FINDING DEMOCRACY IN MUSIC – A SYMPOSIUM

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ABSTRACTS (alphabetical order by author)

David Blake (SUNY-Potsdam, New York)

‘Everybody Makes Up Folksongs’: Pete Seeger’s 1950s College Concerts and the Democratic Potential of Folk Music

During the 1950s, while blacklisted from the music industry and investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee, the folksinger Pete Seeger performed at colleges and universities across the United States. These concerts were crucial to his political work during the decade—Seeger repeatedly called them ‘the most important job I ever did in my life’—but have been neglected in his biography. This presentation examines how Seeger positioned folk music in his 1950s college concerts as a tool for democratic action. He sought to teach his audiences that folk music was an everyday activity created by people around the world, as well as an inherently accessible and participatory genre that modelled democratic cooperation. His conception of democracy as a multicultural and participatory practice was inflected by the nascent civil rights movement as well as what historian Temma Kaplan has identified as a broader worldwide idealization of democracy as a catalyst for social change following World War II. It also marks a crucial political shift in Seeger’s oeuvre from the labour advocacy of his 1940s music, positioning college students rather than union members as pivotal links in the chain of folk music’s transmission and political potential. Drawing on extant concerts from schools including Cornell, Northwestern, Bowdoin, Roosevelt, and Columbia, I illuminate how Seeger expressed the democratic potential of folk music through repertoire choices, in-concert remarks, and performance practice. These concerts, however, also surface the paradox inherent in modelling participatory democracy for an inherently elite audience. As such, Seeger’s concerts act as an early example of the post-war articulation between democracy, civil rights, and higher education in the United States that shaped not only the folk revival, but the subsequent multicultural turn in American higher education.

Georgina Born (University of Oxford)

Imagining New Musical Democracies — For Audiencing, Aesthetic Judgement and Curation

In his paper ‘What can democracy mean for music?’, Robert Adlington summarises thus the composer Elliott Carter’s conception of the democratic nature of his music: ‘the idea of democracy that prevails in Carter’s ruggedly egalitarian musical textures, in which (as Carter says) “each member of a society maintains his or her own identity”, is not unconditionally extended to his listeners, who are expected to receive instruction in a particular mode of attentiveness prior to participation as democratic citizens’. Carter’s conviction that music’s democratic potential can best be modelled via the analogical potential of musical materials points to more general observations. If democracy has been ‘found’ in music, it has invariably be in one of two ways: as a quality of musical textures, which are treated as social allegories, as when Carter writes of his 4th String Quartet as ‘mirroring the democratic attitude’; or in attempts to reconfigure the social relations of performing ensembles, as when theorists of jazz and improvisation take the musical-and-social interactions in
their creative practices, the negotiation of individuality and collectivity, to exemplify democracy. It is the latter paradigm that has perhaps become ascendant in recent decades, in that a range of ensemble musics — improvised, experimental, progressive, networked — have been understood to experiment with the musical division of labour (composer-performer, performer-performer, conductor-performers), fashioning new modes of musical interaction that negate former hierarchies in favour of democratic values of equality, liberty and even deliberation. Both these directions have been productive, and in my previous work I too have attended to democracy in the guise of musicians’ attempts to politicize and reimagine the social relations of musical performance and practice.

In this paper, however, I want to turn the discussion in two new directions. For the first, I take my cue from the didactic attitude displayed by Carter towards the audience’s need for instruction into a special, focused listening. Stimulated by the challenges posed by the art-theoretical paradigm of ‘participation’ (Bishop, Bourriaud), criticizing the conceptually lazy recourse to tropes of ‘community’ in music, and drawing on the political theory of Chantal Mouffe and others, I want to probe in new ways the relations between composer, performer and, in particular, audience. My concern is to become conscious of the ways in which musicologists and practitioners tend to elide real audiences with the audience thought to be afforded or projected by the work. What would it mean to allow real audiences equality and liberty, for audience members (and us) to become conscious of audiences as agonistic social formations rather than aggregates of the effects of mass individuation, and to unleash experimentation — including diverse attempts at empractising democracy? In part this suggests the need to revise the classic theorists of the crowd and of group flows of affect. It means also rejecting the reduction of audience experience to ‘listening’, of audiences to markets, and of the analysis of audiences to the methods of market research. For the second new direction, I want to speculate on the limits of current arrangements for the aesthetic evaluation and curat...
distributed and accessed (Montani 2010), while at the same time it conveys specific ideas about the structures and the shared values of the communities implied by the structural and perceptual features of each object. From an aesthetic perspective, the illusion of proximity to the performer, to the original audience and to the live event that the media promise is the means by which they recover their auratic value in an age of technological reproduction.

