Gérard Grisey and Spectral Music

This book is the first in-depth historical overview of spectral music, which is widely regarded, alongside minimalism, as one of the two most influential compositional movements of the last fifty years. Charting spectral music’s development in France from 1972 to 1982, this ground-breaking study establishes how spectral music’s innovations combined existing techniques from post-war music with the use of information technology. The first section focuses on Gérard Grisey, showing how he creatively developed techniques from Messiaen, Xenakis, Ligeti, Stockhausen, and Boulez towards a distinctive style of music based on groups of sounds mutating in time. The second section shows how a wider generation of young composers centred on the Parisian collective l’Itinéraire developed a common vision of music embracing seismic developments in psychoacoustics and computer sound synthesis. Framed against institutional and political developments in France, spectral music is shown as at once an inventive artistic response to the information age and a continuation of the French colouristic tradition.

Liam Cagney is a co-editor of The Oxford Handbook of Spectral Music, and his musical criticism appears regularly in places like Gramophone, the Guardian, the Telegraph, the Spectator, the Times Literary Supplement, and the Irish Times. He is the recipient of an Arts Council of Ireland Emerging Writer Bursary and a City, University of London doctoral studentship. He lectures at BIMM University.
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Composition in the Information Age

Liam Cagney

BIMM University
For Vincent and Ann Cagney
But is it not the case that these elements, this final residue which we are obliged to keep to ourselves, which speech cannot convey even from friend to friend, from master to pupil, from lover to mistress, that this inexpressible thing which reveals the qualitative difference between what each of us has felt and has had to leave on the threshold of the phrases which he uses to communicate with others, something he can do only by dwelling on points of experience common to all and consequently of no interest to any, can be expressed through art . . . which makes manifest in the colours of the spectrum the intimate make-up of those worlds we call individuals, and which without art we should never know?  

Proust"}

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I am grateful to Hugues Dufourt, Michaël Levinas, Tristan Murail, and Roger Tessier for each giving generously of their time for interviews. I also gratefully acknowledge the following for their informative correspondence: Patrice Bocquillon, Georgina Born, Walter Boudreau, François Bouch, George Couroupos, Jean-Max Dussert, Jean-Claude Éloy, Richard Felciano, Guy Lelong, Mesías Maiguashca, Octavian Nemescu, Louis Roquin, François Rose, Denis Smalley, and Fernand Vandenbogaerde.

I am indebted to the Paul Sacher Foundation and to Raphaël Grisey for allowing me to reproduce and reference herein materials held in the Foundation’s Gérard Grisey Collection. At the Paul Sacher Foundation, I thank Michele Noirjean and, in particular, Angela Ida De Benedictis and Robert Piencikowski for their help. I am also deeply grateful to the Internationales Musikinstitut Darmstadt (in particular, Claudia Mayer-Haase) for allowing me to cite and reproduce materials from its archive. Thanks, too, to the staff of the Centre de Documentation de la Musique Contemporaine in Paris for their helpfulness during my periods of research there.

At Cambridge University Press, thank you to Kate Brett and series editors David Beard and Philip Rupprecht for their guidance and wisdom. Thank you to Sarah Starkey, Fiona Little, and Marijasintha Jacob Srinivasan for their work during the production process. I am grateful for J. P. E. Harper-Scott’s enthusiastic encouragement of my book in the early days. I also thank Robert Hasegawa for his characteristically astute comments on the manuscript; the book has been much improved by his knowledge, observations, and suggestions.

Much of this book’s research was done during my PhD, and I am grateful to City, University of London for the award of a university doctoral studentship. I also thank the Society for Musicology in Ireland for the award of two study grants, and the Paul Sacher Foundation for the award of a two-month stipend to research its Gérard Grisey Collection. Thank you to my PhD supervisor Ian Pace and my examiners Björn Heile and Miguel Mera. I also thank the following: Julian Anderson, Amy Bauer, Abdelaziz Cadi Essadek, Edward Campbell, Daniel Chua, Seán Clancy, Paul and Anja Clift, Jonathan Cross, Omar Dhobb, Nicolas Donin,
Acknowledgements


Last but not least, thank you to my parents Vincent and Ann Cagney for their love and support going back to the days of clarinet lessons in Donegal Town, and to Indrani Ashe, safe cove.
Abbreviations

CDMC Centre de Documentation de la Musique Contemporaine, Paris
CIRM Centre International de Recherche Musicale
CNRS Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
CRISS Collectif de Recherche Instrumentale et de Synthèse Sonore
EIEI Ensemble d’Instruments Électroniques de l’Itinéraire
GERM Groupe d’Étude et Réalisation Musicale
GGCPSF Gérard Grisey Collection, Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel
GRM Groupe de Recherches Musicales
IRCAM Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique
ISCM International Society for Contemporary Music
LAM Laboratoire d’Acoustique Musicale
ORTF Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française