Introduction

Steve Reich pitched up in San Francisco in September 1961. He was a young musician, one who had been taken by the early-century work of the Hungarian composer and folklorist Béla Bartók, and he had journeyed west from New York in the hope of studying with Leon Kirchner, a composer in the rough-lyric Bartók tradition who had been teaching at Mills College. But Kirchner had just left for Harvard, so Reich ended up working at Mills under Luciano Berio. Over the course of the previous decade, Berio had become identified as a figurehead of the European postwar avant-garde: his ultramodern serialist work was quite a different proposition to Kirchner’s own.

As well as doyens of the contemporary music world like Berio, San Francisco was home to unique forms of counterculture and experimentalism. One collection of composers and artists, working in a building they called the San Francisco Tape Music Center, was making strides in the development of electro-acoustic music. The works Pauline Oliveros, Morton Subotnick and Ramon Sender were constructing using tape – still a very new medium – were radical not just in how they were made, but also in how this performer-less music was to be experienced. Reich came under those composers’ influence in 1962 and soon began experimenting with tape himself, at first producing collages of looped and overdubbed samples. (His first tape player was shared with another Mills student, Phil Lesh, soon to become the bassist for the Grateful Dead.) In 1964 he played in the first performance of Terry Riley’s In C at the Center, and in the same year in San Francisco’s Union Square he made the recording of the Pentecostal preacher Brother Walter that would supply material for his first major tape work, realised at the Center: It’s Gonna Rain (1965) (Bernstein 2008).

But Reich was not only interested in classical and experimental music. He also loved jazz, and had studied drumming as a teenager and at weekends played for dance bands. Around the time that Reich arrived on the West Coast, John Coltrane, one of the leading jazz musicians of the
time, was playing a run of gigs at San Francisco’s Jazz Workshop. The young composer watched Coltrane play many times during the early 1960s, and very probably went to some of these September shows (Potter 2000: 158). He had struck lucky. With his core sidemen of Eric Dolphy (alto sax, flute), Elvin Jones (drums), McCoy Tyner (piano) and Jimmy Garrison (bass), Coltrane at this time was assimilating influences from Africa, South Asia and Latin America to construct new principles for jazz form and harmony and an *oeuvre* that would become one of the century’s most influential.

That September, Coltrane’s band were still riding the wave from their first two albums in this outward-looking style, *Africa/Brass* (recorded for Atlantic on 23 May and 7 June 1961) and *Olé Coltrane* (recorded 25 May). The audience at the Jazz Workshop had been able to see the group just weeks before these sessions, where they played a run from 25 April to 7 May. It was now that the saxophonist started to introduce elements from West African music into his group’s style. In an interview conducted on 2 May, right in the middle of his San Francisco shows, Coltrane explained something of what he was up to:

I have an African record at home, and they’re singing these rhythms, some of their native rhythms, so I took part of it and gave it to the bass, and Elvin plays a part and McCoy managed to find something to play, some kind of chords. . . . Still no melody, though. [laughs] I had to make the melody as I went along. But at least I’m trying to think of a melody; I’m not referring to the chords to get the melody. (Porter 1999: 213)

Coincidentally, Reich had been listening to similar records – newly issued LPs of West African, particularly Ghanaian, drumming. When Reich bought a copy of A. M. Jones’ 1959 book *Studies in African Music* in 1962, he formed a better idea of how that music was constructed. Reich had been led to the book by a talk given by Gunther Schuller at the Ojai Festival, an event to which he had been taken by Berio. Models of form, harmony and gesture common to Euro-American art music composition would begin to seem problematic to the younger composer; at the same time, West African music – via Jones’ transcriptions and Coltrane’s jazz – became imprinted on his imagination (Reich 2002: 55–70). Over the coming years, all these influences would seep into the texture of Reich’s music, helping develop a style that would later become known as ‘minimalism’. By the century’s end, that music would have become popular enough to make Reich one of the world’s most admired and recognised composers.
Reich’s story, in which musical success is born of cross-generational, cross-continental and cross-cultural encounter and immersion, is not unique. A glance at the biographies of the other names mentioned in the story above – Bartók, Berio, Coltrane, Oliveros, Lesh, Riley, Schuller – indicates the extent to which worlds of art, popular and folk music had become intertwined. In fact, it would be truer to say that music in the twentieth century was listened to, received and created like this more often than not: here was a newly small, newly connected world in which difference was confronted and synthesised as a matter of necessity, and as a matter of course. The examples are endless. George Gershwin listening to Igor Stravinsky; Stravinsky listening to Duke Ellington; Ella Fitzgerald listening to the Beatles; the Beatles listening to Karlheinz Stockhausen; Stockhausen listening to – if not much liking – Aphex Twin; and Aphex Twin listening to and being performed alongside Reich. As the century progressed, such meetings and reactions only increased, with artists as varied as Diamanda Galás, Outkast and Liza Lim all exploring styles of music from well outside their immediate generic contexts. Reich himself was listened to and referenced by many outside the fold of Western art music, including Brian Eno, Kraftwerk, Andrea Parker and Radiohead.