By addressing five theoretical oppositions regarding the relationship between live and mediated experience in popular music (materiality/ephemerality, reality/artificiality, presence/enactment, aurality/multimediality, art/commodification), this paper underlines how different genres endorse different conceptions of community and democratic space. From the ostensibly elitist approach of mediated private live events such as Pink Floyd’s Live at Pompeii to the representation of the immersive experience of contemporary EDM live acts, the strategies may vary. What they have in common is the production process of a media artefact, starting from an originating event and resulting in a material object, a process that can be critically engaged with the tools of musical analysis and cultural history.

Jacques Caplat (EHESS-CAMS, Paris)

**Between Democratic Practice and Professional Virtuosity: Diatonic Accordion in Brittany**

A traditional instrument in Brittany since the end of the nineteenth century, then fallen into disuse after the Second World War, the diatonic accordion saw a spectacular revival in the 1980s. The actors of its return, at the forefront of Breton culture, were committed to make it once again a popular and accessible instrument. Thus they successfully set up open learning schemes, and promoted its practice in commonplace events (such as parties, traditional balls and bars). The diatonic accordion was part of a militant democratic process which led, after a public debate, to a rejection of the ‘competitions’ which were usual for other Breton instruments, and to create self-taught figures. The diatonic accordion is therefore conceived as an instrument for all and by all, and first and foremost for the dancers. And the amateur status of the musicians resulted in creating an essential rule of the Breton balls: the systematic presence of several bands that play in turns.

These principles, although still present amongst some of the actors, are confronted with the emergence since the 1990s of a quest for virtuosity, and legitimation through excellence. Without disavowing the objectives of a democratic practice, the new generation of accordionists, often professional or with the ambition of professionalization, gave rise to virtuoso ‘models’ and a fundamental evolution: the addition of the semitones which are normally lacking in the instrument. The decline in the number of traditional balls since the early 2000s creates a situation of unprecedented competition, affecting the relations between amateurs and professionals. Based on my immersion in the various places of its practice, this presentation will discuss the original democratic characteristics of the Breton accordion and highlight the questions raised by the articulation between democracy and elitism.

Pietro Cavalloti (Universität der Künste, Berlin)

‘From which finger of Stockhausen are you hanging?’ The Debates About Free Improvisation at the Darmstadt International Summer Course, 1969–1972

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the topic of free improvisation played an important role at the Summer Course in Darmstadt. Particularly significant were the seminars of Vinko Globokar (with the
group New Phonic Art) in 1970 and the seminars of Max Keller in the context of the ‘Kompositionsstudio’ in 1972. In both cases the insistence of the speakers on the most evident political aspects of improvised music as well as on the absolute necessity of internal democratic dynamics within the improvisation group was exceptionally apparent. Although certainly linked to the political climate of the time, this emphasis can be explained by the particular conditions in which the question of improvisation was introduced into the Darmstadt debate: I am referring to the dispute between Karlheinz Stockhausen, Globokar and many other participants of the courses during the last session of Stockhausen’s seminar about *Aus den sieben Tagen* at the Summer Course of 1969. The whole debate (a very passionate dispute lasting about two hours) was about the ‘dictatorial’ role of Stockhausen during the performances of his ‘intuitive music’, in which Globokar’s Group was actively involved as well.

The aim of my speech is to reconstruct and contextualize the main phases of this debate, in which two opposing visions of collective improvisation collide. For this purpose I will make extensive use of still unpublished sources (especially the audio recordings of the seminars) collected in the Archive of the International Music Institute Darmstadt, on which I am currently working as coordinator, together with Dörte Schmidt, of a research project on the Darmstadt Summer Course between 1964 and 1990 at the University of the Arts in Berlin.

