Revista Eletrônica de Musicologia
Volume VII – Dezembro de 2002

Lesbian and Gay Music

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the unexpurgated full-length original of the New Grove II article, edited by Carlos Palombini

A record, in both historical documentation and biographical reclamation, of the struggles and sensibilities of homosexual people of the West that came out in their music, and of the [undoubted but unacknowledged] contribution of homosexual men and women to the music profession. In broader terms, a special perspective from which Western music of all kinds can be heard and critiqued.

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIGINAL VERSION

What *Grove* printed under 'Gay and Lesbian Music' was not entirely what we intended, from the title on. Since we were allotted only two 2500 words and wrote almost five times as much, we inevitably expected cuts. These came not as we feared in the more theoretical sections, but in certain other targeted areas: names, popular music, and the role of women.

Though some living musicians were allowed in, all those thought to be uncomfortable about their sexual orientation's being known were excised, beginning with Boulez. We had had enormous difficulty, in any case, getting the names of any 'out' British classical-music composers from anyone in that country where the closet was born.

Our aim in including a great deal of popular music was partly political, and partly because it was espe-

cially here that we could acknowledge the amount of work that has been done in the field. It was a pity, though, that Klaus Nomi got excised in view of his status in Europe: our editor, Stanley Sadie, viewed our topic as an exclusively (North) American concern, and did a good deal to enforce that opinion.

There would always have been a danger, in writing a combined article like this, of an imbalance between the sexes: we worked hard to eliminate that possibility, but our editor again did not help us. The change of title, which he would not accept, was a statement of our intent. He also rejected our attempt to relate the gay and lesbian movement post-Stonewall and the appearance of lesbian and gay perspectives/studies in music in the 1990s to political and intellectual contexts and developments. These included the impact the women's liberation movement of the 1960s had upon lesbian visibility, feminist debates about sex, sex differences and sexual oppression, the 'women's music' movement and study of women in music and the development of feminist critique and studies of gender and sexuality.

In either version, though, this article is an amalgam of the work of a community. The various people who read it, commented on it, or contributed parts to it were acknowledged in what we submitted, but that acknowledgement was of course cut. It is restored here with our heartfelt thanks to those people without whom we could not even have begun.

Though the difficulties with *Grove* were substantial, and have been exacerbated by some public rhetoric from the editor about how impossible we were to deal with,[1] the opportunity to write abut the entire field (as opposed to the genre-inflected approach of previous encyclopaedias) was very instructive. The piece we produced was not intended to close the book on whatever 'Lesbian and Gay Music' might be, but to use theoretical speculation and suggestion to open it up. We hope that anyone reading it will be able to see straight away the possibility of dozens of dissertation or book topics. And we dedicate it to all those who have worked, often at considerable professional disadvantage, in this field that connects our scholarship to our lives in the most fruitful way.

II. (HOMO)SEXUALITY AND MUSICALITY

To think about sexual categories as being arbitrary, or contingent on historical or social practice, is still difficult for most people because sexuality, like musicality, has been so thoroughly naturalized during the 20th century, and intimately embedded in an individual sense of self (Jagose 1996: 17-18). But, while maintaining the importance for modern society of the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality themselves and the process of acculturation that surrounds them, thinking historically about that 'sense of self' has, paradoxically, become the basis of much lesbian and gay critical work. It also underwrites 'queer theory', the intellectual phenomenon based on the recuperation of the pejorative term 'queer' and the inflecting of lesbian and gay knowledge with postmodern knowledge and ways of thinking. Arguing along lines proposed by Foucault, Halperin (1990: 24-25) pinpoints the historical difficulty: 'homosexuality presupposes sexuality, and sexuality itself [...] is a modern invention' which 'represents the *appropriation* of the human body and of its erogenous zones by an

ideological discourse'. Before the beginning of the 19th century deviant sexual acts such as sodomy — 'that utterly confused category' (Foucault 1978: 101) — were not particularized according to gender or even species; and some ancient modes of same-sex desire, such as Sapphism and pederasty, can be traced through Western culture. By the end of the century, however, the dominant model of heterosexuality was posited upon its binary opposition to an actual (but still incoherent) homosexual identity. A similar process of identity formation can be seen in music, where 'musicality' replaced the earlier and vaguer 'musicalness' as an inherent quality attributed to 'nature' but actually constructed in musical institutions of various kinds, particularly educational ones involved in the development of musical talent (see Kingsbury 1988).

The connection between musicality and homosexuality, and a strong supposition that the music profession is made up largely of homosexuals, entered public discourse as an indirect result of sexology, the scientific work fundamental to the modern understanding of sexuality, beginning with K. F. Ulrichs's pioneering work on Uranism in the 1860s and expanded by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Moll and other German authorities. English studies around the turn of the century advocating a liberal attitude towards the 'invert' or 'Urning' frequently refer to the German sources. 'As to music [...] this is certainly the art which in its subtlety and tenderness — and perhaps in a certain inclination to indulge in emotion — lies nearest to the Urning nature. There are few in fact of this nature who have not some gift in the direction of music' (Carpenter 1908: 111). Havelock Ellis addressed the topic even more arrestingly ('it has been extravagantly said that all musicians are inverts'), and quoted Oppenheim to the effect that 'the musical disposition is marked by a great emotional instability, and this instability is a disposition to nervousness', concluding that 'the musician has not been rendered nervous by his music, but he owes his nervousness (as also, it may be added, his disposition to homosexuality) to the same disposition to which he owes his musical aptitude' (Ellis 1915: 295).

Such beliefs, when juxtaposed with the public scandals in many European countries and most importantly the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, leading to a maximum prison term of two years' hard labour for the misdemeanour of 'gross indecency with another male person' (under the famous Labouchère amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885), only exacerbated a climate in which neither the presence of homosexuals in music nor their contributions to it could be acknowledged, and in which the experience of social oppression that informs lesbian and gay lives could not be connected to musicality. Given this background, any talk of forbidden and illegal sexuality and music was proscribed. 'You didn't mention it', explained the ninety-one year old Virgil Thomson to his biographer, offering as ultimate explanation 'of course everybody knew about the Oscar Wilde case' (Tommasini 1997: 69). The art of music, the music profession, and musicology in the 20th century have all been shaped by the knowledge and fear of homosexuality. The need to separate music from homosexuality has driven the crucial belief that music transcends ordinary life and is autonomous of social effects or expression. It has also contributed to the resistance toward critical inquiry into the politics — especially the sexual politics — of music, and into issues related to sexual diversity such as gender, class, ethnicity and race, religious belief, and power.

Conversely, the non-specificity of musical language and the doctrine of its autonomy from social issues led to a special situation in which music played — and still plays — an important part as both safety valve and regulator in the mechanism of the 'closet', which is not only a symbol of the hidden nature of many lesbian and gay lives but is arguably the most important attribute of 20th century homosexuality, more defining and universal in Western culture than sex acts themselves. In the words of gay author Wayne Koestenbaum (1993: 189-90), 'historically, music has been defined as mystery and miasma, as implicitness rather than explicitness, and so we have hid inside music: in music we can come out without coming out, we can reveal without saying a word'. The privilege of freely expressing desire and other feelings in music, a lifeline to those whose basic emotions are invalidated, appears also to have led to a concomitant and unspoken agreement to preserve the status quo. Although heavily populated by lesbians and gays, the various branches of music have been slow to exhibit any overt opposition to the heteronormative order of things (Brett in Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994: 16-18).

Most homosexuals internalized their oppression. 'Oscar Wilde complained in prison that he had been led astray by "erotomania" and extravagant sexual appetite; [...] Sir Roger Casement, the Irish patriot, thought his homosexuality was a terrible disease which ought to be cured; and Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, a liberal humanist famed for his rationalism, believed his homosexuality to be a misfortune: "I am like a man crippled"' (Weeks 1981: 105). Many homosexual musicians combined such internalization of oppression with some manner of protest, unarticulated though it may have been. The various mechanisms thus employed are sometimes difficult to decipher, and musicology has had as yet little experience with their cryptography, but they are arguably always there. Ravel's 'conspicuous sublimation' (Kramer 1995: 203); the high modernist withdrawal of Maxwell Davies; Strayhorn's self-effacement; Smyth's guarded codes in her operas and memoirs yet exultant lesbian erotic in her Suffrage music (Wood in Solie ed. 1993, Wood 1995); Mary Garden's refusal to create the role of Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier* because of its lesbian implications; the social radicalism of Blitzstein and Tippett; the eccentricity of Vladimir Horowitz and the shrill denials of Peggy Glanville-Hicks; Britten's pacifism, and his homoerotic discourse under cover of the musical treatment of canonic literature; Poulenc's musical camp on the one hand and his religiosity on the other; the insider allusions in the songs of Cole Porter and Noël Coward; Landowska's fixing on the antediluvian harpsichord as the vehicle for her virtuosity; Henze's flight from serialism and from Germany; Kathleen Ferrier's (and many other singers') cultivation of a 'Sapphonic' voice (Wood in Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994); the audacity and despair of blues singers such as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday; Dent's debunking of Beethoven and other received notions; Szymanowski's involvement with the Dionysian (and his two-volume homoerotic novel, *Ephebos*); Copland's early embrace of eroticism (figured through Orientalism or 'blackness') and subsequent eradication of corporeal or erotic elements in favour of a 'pure and absolute' style achieved by means of what Metzer (1997) calls a 'compositional scorched-earth campaign'; Virgil Thomson's collaboration with Gertrude Stein, and his subversive criticism; Partch's 'hobo' voices; the falsetto-enhanced 'lonesome-cowboy' vocal disguise of Elton John, and his representation in music at the funeral of Diana, the Outcast Royal; Cage's dual embrace of both noise and silence within music; Harrison's gamelan and championing of Esperanto; Menotti's

sentimentality; Oliveros's cultivation of communal 'deep listening' and her attachment to the accordion; Bernstein's over-the-top showmanship; even Boulez's mandarin façade and the aggressively blank faces of the Pet Shop Boys: all these — or yet other aspects of the art and self-presentation of these men and women — might be read as signs of both an accommodation to as well as subversion of the pervasive fact of the closet.

It will be objected that in many cases a 'straight' equivalent may be found. But a list of this kind, which could be expanded to include Reynaldo Hahn, Roger Quilter, John Ireland, Charles T. Griffes, Eugene Goosens, Cole Porter, Dimitri Mitropoulos, Henry Cowell, Noël Coward, Colin McPhee, Wolfgang Fortner, Samuel Barber, Paul Bowles, David Diamond, Ben Weber, Daniel Pinkham, Karel Goeyvaerts, Jean Barraqué, Stephen Sondheim, Sylvano Bussotti, Conrad Susa, David del Tredici, John Corigliano, Charles Wuorinen, Konrad Boehmer, Thomas Pasatieri and many others, not only shows how very considerable the homosexual presence has been in 20th century Western music, but also prompts questions as to how and why, in the post-Freudian age, a basic element of subjectivity could have been so little examined in relation to music, or why that relation should have been so obsessively denied — even by a figure like Ned Rorem who has plentifully advertised his homosexuality in memoirs and diaries. The fact that homosexual people represent different, sometimes opposing, stylistic and ideological positions, no matter what part of the music business they are involved in, argues against a unified 'homosexual sensibility' in music and against any simple relation between sexual identity and musical expression. It does not support the view that there is no connection between the two.

Enabling the weird dissociation of homosexuality and music, in spite of their being so patently intertwined for an entire century, is the mechanism described as the 'open secret'. Its function 'is not to conceal knowledge, so much as to conceal the knowledge of the knowledge' (Miller 1988: 206). Its effect is to strengthen the binary oppositions (public/private, inside/outside, heterosexuality/homosexuality) and to consign homosexuality to the private sphere, always on the verge of visibility, and therefore always under surveillance as an unthinkable alternative. To the extent that music, as a performance art, must occupy the public sphere, with, as it were, all its secrets on display, then what Miller calls a 'fantasmatic recovery' of enormous proportions has to be mounted to keep those secrets from making any difference. To what degree resistance can be effective in such a situation is a matter of considerable debate in queer theory. Some incline to what Alan Sinfield (1994: 21-27) terms the entrapment model, derived from Althusser and various interpretations of Foucault, in which subversion merely contributes to containment or to a general postmodernist notion of the subject as completely determined by ideology and therefore without agency. Theories developed from Gramsci, Raymond Williams and Zizek, on the other hand, offer more possibilities of effective resistance by refusing to accept a totalizing system and by recognizing that any 'dominant ideology' is itself constantly undergoing diverse internal disturbances which dissidence may turn to its advantage in particular historical situations. 'Coming out' has been the most undeniably effective political action since the 1970s. Earlier times demanded different tactics. One of the most effective of these, retaining a certain power to the present, is 'camp', a disruptive style of humour that defies canons of taste

and by its very nature evades any stable definition. Other solutions existed for those who refused this self-marking performative style. Britten, for instance, was arguably better advised in exploiting the open secret and capitalizing on his success in order to ensure wide circulation of the powerful critiques of the family, heterosexual relations, organized religion, patriarchal authority, militarism and the rest contained in his works.

Gender, purposely ignored in the list above, adds layers of complexity to the social situation of homosexuals in almost all musical contexts in the West, as do race and ethnicity and class. The male homosexual has been in a particularly ambiguous position in most Western contexts because, especially if white, he had the option of exerting male privilege and power, providing he was not publicly exposed. Some who adopted that expedient behaved in particularly oppressive or offensive ways toward others, for they often overcompensated in elaborating their disguise. Lesbians, on the other hand, were treated as a minority not only because of their sexuality but also, in most musical contexts, because of a hierarchical gender system that pressured all women into certain roles, such as diva, harpist, pianist, castigated them for transgressing them, and put severe obstacles in their paths toward others, such as composer, conductor, saxophone player, impresario.

This system (by no means extinct) was exacerbated to an unusual degree in the concert and recital hall context by the emphasis in the Romantic era on the enduring artwork of 'absolute music' and therefore on its creator, who became arguably more powerful, in spite of the reaction against Romanticism, as a result of high modernism's war on the non-subservient virtuoso performer (see 'Women and Music' and 'Feminism'). Male and female homosexuals, therefore, have had very different experiences in various music worlds, but the basis for their common interest is the codification and regulation of gender roles with appropriate sexual positions and identities. The assignment of the male homosexual to a feminine position — the only position dominant ideology will allow him as a 'failed man' — is mirrored, though not exactly, by the mockery aimed at a challenging or creative lesbian whose work is constantly labelled 'virile', 'manly', and 'unnatural', or 'deficient in the feminine charm that might have been expected of a woman composer', as demonstrated in turn-of-the-century critical responses to the music of Ethel Smyth and Rosalind Ellicott (Kertesz 1995, Fuller 1994). That similar criticism was directed at that icon of womanly respectability, Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, when she wrote a powerful mass or symphony (the composer George Chadwick called her 'one of the boys'), indicates the linked and overlapping forms of gynophobia (fear of women) and homophobia (fear of homosexuals), as in the 'masculine protest' of Charles Ives (Solomon 1987, Tick in Solie ed. 1993, Kramer 1995: 183-88).

Ives mirrors threatened masculinity in general, which tends to see *all* musicians and their activities, whatever their genders or sexualities, as feminine and to value (or devalue) them accordingly. Since people in music all share to some extent the taint of the effeminate or feminized, powerful institutional forces had to be mobilized to counteract that image, especially with the entry of music into the universities on a large scale after World War II. The widespread adoption of a neo-serialist technique, the development of arcane forms of music analysis, the separation of a high art from any form of pop-

ular cultural expression, and the equation of musical scholarship with scientific inquiry are all signs of a dominant masculinist, highly rational, heteronormative discourse in music all too unhappily but accurately characterized by the word 'discipline'.

III. Music and the lesbian and gay movement

In the wake of the 1950s civil rights movement, which began to change the status of African-Americans in the USA, various New Left counter-discourses arose, including a reinvigorated feminist movement for women's rights. A militant lesbian and gay movement, fomenting on both coasts of the USA after World War II, was catalyzed by the Stonewall riot in 1969, named after a New York gay bar whose patrons, mostly working-class men and drag queens (some of them Puerto Rican and black), fought a pitched battle with police on a routine raid of the premises. The movement borrowed from the struggle of oppressed racial minorities, devised its own tactics (the 'zap'), and linked its theory to both the sexual freedom movement and to the new oppression theories of feminism. Conflict and subsequent accommodation between lesbian activists and straight feminists surfaced in the late 1970s over a U.S. constitutional Equal Rights Amendment and within NOW (National Organization for Women), and in debates during the early 1980s over lesbian identity, women's sexual silences and practices, abortion, pornography, and rape. Defining texts in this area are Adrienne Rich's 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' and Gayle S. Rubin's 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality' (both in Abelove, Barale and Halperin eds 1993). Consensus grew among the various counter-discourses that unless a sexual revolution was incorporated into a political revolution there could be no real transformation of society and social relations. Alliances were also built that led not only to the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual concerns under one umbrella but also, somewhat later, to the involvement of the sexual minorities with the politics of race and class.

The subsequent global spread of the movement was complemented by initiatives in humanistic scholarship, consisting (as with feminism) of both a historical branch designed to uncover those 'hidden from history' and a theoretical branch concerned with the pertinent questions of sexual identity and subjectivity and their relation to capitalist society, although the two often overlapped, especially on vexed questions of difference in sexual practices and categories among and between gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, intersex and transgendered people, both crossculturally and in specific historical moments. This scholarly initiative has given rise to a situation in which, in Domna C. Stanton's overview (1992:1-46), modern sexuality is both 'the most meaning intensive of human activities' (Eve Sedgwick) and 'a sign, symbol, or reflection of nearly everything in our culture' (Stephen Jay Gould) as well as 'the name that can be given to a historical construct' (Michel Foucault) of social and sexual relations whose contents and meanings are in constant change and flux.

From the start, homosexual identity was seen as contingent: 'our homosexuality is a crucial part of our identity, not because of anything intrinsic about it but because social oppression made it so' (Altman 1971: 230, 1993: 240). Questions about identity persisted, however, for a variety of reasons:

identity categories were seen by many as instruments of the homophobic and heterosexist order they sought to oppose; they tended to efface 'hyphenations' in identities as white people's domination of the movement came under fire; and they were thrown into disorder by the onset of the decentred, split subject of postmodern thought.

Accordingly, emphasis moved from identity toward representation. Some sense of this can be gained from Morrissey's self-presentation as 'a prophet of the fourth gender', punning on 19th century sexology's 'third gender' while refusing to be determined by it (Hubbs 1996). Attempting to establish self-determination in the feminist subject, Sue-Ellen Case suggested that the role-playing of working-class lesbian bar culture could be rehabilitated as a 'combo butch-femme subject' (reminiscent of Monique Wittig's 'j/e' but 'replacing the Lacanian slash with a lesbian bar') that seduces the sign system with artifice and camp rather than internalizing the torments of dominant ideology (Case in Abelove, Barale and Halperin eds 1993: 294-306, for a musical application see Peraino 1992). Music, especially popular music, often seems to respond in its playful, coy or disruptive tactics around the vocal as well as visual representation of sex and gender (consider Madonna, Prince or Boy George) to Judith Butler's notion of these supposedly natural characteristics as 'performative' utterances (i.e. like speech-acts) to which subjects submit in a constrained repetition as part of entry into language and society. Butler proposes the notable inversion in which 'if a regime of sexuality mandates a compulsory performance of sex, then it may be only through that performance that the binary system of gender and the binary system of sex come to have intelligibility at all' (Butler in Abelove, Barale and Halperin eds 1993: 307-20, for a musical explication see Cusick in Barkin and Hamessley eds 1998).

In academic music study the excavation of lesbian and gay musics, the critique of heteronormative assumptions in such areas as music theory, and an exploration of music and subjectivity might also have begun in the 1970s. But the hermetic nature of postwar musicological discourse, and the policing of music that led many to acquiesce to the status quo, hindered the process, as it also hindered feminist inquiry in musicology and the acceptance of women composers into the concert hall repertory and in opera. This policing, sometimes overt, as in the imprisonment of Henry Cowell (Hicks 1991), but more often silent and insidious, is symbolic of a wider, often unacknowledged, pressure manifest for instance in the recourse of women to work outside the system. Sometimes the policing was more hushed than silent, as in the 'purges of homosexuals' that David Diamond alleges took place during Howard Hanson's forty-year directorship of the Eastman School of Music (Schwarz 1994). Usually, and most devastatingly, it became self-policing.

Avenues for protest did of course exist or could be created, as left-wing radicals such as Woody Guthrie demonstrated through a revivified folksong movement in the 1960s. During the 1970s lesbian and gay musicians began to find the means to give their sexuality musical expression in various interesting ways, often by a radical reinterpretation of an existing musical genre or institution. Concert music and its scholarship were virtually impermeable at this stage because of the venues, conventions, and institutions governing its performance and the aseptic ideological pressure of high modernism. Even opera, with its enormous lesbian and gay following (and open invitation to

ridicule), was less susceptible than ballet to queer subversion: La Gran Scena Opera Company (founded in 1981) never became as successful as its older sister, the virtuoso drag ballet company Les Ballets Trockaderos de Monte Carlo (founded in 1974). On the other hand, the entire opera world (and to some extent that of musical comedy and other music-theatre genres) had long been a stage on which gays and lesbians could perform, or see performed, our presence and humanity. Impresarios, managers, producers, critics, librettists, and composers contributed to this atmosphere along with singers, characters and roles. 'Where else', as Margaret Reynolds asks (in Blackmer and Smith eds 1995: 133) 'can you see two women making love in a public place?' Such coupling runs the gamut, moreover, from the 'principal boy' of lower-class British pantomime, with her fishnet stockings and full-hipped swagger, to the aristocratic Octavian playing butch to the Marschallin's femme in a fin-de-siècle Viennese bedroom, which has often been received as, and was probably intended to encompass, a symbolic performance of lesbian desire (Mary Garden's refused to 'out' herself by creating the role); and the potential for such interpretation grew when high modern performance dogma, putting original tessitura before modern gender sensibility, thrust full-throated mezzos and sopranos into castrato roles. Historical female couplings without cross-dressing, too, can take on fresh significance as a result of being exposed to a marginal perspective, like Dido and the Sorceress in Judith Peraino's account of Purcell's opera (in Blackmer and Smith eds 1995). Closet dramas or parables abound: Szymanowski's *King Roger*; Henze's *The Bassarids*; Britten's *Albert Herring*, *Owen Wingrave*, and *Death in Venice*. Britten's *Peter Grimes* is a powerful allegory of homosexual oppression (Brett 1977, 1983) along lines suggested already by operas, such as Janácek's *Kát'a Kabanová* and (more especially) Shostakovitch's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtensk District*, that explore the oppression of women. 'Real' lesbian or gay characters are of course harder to find. Mel and Dov, the interracial couple in Tippett's *The Knot Garden* (1970) appear to be opera's first 'out' gay males; predictably, they break up, one of them returning to a heterosexual lifestyle. Countess Geschwitz, the one heroic and truly loving character of Berg's *Lulu*, stands as a shining example of musico-dramaturgy that manages to transcend essentialism and stereotyping (see Morris in Blackmer and Smith eds 1995).

A remarkable phenomenon of the immediately post-Stonewall period was the emergence of lesbian-feminist or 'women-identified' singer-songwriters, bands, choruses, record labels and production companies (Olivia and Redwood were both founded in 1973). Venues such as women's coffeehouses and women-only music festivals also arose with largely lesbian audiences: of twenty ongoing annual festivals in the USA the largest is the Michigan Women's Music Festival, founded in 1975. Rarely broadcast over radio or television, 'women's music' was a grassroots movement from its beginnings in Maxine Feldman's *Angry Atthis* and Madeline Davis's *Stonewall Nation* in 1971, and Alix Dobkin's album *Lavender Jane Loves Women* (Women's Wax Works, 1973) through its growth and achievement in the work of such artists as Holly Near, Meg Christian and Cris Williamson, whose first album, *The Changer and the Changed* (Olivia Records, 1975) has been described as 'the best-selling independent album of all time' (Post in *All Music Guide* 1994, p 1039). With an emphasis on acoustic instruments, the music is grounded in folksong styles, sometimes inflected with blues, rock, jazz, reggae and even classical music. Openly addressing lesbian desire and relationships as well as the feminist

critique of patriarchy, misogyny and homophobia, it became important as an arena in which a lesbian community could be forged in the United States.

Another phenomenon of the period was the inception of specifically lesbian/gay bands and choruses. Among the earliest of these was New York's Victoria Woodhull All-Women's Marching Band (1973), named after a 19th century feminist and presidential candidate (and not exclusively lesbian, although its theme song was 'The Dykes Go Marching In'), and Catherine Roma's Anna Crusis Women's Choir in Philadelphia (1975), still a leading organization in the performance of new music by women. The Gotham Male Chorus, founded in 1977, later incorporated women to become the Stonewall Chorale, the first lesbian and gay chorus. In 1978 Jon Sims founded the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps, which became a noted focus for the political aspirations of the large lesbian and gay community in that city; a Gay Men's Chorus soon followed.

While several of these initiatives began as different expressions of communal pride, they have burgeoned into cultural institutions and lasting full-scale artistic movements across the world. The choruses in particular have thrived, founding their own international organization, GALA (Gay and Lesbian Association of Choruses), at the Gay Games in San Francisco in 1982. These now greatly outnumber the bands, who also founded a national association, Lesbian and Gay Bands of America (LGBA) in 1982. In particular, they have contributed to the queer critique of musical institutions and authorized culture by mixing traditional, popular and highbrow musics of all kinds within single concerts; and, by means of a substantial commissioning programme supported by frequent performances and festivals and faithful audiences, have also stimulated creativity among lesbian and gay composers and given support to other significant contemporary music seen as sympathetic to the movement. A Society of Gay and Lesbian Composers was founded in San Francisco in the 1980s in response to this and other stimuli.

IV. Musical theatre, jazz and popular music

The musical theatre has been a special place for gay identification and expression, arguably exceeding even opera in this regard. Not only have gay men traditionally had great affinity for it, but they have shared in its production at every level. Among them are leaders in the field such as Cole Porter, Ivor Novello, Lorenz Hart, Noël Coward, Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim. If the dream of every sensitive gay young man was to take Broadway or the West End by storm, the actual thematics of musical theatre were as heterosexist as those of any other representational form of the pre-Stonewall era. Nevertheless, ways were found to introduce coded or not-so-coded messages, like 'You're a Queer One, Julie Jordan' (*Carousel*, 1945),[2] for a knowing homosexual audience while staying within conventional narrative boundaries. These might include title (Novello's final work, *Gay's the Word*, 1950); lyrics such as Coward's 'Mad about the Boy' (from *Words and Music*, 1933),[3] with its coded references to A. E. Housman and Greta Garbo, or Porter's 'Farming' (Bronski 1984: 113); characters and plot, such as the 'tomboy' Maria in *The Sound of Music* (Wolf 1996); and performers such as Mary Martin as a cross-dressed lesbian in the role of Peter Pan (Wolf 1997). There

has also been a long tradition of appropriation of the material from musicals in every conceivable gay context. With the 1970s articulation of gay and lesbian identity, musicals with gay themes or characters arrived, many of them becoming mainstream commercial successes. If *Cabaret* (Masteroff/Kander/Ebb, 1966) both spectacularized and masked homosexuality, and *Applause* (Comden/Green/Strauss/Adams, 1970) presented it as pathology, Michael Bennett's *A Chorus Line* (Hamlisch/Kirkwood/Dante/Kleban, 1975) sentimentalized it in a characteristically liberal way. *La cage aux folles* (Fierstein/Herman, 1983) affectionately portrays a gay couple, one of whom is a drag queen, and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (McNally/Kander/Ebb, 1992) adapted Manuel Puig's powerful novel about the growing attachment between two prisoners, one homosexual and the other heterosexual. The musical theatre has even dealt with the HIV/AIDS crisis, most notably in *Falsettoland* (1990), the final part of William Finn's trilogy, and also in Jonathan Larson's *Rent* (1996), based on Puccini's *La bohème*.

Jazz's more limited relation to homosexuality can be delineated through two careers. Billy (Dorothy) Lee Tipton, the jazz pianist, performed gender as undetected drag, but her impeccable improvisations, gift for mimicry, same-sex marriages and adopted sons may have had more to do with making it in a male-dominated music and its venues than in a dildo and tuxedo, and serve to show that difference is in the eye of the beholder (Middlebrook 1998). Billy Strayhorn, composer of one of the most famous titles in the history of jazz, 'Take the A Train', and a good deal else, whom many people associate with his mentor, Duke Ellington, seems to have willingly accepted virtual anonymity and the hiding of his abundant talent behind Ellington's benign and affectionate protection in order to be openly gay (Hajdu 1996: 79-80). Queer lore sees jazz itself (like heavy metal) and its audience as heterosexual to the core, but John Gill (1995) explores this half-truth and critiques attitudes towards gay or bisexual jazz musicians, such as Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor, and Gary Burton, in a manner that has opened up the topic.

The long tradition of male and female impersonators, who always sang as part of their act, unlike the lip-synching drag artists of the technological age, is closely linked with queer presence and representation in popular culture. The famous openly lesbian male impersonator, Gladys Bentley, who attracted the rich and famous to her act in Harlem and introduced scat-singing and lewd extemporary parodies of popular songs as well as explicit lesbian lyrics into her act, represents a glorious extreme of the inter-war years. At times her strong, fierce voice ascends into what sounds like a male falsetto, tapping what Emma Calvé called the 'fourth voice' to mark her 'third sex'. In the USA, at least, drag and (to a lesser extent) male impersonation carried the stigma of gender liminality that also marked homosexuality, leading to its being banned in many places (e.g. Los Angeles) in the repressive 1930s. British drag, on the other hand, surviving into the television age through such performers as Benny Hill, indicates the degree to which such acts could help institutionalize homophobia through ridicule rather than active hate-mongering. Impersonation and popular music were not outside the force of the closet and the 'contract' to which highbrow musicians were obliged to subscribe. Even Julian Eltinge, perhaps the most celebrated female impersonator of the earlier part of the century (with a pleasing alto voice), went to great lengths to hide his homosexuality; indeed, many pop

stars have shown extraordinary reluctance to disclose their sexual orientation (Rodger 1998).

On the other hand, Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith could record a number of overtly lesbian songs in the 1920s, and lesbian and gay performers could become popular in New York's Prohibition era 'pansy craze' (Chauncey 1994). Noël Coward and Cole Porter hardly bothered to hide their interest in same-sex desire behind sexual innuendo inflected with camp, which functions in the context of mid-century theatre as a code — to be deciphered by the homosexual cognoscenti and to go undetected or ignored by others. Later, rock and roll included homosexuality among its counter-culture effects, through flamboyant performers like Richard Penniman ('Little Richard'), and songs like his 1956 hit, 'Tutti Frutti', or even Elvis Presley's 'Jailhouse Rock' (1957), [11] with its famous reference to homoerotics behind bars. Later groups such as the Doors (Jim Morrison singing 'I'm a Backdoor Man' in 1968) [12] and the Rolling Stones (whose notorious 'Cocksucker Blues' of 1970 Decca refused to release) maintained this tradition. 'Raga-rock', almost exclusively associated with George Harrison and the Beatles, was in fact initiated by the lead singer and principal songwriter of the Kinks, Ray Davies, with an Indian-influenced song, 'See My Friends' (1965), about his own sexuality; it confirms the often-observed link between exoticism or Orientalism and Western homosexual culture of all kinds (Bellman 1998). Further steps led to Lou Reed's 'Walk on the Wild Side' (1972) with its tribute to Andy Warhol's New York clique, already reflected in the work of the influential group Velvet Underground, Elton John's ever-popular gay love song, 'Daniel' (1972), [13] to Rod Stewart's 'The Killing of Georgie' (1976), the first top-40 hit unambiguously about gay people, and to Tom Robinson's celebratory 'Glad to be Gay' (1977). The era also saw a number of independent (even rebellious) women singers. Janis Joplin, whose major relationships were with women, and who seemed as unashamed of this as of the rest of her colourful life, possessed an intensity that might have founded an entire movement, but for her premature death in 1970. Dusty Springfield, the spirited British soul singer who was a lesbian icon, survived a career slump in the 1970s and cemented her gay following by later recording with The Pet Shop Boys.

In the 1980s the mainstream music industry seemed to respond to the increasing conservatism of Britain and the USA with further closeting of artists and their music. David Bowie, for instance, and other glam-rock stars who responded to the swinging-both-ways 1970s, would no longer advertise their sexual ambivalence or pretend to be gay, and gay performers in the mainstream were usually guarded and their songs still coded. A number of British male groups composed largely or principally of gays — Soft Cell, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Erasure, The Pet Shop Boys — maintained a discreet front. Even gender-bending Boy George and Culture Club kept up evasive talk (such as Boy George's remark about preferring a nice cup of tea to sex) long after almost anyone had ceased speculating about them. Morrissey, as we have seen, theorized this evasiveness. Jimmy Somerville and his group Bronski Beat were a notable exception, performing out songs in an out manner and hitting the charts at the same time. The openly gay duo Romanovsky and Phillips became widely known and developed beyond their San Francisco folk beginnings with their second album, *Trouble in Paradise* (1986). Surprisingly, the moody balladeer Johnny Mathis, long an idol for soulful gay youths, came out in 1982 without much fuss.

V. Music and the AIDS/HIV crisis

The growing crisis over AIDS and HIV infection (from about 1981 on) which, because it initially targeted male homosexuals and intravenous drug users in Western societies, received at first little governmental attention, eventually spurred activism during the Reagan/Bush-Thatcher years. The artistic communities, which were particularly hard hit by this pandemic, were further targeted by repressive measures, such as Republican Party attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts in the USA and Section 28 of the British Local Government Act (1988), which forbade local authorities to fund or 'intentionally promote' homosexuality and state schools to teach it as 'a pretended family relationship'. Signal for the era, possibly, was the US Supreme Court's majority opinion in the notorious Bowers v. Hardwick case of 1986 that upheld Georgia's anti-sodomy laws and deemed 'frivolous' the claim of a right for consenting adults to engage in same-sex acts in private (see Sedgwick 1990: 6-7 and 74-82 for a cultural analysis of the case). The resulting wave of politicization of the arts produced in music a sense of community manifest in the numerous AIDS benefits and memorials of the late 1980s and early 1990s: for example, the huge Live Aid event at Wembley Stadium and later tribute to Freddie Mercury, one of the many casualties in popular music; the 1985 hit ('That's What Friends Are For') by Dionne Warwick and Elton John; concerts among classical music organizations; and a string of commemorative works. These included John Corigliano's Symphony Number One (1989) and a continuing, collectively produced AIDS Quilt Songbook (first performed at Alice Tully Hall in New York in June 1992) that alludes to the great quilt of the NAMES Project (a collective, international work of art numbering over 43,000 panels, to commemorate individually those who have died of AIDS). As much a work of protest as commemoration is Diamanda Galás's three-album project, begun in San Francisco in 1984 with the title *Masque of the Red Death* (after Edgar Allen Poe), eventually becoming the four-movement *Plague Mass* (as recorded in New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine in 1990). Mention should also be made of the songwriter and AIDS activist Michael Callen, a member of the openly gay a capella group, the Flirtations, who also issued a solo album in 1988; Holly Johnson of Frankie Goes to Hollywood and Brian Grillo of Extra Fancy both came out as openly gay and HIV positive. One of the earliest victims of the disease was German artist Klaus Nomi (deceased 6 August 1983), celebrated for his bizarre costumes, chameleon-like voice and unusual musical repertory; switching from earthy cabaret baritone to sinewy soprano falsetto, and juxtaposing pop songs with operatic arias, he is celebrated among gay people, especially in Europe, for his haunting soprano rendition of the 'Song of the Cold Genius' from Purcell's *King Arthur*.

A feature of the effect of AIDS and HIV in music was the re-use and reinterpretation of earlier music associated with gay consciousness. Two famous disco hits of the Village People, whose creator, Jacques Morali, died of AIDS in 1991, resurfaced allusively: 'Go West' as an AIDS anthem by the Pet Shop Boys, and 'YMCA' in a lugubrious 'classical-music' version for cello, voice and guitar with clarinet obbligato in the film *Longtime Companion* (1990). This hilarious arrangement, the opening number in a 'Living with AIDS' concert near the end of the film, achieves multiple meanings — mourning the recent dead (as well as the era of sexual freedom and its music) and encouraging sur-

vival through gay humour and irony. The first CD of Chrysalis's 'Red Hot' series promoting AIDS awareness and benefiting AIDS research and relief consisted of covers of Cole Porter by various artists in a context that gave new and poignant meaning to such songs as 'I've Got You Under My Skin': the record not only literally made 'gay music' of Porter's songs for the first time but also carried a warning to the listener against letting the music 'reinforce an overall sense of social abstraction'. Though lesbians and gays devised more radical forms of social protest during the same period (e.g. ACT-UP, Lesbian Avengers, OutRage! and Queer Nation), the adoption by liberal people in general of an issue strongly affecting the queer community marked a distinct change, and support was particularly strong in music and other artistic fields.

VI. Developments in the 1990s

This second wave of political action coincided with changes within musicology and criticism brought about by the belated impact of poststructural interdisciplinary ways of thinking. A phenomenon dubbed 'the new musicology' began a process of wresting absolute music from the ideology of universal values, transcendence and autonomy. It also heralded a more inclusive, as well as more firmly located, critical practice that refused to leave the category 'music' unmarked in the traditional manner, but embraced all musical phenomena and avoided meaningless comparisons between different genres and different cultural practices. There emerged around 1990 a group of lesbian and gay scholars and critics prepared to work on lesbian and gay topics with a set of procedures derived from feminist and poststructuralist critiques. Like the lesbian and gay musical organizations before them, this group also ignored the traditional genre boundaries. The founding in 1989 of the Gay and Lesbian Study Group (GLSG) of the American Musicological Society constituted a recognition of this phenomenon.

Among the effects was to throw into greater relief lesbian and gay composers of the post World War II era. No lesbian in music before or since Ethel Smyth had been as publicly committed to feminist activism or as candid about same-sex desire as Pauline Oliveros, who strongly represented her own lesbian feminism and community in the world of the American avant-garde from the 1960s onwards. The increasingly celebrated Lou Harrison had always been assertive of his gay identity. The death of John Cage in 1992 opened the way for long-delayed discussions of his partnership with Merce Cunningham and the radicalism that stopped short of declaring his sexuality. Important during the mid-nineties was the self-identifying of eleven gay male composers, Chester Biscardi, Conrad Cummings, Chris DeBlasio, Robert Helps, William Hibberd, Lee Hoiby, Jerry Hunt, Robert Maggio, Ned Rorem, David del Tredici and Lou Harrison, on a CRI recording entitled 'Gay American Composers' (1996), followed a year later by a disc devoted largely to an earlier generation of males — Barber, Blitzstein, Cage, Copland, Cowell, Harrison, Nikolais, Partch, Thomson, and Ben Weber — as well as one celebrating lesbian composers of the present day — Ruth E. Anderson, Eve Beglarian, Madelyn Byrne, Lori Freedman, Jennifer Higdon, Paula M. Kimper, Marilyn Lerner, Annea Lockwood, Linda Montano, Pauline Oliveros and Nurit Tilles. These names by no means exhaust possible resources: the music of Linda Dusman, a lesbian writer as well as composer, might also be included

here as well as that of Laura Karpman, a composer whose work has been largely in television; among gay male composers, their work featured strongly by choruses, are Byron Adams, Roger Bourland, David Conte, and Lee Ganon. Several mainstream recording companies, such as BMG, Teldec and RCA, had already issued recordings with titles like *Out Classics*, *Sensual Classics* and *Classical Erotica*, but what these principally illustrated was the increasing commodification of lesbian or gay desire and its commercial exploitation. Lesbian musicians and composers, in particular, have a tradition of not only remaining outside commercial and institutional networks but also of resisting all musical models, and the work of the composer Sorrel Hays (formerly recorded as pianist Doris Hays, she is a leading interpreter of Henry Cowell), as well as that of the performance artist and composer Meredith Monk, strongly maintains that tradition at a time when lesbian and gay artists were under increasing pressure to join the mainstream.

The gay presence in music during the 1990s was enhanced by such works as John Corigliano's *Of Rage and Remembrance*, a new version of the third movement of his Symphony Number One incorporating chorus and soloists, who sing a text by William Hoffman, librettist of *The Ghosts of Versailles*, and, in a startling application of chance technique, the names of personal friends they have lost to AIDS and wish to commemorate. *Harvey Milk*, an opera by Stewart Wallace and Michael Korie on the life and times of the gay activist assassinated in 1978, was not a critical success. But gay and lesbian opera, as represented, for example, by two successful premieres of 1998, Matthias Pintscher's *Thomas Chatterton* (Dresden) and Paula M. Kimper's *Patience and Sarah* (New York), became more viable as opera companies acknowledged the strength of lesbian and gay support.

In popular music, the 1990s also saw a reversal of the cautious approach of the 1980s and the emergence of openly lesbian musicians into the mainstream from the alternative space of women's music. The extraordinary singer-songwriter k. d. lang, who had earlier invaded the heterosexist field of country music with strongly woman-identified music, and as a result gained a lesbian following, came out decisively in 1992 (see Mockus in Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994). So did Melissa Etheridge and Indigo Girls, which gave lesbians clear representation in popular culture, consolidating, as it were, the sexually ambiguous representations of Tracy Chapman, Michelle Shocked and Madonna, as well as the out-lesbian images of Phranc and Two Nice Girls. The growth in women's punk bands, and the 'riot grrrl' phenomenon of the Pacific Northwest, meant that lesbians could also project a more aggressive image in music, as in the work of such groups as Tribe 8, Bikini Kill and Team Dresch (see Coulombe in Barkin and Hamessley eds 1998).

The previously ambivalent Neil Tennant of the Pet Shop Boys came out in 1994, Michael Stipe of R.E.M. (as bisexual) in 1995, and George Michael in 1998. So (in *The Advocate* 12 May 1998) did Rob Halford, famous for three decades as front man of the heavy metal group Judas Priest. He revealed how simple it had been to transfer the sometimes scary accoutrements of the gay leather world on to the metal stage without disturbing the primarily straight male audience. A knowing gay heavy-metal audience invested in super-masculinity had of course read/heard homoerotics in place of straight homosocial bonding all along (Walser 1993: 108-36). At the close of the century, numerous lesbian

and gay singers and queercore bands had a crossover popular following, or recorded on mainstream labels, including Ani diFranco, Echobelly, Janis Ian, Dan Martin (founder of OutMusic, an organization of lesbian and gay composers and lyricists) and Michael Biello, Mouth Almighty, Me'Shell NdegéOcello, Pansy Division, Linda Perry, Placebo, Queer Conscience, Lucy Ray, Skin, Debbie Smith, Suede, Skunk Anansie, and Sister George. The institution of the Gay/Lesbian American Music Awards (GLAMA) in 1996 did much to consolidate and encourage an already prolific field of endeavour.

By the end of the 1990s, then, an art-form, a scholarly discipline and a journalistic medium that had all set their faces rather sternly against the notion that deviant sexualities had anything to do with them, though the evidence to the contrary lay all around, suddenly found themselves with a modest inundation of 'queer' material — to use the term which, once a form of abuse, had been reclaimed around 1990 as an umbrella for the alliance of people of all unorthodox sexualities and those willing to associate with them.

VII. Divas and discos

The approach so far in this discussion has been along the traditional modernist lines of emphasizing production: the composer and, perhaps less so, the performer. An arguably better way of defining 'lesbian and gay music', and countering arguments about sexuality and gender's being 'inaudible in the notes themselves', is to invert that model and, invoking the 'politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating' (Haraway 1991: 196), to consider both the audience and particular venues as creating (if only by contingency and for the moment) a label for the music.

In answer to the question 'What is Gay Music?' posed by *Out* magazine (November 1996, pp 108-14) to a number of musicians and people in the music business, Peter Rauhofer said 'It's all about the diva effect, an attitude that gay people immediately identify with'. This statement has a certain appeal as a generalization across 20th century homosexual cultures in the West, including both lesbians and gay males. Among affluent males the diva effect tends to produce a devotion to sopranos (Joan Sutherland or Maria Callas, most notably, the latter being central to Terrence McNally's successful play, *The Lisbon Traviata*) and a subject position known as the Opera Queen, widely discussed and theorized (Bronski 1984, Koestenbaum 1993, Mordden 1984, Morris in Solie ed. 1993, Robinson 1994). Lesbian devotion may be equally intense, as instanced by the story of the young woman who committed suicide after being refused admission to Mary Garden's dressing room (Castle in Blackmer and Smith eds 1995: 25-26). It differs in attaching itself to dramatic sopranos, mezzo-sopranos or contraltos, especially if they are suspected of 'belonging' (like Garden) or if they cross-dress frequently in such roles as Orfeo, Octavian or the Poet in *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The tradition goes back beyond Garden (George Sand was 'mad' about Malibran, and both she and George Eliot found literary inspiration in the singing of Pauline Viardot-Garcia) and included among its celebrated divas Olive Fremstad, the famous butch Wagnerian soprano who is the heroine of Willa Cather's *The Song of the Lark* and of Marcia Davenport's *Of Lena Geyer* (Castle in Blackmer and Smith eds 1995, Wood in Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994).

The diva effect applies equally in popular music. If queer culture were religion, then Judy Garland would certainly be among its chief saints, its heaven 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' (a wish-fulfilling refuge from oppression), *The Wizard of Oz* a holy scripture, and 'Friend of Dorothy' the mantra of its votaries. Garland's daughter, Liza Minelli, who starred in *Cabaret*, the musical adaptation of Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories*, almost established an apostolic succession. Other notable divas might include Marlene Dietrich, Mae West, Edith Piaf, Zarah Leander (the deep-voiced diva of the German scene), Bette Midler (who began her career in a New York bathhouse), Barbra Streisand, and Madonna. Whether these idols experienced same-sex liaisons or not is beside the point: more crucial are certain characteristics portrayed in their singing, such as vulnerability (or actual suffering) mixed with defiance, to which many of their fans relate. The quality of their humour is also an important ingredient. Several of the women singers already mentioned, notably k. d. lang, exploit the diva effect, possibly without quite reaching (or wanting) the status of a Garden, Callas, Ferrier, or Garland.

The diva effect also has some hold upon exclusively straight audiences; when it does occur, it is often imbued with camp elements of excess and style associated with homosexuals. Liberace, for instance, appealed to a broad (but not gay or lesbian) audience by developing a canny mixture of sentimentalism and transvestism around his candelabra and piano. His repertory included musical as well as sartorial camp, for example, his inspired cross-dressing of Cole Porter's 'Night and Day' in the haute couture of Beethoven's 'Moonlight Sonata' (for a cultural appraisal see Kopelson 1996:139-85 and Garber 1992). His manipulation of the 'open secret' was more extreme than that of any number of less flamboyant but also closeted gay musicians: the openly flaunted markings of a hidden identity allowed those who adored him to use their adoration (and his and their mother-love) to bolster their own sense of difference and superiority.

Another notable sphere of queer interest and sponsorship has been the dance floor. Disco is maligned in many quarters, but dance-club life throughout Europe and the United States was transformed in the 1970s with the advent of Gloria Gaynor, Patti Labelle, the Pointer Sisters, Sister Sledge, Donna Summer, Sylvester, The Village People, the Weather Girls and dozens more, to whose fast-and-heavy beat, colourfully synthesized sounds and comforting sentiments gay men and sometimes lesbians gyrated and celebrated 'family' in safe queer spaces that were close to realizing for the physicalized and sometimes transcendent moment what opera and *The Wizard of Oz* could only begin to suggest. More localized and specialized forms, such as the even faster and louder House music of the 1980s, and later Acid and Techno, developed as Disco moved into the straight mainstream. In the 1990s gay dance music was strongly affected by the artistry of RuPaul, possibly the recording industry's most successful drag queen. Like rock and roll before them, Disco and House were heavily derived from black performing styles and sounds, the African-American diva from Grace Jones to RuPaul being as important here as in the opera house. They momentarily displaced racial tensions to create an idealized arena for queer identity to be performed (Currid 1995). Even to consider Disco a category of music is inadequate: it is 'also kinds of dancing, club, fashion, film, etc., in a word, a certain *sensibility*, manifest in music, clubs, etc., historically and culturally specific, ideologically and aesthetically determined — and worth thinking about' (Dyer 1992: 149). This is as close as can be to gay music,

one might think, yet its placing of queer performativity on the platform of black 'diva-inity' leads to a complicated play of identification, as Currid (1995) has shown.

Focus on a particular audience and its 'situated knowledge' may also undermine traditional critical arguments seeking to eradicate all identity in music save nationality. The *New York Times* review (by Paul Griffiths, 7 July 1998) of Kimper's opera and the CRI recording of the music of lesbian composers mentioned above, reaches the conclusion 'that sexual preference, as well as sex, is inaudible' and calls that conclusion 'inevitable'. The response immediately suggests itself, 'inaudible to whom'? Modernist criticism, anxious to check the proliferation of meaning and keep forms of authority and canons of taste in place, puts the onus of proof on 'the music itself'. But the notes cannot so easily be separated from their context (of performance, venue, genre and audience, as well as musical allusion): if stripped of all associations — an impossibility — they can yield no meaning.

In some few cases, such as the bizarre juxtapositions in Poulenc's instrumental music, a homosexual sensibility is clearly audible, but then only to someone who has some grasp of the aesthetics of that much-discussed but uneasily defined phenomenon known as 'camp'. Further, the orientalism or exoticism of a great range of 19th and 20th century music can be heard not simply as decorative acculturation but as an audible manifestation of some dissatisfaction with prevailing Western *mores*. More complicated musical strategies, such as the set of motivic and tonal interactions that signal the tragedy of internalized oppression in *Peter Grimes*, may be revealed as criticism involves itself more deeply and widely with such questions. Such markers, however, are possibly more prevalent in (closeted) homosexual culture in which classical music is so heavily implicated than in openly lesbian or gay music, such as Disco or the kinds of alternative women's music mentioned above. Here, context exerts so powerful an influence as to overthrow conventional associations: even the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, that quintessential model of heroic masculinity, met its gay destiny when, tricked out with a heavy beat and other accoutrements, it hit the Disco scene in the 1970s as 'A Fifth of Beethoven'.

> 'The identity of music is the sacred issue', Philip Bohlman explains (referring to McClary 1991): 'That women, working-class labourers, gays and lesbians, blacks, religious or ethnic communities, or anyone else should identify music in some other way or imagine music to embody completely different and differentiated cultural spaces, that becomes blasphemy against "what MUSIC is". Imagined in this way it may not be MUSIC anymore' (Bohlman 1993: 417).

Accordingly, an important strategy among lesbian and gay critics is to insist on the possibility and the importance of different receptions of all kinds of music, an insistence which can undermine any authority or objectivity criticism might claim for itself, and of destroying the essentializing or minoritizing drive to confine lesbian and gay music criticism to style analysis. Suzanne Cusick, in an extremely radical statement quite early in the movement's history (delivered at the first Feminist Theory and Music conference, 1991), insisted on, and explored, a special lesbian relationship to music itself (Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994). This gesture, going (in the gentlest manner) all the way, so to speak, prepared the ground for a good deal of critical work since (not all of it written by self-identifying lesbian, gay or bisexual critics, to complicate the picture even further) that refuses previous pro-

tocols in an effort to reach imaginative and varied views as to what kinds of phenomena might coexist as 'lesbian and gay — or queer — music' and how these might relate to whole sets of other positions, even the hegemonic one.

VIII. Anthropology and History

The discussion so far has pertained to the 20th century, to Europe, North America and their outposts, and has largely been confined to recent musical phenomena. 'Lesbian and Gay Music' is arguably confined to these specific times and places and even then needs greater inflection to describe exactly what was going on in those West German clubs, or to note that the Front d'Alliberament Gai de Catalunya (FAGC), founded in 1977, was more bound up with Catalonian independence and soulful Catalonian song than with American disco. Beyond the 'West' the dilemma becomes even more apparent. In non-Western musics, gender and sexual ambiguities and inversions, not to mention same-sex sexual practices, found in many cultures with different musics and different sexualities, have drawn the imagination of the West, with its attraction to and cultural fantasies about them. The symbolic inversions around the cross-dressed male 'talèdhèk' in Balinese song and dance; transsexual performance by spirit-guides or 'halaa' among Temiar people; the Hawai'in 'mahu' of indeterminate gender; or the Mapuche of the southern Andes: all these bear witness to the warning that 'gay, lesbian, bisexual, homosexual, heterosexual [...] conjure but a limited glimpse of the variations on gender that are beginning to emerge from cross-cultural research' and 'reduce the complexity of personhood to a handful of oppositions contrived by an ethnocentric discourse' (Robertson 1992).

Some of the musics of non-Western cultures became source material for homosexual Western composers cruising off-limits, but cannot be amalgamated with or subsumed under a Western category. Homosexual or pederastic composers from Saint-Saëns onwards were at one time particularly susceptible to the attractions of Orientalism, perhaps because of the projection of illicit sex discerned by Said's critique (1978), perhaps, as Lou Harrison has suggested, because of an identification with the Other, or even (as in the case of Cage) because of dissatisfaction with available resources: this topic remains problematic and interesting in relation to lesbian and gay music. But since orientalism in music at the turn of the present century is represented most strongly by non-gay minimalism, no essentialist link ought to be imagined. Interestingly, Ethnomusicology has been even more nervous of categories of sexual behaviour manifest in music than has historical musicology.

Given that sexuality itself is a modern invention, a long history of homosexuality in music is an impossibility. There is room, however, to explore how same-sex sexual or erotic relations are regarded in different times and places and how the social experience of being involved in them might affect musical utterance: 'it will be history written from the perspective of contemporary gay interests' (Halperin 1990: 29) asking questions never posed during musicology's long love-affair with straight fact. An example might be the placing of Hildegard of Bingen's lyrical effusions in a context of the medieval eroticization of the body focussed (in her case) on same-sex desire. Pointing out 'how insistently "queer" medieval Christianity can be', Holsinger (1993: 120) suggests that 'rather than looking for

"actual" lesbians and gay men in the Middle Ages, why not try outing medieval devotion itself?' Turning to organum, he explores the writings that constantly represent polyphonic practice in corporeal terms as 'coupling' (*copula*), and in relational terms as the product of their male singers. Such rhetoric, he suggests, not only explains the constant link between sodomy and polyphony in the puritan tradition, but uncovers a queerness at the very heart of organum that is also represented in some homoerotic verses of its leading composer, Leoninus (Holsinger 2001, chapter 4). Ironically, then, the polyphony and harmony that differentiate Western music most notably from that of other cultures was from the start connected to same-sex desire, and 'art music' originally fell into disrepute through roughly the same association that it has been trying so hard to avoid in the 20th century.

There seem few enough clues at present about how the frequent accusation of sodomy against musicians of the late medieval and early modern periods should play into a notion of the music they produced. It is not known whether composers like Nicolas Gombert, Dominique Phinot, Tiburzio Massaino, Johann Rosenmüller and Jean-Baptiste Lully shared anything but shame for their sexual desires, and whether even that affected their composition. The first four undoubtedly suffered, Gombert serving a three-year stint in the galleys, Phinot being executed (his body was burnt), Massaino going into exile, and Rosenmüller being imprisoned together with the schoolboys involved. A canon at Loreto, Luigi Fontino, was beheaded in 1570 for sodomy with a choirboy (Sherr 1991); and it has been suggested that Gombert's first book of motets (1539) may have been assembled as an apologia with a view to gaining him a pardon (Lewis 1994: 333-67). Lully, on the other hand, made a fortune and founded an operatic tradition, apparently undamaged by attacks on 'les sodomites' at court, that culminated for him in the removal from his house of the page, Brunet, whom he was suspected of sodomizing. Moreover, since the librettist Campistron was a member of the sodomitical court circle, Lully's last two stage works, *Acis et Galatée* (1686) and *Achille et Polyxène* (1687), may represent the earliest known 'gay collaboration'.

If Lully's case is well documented, particularly in ribald contemporary comments, recent speculation about Zelenka — 'a mad, gloomy homosexual whose music is also mostly mad and gloomy' (R. Morrison, *The Times*, 17 June 1998) — appears to derive solely from a structural and semantic analysis of the Czech composer's trio sonatas (Reich 1987). No evidence concerning Zelenka's sexuality or sexual practices survives; he remained unmarried and was a solitary and unassuming figure, seen by some contemporaries as a reserved, even bigoted, Catholic. It is one thing to infer a musician's participation in same-sex culture and to examine ideological traces of homophobia in the scholarly and critical literature that result from the musician's status as a 'suspect' (as with Thomas's essay on Handel in Brett, Wood and Thomas eds 1994), but quite another for same-sex desire to be discerned internally and then used to make a lesser-known composer of the period appear deviant and exciting and his music therefore more marketable. The heady mixture of Catholicism and homoeroticism on which this new Zelenka image trades belongs rather to the late 19th century, as exemplified in the decadent movement and such key figures as J.-K. Huysmans, Walter Pater, and Oscar Wilde (see Hanson 1997), than to the early 18th century.

Very different from this case is the increasing number of examinations of works for cultural traces that are writ large in the surrounding societal context, or identity-based critical interpretations enriched with a sense of the history of culture. Work on communities of nuns and on the many women composers of Italy, for instance, has prompted questions about how early modern religious eroticism might reflect an erotics of these suppressed voices, and has invited lesbian interpretations of the work of the many religious women who exhibit extravagant devotion to the Virgin Mary. Recent work (by Cusick) on Francesca Caccini also shows how a feminist and specifically lesbian approach can enliven and illumine the discussion of historical issues around music and the patriarchy. In view of the various inflections of the Orpheus legend, too, significance has been read into the fact that in the Monteverdi-Striggio *Orfeo* the male singer loses his female lover only to ascend to heaven in the arms of another man. Whether or not Handel slept with other men, the revelations about the circles in which he moved — and exactly how his modern biographers articulate their anxiety about the possibility he might have done so — makes Thomas's essay a salutary contribution to Handel scholarship. The castrated male who is the central figure of every opera seria in Handel's time not only complicated questions of gender and sexuality but also embodied the threat represented by the music itself: these 'Italian Syrens' are compared by the anonymous author of *Satan's Harvest Home* (1749) to the 'Chromatic Musick' of ancient Greece and the 'Women Singers and Eunuchs from Asia' by whose agency, apparently, the ancient Romans 'quite lost the Spirit of Manhood, and with it their Empire'. Italy was 'the Mother and Nurse of Sodomy' where 'not a Cardinal or Churchman of Note but has his Ganymede' (pp 51 and 56). In North Germany an Italian castrato was not needed to sound the anti-effeminate alarm: mere minuets in symphonies seemed to J. A. Hiller 'like beauty spots on the face of a man: they give the music a foppish appearance, and weaken the manly impression made by the [...] serious movements' (Head 1995).

A lesbian and gay discourse about music will undoubtedly wish to do even more in the way of exhuming those musicians identified with same-sex desire. But there are equally important issues to be addressed. Attention has been drawn to the homophobia in traditional musical scholarship. Whether it be the horror of the prospect of a deviant Handel or Schubert, the assumption that their sexuality makes Ravel, say, or Britten, the victims of 'that fatally aimless cleverness which is a symptom of decadence' (*Grove*, 6th ed., v 15, p 617), the invention of an 'artistic persona' (following literary New Criticism) to evacuate the connection between the life of a lesbian or gay artist and her/his work of all meaning, or the recent movement to import from literary criticism Harold Bloom's theory of the 'anxiety of influence' with its assumption that male relations are always fraught with contention rather than love (Whitesell 1994-95), an opposing or context-providing protest has to be registered, often over and over again. Alternative procedures need to be followed that do not leave homosexuality lying unregistered in the clothes of the open secret as mere decadence or a taste for elaboration. Inevitably part of the focus will be questions of artistic collaboration (such as that between Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein, Britten and Pears), sponsorship (by the Paris salon and circle of the Princesse de Polignac, for example, including the legendary Nadia Boulanger, and in American music around Bernstein, Copland, Menotti and Barber), and even the effect on heterosexually-identified

composers of being liberated by a circle consisting largely of homosexuals and their culture, as was Stravinsky by the *Mir iskusstva* ('World of Art') group around Diaghilev, or of their music becoming the centre of a homosexual cult, as Wagner's appears to have become in Germany.

The greater challenge for a lesbian and gay approach is undoubtedly the German canon in art music and its satellites. Composers like Handel and Schubert, even the effeminized Chopin, are still assumed to be stable entities, and scholarship about them continues to assume the default position of sexual orientation until such time as documentation is discovered that equals Casanova's bursting in on Winckelmann while the distinguished classical scholar was putting Greek Love to the practical test in his Rome apartment. The literature about these bachelor composers reveals, however, a constant embarrassment or evasion that supports the point about an ingrained homophobia in music scholarship. Furthermore, since sexual orthodoxy can never be assumed, especially among musicians, the constant parade of heroism and masculinity in the repertory from Beethoven to Strauss, and its representation in criticism and scholarship, begins to look more and more like a ruse to divert attention from an endemic queerness so firmly repressed that even to suggest it is an unpardonable error of taste and judgment (as in the cases of Beethoven, Schumann, and Brahms).

More nuanced studies of the circumstances of all these composers may link them to patterns of same-sex love or desire that have been discerned among the literary figures of the age of sensibility and of Romanticism. That these patterns did not always or inevitably include sexual acts in no way lessens their intensity or importance. Reception of their music from a lesbian or gay standpoint (e.g. Cusick 1994b, Brett 1994, Wood 2000) should broaden the range of criticism across the entire historical spectrum, throw new light on the meanings people attach to the music they identify with, and help to open the way toward new conversations about the power of music of various kinds in peoples' lives.

Finally, arriving full circle at the sexological discourse with which the article opened, we encounter the figure of Pyotr Ill'yich Tchaikovsky (1840-93), Western music's first and still most celebrated 'homosexual'. As early as 1908 he was called the one 'thorough-going Uranian' to attain 'to the highest eminence in the art' (Carpenter 1908: 111). Other candidates might have been found: his fellow countryman, Modest Musorgsky (1839-81), for instance, or his friend Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921); but the one was a symbol of nationalism (and therefore difference) and the other not a tremendous threat to German hegemony (besides, he firmly resisted the new-fangled *homosexuel* in favour of the traditional label *pédéraste*). Tchaikovsky was without peer in reaching a German level of technique and formal command, even exceeding the celebrated German composers in popularity with concert audiences. His manifest deviance enabled critics so minded to keep the German symphonists themselves untainted and spotless. It is worth noting, in the light of some of the criticism that has linked Tchaikovsky's supposed sentimentality, morbidity and lack of formal values with his sexuality, that his concert music was initially heard as 'free from the frightful effeminacy of most modern works' (Bernard Shaw) and as 'impersonal' and containing 'glimpses of the strong man's hand' (Ernest Newman, see Brown 1999). Once the penny dropped about the composer's failed marriage

and other obvious pointers to his condition given by his brother Modest in a monumental biography made available by Newmarch's condensed translation of 1905, the critical abuse, stemming from a direct connection of the works to the life uncharacteristic of high modernist dogma, constitutes a clear case of institutionalized bigotry; it ran from 'quite like a schoolgirl' and 'truly pathological' to 'must we be shown all his sores?', and the perpetrators were not obscure but critics like Gerald Abraham, Martin Cooper, James Huneker and Edward Lockspeiser (Brown, ibid.).

At the end of the century, Tchaikovsky remained the bellwether of attitudes to homosexuality in music. In novels, plays, films and other representations in dominant culture, the homosexual always dies, and it is significant that a fierce controversy has developed around the death of Tchaikovsky. An entire scholarly monograph has been devoted to the topic (Poznansky 1996). The rumour and gossip upon which homosexuals have had to depend to construct our history are everywhere apparent in this saga, which includes suicide at the direction of Tsar Alexander III, suicide on his own volition to avoid a homosexual scandal, suicide at the suggestion of his gay brother Modest and, most recently, suicide at the direction of some former classmates worried to death about the honour of the old school. Nor is it clear which version, the 'official' account of typhoid in the biography of Modest or one of the rumours, is the more homophobic. The myth of the tortured, morbid homosexual taking his own shameful life is one kind of essentialist stereotype, but the 'gay-positive' image of a homosexual composer of this period experiencing no tensions about his sexuality is equally essentialist and unrealistic. Still, the very idea of a successful, wealthy, world-honoured composer at the height of his powers and productivity committing suicide at the direction of some lawyer bullies he knew from his schooldays makes little sense, not even as sado-masochistic pornographic fiction. Yet the myths and projections are so abundant that the truth is unlikely to be revealed, even to a biographer of the British Royal Family, one of the more recent to tackle the topic (Holden 1995).

A lesbian or gay approach to Tchaikovsky's life would most likely focus on his lively aspects, and the difference he made to the fields of concert music, opera and ballet. For instance, Matthew Bourne's remarkable reinterpretation of *Swan Lake* (1995), in which a tightly feathered male corps replaced the swans in tutus and the love music became the occasion for breathtakingly homoerotic spectacle, attained for some an authenticity beyond anything imagined by historically informed performing practice. It would also consider evidence for the complicated layering of transgression and compliance that resulted from the construction of homosexuality as a role or identity, as well as for points of resistance, such as the entire ballet Tchaikovsky and Saint-Saëns danced for each other during the latter's visit to Moscow for a concert in December 1875.

> As young men, both had not only been very attracted to the ballet, but had also some natural skill for that sort of dancing. And so once, wishing to show off their art to each other, they performed on the stage of the Conservatoire's hall an entire little ballet, *Galatea and Pygmalion*. The 40-year-old Saint-Saëns was Galatea, and performed the rôle of the statue with remarkable assiduity, and the 35-year-old Tchaikovsky took upon himself the part of Pygmalion. Nikolay Rubinstein [the pianist who had played the French composer's two-piano Variations with him in the Moscow concert] provided the orchestra (M. Tchaikovsky, translation in Brown 1982).

A couple of middle-aged queens, one in drag, camping it up on the main stage of the Moscow Conservatory? Not simply that, because, according to Modest, they were showing off their art to each other (those pliés, those jétés!). And there were no witnesses other than the hapless pianist. Their performance epitomizes the social predicament of homosexual musicians throughout the ensuing century: two composers, celebrated throughout Europe, occupying a central site, the stage of the Moscow Conservatory, to enact a closet drama; private delight cannot have been unmixed on that occasion, as on so many others in so many other lives, with the apprehension of disclosure.

Such tensions of the human spirit brought about by the forces of oppression and the counterforces it also generates are much in need of deciphering in order to make greater sense of social and musical experience, both then and now. By focussing on such matters, a gay and lesbian perspective has the means to expand the entire critical and historical enterprise.

IX. Acknowledgements

We wish to thank many people for their help, in particular Byron Adams, John Beynon, Malcolm Hamrick Brown, Susan Leigh Foster, Bruce Holsinger, George Haggerty, Nadine Hubbs, Patrick Macey, Martha Mockus, Davitt Moroney, Mitchell Morris, Gillian Rodger, Carole-Anne Tyler, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Lloyd Whitesell and Daniel J. Wolf.

X. Editor's notes

1 See the article 'How Music Got its *Grove* Back", in the *Independent*, 30 December 2000:

> The big threat now, of course, is from the PC thought-police. One of Sadie's innovations is a series of articles on attitudes and ideologies: no problem with Nazism or Marxism, or with nationalism — on which the formidable Richard Taruskin pontificates — but the discussion of homosexuality gave a lot of problems. Sadie has an article on gay and lesbian music, whose authors — a male Brit and an Australian female — initially wanted it billed as 'lesbian and gay music'.
>
> 'I said no to that, and I also suggested that "gay" covered both sexes, but they said no to that. In fact, I said no to quite a lot of things. They wanted to list gay and lesbian composers, and I said you can't do that without specific permission if they're alive, and I didn't like it being done if they were dead.' He pours scorn on the sexual fellow-travellers who now claim Schubert as gay. 'The evidence is non-existent, but you can't say that in America without being branded a homophobe.' (*Op. cit.*)

The full article is available online at http://www.independent.co.uk/story.jsp?story=48198 .

2 Excerpt taken from the 1956 film with Shirley Jones.

3 Excerpt taken from Tom Robinson's humorous version.

4 Excerpt taken from a 1958 live recording with Cliff Richard.

5 Excerpt taken from a 2 May 1970 Pittsburgh show.

6 Excerpt taken from an acoustic live performance.

XI. Discography

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Separata da Revista Eletrônica de Musicologia
Curitiba: UFPR, Volume VII – Dezembro de 2002
www.humanas.ufpr.br/rem/REMv7/Brett_Wood/Brett_and_Wood.html