

## Introduction

### Why Alan Bush?

Modernist nationalist. British communist. Intellectual populist. When attempting to sum up Alan Bush (1900–95), one is confronted by the contradictory impulses that defined his life and career. Bush was a contemporary of Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett.<sup>1</sup> Born into a wealthy middle-class industrialist family, he studied at the Royal Academy of Music (RAM, 1918–22) and took private composition lessons with John Ireland (1922–7), the teacher who would later have a brief and unhappy working relationship with Britten. He was made Professor of Harmony and Composition at the RAM in 1925 and remained so until his retirement in 1978, producing a compositional textbook, *Strict Counterpoint in the Palestrina Style*, and teaching successive generations of student composers.<sup>2</sup> He was married to his wife Nancy for sixty years, had three children, and continued composing and playing the piano until his death.

In counterpoint with this conventional narrative stands Bush's lifelong radicalism. He spent long periods in Berlin between 1926 and 1931, studying piano with Artur Schnabel, and musicology and philosophy at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (what would become the Humboldt University of Berlin), where his teachers included Max Dessoir and Friedrich Blume.<sup>3</sup> While there, he not only immersed himself in the rich artistic environment of the Weimar Republic, but also became acquainted with the city's large and vibrant radical working-class musical culture. Having dabbled with theosophy and theories of mechanical materialism in the 1920s, he became acquainted with the German émigrés Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler, and Tippett's cousin Phyllis Kemp, in the 1930s. In 1935, he joined the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and remained an ardent Stalinist for the rest of

<sup>1</sup> There is no scholarly biography of Bush. For a useful biographical memoir that incorporates a survey of the works by Lewis Foreman, see Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush: Music, Politics and Life* (London: Thames Publishing, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Alan Bush, *Strict Counterpoint in the Palestrina Style: A Practical Textbook* (London: Joseph Williams, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Bush, *Alan Bush*, 20–3.

his life.<sup>4</sup> For the remainder of that decade, alongside his concert works, he was extremely active in radical working-class musical culture as Musical Adviser to the London Labour Choral Union (LLCU), a conglomerate of working-class choirs, and as the founder of the Workers' Music Association (WMA) from 1936. It was also at this time that he visited the Soviet Union for the first time (1938) and started composing concert works with ostensibly political content, beginning with the Piano Concerto (1935–7) and continuing with the First Symphony (1939–40) and a succession of wartime orchestral and choral works.

Bush achieved notoriety in 1941 when the BBC briefly banned his music because he was a signatory of the communist-led, anti-war People's Convention. While he was courted briefly during the period of the Anglo-Soviet wartime alliance as a leading expert on Soviet music and international popular song, from 1948 he was the subject of renewed suspicion and antagonism from various quarters. Such antagonism stemmed not only from a wider crackdown on known communists working for public institutions in Britain, but also from Bush's outspoken defence of Zhdanovism, and the subsequent changes in his own compositional style in favour of a national, more populist style influenced by English folk music. The immediate fruits of Bush's avowed conversion were his Second Symphony, *The Nottingham* (1949), and his first opera, *Wat Tyler* (1948–50). The latter, despite winning a prize in the Arts Council opera competition run in association with the 1951 Festival of Britain, was not performed in Britain until 1974, and then only in a semi-professional production mounted by the WMA. By this point, Bush had had a successful but much-criticised career as an opera composer in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), but he had never achieved a fully professional production of one of his operas in his own country.

This oxymoronic convergence of the conventional trappings of a teaching career at a British conservatoire and the anything-but-conventional career of a prominent communist is undoubtedly intriguing. Making a case for Bush as a significant case study in the history of modern British music is more difficult. As a communist, Bush stood on the margins of British culture, less central to the articulation of national identity than Elgar or Vaughan Williams, and less vital to the construction of a modern British music than Britten or Tippett. There are well-worn counter-arguments dating back into Bush's middle age: that his music represents a fine body of

<sup>4</sup> See Alan Bush, 'In My Eighth Decade' in *In My Eighth Decade and Other Essays* (London: Kahn & Averill, 1980), 17–20.

### Introduction

3

national opera and symphony that deserves further attention, or, more disturbingly, that he has been unfairly marginalised because of his politics.

The problem with these arguments is that Bush is one of a legion of British composers outside the canonical nexus of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, and Britten who can claim attention; what makes Bush distinctive? Should he, in fact, be properly situated within the seemingly endless ranks of twentieth-century British eccentrics? Regarding the claims of marginalisation, these must indeed be addressed, but so too must the criticism made frequently in Bush's lifetime that his work was *promoted* in East Germany on purely political grounds. Moreover, in both cases, the end point of these arguments is to make the case for spending more time listening to Bush's music. While a worthy cause, this is not the primary task of the music historian. And, for several reasons, Bush seems consigned to the margins of twentieth-century music history. From 1948, he was a self-proclaimed populist and anti-modernist, and, as J.P.E. Harper-Scott has argued, we 'find it difficult to dislodge modernism as the central aesthetic concern of the twentieth century'.<sup>5</sup> An aesthetic of accessibility, social use, and compositions employing shared national musical materials stands in contradiction to modernism's impulses towards technical innovation, alienation, and abstraction. Moreover, in the Adornian narrative of modernism that has proved so influential in musicology of recent decades, such social utility rejects the emancipatory potential of modernism as critique. From a more basic perspective, works so invested in a discredited ideology run the risk of landing, ironically, upon Trotsky's 'rubbish heap of history'. Even prior to his renunciation, Bush was in the equally problematic category of the British composer. As Philip Rupprecht has discussed, the notion of a 'time lag' between musical innovations on the Continent and their appearance in Britain has remained stubbornly persistent.<sup>6</sup> Problematic, too, are the historical claims that modernism is somehow antithetical to the British temperament, variously transgressive, ideological, and contrary to the British sense of caution. Harper-Scott's case study, Walton, is 'doubly dissociated from the vanguard of modernism by being both British and "conservative" [...] in his use of musical materials and processes'.<sup>7</sup> Bush scores the hat trick by adding Stalinism to this list of attributes.

<sup>5</sup> J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism: Revolution, Reaction, and William Walton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism: The Manchester Group and Their Contemporaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 33ff.

<sup>7</sup> Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, xiii.

It is therefore unsurprising that much of his critical reception in his lifetime, and until relatively recently, consisted of either outright condemnation of the later music or of efforts to eliminate one of this trio of obstacles from consideration.<sup>8</sup> Writing on Bush in this period frequently reflects one or more of the following assertions: (i) Bush was a promising and cosmopolitan modernist who sacrificed his personal idiom for the sake of politics and wrote more/less successful works thereafter; (ii) meritorious works of his were unjustly shunned in Britain for purely political reasons; (iii) by continuing to pursue political music beyond the 1930s, he relinquished the possibility of the sort of broad musical humanism ascribed to Britten and Tippett. Thus Tippett himself wrote with not a little condescension that ‘Alan lives in a world of Marxist orthodoxy and certainty, while I live in a world of humanist ambivalence and uncertainty’.<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Pirie could dismiss Bush as ‘isolated in English music, for the reason that his music, centring round his Communism, is dedicated to furthering the class struggle’, while Percy Young contrasted the ‘landmark’ of Bush’s string quartet *Dialectic* with the ‘triteness’ of some of the later music.<sup>10</sup> More nuanced arguments by Malcolm Macdonald, Anthony Payne, and Colin Mason have made attempts to establish an apolitical basis for criticism.<sup>11</sup> Representing another line of defence of Bush’s late music, Ronald Stevenson praised Bush’s move ‘from an amorphous cosmopolitan *imbroglio* of idioms to a well-defined national style’.<sup>12</sup> In each instance, Bush’s relationship to modernism, to national identity, and to communism are in play, yet no attempt has adequately explained the interaction of these conflicting priorities within his work.