Christopher Haworth (University of Birmingham)

**Digital Utopianism and Network Music: The Rise and Fall of the Res Rocket Surfer band**

Computer network music is frequently championed on the grounds that it offers opportunities for experimental forms of social organisation rooted in ‘radical democratic’ principles (Knotts & Collins 2014). Some of the commentary on the genre mirrors the discourses surrounding digital utopianism (Turner 2006), where communitarian-like qualities of bottom-up self-governance and anti-hierarchical organisation are taken to be a natural product of information technologies themselves, rather than something that takes effort and cooperation to bring about. Yet it is telling that the majority of this literature takes electronic art music as its focus, a field that inherits ideas about decentralised control and flattened hierarchy from 1960s experimentalism and free improvisation. What models of social organisation does network music augur when the style of music it supports bears no relation to these traditions?

This paper will focus on a group of computer musicians, studio engineers, software programmers and dotcom entrepreneurs who, in 1994, created the first commercial system for geographically-distributed music production on the public Internet: the Res Rocket Surfer project. Although technically the system did not afford real-time performance, the near-instantaneous transmission of midi files afforded a novel form of loop-based studio performance wherein internet-enabled studio musicians could collaborate on the same studio session together from different locations simultaneously. But if the early web ideals of net-enabled democracy and virtual community were central to Res Rocket’s technological and musical ‘imaginaries’ (Born and Hesmondhalgh 2000), then this was at variance with both the musical ambitions of leading figures in the community and the changing model of governance regulating users’ ownership of data and modes of interaction. This paper will draw out these competing layers of technological, social and institutional agency as they played out in the Res Rocket surfer community, paying particular attention to the oppositional and counter-hegemonic practices that developed among members as the company became increasingly integrated with major commercial audio softwares.
Improvising Democracy: The Problem of Authorship in Jean-Baptiste Barrière’s Sensation/Eternity

‘In ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose “performance” – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his genius.’ Thus Roland Barthes, in his 1967 essay ‘The Death of the Author’, describes a mythical pre-modern, egalitarian society, arguing that the ‘author’ is a modern invention of empiricist thought. This influential essay was indicative of many contemporary cultural practices; composers and musicians often seek to de-emphasize hierarchical structures and the power of the author in their work. In practice, however, the dismantling of the author is not easily achieved.

In 2016, the democratic collective choral ensemble ‘C4’ commissioned and premiered a new work by Jean Baptiste Barrière, Sensation/Eternity, which, according to the composer, seeks to undermine authorial power, substituting for it a process that the composer calls ‘dynamic scoring’, in which composer and performers collaborate in real time. Using computer algorithms that manipulate a score displayed to the musicians, changing and updating musical parameters with each moment, dynamic scoring aims to create a fully democratic performance in which the composer and the performer together interpret and realize musical ideas.

Despite this lofty goal, tensions abound. I take an ethnographic as well as music-analytical approach to show that Barrière’s vision conflicts with the realities of the rehearsal and performance experience with a collaborative ensemble. The composer’s will and the powerful nature of the algorithm still dictated much of the musical realization of this work, and the relinquishing of authority to the performers involved compromise rather than true collaboration. In this first attempt with dynamic scoring, Barrière and C4 both found themselves in a struggle between the ideal of collective music making and the long-held hierarchies in which they and the music were situated.

Democracy and Ecological Transition in Belgian Folk Bals

At a time when democracy is the subject of intense discussions throughout Europe, the project of transition has emerged as one possible way of answering the urgency of social inequalities and ecological disasters. While this movement has been enhanced by numerous academic works, little attention has been paid to musical activities that partake in the same project. We argue that such a connection between transition and music is exemplified by the ‘European folk dancing’ movement. The present paper focuses on ‘folk bals’, as they are practiced in the regions of Wallonia and Brussels (Belgium). Historically rooted in the 1970s folk revival, folk bals consist of parties where participants engage in neo-traditional dances more or less inspired by the pre-WWI peasant celebrations. The Belgian musicians and dancers have developed a common repertoire made of both local and non-local, traditional and modern practices.

