social media, concerts, classrooms, award ceremonies, message boards, and advertising.

music making be reimagined to push back against inequality and injustice? How can a composer's creative practice *itself* reimagine a more equal, compassionate, collaborative, critically engaged, and humanistic society?

In his influential book *Noise* (1977), Jacques Attali suggests that music can structure our reality and thus “anticipate historical developments [and] foreshadow new social formations in a prophetic and annunciatory way.”¹⁶ Essential to the power of music to shape our world, Attali posits, is the ways that the music making itself—the *musicking*¹⁷—has structured the social experience. Sociologist Tia DeNora builds on these ideas, writing that music “‘performs’ social life in the sense that it is a resource for the production of social life—that it affords modes of being, thinking, and feeling.”¹⁸ Josep Martí and Sra Revilla Gúties amplify DeNora's analysis in *Making Music, Making Society*: “musical practices have much to say about who we are, how we are perceived, how we build ourselves, the place we occupy in society, how we understand social order and how we interact in our constant exchange of affordances.”¹⁹ In their reading, music is thus not merely something about the social but rather a social life itself—something capable of structuring the human experience.

This “give and take” between music and society—or “mediation” between the two—is the centerpiece of Georgina Born's article “On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology, and Creativity” (2005). “Music,” she writes, “produces its own varied social relations—in performance, in musical associations and ensembles, in the musical division of labor. It inflects

¹⁶ Jameson, “Forward.”

¹⁷ “Musicking,” as defined by Christopher Small in *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (1998), means “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (p. 9).

¹⁸ DeNora, “Music into Action,” 25.

¹⁹ Martí and Revilla Gúties, *Making Music, Making Society*, 2–3.

existing social relations, from the most concrete and intimate to the most abstract of collectivities—music’s embodiment of the nation, of social hierarchies, and of the structures of class, race, gender and sexuality.”²⁰ Here, Born is pointing to the active nature of music in shaping the way people think about themselves, others, and their role in society. Music not only represents social order, it constructs it.

As a composer, I am fascinated by how these insights into the ability of music to shape our world might be harnessed for one’s own creative practice. I am inclined to ask not just “how did we get here”—i.e. how has music making represented social order—but also “how do we get there”—how can a musical practice construct a more ideal social order. Writing music is, for me, an imaginative project—an opportunity to build a world which is more just and compassionate—one where the problematic power structures that undergird our society cease to exist (even just for a moment) and in which our senses, our awareness of others, and our collective spirit is amplified.

In this view, resistance need not come in the form of direct political engagement nor abstract sonic speculation. Rather, by actively shaping new communication flows, new forms of organization, and new subjectivities around musical creation and performance, resistance can be decoupled from negation, or “being-against,” and give rise to radical identities, ideals, and collective actions that precipitate meaningful proactive social change.²¹ In other words, a resistance of “being-for.”

²⁰ Born, “On Musical Mediation: Ontology, Technology, and Creativity,” 7.

²¹ Duncombe, “Resistance,” 210; Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 61.

Radigue's Collaborative Creative Process as Resistance

The recent instrumental music of French composer Éliane Radigue—and the collaborative creative process she undertakes to create it—is one such model of what this resistance of “being-for” could look like. Her compositional method actively promotes counterhegemonic thinking and makes normative an alternative view of society. It constructs musical norms that circumvent the hierarchies that underlie the capitalist structures of the Western classical concert music tradition, affording glimpses of more equitable possibilities. At the same time, through the process of reconfiguring traditional power relations, Radigue's approach problematizes concepts like creative agency, authorship, reproduction, memory, notation, and sonic intention. Radigue's unique collaborative practice therefore offers one promising alternative model of composition that reframes problematic hierarchies inherited from nineteenth-century Europe and looks to new, more open and egalitarian forms of music making.

Radigue's musical practice starts with a reimagining of the traditional boundaries that typically frame Western understandings of music. This necessitates a reoriented approach to analysis. I will borrow concepts from Bruno Latour's actor-network theory to perform an ontological shift in my analysis. Rather than treating Radigue's music purely as an achievement—an arrival point, a finished object of study—I will examine the procedures and relationships that lead up to it. I will consider Radigue's music as something that is, “put together” in processes that are historical, social, and technological. I will explore how Radigue's music is created, experienced, and transmitted through a network of creative actors.

It is essential, in tracing this network, to acknowledge the power structures, mythologies, hierarchies, and cultural (mis)understandings in which Radigue's music operates. Therefore, I will often frame Radigue's collaborative creative practice against the backdrop of the highly

mythologized Western classical music tradition as I have come to understand it as a composer and scholar trained in the Western tradition. By framing her musical practice as a cultural phenomenon, intrinsically tied to the histories of people, places, institutions, and values of the society from which it came, I aim to better contextualize how it subverts the dominant power structures of its “parent” culture. Within this context, I hope to offer readers a more situated understanding of the ways in which Radigue’s music affirmatively resists these normative frameworks to build new communication flows, new forms of organization, and new subjectivities around musical creation and performance.

Critiquing Capitalism and the Composer

Entangled in the Western classical tradition, as it is understood today, are capitalist concepts of competition and commodification that arose from nineteenth-century European culture.²² Much of my analysis therefore also frames Radigue’s practice against established capitalist models of creation, transmission, and distribution in which an infinitely reproducible fixed musical object, representing the sole creator’s sonic imagination, is treated as a “good” that is exchanged for monetary gain. This top-down model of creation problematically places performers in a subservient position, as they strive to recreate the composer’s original sonic imagination. Audiences—the most subservient in this hierarchy—pay to passively listen to the sounds the performers produce, in hopes of gaining a glimpse into the “great” composer’s mind. In Radigue’s practice, many of these procedures and power relations are turned on their heads, while others stubbornly live on. I hope, nonetheless, to illuminate how Radigue’s approach to music making can serve as a less unequal alternative—a potential model for other composers

²² Ritchey, *Composing Capital*, 1–3.

today who seek to address the rampant inequalities and injustices in our society but who wish to avoid the pitfalls of both direct political messaging and purely abstract sonic adventures.

Radigue, “The Revolutionary”

It is important to note that, despite all of the ways that Radigue’s collaborative creative practice reimagines normative ontological frameworks and understandings about Western music composition, Radigue does not describe her music or creative intentions as being particularly resistant. In fact, when pushed, she often grounds her music in tradition and precedent rather than emphasizing its subversive qualities. In commenting on her use of an oral method of transmission to communicate new music to performers, for instance, she replies, “It’s not that remarkable. Oral transmission is the most widespread method in all the world’s music.”²³ Similarly, many of Radigue’s performer-collaborators have pushed back against interpretations that place Radigue’s musical practice as operating outside of traditional Western music frameworks. Silvia Tarozzi, for example, remarks that working with Éliane “is just like if Bach was alive and could orally transmit his music to his interpreters, who shared with him a knowledge of a specific musical language. It’s exactly that, but with a different sound world, of course.”²⁴

But I take as a starting point the position that music can and *should* be interpreted beyond the limits of the perspectives of its creators. And so, while it is important to acknowledge how Radigue and her performer-collaborators conceive of their creative practice in its sociocultural context, these views do not necessarily limit the potential of this music and the social formations it builds to transcend its own creators’ visions.

²³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 148.

²⁴ Tarozzi, interview. Here, Tarozzi was responding to a question that used Bach as an example. She did not choose Bach herself or intend to make any explicit connections between Bach’s musical language and legacy and Éliane’s.

Discrimination in the Classical Music Marketplace

Over the course of her creative career, Radigue was immensely productive and consistently uncompromising. But she was largely excluded from the male-dominated music institutions of France until quite recently.²⁵ “In France,” Radigue reflects, “I have been very much alone for a long time. Thirty years ago, I was a black duck in my own country!”²⁶ At the age of eighty-seven, despite having actively composed for over half a century and rubbed elbows with some of the most influential experimental composers and institutions of the twentieth century, Radigue remarked, “It’s true that I only started to earn a living with my music recently. I got some money from time to time, starting about ten or twelve years ago. No more than that. And only in the past three years have I actually lived from my music!”²⁷

Gender discrimination undoubtedly played an enormous role in limiting Radigue’s early career success. The bias she faced, especially as a young woman working in the male-dominated early electronic studios of France, left an indelible mark on her way of composing—and this will be touched upon in the following chapter. But the main focus of this dissertation is not to uncover how historical biases Radigue faced because of her gender identity prevented her music from more widespread institutional support. Rather, my aim is to explore how Radigue’s collaborative creative practice *itself* was incompatible with the machinery of the Western classical music marketplace, making it unwelcome in mainstream cultural institutions.²⁸

²⁵ Most of the external support she did receive was from American composers and US universities. See Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*.

²⁶ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 60.

²⁷ Radigue, “Éliane Radigue,” *Purple Magazine*.

²⁸ By “classical music marketplace,” I am referring here to the platforms (venues, concerts, streaming services, social media websites, universities, and conservatories)—where vendors (publishers, composers, performers, ensembles, festivals, agents, publicity firms, educational institutions) can come together to sell their products or

As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello describe in *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (2017), capitalist power structures necessarily incentivize certain actions, behaviors, and ways of thinking as a means of preserving and legitimizing the power structures behind the economic system:

The spirit of capitalism is precisely the set of beliefs associated with the capitalist order that helps to justify this order and, by legitimating them, to sustain the forms of action and predispositions compatible with it. These justifications, whether general or practical, local or global, expressed in terms of virtue or justice, support the performance of more or less unpleasant tasks and, more generally, adherence to a lifestyle conducive to the capitalist order ... a majority of those involved—the strong as well as the weak—rely on these schemas in order to represent to themselves the operation, benefits and constraints of the order in which they find themselves immersed.²⁹

In this view, artists whose creative work circumvents traditional capitalist models of production, commodification, and distribution will be excluded by the very same economic forces that they attempt to bypass. The classical music marketplace, despite the well-meaning intentions of many of its individual actors, necessarily rewards capitalist behaviors and disincentivizes those that make the sale and commodification of music more difficult. This raises questions about how certain creative musical communities and creators themselves face exclusion precisely because they effectively sidestep market forces.

Creators throughout the history of Western music have been excluded due to their identities—their religion, skin color, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, geographical location, and cultural background. In the work of composers like Radigue, it becomes clear that exclusion may also originate in the failure of a creator's artistic practice to conform to the capitalist order. I hope that this perspective will offer a fresh starting point for

services (scores, recordings, new compositions, live performances, workshops, educational materials, personalities, mythologies) to a curated customer base.

²⁹ Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, 10–11.

forging new avenues of understanding in the efforts to reconsider Radigue's place in a more inclusive history of twentieth and twenty-first century Western music.

Methodology

The information in the following study comes largely from unpublished interviews with Radigue's performer-collaborators conducted by the author. This includes interviews with Charles Curtis, Carol Robinson, Kasper Toeplitz, Rhodri Davies, Julia Eckhardt, Frédéric Blondy, Robin Hayward, Angharad Davies, Dominic Lash, Nate Wooley, Xavier Charles, Sylvia Tarozzi, Judith Hamann, and Kaffe Matthews. Publicly available program notes and personal reflections written by these performers, publicly available interviews with Radigue, as well as a 2019 off-the-record meeting in Paris between the author and Radigue also inform this analysis.

Chapter 1: Radigue's Early Encounters with Collaboration and Collective Authorship

1.1 The Freedom of Composing Alone

Composing was a solitary practice for the vast majority of Éliane Radigue's creative life. After unpleasant early experiences assisting "the damndest machos"¹ in the electronic music studio, Radigue turned inward, embracing a compositional practice that requires no labor outside herself—no assistants, no collaborators, no outside artistic input.

With her ARP 2500 synthesizer, Radigue created pieces alone in the living room of her Paris apartment. For over thirty years, she carried out an often painstaking, meticulous, and tirelessly self-reflective process. She would begin each piece by determining her sound material. After settling on specific oscillator settings, she would record the output of the synthesizer while carefully adjusting the dials, changing slightly the filter settings, and thus transforming certain parameters of the sound.² "The aim," as Radigue describes, "was to make the sound progress through slightly changing one of the parameters of the constituent parts of this mass of sound."³ She would then combine these shorter recorded passages—which were usually at least ten minutes in duration—in real-time using three Revox ¼ inch reel-to-reel tape recorders.⁴ Using long crossfades, Radigue blended these prerecorded segments into a single, much longer form.⁵ This mixing stage of the process was particularly taxing because "it had to be done in one go."⁶

¹ Bécourt, "Éliane Radigue: The Mysterious Power Of The Infinitesimal."

² Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 57–58.

³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 115.

⁴ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 57–58.

⁵ Rodgers, 57–58.

As Radigue describes, “If something went wrong at eighty minutes, I had to start all over again.”⁷

Radigue’s creative practice with electronics was centered on a disciplined and focused inner listening. In a highly reflective procedure, she would listen to her mixes over and over, changing her frame of mind—and listening—each time. As Radigue recalls, she would employ, “distracted listening ... listening that waits for sounds to call out; technical listening ... and listening where you simply give in to the pleasure of letting the sounds pass. All the pieces I made alone were subjected to at least four or five different types of listening before being delivered.”⁸ Radigue admits that her method was, “fairly ascetic”—made without interactions with other human beings.⁹ All-in-all, Radigue’s reclusive process was slow, deliberate, and devoid of any external artistic input or interpersonal dialogue.

Against the backdrop of this reclusive working method, Radigue’s turn toward creating an entirely collaborative instrumental composition in 2001 is all the more remarkable. It also raises some important questions: Why did Radigue pursue such an independent working method for so long and what was the impetus to change? It is crucial, in seeking answers to these questions, to first chart Radigue’s early encounters with creative collaboration as an assistant to Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry at the Studio d’Essai and the Applications de Procédés Sonores en Musique Électroacoustique (APSOME) in the 1950s and 60s.

⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 119.

⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 119.

⁸ Radigue and Eckhardt, 148.

⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 147.

1.2 Collective Creation in the Electronic Studio

At the age of twenty-three, Radigue was introduced to Pierre Schaeffer at a roundtable discussion in Paris.¹⁰ An early radio broadcast of his seminal *études of chemins de fer* (1948) for manipulated railroad sounds had caught the attention of Radigue, who was at the time dreaming of her own, more holistic approach to composition—much like Schaeffer’s, in which, “flights are music ... water in a pipe is music”—where everything can become music depending on the way one listens to it.¹¹

After this initial face-to-face meeting, Schaeffer asked her to join the Studio d’Essai at the Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française (RTF) as an intern. Radigue, who was living in Nice with her husband Arman (an avant-garde sculptor and leading figure in the French Nouveaux Réalistes movement) and looking after their young children, decided to take up the offer, despite the practical challenges the situation presented. This opportunity to gain access to cutting-edge audio technology for her own potential creative pursuits was too hard to pass up.¹²

At the Studio d’Essai, Radigue’s main point of contact was composer Pierre Henry.¹³ Henry carried out most of the day-to-day operations of the studio and thus oversaw the majority of Radigue’s practical training. For three years, she worked on and off as an unpaid volunteer to sort, slice, splice, and edit tapes according to Henry’s instructions. In Radigue’s words, she was, “neither an assistant nor a student.” In return, she was able to work in one of the only studios for

¹⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 64.

¹¹ Radigue, “Éliane Radigue,” *Purple Magazine*.

¹² As Radigue recalls: “We were in the south of France, and it was difficult to get the necessary equipment, which at that time was very expensive and very rare.” Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 55.

¹³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 65. Schaeffer spent the majority of his day directing the Société de Radiodiffusion de la France d’Outre-Mer [the French overseas broadcasting company] and so he only worked at the studio at night.

electronic music creation in the world, to encounter guest composers like Yannis Xenakis and Pierre Boulez, and learn from two pioneers in the burgeoning field of musique concrète composition.¹⁴

In these early days, Radigue witnessed firsthand the problematic hierarchies that plagued the electronic music studio. In 1958, after three years of assisting Henry at the Studio d'Essai, Radigue's internship was cut short following a quarrel between Pierre Henry and Pierre Schaeffer over authorship and the division of labor. As Radigue described the situation, "The majority of the time, Pierre Henry, who was younger, did all the work and Pierre Schaeffer signed it. Pierre Henry would have really liked to be able to sign for himself every now and then."¹⁵ Radigue, who was similarly not acknowledged for her work, sympathized with Henry, "I could understand him and I said as much, which Pierre Schaeffer took very badly."¹⁶

When reflecting on her interactions with Schaeffer and Henry at the Studio d'Essai, Radigue described them both as "the damndest machos."¹⁷ As a young woman placed in-between these two established composers vying for authorial credit, Radigue was trapped in an unwelcoming work environment built around unequal power dynamics and divisions of labor. And yet, she had little choice since, in an era where equipment essential to electronic music composition was not yet widely commercially available, she had few if any alternatives.¹⁸

¹⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 65.

¹⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 71.

¹⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 71.

¹⁷ Sannicandro, "François J. Bonnet (Kassel Jaeger) on Éliane Radigue, the GRM, and Quebec."

¹⁸ Gender discrimination profoundly impacted Radigue early on, when she was highly dependent on well-resourced institutions that were run by men to gain access to the essential equipment needed to create and manipulate electronic sound. In 1956, a year after starting her informal internship at the Studio d'Essai, Pierre Schaeffer wrote a glowing letter of recommendation to the director of La Maison de la Radio Niçoise in an attempt to get permission for Radigue to gain access to essential audio equipment at an institution closer to home. As Radigue recalls, "The director patently assessed my anatomy much more than my potential talent. His reply was that there wasn't any free

In the years in which Radigue was forming a picture of the world of music composition, she was observing how the unpaid work of assistants that was essential to the creation of labor-intensive electronic music went completely unacknowledged. (It is revealing that the argument between Schaeffer and Henry left Radigue entirely out of the equation, despite her work being central to the compositional process.) Schaeffer and Henry's notorious fights over authorship not only prematurely ended Radigue's time at the Studio d'Essai, but also put on display their attachment to the Western idea that "great" music must be the work of a sole artistic creator. Entangled in these ideas are capitalist notions of individualism, competition, and ownership. In this framework, the collective labor of multiple individuals is reduced to the work of a single person who, alone, is able to invent, innovate, and pioneer new methods that advance humanity. These are all principles that Radigue's later collaborative instrumental works would challenge.

In the late 1960s, after returning to Paris following an inspiring year in New York City, Radigue reconnected with Pierre Henry. Radigue agreed to assist Henry at his newly founded electronic music studio, APSOME.¹⁹ She soon found herself undertaking a grueling amount of the preparation work, spending fourteen to sixteen hours a day cutting, splicing, and sorting tapes (again on a volunteer basis).²⁰ In the lead up to the premiere, Radigue describes the work environment at Pierre Henry's studio as becoming progressively more hostile. "The preparation was utterly daunting. I installed his two Tolana phonogènes in my home because we could not work together in the studio. I would return with packets of his tapes and he would give me

time in the studio and that he wasn't interested." Not permitted to work at the Maison de la Radio Niçoise, Radigue needed to continue her frequent 10-hour-plus train journeys to the Studio d'Essai in Paris from Nice if she wanted to keep up with her work with electronic sound. Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 69–70.

¹⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 74–75. At the time, Henry was working on his monumental, nearly two-hour musique concrète oratorio *Apocalypse de Jean* (1968) and needed help after the departure of his longtime assistant.

²⁰ Bécourt, "Éliane Radigue: The Mysterious Power of the Infinitesimal."

instructions to prepare several edits for him in order to undertake his selected mixes.”²¹ Before too long, the situation became untenable as Henry’s temper flared. Radigue describes that there was one instance in which Henry “flew into a terrific fury, yelling at me abusively.”²²

Radigue was again facing an uncomfortably inequitable working environment where, as an unpaid assistant, she had little bargaining power to advocate for better treatment. Despite her clear dedication to the work, the behavior of her older, more established male mentor—in the confines of an uncomfortably small electronic music studio—made the situation tense. The power dynamic was problematic from the start. When the verbal abuse began, it only accelerated Radigue’s desire to distance herself from an increasingly toxic professional relationship. Radigue had finally reached her breaking point. Following the concert, Henry reached out again to Radigue for help with the score to his *La Noire à Soixante* (1961) and, as she elegantly put it, “I flatly refused.”²³ This marked the definitive end of Éliane Radigue’s collaborative work in the male-dominated electronic music studios.²⁴

As an unpaid assistant, Radigue was neither acknowledged for her labor nor her artistry, even when, as often was the case, her edits were essential to the pieces.²⁵ Schaeffer and Henry went as far as to actively discourage Radigue from composing. She recalls that when she would devote time to her own music, “these two men were completely angry at me for what I was

²¹ Bécourt.

²² Bécourt.

²³ Bécourt.

²⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 109–11. Radigue did return to a shared electronic studio space in 1970 as part of a yearlong residency at NYU, but she pursued independent work there.

²⁵ “I contributed to various pieces without anyone knowing it.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 109–11.

doing. I was the black duck of the family!”²⁶ Radigue made efforts to foster friendships with both figures after their professional falling out. Even after coming into her own as a composer later on, neither Schaeffer nor Henry acknowledged her as an artist. In response to listening to one of Radigue’s pieces from the 1960s Pierre Henry exclaimed, “What are you doing? It’s meaningless. There is nothing!”²⁷ Similarly, Pierre Schaeffer arrived at a performance of Radigue’s *Adnos* trilogy in Paris in the early 80s and quickly walked out.²⁸

Radigue believes that their treatment of her stems from aesthetic differences: “Because I was working the way I am working, which was absolutely an injury toward the basic principle of musique concrète ... I have been rejected by them.”²⁹ These two celebrated figures, while instrumental to the development of Radigue’s technical skills, did not appear to take her creative pursuits seriously. In fact, as Radigue recalls, they more often dismissed her music outright—even aggressively at times. When Pierre Henry first listened to one of her early compositions, for instance, Radigue recalls that, “he really got mad, he was almost insulting me. The only thing nice that he said was, I considered you the best of my assistants, and look at what you are doing!”³⁰ Radigue adds that his response made it seem like Henry was expecting her to follow in his own footsteps.³¹ But rather than falling in line, Radigue explains, “I’ve always been digging in the direction where I want to go, without paying any attention to how it was perceived.”³²

²⁶ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 59.

²⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 71.

²⁸ Radigue and Eckhardt, 71.

²⁹ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 59.

³⁰ Rodgers, 59.

³¹ Rodgers, 59.

³² Rodgers, 59.

Despite all the negative feedback she received from these more established composers, Radigue went her own way, rejecting the usual mentor-mentee devotional relationship and stylistic mirroring.

1.3 Responding to Gender Discrimination and Privilege

The poor treatment Radigue faced as an assistant in these early years may be more than simply a reflection of Schaeffer and Henry's traditional attitudes toward authorship and collaborative creative work. Undoubtedly, Radigue's gender and youth also played a part. Radigue recalls, for example, overhearing one studio technician at the Studio d'Essai say, "what's good about having Éliane in the studio is that at least it smells good."³³ But when asked to reflect on the discrimination she faced, Radigue explained, "I don't want to burden myself with problems I can't solve. I prefer to leave it behind me as much as possible—not cluttering myself with problems but keeping the mind clear enough to try to make the best of what I want to and can do."³⁴

When facing discrimination, Radigue's *modus vivendi* was to transcend those structural forces that she feared might otherwise hold her back. In the 1960s and 70s, when second-wave feminism spread across the Western world, Radigue found herself in ideological support of the cause, but with no desire to take part in direct political activism. When approached by a feminist group at CalArts in California in the 1970s, for example, Radigue recalls her hesitance to join their collective: "I explained to them that I didn't have enough energy to do everything, that if I committed myself to feminism, I would do nothing else. I need a lot of energy to provide myself

³³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 80.

³⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, 81.

the means to make the music I wanted to make.”³⁵ She chose to view her work in the male-dominated fields of music composition and music technology as itself a feminist intervention. One of the feminist activists, as Radigue recalls, “had the good taste to say that the fact of being who I am and doing what I do was already in itself a feminist act. I think this responds to the question of my engagement with feminism.”³⁶

One could critique such a conscious distancing from the political as an ideological position of privilege that only someone with financial security could obtain. Following her separation from her husband Arman in 1967, Radigue and their children were supported financially through Arman’s family wealth and through the fruits of his numerous artistic successes.³⁷ Never again did Radigue *need* to earn money from her craft. In this respect, Radigue was indeed in a position of privilege, with the financial security to make such an intentional separation between her work and more direct political advocacy in the feminist movement. This position of privilege also potentially shaped the types of music and financial arrangements that Radigue sought throughout her career—a fact that Radigue readily acknowledges. “I didn’t have to pay attention to making money. I could just go with all of my fantasies with sounds. I was free in that sense.”³⁸ Radigue was able to remove herself from the capitalist marketplace and thus did not necessarily require the financial support of commissioners, festivals, and ensembles to make a living.

But Radigue’s attitude toward the gender discrimination she faced is also inextricably tied to the societal environment in which she grew up. Despite Simone de Beauvoir’s

³⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 81.

³⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 81.

³⁷ Radigue, “Éliane Radigue,” *Purple Magazine*.

³⁸ Radigue, *Purple Magazine*.

groundbreaking book *Le Deuxième Sexe* being published in 1949, in post-war France a “woman’s prime role,” as Claire Laubier writes in *The Condition of Women in France: 1945 to the Present*, “was still seen as that of a wife and mother.”³⁹ Women, above all else, “were expected to give priority to her household tasks and to her duties to her husband and children.”⁴⁰ And in fact, Radigue was, in large part, the primary caretaker of her children.⁴¹ When her husband’s career took off in the early 1960s, she recalls, “I had our three children to raise and my priorities were clear.”⁴² Pierre Shaeffer and Pierre Henry’s failure to acknowledge Radigue’s essential work was very much in line with the way women’s labor was systemically undervalued at the time. While many French women were forced to work in the labor market to help repair the country’s decimated economy following the Second World War, Laubier adds, “the male establishment did not give them credit for their double role as workers both inside and outside the home.”⁴³

As a young woman—growing up in France in the 1940s and 50s—Radigue would have experienced this inequality, learning and internalizing the methods that the women around her employed to survive, thrive, and advance their careers. For instance, she observed that trailblazing French female composers like Nadia and Lili Boulanger were able to have thriving careers as musicians as long as they did not become professional threats to their male peers.⁴⁴

³⁹ Laubier, *The Condition of Women in France*, 2.

⁴⁰ Laubier, 2.

⁴¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 70.

⁴² Warburton, “Into the Labyrinth,” 29.

⁴³ Laubier, *The Condition of Women in France*, 2.

⁴⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 79. “Both sisters first came to public attention when they entered the Prix de Rome, the most important composition prize for Paris Conservatoire students ... Nadia Boulanger’s best placing was the second prize she won in 1908, and many commentators believe that sexual discrimination prevented her from winning outright.” Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, xi.

For Nadia Boulanger, in particular, this meant focusing on teaching and composing in genres like art songs that were “traditionally associated with the lady amateur composers.”⁴⁵ And even then, Radigue laments, their music, “disappeared into oblivion, or just about, like many other women.”⁴⁶

For Radigue, she similarly navigated the electronic studio space with an awareness that, in order to pursue her own interests, she would need to appear nonthreatening to her male colleagues. As Radigue explains, “to the extent that I could cut up magnetic tape for hours ... and, as long I didn’t aim for anything else, I was well received.”⁴⁷ And so Radigue’s “keep your head down” response to the gender discrimination she faced might also be interpreted as simply a method of survival—as a way for her to dodge the oppressive forces of gender discrimination—and focus rather on her own creative work. This resilience and adaptability, in this light, was a technique she learned from the environment in which she first oriented herself, as a young woman, navigating gender inequalities in mid-century France.

Societal expectations took a toll on Radigue, likely impacting how she conceived of herself and her own musical work in her early days. When creating her own compositions in the 1960s, for instance, Radigue was hesitant at first to even classify herself as a composer, or her music as compositions, recalling, “I always thought [becoming a composer] was somehow forbidden ... I never referred to my works back then as compositions, either—I called them ‘propositions sonores.’”⁴⁸ Radigue would eventually feel more liberated to define herself as

⁴⁵ Potter, *Nadia and Lili Boulanger*, xi.

⁴⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 80.

⁴⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 80.

⁴⁸ Warburton, “Into the Labyrinth,” 29.

“composer” and her music as “compositions” as time went on and as she came to accept that her own seriousness and dedication to her craft rivaled that of her more celebrated male colleagues.

At any rate, Radigue was aware of the prejudices she faced as a female composer and woman in the electronic music studio. But she resisted these external perceptions by pursuing her own artistic aspirations. “My stance,” Radigue affirms, “has always been to ignore them. It’s their problem, not mine.”⁴⁹ The men with whom she worked in her younger years frequently diminished her worth by failing to acknowledge her work, skills, talent, artistry, and dedication to her craft. And thankfully, Radigue was in a mental and financial position to “ignore them.”⁵⁰

There are many connections to be drawn between Radigue’s negative experiences at Studio d’Essai and APSOME and her views on music and collaboration in her early career. Following these unpleasant collaborative experiences in the electronic studio, Radigue gravitated toward a more solitary creative practice. Except for two notable exceptions, Radigue created exclusively electronic music on her own for nearly three decades.⁵¹ But this all changed in 2001, which marked a turning point for Radigue—the beginning of a long period of working collaboratively with instrumentalists. She not only transitioned from creating purely electronic

⁴⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 79.

⁵⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 79.

⁵¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 128. In 1972, Radigue wrote a piano piece for Gérard Frémy—the first work of Radigue’s to feature an acoustic instrument. *Geelriandre*, for amplified prepared piano and a multi-track recording of Radigue’s ARP 2500 synthesizer on magnetic tape, is a 30-minute exploration of gong-like timbres on the prepared piano complemented by similarly ringing sounds on Radigue’s synthesizer. The premiere performance at the Gaité Lyrique was Radigue’s first concert in Paris. That same year, she composed *FC. 2000/125* for piano, flute, and voice. Using a similar method, Radigue composed and recorded a fixed media magnetic tape part using her ARP 2500 (p. 180). Unlike *Geelriandre* though, this work has never been performed (p. 180). When reflecting on the experience of working with instrumentalists in this time, Radigue notes how unsatisfied with the outcomes of the process she was. “What I offered didn’t suit them and what they wanted wasn’t what I was looking for, either” (p. 148). Moreover, Radigue was unsatisfied with the combination of electronic and acoustic sounds. She believed that the two modes of sound production, while captivating on their own, negatively impacted one another when combined: “Together, acoustic instruments and electronic sounds present a sort of conflict between two forms, their purity and their original character” (p. 148).

synthesizer-based music to purely acoustic instrumental music, she also transitioned from an inward and solitary compositional process to one that embraced collaboration and collective creation.

When Radigue began working exclusively with instrumentalists in 2001, she developed a collaborative practice all her own. Unsurprisingly, her way of working avoided many of the problematic pitfalls she experienced as an assistant in the electronic studios of Henry and Schaeffer. She crafted a compositional method that resists and reconfigures procedures and concepts that emphasize authority, inequity, and objectification—many of which were inherited from nineteenth-century Western Europe and remain pervasive in concert music today—in favor of those embracing community, collectivity, openness, intimacy, compassion, and imagination.

Chapter 2: Beyond the “Gig Economy”: Radigue and the Community-Based Commissioning Model

The procedures that precede the creative act in Radigue’s collaborative composition will be the focus of this chapter. For the purposes of this study, Radigue’s instrumental works will be divided into two periods: 1) The pre-*Occam* period, which begins in 2001 and consists of *Elemental II* (Kasper Toeplitz, BassComputer)¹ and the *Naldjorlak* trilogy—*Naldjorlak I* (Charles Curtis, solo cello), *Naldjorlak II* (Carol Robinson and Bruno Martinez, basset horns), and *Naldjorlak III* (Charles Curtis, cello; Carol Robinson and Bruno Martinez, basset horns), and 2) The *Occam Ocean* period, which starts in 2011 with the collaboration between Radigue and Rhodri Davies on *OCCAM I* and extends to today.

To better understand how Radigue’s collaborative creative process is resisting and reconfiguring certain normative hierarchies of Western music, one must first articulate exactly what constitutes these normative hierarchies. In the following pages, I will attempt to paint a picture of the normative way that new contemporary Western classical concert music is made, or rather, the normative way it is *conceived* to be made. I will draw upon my own lived experience as an American composer, as well as primary sources from American and British new music organizations, to articulate these frameworks. It should be acknowledged that there are inherent problems with treating any large cultural group as a monolith. Obviously, generalizations will fail to honor the individual and independent viewpoints and methods of creators who may work outside or against these normative frameworks. Nonetheless, these broader conceptions and misconceptions about how new music is and *should* be made are an important and illuminating

¹ A second version of *Elemental II* was made in collaboration with the improvising laptop trio The Lappetites (Kaffe Matthews, AGF, Ryoko Akama) in 2004.

backdrop in which to contextualize Radigue's compositional practice and discover what makes the social formations it constructs particularly resistant and unique.

A number of prominent scholars, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, musicologists, and ethnomusicologists—including Nicholas Cook, Susan McClary, Tia DeNora, Georgina Born, Thomas Turino, and Christopher Small—have outlined, dissected, and critiqued many of the mythologies surrounding the creative process in Western music's historical imagination. These mythologies still make up an essential part of Western audiences' understanding of how music is made and are therefore crucial in grasping the subversiveness of Radigue's creative practice. By examining the social contexts within which Radigue's music was produced, reproduced, interpreted, evaluated, and conceptualized, this dissertation aims to derive meaning from her musical practice as it pushes against the broader tradition of Western classical music.

2.1 The Normative Classical Music Commission Model

Today, by-and-large, composers of Western classical concert music are not able to make a living from their compositions alone.² On the Berklee College of Music's career page for aspiring young composers, for instance, they write:

Almost all concert composers will eventually need a day job to pay the bills ... [some] with advanced degrees ... can find work as music professors. Others might work as music teachers or tutors, assistant conductors, orchestra members, bandleaders, freelance composers, or concert/event producers ... [some] set themselves up as musical freelancers, providing arrangement, orchestration, copyist, and/or transcription services for hire.³

² Spero, "Roll over Beethoven! Classical Music and the Real Gig Economy;" "Composer Commissioning Survey: Results Are In;" Berklee College of Music, "Career Communities: Composer (Concert and Stage)."

³ Berklee College of Music, "Career Communities: Composer (Concert and Stage)."

This describes what economists call the “gig economy”—“gig” being a term borrowed from itinerant jazz musicians⁴—in which a worker must take on numerous short-term contracts or freelance “gigs” as opposed to permanent jobs.⁵ Rather than holding stable jobs with healthcare and retirement benefits, “freelance, sub-contracted, and part-time composers, must research and purchase their own health insurance and plan for their own retirements while also constantly learning new skills, marketing themselves in an increasingly competitive job market, and surfing from gig to gig.”⁶

This situation is not specific to the United States. The 2015 Composer Commissioning Survey conducted by Sound and Music in Australia and the United Kingdom found that out of the 456 composers surveyed, the average commission fee from the UK respondents was £918.⁷ For Australian respondents it was even lower, at £731.⁸ In summarizing their findings, the pollsters concluded that “commissions are not a significant income source for a lot of composers” in the United Kingdom and Australia.⁹

⁴ Partridge et al., *The Concise New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 288.

⁵ See Moore, “Neoliberalism and the Musical Entrepreneur,” for other examples. Interestingly, some universities, like USC Thornton, are now training young musicians specifically to participate in the “gig economy,” creating a self-serving feedback loop. Training musicians to participate in the gig economy further secures the university’s long-term financial interest while disadvantaging these young, prospective workers. This model is cost-effective for employers like universities and orchestras, but clearly disadvantages independent creative artists.

⁶ Ritchey, *Composing Capital*, 81.

⁷ “Composer Commissioning Survey: Results Are In.”

⁸ “Composer Commissioning Survey: Results Are In.”

⁹ “Composer Commissioning Survey: Results Are In.”

When composers *are* earning money for their creative work, they do so mainly through commissions.¹⁰ From my experience, a traditionally conceived commission implies that the composer works “at the behest of a performance group, arts organization, or individual”—the external actors with the finances to fund the creation of new music.¹¹ This raises some important questions about the commissioning process: What is the role of the commissioner and the composer in this process? Who determines which composers deserve to be commissioned and how much money they deserve to be compensated? Who has creative agency over artistic decisions? Who maintains “ownership” over the creative work and its transmission? How does one become involved in this work initiation process?

The American Composer’s Forum, offers a guide for “Commissioning by Individuals.”¹² In it, they articulate more clearly what goes into what I will call the “normative classical music commissioning model” or NCMCM:¹³

By commissioning music—paying composers to write a new piece for a specific purpose or event—individuals or organizations become active participants in the creation of a legacy of music for the future ... anyone can commission a new work ... it can be anyone who is motivated to enrich the world with a new piece of music ... From the moment of inspiration to the exciting premiere performance, there are decisions to be made, ideas to explore, and memorable moments when the commissioner, composer, and performers collaborate to give birth to the new work.¹⁴

¹⁰ Spero, “Roll over Beethoven! Classical Music and the Real Gig Economy;” “Composer Commissioning Survey: Results Are In;” “Career Communities: Composer (Concert and Stage).” These earnings rarely amount to a sustaining wage, even for the most world-renowned composers.

¹¹ “Career Communities: Composer (Concert and Stage).”

¹² American Composer’s Forum, “Commissioning by Individuals.” The Forum is a prominent new music organization with eight chapters in cities around the United States. As an undergraduate student at Temple University, this was the first professional organization outside of the university that supported my work.

¹³ I put this in quotes because, as articulated earlier, it is difficult to generalize. While this concept of the normative classical music commissioning model may differ from person-to-person, it is true to my lived experience.

¹⁴ American Composer’s Forum, “Commissioning by Individuals.”

In this description, the commissioner is initially someone placed outside the artistic community. But through their financial backing, they can then become a part of it, even taking part in the creative decision-making process—on equal footing to the composers and performers.

Embedded in this description is the potential of commissioners to “create a legacy of music for the future.”¹⁵ Music creation is viewed as something primarily for posterity, not for the living, breathing composer, performer, or audience.¹⁶ Compositions are treated as aesthetic capital, or something that “can be laid down, like fine wine, for future enjoyment.”¹⁷ Commissioners become facilitators of greatness; the compositions that they underwrite could possibly become a part of “the canon” of Western music masterpieces—what Lydia Goehr described as “the imaginary museum of musical works.”¹⁸ The act of commissioning a new work is therefore framed as an essentially charitable act—a way for a wealthy donor to selflessly give back to humanity and become a part of making an artistic-historic artifact.¹⁹

In the conceptual frameworks expressed in these documents, a traditionally conceived composer is an independent craftsperson—someone who earns a less-than-living wage creating musical objects of great potential benefit to society at the behest of others. The impetus for creation comes largely from wealthy individuals or organizations, not from the creator, performers, or audience. The donors, philanthropists, and curators are in the position of deciding

¹⁵ American Composer’s Forum, “Commissioning by Individuals.”

¹⁶ And there is certainly no mention of supporting the mundane, yet necessary, living expenses of the composers and performers, like rent or healthcare. Rather the focus is on the object of artistic creation.

¹⁷ Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 29.

¹⁸ Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.

¹⁹ “Charity and Taxation: Sweetened Charity.” In America, such a “donation,” if funneled through a nonprofit like the American Composer’s Forum or New Music USA, would lessen the donor’s tax burden and therefore financially benefit the donor, who meanwhile gains social capital. The government makes up for this lost income from taxes on the less wealthy—made up of those unable to offset their taxes using charitable deductions—further disenfranchising the poor.

who creates music, how much music they create, and how much money they can earn doing it. A person with requisite financial resources can even potentially enter into the creative process to make decisions about the composition. The financial resources to make creative work possible thereby comes from individuals who are themselves detached from the compositional process—but who may want to gain entry to it in some way. Anyone with financial resources, these frameworks suggest, can become enmeshed in the creative process.

The Terms and Expectations of a Commission

Taking a step back, one might ask: How should a commissioner choose who is worthy of a commission in the first place? And what are the terms and expectations?

The “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide” created by Meet the Composer offers some illuminating guidance.²⁰ The document advises that commissioners first choose a composer whose music is personally moving to them. It also recommends that they choose a composer who has the ability to write for the occasion and for the instrumentation that they have in mind.²¹ Tellingly, it is the donor in this configuration that serves as the first gatekeeper, assessing the composer’s skill and competence to create emotionally expressive music for a chosen instrumentation. After the commissioner selects the composer, the guide suggests contacting candidate composers, or their publishers, to request samples of their music.”²²

²⁰ I have used this guide as a reference document on numerous occasions when personally negotiating commission fees with curators and performing ensembles. Meet the Composer is an organization for promoting and supporting American new music that was absorbed into New Music USA on November 11 2011. NewMusicBox Staff, “American Music Center and Meet The Composer Have Officially Merged as New Music USA.”

²¹ “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.”

²² “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.” This guide was last published in 2009. From my own personal experience and from discussions with colleagues, it appears that in more recent years composers are often contacted directly—as many have their own websites, are independently published, or have a public email address at an educational institution.

To determine a commissioning fee, the guide recommends basing it on, “the length of the work, number of performers, the budget of the commissioning party, and the composer’s reputation.”²³ Once the composer is contacted, it is recommended to draft a “commissioning agreement” wherein specific terms are laid out prior to the start of the creative labor.²⁴ This includes, in excerpted form:

- a description of the work: type, length, instrumentation
- the fee and method of payment to the composer
- cost allowances and payment schedule
- limit of composer’s liability should the score not be completed
- licenses granted to the commissioning party (including performance, recording, broadcast, or other uses)
- time periods when exclusive rights are held by the commissioning party
- ownership of score, parts, and recording
- form of credit and dedication to the commissioning party
- licenses granted to the commissioning party, etc.²⁵

These commissioning guidelines are clearly devised in the spirit of a lawful contractual agreement, whereby two parties explicitly lay out all financial liabilities, obligations, rights, and expectations. The type of language and concerns, while very relevant for financial stakeholders, have little impact on the creative process itself. The only language that seems to relate directly to the prospective sounds to be created is the work’s “type, length, and instrumentation.”²⁶ This suggests that the NCMCM prioritizes and protects first and foremost the financial interests of the commissioners while leaving details about the actual prospective artistic work quite vague and open.

²³ “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.”

²⁴ “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.”

²⁵ “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.”

²⁶ “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide.”

The NCMCM, as described here, admittedly provides more freedom for the composer to work in whatever way best suits them. As a creator, I have benefited from this liberating feature. But the entire normative commissioning framework is nonetheless problematically built around the interests of the commissioners, not the creators. This initiation process leaves open so much about the creative work because, arguably, it is irrelevant how the creative work is made or what sorts of ideas it challenges or explores. How a creative work comes to be, and the sort of sounds that it produces, is less important to commissioners—the principal initiators of contemporary classical music today—than capitalist concerns like ownership, rights, and acknowledgement of the donor. In the foreground are not artistic concerns, but rather concepts deeply rooted in economic frameworks that situate art making as just another industry that produces commodities of potential financial value that can be contractually bought and sold in exchange for capital.

The Performer's Role in the Normative Classical Commissioning Model

So far, there has been little mention of how performers and instrumentalists figure into the NCMCM. Both the Meet the Composer “Commissioning Music: A Basic Guide” and the American Composers Forum “Commissioning by Individuals” only briefly mention performers.²⁷ Overall, performers seem to be an afterthought in the initiation of a new work. What does this say about the position of the performer, as traditionally conceived, in the creative process?

First, the main labor to be carried out is the creation of the musical object by the composer. The instrumentalist's interpretation of the composer's score—i.e., making sound from

²⁷ Notably the American Composer's Forum “Commissioning by Individuals” advises potential commissioners that one reason to initiate a commission would be if they, “have a favorite music ensemble or performing arts organization and would like to give them a new work to perform.” Interestingly, in this framework, the commission is principally a way to initiate a performance by an ensemble rather than a new work by a specific creator.

visual representations—is not as important as the creation of the visual score object itself.²⁸ The performer is not mentioned in either of the above documents as being equal to the composer in their role as a creative agent.²⁹ This aligns neatly with nineteenth-century ideas—still widely shared—about performers serving as vessels for composers’ original intentions.³⁰ Such an unequal power dynamic engenders little incentive for the performer to treat the new composition’s performance as anything more than a labor transaction—a gig, or a service in exchange for financial remuneration.³¹

The NCMCM incentivizes performers to take as many gigs as possible. Musicians are both ideologically and financially encouraged to become interchangeable. Because they have little-to-no stake in what is conceived to be the “actual creation”³² of the musical work from its outset, performers are contracted to appear for rehearsals and then the concert—and then disappear.³³ This type of “gig” model encourages instrumentalists to move through as much music as possible while maintaining a certain level of musical and artistic professionalism that

²⁸ Terminologies serve to reinforce these conceptual frameworks. Instrumentalists in the classical tradition are often referred to as “performers” or “interpreters”—i.e. those who communicate or channel creative objects or ideas. Tellingly they are not the originators, the “composers” or “creators” of those ideas, despite being the actors in the traditional creative network who literally generate the sound.

²⁹ The American Composer’s Forum “Guide to Commissioning By Individual” does mention that “the commissioner, composer, and performers [can] collaborate to give birth to the new work.” Despite this language regarding collaboration, the same guide seems to suggest that composers are the primary (if not the only) creative agents in the compositional process.

³⁰ Wilson, “Creating Authentic Performances.”

³¹ Especially in larger performing ensembles like orchestras, this has resulted in musicians reporting that they are unhappy, uninspired, and disengaged with the music that they perform. See Price, “Pit of Despair.”

³² I put this in quotes because instrumentalists, on many levels, are actually “creating” the music, even when interpreting musical notation in traditional nineteenth-century Western European frameworks.

³³ From my experience, when universities, conservatories, festivals, and ensembles contract musicians to perform composers’ new works—especially those that the ensemble has not selected on their own through democratic means—this transactional relationship is most pronounced. But further ethnographic study here is needed.

ensures future engagements.³⁴ Developing personal connections with the music and its creator(s) is time consuming. Building these lasting personal relationships would offer little financial benefit to an enterprising performer whose time, in the “gig economy,” is already largely consumed with administrative tasks and juggling multiple jobs.³⁵

In the NCMCM, external commissioners are the principal gatekeepers to the creation of new musical works. These actors—often-wealthy individuals, arts organizations, or curators—decide which composers deserve to be paid for their creative work. They also decide general features of the proposed creative work, including its approximate length, performing forces, and venue. The composer works at the behest of these external actors, meeting their expectations and contractual obligations as a condition of receiving payment. Performers are largely left out of the initiation process and are treated as secondary to the composer and the composer’s creation of the score. This places the commissioner—the person with financial resources—at the top of the NCMCM hierarchy, followed by the composer, and lastly the performer.