But despite the extent of such musical intermingling in the twentieth century, we still make strong distinctions between the territories these artists notionally inhabited; these distinctions are usually described by way of genre labels (‘classical’, ‘pop’, ‘jazz’, ‘folk’), or else in terms which sort and segment what were diverse theories and practices into singular historical schools, or – a particular characteristic of the period – into ‘isms’ (like the minimalism we have already encountered). We imagine even the most cosmopolitan and mobile musicians speaking through interpreters at frontier checkpoints, rather than as stateless multilingualists going where they please. Why?

**Music ‘High’ and ‘Low’**

A common understanding that Western music was comprised of discrete genres, styles and practices held sway throughout the century. And not all musics were seen as being created equal. However these styles were heard and felt by their followers, variously vested interests – institutional, academic, journalistic – worked to maintain a discursive separation of musical cultures, this most obviously embodied in the often-cited ‘high/low’, or highbrow/lowbrow, binary; here, ‘high’ forms, such as classical music, were
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granted the status of timeless art and ‘low’ forms, such as popular music, were seen as transient, commercial trivia.

In a study of this phenomenon made at one end of the century, Charles Hamm (1995) examines a book written at the other, Nathaniel I. Rubinkam’s *Masterpieces of Melody and the Musical Art* (1906). Rubinkam’s is a relatively obscure and unremarkable piece of music commentary, but almost for that reason it offers a good illustration of some of the commonplace assumptions about music and value that existed at the end of the Victorian era. Rubinkam writes that

‘Classical Music’, like Classical Literature, is that which has been recognized by the ages as of the best and highest class. Thus, in common acceptance, ‘classical’ is the antithesis of ‘popular’. In a stricter sense, a classical production is one that has stood the test of time, and has come to be acknowledged by scholars and teachers of the art as a model of purity of style and form, and most worthy of emulation...because of [its] purity of style and form, universality of idea and permanent value to musical art.

In general terms that music is popular which makes an easy appeal to the masses. There can be no definition of popular music that will apply equally to the music of all nationalities, for the reason that standards of taste differ in the various countries. Less civilized peoples, even the wildest tribes of Africa or fiercest islanders of the South Seas, have a ‘music’, and rude musical instruments which are their own. They have their battle songs, and their funeral dirges.

Feasts, weddings, even cannibal orgies, are accompanied with some sort of a succession of sounds chanted with accompaniments pounded from rude instruments. The more civilized the people, the nearer to some form or rhythm and the more intelligible their music. (Quoted in Hamm 1995: 3–4)

These kinds of arguments found their basis in a racist, and indeed classist, assumption of the superiority of bourgeois European culture. Yet, as Hamm writes, they had come ‘to dominate Western attitudes towards music throughout the modern era, enabling musicologists and critics to ignore all music lying outside the Western classical repertory’ (Hamm 1995: 4).

Rubinkam’s screed was a popularising product of the German Idealist tradition that stretched back to the eighteenth century (Hamilton 2007: 40–94), and the philosophical work by thinkers like Schopenhauer and Kant that gave rise to the related Romantic concepts of autonomous and absolute music. Autonomous music was that which did not have a purpose or function, for instance to act as the accompaniment for ritual or dance; absolute music was that which did not try to represent stories or scenes, as opera or programme music did. Instead, this music – almost always instrumental – aimed to lead
the attentive listener towards something mystical, spiritual: a ‘truth’ beyond language and, most importantly, beyond body, time and place. The earthly and passing pleasures of bodily excitement were identified with coarse, simple and ‘popular’ leisure activities: communal song and dance, or feasting and sex – hence, presumably, Rubinkam’s drum-backed cannibal orgies. ‘Art’ was something of much higher purpose and worth.