The project of ecological transition was theorised by authors such as Rob Hopkins, Dominique Bourg, and Dominique Méda and aims at: (1) fostering equity in the distribution of wealth, (2) increasing well-being and social cohesion, and (3) adapting the economy to the ecological limits of the ecosystems. Through the structure of the dances, the roles attributed to the audience and musicians, the material aspects of the events’ organisation, the public they gather and their relation to the musical industry, folk bals transgress a series of social norms and boundaries, thus opening
the participants to other forms of sociality that resonate with the project of social and ecological transition.

The account presented in this talk is based on semi-directive interviews with dancers and musicians and on a personal commitment of the authors in the organisation and animation of folk bals in Wallonia (Belgium).

Sander van Maas (University of Amsterdam)

The Lure of Bureaucracy: On the Musical Politics of Konrad Boehmer

Since the late 1950s the Netherlands have been a critical example of the democratization of musical life. After protests against the musical establishment in the late 1960s the scene was enriched by the rise of the so-called ensemble culture, which would contribute to the country's international reputation as musically diverse, innovative and open minded. Although expressing key democratic values such as inclusiveness, equality, and individuality, however, the musical discourse that supported the rise of a new music culture hardly addressed the topic of democracy as such. The focus was rather on such (native) political movements as Provo, anarchism, Maoism, and cases such as the perceived capitalist imperialism of the Americans in military conflicts worldwide. Musical works composed in the Netherlands since the 1970s seem to support the sense that, as a concept and a system, democracy has remained extraneous to the apparently ‘democratic’ musical environment in which they were made, its usage often being merely instrumental and closely related to the cultural politics and the distribution of subsidies. As a formal reference, then, democracy in Dutch musical life has come to denote the bureaucratic process of cultural policy rather than the development of political ideas and ideals in music and musical life.

In this presentation, I will retrace these developments from the vantage point of a key player in the national and international music scene, the musicologist, sociologist and composer Konrad Boehmer (1941-2014), whose influence on the intellectual landscape hitherto has not been sufficiently reconstructed. Arriving in the Netherlands in 1966 as an electronic music dissident from Stockhausen’s Cologne circles, and burdened by the national-socialist past of his father, Boehmer’s position was complicated from the beginning. Working his way into the Dutch cultural scene he soon found his role as a critic – to the left of the political spectrum – of the self-proclaimed revolutionaries of the new music. Entering into headstrong and impetuous debates with the likes of Peter Schat, Louis Andriessen, and Reinbert de Leeuw and maintaining a close connection with Luigi Nono’s intellectual circles, his criticism often seemed informed by a strong desire to reconnect with the political roots of artistic production. Finding policy where he hoped to find politics, and traveling to North Korea multiple times, Boehmer would ultimately argue that, on historical grounds, the contemporary composer's choices are between bureaucracy and commerce. On the basis of Boehmer’s archive, and in reference to current debates on the concept of bureaucracy, I will discuss why democracy would seem to have dropped from Boehmer’s musical wager.

Giovanni Mori (University of Florence)

Democracy as Musical Practice: The Live Coding Community’s Case

Democracy is not static but a performative concept that involves a continuous dialogue between members of a community. What better than music, then, to represent this idea and put it into practice? One may even draw a parallel between different political systems and the music theories
within them (Simon, 2013). I would add that the way in which performers and public are organised and interact between each other mirrors in some way the relationships of power in the society taken into consideration. In this proposal, I present the case of TOPLAP, a community of musicians who play using live coding technique, an innovative computer music practice. They are an example of democracy shaped on the model of the information age. Working processes inside this group, from software development to events’ organisation to performances, are examples of the idea of democracy permeating digital online communities. Ideas of software sharing, open source, horizontality, and gender and race equality characterise all the activities inside the community. After a brief description of the working processes and the interpersonal relationships within the TOPLAP community, I will analyse some significant examples in order to obtain a representation of the concept of democracy in this context, evidencing the model’s most interesting characteristics and particularities. Additionally, I will illustrate the community’s relationship with their public, analysing aspects of audience involvement, the online and offline communication between all the actors of performances, and how during performances live coders manage to enhance audience involvement, underlining the democratic aspect of their musical practice. Finally, I will analyse their pedagogical approach and how, by teaching live coding and programming languages to children, they aim at raising people’s awareness about the nature of new digital media and to make them ready to understand the intrinsic logic that govern communication in the digital age.

Violeta Nigro Giunta (EHESS–CRAL, Paris)

**Defining Audible Democracy: New Music in Post-Dictatorship Argentina**

Unlike a revolution, democracy doesn’t have ‘events’. The exception to this alleged ‘uneventfulness’ of democracy is after a dictatorial process, where new values and new politics are defined. With the return of democracy in 1983, after one of the most terrible dictatorship in its recent history, Argentina entered a period of defining democracy, the roles of its institutions and actors. In this context, artists and intellectuals stood behind the conviction that ‘culture is one of the pillars that strengthens democracy’, as stated in a letter signed by hundreds of people and published in the magazine *Punto de Vista*. Answers to the question ‘what is the culture of a democratic regime?’ were needed and many of the cultural magazines – which began during the years of resistance prior to the fall of the regime – would take a starring role in these discussions.

New Music re-emerged after the dark years, beginning a new process that was to be centred on the institutionalization of the avant-garde. It would also have at least one important leading player – the composer Gerardo Gandini, who directed many of these new institutions, but also set the tone for how this new democratic life was to be embodied in New Music. The new democracy proved to be fragile and constantly tested: what was behind a discourse centred on plurality, equality and participation?

In this paper, I will focus on two events. The first, is the ‘Primer Encuentro de la Cultura Democrática’, held during December 1985. This celebration of democratic culture was also the platform for many discussions, and featured Luigi Nono in conversation with Gandini. The second is the ‘2nd National Conference of XXth Century Music’ of 1984, which included Gandini’s text-manifesto ESTAR (‘To Be’). The composer drew the lines of what was Argentine new music, and asked whether the generation that had been waiting at the starting line would dare to push the trigger. My goal will be to analyse how the democratic discourse and values were incorporated into the sphere of new music: what was new music supposed to sound like, in this democratic era? What was the effective sound of democracy?
Emily Payne (University of Leeds) and Philip Thomas (University of Huddersfield)

Getting Exercised: Ensemble Relations in Christian Wolff’s Exercises

In 1973 American experimentalist Christian Wolff embarked upon a series of pieces titled Exercises for (mostly) unspecified instrumentation and numbers of players. Since then Wolff has returned to the title to extend the number of works to, at present, 33; they are amongst his most frequently-performed works. The notation is skeletal, with little by way of instructions and indications for performance. Consequently, players negotiate a way of working with the score and with each other, making decisions prior to, and during, the moment of performance. Issues of orchestration, tempo, dynamics, sequence, coordination and much else are ‘up for grabs’.

Although the first set of Exercises was composed around the time that Wolff was especially energised by leftist political ideologies, and indeed was originally conceived to partner a set of songs (unpublished) with explicitly political texts, these are not necessarily political pieces. The title ‘Exercises’ is, however, suggestive of preparatory work toward a future act, putting into action, of being active, and of having effect. All the Exercises afford democratic negotiation on a number of levels: individually and collectively negotiating with the notation, through the music, and with the ensemble members. As such, there is considerable potential for navigating approaches to ensemble interaction, and for exploration and investigation of performance possibilities. Exactly how these possibilities are exercised in practice is the focus of this paper.

This paper draws upon documentation of a recent recording session featuring the ensemble Apartment House, in which a selection of the Exercises were rehearsed and recorded. Analysis from the sessions draws on both personal involvement and reflection (Philip Thomas is pianist with the ensemble), and ethnographic observation (Emily Payne observed the sessions). Both Thomas and Payne make use of video documentation from the sessions to isolate and analyse individual and collective behaviours; and to explore how decisions are prioritised, arrived at, and implemented. Finally, an interview with Wolff about the Exercises, conducted specially for this project, acts as a further contextual frame.

Steve Potter (Guildhall School of Music and Drama)

'Temporary Hegemonic Zones': Conducting and Conduction in Experimental Music

In John Cage’s best-known orchestral music, the composer asked musicians to use a digital clock together with notations that indicated approximate timings, in order to obviate the need for a conductor. However, in his lesser known Etcetera (1973) and Etcetera 2/4 Orchestras (1986), the conductor is not abolished but transformed into a leader whose presence musicians may choose to consent to or not. In the context of Cage’s professed anarchism this interrogation of possible roles for a leader is significant, and should be of interest not only for avowed anarchists but also for those pursuing radical democratic projects, whose emphasis on horizontal structures often sidelines questions regarding leadership roles. Meanwhile the conductor’s character has evolved, I will argue, indexing changing political rationalities. No longer simply an industrial capitalist boss, the new conductor is a bearer of ‘ever-evolving new management techniques’—‘networked, team-based’—‘emphasizing incentivization, guidelines, and benchmarks’, in ways that Wendy Brown identifies as distinctive of recent neoliberalism’s remaking of the subject as financialized human capital. This development is apparent within free improvisation communities, in which Butch Morris’s ‘conductions’—conducting group improvisations—may once have seemed an eccentric aberration,
his authoritarian presence at odds with the very ethos of group improvisation. In the past twenty years musicians of the London Improvisers Orchestra, among others, including Steve Beresford, Dave Tucker, and Caroline Kraabel, have developed conduction as a collaborative venture, something that could be taken in turns just as solos have long been done in jazz. Cage and conduction practitioners alike highlight concerns of inclusion and participation that resonate with radical democratic projects. Replacing an anxiety over leader figures with a discourse of consent and a practice of turn-taking leads to questions regarding what is being consented to, with what limitations, and for how long, in these performance practices? The evolution of the conductor figure, moreover, invites questions regarding what kind of ‘democratic’ subjects are produced through these practices.

Tina K. Ramnarine (Royal Holloway, University of London)

‘Unsociable Sociability’: Orchestras and Democratic Politics in Finland post 1917

1917 marks Finland’s Independence, as well as the Russian Revolution. Orchestral life began to develop during the 19th century when Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy of Russia. Orchestral works were connected with nationalist politics, though there was also significant cultural interaction between Finland and Russia. By the end of the 19th century, major figures in Finnish musical life such as Robert Kajanus and Jean Sibelius undertook music tours to Russia and, in turn, Russian musicians performed in Finland. Post 1917, orchestral life in Finland has flourished and democratic politics has seen important developments regarding universal suffrage, civil society and welfare, though the immediate aftermath of independence was civil war in 1918.

This paper will explore orchestral and political development through Kant’s (1871) ideas about universal possibility and cosmopolitan purpose. In particular, this paper’s starting point is a consideration of musical practice within the frames of Kant’s fourth proposition, which states: ‘the means which nature employs to bring about the development of innate capacities is that of antagonism within society, in so far as this antagonism becomes in the long run the cause of a law-governed social order’. Antagonism refers to human inclination towards ‘unsociable sociability’, bringing into focus the relationship between the individual and society. This relationship has provided one kind of metaphor for understanding orchestral interactions, though it might be extended through biopolitical readings from Kant’s antagonism to Agamben’s notions around biopower (life and death in the new political body). Ultimately, by exploring orchestras and politics in Finland post 1917, this paper will consider articulations of democracy in music to suggest an understanding of orchestral civic projects within Ferrara’s (2014) frame of a democratic ethos that rests on imaginative openness and hyperpluralism.

Benjamin Spatz with Nazlıhan Eda Erçin and Agnieszka Mendel (University of Huddersfield)

Democratizing Songwork: Collaboration and Polarization in the Embodied Research Lab

This lecture-demonstration paper will discuss and share the innovative model for embodied research developed at Huddersfield’s Centre for Psychophysical Performance Research as part of the AHRC Leadership Fellowship project Judaica: An Embodied Laboratory for Song-Action. Located at the boundary between artistic practice and scholarly research in performance, the Judaica project explicitly problematizes assumptions about the nature and form of embodied collaboration. Designed to undertake ‘pure research’ in the technique of song-action, the project does not lead to a final theatrical or musical work and does not rely upon the hierarchical role of director or composer. Instead the relationship between the three embodied researchers is framed — epistemologically as
well as economically — in academic institutional terms: the Principal Investigator (Spatz) leads the work, with two Research Assistants (Erçin and Mendel) making substantial directed but independent contributions. However, since the content of the research is embodied and performative, taking place in a movement/voice studio with the aim of developing new embodied technique, there are few precedents with which this collaborative process can be compared.

