

TO:

Mike Heffley dissertation committee members Anthony Braxton (chair), Alvin Lucier, John Szwed, Su Zheng

Dear committee members:

Here is my dissertation, submitted for your consideration. Accompanying it are 30 CDs of numerous short recorded musical examples interspersed with spoken narrative; the text cues the reader what CDs/tracks to listen to and when. Also enclosed are disk versions; and, if the disk format is wrong for you, you can access it in the Netware music directory (file = "heff's diss") after 12/20.

Because it has been awhile since my qualifying exam--which was the last time you were convened as a committee, focused on my work--and since I've been in touch with some of you more than others about the development of this work, I'd like to say a few things to help you deal with what you now see is an unconventionally long manuscript.

Please suspend, for the moment, the question of how much material it is *reasonable* to expect you or anyone to process; I'll come back to that. Let me first fill you in on the scholarly, practical, and aesthetic considerations that led me to opt for this much as *desirable*.

1. Wesleyan and UMI (dissertation publishers) both put no cap on size allowed; all these pages and CDs are just fine with them. That means that, at the discretion of my faculty advisor and degree committee, I have the opportunity to publish and circulate, even promote and sell (through UMI), something no conventional academic or commercial press is likely to produce for me. The Wesleyan/UMI imprimatur will give this work an authority and credibility it wouldn't have if I published it myself, and will make it available instantly through established channels I can use to get it into the right hands around the world.

This is the work I would most like to see not only on Wesleyan's shelves, as a valuable and unique resource (for its subject, generally untouched here and elsewhere), in its archives for use by future researchers and teachers attracted here by the same traditions and people that drew me in...but also, especially, at the Jazz-Institut in Darmstadt, Europe's largest archive on jazz, where I did much of my research for this study. My eye is on a flowing, healthy concourse with European colleagues for my future professional plans. The director there, Wolfram Knauer, and I have been corresponding about my work, and he's eager to see it shelved there too. It will be unique in Europe not so much for its subject (they're much more concerned than American music scholars about the information and issues I'm involved with here) as for its English-language processing of so much German-language material on contemporary German

musical culture (and on the American history/scene that is largely unaware of but important to them).

This gets me to one of the main reasons this work is so big: it reiterates for English-language readers books and papers from German music scholarship over the last thirty years on American jazz history, German jazz history, and, mostly, the free-jazz movement leading to the new-and-improvised-music scene in Europe. Also, it gives much print to the German voices of the musicians of my focus, all of which are marginal, most silent, to English-language discourse--though by my lights they have as much or more artistic and cultural significance to this transplanted American music than do many of its well-covered "stars" here.

The other reasons it's so big--which I'll mention shortly--call to mind another consideration I had in planning it: you.

2. Since Wesleyan/UMI shares the "gatekeeping" function with individual academic mentors, regarding what is allowed to be published, my other consideration was whether my faculty adviser and committee would support what I was doing. We all know there is a large subjective component in work like this, however mixed up with more "objective" professional standards and aesthetic criteria. The vast majority of people who might have supervised my Ph.D. candidacy would have put their own arbitrary cap on "reasonable length," not to mention the imposition of their other standards and criteria on the contents of my work.

In having Professor Braxton as my adviser, I have been well matched, so this subjective component has been a joy rather than a "challenge." He is famous for "thinking big"--in his musical projects, and in his own writings about music (which, by the way, figured large in the way I framed my task as a writer here, and which surpass my study in sheer amount of print)--and he saw and green-lit enough of my dissertation as it developed to make me feel allowed and encouraged to take it as far and as wide as I could and did.

In fine academic tradition, I see the work I'm submitting very much as a response to the example of Professor Braxton's body of work and mission in the world. In my Master's work, I took in what he had put out, and passed it along through my book. Then I studied and worked with him in the context of a doctoral program, which is conceived as the grooming of a protégé beyond his master's example and into his own new terrain. I took that ball and ran with it, and Anthony Braxton was big enough to let me (rather than narcissistically thwart me if I strayed too far from the leash of his own work and person).

Simply as a gesture, then, "obscenely-long-is-good" also fits aesthetically with the Wesleyan tradition of experimental iconoclasm I align with--that of Cage, Braxton and Lucier, etc. That

tradition includes events such as Satie's *Vexations*, to be repeated 840 times; or some of LaMonte Young's, or Stockhausen's, or similar long works (not to mention Wagner, Bach, Coltrane, and Hildegard of Bingen). Or, from another side of Wesleyan music tradition, the South Indian and Indonesian music events that stretch way beyond Western time conventions. My study's length reflects my musical subject as much as it would those examples, because the phenomena of musical and real time gradually take center stage as we process the material.

As with my dissertation, the long time required to read/hear such works serves two functions: it calls attention to issues of musical time and real time in culture in both abstract and simulative ways; and it calls attention to the work itself, like a thought-provoking flag. I want people to talk about this work, and I want them to talk about the implications of its length as being a move to explode literacy's academic-discursive conventions as too confining, and the music/culture industry's aesthetic constraints on music's performance times/contexts as too shaped by commercialism, in certain ways that are also implied by my work's contents. Much as the change in technology to long-playing records opened up the possibilities in jazz for longer-than-three-minute statements, the advent of computer technology has made my multimedia work (I have here print, audio, pictures, and, eventually, video) as compact as a single CD-ROM disk--for which it was, in fact, conceived (though part of my gesture is indeed to have the "hard copy" bound/boxed and on the shelves).

That said, I've also tried to make the reading experience a mix of both the bite-sized portions of the concise and the grand pleasures of pattern, structure, and fugue unfolding in time--I think my Table of Contents conveys this--a mix I see as key to the readability of long works, especially historical ones about long stretches of time. I've written mine to try and make the reader wish it didn't have to end when it finally does, as I've felt about many long books (or series of books) myself (which I've always generally preferred to short books).

Also: I wanted to give Wesleyan a return on its investment (and the German government's, via DAAD, and my German subjects') in me, as well as on my investment in Wesleyan; I have, after all, spent at least as much of my own money on this education as it has waived in tuition. My position is that no one else in our field is interested in my material or in the issues fascinating me in the way that I am; certainly no one else is making the cases and points I'm making with my fat version. If I extract therefrom some more conventionally acceptable work--which, by the way, I do plan to do anyway, for commercial publication-- I will be depriving Wesleyan of its rightful guardianship/sponsorship of something from the following list:

1. a comprehensive presentation of virtually all the German-language and some French-language (my two formally tested languages here) scholarship on my subject (Chapters Two, Three and Four), something that doesn't exist elsewhere in our English-language knowledge base;

2. a thorough analysis of the only comprehensive bibliography of literature on my subject (Chapters Three & Four), also unprecedented;
3. a reconsideration (Chapter One) of conventional Western music history in the light of my subject, with the benefit of the long engagement I have, as both musician and scholar, with both history and subject;
4. a comprehensive survey of academic literature from several fields--historical; music-analytical and theoretical literature from jazz studies and musicology; sociocultural studies from ethnomusicology, anthropology, history, historiography, body studies, cultural studies; literary studies from current lit-crit and ethnographic theory; philosophical and scientific studies--that pertain to this subject, situating for future research something that has very few such interdisciplinary contexts established in academic discourse now. Those few are among my sources, and I carry (in the Introductions to all three Parts, and in the Conclusion of Part II, thickly; and throughout the work as a whole, woven in) their implications for my subject much farther than they;
5. an ethnography (Part II) that stretches the envelope of ethnographic convention--in part, via necessarily many rather than few pages--both in its presentation of my subjects' voices and of my own voice.

This is the most controversial gesture, maybe even for Anthony when he sees it for the first time: my use of the fiction writer's techniques. In Chapter One, the reader gets a glimpse of a world that suggests science fiction, as much as conventional-historical; that glimpse fades by the end of the chapter; passing like a dream, it stands as a writerly gimmick swallowed up in the in/formal run of mundane scholarship...until Chapter Seven, where the possibility that we are not in Kansas anymore again rears its head. That possibility gradually builds until the unnumbered chapter following Chapter Nine, called "a walk on the wild side," when the suggestion of a science-fiction dimension takes over, resolves the ambiguity left hanging in Chapter One, and develops throughout the rest of the work.

I'm entirely serious about this, and I make it clear to what I presume to be a professional academic readership specializing in my field that my gesture--a move as far into "creative nonfiction" techniques as a novelist might have made--is informed and grounded in recent ethnographic discourse and theory, and in previous music scholarship, which I want to take somewhere useful to my work. That is key--only the imperceptive reader, I think, will fail to see this move of mine as dictated by the goal of conventional music scholarship to generate information and insight as effectively as possible in the literate medium, will see it rather as the inappropriate invasion of an inappropriate voice;

1. an analytical-theoretical focus that reveals and explores terrain previously unnoticed and uncharted. The narrow issue here is musical time, pegged to issues of real time as

expressed in the length of my artists' (30+-year) engagement with their music, and as cognized in various ways by those of us similarly lengthily engaged as listeners and scholars. (Again, that culmination of the study in issues of time is served aesthetically by the length of my fat version too; the experience of reading and hearing what I've presented in Parts I and II sets the reader up, in the simulation of both history and the Now created by the gradual intake of text and recordings, for the concepts discussed in the abstract in Part III);

2. a representative collection of examples from rare/historic recordings out of print or otherwise inaccessible through the English-language world's consumer/research channels.

I am not a young student trying to start an academic career; I am also not some maverick "free spirit" trying to "break in" to a professional circle without accepting its conventions and concerns. What I am is a seasoned, middle-aged professional musician and writer who has written within constraints of space and time and the editorial agendas of others, for publication, on subjects such as my dissertation's, for some 25 years now. That history in music and music journalism led, step-by-step, to music scholarship, to Ethnomusicology's traditional arena, and then to a contract to research and write a long, dense book over a three-year period of time, which was the last big writing project I did just before beginning this one. And this one was, in effect, the equivalent of a gift of time and money and research facilities/grants that was two or three times more than that book contract. It was an easy transition to ply work habits already established to a quantum leap in ambition.

More importantly, that ambition made sense to me in terms of my personal growth and reach for new areas, and of stretching my writer/scholar's toolkit for doing so. There are certainly things the concision of a Slobin, Attali, Lipsitz and many others of the sources I use here can teach and give us--but there are also things we can get only through the grand and detailed scope of a Lang, Apel, or Richie (to name a few of the writers of books over a thousand pages long informing my study). Or, for that matter, a Proust, Joyce, or Henry Miller, who also pertain here for reasons that will become clear.

So--I did write this for myself, first and foremost. I didn't try to emulate or speak to what looks hot and publishable in the field these days, which for the most part interests me little as scholar, musician, writer and person. Such work did interest me much as a researcher and discursive *reader*, as my Sources show--but the writerly-scholarly decisions I made for myself, once informed by it, were mostly in contradistinction to it. As with my book on Prof. Braxton's music, I tried here to offer something that would interest the musicians I'm writing about, and the listeners and students and others who care about the work they've done in the ways that all of them and I do. My first book was long, and this one is long, because the work I'm doing has a big vacuum to fill.

As this work unfolded through me, I found myself imagining its consummation to also be my own death--so that what motivated me was the question of what I wanted to leave behind, more than what would help me get ahead.

To summarize: my decision to submit the fat version is based on the assumption that there are good reasons for all its contents to be available to the few who care about them, in the future (I certainly would have read such a work if I stumbled across it upon first coming to Wesleyan). If there are good reasons for the fat version not to be here, I expect you'll all tell me. One of them may simply be that you don't want to deal with this much material, no matter what; another might be that you do read it all, and don't agree with my assessments, or think what I'm trying to do might work just as well shorter.

I value as a resource your role and feedback as my mentors and supervisors; I'm not defensive about pushing this work on you and fighting for its present form. My position is that it exists in the world now, and I can find or make my own home for it should it prove unsuitable for Wesleyan's shelves--and that may be as it should be, I don't know. A shorter revision wouldn't take long to extract. But I have to take (and give you) a crack at this; I think it's the best stuff.

Thanks for your time and attention; I look forward to finishing this project with you.

Sincerely

Mike Heffley

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