The alleged transcendence of absolute music was closely linked to its customary tonal and structural complexity. Most valued were music’s organic integration (whereby all the many parts of the musical whole were derived from a few kernels of material) and its teleology or goal-direction (whereby those parts, in their development, grew a long and large-scale musical form to its climactic fruition). These methods were enabled by musical notation (Solie 1980; Tomlinson 2003); the lack of such technical complexity in non-notated popular and folk musics supposedly demonstrated their spiritual and historical triviality.

Rather than a thing of technique and artifice, such complexity and scale was often seen as an expression of that higher, natural musical law. This was something that could only be glimpsed and caught by the composer genius, one of the most important figures in Romantic discourse (Cook 1998: 32–3). Heinrich Schenker, one of the most influential music theorists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, argued that while the everyday composer wrote what he wanted to write, the genius was inhabited by a force beyond himself (and, as we will see later, it was always a ‘he’ that was intended).

The greatest European instrumental works were abstracted and collected into the Western art music ‘canon’, that is, an imaginary museum of musical works (Goehr 1992). These works and their composers were laid end to end, from Palestrina to Bach to Beethoven, each work or practice seen as the inevitable development of the last. This was an expression of historical positivism, an important intellectual trend of the later decades of the nineteenth century (Tomlinson 1984). While non-notated musics were doomed to pass into (deserved) obscurity, the essence of these great works, their truth and spirit, would forever remain accessible through the study of authoritative scores. The task of the performer – in theory if not always in practice – was to give listeners access to this ‘superior force’ of truth by playing the music in the manner most faithful to the genius composer’s vision (see Monsaingeon 2001: 153).

The mystical ambiance that surrounded nineteenth-century Romantic arguments about art music’s autonomy would dissipate in the next, more sceptical century, and the rather extreme ideological positions sketched out
above were subject to much qualification. But many of the foundational distinctions between the artistic and the popular endured in updated form. While popular culture and music were routinely positioned as the regressive, anaesthetising products of the new ‘culture industries’, art music was now often staged as uniquely ‘critical’ of this debased reality (Greenberg 1989; Adorno 1991a/1938; 1991b), this a Marxian spin on the old Romantic vision of music’s transcendence of earthly bonds.

Beyond these theoretical perspectives, the high/low dichotomy remained pervasive both in everyday cultural attitudes to different musical forms and in the persistence of stark social distinctions. Across the West, the practitioners and audiences of classical and popular musics were strongly associated with, respectively, higher- and lower-class positions, educational levels and income (Bourdieu 1984/1979). These distinctions were restated and reproduced in school and university curricula and, as a result, in academic music studies. Certainly, ethnomusicology – at first also known as ‘comparative musicology’, and devoted at first to the study of non-Western musics – and later, popular music studies, emerged in a small number of universities from mid-century. But these projects were outliers, and their scholars, methods and moral support often came from anthropology and sociology rather than music departments, the majority of which remained dedicated to the Western art music tradition.

Musicology and Music Historiography in the Late Twentieth Century

In the latter decades of the twentieth century, a number of disciplinary initiatives encouraged a gradual decline in this rigid, ‘Eurocentric’ ideology. Kaplan (1972), Brantlinger (1983) and Novitz (1992) offered critiques of the high/low distinction in general terms; Gracyk (1996), Griffiths (2011), Clarke (2007) and Taruskin (2007) offered critiques anchored in debates on music. These examples are taken from a whole range of texts and movements that attempted to complicate the kinds of cultural divisions – in which assumptions about the relative values of arts, ‘races’ and classes were all interwoven – that are sketched above (see Fisher 2005 for an overview).