2.2 Toward A More Equitable “Commissioning” Model

Setting the Stage

Éliane Radigue’s compositional process is largely free of the power dynamics that come along with a model of work initiation fueled by the external expectations of donors, curators, ensembles, and artistic organizations. In the years that she composed music using her ARP 2500 synthesizer (1972–2000), Radigue mainly created out of her own inner impulse to generate and

³⁴ According to Emily S. Wozniak and Paul R. Judy, “Alternative Ensembles: A Study of Emerging Musical Arts Organizations,” the instrumentalists of the small contemporary music ensembles in the United States that they interviewed place artistic excellence in a position of paramount importance, despite limited financial incentives.

³⁵ Moore, “Neoliberalism and the Musical Entrepreneur.”

mold sound.³⁶ As Charles Curtis describes it, composing was simply a part of her daily practice—it had its own inner structure, logic, and motivation.³⁷ External forces such as commissioners, competitions, or prizes did not, by contrast, motivate it, nor was it sparked by contractual agreements.³⁸ This was largely because of Radigue’s relative obscurity—an unfortunate product of various cultural, biographical, and economic factors that left her sidelined from official and institutional channels (most notably in her home country of France).³⁹ Curtis suggests that this exclusion manifests itself as a sense of freedom in Radigue’s music—“freedom from self-assertion, from the pressure of commissions, from the tyranny of deadlines.”⁴⁰

Radigue’s compositional process could therefore take an enormous amount of time—and it did. It was punctuated by long stretches in which she would intentionally distance herself from her material so that she could make more objective revisions. As she describes it, she would compile a collection of segments of sonic material on her ARP 2500, and then “forget about it for at least one month, maybe two—to come back to listen to all this tape with fresh ears.”⁴¹ And then, as Radigue recalls, “at least half of it goes to be thrown away.”⁴² Radigue’s financial

³⁶ One notable exception is *Triptych* (1978). On the suggestion of Robert Ashley, American choreographer Douglas Dunn commissioned it from Éliane Radigue for dance. Holterbach, “Éliane Radigue: Triptych.”

³⁷ Charles Curtis draws an interesting connection here between Radigue’s musical practice and her daily meditation as a Buddhist. “You could see her music as a personal practice, just as she now has a meditation practice. Every single day, every morning, she spends hours meditating. That’s just what you do as a serious Buddhist. And that idea of a personal practice that has its own logic and has its own structure and has its own motivation was in place for her long before she encountered Buddhism. Buddhism really just confirms it.” Curtis, interview.

³⁸ “As a woman, working largely in what would now be described as a ‘DIY’ mode,” Curtis writes, Radigue nonetheless, “[continued] to produce work after work despite her underground status.” Curtis, “The Incorporeal Music of Éliane Radigue [Manuscript in Preparation].”

³⁹ Curtis, “The Incorporeal Music of Éliane Radigue [Manuscript in Preparation].”

⁴⁰ Curtis.

⁴¹ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 58.

⁴² Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 58.

independence put her in a position where she was able to take her time, to cultivate a creative practice built on a slow, deliberate, and highly self-critical process of revision. In doing so, she was able to transcend the capitalist market forces and work on music that she wanted to write for herself, at her own pace, without the dangling carrot of financial remuneration from external actors.

Without the fetters of capitalism, Radigue was able to pursue, in many ways, what Theodor Adorno theorized to be “autonomous” artwork. In his *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), Adorno theorized about the role of capitalism in shaping artistic creation. He suggested that all works of art created in the capitalist system are necessarily bound by structures of capitalism.⁴³ He dreamed of an “autonomous” artwork, free of the confines of capitalism. But this was only possible if the work (and its creator) existed outside of the capitalist framework. It seems that, through Radigue’s independent wealth, she was able to create in this idealized way. Because she was able to sustain herself from her own family wealth, she had no need to compete for grants, commissions, or more widespread recognition. She did not need to cater to market forces or to the mercurial and fleeting tastes of paying concert audiences or wealthy donors.

When Radigue made the shift to instrumental composition in 2001, she largely maintained these independent working conditions at first. She remained unencumbered by outside donors, curators, or arts organizations. There were no deadlines or donors to appease, nor external expectations to meet. And it was only Radigue and her performer-collaborators who had artistic agency and the power of decision-making in the creative process. One notable difference from her process of electronic music making is the role that Radigue played in initiating a new

⁴³ Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 65–68.

work. Rather than embarking on a new piece from her inner impulses, it was the performers who initiated the process.

In the pre-*Occam* period, performers most often came in contact with Radigue through informal social gatherings or via mutual friends and acquaintances.⁴⁴ In these preliminary conversations, the idea of working together would often organically emerge. In this flipped initiation model, it was the performers who provided the impetus for a new instrumental work, not the composer or external commissioners. This reconfiguration gives an enormous amount of power to independent instrumentalists who were personally drawn to the music of Radigue. It also meant that performers had an important hand in shaping the trajectory of Radigue's compositional practice. After all, it was not Radigue's idea to compose for instrumentalists in the first place. In fact, as we will discover, she was at first quite resistant to the idea.

In the following three subsections on the initiation process for collaborations between Radigue and Kasper Toeplitz (*Elemental II*), Radigue and Charles Curtis (*Naldjorlak I*), and Radigue and Rhodri Davies (*OCCAM I*), the information gleaned, unless otherwise indicated, was from unpublished interviews with the instrumentalists conducted by the author.

⁴⁴ Bruno Martinez, the third member of the *Naldjorlak III* trio, is one exception from this period. He was recommended to Radigue by American clarinetist and composer Carol Robinson. Notably, for two of the three principal performers of *Naldjorlak* and *Elemental II*, this initial connection was made through an American composer who was close friends with Radigue—Kasper Toeplitz through Phill Niblock and Carol Robinson through Tom Johnson. Johnson also connected Rhodri Davies with Radigue in 2010. Throughout Radigue's career, she received the majority of her creative encouragement and support from American composers. See Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 109. Radigue recalls: "I had great encouragement from wonderful people, other musicians—Bob Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier, all these people—who immediately respected my work, which was very encouraging because it was a mutual admiration. And in fact, I've found this family over here in the United States. I used to say that my real family in terms of musicians is here. In France, I have been very much alone for a long time." Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 59–60.

Kasper Toeplitz (*Elemental II*): First Contact

Polish-born French composer and electric bassist Kasper Toeplitz was the first person to request an instrumental work from Radigue.⁴⁵ In 1999, he reached out to her about writing him a new piece for his specially designed BassComputer.⁴⁶ Toeplitz wanted to commission composers who—like him—explored, with electronic sound, the intersections between noise and pitch in works of extended duration. He thought Radigue would be an ideal potential composer to commission. With the help of American composer and filmmaker Phill Niblock—who Toeplitz was also courting for the project—he met Radigue at an informal social gathering in Paris.⁴⁷ After meeting in person, he arranged to meet with Radigue again one-on-one a number of times. Each time they met, he would suggest that Radigue compose for him a new piece for BassComputer. And each time she would refuse. This went on for over two years.⁴⁸ Radigue finally relented only when she could guarantee from Toeplitz noncommitment. “One day I agreed to try,” Radigue recalls, “explaining that if it didn’t work we wouldn’t be angry about

⁴⁵ It is unclear if Gérard Frey specifically requested that Radigue write *Geelriandre* (1972) for amplified prepared piano and a multi-track recording of Radigue’s ARP 2500 or if it was Radigue’s initiative. The same goes for the never performed *FC. 2000/125* (1972) for piano, flute, and voice.

⁴⁶ He had developed an augmented electric bass he called the BassComputer—an electric bass with five fretted strings and four unfretted strings—which he then routed through an assortment of self-designed electronic effects in MAX/msp.

⁴⁷ For years, Phill Niblock had been a great supporter of Radigue’s, dating back to the early 1970s. In 1974, he organized the first retrospective of Radigue’s works at The Kitchen in New York City—a three-night mini festival called “Three nights of four years work.” Radigue and Girard, *Entretiens Avec Éliane Radigue*, 65–66. Toeplitz was also commissioning Niblock to write for his BassComputer at the time. Toeplitz, interview.

⁴⁸ Radigue gave Toeplitz a number of reasons for her initial quite prolonged reticence. She had not written a piece for an instrumentalist for over thirty years. She was not familiar with the abilities and techniques of the electric bass. She also felt that she could not add anything to Toeplitz’s playing. Toeplitz, interview.

it.”⁴⁹ Their collaboration would become *Elemental II*, her first instrumental work in over thirty years, marking a turning point in her compositional career.

Charles Curtis (*Naldjorlak*): First Contact

American cellist Charles Curtis first connected with Radigue in Paris in 2003 after premiering La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela’s monumental *Just Charles & Cello in The Romantic Chord* in a setting of *Abstract #1 from Quadrilateral Phase Angle Traversals with Dream Light* (2003).⁵⁰ In the lead up to the concert, Curtis told his circle of friends that he would love to meet Radigue and hoped that she would attend his performance. Word spread to Radigue through multiple contacts. After the concert, they spoke. As Curtis describes, this informal conversation, along with a throwaway comment from a colleague, launched their collaboration.⁵¹ This friendly post-concert encounter turned into an alliance that would lead to Radigue’s first work for an orchestral instrument—*Naldjorlak I*. After this initial meeting, Curtis, who was based in California, corresponded via letters with Radigue. When he requested in writing that they work together, Radigue replied, “Where, when and how?”⁵²

Rhodri Davies (*OCCAM I*): First Contact

Welsh harpist, improviser, and composer Rhodri Davies was very well acquainted with Radigue’s electronic music when he first reached out to her by phone in late 2005. He loved her music at the time, describing her as one of his favorite composers. In a profile and interview with

⁴⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 147. This commitment to noncommitment would become a staple of Radigue’s collaborative compositional practice to be discussed later.

⁵⁰ “Just Charles 2003.”

⁵¹ “We sort of looked at each other and then Gérard Pape, the composer who was introducing us, almost on a whim, said to her, ‘Well, Éliane, why don’t you make your next piece for Charles?’ She sort of laughed, and I laughed.” Curtis, interview.

⁵² Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 150.

Radigue in an October 2005 issue of *The Wire*, Davies became intrigued by a graphic score she mentioned titled *Asymptote Versatile* from 1960.⁵³ He thought that Radigue might be willing to share it with him so that he could potentially perform it on harp. As he recalls, “I rang her up and asked if she would be interested in working with an acoustic instrument.”⁵⁴ According to Davies, Radigue swiftly responded, “No, no, absolutely not.”⁵⁵ And so Davies thought that was the end of that idea. Years later, in May of 2010, Davies was playing a solo at Les Instants Chavirés in Paris when saxophonist Bertrand Gauget arranged a meeting between Davies and Radigue. As Davies describes, “she invited me around for tea the next day, which was incredible.”⁵⁶ After their first meeting, Davies sent Radigue some recordings of his playing including his album *Over Shadows* which features mainly sustaining sounds on the harp. Radigue replied in a letter, “Yes, I enjoyed your CD. That sounds familiar to my ears. I can understand why you might be interested in working on a project together.”⁵⁷ Rhodri replied with another two CDs. In September 2010, Radigue replied, “Thank you for your letter and the two CDs ... there’s something quite interesting and beautiful here ... As a first step we’ll have to work some exploration together. I also have some ideas about it ... let’s go on with this project. We’ll know only about it if it

⁵³ “Unfortunately, few of [her works from this time] survive. ‘The only piece from the period that I kept, because it took so long to make and I still like the way it looks, is a graphic score from 1960 entitled *Asymptote Versatile*.’ Radigue continues. ‘I calculated logarithmic curves derived from the Fibonacci series and drew them on transparent paper. If you lay them on top of traditional manuscript paper they can be performed as sustained tones by traditional instruments.’” Warburton, “Into the Labyrinth,” 29.

⁵⁴ Davies, interview.

⁵⁵ Davies, interview.

⁵⁶ Davies, interview.

⁵⁷ Radigue, letter to Davies, June 7, 2010.

works at the end.”⁵⁸ They arranged to meet in January of 2011 to start the collaboration that would become *OCCAM I*, the first piece in the monumental *Occam Ocean* series.⁵⁹

Davies’ initial contact with Radigue became the norm for most instrumentalists who came after him. The vast majority of performers in the *Occam Ocean* series reached out to Radigue on their own about collaborating on a new work.⁶⁰ In the later *Occam Ocean* period, once it became clear that Radigue was regularly writing instrumental works, most performers contacted Radigue with the help of instrumentalists with whom she already collaborated via phone, letter, or email. In these initial correspondences, if Radigue was unfamiliar with the instrumentalist’s playing, she requested recordings. Based on these, Radigue would assess if the performer had the experience and knowledge needed to perform her music.

Preselection Bias

This process of getting in touch with Radigue was, at first, quite notably exclusive. A performer would need to know of Radigue’s music,⁶¹ know that she was actively writing instrumental works,⁶² and somehow have Radigue’s contact information through a mutual friend or colleague. Though, as Radigue describes it, this “flipped” way of initiating a new work does not have its roots in exclusivity. “Generally,” Radigue explains, “it’s the musicians who approach me. It’s not out of vanity, it’s simply because you would need to know my work, you

⁵⁸ Radigue, letter to Davies, September 1, 2010.

⁵⁹ Davies, interview.

⁶⁰ With the exception of Carol Robinson—who Radigue asked personally to create *Naldjorlak II and III*.

⁶¹ Her music was not widely known outside of niche experimental electronic music communities in the early 2000s—in particular, those in the United States. See Curtis, “The Incorporeal Music of Éliane Radigue [Manuscript in Preparation].”

⁶² At the time of writing *OCCAM I* in 2011, there were only a total of four recent instrumental compositions by Radigue—*Elemental II*, and *Naldjorlak I, II, III*.

would need to have a desire to play it. Otherwise it's not possible."⁶³ Considering her relative obscurity amongst instrumentalists in the early 2000s, this already narrowed down the field of potential collaborators quite significantly. This performer-led initiation model thus served to "preselect" those musicians who were most prepared and enthusiastic to perform her music.

Indeed, these early collaborations were mainly limited to a small community of like-minded performers. The majority of instrumentalists who had access to Radigue's contact information through colleagues were already prefigured to work well with her because they were familiar with her sound world and approach. Many of the performers who worked with Radigue in the early years of the *Occam Ocean* series, for instance, were friends or artistic collaborators connected, in some way, to London's "Reductionist" music scene of the early 2000s. This loosely defined community of improvisers often explored alternative tuning systems, extended techniques, very soft and quiet dynamics, silence, extended durations, and unconventional sounds and timbres in their improvisations and compositions.⁶⁴ Because of these shared stylistic and theoretical affinities, these performers were already positioned to work well with Radigue. And so, in the early years of these instrumental compositions, because networks of like-minded performers facilitated the initiation process, Radigue rarely turned anyone down.

Commitment to Noncommitment

If Radigue determined that a prospective instrumentalist had the requisite experience and knowledge needed to perform her music, she would arrange a time for them to meet in person, in Paris, to potentially begin work on a new piece. But notably, Radigue would never commit to an end product. In fact, she would insist on a commitment to noncommitment. In Radigue's

⁶³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 154.

⁶⁴ Spencer, "Axel Dörner and Robin Hayward: Review."

preliminary correspondence with Davies, for instance, she wrote, “We’ll see or hear if something interesting can come out. The risk is for both of us of not succeeding in doing something we totally agree with.”⁶⁵ In a follow-up letter she wrote, “As a first step we’ll have to work some exploration together. I’ve also some ideas about it ... let’s go on this project we’ll know only about it if it works at the end.”⁶⁶ In their first meeting, Silvia Tarozzi (*OCCAM II*) recalls Radigue saying, “We have no deadline, and we can’t have a deadline, because the deadline is when the piece is ready. And the piece is ready when it’s ready.”⁶⁷

Some performers, like Robin Hayward, came with no expectations of actually forming a new piece. “I just went to her because people had asked me to go to her and I hadn’t envisioned it becoming a solo piece. It just became that.”⁶⁸ Similarly, Judith Hamann, who was one of the most recent performers to collaborate with Radigue (alongside Cat Hope on *OCCAM RIVER XXIV* for flute and cello), explains, “When I got to Paris, we were just going to meet Éliane. No one expected us, Éliane included, to necessarily make a piece.”⁶⁹ This stands in stark contrast to the contractual terms and agreements recommended to potential commissioners by organizations like Meet the Composer. In fact, Radigue’s mode of working is the complete opposite. Rather than starting with a guarantee of a product, she is only able to confirm her commitment to try and create something meaningful. But, if either party is artistically or creatively unsatisfied, they will both be permitted to discard it entirely with no repercussions. This mode of working clearly prioritizes the integrity of the creative work over expected outcomes. This lack of commitment

⁶⁵ Radigue, letter to Davies, June 7, 2010.

⁶⁶ Radigue, letter to Davies, September 1, 2010.

⁶⁷ Tarozzi, interview.

⁶⁸ Hayward, interview.

⁶⁹ Hamann, interview.

preserves for Radigue the same working conditions in which she wrote her electronic music. She maintains an independence and a creative agency over the life of her own compositions, never ceding this unencumbered, unwavering, and uncompromising approach to composition.

Doubts and Personal Spaces

When Radigue meets one-on-one with a performer for the first time, she invites them to an intimate personal space—her small apartment in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. Charles Curtis offers a particularly detailed description of the interior:

The apartment, in effect a single space with extensions off the living room for sleeping on one side and eating on the other, was additionally full (though not cluttered) with numerous plants (a very tall ficus, a curtain of climbing philodendron), a small upright piano with a plexiglas keyboard cover, a number of small artifacts from ancient cultures, books, a black cat with a skeptical and scrutinizing facial expression, and above all, a dazzling collection of artworks, most of them by her ex-husband Arman, but by other notable artists as well, probably all friends of Radigue at one time or another ... In keeping with the mood of the entire building, the apartment has a shady half-light, there is little direct sunlight; and for me the atmosphere of being in it is how I imagine a cave or a recess in a small mountain to be: cool, relaxing, and conducive to reflection. It is a very quiet space; a school directly across the street provides regularly-timed blocks of sound from the echoing shouts of children arriving or leaving; and almost as regularly the sounds of the children upstairs practicing the piano awkwardly and dutifully are the brackets around an otherwise quite continuous near-silence.⁷⁰

The first meeting between Radigue and the instrumentalist usually features tea, sometimes food, and always revolves around conversation. In this way of working, the relationship between composer and performer starts with the personal rather than a financial transaction or contract guaranteeing future remuneration.⁷¹ As Angharad Davies describes, in her first meeting with Radigue, they “had a conversation with some tea and biscuits and everything was very

⁷⁰ Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak: Pour Charles Curtis; Violoncelle*.

⁷¹ Luke Nickel also reports that many of the performers he interviewed mentioned the domestic setting as contributing significantly to the overall positive atmosphere of their collaboration with Radigue. See Nickel, “Occam Notions,” 32.

relaxed.”⁷² In this personal exchange, Radigue learns a bit about each individual’s history, character, and approach to music making.

In most cases, performers also bring along their instrument to this first meeting to play some sounds that they think might appeal to Radigue for their potential collaborative work. After this sonic exchange, very often—and especially if Radigue is in good health—they will visit a nearby restaurant for lunch or dinner and more conversation. For Julia Eckhardt, their work together on *OCCAM IV* for viola started with tea. After playing for a few hours and experimenting with different sounds, they crossed the street to a Vietnamese restaurant opposite Radigue’s apartment.⁷³

These personal interactions with performers open and rebalance the composer-performer relationship.⁷⁴ Rather than Radigue treating performers as contracted individuals merely carrying out a service, she works to get to know them as people and to forge a genuine personal relationship in and around her home. This approach is rooted in openness and honesty. Each performer-collaborator enters into Radigue’s home, her personal space, to break bread and build not just a new composition but a new friendship.

In her early instrumental works, Radigue’s openness and honesty transcended the normative role of the traditional authoritative “great” composer.⁷⁵ She often confided in the performers about her doubts and uncertainties concerning the work at hand. When composing

⁷² Davies, interview.

⁷³ Eckhardt, interview.

⁷⁴ Luke Nickel similarly concluded, through a series of interviews with Radigue’s performer-collaborators, that their interactions were “not only warm and intimate, but also reciprocal, rather than hierarchical.” See Nickel, “Occam Notions,” 33.

⁷⁵ In my experience with the traditional Western music mythology, “great” composers could lose their air of authority if they openly questioned or expressed uncertainty about their own work to performers. A “master” of composition is able to generate their own self-evident and unquestionable rhetoric and discourse.

with purely electronic sound, Radigue's process was punctuated with uncertainty and doubt.⁷⁶

This self-consciousness remained a staple of her early work with instrumentalists. But rather than internalizing these doubts and maintaining an air of all-knowing certainty, Radigue confided in her collaborators as trusted creative partners and as friends.

With Kasper Toeplitz, Radigue nearly cancelled the premiere of *Elemental II* the week before its scheduled performance over uncertainties she had about the work in their final rehearsal. This was the first work she had written for an instrumentalist in over thirty years. In Toeplitz's retelling, Radigue walked out of his studio for some fresh air, smoked a cigarette, came back, and spoke with Toeplitz about her doubts. He performed the work once more for her, promising to avoid, as best he could, the pitfalls she had identified. Afterward, she was pleased.

The composer in Radigue's collaborative practice is no longer an authority with power over the instrumentalist, but rather a coequal on a journey of mutual creation and self-reflection. As Charles Curtis explains, "the move to composing for acoustic instruments now means working with musicians, being with them for extended periods of time, sharing the difficulties of creation and the hopefulness of the new piece evolving."⁷⁷

Lifelong Friendships

Through her creative collaboration, Radigue has developed many meaningful friendships with performers along the way. Carol Robinson, for example, became very close friends with Radigue following their initial collaboration on *Naldjorlak II* and *III*. They have since worked

⁷⁶ "In these long phases of conceiving and composing a piece, I sometimes had crises. I would say to myself that I was completely mad to make work like that ... I have had periods of extreme doubt, but everyone experiences that." Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 121.

⁷⁷ Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

together on over thirteen pieces⁷⁸ and coauthored two works: *OCCAM HEXA II* for flute, clarinet, viola, cello, and percussion for Decibel New Music Ensemble in Perth, Australia, and *OCCAM RIVER XXII* for bass clarinet and saxophone. As Robinson told me, their relationship goes far beyond their many creative musical collaborations: “Éliane counts on me,” Robinson explains, “I help her in many ways, and we have a very, very nice friendship. It’s a gift for both of us.”⁷⁹

Violinist Silvia Tarozzi was pregnant when she first met Radigue to discuss potentially working together in 2010. As Silvia recalls, “we spoke about life, death, children, music . . . and we became close very fast.”⁸⁰ Radigue became a source of loving guidance for Silvia as she embarked on her journey into motherhood. “She told me, first you have to dedicate yourself to this new experience that you are living, so take your time.”⁸¹ Less than a year later, during their first rehearsals of *OCCAM II*, Silvia traveled to Paris with her newborn baby and her aunt in tow. After rehearsing in the afternoon, Silvia, her family, and Radigue ate dinner together. “The time shared in family intimacy and that of work intertwined naturally.”⁸² When reflecting on how their relationship has blossomed over the years, Silvia remarks, “Over time we learned to know

⁷⁸ *OCCAM III* for birbyné; *OCCAM XVI* for bass clarinet; *OCCAM RIVER I* for birbyné and viola; *OCCAM RIVER III* for birbyné and trumpet; *OCCAM RIVER VIII* for bass clarinet and double bass; *OCCAM RIVER XVI* for birbyné and harp; *OCCAM DELTA I* for birbyné, violin, viola, and harp; *OCCAM DELTA II* for bass clarinet, viola, and harp; *OCCAM DELTA V* for bass clarinet, tube, cell, and harp; *OCCAM DELTA XIII* for bass clarinet, harp, and five-string double bass; *OCCAM DELTA XVIII* for bass clarinet, baritone voice, viola, and saxophone; and *OCCAM HEXA I* for bass clarinet, tuba, viola, cell, and harp.

⁷⁹ Robinson, interview.

⁸⁰ Tarozzi, interview.

⁸¹ Tarozzi, interview.

⁸² Tarozzi, interview.

each other well and despite the age difference a sincere and deep friendship was born. We love each other.”⁸³

At the heart of Radigue’s initiation process is a direct, personal link between performer and composer. The impetus that starts the process for creating a new work is not financial or career gain, or the vision of a wealthy donor or festival curator. Especially in her earliest collaborative works, there were rarely deadlines or external pressures to produce the new work for particular occasions.⁸⁴ Most often a new work is born out of a mutual desire between composer and performer to create a collaboration and to one day, if all goes well, share this music with audiences. In all of the above scenarios,⁸⁵ it was the performers who took the initiative in reaching out to the composer for a new work—not a wealthy individual seeking to “give back to the community” or an arts organization, ensemble, or government-funding scheme. The beginnings of each collaboration were largely informal, community-based, and time-intensive—and not revolving around a financial interest or a transaction.

Transcending the “Gig Economy”

This reconfiguration of the composition initiation process puts all of the power in the hands of the creative actors themselves. Radigue and her performer-collaborators decided on how to shape the terms of the cooperation, not external commissioners. Many of Radigue’s collaborators have noted how refreshing these reconfigured power dynamics were. Julia Eckhardt, for example, remarked that now, she finds it “very strange to think that I get a score

⁸³ Tarozzi, interview.

⁸⁴ In more recent years, as the demand for Radigue’s music has increased dramatically, this has changed. More and more external commissioners have approached Radigue for new *Occam* compositions.

⁸⁵ Carol Robinson is the only exception. Radigue contacted Robinson after talking with her at a social gathering and listening to an album of Robinson performing compositions by Morton Feldman that feature the clarinet. Robinson, interview.

and I've never met a composer."⁸⁶ She added, "Actually, this [way] is more strange than coming together and making music, discussing it, deciding together on certain things. Éliane's way feels much more organic, more natural."⁸⁷

At the same time, Radigue's personal, non-transactional, and noncommittal way of working meant that she and her performer-collaborators needed to dedicate an enormous amount of time and resources to the potential composition upfront—with no guarantee of a particular outcome. Performers were often spending significant amounts of money (especially if they did not live in France) traveling to Paris to meet with Radigue in person. Nate Wooley recalls trying to scrape together enough money to fly to Paris from New York to work on *OCCAM X* for solo trumpet. In the midst of a whirlwind European tour, he recalls coordinating a day or two to stay in Paris to meet with Radigue. Like many of Radigue's collaborators, Wooley was paying out of pocket for these trips and overnight stays.

And this turns the model of the instrumentalist as independent contractors on its head. Rather than taking on as many concerts or "gigs" as possible—and as cheaply as possible—Radigue's performer-collaborators were dedicating resources to something that came with no promise of future financial gain. Rather than remuneration or career advancement, Radigue's potential performer-collaborators were "paying in" for the opportunity to have a potentially rewarding collective musical experience with a composer that they deeply admired.

Likewise, Radigue was working with no promise of payment, no commission fee from external institutions or donors. In fact, there was no guarantee of any particular outcome from any of the collaborations Radigue undertook with performers. Expectations were intentionally

⁸⁶ Eckhardt, interview.

⁸⁷ Eckhardt, interview.

kept low. And this makes Radigue's collaborative process completely incompatible with the NCMCM. Even if there were external commissioners, Radigue could never promise that her collaborative creative process would yield a new work. And likewise, she could never guarantee that she could meet a particular deadline. Radigue's initiation process started first and foremost from the desire of the instrumentalist to perform her music because of a deep personal connection to her sound world. By doing away with promises of financial or career gain as the principle motivating factor behind these new compositions, Radigue's collaborative way of working questions the interpersonal dynamics and artistic outcomes of the "gig economy."

Chapter 3: Reconfiguring Roles: The Composer, Performer, and Score in Radigue's Collaborative Creative Process

3.1 The Creative Process in the Western Classical Music Mythology

There are countless mythologies of creation behind the Western classical music tradition. Embedded in these ontological frameworks—many of which first emerged from mid-nineteenth-century Europe—are certain power relationships and hierarchies which are expressed today through concert programming, music curricula, educational resources, scholarship, marketing, the media, and so on. Each individual comes to understand these relationships differently, based on their own sociocultural and economic background, educational and professional experiences, interpersonal relationships, and personal identities. These mythologies are therefore difficult to articulate in any definitive sense.

In the following section, I am first setting out to trace some of the most prominent features of these mythologies, as I have come to understand them, based on my own experiences, backgrounds, and identities.¹ My aim is to create a backdrop on which to explore Éliane Radigue's collaborative compositional practice and the ways in which it calls into question many of these embedded frameworks of musical creation. In doing so, I seek to examine how Radigue's collaborative creative practice participates in a form of affirmative resistance—a resistance of “being for”—by shaping new communication flows, new forms of organization, and new subjectivities around musical creation and performance. My hope is that this chapter might serve as one roadmap for composers who seek to precipitate meaningful proactive social change through the relationships that their creative practices build.

¹ I identify as many things. Some of those identities include: straight, white, cis-gendered, male, able-bodied, agnostic, middle-class, American (from the mid-Atlantic region), composer, writer, activist, and as a person educated at American, British, and Swiss music institutions in the early twenty-first century.

The Composer

In Western music mythology, one mark of a composer's "genius" is their ability to compose fully-formed compositions in their heads.² This highly individual and inward-facing conception of creation—frankly bordering on the divine—was first popularized by prominent nineteenth-century composers at the height of the Romantic Era. "My mind is always working", Robert Schumann wrote in 1829, and "my symphonies would have reached Op. 100, if I had but written them down."³ Over a century later, similar claims were still being made by leading creative voices. On the first page of his highly influential *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1948), for instance, Arnold Schoenberg wrote:

A composer does not, of course, add bit by bit, as a child does in building with wooden blocks. He conceives an entire composition as a spontaneous vision. Then he proceeds, like Michelangelo who chiselled his *Moses* out of the marble without sketches, complete in every detail, thus directly *forming* his material.⁴

Fast-forward to the present day, and many of these individualistic ideas about music making still loom large. In a 2008 advice blog for young creators, for example, celebrated American composer Eric Whitacre writes, "I think the most important skill a composer can develop is the ability to sit quietly and 'hear' the music in their mind before they write it down ... I try to imagine the music as it's being played in the 'virtual' concert hall in my mind."⁵ But how does such an inward conception of creation impact a composer's relationship with others?

First, the creator's ability to generate, hear, and remember huge amounts of sonic material immediately makes them appear superior (if not superhuman) to average performers and

² Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 99.

³ Agnew, "The Auditory Imagery of Great Composers," 281.

⁴ Schönberg and Strang, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, 102.

⁵ Whitacre, "Advice for the Emerging Composer, Part I."

concertgoers. And this sort of separation of the artist from the broader public is something that is often encouraged in Western music mythology. In order to *truly* innovate, the traditional thinking goes, creators should disengage from others—removing themselves from the normative confines of culture, time, and place. As Antonio Mantuori writes in “Deconstructing the Lone Genius Myth” (1995):

This modern view of creativity has venerated the artist or genius as a cultural hero, because he or she is someone who has forged something new and original by struggling against and rising above the limiting, stultifying forces of the conforming masses. To maintain such a stance, the creative person must in a sense disengage him- or herself from the environment. The resulting psychic isolation . . . is romanticized or even seen as being synonymous with genius.⁶

This detached conception of creativity has had an enormous impact on how the traditional roles of the composer, the instrumentalist, and audience are viewed in the production of a new musical work. In this framework, as Nicholas Cook writes, the creative process is focused on what might be called “a moment of truth into which all temporal unfolding is compressed.”⁷ It is then “this moment of truth that editors, performers, musicologists, and critics all try in their different ways to recapture.”⁸ A glaring problem (among many) with this myth is, of course, that without other individuals—and, in particular, instrumentalists—these imagined sounds, playing out in composers’ heads, would never be made audible. Without performers, even the greatest musical imaginings in the Western music tradition would remain voiceless dots on a page.

⁶ Montuori and Purser, “Deconstructing the Lone Genius Myth,” 74.

⁷ Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 65.

⁸ Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 65.

The Score

In Western classical music, the score is traditionally conceived to be the embodiment of the composer's original creative vision as imagined in their mind.⁹ The first role of notation, therefore, is to recreate and transmit the creator's imagined sounds, either by representing the sounds themselves visually or by describing the methods the performer should use to recreate these sounds. Throughout this process, sounds are interpreted through the filter of notation. Certain sonic features are necessarily prioritized while others are neglected. This is due to the simple fact that no system of musical notation could ever be wholly complete.¹⁰ And, even if hypothetically-speaking, there was a notation that described every single feature of an imagined sound (or every physical action needed to perform it), this notation would no doubt be far too complex to feasibly and accurately read and interpret.¹¹

So, then, what features of sound does traditional Western notation prioritize? This can be a surprisingly difficult thought exercise because notation often conceals as much as it reveals.¹² In other words, that which is omitted says perhaps more about the musical culture than what is included. As Klaus Lang describes in his lecture *Liebe und Notation* given at the 2016 Darmstadt Summer Course, Western notation, starting from neumatic notation in the Medieval Era, treats pitch as a substance—as the essential material of a composition. All other features are considered attributes given to that pitch:

⁹ Harper-Scott and Samson, *An Introduction to Music Studies*, 29.

¹⁰ As Tim Ingold writes in *Lines: A Brief History* (2016): “Of course, no system of musical notation can be complete: the orthodox system of notation for Western music, for example, focuses on pitch and rhythm to the exclusion of other features of tone and timbre. These latter features, if they are to be specified, have to be added in another format—for example as written words or abbreviations, or as numbers.”

¹¹ Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 60.

¹² Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 55.

Because Guido of Arezzo created a system of notation, he transformed a process (sound evolving through time) into an object and took one aspect of this process, namely pitch and defined it as a substance. All other aspects of sounds like duration, dynamic sound qualities became attributes attached to the substance ... this observation shows that musical notation is not only a system of writing ... it deeply reflects our philosophical interpretation of reality. [Notation] determines the way we think musically and influences heavily what we compose in our musical thoughts, and our theory of music follows the categories defined by notation.¹³

A musical notation therefore focused on pitch as its essential material leaves out other important sonic features central to the perception of sound. This includes timbre, intensity, and other intangible and perhaps indescribable characteristics of sounds.¹⁴

Notation also serves the important function of maintaining and defining a musical culture.¹⁵ As Klaus Lang points out in his lecture excerpted above, notation also works reflexively. In other words, it not only shapes the music, but also the people who make it. Karin Barber explores this concept as it relates to texts in her book *The Anthropology of Texts Persons and Publics* (2007). She shows how texts (or in our case, musical scores) can “assume a role of authority, reflect on one’s own or a community’s behaviour, assume cultural identities, call upon audience members as social actors and so on.”¹⁶ Beyond simply representing sounds then, notation then can be conceived “as a community’s ethnography of itself”—it can provide us insights into how a group of music makers construct meaning through their relationships to it.¹⁷

¹³ Lang, *Liebe Und Notation*.

¹⁴ It must also be acknowledged that our descriptions of the elements of sounds are also constrained by the limits of our own terminologies and language.

¹⁵ Schuiling, “Notation Cultures.”

¹⁶ Barber, *The Anthropology of Texts, Persons, and Publics*, 443.

¹⁷ Barber, 443.

As a tool for conservation, notation has also played an important role in shaping the infinitely reproducible “work concept.”¹⁸ In this idealistic ontology, a musical object or sonic idea becomes a “text,” a product, a fixed object created by a singular artist for future generations to enjoy.¹⁹ Notation, in this traditional framework, makes music something that is (in theory) easily transmissible—something that can be bought and sold and recreated in perpetuity elsewhere.

Of course, there are numerous inconsistencies in this mythology. Charting the history of Western music notation will illustrate that certain assumptions are operating behind the score and that these assumptions are constantly changing. In particular, there are assumptions about performance practice, including the performers’ training and general knowledge and experiences. But there are also assumptions about the instruments’ capabilities, the venues in which the works will be performed, and the cultural understandings of the audience. A da capo Baroque aria, for instance, gives little clue as to what the *actual* performance would have sounded like. In the repeat of the opening section, the singer would add an entirely new virtuosic layer of improvised ornamentation on top of what is written on the page.²⁰ But nonetheless, in my experience, this conception of notation, as a “pure” transmitter of the authorial image stubbornly remains today. And this leads to the idea that musical scores—i.e., visual representations of the original sonic imaginings of the composer—are a commodity which can be perpetually recreated and reproduced.

¹⁸ See Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.

¹⁹ As Tim Ingold notes, Lydia Goehr shows that “the work as a constructed artefact has its roots in a conception of composition, performance and notation that emerged, around the close of the eighteenth century, alongside the separation of music as an autonomous fine art.” Ingold, *Lines*, 13. See also Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, 203.

²⁰ See “Aria” in Randel, ed., *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 54.

The Performer

Taking a step back from the “genius” composer and the authoritative text model, we encounter the performer—another actor in the music-making network necessary to make audible the sounds devised by the creator. But what is the role of the performer in the traditional Western classical music model? Longtime conductor-composer Leonard Bernstein provides a glimpse into the traditional performer-composer relationship. “The conductor,” Bernstein writes, “must be humble before the composer; he [must] never interpose himself between the music and the audience; all his efforts, however strenuous or glamorous, [must] be made in the service of the composer’s meaning.”²¹ In this framework, the performer and conductor become, at best, intermediaries.

Arnold Schoenberg took this idea to the extreme. “The performer,” he bemoans in his *Diaries and Recollections* (1938-76), “for all his intolerable arrogance is totally unnecessary except as his interpretations make the music understandable to an audience unfortunate enough not to be able to read it in print.”²² As Nicholas Cook writes, the performer is thus conceived as a “‘middleman’: someone who puts a markup on the product without contributing anything to it, and who should accordingly be cut out wherever possible.”²³ In this view, instrumentalists are only successful at performing a work when they achieve “transparency, invisibility, or personality negation.”²⁴

Just like with the composer and the score, the role of the performer has changed drastically over time, illustrating that these frameworks are in no way universal. As culture

²¹ Bernstein, *The Joy of Music*, 56.

²² Newlin and Schoenberg, *Schoenberg Remembered*, 164.

²³ Cook, “Between Process and Product,” 2.

²⁴ Cook, “Between Process and Product,” 2.

changes, so does the role of the performer. Tina Ramnarine points out in *Introduction to Music Studies* (2009) that, starting in the mid-nineteenth century, “performers were increasingly regarded as re-creators or interpreters of works, who should adhere to the demands of the text, rather than cocreators, a trend that intensified during the twentieth century.”²⁵ From my experience, these same frameworks—emerging over a century ago—still dominate the classical music world today. “If you have taken instrumental lessons in the Western art musical tradition,” Ramnarine writes, “you may well be familiar with the injunctions to ‘just play the notes,’ ‘follow the score,’ or ‘play what is on the page.’”²⁶

This is all to say that these pervasive and enduring ontologies emerging out of mid-nineteenth-century Europe (which remain in modern-day classical music mythologies) place the composer’s imagination at the heart of the creative process. Notation then serves to codify and encapsulate the imagined musical object —“the work”—for re-creation, widespread distribution, and preservation. The performer strives to recreate, in sound, the authoritative musical work as close as possible to the composer’s original intention, minimally inserting themselves and their individual voices into this creational process. This hierarchy, in which the “genius” composer is at the top, plays out in myriad ways today—in music lessons, concert halls, classical music marketing, new music organizations, the press, universities, and conservatories across the globe.

3.2 Éliane Radigue’s Collaborative Creative Process in Practice

Éliane Radigue’s collaborative compositional process, by contrast, is built around dialogue, mutual discovery, exchange, and personal relationships. She arrives at the compositional process with a blank slate. She has no preconceived notion about the structure of

²⁵ Harper-Scott and Samson, *An Introduction to Music Studies*, 228.

²⁶ Harper-Scott and Samson, 228.

the work or specific sonic characteristics.²⁷ She is open to the personality of each performer and adaptable to each person's strengths and weaknesses. As Julia Eckhardt describes it, "Éliane will adapt her way of guiding to the instrument, the performer, and their personality."²⁸

In the pre-*Occam* period, Radigue's collaborative compositional process was still evolving, becoming more or less standardized in early collaborations of the *Occam Ocean* series. While the collaboration process itself became more codified, the duration of the creative process from start to finish also became generally shorter. Julia Eckhardt, for instance, reports meeting with Radigue over seven times in 2011 and 2012 to work on *OCCAM IV* for solo viola. Silvia Tarozzi met with Radigue starting in the spring of 2011 and traveled back-and-forth many times between Italy and France to work together in-person before premiering *OCCAM II* for solo violin over a year later. Robin Hayward, on the other hand, met with Radigue only twice in 2014 before *OCCAM XI* for solo tuba was fully formed.

This radically different timeline from piece to piece is the result of a number of factors. For example, each performer brought with them different experiences and abilities. The more quickly they could learn to embody Radigue's sonic aims, the faster the creative process could potentially unfold. Moreover, as Silvia Tarozzi explains, Radigue's increasing comfort level with the overall collaborative process also made collaborations more expedient as time went on. When Radigue first started working with instrumentalists, Tarozzi recalls, she took a lot of time to communicate her vision of the sound. She discovered, through this process, how to realize her sonic imagination with the help of the performer. So, in many ways, these early instrumental

²⁷ Radigue's earliest instrumental compositions—*Naldjorlak I* and *Elemental II*—are two notable exceptions to this working method. As will be discussed, Radigue had a guiding sketch for *Naldjorlak I* and used her *Elemental I* as a guide for the structure of *Elemental II*.

²⁸ Eckhardt, interview.

works were as much a learning process for Radigue as they were for her performer-collaborators.²⁹

With this in mind, the earliest instrumental collaborations—*Elemental II* and the *Naldjorlak I, II, and III* series—unsurprisingly took the most amount of time. Toeplitz met with Radigue more than ten times over the course of a couple months, and with Curtis, the whole process (which was intermittent because of his being based in California) took two years from start to finish. *Naldjorlak III*, with Curtis on cello and Carol Robinson and Bruno Martinez on basset horns, took a week of nearly full-time dedicated work.³⁰

After the composition of *OCCAM I* in collaboration with Rhodri Davies, Radigue’s way of working with instrumentalists more or less coalesced into a set of normative procedures. These procedures are what governed the more than seventy collaborative works written under the umbrella of the *Occam Ocean* series spanning 2011–2020.³¹ Some additional attention must be paid to the earliest instrumental collaborations—*Elemental II*, *Naldjorlak*, and *OCCAM I* in particular, because the procedures for creating a new work, while still in flux at this time, would serve as the starting point for all future collaborations.

Elemental II

The first instrumental collaboration with Kasper Toeplitz—what would become *Elemental II*—started with Toeplitz improvising on his BassComputer for Radigue in his studio. Radigue had asked Toeplitz to improvise to illustrate to her the sonic possibilities of his

²⁹ Tarozzi, interview.

³⁰ Curtis writes: “The final, three-instrument incarnation of *Naldjorlak* was completed, with Radigue and all three musicians, in September of 2008, in a working period of about a week.” Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

³¹ The last *Occam* solo to be premiered was *OCCAM XXVII* for bagpipes, written in collaboration with Erwan Keravec and premiered in 2019 at Le Vivier in Montreal, Canada. *OCCAM RIVER XXIV* for flute and cello, written in collaboration with Cat Hope and Judith Hamann, was composed after *OCCAM XXVII*. Its scheduled premiere at Hobart Town Hall, Dark Mofo, Hobart, Australia though was canceled due the COVID-19 pandemic.

instrument. But there was little guidance, at first. As Toeplitz recalls, it was just “do what you do.”³²

Radigue then offered some images to help shape and inspire the sounds that Toeplitz was creating. For instance, Radigue gave him the image of a mountain after it had rained.³³ Toeplitz was a bit unsure about how to transform this image into sound—and any image into sound, for that matter. He was accustomed to more prescriptive approaches. “How might a mountain sound?”³⁴ Toeplitz recalls thinking. “Should I play a D or an E?”³⁵

When Radigue was unsatisfied with the sounds that Toeplitz was playing, she would not offer specific technical critiques relating to pitch, rhythm, range, melody, harmony, timbre, but rather alter the given image. She would give comments like, “it’s not such a dry mountain, it’s more of a wet mountain,” and this would, in turn, prompt Toeplitz to change his sound.³⁶ Practically speaking, he made slight adjustments to match the sounds that he imagined Radigue sought. But this never included specific musical terminology.³⁷ In shaping his sound, Radigue acted more like a guide, choosing whether Toeplitz should proceed as is or change course.³⁸

³² Toeplitz, interview.

³³ “The only explanations were in a kind of very abstract sense. Like at the beginning of the piece you have a mountain and it was raining. It’s not raining anymore. It was raining. So it’s the mountain after the rain.” Toeplitz, interview.

³⁴ Toeplitz, interview.

³⁵ Toeplitz, interview.

³⁶ Toeplitz, interview.

³⁷ “When she was explaining things, it was never musical terms. Just always like, for example, now you have fire or more water.” Toeplitz, interview.

³⁸ “She never said to change some specific musical parameters. It was either yes or no.” Toeplitz, interview.

Eventually, Radigue introduced the idea of featuring four elements—air-wind, fire, earth-water-rain, and sea—from her (at that time) unperformed electronic work *Elemental I* (1968)³⁹ and added a fifth element: “ethers.” These elements became the visual inspiration for five distinct sections of sonic material that were then joined together via smooth transitions to make *Elemental II*.⁴⁰

Naldjorlak I

The second work for an instrumentalist in this period was *Naldjorlak*—the first purely acoustic instrumental work written by Radigue. It started initially as a title, a concept, and a handwritten drawing representing the work’s tripartite form.⁴¹ “Naldjorlak” is Radigue’s own term, based on the Tibetan word “naldjor” (meaning “union” or “yoga”), while the “lak” ending is diminutive.⁴² As Curtis explains, “the word evokes something along the lines of ‘my friend union’ or ‘union,’ ‘with whom I have an informal and affectionate relationship,’ or ‘my little

³⁹ *Elemental I* featured natural sounds recorded by Radigue around Nice in 1961 on a portable Stellavox tape recorder. The sounds were treated through feedback on magnetic tape. Radigue produced the work at Studio APSOME in Paris while assisting Pierre Henry in 1968. It was diffused for a live audience for the first time in June 2011 at the Triptych Festival in London. See Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*.

⁴⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 147. The laptop trio—The Lappetites (Kaffe Matthews, AGF, Ryoko Akama)—created a second version of *Elemental II* with Radigue in 2004, two years after completing the first version with Toeplitz. Uncharacteristically of this time, this piece was created at the request of a festival—the inaugural Capitales Sonores festival, organized by CCMIX (Centre de Création musicale Iannis Xenakis), Paris. Both versions of *Elemental II*—Kasper Toeplitz’s and The Lappetites’—were premiered at the festival. Kaffe Matthews, the founder of The Lappetites, had become friends with Radigue after appearing on the same concert series at the Metronom Gallery in Barcelona in 1999. The second version of *Elemental II* was based on the structural ideas that Kasper Toeplitz and Radigue had already workshopped together over multiple years. The collaboration with Radigue and The Lappetites was therefore much more expedient. Radigue provided The Lappetites with a one-page hand-drawn sketch of the composition’s structure before their in-person meeting. Each individual member of The Lappetites made audible one of the five elements of the work’s structure and then faded their element in gradually, overlapping with one another. The piece was created during a 2004 residency at the CCMIX studios over the course of a week, with Radigue visiting and working with the group two or three times. Radigue was by-and-large very pleased with The Lappetite’s rendition from the start. She worked with them to shape the piece. Matthews, interview.

⁴¹ Curtis: “She was bringing nothing except a title, a concept, and then this sketch.” Curtis, interview.

⁴² Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

union.”⁴³ The diminutive here, as Curtis suggests, implies a certain level of “tenderness and intimacy.”⁴⁴ One theme of the piece is therefore the intimate personal connection between two people working together to create music.

In their first meeting, Radigue explained this concept to Curtis and showed him a sketch. She explained that the concept was something she “had in mind for a long time and couldn’t do it alone with [her] synthesizer.”⁴⁵ But in Radigue’s imagining, the “unity” she described was not only between two people, but also “the medium that joins them together”—Curtis’s cello.⁴⁶ For the first time, Radigue points to the instrument itself as an essential and unique binding element in the collaborative process.

But the work’s title points to something even deeper. “The theme of *Naldjorlak*,” as Radigue describes it, “is really the necessity of doing together something we don’t know how to do alone.”⁴⁷ In this light, Radigue is acknowledging and embracing the limits of her own technical capacity. Without extensive knowledge of instrumental technique, she is creatively dependent on the artistic input, personalities, musical backgrounds, and technical expertise of the instrumentalists with whom she collaborates. Without either actor, this music could never come into existence in the first place. And Radigue notably honors this reality rather than shying away

⁴³ Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

⁴⁴ Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

⁴⁵ Radigue: “It reflects the union of body, speech and mind, to summarise very briefly. ‘Lak’ pronounced ‘la’ is a suffix that means ‘hand,’ simultaneously the hand that protects, that offers and that honours. The term ‘naldjorlak’ is what we call vernacular Tibetan ... Hence, with much respect, the title reflects the idea of unity.” Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 150.

⁴⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 151.

⁴⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 151.

from it. Indeed, the concept of “Naldjorlak” in many ways encapsulates Radigue’s entire collaborative compositional practice.

Radigue also brought a hand-drawn sketch to their first meeting. Curtis described it as “a very faint pencil sketch that had a lot of shading and a gradual incline ... [with] some cross hatching and some rippling wavy lines.”⁴⁸ As Curtis recalls, the sketch evoked “sustain,” “agreeableness,” and “very gradual change.”⁴⁹ It was something that he described as being “very modest, very sincere, and very straightforward,” but at the same time, “self-involved and involuted.”⁵⁰ When Radigue first showed Curtis the sketch, he recalls her saying, “Well, this is basically a sketch for all of my pieces. They all do the same thing.”⁵¹ Radigue here acknowledged that this drawing loosely represented the work’s macrostructure—and that many of her compositions share similar large-scale formal trajectories.

Before their first meeting, Curtis sent Radigue a CD of sounds that he recorded on his cello. The sounds were ones that he thought might appeal to Radigue’s sonic sensibilities. The CD featured only sustaining sounds, or as Curtis describes them, “steady state” sounds.⁵² They included sounds that he had developed over years of playing free improvisation and noise music, as well as techniques he cultivated from collaborations with composers La Monte Young and Richard Maxfield.⁵³ Radigue went through each sound, remarking on which ones she found most

⁴⁸ Curtis, interview.

⁴⁹ Curtis, interview.

⁵⁰ Curtis, interview.

⁵¹ Curtis, interview.

⁵² Curtis, interview.

⁵³ Curtis: “I had prepared a series of recordings of different techniques and sort of steady state sounds on the cello. These were all things that I had, you know, developed over my years of doing free improvisation and noise music and stuff like that. And also things that I had learned from La Monte Young and in the performance of Richard Maxfield and I played these recordings for her.” Curtis, interview.

interesting and which were conversely less so. Curtis then demonstrated some of the techniques for Radigue in-person.⁵⁴ This became, as Curtis describes, “the lexicon of possible sounds and techniques.”⁵⁵ From this, he recalls, “we basically had our raw materials out on the table.”⁵⁶

After completing *Naldjorlak I*, Radigue reached out to Carol Robinson about potentially collaborating on what would become *Naldjorlak II* (2007) for two basset horns. Robinson enlisted clarinetist Bruno Martinez to play a second basset horn so that they could achieve a more or less sustaining sound between the two. To round out the trilogy, Curtis joined Robinson and Martinez for *Naldjorlak III* (2009). This way of creating new ensemble configurations—and thus new pieces—by combining individual performers with whom she had already collaborated—as will be discussed in more detail later—became a centerpiece of Radigue’s *Occam Ocean* series.

The Occam Ocean Series

Welsh harpist Rhodri Davies was the first to collaborate with Radigue on what would become the extensive *Occam Ocean* series. Together, Davies and Radigue crafted *OCCAM I* for solo harp in January of 2011, completing the work on January 24th, Radigue’s 79th birthday. Unbeknownst to them at the time, they were laying the groundwork for the normative collaborative procedures for the entire *Occam Ocean* series. The processes that coalesced during this collaboration had evolved out of Radigue’s earlier experiences working with Curtis, Robinson, and Martinez on the *Naldjorlak Trilogy* and Toeplitz on *Elemental II*. While the following section will detail the normative processes of creation that were in place for more than

⁵⁴ Curtis: “At the same time, I had some kind of a cello with me and I sort of demonstrated for her how they are produced.” Curtis, interview.

⁵⁵ Curtis, interview.

⁵⁶ Curtis, interview.

seventy collaborative works written as part of the *Occam Ocean* series, it must be acknowledged that these ways of working are the products of an evolution. These procedures gradually emerged from trial and error, from experimentation carried out over a decade (2001–2011) in Radigue’s early collaborations with instrumentalists.

The *Occam Ocean* series is woven together with three principle threads. The first is the idea that “plurality should not be posited without necessity,” or in its original Latin “in pluralitas non est ponenda sine necessitate.”⁵⁷ This philosophical concept was first developed by the medieval Franciscan friar and theologian William of Ockham.⁵⁸ (Hence, the first part of the title of the series “Occam”). Radigue then reduces this to the principle, “the simplest, the best.”⁵⁹ According to Radigue, simplicity in this case means to “avoid complicating things, overdoing it ... clearing away what is superfluous to be better able to perceive the meaning of things. It’s a logic that enables recognition of how everything is held together.”⁶⁰

The second is the concept of waves—and, in particular, the vibrations that permeate the physical world. This includes sound waves, light waves, radio waves, and most importantly, waves of water. Radigue wanted to draw listeners’ attention to the “unthinkable dizziness” of waves that make up the world.⁶¹ As she describes it, “the infinity of magnetic wavelengths between ear and the sun and about those that are infinitely small, which we don’t even manage to

⁵⁷ Duignan, “Occam’s Razor.”

⁵⁸ Radigue was inspired by the idea after reading the 1957 science fiction thriller *Occam’s Razor* by David Duncan. See Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 159.

⁵⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 159.

⁶⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 159.

⁶¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 161.

understand.”⁶² What most fascinated Radigue was those elements of the “vibratory universe” which humans are unable to perceive.⁶³ And thus, “the spirit of [*Occam Ocean*],” as Radigue explains, is to illuminate “the vertiginous nature of the inconceivable.”⁶⁴

The third and final thread, which ties the series together, is actual bodies of water. This is where the second part of the title “Ocean” comes in. Radigue was inspired by the multiple simultaneous waves that occur in large bodies of water. Images of water became a tangible and personal source of inspiration for all of the *Occam Ocean* works. They also provided a loose formal structure for each composition.⁶⁵

Every *Occam* collaboration begins with an image of water. In some cases, the image is related to the performer’s upbringing.⁶⁶ Robin Hayward, for instance, grew up in Shoreham, a small harbor town in England. And so he chose an image of the harbor as his starting point.⁶⁷ Nate Wooley grew up where the Columbia River empties into the Pacific Ocean in the northwest of the United States. As he recalls, “that was immediately the image that came to mind when

⁶² Radigue and Eckhardt, 161. Radigue was at first inspired by a large wall banner at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles in the 1970s. She recalls that it was “like an emakimono—a Japanese story-telling scroll—that represents known electromagnetic wavelengths, from the wavelengths between the earth and the sun through to micro-, mini-, nano-rays, etc.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 158.

⁶³ Radigue: “It is within this kind of vibratory universe that we live, but we have only a small zone of auditory reception by way of our ears ... we humans remain limited to an extremely restricted zone compared to the infinity of the universe.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 158.

⁶⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, 158.

⁶⁵ Water “also possesses multiple wavelengths ... What interests me is the life that animates [bodies of water] ... and the inexplicability of life through music.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 159.

⁶⁶ Radigue: “Either I suggest an image or it’s the musicians who choose. But one mustn’t look too far ...” Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

⁶⁷ Hayward: “Because I come from a small harbour town in England. I thought of Shoreham harbor where I come from. And I did improvisation based on it so thinking of the ship horns.” Hayward, interview.

[Radigue] said that we needed to pick a river.”⁶⁸ Angharad and Rhodri Davies—who are brother and sister—chose a shared image of water from their childhood growing up in Wales.⁶⁹

With a personal image of water, Radigue sought to ground the “unthinkable dizziness” in physical reality.⁷⁰ These images allow musicians to connect the sounds they produce with tangible waves from their own sensuous experience. Musicians can tap into, “the pleasure of diving, swimming, being on the waterside, listening to a tap run—it becomes physical,” Radigue explains.⁷¹ “It’s no longer only a mental dizziness, it becomes palpable.”⁷² While many of the images come from the instrumentalists’ personal experiences, some of them came from magazines like *National Geographic* or similar publications that Radigue had around her apartment.⁷³

Once the image of water is chosen and mutually agreed upon, it then serves to shape the character, progression, and structure of the composition. With the image in mind, the musicians improvise, striving to create sounds that the image evokes. In carrying out this process of translation—from personal experience to image and then from image to sound—the musicians root their improvised material in their own embodied physical realities and memories. As Radigue describes it, “the image allows this impalpable sound-matter to be anchored in a

⁶⁸ Wooley, interview.

⁶⁹ Davies, interview.

⁷⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 161.

⁷¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

⁷² Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

⁷³ Blondy, interview.

‘physicality,’ whether visual or felt. It’s the portal that opens up this whole space and makes it habitable. And it’s the musicians who enliven it through sound.”⁷⁴

OCCAMI for Solo Harp

For *OCCAMI*, Radigue shared with Rhodri Davies *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, a famous illustration by the nineteenth-century Japanese artist Hokusai.⁷⁵ This image of water, in retrospect, was unusual in that it was an illustration and not a photo or memory—as became the norm for structural images in later collaborations. Davies translated the illustration into sound, starting from the bottom up. *OCCAMI* begins in the lowest range of the harp and then gradually moves up in register over the course of the piece. Toward the end, Davies evokes the white, foamy sprays of water at the tips of the waves as quietly plucked harmonics.

Much like Charles Curtis, Davies provided Radigue with a recording of sonic possibilities available to him on his harp—sounds that he thought might appeal to Radigue’s own musical sensibilities. These sounds were inspired by Davies’ first meeting with Radigue (which occurred without his harp).⁷⁶ The examples that he included on the CD were mainly sustaining sounds; for instance, playing the harp strings with a bow and E bow (electronic bow). He also sent her albums featuring sustaining sounds on the harp, like his *Over Shadows*. On January 19, 2011, Rhodri traveled from Gateshead, England, to Paris to work with Radigue in-person. He arranged to borrow a harp from a friend, the harpist H el ene Breschand. Over four days, they experimented together with different types of sustaining sounds, including using the E bow, a bass and violin bow, two violin bows, and a miniature handheld electric fan with some string

⁷⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Interm ediaires*, 162.

⁷⁵ Katsushika Hokusai, *Under the Wave off Kanagawa (Kanagawa oki nami ura)* [also known as *The Great Wave*].

⁷⁶ Rhodri wrote to  eliane on June 7, 2010: “I will experiment with the ideas you suggested. And I will arrange to make a recording of the resulting sounds for you.” Davies, letter to Radigue, June 7, 2010.

attached to the end (rather than the usual propeller) that lightly grazed the harp's strings. During the collaboration they also experimented with different tunings and spent a large amount of time shaping the transitions from one type of sonic material to another. Much like with Toeplitz and Curtis, Radigue sculpted the sounds, rather than prescribing them. She served as a facilitator, working together with Davies to create a union between his instrumental expertise and her sonic sensibilities. By January 24th, four days later, they had finished the piece.⁷⁷ In a letter dated February 10, 2011—a little over two weeks after completing the piece—Radigue wrote to Davies (who had returned to Gateshead): “I agree, we had a good time working together. It was simple, quiet and easy. Now it's all yours!”⁷⁸

In this seemingly offhand remark, Radigue was pointing to an exciting new element that further reimagines the role of the performer beyond the creative process itself. Starting with *OCCAMI*, Radigue instructs all of the performers with whom she collaborates that they may teach their *Occam* to any performer of their choosing—and to any number of performers. When Radigue writes to Davies “It's all yours,” she means it. Rhodri Davies alone can now pass on this composition to other instrumentalists. In entrusting the transmission of her works to her performer-collaborators, Radigue is providing them with a huge amount of responsibility over the potential longevity and preservation of her musical legacy. She is essentially giving up “ownership” over the work's future, leaving it to the performer—and thus notably *not* herself (the composer), a publisher, estate, or archive—to choose when, how, and to whom the piece is transmitted.

⁷⁷ Davies: “And actually things happened really quickly. So we kind of finished. The piece came together super quickly. So by the 24th of January was Éliane's 79th birthday and we had finished. We finished the piece.” Davies, interview.

⁷⁸ Radigue, letter to Davies, February 10, 2011.

Ensemble Occams

In 2012, after working with four performers on *Occam* solos—*OCCAM I* for harp with Rhodri Davies, *OCCAM II* for violin with Silvia Tarozzi, *OCCAM III* for birbyné with Carol Robinson, and *OCCAM IV* for viola with Julia Eckhardt—Radigue decided to combine forces to make ensemble *Occams*. In doing so, a new aspect of the *Occam Ocean* series was introduced; any combination of soloists who had previously worked with Radigue on an *Occam* solo could theoretically be combined into a larger ensemble piece under Radigue’s guidance.⁷⁹ The idea, in her conception, is that any and all combinations of performers who have previously worked with Radigue on solo *Occams* could (and should) exist,⁸⁰ though, considering that there are over twenty-seven *Occam* solos, Radigue acknowledges that “completing the oeuvre,” as she puts it, would be essentially impossible.⁸¹

Occam pieces fall into six different naming categories, based on the size of the ensemble: *OCCAM*⁸² (solo), *OCCAM RIVER* (duo), *OCCAM DELTA* (trio to quartet), *OCCAM HEXA* (quintet to sextet), *OCCAM HEPTA* (septet), and *OCCAM OCÉAN* (orchestra). The vast majority of the ensemble works are made up of individual performers who have already worked one-on-one with Radigue on an *Occam* solo.⁸³ As time went on, the size of the ensembles

⁷⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 194. Later on, there are some exceptions to this way of working, for example, *OCCAM DELTA XII* for cello, bass, clarinet, and bass flute performed by Robert Engelbreth, Volker Hemken, and Erik Drescher in January 2017. None of these performers had previously worked with Radigue.

⁸⁰ Radigue: “I’ll leave it up to the mathematicians out there to calculate the number of pieces the twenty-seven solos so far would add up to if all the combinations were to be realised.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 157–58. This would be $1.08e+28$ or, in other words, a number with 29 digits (well over a trillion).

⁸¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 158.

⁸² These compositions are sometimes also referred to as *OCCAM OCÉAN*.

⁸³ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*. The most notable exception is *OCCAM OCÉAN I*, which was a collaboration with Orchestre de Nouvelles Créations, Expérimentations et Improvisations Musicales (ONCEIM). Most of the performers in this large group had not worked with Radigue before. Certain

expanded. What started with *Occam Rivers* (duos) and *Occam Deltas* (trios and quartets) in 2012 became *Occam Hexas* (quintet to sextet) in 2013, *Occam Heptas* (septet) in 2017, and in 2015—with Radigue’s partnership with Frédéric Blondy and l’Orchestre de Nouvelles Créations, Expérimentations et Improvisation Musicales (ONCEIM)—*OCCAM Océan 1* and *2* (small orchestra).

The compositional process with these ensemble configurations starts similarly to the solo *Occam* process. All performers gather together at Radigue’s Paris apartment, chat, and drink tea.⁸⁴ Then a collective image is chosen to structure the piece. Much like with the solos, the performers begin to collectively improvise, using the image as a guide. Radigue comments and shapes the sound. As Silvia Tarozzi reports, in some cases, performers will meet with one another prior to meeting with Radigue, to generate some starting material to use as a springboard for their first improvisation.

The biggest difference in the collaborative compositional process from the solos is that most performers report playing sections of their solos in these pieces, rather than brand new sonic material. Consequently, in the ensemble pieces, there is much less focus on generating new sounds as there is on refashioning and recultivating sounds from the solo *Occam* works.

This process of overlaying preexisting material to discover new sonic interactions is not new for Radigue. With her early composition *Chry-ptus* (1971), built on electronic feedback, Radigue instructs the performer to play two tapes of sonic material “simultaneously, either

groups of performers created a number of permutations of their particular ensemble. For instance, in 2015, Charles Curtis (cello), Robin Hayward (tuba), Rhodri Davies (harp), and Dafne Vicente-Sandoval (bassoon) formed *OCCAM DELTA VII*. There are currently nine other permutations of this same group of performers.

⁸⁴ Blondy, interview. For the orchestral works, Radigue met with smaller groups of like-instrumentalists—sections of the orchestra. And, as will be described later, there also exists cocreated works, composed without Éliane Radigue present which do not fit this model.

synchronous or asynchronous (up to one minute of desynchronization for each tape.)”⁸⁵ *Chry-ptus* is thus a work of multiple, simultaneous possibilities, depending on how each tape of preexisting sonic material interacts with the other according to the specific amount of desynchronization of that specific performance. As Radigue describes, the in-built desynchronization of *Chry-ptus*, “in no way affects the work’s structure, but creates infinite variations, mainly in the play of harmonics.”⁸⁶ Radigue’s ensemble *Occams* function similarly. Refashioned material from each individual instrumentalist’s solo *Occam* produces a curated sonic unpredictability while also maintaining a sense of cohesion.

In ensemble *Occams*, there is also a greater degree of collective creativity in the process of shaping the piece. This is a product of the mere fact that each instrumentalist is afforded a high level of creative agency in the compositional process. While Radigue still shapes and facilitates the sounds, as in the solo *Occams*, there is more interpersonal and sonic “dialogue”—a give and take between the performers. This sonic and verbal “dialogue” inevitably leads to mutual discoveries, affordances, and potentially more diverse and unpredictable sonic outcomes—what R. Keith Sawyer calls a “combinatorial explosion.”⁸⁷ At every moment, there are multiple possible ways for the music to develop and branch off into other potential sonic outcomes.⁸⁸ There remains much to explore here—in the field of critical improvisation studies—about how this collective creative environment fosters new relationships, intersections, affordances, and ways of listening.

⁸⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 178.

⁸⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 178.

⁸⁷ Sawyer, *Group Creativity*, 91.

⁸⁸ Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 10.

As Radigue worked with larger and larger ensembles, and became accustomed to a largely codified way of working, she also became more receptive to the artistic approaches of her collaborators. As Silvia Tarozzi reports:

In my opinion, [Radigue] has become more—in a certain way—free. Before, the process was more strict in my experience. She seemed less open from being influenced by the personal languages of the interpreters that deviated from her aesthetics ... Later, with time and the different personalities she met along the way, she seemed more “confident” in a certain way—more open—even though her sound world has remained the same.⁸⁹

The more Radigue works with the same performers, the more open she becomes to their artistic input. “[Radigue] often says that she really enjoys this part of her life where she collaborates with other musicians,” Tarozzi adds.⁹⁰ “And she puts a lot of confidence in her interpreters because she knows that we exchanged so much, we trust in her approach, in her music, and we became friends.”⁹¹ While outside of the scope of this study, these later ensemble configurations, where Radigue became more receptive to possibilities outside of her own sonic sensibilities, open up important questions relating to authorship, collective improvisation, and collaborative composition. There also remain many potentially illuminating connections to be made between Radigue’s collaborative compositional methods in these ensemble works and those of various improvising ensembles rooted in collective creation.⁹²

⁸⁹ Tarozzi, interview.

⁹⁰ Tarozzi, interview.

⁹¹ Tarozzi, interview.

⁹² Particularly illuminating connections could be made between Radigue’s way of working and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, Cornelius Cardew’s Scratch Orchestra, the Jazz Composer’s Orchestra, and Musica Elettronica Viva (to name a few).

3.3 Examining the Role of Composer, Performer, and Score in Radigue’s Collaborative Creative Process

The sonic material of Radigue’s collaborative works is collectively conceived through dialogue. The creative act is therefore effectively externalized, removed from the exclusive domain of the composer’s mind. Like with any creative practice built on improvisation, this puts into question the “work concept”⁹³—the idea that there exists an idealized sonic object that represents the composer’s original creative imagination.⁹⁴ In Radigue’s practice, there exists no preconceived idealized fixed sonic object for performers to recreate and therefore the notion of “the work” only forms in the process of the collaboration itself. And even then, as will be discussed later, the idea of “the work” as being a single, fixed sonic object is challenged.

Radigue’s collaborative creative process diffuses authority amongst its actors. Rather than having a singular authorial voice with power over all others, this responsibility is shared. In this model, the performer is no longer treated as a “deviant” or “corruptor” of the original creator’s vision.⁹⁵ Rather, performers are foregrounded as essential partners in the creation of the composition. This, in turn, fosters an inherently more equitable and democratic creative environment.

Moreover, Radigue openly acknowledges her dependency on performers. In fact, she celebrates it. With *Naldjorlak*, this concept is even built into the work’s title—as a union between people, or, as Radigue says it, “the necessity of doing something together that we don’t

⁹³ “A term used to suggest that European musical culture comes to be work-centered (i.e., regulated above all by musical works) around 1800 or so. This thesis was first proposed by German scholars in the 1970s, but it was popularized above all by Lydia Goehr in her book, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*.” Harper-Scott and Samson, *An Introduction to Music Studies*, 24.

⁹⁴ Harper-Scott and Samson, 189–90.

⁹⁵ Taruskin, *Text and Act*, 13.

know how to do alone.”⁹⁶ In Radigue’s collaborative practice, she elevates a concept that is rarely acknowledged in Western music lore: that as a composer, she is dependent on others, on a community of creators, and interpreters. In doing so, Radigue does away with the nineteenth-century “lone genius” model and instead celebrates the often-overlooked fact that art is *and has always been*, at its core, communal.

In Radigue’s collaborative method, the performer’s personality, musical experiences, and specific technical abilities indelibly shape the composition. Each performer brings their own extended techniques and sonic lexicon to the collaboration—the half valves of Robin Hayward’s microtonal tuba, for instance, or the wolf tone of Charles Curtis’ detuned cello, the bowing of Rhodri Davies’ harp, or the multiphonics of Carol Robinson’s basset horn, to name a few. These are all sounds specific to these performers, their particular playing techniques, and their own instruments. They are products of years of experience and focused cultivation. These collaborations are thus a celebration of each instrumentalist’s personality, histories, memories, and sonic affinities.

In this collaborative configuration, performers are no longer required to be transparent or invisible. And for many of those whom I interviewed, this is a remarkably refreshing affirmation. As Julia Eckhardt reflects, “I have met so many composers who found my playing wrong, my instrument wrong, my tuning wrong. With Éliane this is just not happening ... Éliane really adapts her way to the instrument and to the performer.”⁹⁷

A creative approach that celebrates the history, memory, culture, and personal location of the individual performer points to what George Lewis describes as an Afrological perspective of

⁹⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 151.

⁹⁷ Eckhardt, interview.

improvisation in his landmark article, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives.”⁹⁸ Radigue, much like those creators associated with the Afrological tradition of improvisation that Lewis describes, welcomes “agency, social necessity, personality, and difference.”⁹⁹ While outside the scope of this study, there remains many more connections to be made between perspectives, aesthetics, and ontologies of improvisation as described by Lewis and many others¹⁰⁰ in the field of critical improvisation studies and those found in Éliane Radigue’s collaborative compositional process.

Embodying a Shared Creative Vision

But this collaborative way of working also raises a number of important ontological questions about the generation of sonic material. For example, what is *actually* happening when the performer begins to play sounds in a collaboration with Radigue? For instance, where do these sounds come from? Are the performers simply improvising? Are they free to play whatever they want? How do their prior expectations and knowledge of Radigue’s music and aesthetic approach shape the *sorts* of sounds and techniques they offer?

Of course, there are neither simple nor singular answers to these questions, as my interviews with Radigue’s performer-collaborators revealed. Some performers embrace the term “improvisation” while others distance themselves from it, drawing a distinction between improvisation and the process of sound creation that they enacted for, and with, Radigue. Bassist Dominic Lash tellingly put it this way: “It’s like what Joe Zawinul from Weather Report said:

⁹⁸ Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950.”

⁹⁹ Lewis, 110.

¹⁰⁰ See Lewis and Piekut, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies* and Lewis, *Intents and Purposes*.

‘We always solo and we never solo.’ It’s like that. You’re always improvising and at the same time, you’re not improvising at all.”¹⁰¹

Notably, no performer spoke of “free improvisation” because it was obvious that these collaborations did not warrant such an individualistic approach to sound generation.¹⁰² These performers all understood that they were not improvising to create their own music, but rather, as a method of creating a new work by Éliane Radigue. This is despite many of the performers—including Rhodri Davies, Carol Robinson, Nate Wooley, and Frédéric Blondy—being accomplished improvisers and composers in their own rights.

Rather than seeking to create their own sound worlds, Radigue’s performer-collaborators were tasked with channeling Radigue’s own sonic sensibilities. As Charles Curtis describes it, the role of Radigue’s performer-collaborators was to embody Radigue’s way of perceiving—“to hear the way she hears [and] listen the way she listens.”¹⁰³ There is thus an in-built acquiescence to Radigue’s creative vision. Her authorship therefore remains front and center in the outcome of the collaboration: new compositions by Éliane Radigue. Despite the diffusion of creative agency across multiple actors, Radigue’s performer-collaborators approached the creative act as a way to bring Radigue’s ideas to life, not their own.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Lash, interview.

¹⁰² Free Improvisation is notoriously difficult to define. But here I use Joe Morris’s definition: “The nature of free music is such that all properties are available for use, but no rules apply as to which ones must be used or how they must be used.” Morris, *Perpetual Frontier*, 30. As Sabine Feisst writes in “Negotiating Freedom and Control in Composition: Improvisation and Its Offshoots, 1950 to 1980”: “The idea to create free improvisation was more wishful thinking than reality. Every free and non-idiomatic improvisation draws on familiar materials since the improvisers cannot completely ignore their musical baggage. And whatever seems new at first glance, can be at risk of quickly solidifying into a musical idiom.” Lewis and Piekut, *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, 219.

¹⁰³ Curtis, interview.

¹⁰⁴ Robin Hayward was the only performer with whom I spoke to raise a potential issue with this way of composing. He was initially skeptical of working with Radigue because of negative past experiences he had had in collaborating

In addition to an embodiment of Radigue's sonic sensibilities, each performer-collaborator had a predetermined structuring image that gave shape and direction to their improvisation before ever generating any actual sounds. This structure gave instrumentalists more direction in the "sorts of sounds"¹⁰⁵ that they could potentially improvise. A fast-moving and choppy river would not yield the same improvised sounds as the trickle of a small stream, for instance. This way of working, using structuring images as a springboard for improvisation, was already central to Radigue's compositional process long before collaborating with instrumentalists.

Radigue explains that, when writing electronic music, for her, "there always has to be a little conductive idea in advance, to determine the structure."¹⁰⁶ She continues, adding that, "my whole life, I've not been able to do anything without an initial idea."¹⁰⁷ The images of water in the *Occam Ocean* series are a continuation of this working method. But interestingly, Radigue sees these structuring images as something that sets her music apart from one based on improvisation. When asked specifically about the role of improvisation in her composing, she replies: "I'm a bad improviser. I always need a clear idea of what I'm going to do in advance. Everything that I do, whether at the synthesizer or with a collaborating musician, needs a clear

with composers. As he described it, there were multiple instances in past collaborations where his own sounds and techniques were co-opted without his consent. As Hayward put it, "I end up playing my own sounds with a composer's signature under them." With Radigue, Hayward was concerned that the same thing would happen. And, he acknowledged, in a way, it did. But it was Radigue's openness and her non-prescriptive approach to the collaborative process that left Hayward creatively satisfied with the outcome and in his role in fostering it. "I don't regret it. I'm very glad that I did make the decision to collaborate with Éliane Radigue," Hayward explains. "She's very open and there's no notation. It's clear to anybody who knows a bit about the process, that it really is a collaboration." Hayward, interview.

¹⁰⁵ I use this phrase quite broadly to mean the general character of sounds—their volume, timbre, and rhythmic features.

¹⁰⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 116.

¹⁰⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 116.

structure as its basis.”¹⁰⁸ In effect, Radigue is claiming that because she (or her performer-collaborators) devise a predetermined structuring image, her process of generating sonic material—or that of her performer-collaborators—is not, at its heart, improvisatory.

In contrast to Radigue’s framing, improvisation today is largely understood to be a broad category that includes music with predetermined structures.¹⁰⁹ And yet, Radigue resists being categorized as an improviser despite improvisation (at least, in some form) featuring prominently in her creative process both at the synthesizer and with her performer-collaborators.¹¹⁰ I will therefore use “improvisation” throughout when referring to the process of real-time sonic generation that each performer carried out under Radigue’s guidance.

Communities of Shared Affinities

The performers who worked with Radigue were also prefigured to bring certain approaches and sonic understandings to the collaboration, making their improvisations more predictably in-line with Radigue’s own sonic sensibilities. Many belonged to overlapping artistic communities of like-minded instrumentalists that shared many of Radigue’s aesthetic affinities. Members of these communities therefore brought with them shared knowledge about the general sorts of sounds and approaches needed to successfully craft a new composition collaboratively with Radigue.

The collaboration with Angharad Davies on *OCCAM XXI* for solo violin, for instance, was facilitated by the community of performers to which Angharad belonged. It was her brother, Rhodri Davies, collaborator with Radigue on *OCCAM I*, who first suggested that Angharad reach

¹⁰⁸ Radigue, interview by Hepfer, *Purple Magazine*.

¹⁰⁹ Nettl et al., *Improvisation*.

¹¹⁰ As described earlier, Radigue would record and rerecord long stretches of improvisations and then sift through them, cutting and reworking the material that was not up to her standards. She would then combine these stretches of sonic material with long crossfades in real-time—another improvisation of sorts.

out to Radigue.¹¹¹ Around the same time, she was also encouraged to contact Radigue by friends and creative collaborators, who, like her and her brother, were connected to a small community of like-minded experimental performers, composers, and improvisers based in London in the early 2000s. This community was later labeled “Reductionist” or “New London Silence.”¹¹²

The *Guardian* critic Philip Clark describes “Reductionists” as improvisers and composers who aim to “deconstruct conventional gestures because they want to open up the space—they distrust the push-pull emotive rhetoric with which music normally plays itself out.”¹¹³

Composers associated with this scene include many from the Wandelweiser collective—a network of experimental composers who share an interest in “slow music, quiet music, spare music, fragile music.”¹¹⁴ The composers, performers, and improvisers revolving around this music scene shared numerous stylistic and ideological affinities with Radigue.¹¹⁵ And so it comes as no surprise that many of these instrumentalists admired Radigue and her music and would want to personally connect with her.

Violist Julia Eckhardt and bassist Dominic Lash were both a part of this small performer-improviser community and also good friends with Angharad. They had each worked with Radigue on solo *Occam* pieces—Eckhardt on *OCCAM IV* and Lash on *OCCAM XVII*—and had described to Angharad the rewarding collaborative process. It was Eckhardt and Lash who, in

¹¹¹ Davies, interview.

¹¹² Warburton, “Into the Labyrinth,” and Wastell, interview by Tomas Korber.

¹¹³ Clark, “The Playlist: Experimental Music.”

¹¹⁴ Ross, “Searching for Silence.” Angharad’s repertoire from the time, for instance, featured music by Stefan Thut, Manfred Werder, and Michael Pisaro—all Wandelweiser-associated composers. Angharad also regularly performed similarly “Reductionist” music by composers James Saunders, Tim Parkinson, and Tony Conrad. Davies, interview.

¹¹⁵ The October 2005 issue of *The Wire*, which featured an interview and profile with Éliane Radigue, also featured (in the pages immediately following the interview with Radigue) a profile of the Davies siblings and fellow performers on the London “Reductionist” scene. *The Wire* was thus a site of connection between like-minded communities.

turn, convinced their friend and colleague Angharad to finally contact Radigue. They knew, based on their experiences and shared artistic outlooks, that Angharad would be well suited for a new collaboration with Radigue. And in doing so, they seeded a new collaboration. It was creative communities like these, with shared artistic values that overlapped with Radigue's that became pipelines for new collaborators. These networks ensured a steady stream of like-minded potential performer-collaborators who would eventually take part in Radigue's unique creative process.

Tubist, improviser, and composer Robin Hayward was in a similar situation. He first decided to reach out to Radigue in 2014 when four of his most respected colleagues independently suggested that he contact her.¹¹⁶ Two out of the four performers (Charles Curtis and Rhodri Davies) had already worked with Radigue on solo collaborative compositions and thus knew that Hayward would be a good fit. As Hayward reflects on the situation, "I thought, well, if they're all telling me, there's probably something in it."¹¹⁷ At the time, Hayward was also creating a great deal of music, as a composer and performer, that explored alternate tuning systems through sustaining sounds. He had recently released a record of music by Alvin Lucier, Catherine Christer Hennix, as well as his own compositions for his specially designed microtonal tuba. The informal network to which Hayward belonged as a performer, improviser, and composer overlapped and intersected with those performers who had already worked with Radigue. The colleagues who recommended that Hayward contact Radigue knew, because of their shared sensibilities, that he would be well suited for a new Radigue collaboration.

¹¹⁶ These performers were Anthea Caddy, Charles Curtis, Rhodri Davies, and Werner Durand. Hayward, interview.

¹¹⁷ Hayward, interview.

Fittingly, Radigue was often under the assumption that the performers who came to her already had an awareness of the sorts of sounds she preferred. According to Dominic Lash, “there was an assumption that you were familiar with her music. She knew you would have been anyway. And so there was some trust.”¹¹⁸ Lash adds that, despite this shared sense, Radigue was never prescriptive in her approach. “She never said, ‘Oh, by the way, my music has to be this or that.’”¹¹⁹ This contrasts with Nate Wooley’s account. “I sent her a solo record,” Wooley recalls, “and on that, there’s some really harsh stuff. She wrote back and said, ‘I like this and I think you can do this music but there’s a lot of harsh things that wouldn’t fit my music.’”¹²⁰ Wooley explains, “I knew going in, that it was going to be okay to just stay away from the screaming sounds and things that were really bright or percussive.”¹²¹

On the other hand, one of Radigue’s earliest performer-collaborators Carol Robinson says, “I think I arrived with the least amount of preconception. I was really an open slate, and curious to see what would happen.”¹²² Nonetheless, like many of the performers who have worked with Radigue, she shared with her certain sonic affinities. “Obviously,” Robinson explains, “I had been playing music my whole life. I worked intensively with Giacinto Scelsi ... and so there was a kindred musical sensitivity.”¹²³

Countless stories like these illustrate that many of the performers who approached Radigue were in large part preselected to have the experience, knowledge, technical abilities, and

¹¹⁸ Lash, interview.

¹¹⁹ Lash, interview.

¹²⁰ Wooley, interview.

¹²¹ Wooley, interview.

¹²² Robinson, interview.

¹²³ Robinson, interview.

ideological outlooks well suited to Radigue's collaborative process and aesthetic sensibilities. While the sort of sonic material that each instrumentalist would generate when they improvised for the first time with Radigue was not prescribed specifically in most cases, these instrumentalists were already conversant in the general sorts of sounds, approaches, and character of the music of Éliane Radigue because of shared community knowledge. Before even stepping foot in her apartment, most of Radigue's performer-collaborators were primed for her unique creative process and musical language. And, vice versa, Radigue was very much prepared to discover and explore this common ground.

Composer as Facilitator

When collaboratively composing, Radigue was not the sole authority attempting to recreate through the labor of instrumentalists predetermined sounds that she had imagined earlier in her head. Rather, she took on the role of a facilitator, sculpting sounds that already existed—sounds that came into being only through the actions and creative imagination of her performer-collaborators. This working method is closely connected to Radigue's electronic music practice. In working with her ARP 2500, Radigue described beginning always with a “mass of sound.”¹²⁴ She would then make slight adjustments on different modules so that the parameters of this sound mass would gradually change over time.¹²⁵ Similarly, in earlier pieces like *Ursal* (1969) or *In Memoriam Ostinato* (1969), Radigue subtly shaped nuanced sonic material out of audio feedback. In this way of working, Radigue was not generating sounds from scratch, but rather shaping sounds that were, in essence, already there.

¹²⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 114.

¹²⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 114–15.

Radigue, by shaping rather than generating sounds in her instrumental collaborations, treated her performer-collaborators like she might her ARP 2500—as “human synthesizers.”¹²⁶ With this working method, the sound-producing technology (or human instrumentalist in the case of her collaborative compositions) produced the sounds and Radigue then sculpted them into something that she found to be musically satisfying. This process completely reimagines the sole creator model in which the composer sits alone, imagining their compositions fully formed in their heads. In contrast, Radigue arrives to the compositional process having not heard or even imagined the sounds that would eventually constitute her instrumental works. It is only through the creativity, personality, and skill of her performer-collaborators that this music could actually come into being.¹²⁷

As a facilitator of sounds, Radigue also diffused the power of artistic judgment across multiple actors—a notable difference between her solitary electronic practice and her collaborative instrumental one. When working alone, she would subject her drafts to multiple listenings and multiple ways of listening.¹²⁸ With her performer-collaborators, she was willing to share this burden of artistic evaluation. “Together, we would feel immediately if there was something that worked less well,” Radigue explained.¹²⁹ “I don’t say anything in this collective work, I listen and occasionally make a little comment.”¹³⁰ Radigue suggests here that even the role of arbiter is equally shared between composer and performer. Of course, it must be

¹²⁶ Toeplitz, interview.

¹²⁷ Charles Curtis: “I’m doing it all. She never heard of any of these things before.” Curtis, interview.

¹²⁸ Radigue: “All the pieces I made alone were subjected to at least four or five different types of listening before being delivered.” Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 148.

¹²⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 148.

¹³⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 148.

acknowledged that each performer's judgment of the quality of the sounds they produced was closely tied to what they understood Radigue's sonic expectations to be—in this compositional process, her performer-collaborators saw themselves as fostering Radigue's artistic vision, not their own. Nonetheless, they played a crucial role in helping Radigue decide whether the music was up to (what they believed were) her rigorous creative and sonic standards.

As a facilitator, rather than sole creator, Radigue decentralized creative agency to the performers while still remaining a central actor in the compositional network. The right of final approval remained Radigue's alone, but the actual process of generating and evaluating sounds was carried out collectively, under her guidance.

Disembodied Sound, Disembodied Technique

When guiding her performer-collaborators through the creative process, Radigue is never prescriptive. This extends not only to sounds but also the technical methods for producing sounds. Moreover, she expresses no interest in learning the techniques of sonic production of the instrumentalists. In fact, she intentionally distances herself from them, focusing rather on the sounds themselves. When working with Kasper Toeplitz on *Elemental II*, she even turned her back on Toeplitz while he played, not wanting to be distracted by the visual elements of his performance.¹³¹

Radigue never received formal composition training in the Western classical tradition and so she had little knowledge of specific instrumental techniques—their strengths and limitations—when she set out to compose for instruments later in life. If she had wanted to be more specific in describing to performers *how* certain sounds should be performed, she would have needed to gather more knowledge on the techniques of orchestration. So this was perhaps

¹³¹ Toeplitz, interview. She turned around to face Toeplitz in their last rehearsal and found that seeing him was not distracting from the sound—but rather enhanced it.

one limiting factor that influenced her technically-distanced working method. But I would rather connect Radigue's desire to separate the sounds from their means of production to her training in the early electronic music studios of France.

In the French tradition of acousmatic music making, described by Radigue's mentor Pierre Schaeffer in his *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966), the composer is advised to separate sounds from their sources—to seek an objective pure listening or “la pure écouter” of sound.¹³² This tradition is modeled on Edmund Husserl's concept of the *epoché* in which a viewer or listener performs a “phenomenological reduction” or “bracketing”—a temporary suspension of judgment—to examine phenomena as they are originally provided to the human consciousness.¹³³ In Schaeffer's application of the *epoché* model, the sources of sounds are “bracketed,” or set aside, in order to distinguish the source from the sound itself. Sound is thus conceived of as an independent and transcendent object.¹³⁴ The acousmatic experience of sound “bars direct access to visible, tactile, and physically quantifiable assessments” to describe and elucidate the spatiotemporal causes of sound.¹³⁵

Radigue's work alongside Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry clearly had a considerable impact on her attitude toward sound and its means of production. When working with her ARP 2500, for instance, Radigue intentionally avoided learning about the synthesizer's inner workings.¹³⁶ She preferred to internalize only that which was necessary to create the sounds she

¹³² Schaeffer, *Traité Des Objets Musicaux*, 93.

¹³³ Cogan, “Phenomenological Reduction.”

¹³⁴ Kane, *Sound Unseen*, 24.

¹³⁵ Kane, 24.

¹³⁶ Radigue: “Technically, I'm useless, I only know the minimum necessary to use the synthesiser. Technology bores me. It has always been a mandatory means of passage that I hurried to forget.” Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 116.

sought to make. Technological machinations, and likewise instrumental techniques, were only a means to an end. It comes as no surprise then that Radigue would not be interested in providing specific technical instructions to performers or to make orchestrational decisions prior to meeting with them. This also helps explain why Radigue’s comments when collaboratively composing are usually more broad in scope, dealing with dynamics, overall sound quality, timbre, pacing, or balance versus more technical descriptions and critiques.

Separating sounds from their technical means of production also led Radigue to personify her music-making technology as a way of conceptualizing their sonic characteristics and idiosyncrasies. Rather than viewing the sound character of her ARP 2500 synthesizer, for instance, as a technical nuance, Radigue frames it as an intrinsic quality, as if the instrument were a person. “I think he has a very special sonority,” Radigue reflected, when reminiscing about the synthesizer.¹³⁷ “He has a quality, he has a voice. A real voice. It’s a very special quality of the sound.”¹³⁸ Clearly, Radigue conceptualized the “voice” of the ARP 2500 as having a certain mysterious and unchangeable character with which she would—much like in her collaborative practice—dialogue and interact. As Radigue recalls, “We tamed each other, in the language we shared.”¹³⁹ In retrospect, Radigue’s relationship with her technology—one in which she accepted its sonic qualities and capabilities as baked in—made her very well suited for a collaborative practice with performers, many of whom were themselves improvisers with their own artistic voices, personal backgrounds, and technical abilities. This openness to the

¹³⁷ Rodgers, *Pink Noises*, 56.

¹³⁸ Rodgers, 56.

¹³⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 115.

personality and experiences that a music maker and their instrument bring to the creative process primed Radigue to work collaboratively with others.

Image as “Score”

Origins and Advantages

When creating electronic music on her ARP 2500 synthesizer, Radigue did not use a traditional five-line staff. Nor did she need to represent the music visually for any reason other than as a personal compositional aid.¹⁴⁰ Rather than notation, she used images, real and imagined, to evoke the sounds she sought to sculpt. “In my electronic music,” Radigue explains, “I often used images in the guise of notation, whether in my head or in drawings, and notably the image of woven sounds, as if drawn from the synthesizer, intertwined, mixed, a little like a clay in the hands of the sculptor.”¹⁴¹ Radigue viewed sound as her principal material, and she conceptualized that sound through images. By circumventing more traditional intermediaries—performers and notation—the images she imagined and sculpted in sound during her solitary compositional process became the final work that would then be diffused in a concert space.

Using an image-based method for conjuring sounds with live performers, Radigue maintained this aspect of her electronic practice, despite introducing instrumentalists into her creative process.¹⁴² In rehearsals with performers, Radigue was still directly shaping the sound, through the medium of a shared image. Through dialogue, Radigue worked with the performers to hone the sonic representation of the image—“it’s more of a wet mountain” as she explained to

¹⁴⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 114–17. Sometimes Radigue would create sketches of a work’s overall form as a visual organization aid and also sometimes work from diagrams as a guide for what knobs to turn and when. But, these were purely tools for Radigue’s own benefit, not as a way to externalize, translate, or transmit the sound to others.

¹⁴¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 167.

¹⁴² Luke Nickel writes that “... by working orally and aurally, Radigue and her collaborators bypass any intermediate media (such as written scores in Western classical music) and communicate entirely in sound, which, due to her background in electroacoustic music, is how Radigue has always worked.” Nickel, “Occam Notions,” 30.

Kasper Toeplitz, for example—to closer match her own aural imagination and sonic sensibilities.¹⁴³

Radigue believed that by using an image as “score,” shaped one-on-one through verbal discourse between composer and performer, she could more directly and personally communicate with the instrumentalist than through notation. As Radigue reflects, “oral transmission permits a more direct exchange of ideas.”¹⁴⁴ It also allows for the work to more freely evolve over time, as it is gradually embodied in the mind and spirit of the performer. “It encourages their contemplation and generates a fluctuating submersion, ripening over time,” Radigue explains.¹⁴⁵ “Eastern cultures call this the ‘heart to heart,’ the site of the spirit. In such cultures, the heart is also where music is created, whereas the West instead imagines it as a product of the brain.”¹⁴⁶

Degrees of Interpretive Freedom

In the image’s inherent vagaries and the openness to which each performer is welcome to interpret it through sound, the performer is provided with an enormous amount of creative license. But, at the same time, Radigue frames the performer’s interpretative freedom in terms of “precision” and “imprecision.”¹⁴⁷ She contends that “a margin of imprecision [is necessary] in order to allow the instrumentalist the freedom to give rigorous and precise form to what has been

¹⁴³ Toeplitz, interview.

¹⁴⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 149.

¹⁴⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

¹⁴⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

¹⁴⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

transmitted orally.”¹⁴⁸ This suggests that there remains a certain ideal “work”—or perhaps many possible potential “works”—that each performer must strive to make audible.

In Radigue’s creative framework, a certain level of imprecision between her own ideal sonic representation of the image (what one would traditionally call “the work”) and the *actual* sounding result (the interpretation of “the work”) is desirable. This imprecision, Radigue suggests, opens up a space for interpreters to enhance the composition. “Naturally, there is always a margin of imprecision,” Radigue explains, “and I am interested precisely in what happens within this margin, this little space that remains open to interpretation.”¹⁴⁹

Radigue draws an important distinction here. There is an *area* of imprecision that is open to interpretation. It follows that outside of this area, the performer is *not* given creative freedom. Radigue then drives home the point: “It’s a question of priorities, but it doesn’t seem to me that oral transmission would be any less faithful to a score.”¹⁵⁰ From this, we can deduce that Radigue conceives of her imagined sonic representation of the shared image as “the score.” Moreover, she wants performers to make audible that “score.”

With these insights, Radigue’s method of transmission is not so dissimilar from traditional Western notation, in which a performer interprets a score within a certain margin of creative freedom. In learning to perform a work by Beethoven, for example, one usually starts from the notated score. This document is often analyzed in harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic terms and compared against recorded and live performances of the piece. Although there may be disagreements on the details of the score, its main features will generally be well established, and

¹⁴⁸ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

¹⁴⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

¹⁵⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 149.

performances that fail to do justice to those features will be regarded as inadequate.¹⁵¹ The role of the interpreter in this framework is remarkably similar to the role of Radigue’s performer-collaborators when they are recreating the compositions that they have previously conceived together with Radigue.

But instead of a physical score, as Radigue describes, “the image contains the progression and structure of the piece”—or at least, an ideal progression and structure of the piece.¹⁵² “Then,” Radigue describes, “the music is brought to life through the sounds the musicians animate.”¹⁵³ Radigue acknowledges that in this space of interpretive freedom, or “area of imprecision,” the performer is able to elevate the work.¹⁵⁴ “That’s where [performers’] art and genius lies ...” Radigue explains.¹⁵⁵ “That’s why I am always saying that without musicians, even the most extraordinary scores would go from sublime to the trash-can.”¹⁵⁶ In the end, this view largely conforms to the nineteenth-century Western classical mythology of performance. The performer is able to elevate a work to new heights in a small area in which interpretive freedom is allowed by the composer and by “the work” itself. Of course, the connection between the score as a representation of “the work” and the actual sounds in performance is not so clear-cut, even in the Western classical music tradition. Interpretations of notation, and therefore

¹⁵¹ Harper-Scott and Samson, *An Introduction to Music Studies*, 182.

¹⁵² Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 162.

¹⁵³ Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

¹⁵⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

¹⁵⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 162.

performances of the same composition, have differed drastically throughout time, raising questions about the *actual* fixed nature of “the work,” even in more traditional frameworks.¹⁵⁷

Exposing the Limits of Western Notation

In any sort of formalized system of notation, as discussed earlier (see “The Score” in Chapter 3) certain sonic elements are prioritized over others. Notation, by necessity, filters not only music but how performers and composers conceptualize it. As Klaus Lang describes in *Liebe und Notation*, Western notation, in particular, prioritizes pitch as the essential material of music and treats all other features as secondary attributes.¹⁵⁸ But Radigue’s music is focused on gradual changes in timbre, beating, and inner fluctuations. These elements of sound are invisible in Western notation, making it a poor fit to represent the focus of her sonic material.

Radigue was well aware of Western notation’s insufficiency and so she found affinities with non-Western music that, like her own, operates as an oral tradition.¹⁵⁹ An oral method of transmission was not seen as a compromise for Radigue, but rather a necessity. Notating the *actual* complexity of sounds that Radigue sought in her music would be visually overwhelming for a performer—or even simply impossible to accurately represent.¹⁶⁰

Indeed, a traditionally notated score of Éliane Radigue’s instrumental music would not say much about how the sounds are *actually* changing through time. And this is despite there

¹⁵⁷ Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 20.

¹⁵⁸ Lang, *Liebe Und Notation*.

¹⁵⁹ Radigue: “There is other classical music, such as Asian music, for which oral transmission is implicitly necessary because of the complexity of the structure.” Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 149.

¹⁶⁰ Nickel, “Occam Notions,” 31. Nate Wooley imagines that notating one of Radigue’s instrumental compositions would “be a nightmare.” He explains that each sound would need at least two pages and there would be a need for an entirely new hyper-complex notational system which would, in turn, destroy the receptive frame of mind that one needs to perform her music.

being a great deal of sonic change and evolution. In the *Occam Ocean* series, in particular, Radigue sought to raise an awareness in listeners' perceptions to the infinite, and often overlooked, complexities of the physical world—the ever-present, yet often imperceivable existence of waves and vibrations. Radigue encourages listeners to reorient their way of listening—to seek out structures *within* sounds themselves that may otherwise be overlooked and thus remain “unseen.”¹⁶¹

From Radigue's descriptions, there is a certain “magic” or “lightness” that emerges out of sounds—something that “sharpens perceptions at every level.”¹⁶² This comes from an intense focus on all of the different components of sound, especially those that are not traditionally conceived of as being “musical.” “When you play an A or a D on a string, it's an A or a D,” Radigue explains.¹⁶³ “But what is really interesting is the whole immaterial zone emanating from the bow's friction on the string. For me, the manner of making the string vibrate, and all the richness that exudes from it, that is music itself.”¹⁶⁴ This illustrates that, for Radigue, traditional Western notation would be entirely inadequate at visually representing those features of sonority that she is most interested in illuminating in her compositions.

Beyond Notes and Rhythms

Radigue's music is centered on her desire to make audible the inner structures of sound. This is why, in part, so much of her music consists of radically sustaining sonorities. Radigue

¹⁶¹ Radigue here is expanding on the concept of “deep listening” as developed by Pauline Oliveros. In Oliveros' conception, deep listening “involves going below the surface of what is heard, expanding to the whole field of sound while finding focus.” Oliveros, “Quantum Listening.” Radigue, like Oliveros, wants to awaken what she calls a “technical prowess” to search for the “immaterial sounds” contained within sounds—attributes of sounds which are often ignored or overlooked. Radigue, “*Occam Ocean* Description [unpublished].”

¹⁶² Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 54.

¹⁶³ Radigue and Eckhardt, 54.

¹⁶⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, 54.

reduces the activity of her musical textures to clear the way for certain components of sounds to become more easily perceived. As Radigue reflects:

I have always preferred slow movements in classical music, as they allow much more time for all this aerial sound texture to manifest itself. Whereas when you're in a scherzo, it's essentially a game of fundamentals, harmonics don't have the time to develop within their own organization. This is also the reason why I like sustained sounds, which give time for the profusion of this subtle and tender deployment—the slowness of my pieces and the necessity of held sounds—as well as some intensities in the piano nuances to prevent the fundamentals from resurfacing too abruptly.¹⁶⁵

In other words, Radigue prefers slow, sustaining sounds because she wants to create a space that allows for the overtones of an acoustic instrument to speak—to become the principal material. In faster textures, Radigue suggests, the fundamentals—what in Western music is often designated as the substance of music—will inevitably become the main area of focus.

Radigue makes this explicit to performers with whom she collaborates. She asks that they “forget” the fundamental:

Ideally, the listener and the performer should be able to quickly forget this fundamental and be absorbed in listening to the richness of the subtle play emanating from the beatings, pulsations, games of harmonics, etc.—everything that makes up the basic, immaterial nature of sounds, which are intensified in the unique relation between instrumentalist and instrument.¹⁶⁶

This way of listening and conceptualizing the material of music runs counter to the Western classical music tradition in which “pitches” or “notes” are treated as the atoms of musical structures—immutable building blocks that make up variable melodies and chords. Radigue, on the other hand, is interested in an essential reconfiguring of this perspective; she seeks to uncover the structures *within* a single “pitch” or “note.” She wants to explore “the impalpable essence of

¹⁶⁵ Radigue and Eckhardt, 134–35.

¹⁶⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, 164.

acoustic instruments and the richness of partials of all kinds, which go far beyond fundamentals.”¹⁶⁷

Radigue believes that the sonority of an instrument is not singular and static. Rather, it is “a prodigious universe.”¹⁶⁸ In her instrumental music she thus seeks to explore “the immateriality of these sounds” by bringing out what she calls their “flight of harmonics.”¹⁶⁹ She seeks to create a space for them to speak for themselves, to “frame the soft singing being shaped by itself through the interactions within the sound.”¹⁷⁰

Radigue was well aware that traditional Western notation would fail to represent these essential aspects of sonority. As she explains, traditional musical notation would only represent the fundamental, “and that wouldn’t make sense because in this work the fundamentals are only an energy.”¹⁷¹ Notating only the fundamentals (or what are considered “pitches” or “notes” in Western music parlance) would miss all of the sonic activity—the sonic material of Radigue’s music.

By circumventing Western notation in preference for an oral image-based mode of transmission, Radigue resists the frameworks within which Western music operates as “notes and rhythms on a page.” But, as with many other aspects of her work, she does not view this from the lens of resistance. Rather, she sees oral transmission as an age-old method for creating art—a method that has been around much longer and is more widespread than Western notation. “It’s not that remarkable,” Radigue reflects, when asked about her use of oral method of

¹⁶⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 134.

¹⁶⁸ Radigue and Eckhardt, 134.

¹⁶⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 134.

¹⁷⁰ Radigue and Eckhardt, 167.

¹⁷¹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 167.

transmission.¹⁷² “Oral transmission is the most widespread method in all the world’s music and actually not only for music, but also for speech—the vehicle of thought—somehow for everything that makes for our humanity.”¹⁷³

Decoupling the Score from the Work

Musical notation has far wider implications than simply the sort of sounds and structures it can communicate. As Nicholas Cook describes, notation “determines how people imagine music within a given culture.”¹⁷⁴ In Western culture, notation has been used to preserve, codify, instruct, and transmit the authorial image of the sole artistic creative genius. By doing away with notation, Radigue is also reconfiguring these more traditional priorities. The principal goal of the music is no longer to preserve the original creative vision of the composer. Her music is therefore less focused on posterity—on creating a commodity that can be bought, sold, and preserved—and more concerned with building relationships with the people of the here and now.

And yet, despite this recalibration away from a score-based practice in which a document represents tangibly “the work,” the idea of “the work” in Radigue’s collaborative instrumental music remains. Not only are Radigue’s compositions still conceived as “works” but Éliane Radigue remains the sole author. Each composition in the *Occam Ocean* series is billed on concert programs and CD liner notes as a work by Radigue, not a co-creation.¹⁷⁵ Performers are not acknowledged to be the composers of these works who are equal to Radigue in their role as creators.

¹⁷² Radigue and Eckhardt, 148–49.

¹⁷³ Radigue and Eckhardt, 148–49.

¹⁷⁴ Cook, *Music: A Very Short Introduction*, 63.

¹⁷⁵ *OCCAM RIVER XXII* for bass clarinet and saxophone and *OCCAM HEXA II* for flute, clarinet, viola, cello, and percussion were explicitly co-creations between Carol Robinson and Éliane Radigue and thus are exceptions to this.

Authorship and “The Work Concept”

Authorship, Capitalism, and Mutual Respect

It is not just concert curators and venues that advance the idea that Radigue is the author of these collaborative compositions. Every performer with whom I spoke understood their role in the collaborative creative process as being to bring to life Radigue’s sonic imagination and not their own. In my discussions with performers, there was this pervasive idea of “honoring” Radigue in the performance of her collaborative works—to stay true to her original imagination, beliefs, and ideas. As Charles Curtis describes, his goal was “to bring sounds and techniques that [he] felt were appropriate to her music, that were a part of her sound world and that would lend themselves to the kind of sustaining and the kind of gradual transformation associated with her music.”¹⁷⁶ Robin Hayward shared similar sentiments, emphasizing his goal of illuminating her sonic sensibilities, not his own. “It’s important when we play,” Hayward reflected, “that we don’t put our own interest too much in the foreground.”¹⁷⁷

Radigue’s instrumental collaborators often go out of their way to honor Radigue’s vision, even going beyond her expectations. While Radigue is the only person who can definitively determine that a new composition is ready to be performed for a live audience, a number of performers have decided on their own that it still requires additional rehearsals to achieve Radigue’s authorial vision.¹⁷⁸ Radigue’s performer-collaborators—and especially those who have worked with her extensively like Carol Robinson, Silvia Tarozzi, and Charles Curtis—do

¹⁷⁶ Curtis, interview.

¹⁷⁷ Hayward, interview.

¹⁷⁸ Robinson: “She often says at some point when we’re rehearsing, ‘Oh, there you got it. Now it’s yours.’ And we might reply, ‘Oh, no, no, it’s just the beginning. We’re still far from where we need to be.’ We would say, ‘Okay, we’ve found it this time, but there is so much more work to be done.’” Robinson, interview.

not want to compromise their integrity or the integrity of the composition for the sake of expediency.¹⁷⁹

The question then must be raised: Why has this conception of the performer's subservient role remained, despite evidence that points to Radigue's instrumental compositions as being "co-creations" rather than the work of a single author? First, it is important to acknowledge that Radigue herself frames the music as her own. As Carol Robinson notes, for instance, in rehearsals "when you are not playing with exactly the right energy or things are just not working, [Radigue] steps right in and says, 'no, that's not it,' or might tell someone, 'you are not playing my music, you're playing *your* music.'"¹⁸⁰ This suggests that Radigue is sensitive to the identity and sonic sensibilities that define her music and views the preservation of these elements as necessary for the collaborative compositions to remain under her sole authorship.

Second, the vast majority of the performers who have collaborated with Radigue come from a traditional conservatory training, where ideas of authorship—and, in particular, sole authorship of musical works—remain particularly strong. While many of Radigue's performer-collaborators have made their careers in experimental, alternative, and improvisatory music scenes, the "work concept" remains a staple of the art world, even amongst these boundary-blurring communities. But this explanation still seems limited. Why does there remain such a strong desire to preserve the mythology of individual artistic creators, even in creative practices like Radigue's, where there is so much evidence that points to the contrary?

I would argue first that the "work concept" is deeply ingrained in the West as a feature of the underlying capitalist framework. In *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), Theodor Adorno suggests that

¹⁷⁹ The "composition" in this case is Radigue's original sonic intention.

¹⁸⁰ Robinson, interview.

all art created in a certain sociohistorical framework is necessarily bound by the structures of that framework. Furthermore, the artist and artwork, Adorno posits, is able to push back against some of these structures, creating an in-built tension within the artwork itself. But nonetheless these tensions will remain unresolved as long as the structures underlying the society in which the artwork exists, remain.¹⁸¹ Radigue's collaborative instrumental works fit neatly into this analysis. There is an enormous amount of unresolvable tension between concepts of authorship and collaboration, of "the work" and collective creation.

Further related to Adorno's theory, recent scholars have examined how concepts underlying the contemporary market economy impact not just commerce and trade, but how we conceptualize the world around us.¹⁸² Capitalism impacts all fields of study, creative work, and the systems governing relationships between people and institutions. As Luke Plotica writes in *Nineteenth-Century Individualism and the Market Economy* (2017), "diverse local and specialized markets ... come to function according to sufficiently shared logics and values that they speak a common language, not only of prices but also of principles such as efficiency, ownership, and self-interest."¹⁸³ Thus, Radigue and her performer-collaborators' more traditional attitudes toward authorship permeated these unique creative formations despite the presence of numerous nonhierarchical approaches and ways of thinking that run counter to them.

Beyond the impact of capitalism on the ways in which artistic creation is framed in Western culture, there may actually be a simpler more humanistic answer to why Radigue's

¹⁸¹ "The unavoidable tensions within artworks express unavoidable conflicts within the larger sociohistorical process from which they arise and to which they belong. These tensions enter the artwork through the artist's struggle with sociohistorically laden materials, and they call forth conflicting interpretations, many of which misread either the work-internal tensions or their connection to conflicts in society as a whole." Zuidervaart, "Theodor W. Adorno."

¹⁸² See Plotica, Ritchey, and Baym.

¹⁸³ Plotica, *Nineteenth-Century Individualism and the Market Economy*, 12.

instrumental collaborators uphold the “work concept” despite resisting it in practice. In working together with Radigue in her small apartment, performers come to feel that they owe Radigue the respect of upholding and honoring her artistic and ideological intents. They see themselves as playing an important part in elevating her music and ideas. This comes from a place of mutual respect, empathy, and compassion—from human to human, creator to creator. Nate Wooley reflects on this dynamic, saying “those who have collaborated with Éliane come out the other side with a deep appreciation and love for her and for her music. It’s like a family.”¹⁸⁴

Coauthorship

In more recent years, Radigue has become increasingly immobile with age. When approached by flautist Cat Hope and her Decibel New Music Ensemble—based in Perth, Australia—about collaborating on a new work, Radigue decided that, while she would like to work with them in-person, her health would not permit her to make the trip. She decided to officially coauthor a new ensemble *Occam* with Carol Robinson, who would then travel to Australia in her place. This became *OCCAM HEXA II* for flute, clarinet, viola, cello, and percussion, written in collaboration with the Decibel New Music Ensemble.

Robinson oversaw, in person, the creative act in lieu of Radigue, guiding the musicians through the compositional process.¹⁸⁵ This opens up additional questions about how these compositions resist and yet in some ways maintain the “work concept.” Robinson viewed her role in the compositional process as being a steward of Radigue’s working method and sonic sensibilities. At the same time, she was not seeking to create “an imitation, like substandard Éliane,” as she described it, but rather a hybrid that incorporates some of her own sonic

¹⁸⁴ Wooley, interview.

¹⁸⁵ Hope and Robinson, “*OCCAM HEXA II*.”

affinities.¹⁸⁶ There are moments in the piece, for example, that Robinson identifies as being perhaps uncharacteristic of Radigue. “There’s a point in the piece,” Robinson reflects, “that is perhaps a little edgy. Éliane doesn’t really like dissonance.”¹⁸⁷ Robinson never viewed her role in this co-creation as being an “assistant” or subservient to Radigue. Rather, her goal with the Decibel Ensemble was “to make a piece in the *Occam* spirit together.”¹⁸⁸

Robinson is honored to be a person to whom Radigue entrusts with such creative responsibility to carry on her legacy. “It’s a very important step that we’ve taken,” Robinson explains, “her trusting me to make the pieces. At some point, she won’t be here to share the experience and wants there to be people who can continue the work. In a way, she has designated me as one of those people, which I find very moving.”¹⁸⁹

The second work to be cosigned by Robinson was *OCCAM RIVER XXII* for bass clarinet and saxophone (Bertrand Gauguet), which premiered in 2018. This work, unlike the piece for the Decibel Ensemble, did involve Radigue in person. As Robinson describes, the decision to coauthor this piece came not from Radigue’s lack of involvement, but rather from a place of friendship, kindness, and an honoring of Robinson’s contributions to it and to the entire *Occam Ocean* series.¹⁹⁰ Over the course of their twelve years of working together, Robinson and Radigue developed a deep friendship.¹⁹¹ These co-creations, in Robinson’s view, are a way of

¹⁸⁶ Robinson: “I did try to respect the aesthetics and the way of working ... but [at the same time] I wasn’t trying to do an imitation, like substandard Éliane.” Robinson, interview.

¹⁸⁷ Robinson, interview.

¹⁸⁸ Robinson, interview.

¹⁸⁹ Robinson, interview.

¹⁹⁰ Robinson is by far the most frequent collaborator in the *Occam Ocean* series, collaborating on fourteen separate compositions with Radigue. Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 188–96.

¹⁹¹ Robinson: “Her suggestion of me cosigning the bass clarinet and saxophone piece was, I would say, a gift, but it’s also a testament to our very deep friendship. She felt that at a certain point in the piece, the music shifted toward

honoring that, of saying “we’ve come a long way on this road together.”¹⁹² More broadly, these recent co-creations point to an increasing willingness on Radigue’s part to hand over the responsibility of preserving and transmitting her works and legacy to the performers themselves, empowering them with responsibilities usually reserved solely for the composer and their publisher.

Issues of Transmission

With all of Radigue’s *Occams*, she entrusted the power of transmission to her performer-collaborators. It is therefore the performer’s right and responsibility to teach their *Occam* to other instrumentalists of their choosing. This partly comes out of necessity. As an essentially oral tradition, there remain no scores—and thus, no physical documents that could potentially be transmitted to other performers to recreate the work.¹⁹³ Radigue maintains this oral mode of transmission because she believes that notation would limit the potential of the compositions to evolve after their original conception. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, traditional notation would not sufficiently represent visually what was *actually* happening with her sounds.¹⁹⁴

Once a new *Occam* is formed, Radigue will often say, “Now it is yours.”¹⁹⁵ What she means is that, while she remains the author of the composition, it is the performer’s prerogative to share the work with others. It is their responsibility to teach it to other instrumentalists (if they

my voice. Her suggestion was done out of kindness and made me feel honored. Rather than taking possession of the piece, it was more like, we’ve come a long way on this road together. It was her way of acknowledging it.”
Robinson, interview.

¹⁹² Robinson, interview.

¹⁹³ Some performers—like Carol Robinson, Robin Hayward, and Frédéric Blondy—take detailed notes or audio recordings to remember fingerings and general structures, while others like Charles Curtis operate purely by memory. These personal notes and audio recordings serve as idiomatic performance aids not to represent the piece or to transmit it to others.

¹⁹⁴ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 149.

¹⁹⁵ Davies, interview.

choose to do so). Each performer then becomes a de facto conservator, a guardian, a steward of Radigue's legacy.

This makes "the work" not easily transmissible. These compositions are not available for purchase—they cannot be bought or sold. Radigue's collaborative compositions therefore operate outside of the typical capitalist systems of cultural production. This flies in the face of the publishing industry, which profits off of the sales of composer's labor (in the form of notated scores) to performers.¹⁹⁶ Once one of Radigue's *Occams* is created, "ownership" is essentially transferred to the performer. The middleman—the publisher—is taken completely out of the equation. But "authorship," interestingly, remains Radigue's.

All of Radigue's performer-collaborators with whom I spoke took this stewardship role quite seriously as they considered when, how, and to whom to transmit their works. For instance, Rhodri Davies, the first collaborator of the *Occam Ocean* series, would only transmit his piece to another harp player who had a similar affection for Radigue's music. "I'm not going to just pass it on to any harpist who just wants it in their repertoire. They must have a love for it," Davies explains, "a deep connection with the music."¹⁹⁷ Nate Wooley describes being contacted frequently by other trumpet players seeking to obtain a score for *OCCAM X* for solo trumpet, but being unable to assist them. "I still get, about every two months, someone writing saying, 'can you hook me up with the score, because I want to play that music.'¹⁹⁸ Of course, there is no score to offer.

¹⁹⁶ Publishing houses in recent years have turned toward copyright acquisitions and licensing as principal forms of profit-making. Towse, "Economics of Music Publishing."

¹⁹⁷ Davies, interview.

¹⁹⁸ Wooley, interview.

Among Radigue's performer-collaborators there is a shared hesitance to transmit her music to others who might simply be an enterprising careerist seeking a new, fashionable work for their repertoire. Radigue's music has significantly increased in popularity in recent years. Even IRCAM—an institution famously oriented toward musical approaches anathema to Radigue's¹⁹⁹—recently (September 2020) presented a whole evening of her music at the Centre Pompidou.²⁰⁰ As a result, more and more instrumentalists have made inquiries to Radigue's original performer-collaborators about acquiring a composition of Radigue's. But, of course, Radigue's instrumental music cannot be “acquired” by the usual means. Radigue's instrumental works cannot be found in the catalogues of publishers, libraries, or even in dark corners of the Internet. There are no publicly available documents (or scores) that instruct performers on how to recreate her music. This personal, intimate, and time-consuming collaborative process runs completely counter to the traditional, more expedient, transactional model of transmitting Western music.

And it is precisely these characteristics that Radigue's original performer-collaborators view as essential to the creation (and re-creation) of this music. Radigue's performer-collaborators often aim to devise the same conditions in which they realized the composition. These conditions are deemed necessary to the composition itself and ensure that Radigue, her sonic sensibilities, and collaborative approaches are preserved. But these procedures also often create nearly insurmountable obstacles to *actually* carrying out a successful transmission. To date, there has only been one “official” transmission of an *Occam*—Silvia Tarozzi's *OCCAM II*

¹⁹⁹ “[In the 1980s] the institute's concert programming embodied an extremely coherent and forceful canonization of twentieth-century high-musical modernism consistent with Boulez's own genealogy of music history.” Born, *Rationalizing Culture*, 164.

²⁰⁰ “Le Monde d'Éliane Radigue.”

that was transmitted to Irvine Arditti in 2019. And this was an initiative of an external festival organizer, not the performers themselves.²⁰¹

The time commitment that a prospective performer and one of Radigue's original collaborators would need to dedicate to the process is one of the leading reasons that performers have been reluctant to transmit their *Occam* to others.²⁰² Another obstacle is the capabilities of the prospective performer's instrument. Robin Hayward, for example, says that any prospective tuba player who might want to learn his *OCCAM XI* for solo tuba, would need to get the same microtonal tuba that had been specially designed for him.²⁰³ This is something that would be, in the words of Hayward, "expensive and a lot of work."²⁰⁴

Other performers are also concerned about teaching other instrumentalists their own specific and personal extended techniques that they have refined over many years. As Rhodri Davies reflects:

Performers would need the ability to do the techniques that I have been developing with the bow on the harp, much like Robin Hayward has been doing with circular breathing. All of us have these very precise fields of expertise that have been built over the years. So they're very technically advanced things to teach.²⁰⁵

Beyond the time commitment, technical challenges, and instrumental capabilities, one of the biggest obstacles to more widespread transmission of Radigue's *Occams* is the desire of Radigue's performer-collaborators to maintain a non-transactional, community-based method of

²⁰¹ Tarozzi, interview.

²⁰² Julia Eckhardt: "I haven't transmitted my piece because this would be quite a commitment. And this is why I'm not really so eager. It would be of course a nice experiment—interesting in this sense." Eckhardt, interview.

²⁰³ According to Hayward, currently there only exists one other version of the same tuba in the world. Hayward, interview.

²⁰⁴ Hayward, interview.

²⁰⁵ Davies, interview.

transmission, wherein personal relationships and dialogue are prized over expediency and cost-effectiveness. Nate Wooley, for one, warns that if Radigue’s music is to be disseminated in a more traditional way—via tangible documentation or superficial exchanges—it may lose the communal and collective spirit of the original collaborations.²⁰⁶ And in neglecting this, Wooley suggests, an essential part—if not *the* essential part—of Radigue’s music would be lost.

Wooley draws an illuminating parallel here between being a performer-collaborator of Radigue’s and playing in a traditional jazz ensemble. When Wooley was scraping together money to visit Paris and work on *OCCAM X* for solo trumpet with Radigue, he recounts speaking to his father—Deb Wooley, a saxophonist who in the 1950s had a short stint playing in Count Basie’s band.²⁰⁷ As Nate recalls, his father said, “I followed [the Count Basie Band] and had no money and learned all the songs. And I knew exactly how to do it and understood how it worked, rather than just playing the notes.”²⁰⁸ Adding encouragement, Deb Wooley added, “You should do that. Everybody should do that with someone that they totally love—just figure it out.”²⁰⁹

This brings up an important connection that has not yet been touched upon in this study. Radigue’s collaborative creative practice is less of an outlier when compared against communities of instrumentalists who specialize in improvised music. The sorts of personal relationships, creative exchanges, and collective work at the center of Radigue’s creative process

²⁰⁶ Wooley: “But in a way, it’s good to just have a limited group of people that have gone through that process and have really come out the other side with a deep appreciation and love for her and for her music. It’s like more of a family—to me at least. And I think if she had kept doing more and more with new people—and she’s never said this to me, but it’s the feeling I get like—she would have lost a little bit of that.” Wooley, interview.

²⁰⁷ Wooley, interview.

²⁰⁸ Wooley, interview.

²⁰⁹ Hayward, interview.

are, in myriad ways, more closely tied to the working methods of jazz musicians (as one example) than those of traditional Western classical music. In Radigue's ensemble *Occams*, the performers are all sharing creative agency. Much like in improvising ensembles, the sonic outcomes are jointly owned, and yet simultaneously unpredictable. While outside of the scope of this study, further analysis is needed to better illuminate how these connections might help shed more light on the social formations of Radigue's collaborative compositional method and how they resist normative ways of considering music.

Performers as Stewards

The performer-collaborators around Radigue share an intimate connection—a shared experience, a certain technical proficiency, and a deep understanding of Radigue's worldview and aesthetic approach. These performers, in becoming the sole transmitters of this music, act as gatekeepers, stewards, and conservers of Radigue's legacy. The responsibility of preserving Radigue's instrumental music is entirely in the hands of the performers themselves.

In many ways, this is not so different from *actual* Western classical music performance. (I use the word “actual” in contrast to the mythology of Western classical music performance, in which musicians try to recreate “the work” as originally conceived by the composer.) In actuality, performers have largely been the principal stewards of a composer's musical legacy, despite mythmaking that suggests otherwise. Every performance of a traditionally notated composition—and here I am referring to the sounds themselves, not other social aspects of the performance—reaffirms certain aspects of a composer's legacy and erases others through every single musical decision that is made in real-time. Performance styles have changed continuously and drastically during the past century of recorded music—as they no doubt did in the days

before recording.²¹⁰ How music is played, and perhaps just as importantly, how it is transmitted to other performers therefore contributes enormously to how it will be experienced, even what it means to audiences. In this view, performers, even in the score-based tradition of Western music, have always been the *actual* principal conservers of composers' legacies—not the notation. And so, while performer-collaborators of Radigue's are imparted with an enormous responsibility—as there is no written documentation or publishing house conserving Radigue's musical legacy it is not so radically different from traditional Western classical music performance.

What is "The Work"?

Taking a step back for a moment, one must ask: So, what is "the work" that Radigue's instrumental collaborators are aiming to preserve? If, in fact, there is no preconceived sonic object in Radigue's mind prior to the collaborative composition process, what are the instrumentalists seeking to recreate? Does an ideal sonic object form collectively between the composer and performer over the course of their collaboration? Or is there no *actual* conceptually fixed musical object as traditionally conceived? Are instrumentalists aiming to perform an "authoritative" version of Radigue's music—meaning, one that is as close as possible to Radigue's initial conception? If so, how would an "authoritative" performance differ from one that is not? If not in the sounds themselves, where does "the work" lie?

Locating "The Work"

The idea that a "musical work" is a fixed sonic object is central to the Western music mythology and ethos. But the reality is quite the opposite. Just listen to Carl Reinecke's piano roll recording of Mozart's *Piano Sonata No. 12 in F major*, K. 332 (1783) from 1907²¹¹—an

²¹⁰ Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 15–22.

²¹¹ Reinecke, "Reinecke Plays Mozart: Sonata K.332 Movts. 1 & 2," YouTube video.

example discussed at length in Nicholas Cook's *Music as Creative Process* (2018).²¹² To modern ears, Reinecke's playing will likely sound highly erratic and jolting. At some points Reinecke, seemingly out of nowhere, will accelerate, while at others he will drastically slow down.²¹³ In comparison, recordings from the second half of the twentieth century of the same piece are largely even-keeled, maintaining stable tempi and phrasing throughout. Even when performers have depended on notated scores or treatises about performance practice, the idea of a "historically informed performance" is as much a response to modern-day aesthetics as to the results of insights into past performance practices.²¹⁴ In other words, the fixed "musical work" is more of an ideological construction than one based on real-world performance practices informed "purely" from notation.

Despite all of the innovative aspects of the social formations and shared creative agency of Radigue's collaborative compositional practice, the performers nonetheless strive to make audible Radigue's original musical imagination—largely adhering to traditional ideological frameworks of "the work" from the Western classical music tradition. But, as will be discussed, "the work," in this case, seems much more fluid in its conception than a traditionally notated score.

When analyzing Frédéric Chopin's *Berceuse*, Op. 57 (1833–1834) as performed by pianist Alfred Cortot in *Cortot's Berceuse* (2015), Daniel Leech-Wilkinson describes its "unchanging core":

To be strict about it one might need to say that only the pitches, their intervallic relationships, and their metrical positions remain stable; and if performers change

²¹² Cook, *Music as Creative Practice*, 15–17.

²¹³ Cook, 15.

²¹⁴ Harper-Scott and Samson, *An Introduction to Music Studies*, 222.

notes, which they not infrequently did before modern times, then even those may partly come into the domain of performance style.²¹⁵

Leech-Wilkinson is drawing our attention to the fact that pitches and rhythms may be the only “unchanging” aspect of different interpretations of Chopin’s piano music. Leech-Wilkinson is, in effect, disentangling performance practice from the notated score. Aside from pitches and rhythms—the “unchanging core” of Chopin’s *Berceuse*—all other parameters are thus up to the discretion of the individual performer.

In Radigue’s practice, the “core” of the work is no longer even tied to a specific collection of discrete and clearly defined pitches, intervallic relationships, and metrical positions—sonic features often deemed the principal material of Western music.²¹⁶ On a cursory level, I would suggest, it is rather a set of general trajectories, gradual transitions from one sonority to another, and a certain pacing that make up the “core” of a specific instrumental work of Radigue.²¹⁷ For instance, bassist Dominic Lash, when reflecting on *OCCAM XVII* for solo bass, says that “as long as I start the bass piece with the high material on just the A string and then come in and gradually bring the other string in, it’s not going to go wrong because it’s really quite a simple shape.”²¹⁸ He continues, “as long as you set up the Radigue world, you play it with a Radigue mindset, and you’re technically in good shape, then it has a good chance of working.”²¹⁹ Nate Wooley similarly describes needing to step into “another world”—a certain

²¹⁵ Leech-Wilkinson, “Cortot’s *Berceuse*,” 344.

²¹⁶ Lang, *Liebe Und Notation*.

²¹⁷ I chose the term “sonority” here because Radigue does not specify pitches or rhythms—the dialogue between her and the musicians is about sonority, rather than certain parameters (treated as definable points) of sound. This does not mean that there are no pitch-related or time-related structures to which her performer-collaborators strive. But rather, the boundaries are blurred between the supposedly easily parsed elements of sound (pitches and rhythms), raising questions about what exactly it is that her performer-collaborators are striving to recreate in performance.

²¹⁸ Lash, interview.

way of thinking and perceiving—in order to play Radigue’s music.²²⁰ “Once you start playing Éliane’s music, you’re in it and you can’t get out of it,” Wooley explains.²²¹ “You’re entering back into her world. And then after the concert is over you go back into this other world until it’s the next time for a concert.”²²²

It is here that Wooley and Lash point to something bigger. Beyond the composition’s general shape, Radigue’s music is more about the process of learning to perceive and interact with sound in the same way as Radigue. Learning “the work” means enacting the interpersonal exchanges of Radigue’s collaborative process with the aim of dialoguing with and embodying her sonic sensibilities, her way of listening and approaching sound. As Silvia Tarozzi explains:

The composition is the process of learning. Because the process of learning is also the process of shaping the music. So, orally, meeting in person ... taking the time to play, listen, exchange, arriving little-by-little to find a new way, a new path, a new form, and being respectful to Éliane’s sensitivity, her music, her taste for sound. But it’s really an experience that you share with someone—to guide someone as Éliane guided us.²²³

So then “the work” is actually much more than a general outline of structural material. “The work,” in Radigue’s collaborative practice, is rather a set of guidelines, preference rules, and sonic sensibilities related to how one listens and responds to sound²²⁴—what Lash and Wooley might call the “Radigue world” or “Radigue mindset.” It is the ultimate task of the performer, therefore, to internalize Radigue’s aesthetic aims, “to hear the way she hears [and] listen the way

²¹⁹ Lash, interview.

²²⁰ Wooley, interview.

²²¹ Wooley, interview.

²²² Wooley, interview.

²²³ Tarozzi, interview.

²²⁴ Lash, interview; Wooley, interview.

she listens,²²⁵ through a process of interpersonal dialogue and exchange—so that they are able to make audible a collection of sonic events that fit within Radigue’s framework and yield “successful” performances.²²⁶

Describing a Moving Target

Because there is no “ideal” fixed collection of easily parsed or clearly defined pitches, rhythms, or metrical patterns at the core of “the work,” each piece of collaborative instrumental music is constantly evolving from performance to performance. In describing the steps needed for one of her collaborative instrumental works to come into being, Radigue repeatedly refers to a “process of maturation.”²²⁷ And it seems that there are two levels to this process. The first is when the performer-collaborator achieves Radigue’s sonic aims to a point that she, in turn, authorizes its public performance. The second is an ongoing process of maturation—one that essentially never ends.²²⁸ This continual process of evolution for Radigue is one of the most important elements of her music. It is, as she describes, one of the principal reasons that she has avoided using notation. As she explains, notating her instrumental works “would be deadening,” and it would, “cut the music off from its ongoing process of maturation.”²²⁹

Here, we have an important distinction. This means that not only do the actual sounds produced from performance to performance change (similar to what one might expect with traditional Western music—from articulations, pacing, pitch inflections, and timbral nuances),

²²⁵ Curtis, interview.

²²⁶ I use the term “success” here because performers and Radigue alike acknowledge that not all performances are the same. Some are better than others.

²²⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 167.

²²⁸ Radigue: “In my eyes, the time for maturation is specific to each creative act . . . All the acoustic pieces need time to mature, and they don’t stop evolving.” Radigue and Eckhardt, 162–64.

²²⁹ Radigue and Eckhardt, 167.

but also the *idea* of the musical work evolves over time. And in this conceptual distinction, Radigue’s music radically reimagines the traditional nineteenth-century work concept. “The work” is no longer something static—a previously envisaged musical ideal from the mind of the composer—for performers to strive toward. Rather, “the work” itself is an ever-evolving ideal—not necessarily bound to specific musical material—that gradually moves closer to achieving a particular collection of aesthetic and ideological aims.

As Nicholas Cook points out in “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance” (2001), this is also the *actual* case with the performance of Western classical music, despite, by and large, it not being conceived of in this way. For instance, Cook explains that Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* “[is] something existing in the relation between its notation and the field of its performances.”²³⁰ “The work” is not as much a “core” of certain ideal discrete pitches and rhythms, but rather an ever-evolving amorphous concept in and of itself. “The work” is not the score, nor is it the many different performances of that score, but rather a totality of all of these separate and disparate instantiations.²³¹

Charles Curtis confirms that what he describes as the “essence” of Radigue’s music differs widely over time. “Over the more than thirty performances I have given of *Naldjorlak*,” Curtis recalls, “the overall shape has remained the same, but the details—the essence of the music—have differed very widely.”²³² Robin Hayward similarly emphasizes that Radigue’s instrumental works are always evolving, always changing—regardless of how well-practiced or

²³⁰ Cook, “Between Process and Product,” 51.

²³¹ Cook, 51.

²³² Curtis, *Éliane Radigue Naldjorlak*.

rehearsed they are. He suggests that delving into the sounds, as a performer, is an evolving process that is potentially infinite:

You go more and more into depth in the pieces ... [Radigue] stresses that the piece isn't just static—a thing that's finished and then you perform it. It is always a process no matter how many times you play it, it remains an ongoing process ... for me this means going into more and more depth into the sound.²³³

Impermanence and the Buddhism Connection

This idea of an ever-evolving, always in-progress musical composition aligns neatly with the concept of “impermanence”—a tenet fundamental to all Buddhist schools.²³⁴ According to Robert Buswell’s *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (2004), in Buddhist theology, everything that exists in this world is impermanent. No element of physical matter or even any concept remains unchanged. At the heart of this outlook is the role of human beings in accepting or resisting this change. Buddhist teachings suggest that human beings often attempt to hold onto things that are unavoidably and constantly changing on the mistaken assumption that those things are permanent. This, in turn, is one of the main sources of suffering in the world. Therefore, by accepting change as a constant of human existence, one can free oneself from this widespread and potentially endless cycle of suffering.²³⁵

From all accounts, Radigue sought to embrace this same sort of impermanence in her own creative work—something she acknowledges as being directly connected to Buddhism.²³⁶ “A fundamental precept,” Radigue remarks, “is to recognise that everything that lives belongs to Buddha (or Buddhahood),” and adds, “But the first proof is that of the inherent impermanence of

²³³ Hayward, interview.

²³⁴ Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 23. Radigue, as a practicing Buddhist for over thirty years, was intimately aware of this concept. See also Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 167.

²³⁵ Buswell, *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*, 23.

²³⁶ Radigue and Eckhardt, *Intermediary Spaces/Espaces Intermédiaires*, 136.

everything.” She acknowledges that this has given rise to her “penchant for modulation phases in classical music, the subtle changes, the transitions that arise, as in life, in respiration.”²³⁷

Radigue, in framing a work as a constantly evolving entity, makes audible the Buddhist embrace of impermanence. While in many ways Radigue adopted the traditional Western “work concept,” she fundamentally reimagined one of its essential features—its alleged fixity. If, as Radigue describes, “we’re constantly in intermediary phases” and “everything is transient,” then so too must the “core”—the essential material, whatever that may be—of her musical compositions.²³⁸

Exposing Limits of “The Work Concept”

Here we can see the breakdown of the “work concept” and, with that, a failure of Western music terminologies to describe music that operates outside of a culture of commodification. Because Radigue’s collaborative music is contingent on interpersonal exchanges, on a process of learning, of seeking to embody certain ways of listening and responding to sound, it transcends the very concept of “the work.” Rather than living in a score, or even a certain explicit sonority, Radigue’s music *is* the process, the social formation, and the sonic outlooks it fosters.²³⁹ This lays bare the limits of terminologies and frameworks inherited from nineteenth-century Western Europe to deal with forms of artistic expression that operate outside of capitalist models of creation. When a musical composition is no longer tethered to a tangible object (the score) or even a fixed ideal (the composer’s intent), there is a conceptual breakdown that exposes the seams, edges, and contradictions of the commodity-centered tradition of Western music.

²³⁷ Radigue and Eckhardt, 136.

²³⁸ Radigue and Eckhardt, 136.

²³⁹ Luke Nickel expands on this concept of what he calls “living scores” and connects it to Éliane Radigue’s collaborative compositional practice. He writes that living scores “foreground collaboration and encourage the formation of micro-communities. Because they eschew written notation, living scores allow the act of forgetting to become a vital part of the creative process.” Nickel, “Living Scores.”

Conclusion: Toward A More Equitable Creativity

Now, perhaps more than ever, composers of Western concert music are examining how their culture's systems, institutions, hierarchies, terminologies, discourses, and ways of thinking have maintained power structures which continue to exclude entire groups of people, traditions, and cultures. In the United States, in particular, fueled by the momentum created by the Black Lives Matter Movement, composers are reckoning with the ways that their culture continues to perpetuate systemic racism and white supremacy—reinforcing ongoing endemic structural social inequalities.¹ But how might composers address these issues through their creative work?

To effectively question, critique, and dismantle these normative frameworks, I believe each composer's creative practice can and *should* be a part of this conversation. This includes an examination of the ways in which new compositions are initiated and financially supported, the ways in which sounds themselves are generated, and the ways in which the composition is communicated to others. Activist composers, in seeking to spark real, meaningful change through their music, should reflect on how their process of music-making participates in the very same problematically unequal frameworks that they seek to change.

This has raised a number of questions for me, as a composer who views composition as a way to build a more ideal world: How can my own creative practice construct less hierarchical social orders and point to more equitable ways of relating to others? How might my music, by decoupling it from an infinitely transmissible commodity and toward an intangible process and a

¹ See Ewell, "Music Theory and the White Racial Frame" and Ross, "Black Scholars Confront White Supremacy in Classical Music" and Brodeur, "That Sound You're Hearing Is Classical Music's Long Overdue Reckoning with Racism" and Cutting, "Classical Music Had A Race Problem 20 Years Ago. It Still Does."

way of relating to others, help shape the more open, equitable, and community-centered world that I advocate for in my personal and political life?

The collaborative creative process behind Éliane Radigue's instrumental compositions has provided me with some inspiring guidance in devising tangible ways to respond to these questions. And while her process of creating is not entirely equitable, nor is it completely divorced from problematically hierarchical nineteenth-century models of authorship and concepts of "the work," it does point to some convincing alternatives. In her re-configuration of the traditional role of the instrumentalist in the creative process—putting them in the position of commissioner, co-creator, transmitter, and steward—she has recalibrated the normative classical music creative process, spreading responsibilities usually reserved for wealthy donors, grantmaking institutions, publishing houses, record labels, and the composer themselves, amongst her network of performer-collaborators. In doing so, the responsibility for creating, spreading, and preserving her musical legacy is passed on to those people with whom she shares the deepest of personal and artistic affinities. Through long conversations, shared meals, and the give-and-take of collaborative sonic generation, Radigue not only creates music, but builds a community of creative partners and friends—an entire collaborative ecosystem.

This community, which comes from different geographical areas, ages, educational backgrounds, and experiences, shares a unique set of values and perspectives from their intimate and personal creative encounters with Radigue. In developing a shared lexicon of *musicicking*—of listening, relating, and creating—Radigue builds a community around a more equitable social order. Her performer-collaborators will be forever linked through this shared process of music making. I find this collectivity, this spirit of equitable exchange, to be far more inspiring and

potentially impactful than any political message or sonic experiment that I could create in my own compositions.

This revelation has led me to question my aims as a composer. Rather than seeking to make audible my sonic imagination through an infinitely reproducible score object that must be interpreted by (subservient) instrumentalists, how can I develop a more equitable creative process—a process around community-building and the construction of a shared knowledge and more inclusive way of thinking and relating to the world?

In response to the murders of black Americans George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor in 2020, music writer Will Robin fielded responses from seven prominent musicians to the question: “How can artists respond to injustice?” Flutist, composer, and vocalist Nathalie Joachim responded:

I hope that everybody in our industry is really thinking about how to come out of this changed for the better. Not in this every-man-for-himself hustle, but in a way that allows us to create an infrastructure that supports all of us. We have to care about one another, we have to see one another, we have to embrace everybody that is a part of this community.²

What if composers who seek to address systemic inequalities and injustices through their creative work, applied Joachim’s call to action to their own compositional practices? I believe that, on a vast scale, this could lead to a fundamental reshaping of Western music culture. Composers can make a real, meaningful impact on the here and now by reconfiguring the aims and social orders of the compositional process itself. By actively shaping new community-centered communication flows, new forms of organization, and new subjectivities around musical creation and performance, I believe composers’ creative practices can and *should* help foster a more equitable future.

² Joachim and Robin, “How Can Artists Respond to Injustice? Thoughts from Seven Musicians.”

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