The conference ‘Finding Democracy in Music’ takes place at a crucial point in the Judaica project’s six-month laboratory phase: just after four months of intensive, mostly closed laboratory work has finished and before the trio embarks on an extended tour of research presentations across the United Kingdom, United States, and Poland. We will take this opportunity to reflect on our laboratory process from the perspective of power relations, drawing on recent critical thought (Colin and Sachsenmaier 2015) as well as Dr Spatz’s work on consensual polarization in spaces of embodied practice (Spatz 2010). Our multimodal presentation will offer new ways of thinking about the nonlinear relationship between democracy in the studio and democracy in the public sphere. By sharing extracts from the project’s audiovisual catalogue, we will invite conference participants into our process and open a series of questions about embodied democracy and its relationship to institutionality.

Jutta Toelle (Max-Planck-Institut, Frankfurt)

‘It’s So Egalitarian’: Participatory Projects in the Contemporary Music Scene

‘Egalitarian’ and ‘democratic’: this is how one workshop attendee described the atmosphere of a recent participatory music project. Was this only wishful thinking of an empowered audience member or were these already the effects of the audience’s ‘co-curatorship’ or even ‘co-creatorship’? My presentation focuses on the power relations between audience and musicians in the realm of the contemporary classical concert scene, and on the question of how far they can be altered or stretched. What happens if a specific concert engages the audience members beyond their traditional listening mode? If the listeners are empowered to participate, engage, or become involved, do the professional musicians then have to give up some of their authorship over the performance? And do the professional musicians have to lower their demands or their standards, or can they hope to somehow ‘elevate’ the participating audience to their professional level? And finally: as opposed to the frequent top-down approaches ‘imposed’ on audiences, is participation in a bottom-up approach, a true ‘co-creatorship’, possible at all? Amidst a flurry of participatory projects, even in the relatively traditional German classical/contemporary classical music scene, questions like these have arisen lately. And they are going to persist, given the threatening backdrop of legitimation problems for subsidies and the more general and Europe-wide discussion about cultural participation.

Based on qualitative data from my current research project on CONNECT (a Europe-wide participatory project designed to explore the relationship between audience and artists) and related to recent trends in performance studies and audience research, my presentation will focus on the question of whether any kind of democracy in the concert hall is an attainable – or even desirable – goal.

Ryan Weber (Misericordia University, USA)

In an October 2016 report delivered by the Pew Research Center, researchers noted that ‘opinions about American democracy and the candidates’ respect for democratic institutions – as well as their respect for women, minorities and other groups in society – have emerged as political flashpoints.’ Likewise, Vincente Navarro has claimed that ‘in the US, there has been, for some time, anger and frustration about the limited democracy that exists in representative political institutions.’ Indeed, the tumultuous American election and the contemporaneous Brexit fallout have left many asking: does democracy offer a process for mediating societal imbalances, or is it simply a façade to disguise a privileged hierarchy?

Similar tensions emerged at the outbreak of war in 1914 when the Australian composer Percy Grainger (1882-1961) departed England for America. Inspired by democratic institutions on three continents, Grainger extolled the virtues of democracy in music in his varied writings, including his eponymous article of 1931. Even more, Grainger advocated democracy as a compositional process. In works such as Marching Song of Democracy and Country Gardens, he enshrined his socio-political philosophy in musical syntax. Taken together, “democracy in music” represented both a procedure for (re)awakening 19th-century idealism and a pathway for developing a style of aesthetic modernism in the 20th century. However, as Diane Morgan (2007) has claimed, ‘the intercommunication of the part and the whole is no linear relation.’ This was certainly the case for Grainger, whose notions of racial superiority and aesthetic philosophy produced deeply rooted incongruences in the fabric of his sociological imagination. Thus, in this paper, I will elucidate how Grainger’s efforts to dismantle borders of identity ironically led to the creation of new hierarchies masked by his democratic label. I will also outline important parallels to recent events and illustrate how concepts of cosmopolitanism may serve as mediators of current tensions.