For many of these writers the attempt to sort cultural groups and activities into hierarchies of worth, in which bourgeois European culture was always given supremacy, was abhorrent. Moreover, it entailed the imposition of boundaries where none existed, and the magicking away of
productive musical relationships that had existed between forms. As trends in communication, cultural consumption, migration and education coalesced into what, by the end of the century, was thought of as ‘globalisation’, classifications seemed all the more moribund to many.

The old hierarchies were durable, but efforts to grapple with these musical and social complexities eventually came to the fore. The story of music studies in the twentieth century mirrors that of many other disciplines. In broad terms, musicology began the century subscribing to an idealist and positivist ideology anchored in transcendent texts. This disciplinary ideology gave way over the course of the twentieth century, at least in some respects, to a stylistic and methodological pluralism attuned to music’s social and cultural contexts.

This movement was engineered from both in- and outside traditional music studies. The insiders were those scholars linked to what became known as the ‘new musicology’, which emerged in the mid-1980s. These writers responded to what Robert Fink (1998: 137–8) called a ‘general disciplinary crisis’ over the authority and legitimacy of art music and its study both by expanding the methodologies and conceptual approaches used to tackle canonical works, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, by expanding the range of music considered suitable for such study (see Kerman 1985; Kramer 1990; McClary 1991; Rosen 2000). The outsiders were ethnomusicologists and, later, popular music scholars. They questioned traditional musicology’s legitimacy by seeking the wholesale expansion of academic study to include both non-Western and popular musics, and by invoking anthropological and sociological methodologies of the kind that allowed the address of music’s social meanings.

Yet while inroads were made, efforts to explore new methodologies and repertories continued to be hampered by traditional musicology’s positivistic and ethnocentric values and vocabularies (see Middleton 1990; Frith 1996; Tomlinson 2003; Walser 2003; Nettl 2005). For much of the later twentieth century, both ethnomusicology and popular music studies remained under the influence of traditional musicology, just as traditional musicology itself struggled to get free of its own inheritance.

The persistence of these traditional views can be seen in a range of music histories written in the latter decades of the twentieth century. Despite their nominal promise to cover ‘twentieth-century music’ or ‘modern music’, they in fact focus almost exclusively on art music. They also focus primarily on the works ‘themselves’, which are invariably treated as stable entities embodied in written scores largely free of social and cultural context (e.g., Morgan 1991; Schwartz and Godfrey 1993; Whittall 1999; Salzman 2001/
1967; Griffiths 2011). Even Richard Taruskin’s monumental six-volume *Oxford History of Western Music*, published across several years in the 2010s, which attempts to move beyond the works-and-composers model of most music histories, includes only a single chapter on popular music. While some attempts at writing social and postmodern music histories have been made – Herbert (2003) and Clarke (2007) provide neat overviews of these attempts – the dominant mode of music history writing remained text-centred and generically exclusive into the twenty-first century.

Many writings did attest to musicology’s efforts towards diversification at or following the century’s close (Bergeron and Bohlman 1996; Fink 1998; Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000; Shepherd 2003; Clarke and Cook 2004; Clarke 2007; Cook 2008; Born 2010). These books and articles variously historicised musicology’s prejudices of repertoire, style and methodology as historically determined and culturally anchored constructions. In addition, various extra-academic or para-academic publications also reflected these shifts. ‘Polygeneric’ anthologies such as *Audio Culture* (Cox and Warner 2006), *Sound Unbound* (Miller 2008) and the *Arcana* series (2000–12) treated various contemporary music genres in broadly equal terms, although, mashing genres together, they did not attempt to develop a critical account of the ways in which styles interrelated and overlapped.

So, at the time of writing, a growing recognition exists within the music academy that old disciplinary canons and methodologies need to be reinvented for a new era in which the presumed cultural authority and distinctiveness of different repertories has collapsed. Many music departments have attempted to remodel ageing curricula in order to reflect better both this and the increasingly diverse backgrounds and listening habits of their students and professors. Certainly, inequalities of prestige and representation still riddle university music courses, and, indeed, faculties. Nevertheless, in the twenty-first century it is possible not only to study popular music to the highest academic levels at a range of institutions across Europe and America but also to study popular and non-Western musics within general music degrees of an otherwise traditional nature.