<sup>8</sup> More recent efforts in musicology to assess Bush include Nathaniel Lew, ‘A New and Glorious Age: Constructions of National Opera in Britain, 1945–1951’, PhD thesis, University of California, Berkeley (2001); Julie Anne Waters, ‘“Against the Stream”: Intersections of Music and Politics in the Conception, Composition and Reception of Alan Bush’s First Three Symphonies’, PhD thesis, Monash University (2012); and Joanna Bullivant, ‘Modernism, Politics and Individuality in 1930s Britain: The Case of Alan Bush’, *Music & Letters* 90/3 (August 2009), 432–52. In each case, only part of the composer’s career and selected works are examined.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Tippett, ‘A Magnetic Friendship: An Attraction of Opposites’ in Ronald Stevenson (ed.), *Time Remembered. Alan Bush: An 80th Birthday Symposium* (Kidderminster: Bravura Publications, 1981), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Peter J. Pirie, *The English Musical Renaissance* (London: Gollancz, 1979), 187–8; Percy M. Young, *A History of British Music* (London: Benn, 1967), 597.

<sup>11</sup> Malcolm Macdonald, ‘The Music, to One Pair of Ears’ in Stevenson (ed.), *Time Remembered*, 26; Anthony Payne, ‘Alan Bush’, *Musical Times* 105/1454 (April 1964), 264; Colin Mason, ‘Alan Bush in High Middle Age’, *The Listener*, 26 May 1960, 954.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald Stevenson, ‘Alan Bush: Committed Composer’, *Music Review* 25/4 (November 1964), 324.

## British Modernism

How, then, might Bush be approached anew as a historical subject? One solution which has borne fruit in relation to other British composers is to interpret his music through the lens of a more encompassing understanding of modernism. Work on reception history and institutions has uncovered the extent to which ‘ultra-modern’ music was heard, performed, and debated in twentieth-century Britain.<sup>13</sup> Jenny Doctor has gone so far as to view its presence itself as modernist, drawing attention to the ‘parataxis’ of the juxtaposition of traditional concert procedure and new technologies, classics and ‘novelties’ at the wartime Proms.<sup>14</sup> Ongoing research reveals ever more evidence of the impact of Continental modernists upon British composers.<sup>15</sup> Alongside such scholarship, what Harper-Scott terms an ‘expansionist’ critical approach has drawn on a broader array of technical resources in order to elucidate instances of British modernism.<sup>16</sup> Alain Frogley’s reading of Vaughan Williams’s ‘London’ Symphony, drawing on H.G. Wells and the modernist preoccupation with the alienating metropolis; Daniel M. Grimley’s account of the ‘Pastoral’ Symphony and its parallels with Paul Nash’s fractured landscapes of wartime France; and Harper-Scott’s own analysis of Elgar, which employs James Hepokoski’s analysis of modernist sonata forms in Sibelius and others, are cases in point.<sup>17</sup> Musicologists have also benefitted from new theories of British modernism in literary studies, in which, similarly, the period following the high, cosmopolitan modernism of Pound, Eliot, Yeats, Woolf et al. has been seen as one of insularity and decline. In the most influential such

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Malcolm Gillies, *Bartók in Britain: A Guided Tour* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Jennifer Doctor, *The BBC and Ultra-Modern Music, 1922–1936: Shaping a Nation’s Tastes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jenny Doctor and David Wright (eds.), *The Proms: A New History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Jenny Doctor, ‘The Parataxis of “British Musical Modernism”’, *Musical Quarterly* 91/1–2 (Spring/Summer 2008), 110–12.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the discussion of the impact of Hindemith on British composers in Jürgen Schaarwächter, *Two Centuries of British Symphonism: From the Beginnings to 1945: A Preliminary Survey* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2015), vol. II, 731–49.

<sup>16</sup> Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Alain Frogley, ‘H.G. Wells and Vaughan Williams’s *A London Symphony*: Politics and Culture in Fin-de-Siècle England’ in Chris Banks, Arthur Searle and Malcolm Turner (eds.), *Sundry Sorts of Music Books: Essays on the British Library Collections Presented to O.W. Neighbour on His 70th Birthday* (London: British Library, 1993), 299–308; Daniel M. Grimley, ‘Landscape and Distance: Vaughan Williams, Modernism and the Symphonic Pastoral’ in Matthew Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism, 1895–1960* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2010), 147–74; J.P.E. Harper-Scott, *Edward Elgar: Modernist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

study for musicologists, Jed Esty has read late works of Eliot, Woolf, and E.M. Forster as attempts, in response to Britain's transformation from imperial power to 'Little England', to retain the transformative powers of modernism within a national context.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in such works, a metropolitan, cosmopolitan, and alienated modernism operates in tension with the articulation of an idealised rural, organic, national community. While not always directly indebted to Esty, the exploration of these tensions has produced varied new perspectives from Heather Wiebe, Christopher Chowrimootoo, and Rupprecht, for example.<sup>19</sup>

The strengths of this body of work are the situating of aspects of musical style and technique within a complex historical and cultural context, an expanded analytical palette, and illuminating comparisons with a wealth of figures, such as Sibelius, who have themselves been incorporated into a diverse modernism beyond a putative Schoenberg/Stravinsky core. Yet in the case of Bush the category of British modernism must be handled with care. Rupprecht has traced the trope in British music criticism that perceived something 'indecent' or alien about the use of modernist techniques, and the marginal position of those composers – ranging from Frank Bridge to Dorothy Gow to Elisabeth Lutyens – who were most indebted to developments such as the twelve-note method.<sup>20</sup> Yet alongside this stands the vein of criticism demonstrated by the following vignette. Walter Leigh, another contemporary of Bush, studied composition with Hindemith in the 1920s and was influenced by the radical aesthetic experimentation of Weimar Berlin. In Leigh's obituary, Hubert Foss remarked that in comparison with his teacher 'Leigh's [music] was hardly what is called *gebrauchsmusik*: it was less terrifying, less self-conscious'.<sup>21</sup> While Leigh himself did not live to see such a time, others who showed a 'less terrifying' absorption of modernism – such as Alan Rawsthorne, Bush himself, and even Lutyens to an extent – formed part of what Calum Macdonald would come to denote a 'lost generation' of composers.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Jed Esty, *A Shrinking Island: Modernism and National Culture in England* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

<sup>19</sup> Heather Wiebe, *Britten's Unquiet Pasts: Sound and Memory in Postwar Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Christopher Chowrimootoo, 'The Timely Traditions of Albert Herring', *Opera Quarterly* 27/4 (2011), 379–419 and 'Bourgeois Opera: *Death in Venice* and the Aesthetics of Sublimation', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22/2 (2011), 177–218; Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 48ff.

<sup>20</sup> Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 45–7.

<sup>21</sup> Hubert J. Foss, 'Walter Leigh', *Musical Times* 83/1194 (August 1942), 255.

<sup>22</sup> Calum Macdonald, 'Lost Generation', *The Listener*, 23 April 1987, cited in Neil Edmunds, 'William Glock and the British Broadcasting Corporation's Music Policy, 1959–73', *Contemporary British History* 20/2 (June 2006), 247.

## Introduction

7

This group, generally on the Left, fell between two stools of being too modernist when they were becoming established and too conservative for the more internationalist musical climate of the 1960s.

The notion of the ‘lost generation’ is worth pausing over because it highlights the slippage – almost impossible to avoid – into describing British composers as more or less modernist. The use of such language is intriguing. It is dangerous because it can imply a sort of Richter scale of modernism, and thus reinforce the very centralising model with Schoenberg at its centre that the concept of British modernism aims to challenge. It also reveals a longstanding trend of ambivalence in the discourse over British modernism. Foss implies, whether through bombast, insecurity, or generosity, a superiority on the part of Leigh, a level of confidence and authenticity missing in true *Gebrauchsmusik*. Yet as Rupprecht and Ben Earle have both identified, an opposing tradition of ‘group self-contempt’ towards British modernism is equally venerable.<sup>23</sup> Earle’s assertions that this notion needs revision notwithstanding, his closing statement that Humphrey Searle was ‘the British composer, perhaps more than any other, who genuinely deserves to be called a modernist’ suggests that the ‘discourse of national doubt’ is by no means finished.<sup>24</sup>

Directly related to the long history of self-examination in discussions of British modernism is the question of what cultural work is being done when we claim a composer or work for modernism. As Harper-Scott writes, ‘labelling music as modernist or not is not a neutral aesthetic judgment but always a political act’.<sup>25</sup> He identifies, in addition to the ‘expansionist’ response to modernism, a ‘positive’ response (of which the expansionist is a variant) and a ‘democratic’ response.<sup>26</sup> The positive response is a post-Adornian position, which posits modernism as the most vital and emancipatory response to human existence in the twentieth century. The democratic response, with which Harper-Scott especially associates the work of Richard Taruskin, presents modernism as bourgeois, elitist, and repudiated by the emergence of popular forms of music disseminated via modern technologies and media. It is striking that efforts to resituate British composers in the context of modernism almost always involve ethical rehabilitation as much as an expanded technical vocabulary: Elgar’s ambivalence towards Empire, the radical socialist roots of Vaughan Williams’s Englishness, Holst’s Eastern spiritualism. The ‘positive’ view is

<sup>23</sup> Ben Earle, “‘The real thing – at last?’ Historicizing Humphrey Searle’ in Riley (ed.), *British Music and Modernism*, 300.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 325; Rupprecht, *British Musical Modernism*, 48.

<sup>25</sup> Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, xii. <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

perhaps historically nowhere more evident in British music studies than in the body of work on Britten, notably in the work of Philip Brett, that connected his adoption of aspects of Continental modernism to his artistic and moral project of addressing the plight of the alienated individual, and subjecting those societies which oppress the outsider to critique.<sup>27</sup>

This is not to question the veracity of any of the composer-focused work just mentioned. What must be observed is how uneasily Bush sits within this expansionist, positive model of British modernism. He is precisely in the category of composers who made limited inroads into modernist techniques and who are thus vulnerable to the narrative of national self-doubt, and his virulent Stalinism and conservatism are antithetical to recuperation based on a model of modernism associated with Adornian values of individual emancipation.

### Communists

Returning to the question of how to approach Bush as historical subject and bearing these issues in mind, another profitable line of investigation is to examine Bush through the lens of the large respective bodies of work on music and communism and on British communism. In the field of Cold War musicology, scholarship by Marina Frolova-Walker, Peter J. Schmelz, Anne C. Shreffler, and others has drawn attention to such central issues as the incoherence of socialist realism as an aesthetic and the wide-ranging interpretations it provoked; the non-identity between socialist individuals and states; the complexity of processes of political oversight of musicians (in opposition to myths surrounding the relationship between Stalin and Shostakovich, say); the competing Cold War rhetoric and programmes of arts patronage that surrounded claims to such contested categories as ‘freedom’ and ‘modernity’; the nuanced position occupied by politically radical modernists such as Luigi Nono, Cornelius Cardew, and Louis Andriessen; and the permeability of the aesthetic and ideological ‘Nylon Curtain’.<sup>28</sup> Such work has

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, the essays on Britten reproduced in Philip Brett, *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, ed. George E. Haggerty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>28</sup> The literature here is too broad to give more than suggestions. On Nono, Cardew, and Andriessen, see Carola Nielinger-Vakil, *Luigi Nono: A Composer in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); John Tilbury, *Cornelius Cardew (1936–1981): A Life Unfinished* (Matching Tye, Essex: Copula, 2008); Robert Adlington, *Louis Andriessen: De Staat* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). On music and communism, see Anne C. Shreffler, ‘Berlin Walls: Dahlhaus, Knepler, and Ideologies of Music History’, *The Journal of Musicology* 20/4



## Introduction

9

established a framework within which the individual agency of communist composers (in both the East and West) can be examined and the ideological binarism that forms a barrier to serious investigation of a composer like Bush can be dismantled.

The study of British communism has produced little on musicians, a situation eminently fair given the tiny size of the Party and even smaller cohort of musicians within it, yet this also offers fresh perspectives.<sup>29</sup> An important and continuing strain of British communist memoir – most recently added to by David Aaronovitch’s *Party Animals* – has emphasised the elements of otherness, insularity, delusion, even tragicomedy, which characterised British communism.<sup>30</sup> The titles of these memoirs – *Party Animals*, *The Lost World of British Communism*, *I Believed* – variously evoke the exotic curiosity of the phenomenon when viewed strictly from the outside, the sense of disillusionment experienced by so many who left the Party, and the uniformity and collective nature of their experiences. As Raphael Samuel has asserted:

To be a Communist was to have a complete social identity, one which transcended the limits of class, gender and nationality. Like practising Catholics or Orthodox Jews, we lived in a little private world of our own, or, like some of the large or extended families of the period, ‘a tight . . . self-referential group’. A great deal of our activity – Communists of the period were nothing if not ‘politically active’ – for all the urgency of its occasions, might be seen retrospectively as a way of practising togetherness.<sup>31</sup>

(Autumn 2003), 498–525 and “‘Music Left and Right’: A Tale of Two Histories of Progressive Music’ in Robert Adlington (ed.), *Red Strains: Music and Communism Outside the Communist Bloc*, Proceedings of the British Academy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 67–88; Marina Frolova-Walker, “‘National in Form, Socialist in Content’: Musical Nation-Building in the Soviet Republics’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51/2 (1998), 331–71 and *Stalin’s Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016); and a special Cold War issue, edited by Peter J. Schmelz, of the *Journal of Musicology* 26/1 (Winter 2009). For the phrase the ‘Nylon Curtain’, see Györgi Péteri (ed.), *Nylon Curtain: Transnational and Trans-Systemic Tendencies in the Cultural Life of State-Socialist Russia and East-Central Europe* (Trondheim, Norway: Program on East European Cultures and Societies, 2006).

<sup>29</sup> Some partially successful attempts to open discussion on music in the CPGB may be found in several chapters of Andy Croft (ed.), *A Weapon in the Struggle: The Cultural History of the Communist Party in Britain* (London: Pluto, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> Examples include David Aaronovitch, *Party Animals: My Family and Other Communists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016); Alexei Sayle, *Stalin Ate My Homework* (London: Sceptre, 2010); Raphael Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); Douglas Hyde, *I Believed: The Autobiography of a Former British Communist* (London: Heinemann, 1950).

<sup>31</sup> Samuel, *The Lost World of British Communism*, 13.

In the field of history rather than memoir, however, a more nuanced picture of communist identity and experience is emerging. Rather than exotic Others, British communists were a diverse group who occupied various positions with respect to national identity, and who embraced different group identities in addition to their communism through intellectual and cultural activity, work, trade unionism, family life, and friendship. Thus Bush was married to a non-communist, worked with the BBC, maintained his longstanding teaching position in the heart of the British musical establishment, and was, eventually, able to see past Tippett's Trotskyism and the composer Bernard Stevens' exit from the Party to maintain his friendships.

On the one hand, such work on communism and culture offers a route into the complexity of Bush's experiences and aesthetic positions, and the possibility of a more nuanced view of his relationship with British culture than simply conceiving of him as the outsider variously marginalised by his modernism, his conservatism, or his politics. On the other hand, care must be taken that evidence of his embeddedness in British culture does not efface the very real suspicion and ostracism of communists in Cold War Britain, nor Bush's genuine political radicalism, which remains problematic. In new accounts of British communist culture, Bush invariably emerges as excessively willing to embrace the Party line even by its own rigorous standards. Not only did he throw himself into all manner of Party work, but was unfailingly willing to defend the Party and, to an even greater extent, the Soviet Union at the lowest moments of its history. Just as Bush sits uneasily within British modernism, he remains problematic as the subject of a rehabilitated picture of Western communism.

### Modernism and Communism: A Theoretical Solution

As a final starting point for approaching Bush, there stands Harper-Scott's adumbration of a theoretical relationship between communism and British modernism. Harper-Scott interprets modernism, after Alain Badiou, as an '*Event* that institutes a new form of knowledge', that evinces a variety of responses, both 'faithful' and 'reactive' (thus producing faithful or reactive subjects, a designation that may variously refer to a piece of music or a group of composers, for example).<sup>32</sup> For Harper-Scott, the fundamental revolution of musical modernism is the emancipation of dissonance, because it established an order outside the ancient binary of consonance and dissonance in Western music. Consequently, the faithful

<sup>32</sup> Harper-Scott, *The Quilting Points of Musical Modernism*, xiii and 159ff.