**How to Use This Book**

Our fundamental position is that twentieth-century music is best studied not as a number of parallel or hierarchical traditions but as a proliferation of intersecting practices and problems – the latter technical, cultural and historical. It is by thinking about music in this way that the full significance of styles
and acts – their specificities, their commonalities – can most fully be understood and enjoyed.

We hope readers will emerge with a strong sense of chronology, in terms of both twentieth-century history and twentieth-century music. But the book also sets that music amid the more fluid critical discourses that surround it. This period saw the massive expansion of professional music criticism and academic study, and many practitioners were also active writers, analysts and polemicists; these proliferating, competing interpretations of musical activity and worth meant that no form’s cultural stature remained stable for long. The interweaving of critical position-taking with practice, and the understanding of both in flux, is one of this text’s central aims.

The scope of repertoire covered is governed by the same basic principles. The book addresses what have been considered central works and practices – Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, the Beatles’ recording methods – but it also devotes much time and attention to material which, while more marginal to the canons of art music, popular music or jazz, nevertheless offer musically rich and intellectually ripe opportunities for thematic exploration. And while our focus is on musics in ‘the West’ – an old, meaningful but admittedly problematic category – practices from around the world, and particularly global popular musics, are also addressed.

Certainly, the book’s attempt to evolve rather than revolutionise the stuff of musical history, along with its Anglophone, European–North American perspective, marks it out as the product of a particular institutional and cultural environment. But we believe its method allows us to circumvent at least some of the problems attending many canonic constructions, not the least of which has been the systematic exclusion of musicians and thinkers who were women and/or people of colour. It also allows us to avoid the construction of yet another authorised collection of Greats, one perhaps more inclusive, yet similarly bounded; instead, we aim to show numerous local understandings of musical repertoire and value in dialogical but ultimately removed relationships.

The book is divided into four broadly defined parts: (I) Histories, (II) Techniques and Technology, (III) Mediation and (IV) Identities. We aim to offer a new range of perspectives on musics that have too often been presented as having one kind of value – formal interest in the case of art music, sociological import in the case of the popular. Our four sections, then, aim to show: (1) how twentieth-century music can be heard in relation to historical and social change; (2) how, and with what developing resources, musicians constructed that music; (3) how music was fostered, disseminated...
and valued by commercial agents and governmental organisations; and (4) how music played host to changing notions of the private and public self.

Each of these sections is divided into four chapters. Rather than a particular musical style or moment, the chapters focus on topics important across the twentieth century’s genres and decades. In the name of coherence and the appreciation of historical change, each of these topics is framed chronologically. But, forming a series of sixteen juxtapositions rather than a single thread through the century, the chapters are designed to present music history as strata overlaid, or as threads twisted, rather than as a sequence of slices. At many points in the text, we touch on a topic briefly, but, using the ➔ symbol, point to a chapter in which it is dealt with at greater length. Suggested listening is indicated at bullet points. We use English-language titles of works, except where the non-English original title is standard; we use the British rhythmic terms semiquaver, quaver, crotchet, minim, breve and bar (equivalents to the US terms sixteenth note, eighth note, quarter note, half note, whole note and measure).

We have chosen chapter topics which, apart from their central importance, maximise cross-cutting between art music, popular music and jazz traditions. Certain chapters, such as Chapter 9, ‘Recording and Production’, or Chapter 13, ‘Gender and Sexuality’, suggest themselves easily in these terms. Others, such as Chapter 7, ‘Harmony’, Chapter 5, ‘Work and Notation’ or Chapter 15, ‘Audiences, Class and Consumption’, are more usually studied in terms of either popular or Western art music, but for that reason are often more productive when applied to unexpected musics in unexpected ways.

However, our chapter topics echo shifts far more dramatic than any within music studies. Where our discipline has tarried with concerns around cultural authority, relation, and value, it has been because – in an unstable and often troubled era – such anxieties have occupied the thoughts and actions of many people in general. In line with much musicological work since the 1980s, this book argues that any attempt at musical history must consider the social, cultural, political, economic and technological landscapes from which that music emerged; for that reason, it will be useful to end this introduction by way of a schematic survey of those landscapes as seen from the West, and the ways they changed between 1900 and 2000.

### An Outline of the Western Twentieth Century

There are several historical trajectories that we might highlight in sketching the Western twentieth century. These include: