UNCANNY TIMING: HISTORICAL TOPOI, TEMPORAL DRAG, AND QUEER WORLD-

MAKING IN SOUND

by

CYRIL J. KOMP

(Under the Direction of Susan R. Thomas)

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I propose a framework of queer temporalities in music scholarship. In four contrasting chapters exemplifying its application, I explore musical time travel between the past and the present. I consider Benjamin Britten's unconventional neoclassical style, using his *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* as a case study. Next, I explore a lesser-known history of EDM and its early practitioners, exposing EDM as a style of music that has had a queer temporality from its inception. I follow the style's continuity in the work of 21st-century Belgian EDM artist, Stromae (Paul van Haver). His deliberate referencing of the past sometimes functions as parody, sometimes as homage, and sometimes as temporal drag. While he has found a significant measure of commercial success in his sound creations, when Stromae does invoke past styles and texts, the effect challenges something about present society. Finally, I consider the expressive potential of the queer performative arts scene in Athens, GA. Diving into the history of Georgia's longest running drag show, I contemplate the motivations behind Boybutante's rise and meanings generated in iterative themed drag balls. Athens' multiple amateur drag troupes parody events, cultural figures, and ideas from the past in their sets, creating a clever, multi-layered commentary.

What distinguishes my analysis from a simple investigation into an artist's use of classic techniques is my focus on the affect and meanings generated by a performative engagement with

multiple temporalities. The artists and texts that I focused on all employ references to the past to question something about present norms, rather than connect to a lineage or tradition. I consider how performers, composers, and artists *queer*, or challenge present norms of social organization and offer visions of a time and place when queer diversity is freely expressed.

INDEX WORDS: Queer Musicology; Queer Theories; Temporalities; Benjamin Britten; EDM; Stromae; Drag

UNCANNY TIMING: HISTORICAL TOPOI, TEMPORAL DRAG, AND QUEER WORLD-

MAKING IN SOUND

by

CYRIL J. KOMP

BM, Florida State University, 2011

MA, University of Georgia, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2023

UNCANNY TIMING: HISTORICAL TOPOI, TEMPORAL DRAG, AND QUEER WORLD-

MAKING IN SOUND

by

CYRIL J. KOMP

Major Professor:	Susan R. Thomas
Committee:	Adrian P. Childs
	Jean N. Kidula
	Peter Van Zandt Lane

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2023

DEDICATION

To Becca.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

ON QUEER TIMING IN MUSIC

> "That's gay!"
> - Students at the University of Georgia, 2014-2018

I heard this phrase uttered multiple times over the course of my graduate work and teaching in music. During that time, I have come to understand that rather than explicitly being about sexual identity, the phrase "that's gay" has had something do to with the temporalities of music and perception. I came to realize students often used the epithet to denote music whose style or performative practice kept it from feeling current.

I first heard the words expressed in connection to music by a group of young men in a History of Popular Music class (for non-music majors) when met with the sound of old-school hip hop from the 1980s. Despite hip-hop's history of being born of anger and protest, these students did not perceive the sound as hard-hitting or masculine in the same way they might regard the sounds of ATL trap. For these 18–20-year-old students in 2014, the sounds of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five indexed something passé, something *out* of the current time. The students' reaction to 80's hip hop was not due to a lack of familiarity with the music. Rather, their reaction was influenced by the weight of new meanings from the changing contexts in which they encountered the same music. Heard in memes, commercials, cartoons, and sitcoms, these iterations eclipsed the significance of the musical style's origins. Sounding dated means sounding eccentric and outside of the current codes of cool.

I heard the same epithet expressed again from a group of students after a History of Western Music class (for music majors) when observing a reenactment of dance "hits" of 17th-century France. The filmed performance provided a view into the gendered courtship norms of another time and something in the Baroque *menuet*'s sensuality struck a group of brass players as

unsettling leading to their vocal protest. The offended students appeared to hear the musical gestures and observe the gendered choreographed movements through a contemporary lens. In this moment, the visual signs of heels, tight pants, wigs, and graceful hand movements accompanying an intimate trio of softly timbred instruments all together read as queer. In this case, it didn't matter that the 17th-century dance was a courtly expression of interest between a man and woman. The sensuality in offering first the right hand, then left, veiled immense sexual tension between dancers of gendered roles was, in that classroom, still perceived as queer. I found that the cultural meaning of the sound had changed and this deviation from contemporary norms made students uncomfortable. They saw performances of gendered roles from another time as performing gender incorrectly according to contemporary Western norms. In both above cases, sounding dated was indexical to sounding queer.

In this dissertation, I explore what music means to people of different social groups when it sounds outside of its time. Further, I consider how deliberately sounding outside of the aesthetic norms of a particular moment can propose new ways of being. I ask, what are the sonic markers of temporality and what musical signs and contexts are involved when listeners find themselves questioning social norms of the past or present? How does one perform out-of-time? In order to prepare us to analyze these questions, this introduction is intended to provide the reader with a theoretical apparatus for understanding queer temporalities in music. By weaving together studies on time, music, and queer studies, I call for the recognition of a new musicological subfield that will allow us to think deeply about social roles, sound, and time.

Time is a familiar concept in Western music performance and pedagogy, but one that usually remains unquestioned. Western norms consider well-constructed music to unfold linearly, having a clear beginning, middle, and conclusion. We tend to think in similarly linear fashion about the teleology of musical ideas and the historiography of styles and composers. Musical norms reflect larger unquestioned concepts of time, including that time moves only forward, at a constant pace; that the current structure of things is natural and inevitable and that there is only

one future or present possible. Recognizing the social and rhetorical power of teleological notions

of time, Elizabeth Freeman coined the term "chrononormativity" for unquestioned assumptions of

"causality, sequence, [and] forward-moving agency."[1] However, a chronormative conception of

time has not been the only way that time has been viewed throughout history. As I will show

below, our modern understanding of time as a straight and constant vector and the temporal

organization of our days are also constructions of our time. I explore the ways that overt musical

and sonic engagement with temporality – whether the past, the present, or the future—is invested

with queer potential. In what follows, I unpack the meanings of the word queer, especially its

possible function as an adjective and a verb. I consider many ways queer temporalities has been

explored in recent scholarship and develop a theoretical approach to understanding queer timing

in music. This introduction prepares readers to think about the social significance of time. I

develop a theoretical apparatus for understanding the temporalities of gendered and racialized

social roles, especially as they are expressed sonically.

QUEER MEANINGS

Freya Jarman uses the word "queer" as a verb to mean "gestures that dramatize

incoherencies in an already tenuous set of links,"[2] particularly the links between gender (a social

role), sex (biologically determined), and sexuality (expressions of desire). I expand on Jarman's

understanding of the word to question how queer musical and choreographic gestures play with

time to challenge taken-for-granted notions about current norms and how time, itself, works.

My understanding of queer as a verb represents an anti-essentialist questioning of the

ways we organize socially. I want to distinguish this inquiry from identity labels because my

inquiry is not solely about what box someone selects regarding identity. While I do examine the

---

[1] Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 64.
[2] Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*, Critical Studies in Gender, Sexuality, and Culture, edited by Patricia T. Clough and R. Danielle Egan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 17.

creative works of individuals that might identify as LGBTQ today, I am especially interested in what their work does. The pitfalls of reading biography into a composer's oeuvre has been explored as a troubling approach unevenly applied to composers suspected to be queer.[3] I am not in search of a queer chord or queer composition as much as I am looking for how music *queers*, or questions, what *modi operandi* are assumed to be correct or true. In my adaptation of Freya Jarman's understanding of the word "as a verb, 'to queer' suggests a process, and one of upsetting, making strange, unsettling...suggest[ing] this in multiple languages through its connection with the act of questioning and of enquiry."[4] Queer musical gestures question and "dramatize incoherencies*"* in ways that "brin[g] the precarious nature of the [sonic gestures and their meanings] to the foreground."[5] Returning to the two examples in my introduction, a queer lens foregrounds the precarious relations between expressions of masculinity or femininity, a sexed body, and the lexicon of visual or sonic signs the members of a particular group use to express belonging in that group.

What musical or visual signs hold relevance or social value in a marketplace of signs speaks to what trends hold dominance and how boundaries of group membership are policed at any given moment. In my examples at the start of this chapter, introducing the element of time destabilized or questioned the veracity of a universal or biologically-determined social role. Being read as *out* of the current time comes "with all the associations that the word *'drag'* has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past on the present."[6] The evocation of other times and places *queers* or questions the veracity of the present.

---

[3] Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 1994), 9-26.

[4] Freya Jarman traces the etymology of "queer" to the German "*quer*" – "transverse, oblique, crosswise," and the middle French "*querir*" – "to seek, to ask, to inquire." *Queer Voices*, 15-16.

[5] Ibid., 17.

[6] Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," in *Time Binds,* 62.

I turn to questions of time because these inquiries respond more fully to the contradictions among the fields of study I call my home disciplines: Musicology, Women's Studies, and LGBTQ Studies. Because I consider how meanings change over time, these are not just questions about what it is to self-identify as LGBT, but rather how a performer or composer *queers*, or performs "gestures that *dramatize incoherencies* in an already tenuous" link between action, sound and meaning.[7] There is a danger in oversimplifying identity in ways that erase time, a renewed form of essentialism.[8] I hope to avoid these pitfalls by revealing how socially-performed identities work in the context of their own times and how social identities have histories. Even as I do this, I question what ways the past is very much active in the choreographies of the present.[9] Thinking about queer temporalities, for me, means bringing the contradictory voices of feminist theory and queer theory into conversation. Where the former has argued for an epistemic vantage from one's positionality, subjectivity, or difference,[10] the latter sought instead to deconstruct rigid categories and argue from a "view from nowhere" that any notion of an original was "always-already lost."[11] Rather than attempt to smooth out the wrinkles of what may seem to be an epistemological crisis, I take these problems as the start of my inquiries. Doing so requires a kind of "scavenger methodology …[which] uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally

---

[7] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices,* 17.

[8] This is not to undermine the importance of a sometimes very timely performance of strategic essentialism, such as spoken word performed by marginalized individuals as an inherently political act. I am speaking here, rather, to a troubling scholarly trend to read the structures of frameworks designed to highlight disparity onto *real* bodies and lives and groups in ways that erase their complexities of being, or even more dangerously, read causality of difference into some essential characteristic of their personhood.

[9] As, for instance, Angela Hall has spoken, connecting the violent lynching of Black women in the U.S., and the erasure of this history, to present day state violence against Black women. Angela Hall, "Dismembered and Forgotten Bodies: The Lynching of Black Women," *Friday Speaker Series*, Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia (March 29, 2019).

[10] I want to avoid the purely negative critique of past "waves," or the Oedipal tendency for a newer theory to "kill" what came before it by asking what values and ideas are gained from each perspective, as Rosemarie Tong has described in the conclusion to her anthology of feminist theories. Rosemarie Tong, "Conclusion: Standpoints and Differences," in *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 235.

[11] Adam Isaiah Green, "Queer Theory and Sociology," *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 1 (March 2007): 27.

excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour."[12] My scavenger method is queer in its approach in that it refuses the confines of one discipline or framework, finding space for once-excluded knowledges *while* questioning the structures that rendered them invisible.

LITERATURE ON QUEER TEMPORALITIES

Medieval literary scholar Carolyn Dinshaw opens her pivotal text *How Soon is Now?* with music, using sound as an introduction to yearning for other relationships to time, expressions "so acute that the possibility of a common present is ruptured."[13] In this dissertation, I consider how sounding the future or giving voice to the past troubles the notion of a single possible present. Doing so opens conceptual space for other modes of existing than what is more obviously visible. Studies of queer time now exist across many disciplines; there is not one singular book, nor is there yet a canon. As with The Smith's titular song, "How Soon is Now,"[14] these studies are interdisciplinary, intertextual, and concerned with both scholarly and pop cultural references to a queer past, and possible future. I use these texts to aid my search for the musical moments and voices that similarly express desire for other pasts, presents, and futures.

Queer temporalities is indebted to the work of Black academics, fiction writers, poets, musicians, and artists who have been suggesting for decades that we may need to think differently about time, historical narratives, and the future. Scholars and musicians (not mutually exclusive titles) have considered the ways that Black memory of the U.S. pre-emancipation lives in song, even where it is less-often preserved in written form or artifact.[15] Because the motion of learning by ear and matching in voice involves such an embodied knowledge, the affect of the past is in

---

[12] J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.

[13] Dinshaw discussing "How Soon is Now," by The Smiths in Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 3.

[14] By intertextual, I refer to the numerous literary and historical references throughout their songs, such as nods queer English writers, that then take on extra meaning in the context of multiple references and poetic lyrics: The Smiths, "How Soon is Now?" *Meat is Murder* (Rough Trade, 1985).

[15] Bernice Johnson Reagon describes the passing down of musical knowledge through primarily oral traditions link her (a few generations removed from slavery) to Roland Hayes, the concert tenor who created space for the spiritual on stage (one generation removed), to their ancestors who lived and survived while enslaved. Bernice Johnson Reagon, *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 69-70.

some ways carried into the present.[16] Black music styles of the 20th-century, likewise, told a

richer history through repetition in performance. The blues and jazz, and all their related

branches, developed not from rigid, notated musical forms but were iterative, always becoming.[17]

Musicians from Parliament Funkadelic, Sun Ra, Nina Simone, Abbey Lincoln to Lauren Hill,

Erykah Badu and Janelle Monae, to name just a few, bend space and time through their musical

iterations of past and envisioning of possible futures.[18] Black writers of historical and speculative

fiction have also imagined the ways that the past continues to haunt the present.[19] Black fantasy

and Afrofuturist writers have worked to envision futures in which Black populations not only

exist but are normal parts, sometimes one of the few normalities, of the fabric of the story.[20] For

Afrofuturist writers like N. K. Jemisin, the fictional writings and the essays, developed in

response to historically discriminatory genres, expose the limited perspectives underlying many

canonic fantasy and sci-fi works, works which seem to rewrite both Medieval history and

---

[16] Dr. Bernice Reagon further connects past and present through sonic archives and repertoires of civil rights activism, anthologies of compositions dedicated to civil rights activists of the past, as well as her scholarship and repertoires of performing in the context of the SNCC Freedom Singers, and their demonstrations in Albany, Georgia that found many participants jailed. William C. Banfield, "The Music Kept Us from Being Paralyzed: A Talk with Bernice Johnson Reagon" in *Black Notes: Essays of a Musician Writing in a Post-Album Age* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

[17] I offer, for example, the "changes" of jazz chord progressions are flexible and yet scripted, fluid and cyclical, referent to music of the past and looking to future through adaptability of improvisation.

[18] N.K Jemison mentions Funkadelic and Sun Ra as early inspirations, and coins "Monaeism" for the artist's Afrofuturist audio visual texts that challenge Jemison to imagine herself in future-scapes. N.K. Jemisin, "How Long 'Til Black Future Month?" (Sept. 30, 2013) https://nkjemisin.com/2013/09/how-long-til-black-future-month/ (Accessed April 1, 2023).

See also: Daphne A. Brooks, "'Bring the Pain': Post-soul Memory, Neo-soul Affect, and Lauren Hill in the Black Public Sphere," in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 182-203.

Aida Mbowa, "Abbey Lincoln's Screaming Singing and the Sonic Liberatory Potential Thereafter," in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 135-154.

And J. Brendan Shaw, "'I don't wanna time travel no mo': Race, Gender, and the Politics of Replacement in Erykah Badu's 'Window Seat.'" *Feminist Formations* 27, no. 2 (2015): 46-69.

[19] For example, see the haunting novels by Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (1979); Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (1987); and the William Bolcom song cycle with Sandra Seaton, playwright, *From the Diaries of Sally Hemings* (2001).

[20] I am thinking of: Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower (*1993), *Parable of Talents* (1998), and *Wild Seed* (1980); and N.K. Jemisin, *How Long 'Til Black Future Month* (2018).

humanity's future to be devoid of people of color.[21] For Afrofuturist arts movements, the focus is not solely on the future of our present day, but also speculation of alternative present days had Black communities been allowed to flourish.[22]

What follows is an extensive literature review that I had to undertake simply because the literature is multi-thematic and scattered across disciplines. While I won't be able to include everything, the study of these texts informed my process. The various approaches to temporality I have found fall into the following subcategories, explained in more detail across the next several pages:

Table 1.1: Table of contents for literature review

Defining Time	9
Historical Narratives and Writing History	11
Queering the Archives	15
Performing Memory and Repertoire	20
Otherworldly Voices, Ghostly Sounds	24
Affecting Time	27
Queer Life Cycles and Genealogies	31

Queer temporal texts challenge me to think about time in many ways: from how our historical narratives are constructed and *interested* to how knowledge is archived and retrieved. These texts challenge me to think about how musical performances and works play on ideas of the past. Such scholarship inspires me to consider how references to other worlds, realities, and futures offer alternatives to what structures or practices dominate the present. I am brought to envision how queer performances might unfold over a different timeline than a linear one. Might

---

[21] N.K. Jemisin, "How Long 'Til Black Future Month?" (Sept. 30, 2013) https://nkjemisin.com/2013/09/how-long-til-black-future-month/ (Accessed April 1, 2023).
[22] Ian Alteveer, Hannah Beachler, and Sarah Lawrence, Introduction, with an essay by Michelle D. Commander and a graphic novella by John Jennings, "Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (Winter, 2022).

the use iterative or cyclical performances disrupt established geographies of power, such as the

mapping of venues in a city's downtown? I consider how such disruptions to normative logics of

time might help construct an epistemology of those rendered less visible. Finally, these forays

raise larger questions about the valuing of life progress and timelines. I wonder how deadlines

and "stages" represent taken-for-granted demarcations of time in the life of a composer,

performer, or musicologist? Additionally, I explore how genealogies of sound and chosen family

develop subaltern music scenes. I consider how a queer orientation can be about a whole different

way of relating to the world, our communities, and each other.

Defining Time

The act of defining time and tracing historical definitions of time opens up the dimension

to scrutiny: that it might not be as constant or universally experienced as we think. Some of the

earliest definitions come from Aristotle who describes time as "a number of change [sic] in

respect of the before and after."[23] Dinshaw juxtaposes time as it is described in ancient

philosophy with modern conceptions, in order to highlight incongruencies between the two. She

states that what Michel Serres labeled as "classical time" is actually a modern label for time that

is "linear, laminar, [and] measurably constant."[24] In contrast, early philosophies on time propose

different logics than those of the modern Western clock, as reflected in Aristotle's writings that

"when we do not perceive some mutation, time is not thought of."[25] Such early conceptions were

more focused on how humans experience the passage of time, than how to precisely subdivide

years and days into even and universal units.

According to Carolyn Dinshaw, ancient definitions of time reveal a paradox in

"Aristotle's discussion of time as a measurement of change" and "that 'our everyday experience of

time...is not linear at all.'"[26] Dinshaw organizes her monograph from this ancient discourse,

---

[23] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, 8.
[24] Ibid., 9.
[25] Aristotle quoted and translated by Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, 11.
[26] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, 10.

finding expressions that today hint at how "our experience departs from the metrical clocking of time that measures a succession of moments one after another."[27] In short, time was not always perceived by the constant ticking of seconds or minutes; our modern conceptions are actually quite recent perspectives influenced by newer technologies and ways of measuring time.

Dinshaw also considers different registers of time between the sacred and secular realms, spaces in which time flows at different rates. She considers that "for Augustine, time is good...created by God, but is also associated with life on earth, which is ultimately an exile from the timeless divine realm, eternity. Augustine's unease about being in time is soothed by his belief in eternity."[28] In this case, investment in a timeless immortal realm represented a motivation for dealing with the existential angst about life in a mortal plane. Early philosophers thought of time as functioning non-linearly and inconsistently depending on whether one is in an earthly or heavenly realm.

Within another very early treatise musicologist Margot Fassler has found a deep relationship between time and music. She writes that St. Augustine's *De musica* is "a treatise on measured verse, becom[ing] a theological *discursus* on time at its close."[29] Fassler finds paradoxes of time and the power of the voice to trouble the present, investigating how "the repeated singing of a plea...that, because it is sung, works in and over and through time."[30] The sacred music in the later Middle Ages, of which Fassler describes, resonated across centuries through the cyclical liturgical calendar of cloistered sounds in Medieval convents.[31] From diverse disciplinary perspectives, musicologist Susan Boynton and literary scholar Cynthia Turner Camp have also considered the ways women in convents were "doing history,"[32] shaping what was

---

[27] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, 9.
[28] Ibid., 13.
[29] Margot Fassler, "The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History," in *Representing History, 900-1300: Art, Music, History*, edited by Robert A. Maxwell (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 149.
[30] Ibid., 149.
[31] Fassler, "The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History," 149-171.
[32] Susan Boynton, "Writing History with Liturgy," in *Representing History, 900-1300: Art, Music,*

recorded in, or performed from, texts like the *Book of Hours*. Camp finds temporal agency in the annual repetitive rituals on death days in spaces "filled with funerary reminders" that cross time through communal ritual and sound.[33] The ability to compose history in real time so that it traverses centuries has long been attained through sonic ritual and music.

Historical Narratives and Writing History

I find a related scholarly inquiry into the act of writing history, for which scholars of queer theory and temporalities describe to be an interested process: the historical narrative itself can be seen as evidence of the motivations of its writer(s) and their milieu. Lee Edelman, José Quiroga, and Michael Bronski consider representations of both the present and the past to be fictions, which raises the question, what is at stake in upholding normative assumptions of time?[34] In three influential texts, the scholars focus on how groups or individuals in power weaponize the idea of a golden period in time, while simultaneously denying the past violences on which the present was founded. They identify how nostalgia and chronormativity can work together for the benefit of groups with hegemonic power. Nostalgia requires an assumption that the past is in the past, rendered as a simpler time free of the anxieties of the present. Even so, this requires that the current mapping of power onto structures, geographies, and institutions appear as natural and inevitable. A fictional paradox, these two assumptions erase how today's disparities in access to resources relate to generational traumas, even while valuing lineage and goal-oriented progress. This false rendering of the present also does another form of violence: erasing the fact of queer existence in the past. There is a hegemonic stake in maintaining these normative concepts of time.

History, edited by Robert A. Maxwell (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 187-200.

[33] Cynthia Turner Camp, "A Murdering, if Penitent, Philandress: Queen Ælfthryth's Reputation at Wherwell Abbey" *Friday Speaker Series*, Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia (November 2, 2019).

[34] Michael Bronski, *A Queer History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011); Jose Quiroga, *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

In between the actual past and its representational fictions exists a potential for inversion and critique of the present-day mapping of power.

In temporalities scholarship concerning the modern era, there is a focus on how figures and regimes in power package history to control the present. Geeta Patel has suggested "that instead of changing one clock into another (e.g. traditional into modern), or speeding up and slowing down time (e.g. the acceleration of history), one must consider the persistence of at least three ways of telling time at once."[35] In her study of how time was manipulated by modern Indian rulers, she introduces the concept of "nationalist orders of time."[36] Patel considers how nationalist propaganda augmented the *kisaan*, a pastoral farmer, "by the prosthesis of modernity extraneous to his pastness."[37] For Patel, something about the idea of a rural figure, representative of the past in the present, became key to reinforcing the rule of those currently in power. This was executed through a rhetoric of the masculine as tied to both the past and the modern. Representations of the present are interested and gendered, dependent on images of the past to promote something about the present as being natural or correct.

In her introduction concerning insiders and outsiders, Diana Fuss delves into the tensions between being and doing and considers how meanings change over time.[38] I turn to Fuss in order to question frameworks that over-simplify difference based on marked/unmarked opposition, which frequently present as timeless. Fuss inquires how the metaphysics of identity "depended on the structural symmetry of these seemingly fundamental distinctions and the inevitability of a symbolic order based on a logic of limits, margins, borders, and boundaries."[39] In doing so, she

---

[35] Geeta Patel, "Ghostly Appearances," in *Secularisms*, edited by Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 226.
[36] Ibid., 227.
[37] Ibid., 231.
[38] Diana Fuss, Introduction to *Inside/Out*, edited by Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 1-4. I include in this early queer temporal approach Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza.* (Originally pub. 1987); and Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1993).
[39] Diana Fuss, *Inside/Out*, 3.

questions "how, exactly, do we bring the hetero/homo opposition to the point of collapse?"[40] Though a relatively early volume on queer theory, I find Fuss' work to be implicitly about time. Drawing the element of time under scrutiny may be the means to bring the artificial binaries of which she speaks to the point of collapse. In my dissertation, one way I trouble fictional meanings of the present, such as binary gender, is to question the narratives that lead to representations of identity as timeless, ahistorical, and rigidly structuralist. By examining temporality, the following scholars of postcolonial or alternative histories can trouble binaries of existing scholarship and give voice to people disappeared by hegemonic modes of historiography.

How the past is narrated contributes to insiders and outsiders. Richard Iton follows this inquiry in his work on cultural history, stating, "the excluded are never simply excluded and that their marginalization reflects and determines the shape, texture, and boundaries of the dominant order."[41] Scholars focused on historically excluded groups, such as Iton, question how we are seduced into deriving meaning from oppositions, and how those oppositional binaries rely on an illusion of timeless in order to sustain themselves. Though the othered group in focus differs, Iton's rhetoric resonates with Lee Edelman's descriptions of power to time as a Möbius loop: in that, how we describe the past reinforces the current structures and interests of the present.[42] Jose Quiroga similarly writes of "a History that never quite moved, or moved in circular fashion, trapping all subjects, and condemning them to live in a state of amnesia."[43] Some historical timelines and discourse on social identities, actually erases the fact of their development over time. Escape from such an ontological loop is, by design, nearly impossible. When represented as ahistorical fact, different treatment based on binary oppositions (social roles, such as

---

[40] Diana Fuss, *Inside/Out*, 3.
[41] Richard Iton, "Known Rivers/New Forms," in *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.
[42] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.
[43] Jose Quiroga, "History on the Rocks," in *Cuban Palimpsests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005): 26.

man/woman, hetero/homo, even the racial category of whiteness) is normalized.[44] While it has

been a project of feminist theories to reveal how these binary oppositions are not as symmetrical

as one might think (in regards to power, resources, and opportunity),[45] queer theory and temporal

studies have the potential to expose these oppositions as *always-already* fictions. The work of

pivotal feminist consciousness and queer historiography together reveals how these dialectical

asymmetries developed and how binary representations are relatively recent constructions.[46]

Additionally, the pivotal work of Black feminist geography shows how the historical mapping of

borders and power onto real places and bodies was always interested.[47] The scholarly

reexamination of history and place troubles existing historical narratives of the origins of nations

and social categories.

So naturalized is the rhetoric and conception of time and chronology that those wishing to

queer their experience of time or their representation of it must develop new tools. A key goal of

this dissertation is to identify those tools and how they are employed to make new meanings. In

so doing, artists and scholars must consider the invisible and the fleeting: archives of ephemera

and feelings, memories or ghosts of figures erased from accounts of the past, and speculative

works that envision alternative futures. Queer critique of historical narrative finds that the writing

---

[44] See, for instance, Margaret L. Anderson and Patricia Hill Collins's nuanced discussions of feminist frameworks and the potential dangers of essentialism in a "framework of difference," in Anderson and Collins, "Why Race, Class, and Gender Still Matter" in *Race, Class, and Gender: An Anthology*, 9th edition (Boston, MA: Cengage, 2015): 1-15.

[45] For examples of foundational texts concerned with identifying the asymmetrical valuation of gender, see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949); Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963); Kate Millett, "Theory of Sexual Politics" in *Sexual Politics* (1969); Marilyn Frye, "Oppression," (1987).

[46] For example, Bronski describes how "homosexuality" was coined in the 19th-century to define the unmarked "heterosexuality." Bronski also focuses on "queer" as an indigenous concept and shows how the historical violences against native American men, women, and two-spirit people were always implicitly about policing sexuality according to rigid Western binaries. Bronski, "The Persecuting Society," in *A Queer History of the U.S*, 1-18. I find a similar (queer) historical project in Anzaldua's "Mestiza Consciousness" reveals the short and unnatural history of borders and an epistemology of those descending from colonizers and colonized indigenous people, people caught between artificial national borders. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza (Originally pub. 1987)* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012).

[47] See, for example, Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

of history itself is a performative act. A methodological answer to this problem might be to develop queer archival practices, which dive in to recover what evidence from the past was deliberately or conveniently discarded.

Queering the Archives

In her article, "The Peacock's Tale," musicologist Rita Steblin claimed that Vienna could not have been home to underground queer circles and Franz Schubert was most definitely *not gay*.[48] The weight of her evidence lies in documents archived with a noted absence of queer activity: arrests or accounts of homosocial happenings recorded on paper by the sources she claims to have authority. A traditional approach to the archives, in this way, states that if there is no concrete, documented evidence of something, it must not have existed. Thus, in this mode of examining the past, representation eclipses reality. Alternatively, *to queer* the archives is to approach with a critical lens and rethink what alternative sources might hold evidence of performative and sexual practices of the past. Evidence that might be less permanently recorded, "archives of ephemera,"[49] "repertoire,"[50] and "archives of feelings,"[51] comprise what I consider *queer archives*. I consider queering the archives to be an important investigatory practice because it finds those whose existences or practices were erased by the traditional approaches, such as those Steblin employed.

Historical Musicology's Schubert debate exemplifies the limitations of traditional archives, contestations of identity and historical evidence, and potential of non-traditional archives. In contrast to a solitary focus on the original documents once deemed worth preserving, responders to Steblin's argument employed various methodologies to give voice to queer pasts

---

[48] Rita Steblin, "The Peacock's Tale: Schubert's Sexuality Reconsidered," *19th-Century Music* 17 (1993).
[49] Judith Halberstam, "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives," in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3-25.
[50] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).
[51] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

and present practices. Philip Brett articulated new kinds of evidence from the queer subtext that arises in *performing* Schubert's piano duets; Brett also reflected critically on the backlash Susan McClary received for her considerations of gender in a paper given at a Schubertiade.[52] Following this, Paul Attinello archived the debate itself, tracing each author from Maynard Solomon, whose thesis on Schubert's sexuality provoked Steblin's response, to Brett.[53] My point here is to draw attention to how approaches to the archives, even what is considered to be archival evidence, is political. The way researchers approach archives influences how the past is considered, how historical narratives are written, preserved, and taught. I argue that it is not just previous, but *current* historical traditions that queer archives have potential to disrupt by exposing the circular logics on which current historical representations rely.[54] In this way, how we approach the archives often says as much about the current state of things as what can be confidently stated about the past. Far from representing one objective truth, queer historiography shows that everyone actor has a stake in the way the past is archived, retrieved, narrated, and taught: archival practices determine future power.

Materials sometimes require literal rescue, as was the case for persistent historian Alan Berube, who (with no institutional affiliation or authority), dove into closets and dumpsters for records of gay men and trans women in the 1980s amid the AIDS crisis.[55] Only recently have materials started to make their way into a more permanent home and considered epistemologically valuable. But these are not the large repositories of materials we think of when we consider the work of much earlier anthropologists or ethnomusicologists, such as the Library

---

[52] See Brett's breakdown of the print war in "Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire," *19th-century Music* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1997): 149-176.

[53] *GLSG Newsletter*, edited by Paul Attinello, et. al., 2, no. 1, (March 1992) LGBTQ Study Group, American Musicological Society. http://ams-lgbtq.org/newsletters-archive/ (Accessed March 11, 2016).

[54] This is the "ideological Möbius strip, only *permitted* one side," to which Lee Edelman refers in "The Future is Kid Stuff," in *No Future* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 2.

[55] Nan Alamilla Boyd and Horacio N. Roque Ramirez, "Close Encounters: The Body and Knowledge in Queer Oral History," in *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 3-4.

of Congress's collection of the wax cylinders of indigenous voices Frances Densmore collected, which remain largely unexplained in one central location. In contrast, the *Invisible Histories Project* complements the existing projects of The Stonewall National Museum and Archives (Fort Lauderdale, FL), which houses artifacts documenting queer cultural and social history, and the GLBT Historical Society (San Francisco), which specifically concern the Bay Area community. The curators of this project describe their mission as "rather than developing a mammoth, gay version of the Smithsonian Institution that could be difficult for people to visit, the Invisible Histories Project plans to store items in smaller, local repositories."[56] The project will contain materials from arrest records for cruising to memorabilia collected and held for decades by gay southerners. In reflection on my own community, I find my southern queer community to be quite adept at holding onto memories in this way. It is not the items themselves that leads one to collect, but the affect, spirit, or extra meanings held in the items: a card, a note, a mixed tape or CD, a newspaper clipping. Members of queer groups hold onto scraps because they have often subsisted on table scraps of support and affirmation from the larger communities.

In his book, *The Queen's Throat*, Wayne Koestenbaum muses on the gay cults of opera queens and the operatic sensibilities through which they express belonging, from an obsession with garment to voice.[57] Koestenbaum focuses on four themes that carry temporal-archival significance: Diva gowns, vocal crisis, queer relics of a shut-in-fan, and the cult following of a diva like Maria Callas. I find a similar ethos in the obsessive followings of beloved drag stars today, to whom a choice of gown or collection of swag and ephemera from an event holds individual significance. The various belongings left behind by a "shut-in fan," for example, included items which carry extra meaning in the way multiple collectors of opera memorabilia have arranged them. It matters less "if that listener [were] gay or lesbian, but if he handle[d the

---

[56] Jay Reeves, "Project documents hidden history of LGBTQ life in the South," *AP News*, August 20, 2018 https://apnews.com/ce5f60c4f0a64f8c9f489700ea21a9a4 (Accessed August 21, 2018).
[57] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1993).

item] as if it were a queer relic."[58] Towards his perusal of those items left behind, Koestenbaum describes:

> that sleeve on which, beside the trademark, "Le Miroir de la Voix," a nameless hand has glued pieces of a catalogue, fragments which identify the singer as Albert Huberty and the aria as "Quand la flamme" from Bizet's *La Jolie fille de Perth*. In my used copy of the 1912 *Victor Book of the Opera*, the previous owner, who signs herself "Janet," has cut out the illustrations accompanying the descriptions of *Faust* arias available on Victor, and she has colored in the gowns (Massenet's Manon with pink crayon, and Offenbach's Olympia with orange), and she has written "This is the last!" beside several finales.[59]

This excerpt, like the LP sleeves, collages of cutouts and magazines Kostenbaum describes, is seemingly meaningless, something to be discarded or overlooked, but that which Koestenbaum finds queer significance. Meaning is found in who last owned the collections Koestenbaum peruses, including friends who passed away from complications of AIDS. Traces of another person's intimate connections among the materials represent connections among singers, specific arias, costuming, which, like the remnants of the Met's old curtain are "membrane[s] that separates in from out, diva from fan, gramophone-horn from ear, sound-in-the-box from inkling-in-the-heart."[60] Jose Muñoz similarly writes about such queer potentially of quotidian objects throughout *Cruising Utopia*. He finds meaning in returning to empty spaces where people cruised for sex and in photographs of the empty stages of iconic queer clubs.[61] Koestenbaum and Muñoz describe the materiality of queer performance, even inanimate stages and ephemera, with a rhetoric of queer embodiment. It is in the materiality of the obsession an around which a queer archive develops: beyond an object's use value, what epistemological value there is to be gained in understanding how objects became meaning to people through the act of collecting.

Questioning what counts as archival evidence has become an important avenue of queer music studies that consider embodiment and affect as meaningful evidence of relating to the

---

[58] Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*, 64.
[59] Ibid., 65.
[60] Ibid., 65.
[61] Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

world in a particular way.[62] I find a potential in scholarship of this mode to find the affective

weight in accounts of the past harms preserved uncannily in recordings made centuries later:

showing painful pasts to continually haunt the present in ways that written historical records

cannot.[63] Scholars have also reconsidered archives in the form of performative and oral histories

or as psychic remainders, affective and embodied memory.[64] These approaches queer time by

highlighting how the past lingers in the present. Nan Boyd and Horacio Ramirez write how "oral

history with subaltern or historically undervalued communities...disrupts historical paradigms that

do not or will not acknowledge the existence of bodies, genders, and desires invisible to previous

historical traditions."[65] Figures from the margins and ghosts from the past queer normative

understandings of the rigid categories that structure much previous archival work. I call these

figures "ghosts," to borrow from Diana Taylor and Avery Gordon's descriptions of figures

rendered invisible today because they have been literally disappeared, or whose accounts do not

persevere in the more permanent location of written documents deemed authoritative.[66] A

queering of archival methods finds those figures once considered invisible by turning to records

that are eccentric, unusual, or fleeting. This (re)turn to records of the past that linger in the present

queers the usual linear, straight investigative thought. In my dissertation, I consider queer archival

methods through at every step of traditional historical inquiry: from the collection of materials,

---

[62] For example, Suzanne Cusick has described making and letting music work on her body as "an experience that re-teaches [us] how to relate to the world, how to have the nerve to open [one]self to it." Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relation with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 75.

[63] Aida Mbowa, "Abbey Lincoln's Screaming Singing and the Sonic Liberatory Potential Thereafter," in *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013), 135-154.

[64] Nan Boyd and Horacio Ramirez, ed.s, *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See, for example Cvetkovich's discussions of the extra meanings a mixed tape contains for her after the end of a queer relationship, or a significant geographical location to the descendants of those that experienced trauma there. In *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 1-14.

[65] Boyd and Ramirez, *Bodies of Evidence*, 5.

[66] Diana Taylor, "Staging Traumatic Memory," in *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 190-211; Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

the storage of things, the transmission of knowledge, and the narratives constructed in relation to the subcultures they represent.

Expanding, reinventing, and deconstructing conceptions of archives and evidence is crucial for investigating a history of queer community, like the one in Athens, GA, for which there is no permanent location (whether gay bar, LGBT Studies program, collection in the UGA special collections archives) to attest to a rich history of queer musicking. A lack of hard, written evidence or materials catalogued and stored in temperature-controlled building would, for someone like Steblin, definitively say there was *no* queer activity. To me, the absence of a gay bar or LGBTQ studies program is far more indicative of the geographies of power than the existence or not of subcultures. It is through the less permanent collections of ephemera and repertoires of drag and voguing over several decades that these histories speak.

Performing Memory, Repertoire, and Vocality

Queering the archives turns them inside-out, questions the logics of linear time and constructions of historical narrative, and allows for the consideration of cultural knowledge that exists outside of written, published accounts, in more ephemeral and performative repertoire. What I consider to be queer modes of transfer, such as the *Sensational Knowledge* of which Tomie Hahn writes,[67] Diana Taylor's work on "repertoire" and "Staging Traumatic Memory,"[68] Christina Sunardi on "Constructive Gender and Tradition through Senses of History,"[69] all resist the containment of written documents and create meaning through performance and repetition. The scholars named above trouble the boundaries between "you" and "I," collective and individual, performer and audience; they focus on how performers and audiences become collective witnesses to the transfer of historical knowledge-as-embodied in movement.

---

[67] Tomie Hahn, *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007).
[68] Diana Taylor, "Staging Traumatic Memory" in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 190-211.
[69] Christina Sunardi, *Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).

Redefining archives and repertoire in this way creates space for the historically displaced and voices from the margins.

Through what Diana Taylor calls "a non-archival system of transfer," she considers how *repertoire*, which she considers to be in opposition to the traditional archive, performs crucial and usually invisible knowledge. She states, "if performance did not transmit knowledge, only the literate and powerful could claim social memory and identity."[70] Taylor questions "whose stories, memories, and struggles might become visible? What tensions might performance behaviors show that would not be recognized in texts and documents?"[71] In his 1997 article, "Four Hands," Brett applied these queries to Schubert, questioning how Schubert's Vienna might be conceived of differently if we considered the acts he and his circle of artists *performed* and the meanings implied between the notes and sheets of music, rather than what exists only on paper. Brett, like Taylor, is not just concerned with the past, but what meanings arise in present-day performances, those social meanings created via repeat performance. Taylor and Halberstam describe this knowledge as ephemeral because by their nature or design they are temporary.[72] The meaning of such performative memories are subsequently fleeting and fluid, with no permanent anchor between signifier and signified. However, Taylor wants us to, "rather than think of performance primarily as the ephemeral, as that which disappears, [reconsider how it] insists on creating a community of witnesses by and through performance."[73] She writes (of indigenous actor troupes in Peru) that performing trauma from the past blurs the distinction between both the past and present and the collective and individual.

Recent operas and vocal works created by people working outside of the traditional art and academic institutions build on this idea, blurring distinctions in time and between audience

---

[70] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, xvii.
[71] Ibid., xviii.
[72] See Halberstam's "archive of the ephemeral" in *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
[73] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 211.

and performer. Toshi Reagon cultivates a community of witnesses in her opera, *Parable of the Sower*, in her dissolution of the barriers between those on stage and the audience that surrounds the stage. She does this even as she uses musical styles of the past the create a critical distance for commentary on the real past/present.[74] A community of witnesses similarly traverses real-world locale Union Station in Christopher Cerrone's setting of his opera, *Invisible Cities*.[75] And a community of witnesses observes the women of current day government led down the aisles and onto a staging of the historical presidential run of Victoria Woodhull in Victoria Bond's *Mrs. President*.[76] The positioning of bodies and voice in space becomes a way to traverse boundaries between audience and performer, past and present.

Though she does not use the term queer, or classify her work on Cerrone's opera as queer analysis, Nina Eidsheim raises questions about voice that interrogate what was previously deemed natural or normative. While she walks through Union Station, as an observer to Cerrone's opera happening in a real-world place, she listens to electronically mediated voices via headphones in an uncanny dislocation between acousmatic sound and the sounds happening in

---

[74] Toshi and Bernice Johnson Reagon's opera, *Parable of the Sower* (2015), has been described by adrienne brown as a powerful "new—well, old project." Black sci-fi writer Octavia Butler set her 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower* in a rapidly disintegrating U.S. of 2024, following the destruction of the environment, ruthless unchecked capitalism, and the election of one, President Donner. It is an uncanny tale of the future that comments on the present Butler never lived to see. Sonically, Reagon weaves spirituals from the 19th century with music derived from gospel, blues, rock, and electronica; her scoring works as an archive of historically Black music to connect with a young Black woman of the future. Autumn Brown and adrienne maree brown, "There's a New World Comin' with Toshi Reagon" (March 13, 2018) *How to Survive the End of the World: Learning from the apocalypse with grace, rigor and curiosity*, podcast and site, https://www.endoftheworldshow.org/?offset=1524247175485 (last accessed April 21, 2019)

[75] Nina Eidsheim, "The Acoustic Mediation of Voice, Self, and Others," in *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 58-94.

[76] In Victoria Bond's new opera on the suffragist and first woman to run for president in 1872, also creates a stage for a figure from the past with resonance today. The aria "I'm told I'm a citizen" is a soliloquy on women's rights after her incarceration by Henry Beecher. In recent performances, Bond has brought in women active in local government to place them on and around the staging of the scene from the past. Woodhull's interests in alternative, older spiritualities also manifest in the music several ways: from the channeling of the conversation between older and younger Woodhull; in the form of a soaring soprano (with speaking roles for a male voice that recall Hildegard von Bingen morality plays); and in Bond's settings of "instruments creating a world that cannot be vocalized yet." Victoria Bond, Susan McClary, McKenna Milici, and Denise Van Glahn, "On Victoria Bond, *Mrs. President*: An Opera on Victoria Woodhull," panel discussion, meeting of the American Musicological Society (Nov. 10, 2017) Rochester, NY.

that real space. She asks of hearing sound dislocated from the acoustic space it originated, if "we cannot hear outside the naturalized...cannot attain the distance necessary to sense that it is indeed naturalized?"[77] She finds that Meredith Monk's *Songs of Ascension* and Christopher Cerrone's *Invisible Cities* "negotiate the issue by being simultaneously inside and outside" and "work[ing] within the model of the figure of sound while also resisting it." Focusing on the voice, how it is mediated through technology, and how it travels through space (because it takes time for sound waves to dissipate and reach ears) becomes a way to question the reductive binaries of structuralist semiotics.

Christina Sunardi's attention to constantly shifting meanings of identity in performativity and embodiment in her investigations into Javanese music and dance.[78] Through this careful approach to subjectivity and performativity, Sunardi avoids some of the pitfalls of early lesbian and gay studies as well as early feminist approaches that essentialized difference. There is a brave vulnerability to Sunardi's approach, and one that allows her access to epistemologies previously written off as too subjective: knowledge from the positioning of the body and affects felt in the body, and an attention to different conceptions of gender, identity and time that are sometimes deeply spiritual, outside of modern constructions of religion, and older than colonial influences on Javanese culture.

Sunardi writes of a queer cultural transmission through performed repertoire, one in which "there are no artist-audience distinctions, only participants and potential participants performing different roles."[79] She finds acts of indigenous cultural transfer that were always-already queer, though she avoids imposing Western labels. I find this idea vibrational with Taylor's considerations of how Yuyachkani perform "a relational nonindividualistic

---

[77] Nina Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*, 90.
[78] Christina Sunardi, *Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015).
[79] Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), as quoted in Christina Sunardi, *Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015): 13.

understanding of subjectivity," living up to a Quechua name that "signals embodied knowledge and memory and blurs the line between thinking subjects and the subjects of thought."[80] My point here is not to make sweeping statements about indigenous performance persisting in modern day Java and Peru as being the same. I want to, rather, find value in the cultivation of cultural memory that queers Western European archival methods and destabilizes what are usually unquestioned assumptions about individual expression and historical narrative.

Otherworldly Voices, Ghostly Sounds

We invoke ghosts to refer to any number of things that remain unexplained: things that move or change unexpectedly, when we are haunted by past actions, and when we feel the presence of someone lost or invisible. I take ghostly sounds to be the signs of a presence that has been rendered invisible by the existing modes of analysis. A ghostly sound can be that flaw, which is a whisper of evidence that we are told should not exist. I consider a ghostly sound to have temporal significance, such as a sign of a past *effortfully* forgotten by a current order. Ghosts have featured prominently in queer musical texts, sometimes coded with otherworldly sounds, such as Benjamin Britten's sonic characterization of the ghost Quint in *The Turn of the Screw*.[81] Again, it is not whether the characters Quint, Peter Grimes, or Britten himself for that matter, are *gay* that makes the text a queer text, but how certain sounds become signifiers for people we are told do not fit or should not be there. In an ethnographic sense, communing with ghosts means amplifying voices of either disappeared figures from the past or finding those figures who exist in the present despite what the data says. When present day venues come to harbor excess meaning, extraneous to the hegemonic use of a space, they become haunted spaces. I argue, this happens when significant events that happened there in the past alter the communal memories of a place or when the voices of those who are rendered invisible echo in acousmatic reverberation.

---

[80] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 191.
[81] For a discussion of how the sounds of the East Asian Gamelan came to characterize Quint's otherworldliness, see Philip Brett's essay "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 135-142.

Ghostly presences and voices have also been a subject of inquiries into time and historiography. Such supernatural utterances have the potential to pierce the dichotomies of past/present or inside/outside. Diana Fuss describes how the development of an inside and outside creates a kind of haunting, for instance, "a fascination with the specter of abjection, a certain preoccupation with the figure of the homosexual as specter and phantom, as spirit and revenant, as abject and undead."[82] She considers how "those inhabiting the inside...can only comprehend the outside through the incorporation of a negative image."[83] The inverse negative acts as a ghostly presence, representing those kept in the margins of a carefully maintained social caste system.

By following and listening to these spectral voices, the queer scholarship of Fuss, Halberstam, and Muñoz destabilizes established hierarchies of the present. Halberstam has written of the kind of "ghosting" trans characters do in film (and real life), noting that "it often becomes necessary...to disappear in order to remain viable. The transgender gaze becomes difficult to track because it depends on complex relations in time and space between seeing and not seeing, appearing and disappearing, knowing and not knowing."[84] In reconstructions of the true story of someone brutally murdered for being neither here nor there, Halberstam and others find immense power in a spectral voice. In a case like *The Brandon Teena Story*, "ghosting the transgender character [allows] him to haunt the narrative after death" especially in the uncanny form existing "only as an eerie voice recorded during a brutal police interrogation."[85] I envision the investigations of "hauntings" as a way to consider how invisible subjects destabilize a space with a spectral voice and "ghosting" as a way to describe the strategies of certain subjects to appear and disappear for self-preservation.

---

[82] Fuss, *Inside/out*, 3.
[83] Ibid., 3.
[84] J. Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 78.
[85] Ibid.

Emanuelle Majeau-Bettez described a ghostly *presence* of Éliane Radigue in the recordings of Pierre Henry at *Sigma3*, an exposition of experimental electro-acoustic art.[86] In this case of haunting, Radigue's voice remained in the recording as the sonic traces of a contributor rendered invisible by the publicity of the event, which cast Pierre Henry in the archetype of solitary artist-genius. In this case, her sonic influence represents a remainder, something of a failure in a narrative sold to consumers and students of music who rely on the common trope of individual, striving male artist. Sociologist Avery Gordon argues elsewhere that "knowing ghosts often shows up not as professional success, but as failure."[87] In the case of Henry's production, the sound of Radigue's presence represents a failure of sonic narrative to sustain its fiction as the creation of a sole male artist; the sounds represent a failure of Radigue to remain within the socially expected gender role of invisible sound cataloguer.[88] Majeau-Bettez followed the voice of a ghost, someone rendered invisible by current practices of reporting on music in order to flesh out the body erased by that practice.

Avery Gordon extrapolates on the social meaning of ghosts through her examinations of speculative/historical fiction, including Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. She describes how "Morrison's (1989) argument that 'invisible things are not necessarily not-there' encourages the complementary gesture of investigating how that which appears absent can indeed be a seething presence."[89] In this particular case, Morrison writes of the child killed by a mother who would not

---

[86] Emanuelle Majeau-Bettez, "A Concert the Way He Likes It: Éliane Radigue's Audibility/Inaudibility at *Sigma3*," the biennial national conference on Feminist Theory and Music, San Francisco, CA (July 2017).
[87] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 22.
[88] As many feminist ethnographers have similarly revealed to be the case of the scholarly productions of male anthropologists and sociologists: the ghostly presence of their wives or female assistants who typed and edited their work, conducted fieldwork, have always been there. See, for example, Barbara Tedlock, "Works and Wives: On the Sexual Division of Textual Labor," in in *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 267-286. When thoughtful and diligent scholarship was published under her own name becomes a "life...characterized by a failure to fit into roles appropriate to her sex and her time." Barbara Babcock, "Not in the Absolute Singular: Rereading Ruth Benedict," in *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 106.
[89] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 17.

have her endure the horrors of slavery; this is the child who comes back to haunt the present in *Beloved*. However, this supernatural presence is conspicuously absent in the recent opera *Margaret Garner*.[90] I think here is a potential for productive dialogue: between the staged accounts of what happened and the speculative fiction of Morrison, especially where both have some claim to ethnographic authenticity of oral histories on which they are based. Projects like Gordon's speak to "the merging of the visible and the invisible, the dead and the living, the past and the present," which seriously considers the "ghost as a social figure."[91] I ask how can starting with a ghost as subject shape a research inquiry? Studying ghosts might entail studying the figures of performing arts communities, for example, who are invisible to the everyday landscape of a city. Additionally, tracing ghostly presences might allow us to contemplate what sonic remainders exist in commercially viable popular music styles that point to a deeper, queerer history of music than what the most accounts hold today.

Affecting Time

Affect is one key element that reveals how temporalities and music are closely intertwined. I consider affect to be not just a feeling or a musical expression of a feeling, but an evocation or representation of a deeply embodied musical experience. Drawing from scholarship on affect, I question what is the potential of a hermeneutics of time? And how are experiences of time in sound deeply felt? First, tempo and rhythm function as a means to represent affective states (anxiety, relaxation, elation, etc.) and how time may either feel like it flies by or is in suspension. A frantic level of surface rhythm, for instance, might directly reflect the physiological stress of a character (literally a racing heartbeat) on screen, or induce in the audience a reflection of the affective state. Time, in this way, becomes a means of manipulating feeling, desire, or unsettling listeners. To return to Dinshaw's writings on early concepts of time, she emphasizes

---

[90] Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison speaking on, "'Margaret Garner' from Opera Carolina" *NPR Music*, June 22, 2007 https://www.npr.org/2007/06/22/10986783/margaret-garner-from-opera-carolina (Accessed May 22, 2018).
[91] Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 24-5.

the time-altering power of affect, which manifests in changing physiological states. She writes

that "[s]leep and sorrow exemplify that our lived sense of time can differ from the measured time

of successive linear intervals. As does drunken partying."[92] Considerations of time-bending affect

help us understand the music underscoring the supernatural sleep, for example, in a work like

Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Dinshaw writes of how "[s]upernatural sleep,

ordinary sleep, absorption in deep thought, intense longing, inebriation – a wide range of

conditions in fact brings out life's essential asynchrony."[93] Affect transforms the body and the

ways time is experienced; though achieved through varied compositional means, both affect and

time are the keys to understanding how music is experienced.

Feelings like nostalgia, instilled through reference back to familiar topics or musical

styles, can also affect the way an audience experiences and receives art. It has been the project of

queer scholarship to examine affect and its epistemic potential. Scholars in queer temporalities

write of how nostalgic returns and "backwards looks" in queer art and culture speaks to queer

groups.[94] The idea of nostalgic return underlines an opera like Corigliano's *Ghosts of Versailles*,

for example, which played on musical topics of the past.[95] David Samuels also describes how a

"backward look, through space and time" relies on expression and affect.[96] In his case studies on

---

[92] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now*, 9-10.

[93] Ibid.

[94] See, for example, Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*; Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Nishant Shahani, *Queer Retrosexualities: The Politics of Reparative Return* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2012); Mark Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (London: Reaktion Books, 2003).

[95] I consider a form of temporal drag in the queer semiotics of John Corigliano's historical topic play in *The Ghosts of Versailles*. An opera commissioned for the 100th anniversary of the Met which enjoyed its first recording at its own 25th commemoration in 2015, this was an opera written to delight an audience of opera queens through its self-conscious historical references and historical diva Marie Antoinette as a central character. To quote Corigliano and Hoffman's baritone narrator, "Now we go back in time…" The queer text created in collaboration with librettist William Hoffman, became a mish-mashing of historical figures with 18th-century opera characters and the present day, requiring historical characters, and the audience, to time-travel. And its music has been described by critics as "dressing the twentieth century in Mozartian drag." Anonymous, "Notes and Comments: 'A Further Note on 'Camp,'" *New Criterion* 13, no. 9 (May 1995): 3.

[96] David W. Samuels, *Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004), 39.

Apache reservations, Samuels finds that expression and experience of culture on the reservation necessitates communing with the past while engaging with the present, and "this sense of the recoverability of the past pervades both concrete instances of expression in the community and people's responses to it."[97] In something he terms the "'back then,'" he finds "not a chronological period forever closed off by the passage of time into the present, but an open enigmatic *feelingful* place to which one can go if given the proper invitation" (my emphasis).[98] Exploring the potential of queer performative events to create an "enigmatic *feelingful* place" is a key to understanding how affective associations foster queer space regardless of how distant in time or place they may be.

On a more meta level, affect relates to time and current receptions of discourse or criticism within an academic discipline. I find that scholarship in queer temporalities eschews theoretical approaches that solely on rejects work of the past through negative critique; and the scholarship does so while maintaining a healthy skepticism of purely positivist research methods. The impulse behind theoretical frameworks becomes, itself, a question of affect. Feminist philosopher bell hooks describes how, "I came to theory because I was hurting—the pain within me was so intense that I could not go on living. I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me."[99] I would argue that queer theory builds on feminist theory's rejection of the myth of objectivity, finding meaning and liberation in contemplating affect and embodied gendered experiences. A queer temporal theory is one that dances fluidly between both the positions of poststructuralist deconstruction of the present and a more optimistic world-making that sees ways the future may already be expressed and experienced now. It is a framework that is versatile, attentive to multiple positions and perspectives, critical and hopeful.

---

[97] Samuels, *Putting a Song on Top of It*, 39.
[98] Ibid.
[99] bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice" (1994).

Heather Love is one scholar attentive to the affective change in queer politics over time, for example, from that of melancholy and shame to pride. She considers how "earlier forms of feeling, imagination and community may offer crucial resources in the present."[100] She finds that neither pride nor shame can really exist without the other, because pride in a present without understanding shame of the past loses momentum as a movement and assimilation in the present risks normalization. For Love, liberatory theory entails "feeling backward." Delving into 19th-century writers whose queer politics are hidden in the subtle language of homosocial circles pre-homosexual identity, Love finds queer expressions that even the present day can find illuminating.[101] Attentive to how understandings necessarily change over time and are dependent on time and context, the framework also creates space for a window to see outside of one's context.

William Cheng calls for more space in scholarship for a politics of repair. Towards this, he is attentive to how "pain receptors alert us to injury...pain serves the body in the way that criticism serves the body politic."[102] While there is place for criticism, he suggests that we take care that it does not always dissolve into what Sedgwick has called "paranoid readings."[103] I am particularly interested in those repetitive actions and musical interactions that offer space for repair, asking what contributes to an underground queer community's resilience in these times? And, how does an awareness of an affective orientation to our frameworks open us up to seeing queer world-making where it exists? In his earlier work, Cheng was, like Dinshaw, concerned with *play*, and the imaginative aspects as well as positive affects that motivate people to do

---

[100] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward,* 30.
[101] See Heather Love, "Forced Exile: Walter Pater's Backward Modernism," in *Feeling Backward*, 53-71.
[102] William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 34.
[103] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You," in *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-151.

things, push buttons, perform roles.[104] I would argue that finding the scholarly or epistemic value of play is key to understanding queer musicking, whether a local drag show or Met opera. Focusing on repair and play, rather than reactionary response, offers a more sustainable temporal mode: one that avoids the paranoia and burn out of recent feminist and activist trends.

Queer Life Cycles and Genealogies

A final area of literature (though this is by no means a comprehensive list), concerns how music, sexuality and time are tied to familial or community relations. Within its analytical scope are the life stages expected of an individual in the context of a community, and the roles genealogies play in maintaining other social institutions. Queer lenses may question the role of music in passing down either oppressive ideologies or modes of resilience from one generation to the next. I inquire, how can queer musicking forge communal bonds? The formation of a chosen family that is not related by blood is an important aspect of queer world-making. Music can be used to express one's transition from one life stage to another, or in the expression of the rejection to an obligated path. It's worth considering how musical gestures can signify the willfulness of queer youth or the untimely severing of a life's path to adulthood.

Recent work by feminist and queer musicologists confronting white supremacy speaks to how affective orientations have implications for future generations and the ideologies passed down. Suzanne Cusick, in her examination of white supremacist folk group Prussian Blue, found that "the [packaging of the] sexuality of the young, blond sisters was in reproducing the white race."[105] Songs such as "Road to Valhalla," and "Aryan Man Awake" were, then, about "us[ing] music to bring their desired world into being."[106] Cusick hit the audience of her talk with the disturbing revelation that the name Prussian Blue derives from a residue of the gas used in Nazi

---

[104] William Cheng, *Sound Play: Video Games and the Musical Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[105] Suzanne Cusick, *Recognizing and Confronting White Supremacy*, panel at meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Albuquerque, NM (November 16, 2018).
[106] Ibid.

death camps. She revealed that music and sexuality are implicated in how some groups form and reproduce around racialized ideologies, but also how such groups use music to advocate controlling the very existence of others *unlike* them, whether through eugenics or genocide. This work exemplifies the potential of queer temporalities to question the interlocking quality of multiple modes of oppression how such scholarship would benefit more than just white masculine gay subjects.

In a similarly affecting lecture, Maureen Mahon unpacked the nuanced musical text of Nina Simone's "Turning Point," which confronts the intergenerational transmission of white supremacist ideology.[107] Simone sings sweetly, in major mode over sentimental strings and harpsichord; the historical settings make for a pronounced ironic accompaniment for painful childhood revelation. Through conflict between timbre, historical topic, musical affect, and lyrics, Simone questions how the bonds formed with other children were instantly severed by the introduction of the racist ideology of their parents. Dinshaw, in dialogue with Dipesh Chakrabarty, describes how "[p]asts *are* there in taste, in practices of embodiment, in the cultural training the senses have received over generations."[108] Cusick and Mahon's critical analyses of the musical packaging of gender, race, and sexuality is about much more than an individual expression of identity. Their work shows how expressions of sexualities reflect deeply internalized ideologies of what it means to be an individual in a community, to pursue lineages, create and maintain bonds with people who are like or unlike us.

In the Charles Seeger Lecture at the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology, Kay Kaufman Shelemay described "Living an Ethnographic Life," and how we might interrogate our own life cycles as we consider that of those we study. She proposed the different ways one *becomes*, borrowing the ideas of "becoming" and always being "influx" from Biehl and Locke's "Deleuze

---

[107] Maureen Mahon, *Recognizing and Confronting White Supremacy*, panel at meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Albuquerque, NM (November 16, 2018).
[108] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now*, xii.

and the Anthropology of Becoming,"[109] which resonates with Jose Muñoz's theory of "perpetual becoming."[110] In a field that is "neither old nor new," Shelemay contemplates her own "transitory present suspended between past and unknown future" and invites us to "consider how we move through time as ethnographers."[111] She describes the ethnographic life cycle as "a rhythm," connecting with her research into the Ethiopian life cycles of *Oromo* (8 year life stages) and *Amhara* (20 years) rites of passage that are marked by song. By drawing focus onto ourselves as researchers in this way, we can continue to question how it is that people come into certain social, and academic, roles; we can continue to question the validity of the historical narratives we tell about other communities, or our own.

In the above considerations, (ethno)musicologists confront the definition and maintenance of categories of difference onto which power and privilege map. A queer lens develops a consciousness of in-betweenness, the space between established categories, questioning their legitimacy. What I consider to be an early queer temporal lens developed with an awareness of the historical violences and epistemology of in-betweenness in "the consciousness of a *mestiz[o/a],"* someone of mixed ancestry who, by very existence, troubles artificial boundaries like the southern U.S. border.[112] In more recent music scholarship, Naomi Andre raised questions of agency and "in-betweenness" in her investigation into the kinship between Florence Price and Marian Anderson.[113] Again, these are not solely considerations of sexual, racial, or gender identity in which in-betweenness manifests; however, here queer theory is a fruitful place for challenging the legitimacy of oppression based on categorical difference. A

---

[109] Joao Biehl and Peter Locke, "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming," *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 3 (June 2010): 317-351.

[110] I am thinking of Muñoz's descriptions of the queer collaborative art of Jill Johnston and Ray Johnson, which art evolved through connections via mail in a way that dissolved the simple relationship between sender and receiver, start and finished product. In *Cruising Utopia*, 125.

[111] Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "Living an Ethnographic Life," *Charles Seeger Lecture,* given at the meeting for the Society for Ethnomusicology, Albuquerque, NM (Nov. 17, 2018).

[112] Such as described in the critical work of Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza* (Originally pub. 1987) (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012).

[113] Naomi Andre, Panel on *Incursions and In-Betweenness: The Strategic Artistry of Marian Anderson and Florence Price*, 15th Biannual conference on Feminist Theory and Music, Boston, MA (June 7, 2019).

queer temporal lens shows how such categories developed, how identity groups are contested and people may fluctuate among them, but also how members of different communities may empathize from similar treatment faced at different times.

In an address on academic societies and institutional power, Cusick recently called on academics to consider "queer time and space, not in the sense of sexuality, but in the sense of dodging reproductive logics of hetero-patriarchal societies."[114] In this, she questioned the relationship of power to current practices of mentorship, academic lineage, and who are funneled into certain opportunities towards leadership. She states that the current *modus operandi* of academic lineages is to "reproduce" oneself. She calls us to consider the tendency of established scholars to gravitate towards mentoring and promoting students that most resemble themselves: whether in physiognomy, life experience, or scholarly interests. Cusick called, instead, for openness to change and avoiding "fossilization." According to her, this change requires a mode of "caring *without* the desire to reproduce ourselves...building relationships of trust with people who are nothing like [us]," and in doing so we might, as an academic society, strive "towards a more horizontal flow of power and heterogeneity."[115] Cusick gave this lecture at a historic moment, inviting incoming presidents of the academic music societies present at the biennial conference on Feminist Theory and Music (2019). All society presidents in attendance were women, some were women of color, and some were brave instructors at small institutions without graduate programs or tenure. In turning a queer temporal lens on the discipline at large, Cusick envisioned a way to achieve a more equitable distribution of institutional power, even if it would take some time to get there.

---

[114] Suzanne Cusick, *Plenary Speaker-Panel From Margins to Center: Three Presidents Talk Back*, 15th Biennial conference on Feminist Theory and Music, Boston, MA (June 8, 2019).
[115] Ibid.

Stephan Pennington addressed the two kinds of queer theory that queer musicologists do.[116] The first is an official kind of engagement with texts and terminology that is so rigorous that it is legible as scholarship to the larger field. The second kind of queer theory is a secret; it comes from discovering, living, and seeking queer knowledge that is not linear in its dissemination. Pennington described how the difference queer children express is not one that is shared by their parents and family. While knowledge of who they are, the history of queer communities, and how to find one another is not passed down linearly from parent to child, schools are silent on the subject. In absence of a clear, linear passing down of knowledge, the process of self-discovery, seeking others, comes from coded interactions: developing an epistemology of recognizing the excess meaning in small signs. He described the process of "reading" one another, the passing of a secret knowledge that occurs in subaltern scenes. It is the secret knowledge of queer codes and community I seek in my time traveling through three case studies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that guide my research and analysis get at the heart of what it means to have a queer relationship to time. I ask, how can it be queer to be read as "out" of time? When and why are references to other times read as queer and when are they considered normative? I.e. I want to consider when a stylistic impression or a historical quote upholds vs. challenges a given context, social institution, or *modus operandi*. For example, Benjamin Britten's neo-Baroque countertenor Oberon and Richard Strauss' fugal writing in *Also sprach Zarathustra* are both referential to Baroque styles or techniques, however, only one of these is frequently described as a queer text. How does a queer historical topic function differently than a reference to the past that is not read as queer?

---

[116] Stephan Pennington, respondent, *Still Here, Still Queer*, Panel of the 30th meeting of the LGBTQ Study Group, AMS Boston (Nov. 1, 2019).

In the compositional process itself, I am curious how a composer intentionally or unintentionally queers the temporal dimensions of a piece: is it through tempo, historical *topoi*, affect, libretto, or intertext? How can moments of musical boundary crossings, metrical or form disruptions and interjections read as queer? What does a queer compositional process look like; could it, for instance, be collaborative: sharing agency, power, and responsibility?

How would a performance queer a musical text through manipulations of time and how an audience perceives time? How do queer musicians or dancers perform differently, perhaps in less permanent and more ephemeral scenes? Where and when would a researcher go to experience queer culture in a particular location? How do marginalized groups who participate with music consider the histories of their scenes? I wonder where such narratives and material evidence of queer culture would be housed. I ask, what are the social implications and consequences of being considered "untimely?"

METHODS

In four distinct chapters, I explore the various ways queer musicking happens. First, I consider how 20th-century art music invokes a distant past to read as a queer text. Further, inquire into how multi-layered audio-visual texts in recent EDM music videos render visible the process of construction and tropes on the past to challenge a current socio-economic system. Finally, I comment on how temporary and repetitive interactions with sound by amateur performers of drag invert how power maps onto streets and venues. Investigating how these case studies work on different temporal logics means considering the concept of orientation beyond a simple ahistorical identity of LGBTQ or straight. I investigate how relationships to time shape lives and musical experiences in significant ways and how different sexual and communal orientations are intimately tied to time. Queering time, in this sense, means revealing other ways of interacting with music and space. Through the act of recalling a forgotten past or imagining a future where the queer, alternative, and the weird flourishes, this kind of performativity questions the they

ways social norms of the present suppress other ways of being. In this document, I focus on the evocation of other times in order *to queer* the present.

Queering the Archives: Local histories of drag through ephemera

Previously, I brought the scholarship of multiple fields into dialogue to discuss how queer archival strategies might give voice to those rendered absent in historical accounts. I offer here the beginnings of a development in a queer temporal methodologies and how it applies to the case studies in the chapters following this introduction. I draw from J. Halberstam, Jose Muñoz, and Wayne Koestenbaum's "archives of ephemera" to dive into the history of drag traditions and queer dance music scenes; such an approach may prove necessary because the physical venues may not be extant and there is not yet secondary literature published on all specific locations. I found it important to investigate alternative print sources, such as our own local magazine on alternative culture the *Flagpole*, which has decades of weekly publications preserved in the Georgia Historical Newspapers project.[117] Even in places less universally celebrative of queer scenes and drag culture, alternative prints like the *Flagpole* provide a crucial link between event and audience. Other online queer community publications prove vital, especially while researching queer scenes continuity during a pandemic, such as *Project Q Atlanta*; however, even online publications face the same pressures as print, and diminished in number even as I undertook this project.[118] Towards the research of queer music styles and venues that happen to emerge in larger cities, I found projects including the virtual "sites" of the *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* its own valuable queer archive.[119] What makes the project so valuable is its ability to

---

[117] *Georgia Historical Newspapers,* Digital Library of Georgia https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/ (Accessed Feb. 14, 2023). Described as "a music rag" and the "Colorbearer of Athens Alternative Music," the weekly publication can be found in local cafes, bars, and shops. The most recent decade is archived at: https://flagpole.com/ (Accessed Feb. 14, 2023).
[118] Mike Fleming, "Project Q Atlanta goes on hiatus after 14 years," *Project Q Atlanta* https://www.projectq.us/project-q-atlanta-goes-on-hiatus-after-14-years/ (Accessed Feb. 14, 2023).
[119] The project has a map of virtual venues of queer historical importance you can explore. Each venue or space takes you to a page with a plethora of information and sources in various formats: photographs, recordings of interviews, flyers and other ephemera, transcripts, and links to further research. *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/ (Accessed December 7, 2021).

show on a map where historical venues and figures once were, allowing users to explore such

primary sources as photographs, recordings of interviews, transcripts, artwork, flyers and other

ephemera. These virtually archived materials became useful in piecing together timelines of queer

events, their evolution over time, a sense of how events fit into or parodied pop culture of the

time, as well as themes that were important in the past which continue to resurface in

performances today.

I had to dive deeper where there are spaces in existing published material. I include in the

materials I investigate: videos and accounts of past drag and queer events posted to channels of

local drag troupes via YouTube and Instagram; pictures (digital and physical collections);

physical promotional materials from events; social media advertisements and their connections to

specific accounts and hashtags; and descriptions, interviews already transcribed, reviews of past

events. Complicating matters of researching online is the recent social media targeting of queer

and trans contributors, which has led to the erasure and silencing of LGBT Twitter, Instagram,

and YouTube handles.[120] Social media certainly proves to be a double-edged sword for research.

YouTube videos prove a vital memory project for beloved DJs and venues lost, for example,

bringing together past participants to reminisce in recorded block parties and in the comments

section of videos.[121] I have considered the ramifications of recent complete censorship of Tumblr

accounts, which deleted most artwork and pictures relating to alternative sexual practices, a label

that is increasingly being applied to drag. Rescuing digital materials sometimes proves as difficult

---

[120] Well-known trans vlogger Chase at youtube.com/uppercaseCHASE1, describes this as "[six] fucking layers to this problem" of being targeted and silenced by both trolls and algorithms: 1. Restricted mode videos/posts (down from 700 to 4), 2. Age restrictions 3. Automatic de-monetizing videos that have "trans" in the title 4. Anti-LGBT ads placed on LGBT videos 5. Strikes on LGBT channels for "content," which bars the user from live-streaming 6. Complete removal of some LGBT accounts without strikes or warning: "EPISODE #113 - ANTI-LGBT ADS ON OUR VIDEOS?! (we wish this was clickbait)" (June 6, 2018) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9KOdAdccss (accessed April 18, 2019).

[121] For example, The BBC put together a radio program dedicated to showcasing live DJs, well-known and obscure, called *Legends of the Dance Floor*. "A Piece of Paradise" came out of discovering a four hour mix on tape of Levan playing the 2nd Anniversary party for the opening of Paradise (1979). BBC, *A Piece of Paradise 1 - Paradise Garage Lost Tapes* (Posted to YouTube, July 31, 2013) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq0NmNm2H5A (Accessed October 6, 2021).

and political a process as finding extant physical materials. Finally, while I do not conduct interviews with participants, this is an area where a rich opportunity exists to expand such a case study into a larger oral history project in the future. Oral history projects are queer temporal projects in their mode of bypassing institutional control, giving agency to the speaker. Amy Stone and Jaime Cantrell propose a queer archival method that critically reflects on every step of traditional historical inquiry: from the collection of materials, the storage of things, the transmission of knowledge, and the narratives constructed in relation to the subcultures they represent.[122] Queer archival methods finds those figures once considered invisible by turning to records that are unusual or fleeting; such methods challenge investigators to reflect critically on their process of searching, coding, analyzing, and writing.

Queering Fieldwork

Though what I conduct in the scope of this dissertation is not an ethnography, I consider how power and meaning are constructed at different stages of ethnographic writing: from the selection of scenes, jotting of field notes, to the representations imparted in final descriptions.[123] Without engaging directly with others, I focused on recording events and scenes as texts while staying aware of my own positioning in each space. As I continue to be an active member in the local communities I study (even if I do not actively do drag on stage), I have joined significant following of the multiple drag troupes that continue to perform locally. When I insert myself into scenes, I use methods that according to Kristin Luker "sees itself as socially embedded, is strongly committed to building theory in a cumulative way, and is deeply attentive to questions of power."[124] In my participant-observation I contemplate local scenes that queer the existing

---

[122] Jaime Cantrell and Amy L. Stone *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).
[123] As Robert M. Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw describe in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[124] Kristin Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3.

structures of power and space, how participating through "deep play"[125] and Pauline Oliveros'

concept of "deep listening"[126] may develop a "thick description,"[127] attuned to the many layers of

meanings at work. This self-reflexive interrogation is also informed by what anthropologist

Visweswaran terms "homework," and Bruno Nettl describes as "looking literally in one's own

backyard."[128] Through these methods, I contemplate on how seasonal queer stages invert existing

physical structures and geographies, the ways power maps onto these geographies and bodies,

and how I can seek the more hidden expressions of those groups unacknowledged in the

permanence of written text or more solid historical monuments.

Through the process of developing an embodied ethnography of queer events, I became

particularly conscious of the contradictions and tensions between such fieldwork and Queer

Theory's "subjectless view from nowhere," of which sociologist Adam Isaiah Green has

described as a "deconstructionist *raison d'etre.*"[129] These are tensions I have grappled with in

regard to my own physiognomy and how meanings mapped onto my body have changed over

time. I find a knowledge worth knowing from these epistemological tensions.

Additionally, I pair this theoretical offspring of post-structuralism with a more positive

lens of queer temporalities in order to find other modes of staging resistance in the quotidian

present. While a "stage" might be a mode of containment, a "developmental hiccup" in the

meaningful life progress that straight time dictates, Muñoz has considered how *stag-ing* a queer

"utopian performativity suggests another modality of doing and being that is in process,

---

[125] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 134, No. 4 (Fall, 2005): 56-86.

[126] Pauline Oliveros has described "acoustic space [as] where time and space merge as they are articulated by sound," and through "deep listening," one may perceive in sound much more than just pitch or timbre. Pauline Oliveros, "The Difference between Hearing and Listening," Lecture given at *TEDxIndianapolis* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QHfOuRrJB8 (Accessed Jan 1, 2017).

[127] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Original, 1973) in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 2000), 3-30.

[128] Bruno Nettl "Redefining the Field," in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 186.

[129] Adam Isaiah Green, "Queer Theory and Sociology," *Sociological Theory* 25:1 (March 2007): 27.

unfinished."[130] The queer temporalities of local scenes, then, have the potential to stage modes of being that disrupt straight business as usual, or as Wayne Koestenbaum has described, to "queer the pitch."[131]

Queering Analysis of Notated Music

In my investigation of temporalities in art music, popular dance music, audiovisual texts, and drag scenes-as-texts, I consider multiple modes of queer timing. First, I consider the way references to the past are coded as queer through a historical topic play. Elizabeth Freeman describes drag as a temporal process in her book, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, "with all the associations that the word *'drag'* has with retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past on the present."[132] Freeman's temporal drag is in reference to a particular lesbian film, made of collages discarded footage of the past. Thinking of drag in temporal terms reveals how it essentially relies on references to the past and topic play to work. Drag performers then play with *time* as much as they do *gender*. I suggest that musical drag is more than a play on gender or a quote from the past, but rather the way some evocation of the past questions, or queries, the current structures of the present.

Second, I consider how Queering narrative structure, drawing attention to – rather than smoothing out – narrative flaw also work to "*dramatize incoherencies*."[133] These signifying remainders come in the form of ghosts from the past, uncanny presences of other times that disrupt normative assumptions of how time works. Queering narrative, or narrative "flaw" may also exist in the structure of plot: flashbacks, cuts, dream sequences, and registers of different times within a music drama. The flaw may be in the structure of the music without words, something that disrupts the notion of organic unfolding, goal-oriented progress, and meaning

---

[130] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 98-99.
[131] Wayne Koestenbaum, "Queering the Pitch: A Posy of Definitions and Impersonations," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1.
[132] Freeman, *Time Binds*, 62.
[133] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices,* 17.

from oppositional contrast and the other ways scholars describe narrative in absolute music like

the works of Beethoven.[134]

Sound Studies and Electro-acoustic Analysis

A musicology or theory of electro-acoustic music,[135] a relatively new subfield, offers

insight towards considering the complexities of sound in space. More than analyzing single

sounds, recording technologies, or instruments, Timothy Taylor considers how music

technologies are inseparable from the social systems they emerge, writing:

> Whatever music technology is, it is not one thing alone. It is not separate from the social
> groups that use it; it is not separate from the individuals who invented it, tested it,
> marketed it, distributed it, sold it, repaired it, listened to it, bought it, or revived it...music
> technology – any technology – is not simply an artifact or a collection of artifacts; it is ,
> rather, always bound up in a social system, a "seamless web"...[136]

From an ethnography of music techies,[137] to a close reading of acousmatic art music,[138] here are

some methods for finding meaning in music that is frequently un-notated and free from the

confines of a rigid organization of pitch and time of traditional Western art music. Thus, in the

way that electro-acoustic music questions the legitimacy of rigid categories or elements of music,

it can be considered a queer project. From sound studies comes additional modes for analyzing

the physics of a sound decay in space, over time;[139] the timing and shape of those complex

waveforms contain imprints of a space within their reverberations.

---

[134] See, for example, the collection of essays on narrative and semiotic meaning in Beethoven's works: Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[135] In this, I include everything that is composed, produced, and mediated in real space through electronic means. I consider methods of analysis that finds meaning in Pierre Schaffer's Musique concrete and his collaborations with Pierre Henry *and* Éliane Radigue's methodical archiving of recorded sound, to popular electronic dance music that employs referential samples of the past, as it sounds in music video or dance clubs.

[136] Timothy D. Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 7.

[137] Eliot Bates, Lauren Flood, and Chris McGuinness, *The Ethnomusicology of Transduction: Listening Technologies and the Creation of Musical Communities*, panel at the Society for Ethnomusicology, Albuquerque, NM (November 18, 2018).

[138] For example, see Michael Clarke, "Jonathan Harvey's Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco," in *Analytical Methods of Electroacoustic Music*, edited by Mary Simoni, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 111-143.

[139] For example, see Pauline Oliveros, *Sounding the Margins: Collected Writings, 1992-2009,* edited by Lawton Hall (Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2010).
And Tom Bickley and Monique Buzzarté, ed.s *Anthology of Essays on Deep Listening* (Kingston,

Pauline Oliveros' work on recorded sounds in a subterranean cistern explores how sound disperses through space over time, allowing us to hear the past *in* the present.[140] This is echoed in the work of musicologist Bruce Holsinger, who describes the "embodiment of homoerotics:" "The Flesh of the Voice" as it fills the womb-like space of 11th century convents.[141] I consider Rebecca Lentjes's writing on 20th-century electro-acoustic composer, Éliane Radigue's "Biogenesis," a "piece that is referred to by musicologists not only as 'the sound of the void' but as a 'sonic blanket' recalling the comforts of the womb…[presenting] the heartbeats of potential human lives juxtaposed against those past and present."[142] Here is a productive space for dialogue among queer music studies of embodiment and the sound studies that present tools for the analysis of reverberations in real spaces.

Oliveros offers a few more insights that I contemplate in my own case studies. Her collaborations with other composers, improvisers, and technology were frequently unscripted (in the traditional music notation) and iterative in the way jazz improv is: referential to the past while sounding the ideology of perpetual becoming. Finally, she offers in her writings about listening a lexicon of terms we might use to shift the focus from visual imagery to "auralization," which gives me a way to investigate what Diana Taylor describes as "repertoire."[143] In this, I can find value in what is more ephemeral, less permanently inscribed and archived (as an M2 score, for instance). Oliveros develops ways of talking about and writing about music primarily through the language of sounds, rather than visual. In addition to an awareness of "being with the sound,"

NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2012).

[140] As practiced deep listeners found that "a 2 million-gallon concrete cistern, now empty,... has a 45-second reverb time: the Dan Harpole Cistern." Nat Evan, "The Cistern Chapel: Resonance from the Pacific Northwest" *New Music Box* (April, 2016) https://nmbx.newmusicusa.org/cistern-chapel/ (Accessed Jan. 1, 2017).

[141] Bruce Wood Holsinger, "The Flesh of the Voice: Embodiment and the Homoerotics of Devotion in the Music of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)" *Signs* 19 (Autumn 1993): 92-125.

[142] Conference paper turned into blog: Rebecca Lentjes, *Doom and Womb*, https://van-us.atavist.com/doom-and-womb (Accessed Jan. 1, 2017).

[143] See Pauline Oliveros, "Auralizing in the Sonosphere: Vocabulary for Inner Sound and Sounding," in *Sounding the Margins: Collected Writings, 1992-2009* (Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2010), 22-24.

Oliveros "also calls for an awareness of 'being between,' an attention to the space of waiting."[144] For Oliveros, considering how a sound is intimately connected with a space was always a temporal concern.

In the analysis of sound and image together, Dick Raaijamakers writes of the morphology of sound: the examination of sound profiles, layering images of electronic sound that become holographic, and the spatial distribution of layered sound.[145] Other electronic composers and theorists have written of the aspects of a sound, demonstrable on a spectrograph for instance, that even without definite single pitch can be the underlying logic of a piece of music organized around its harmonics, or by timbre and other unusual means.[146] In this, I have found some ways of hearing meaning in quotidian sounds and the way they reverberate in a given space, an important consideration for my subsequent chapters.

As with Jose Muñoz' discussions of scenes of futurity and staging as "always in flux" and never finished, a queer temporal process is equally difficult to pin down, always changing but with no definite goal. This may turn out to be another stage in queer or musicological scholarship, one that some may implore us to grow out of, but this is a framework that opens the door to considerations on musical meaning and time that may have been taken for granted in the past.

EXPLORING QUEER TEMPORALITIES IN MUSIC

The chapters that follow function as in-depth case studies of to illustrate what this theoretical introduction into queer temporalities proposes. The styles and techniques of musical language and the way I approach the study of music and interaction with music are distinct to each article-style chapter. While very different in approach, all these case studies do fall under the

---

[144] Jann Pasler, "Negotiating the Space Between: Ramos' *Musica pratica* (1482) and Pauline Oliveros' Challenge to Listeners," in *Anthology of Essays on Deep Listening* (Kingston, Monique Buzzarte and Tom Bickley, 263-71 (Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2012), 264.
[145] Dick Raaijamakers, *Cahier "M": A Brief Morphology of Electric Sound* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2000).
[146] See, for example, Michael Clarke, "Jonathan Harvey's Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco," in *Analytical Methods of Electroacoustic Music* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

umbrella of queer temporal theoretical approaches, as I have introduced them in this opening chapter. Each has the potential for its own deeper exploration in a separate book; I am interested here in what their juxtaposition elucidates about this fledgling subfield. The three case studies, which follow this theoretical introduction, connect the past with the present, and other worlds with this one, showing how queer expressions are simultaneously *new* and *very old.* I follow reanimations of classic myths of metamorphosis to the queer staging of futurity and "temporal drag" around present-day Athens, Georgia. Through this lens, I find queer time in art music, popular dance genres, music video, and local drag scenes, finding space in between the notes, sounds, and staging of other times where queer expressions thrive.

Chapter 2. Mythology and Metamorphosis: Rethinking Neoclassicism in Britten

In my second chapter, I analyze how Benjamin Britten questions assumptions about time and the stability of categories including gender in his short piece for solo oboe, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (1951). The source material for his brief tone poems is a book of translated excerpts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, thus the themes explore Greek mythology as transcribed by the Roman poet in 2-8 CE. Though quite short, I am inclined to refer to Britten's six movements--which explore the mythological transformations of Syrinx, Narcissus, Arethusa, Niobe, Phaeton, and the mortals surrounding Bacchus-- as tone poetry rather than vignettes because of the necessary depiction of change, reflected in the musical development of melodic motives, tonality, structure, or rhythm. One being changes into another, crossing lines thought to be rigid and immutable in Britten's modern world: gender, species, and animate to inanimate.

Britten's choice of text marks a deliberate departure from traditionally sourced Western Christian texts for a parable of creation. Ovid's text offers an alternative myth, one which allows for diversity of being and remarks on the fluidity of nature and the earth's seasons. It is a significant choice for Britten because it aligns with his own admissions that he believed himself to be an anachronism, not because he was traditional or old-fashioned in the social-moral sense, but the opposite. He probably saw the unspoken rigid codes of conduct that were gendered, raced,

and inextricably about sexuality, as stemming from a kind of false parable of Christian world

making, a world that did not have a place for Britten's own sexuality. Drawing from a text that

emerged around the same time as other religious texts, and significantly before the Anglican

church, questions the validity of the Christian text as the one, right way. It is significant to us

today by showing that despite the popular misconception of newness, queer and trans ways of

being existed in the pre-modern world, even without the identity labels we employ today.

Britten's musical illustration of metamorphosis also focuses our attention on the

temporalities of deeply affecting emotions and how time can feel differently depending on one's

physiological and emotional state. His musical language also changes movement by movement,

deliberately borrowing modes or techniques from different musical time periods in juxtaposition.

In order to analyze how his tonal language can manipulate time, I draw from various theoretical

approaches, connecting analysis of the notes as they are written to a semiotics of time. We might

write of an organizing force of Alban Berg's Lieder, for example, as octatonic collections

alternating with whole tone collections in juxtaposition; Britten organizes and comments

musically through collections of signifiers from different times in juxtaposition. I further connect

this temporal topic play, a form of temporal "drag" as literary scholar Elizabeth Freeman

describes,[147] with Britten's larger staged works, such as *Death in Venice*.

Additionally, I analyze the way the musical metamorphosis unfolds. Each movement's

musical narrative raises larger questions for the interpretation of the myths--texts that are

transcribed and translated by multiple mediators--and it questions the fragile foundation for the

gendered roles of Britten's and our present day. As the subjects in the myths flee from

compulsory heterosexuality,[148] they transform to escape its violent norms, turning from an

---

[147] Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," in *Time Binds,* 62.
[148] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-60.

expected life timeline that requires progeny and goal-oriented progress to be considered valuable.[149]

Beyond considerations of a musical text, I contemplate the philosophical meaning of how the music was performed in a live setting. I consider the physiology of performing the piece on location by a woman who is neither genderless nor unfamiliar with performing Britten's works that contemplated gendered violence. The piece was commissioned for a particular person and place, both of which add to the significance of what I found in the text. In the case of the six myths Britten chose, their locations referenced topically, or *loci*, resonate with the real location selected for the work's premier: on the water.

I investigate the work of a 20th-century British composer who has been studied extensively in regard to his exploration of compositional techniques, chromaticism, operas that confront themes of morality, persecution, and sexuality. Being extensively studied does not mean there is nothing left to say about Benjamin Britten. Nor should this exploration be misread as a defense of the study of one Western Anglo composer in the place of the much-deserved attention that non-western, non-white composers do not receive in the academy. My second chapter is one exploration of a composer, his work, and his collaboration with a musician which has not yet been considered with this particular lens. I intended that this second chapter be considered in the context of its juxtaposition with subsequent chapters that do explore less-canonized figures, musical styles, and ways of interacting with music. In my second chapter, I travel down the rabbit hole of temporalities in art music, which have not yet been fully connected with Britten's works and tie this analysis of musical text to its larger significance to queer music studies and the analysis of instrumental art music in this way.

---

[149] As critiqued in Lee Edelman, *No Future.*

Chapter 3. Queer Remixes: Temporal Drag and EDM's Continuity in Stromae's Audio-visual Texts

In my third chapter, I consider the oeuvre of Belgian artist, Stromae, that consists of videos intended to bring humor and transparency to the process of creation. My analysis delves in particular into electro-acoustic and audio-visual texts that reference both EDM's past and operatic history. Engaging with this re-setting of *Carmen* questions our social and economic practices in the present. How he layers musical texts harken back to the queer temporal roots of EDM's beginnings.

This work necessitated that I investigate queer archives to find accounts of the development of a musical style that is not canon or yet frequently studied in academia. I needed to comprehensively outline Electronic Dance Music history as a style and way of queer musicking, before its more recent commercialization. In so doing, I draw from Micah Salkind's rich studies of EDM's development in his recently published scholarship on Chicago's scenes.[150] Salkind's work is unique in its scope, in which he combines extensive oral histories with a geography of Chicago's queer spaces, music discussion, and analysis of the socio-economic factors affecting Disco's survival and EDM's beginnings in queer of color underground spaces.

Where scholarship on NYC's EDM creators and scenes is not yet published, I look to variety of materials and ephemera, through a kind of "scavenger methodology,"[151] that helps piece together the multiple coterminous timelines of Disco's transition into EDM. This is where I found the *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* to be invaluable: accessible through an interactive map is an archive of the physical locations that once and, in some cases, still exist where queer communities interacted. On the pages for the Paradise Garage are ephemera from the shows, pictures, and remembrances, especially for their talented resident DJ, Larry Levan. Despite the club's closing and eventual demolition, the site remains on the map virtually in this queer archive.

---

[150] Micah E. Salkind, *Do You Remember House?: Chicago's Queer of Color Undergrounds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[151] J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 13.

Paradise is but one place and time that cultivated queer EDM community and led to the style of music from which Stromae draws and references.

Delving into the history of EDM upends today's dominating notions about the style; I find the stylistic and technique contributes to a category of music that has been meaningful to queer groups, but which is also temporally queer in its construction. It is the more recent commercialized trend that eclipses EDM's rich history as a style that fostered intergenerational and inter-racial queer communing. Stromae's setting of music from queer of color EDM scenes in the 1980s, with additional references to Afro-Caribbean vocalists and Cuban songs, returns his 2010s EDM style back to its queer of color roots while questioning its recent commercialization.

Chapter 4: Staging Resilience: Performing Drag in the South

In this chapter, I explore the temporality of queer musicking in the town I've called home for the duration of my graduate studies. Local queer communities come together in celebration of chosen family and to support each other in times of crisis, including multiple epidemics, and this happens on a timeframe that defies the day-to-day business as usual. In this frame, queer timing refers to several alternative ways of musicking: I find intentional references to past decades and media through drag, literally temporal drag. I also consider the stages on which drag shows are performed which transform annually into something else from the typically flat stage that focuses audience attention on a musician or band, instead inventing a structure that invites a different orientation to the audience. This alternative, yet temporary, physicality of the stage speaks to the metaphor of a "stage," something often spoken of queer identities as a phase to grow out of. A stage becomes a temporal and physical way to invert power as it is usually structured throughout a downtown scene: a temporary community that can reappear periodically, even when no one building or street is owned or controlled by that community.

I describe scenes of queer musicking as rich musical "texts." I use the term musicking to mean interactions with music, sometimes involving music making but also lip-syncing and dancing. Investigating such scenes entails queering the temporality of sociological methods of

qualitative research and observation: the scene does not exist daily at the same time in the same place, so traditional methodology does not render it visible. To investigate scenes that exist outside of the usual, routine, and expected, I needed to visit scenes that were cyclical, sometimes differing in venue, and consider how the scenes themselves changed venues by altering the appearance, feel, and power structure that maps onto a town. I read these rich social and musical "texts" through participant observation, placing myself on location and to record not just the names of songs, performers, and thick descriptions of performances, but also to think about how sound reverberates in a space or even competes for space. I consider this a kind of thick description in that I explore layers of meaning through additional research: i.e. how musical or gestural signs can mean multiple things at once to the people meant to interpret them ("winks upon winks").[152] While Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description" is not in itself a queer theoretical approach, I believe it has potential to explore frameworks of temporalities through an analysis of temporal topoi and the rendering visible of multiple layers of meaning over time. In short, I look for the link between thick description, "deep play," and "deep listening."[153]

Researching the contexts of what thematic drag I observed meant going down rabbit holes of queer and cult following for the films and music referenced in a show. Such an endeavor also required the exploration of the history of local drag troupes and queer community events. While seldom preserved in any official archives or publications, I consider what alternative sources and ephemera help piece together a history of decades of LGBTQ events across town. I include an extensive search of the local music rag, an alternative paper produced weekly by and for Athens' townies; a collection of ephemera from events; video recordings preserved on the YouTube channels of local drag troupes. J. Halberstam describes evidence that might be less

---

[152] Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick description," Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Original, 1973) in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 2000), 3-30.

[153] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 134, No. 4 (Fall, 2005): 56-86; Pauline Oliveros, "The Difference between Hearing and Listening," Lecture given at *TEDxIndianapolis* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QHfOuRrJB8 (Accessed Jan 1, 2017).

permanently recorded or stored as "archives of ephemera,"[154] which are frequently the places where evidence of queer communities resides.

Conclusions and Returns

Throughout this dissertation, I focus on performances of gender, race, sexuality, and class that bend time to unwork or survive violent hegemonic norms. The significance of a queer temporal lens is in finding the space within the margins: an epistemology of people rendered invisible. By envisioning alternative presents, futures, or pasts different from how they may have been recorded, the current *modus operandi* is revealed to be narrow, false, and fragile. This is a queer perspective that questions the current hegemonic norms defining meaningful life progress as straight, goal-oriented, and according to capitalist logics. It reveals these norms to be more carefully defined, contained, and constructed than the marginalized against which they define themselves.[155] A queer temporal lens can reveal the violence and unnaturalness of the suppression of all other modes of being by the hegemonic norms of a time. In addition, queer temporal texts have the potential to elucidate strategies for survival in the present.

---

[154] Judith Halberstam, "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives," in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga, 3-25 (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[155] For the short and precarious history of terms like "homosexuality," and demonization of alternative sexualities as another violence on which the U.S. was founded, see Michael Bronski, *A Queer History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

CHAPTER 2

MYTHOLOGY AND METAMORPHOSIS: REFRAMING NEOCLASSICISM IN BRITTEN

"The love I had discovered belonged to Classical times of Greece rather than to Christianity of

today."[1]

– Benjamin Britten

Benjamin Britten travels through time in his 1951 composition, *Six Metamorphoses after*

Ovid for unaccompanied oboe. By manipulating temporality throughout this small work, the

openly gay British composer challenges performers and listeners of the present and the future to

think about their own relationship with the times in which they live. Commissioned for the

Aldeburgh Festival, the work evidences a deep collaboration with oboist Joy Boughton, to whom

Britten dedicated the work premiering on her birthday, June 14, 1951. As a post-war composition

in which each movement invites a listener to contemplate ancient-Classical settings, *Six*

Metamorphoses after Ovid is sometimes referenced as neoclassical.[2] Britten's musical scenes

draw from the Roman poet Ovid's compilation of Greek myths, who just prior to his exile by

Augustus began the composite poem, *Metamorphoses* (C.E. 2-8). Depicting mythical

transformations from one state of being to another, Britten challenges the performer of his *Six*

Metamorphoses to shapeshift through changing sound and affective state. Such musical

shapeshifting allows the performer to embody the different personalities and gendered

perspectives present in the narrative. It is especially Britten's manipulation of musical time—

through meter, and rhythm as well as tonal and topical reference to different times and

---

[1] Christopher Headington, *Peter Pears: A Biography* (London: Faber, 1992), 15. Also quoted in George Caird, "Six Metamorphoses after Ovid and the Influence of Classical Mythology on Benjamin Britten," in *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on His Life and Work*, edited by Lucy Walker, 46-55, Aldeburgh Studies in Music 8 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009): 47.

[2] I deal with the nuances of defining neoclassicism later.

geographies—that elevates Ovid's metamorphoses into something more than a short virtuosic concert piece: an astute commentary on his and our present-day social roles.

Rather than employing the musical forms and the tonal hierarchy of the long 18th-century, Britten's neo-classicism in *Six Metamorphoses* travels to a more distant past. Britten's musical narration of Ovid's poetry unsettles temporal expectations of how a classically influenced work should unfold. Bucking convention, Britten *queers* the "more conventional 'neo-classicism,'" as the style has been described from the structural markers of musical neoclassicism in works by Prokofiev, Stravinsky, and Ravel.[3] Britten avoids responding to limiting conventions through newness of technique and reinterpretations of classical forms; rather, he avoids the neoclassical style more in fashion in his own time and instead calls upon even older ways of producing and organizing sound which he strategically juxtaposes against multiple historical styles. In this chapter, I consider how Britten's neoclassicism avoids restoring the order and symmetry of Enlightenment sensibilities and yearns for a "then and there"[4] beyond the past two centuries, a time before and, possibly, after rigid categories of social organization.

Before delving into a close analysis of Britten's Metamorphoses, I trace Britten's identifications with the Roman poet Ovid and the subjects of the composite poem Metamorphoses, considering the significance of this classical text as a source. I also contemplate Britten's collaboration with intended performer Joy Boughton, a connection that will prove important when I consider how the gendered subjectivity of the six mythical subjects became envoiced through Boughton's performance on location. Next, I consider Britten's reason for turning to specific classical settings and myths and propose an explanation for how and why his particular neoclassical sensibility differs so starkly from compatriots and contemporary

---

[3] Jennifer Doctor, Judith LeGrove, Paul Banks, Heather Wiebe, and Philip Brett, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," *Grove Music Online* (2001, updated 2013) https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

[4] Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

composers. Following discussion of these three musical identifications, I develop methods of analysis for the notated music. In the middle third of this chapter, devoted to my analysis of Six *Metamorphoses after Ovid*, I find multiple compositional techniques that evoke other times and places, setting the ancient-classic poetry in juxtapositions of historical styles. While Britten's style ranges from the mimesis of ancient, indigenous instruments to a temporally displaced Baroque counterpoint, his musical language exceeds the boundaries of what most musicologists have considered as markers of 20th-century neoclassical music. In the final third of this chapter, I unpack the meaning of neoclassicism in art, literature, and music, finding the post-war aesthetic of returning to order and older musical forms to be about much more than just a retreat from expressionism. Britten's deliberate evasion of a more nostalgic neoclassicism, which served a dual purpose of commemorating and justifying a nation's history, speaks to his rhetorical strategies of portraying those othered, exiled, or persecuted by their own communities or the social norms of a state.

I recognize that the ingrained social roles of both Britten's and our present times owe their logic to 18th and 19th-century European taxonomies. Queer time travel, then, becomes about finding space for those who do not fit these narrowly defined roles, or the temporally bound mores that created them. Britten's communion with voices of distant times and geographies pierces the feedback loop of a nostalgic neoclassicism. I argue that in collaborating with Boughton in the present and reaching back through time to dialogue with Ovid (who wrote about the fluid and changing nature of existence in the world),Britten challenges us to consider the epistemic value of transitioning between different social locations. Britten and Boughton's engagement with time and space also troubles what is taken for granted as natural: the *modi operandi* and false histories on which present hegemonies are justified.

Britten's Identification with Ovid

Britten's selection of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as a source text is the first indication of the composer's divergent neoclassical sensibilities. Evident from the age of the original source text,

but also in the particularities of Ovid's scenes and how Britten narrates them musically, Britten's depictions reference a time pre-18th-century, pre-rationalism, and pre-Enlightenment. His setting of Ovid's "Pan" and "Narcissus," for example, topically evokes the pastoral homoeroticism of neoclassical art in the early Italian Renaissance (e.g., Donatello's *David*, 1444).[5] Like the fluidity of form in early neoclassical sculpture, the characters of Ovid's text are often fluid in their physical forms and are pastoral in setting. Ovid created the poetry from shifting perspectives that give testimony to "forms changed into new bodies."[6] Britten's envoicing of characters from Ovid's poetry equally shifts perspectives through the process of transitioning from one state to another. Without imposing our modern terminology, Ovid's poetry and Britten's composition both make space for the existence, if not the perspectives of shapeshifters between gendered bodies.[7] Britten's neoclassicism, inspired by interpretations of the Classics of ancient Greece, references a time before gender was redefined as a rigid dichotomy (in the 18th-century) and before heterosexuality was defined by the coining of its marked opposite, "homosexuality" (in the 19th-century).[8]

---

[5] The work is often described as "Neo-Platonic" or neoclassical for, despite its Biblical character, reintroduced use of the bronze male nude figure in contrapposto stance; pastoral for its setting and the flower-crown atop David's head, his sandals, and the wreath on which his sword rests. It is an intimate, androgynous, and contemplative David (in contrast to the more public marble Michelangelo statue). Steven Zucker describes "This intimacy is not simply a result of the nudity, but also of the emotional experience Donatello renders through the face and even the stance of the body." Zucker writes, "the contrapposto is also Donatello's swagger, the sculptor's rendering of David offers the most complete expression of this natural stance since antiquity. We know he was studying ancient Roman art with his friends, Masaccio and Brunelleschi and it's worth noting that he reclaims more than just the classical knowledge of contrapposto, he has also reclaimed the large-scale bronze casting of the ancient world." Steven Zucker, Beth Harris, and Heather Graham, "Donatello, David," *Smart History: The Center for Public Art History* (Updated August 10, 2021) https://smarthistory.org/donatello-david/ (Accessed September 13, 2021).
[6] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.1-2. English translation by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).
[7] Ovid references a classical gender transition as a natural occurrence in Pythagoras's speech on the changing nature of everything: "But if there is anything to wonder at in such novelties as these, we might wonder that the hyena changes her nature and that a creature which was but now a female and mated with a male is now a male herself…" Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book XV: 408-411.
[8] See, for example, Hanne Blank, *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

Rather than presenting the single narrative typical of the epic poetic genre, Ovid's

Metamorphoses "covers everything, and does so in a chaotic tumble," moving from "primordial

ooze to Greece to Rome to the heavens,"[9] steadfastly stipulating "change as the only constant."[10]

The changes documented by Ovid not only include the physical metamorphoses of the immortals

of Greek mythology, but also the constantly shifting subjectivities voiced by contemporary

philosophers. Ovid grouped the fifteen books of his composite poem into Greek gods and lesser

gods (books 1-5), mythical heroes (books 6-10), and historical figures (11-15). *Metamorphoses*

functioned as a kind of archive in its collection of Greek myths, gods, and heroes, and the

expansive poem later became a resource from which many writers drew, including Shakespeare.

Even so, no one figure, element, or creature is static in its form. The *Metamorphoses* represented

the beginnings of categorizing the world and knowledge as similar subjects were treated around

the millennium (0 C.E.); the significance of its selection is its reemergence as a source text for an

origin myth and categorization of things rather than the Bible or contemporary scientific texts.

Britten found a kindred spirit in Ovid, perhaps identifying with the poet's treatment of

figures who were singled out and removed from their communities.[11] Classicist Laurel Fulkerson

considers the poetry that followed Ovid's banishment from the Roman Empire to be poetry of

exile.[12] She writes that "metamorphosis nearly always means exile: even Io, eventually turned

back into human form, lives the rest of her life in a foreign land."[13] Britten's setting of Ovid's

text, the work of a poet exiled from his own community two millennia ago, reflects on the themes

which musicologist Philip Brett highlighted in Britten's staged works: innocence, persecution,

---

[9] Laurel Fulkerson, *Ovid: A Poet on the Margins*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 11.
[10] Ibid., 26.
[11] See Laurel Fulkerson, *Ovid: A Poet on the Margins*; and Philip Brett's discussions of Britten's more nuanced portrayal of Peter Grime's social ostracization and effective exile in Philip Brett, "Britten and Grimes," (first published *Musical Times 117*, 1977) in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), 11-33.
[12] Laurel Fulkerson, *Ovid: A Poet on the Margins* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
[13] Fulkerson, 65.

violence, and exile.[14] Britten's setting of the *Metamorphoses* delves even further into the effects of violence and isolation hinted at in Ovid's texts. While Britten was not the only composer who considered Ovid, he does so in a way that complicates previously flat readings of the myths. Rather than composing a dramatic musical depiction of Ovid's plot word-for-word, Britten focuses on the *affect* that catalyzes the metamorphosis or change from one state of being into another. Through a collaboration with Joy Boughton and his own developed sense of empathy as a social exile of sorts, Britten's sonic metamorphoses are nuanced. In his empathetic renderings of Ovid's feminine characters who must change form to escape gendered violence or loss, Britten gives voice to those who were rendered present yet silent in Ovid's text.

Britten and Boughton

Britten's only work for unaccompanied oboe is significant for the context of its performance as well as its notated musical text. The top of the first page carries a dedication, "*For Joy Boughton*." Several correspondences, programs, and other materials suggest that Boughton was possibly a friend and long-time collaborator of Britten's.[15] The two met at the Royal College of Music, where she began her studies in 1929, one year before Britten's arrival. Her pupil Sarah Francis recollects that before Boughton was in Britten's orchestra for his most significant opera premieres she performed with John Francis and Millicent Silver to form the Baroque chamber ensemble, the Sylvan trio.[16] It was this trio, with the addition of harpsichord, that formed the London Harpsichord Ensemble, which became the core of the English Opera Group Orchestra, Britten's ensemble for the premier of many of his operas. Boughton and Britten must have been acquainted some 20 years before he set Ovid's poetry for solo oboe.

---

[14] See Philip Brett, "'Grimes Is at His Exercise': Sex, Politics, and Violence in the Librettos of *Peter Grimes*," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), 34-53; Philip Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas," (first published in *Queering the Pitch*, 1994) in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), 129-153.
[15] Sarah Francis, "Joy Boughton: A Portrait" *Double Reed News* 26 (orig. Feb. 1994, reprinted in *The Double Reed*, February 2004): 63-66.
[16] Ibid.

Francis remembers Boughton specifically in the role as English hornist for Britten's opera, *The Rape of Lucretia*, recalling that she had "a lovely well-focused tone which you *had* to listen to. Every phrase had meaning. It was sincere playing, warm but not sentimental."[17] Through oboe and English horn in Britten's opera orchestra, Boughton gave voice to the pain, innocence, and loss inflicted by gendered violence. Around the same time, Britten composed his first works for solo oboe in the *Temporal Variations* (1936), showing Britten was considering the significance of the instrument, its affective potential, and experimenting with different techniques in temporalities.

Britten's Neoclassical Identity

Greek mythological characters and references to ancient Greek culture appear repeatedly across Britten's *oeuvre*, even if *Six Metamorphoses* is the only work identifying Ovid as a source. Britten marks many appearances of the Greek myths in his staged vocal and instrumental works, both compositionally and through extramusical associations, suggesting queer literary cross-references and musical intertexts. References to the ancient past are, thus, not merely coincidental. Britten's interest in the classics has been linked to his collaborations with a circle of gay literary friends, particularly W.H. Auden.[18] Additional anecdotes describe Britten travelling with Classical anthologies, including two copies of *The Selected Works of Ovid*, which remain archived in the Britten-Pears Foundation.[19] He includes Classical poetic references in such compositions as *Young Apollo* (1939), which Philip Brett describes as infused with Britten's infatuation with the youth Wulff Scherchen.[20] The work also contains an additional Ovidian

---

[17] Francis, "Joy Boughton: A Portrait," 63-66.

[18] Additionally, Britten's setting of Auden's poetry in the song cycle *On this Island* has been connected to Baroque sensibilities: it "open[s] with a Baroque flourish and Purcellian melisma that no sensitive English songwriter of the previous 50 years would have countenanced, and ends with a throwaway dance-hall tune to match Auden's parody of bourgeois materialistic existence." Philip Brett, Heather Wiebe, Jennifer Doctor, Judith LeGrove, and Paul Banks, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," in *Grove Music Online* https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

[19] Caird, 47.

[20] Brett, et. al., "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," in *Grove Music Online* https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

reference through its use of quotations from John Keats "Hyperion."[21] In his final opera, *Death in Venice* (1973), Britten wove the metaphorical voices of Apollo and Dionysus into counterpoint as his protagonist describes the Polish youth Tadzio as beautiful in the aesthetic terms of the classic Greek male ideal. A perhaps better-known example is the stage the immortals from Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* share. Britten has paired fairy queen Titania, who ultimately traces back to Ovid's text, alongside figures from Celtic (Puck) and German (Oberon) mythology. Britten's access to Ovid appears often with to other literary and artistic references to create scenes of the distant, otherworldly, and supernatural to contrast the quotidian.

Because I consider existing literature on music and meaning in Britten's larger staged works, I find it important to highlight the temporal links between his operas and *Six Metamorphoses*. "Antique" of *Les Illuminations*, Britten's 1939 work for voice and strings, echoes with purposeful intertextuality, a yearning *idée fixe* for the "Gracieux fils de Pan" (Graceful son of Pan) and bears a dedication to Wulff. "Pan," in the opening movement of *Six Metamorphoses*, evokes a classical pastoral scene in imitation of the hybrid beast-man who plays airy Dionysian pipes. And Britten's "Phaeton" from *Six Metamorphoses* shares compositional strategies with early work *Young Apollo*, with both pieces opening in bombastic arpeggiating leaps. Where Britten's 1951 Phaeton musically narrates his plummet into the river Padus, the particular lines of Keats quoted in *Young Apollo* depict how Phaeton's mother Clymene uses a seashell to make sound. The above-mentioned references are but a few examples of classical topoi linking Britten's works, even those works composed decades apart. From large operatic works to smaller vocal or instrumental pieces, references to the Ancient Greek myths, their

---

[21] Brett, et. al., "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," in *Grove Music Online* https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019); Caird, 48; Phaeton, the subject of Britten's second metamorphosis in his 1951 work for oboe, "rode upon the chariot of the sun for one day and was hurled into the river Padus by a thunderbolt." Britten's inscription, Benjamin Britten, "Phaeton," *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952).

settings by Roman poet Ovid, are like Ariadne threading a labyrinth of connections through affect, woven throughout Britten's works.

Britten stated of his operatic composing, "I am possibly an anachronism," referring to his love for the dramatic genre and the mid-century perception of opera as passé.[22] Britten's references to previous styles of art and composition seem to be simultaneously "identification with other times,"[23] and "notes of unbelonging" with his present-day communities.[24] For many 20th-century composers, neoclassicism presented a way of restoring order and rationalism to a war-torn present, while muting preceding trends of expressionism.[25] Reaching back, though not too far, to musical aesthetics valuing order, symmetry, and a nation's beloved artists, neoclassicism expressed justification for the political and national entities of the present. In contrast, Britten weaves texts that yearn for a time and place outside of the logic of his *milieu*. Historians and literary scholars who employ queer theories in their work have discussed how expressions of feeling "backward," "out of time," or having "bad timing," and identifications with a past that is dissonant with the present are queer identifications.[26] Britten *queers* neoclassicism and the values it represents to his contemporary music circles.

Shapeshifting with the Music: a method for analysis

In Six *Metamorphoses after Ovid,* Britten explores multiple compositional styles and techniques, taking a vastly different approach with each movement. No one singular influence or

---

[22] Jennifer Doctor, et al, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," *Grove Music Online* 2001, updated 2013 https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

[23] Ann Pellegrini, "Touching the Past; or, Hanging Chad," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (April 1, 2001): 185-94.

[24] Lloyd Whitesell, "Notes of Unbelonging," in *Benjamin Britten Studies: Essays on An Inexplicit Art*, edited by Vicki P. Stroeher and Justin Vickers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017), 214-233.

[25] As it applies to analysis of the post-first-war works of Stravinsky. Don Michael Randel, ed., "Neoclassical" in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999): 449; and according to Arnold Whittall, "Neo-classicism" in *Grove Music Online* 2001 https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 5 Feb. 2021).

[26] On how feeling "backward," "out of time" or having "bad timing," respectively, are queer temporal sensibilities, see: Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

period dominates his musical language, thus in my search for a singular method to elucidate meaning in this short yet complex work, I failed. I applied the same mode of analysis to different movements and found that where one technique clarified a movement, the meaning in other movements remained occluded. Metrical fluctuations are important in "III. Niobe," for example, perhaps because of the relationship of Niobe's text and music to the affect of grief: the mimesis of sobbing contributes to her musical metamorphosis into stone. In contrast, I found that all of Pan's or Syrinx's utterances in "I. Pan" are deliberately unmetered. I also had to be more flexible in my analysis of melody and implied harmony. Post-tonal set theory quickly illuminated the non-functional tetrachord juxtapositions in "II. Phaeton," while in "III. Niobe," Britten relies on a relatively "functional" tonality and in "I. Pan" he references pre-tonal modality. Set theory thus proved poor in analyzing these latter two movements. With the sound and tonal organization of each movement so distinct, I employed a "scavenger method" to find meaning in the work as a whole.[27] J. Halberstam describes a queer "scavenger methodology" as "us[ing] different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour."[28] I had to develop a method of shapeshifting with the music itself to study Britten's setting of Ovid's metamorphized and exiled characters.

Thinking about the multitude of levels of musical meaning in *Six Metamorphoses* necessitated a queer close reading. The subtle transformations of the tetrachords in "II. Phaeton" are equally as fascinating as the dramatic narration of his fall from air to water below. While the change in altitude can be felt most acutely in the literally plummeting melodic line, Britten's oboist communicates on multiple levels at once and the resulting changes in character via transformations in pitch collections add depth to a surface-level reading. In another example, "V. Narcissus," presents an obvious melodic reflection via register change. However, hidden

---

[27] J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.
[28] Ibid.

between the melodic lines is a covert counterpoint for the musician/analyst who knows where to look. Only apparent when the two temporally displaced lines are aligned on a staff, this hidden duet not only illuminates the synchronization of two linear melodies in time, but also the fusion of Baroque and 20th-century techniques. I envision this kind of queer close reading to be an expansion on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "epistemology of the closet," which is a concept she describes as a navigation of the duality of secrecy and disclosure, necessitated by "the deadly elasticity of a heterosexist presumption."[29] A queer close reading draws from the epistemology of having to pass in a dominant culture as non-threatening (i.e. cisgender and straight), while recognizing those who are similarly situated.

I consider the changes a composer makes in perspective, style, or technique, and the shifts a musicologist takes in methodology, to reflect an epistemology of shapeshifting. What I propose in addition to Sedgwick and Halberstam's strategies for queer readings is a trans-informed music theory, which values the knowledge of people who have had to camouflage and change their physiognomy to survive or thrive. I find this strategically shifting approach to music analysis to be particularly useful in the study of a work in which metamorphosis of some kind is the central theme. One method of structural analysis imposed on the piece would obscure how multiple layers of meaning work together. It is only through a lens as flexible and changing as the subjects themselves, which morph from one state of being into another, that the layers begin to unveil.

Concerning Tonality: Finding Meaning in Sound

I first turned my analysis towards chromatic notes and modulations that stand out from their surrounding musical context. . Existing literature on Britten considers the semiotics of

---

[29] Closets spring up in the everyday interactions with new individuals and institutions a gay person encounters and self-disclosure is strategic and a never ending project. While her focus is on the knowledge gained from living as a gay person in the 20th-century US, I find the concept relevant to considering epistemology under the umbrella of queer existence. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 67-90.

chromatic "problems," the meaning of tonal language, modulation, and their connection to affect. Stephen Arthur Allen, for example, draws a line between affect and key in Britten's chromatic slippage from sharp keys to flat keys in his large, staged works. Allen describes the slip from **"**E (in E Maj) to E-flat (C minor) on 'O pride,' [in which] the aural sense is of transition from something warm to something cold. The sense of loss evoked in the slide...points forward…to *Death in Venice*."[30] Elsewhere, Mervyn Cooke connects what he labels a "wild chromatic 'canker' filling-in the third," first heard in the voices of *Our Hunting Fathers*, to the strings and winds in the late opera *Death in Venice*.[31] Cooke and Allen describe these chromatic slips and voice leading with such rhetoric that within the framework of traditional voice leading the "problems" and failures to properly resolve connote disease or aberrance.

What seem to present as singular chromatic "problems," or in Cooke's term, "chromatic canker[s]" in reference to singular chromaticisms, might at first glance appear to be chromatic upper or lower neighbors that trouble the tonic or central tonality.[32] However, I find that chromaticisms in many of the movements of Britten's *Six Metamorphoses* are never easily explained by simply labeling them embellishing tones. Britten also marks such chromaticisms temporally through cadence, metrical accent, repetition, or agogic accent. These problem notes stand out as notes of importance. Like the socially imposed categories that Britten troubles, chromatic "problems" depend on the context of the phrase and the work to represent what scholars of tonal music consider something that should not—per voice leading rules—exist.[33] To the existing theoretic understanding of "problems" in voice leading, I add the secondary meaning

---

[30] Stephen Arthur Allen, "'O Hurry to the Feted Spot of Your Deliberate Fall': Death in Britten, 1936-1940," in *Rethinking Britten*, edited by Philip Rupprecht (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 22.
[31] Ibid., 22.
[32] Mervyn Cooke, "Be Flat or Be Natural?: Pitch Symbolism in Britten's Operas," in *Rethinking Britten*, edited by Philip Rupprecht (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102-127.
[33] Beethoven's C-Sharp chromatic problem in Eroica propels the drama but is smoothed out by the end; Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation. Advances in Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

of "problem" as an enigma, something which challenges us to think about present contexts or practices.[34] I want to use the idea of a "problem" note or tonal area as a mark of something worth investigating, rather than smoothing out; in so doing, I seek to problematize the previously unquestioned idea that these sounds (and the concepts or people they symbolize) are in need of correction.

Another tonal concern involves what some scholars have found in the connection of certain tonalities with mythological figures, classical themes, and people Britten is known to have adored. Scales and triads outlining A Major repeat relentlessly in Britten's early work *Young Apollo* (1939), for example, a work which, as I mentioned before, has been connected to his infatuation with Wulff Scherchen. Cooke considers Britten's attachment to particular keys to be enduring and not coincidental when they arise. He describes how a "direct connection between A major and Apollo was to remain and many years later it resurfaced memorably in *Death in Venice* (1973)."[35] In another article on Britten's works from 1936-1940, Allen argues that throughout these early works, after which Britten had begun seeing Peter Pears, Britten continued to lament or pine after Wulff, an expressive affect identified by Allen through a hermeneutic reading of Britten's tonal language.[36] While I am often skeptical of these kinds of specific biographical readings into or onto music, there do appear to be affective connections between tonalities across the works, or at least evidence that Britten's choice of key is important.

The meaning of certain tonalities across Britten's works reveals additional significance. In the third movement of the violin concerto, for example, Allen states that "the last few bars of the movement slowly strum the soloist into a temporary and heavenly–but 'nameless'–D Major,

---

[34] Gertz identifies an Augustinian principle in her examination of medieval French poetry of Marie and in Ovid, an "aware[ness] of future readers...to provide enigmas that will occupy readers and thereby enhance their delight in seeking the truth." SunHee Kim Gertz, *Echoes and Reflections: Memory and Memorials in Ovid and Marie de France* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2003), 22.

[35] Mervyn Cooke, "Be Flat or Be Natural?: Pitch Symbolism in Britten's Operas," in *Rethinking Britten*, edited by Philip Rupprecht, 102-127 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 102.

[36] Allen, 20-39.

in which the 'Antique' (Wulff) figure [of *Les Illuminations*] is the only retained rhythmic

feature."[37] While D represents a plagal relationship to *Six Metamorphoses* opening tonal center, D

Major is the tonality on which *Six Metamorphoses* triumphantly ends, with "VI. Arethusa"

escaping the pursuit of the river god. I do not suggest, however, that one key always means the

same thing across works, or even in the same work. Christopher Mark examines how Britten's use

of certain tonalities is contextual: when C appears in one place it means something different in

another location, transformed by the meaning of the new timing and placement.[38] As with queer

theory's questioning of the performativity of social roles, context is key. Across Britten's works,

key areas and central tonalities create a sense of place, give insight into a character's affect, and

assist in the unfolding of a musical narrative.

Historical Topoi

A close reading of Britten's score reinforces the idea that the composer employed

classical myths to comment on past and present-day norms. His tonal language, particularly his

juxtaposition of moments of pre-tonal modality in contrast to a post-tonal flexibility suggests that

Britten's use of historical styles is a rhetorical strategy. Britten's juxtaposition of historical styles

also evidences a comprehensive knowledge and awareness of the signifying potential of *topoi* or

topics. As with Kofi Agawu's discussion of musical topics, I contemplate the effects and settings

implied by the brief, contained musical excerpts and how these excerpts add a layer of meaning to

music without words.[39] On topical references to musical styles, as written by early theorists of

music from the classical period, Agawu states:

> The most direct references to topics occur in the context of discussions of style. Style
> attaches easily to a wide variety of contexts, including national styles (the "French,"
> "German," or "Italian" styles), chamber styles, socially based styles (low and high styles),
> and so on…William Crotch also identifies various styles of music in an attempt to define
> the nature of musical expression. He speaks of "the military, or the pastoral, or the

---

[37] Allen, 29.

[38] Christopher Mark, "Contextually Transformed Tonality in Britten," *Music Analysis* 4, no. 3 (October 1985): 265-287.

[39] V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

pianoforte style," and goes on to consider the timbral transferability of these various styles.[40]

Agawu describes brief musical references that either characterize a work or describe a character in a work as the focus of his topic theory. These musical "characters" create meaning through allusions to the contexts in which the original sounds would have been used, e.g., a Turkish march, French grand opera, or a courtly dance suite. Agawu's "Universe of Topic" is what he considers to be a comprehensive list of topics that appear in the works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.[41] As the above quote illustrates, Agawu finds that genre did not necessarily deter composers from employing topics: vocal topics such as "aria" and "cantabile/singing style" could be found in a piano sonata or a string quartet. The significance of an extra-generic reference comes from the idea, character, or style evoked from its original context and the musical idea's placement in new context.

I expand on Agawu's understanding of topic theory to contemplate how topics may be intentionally historical, referencing a particular time and/or place for an intended effect. In my examination of a 20th-century British composer who found himself at odds with his own milieu as a pacifist and gay man, my universe of topics will differ from Agawu's 18th-century survey. I have collected the styles that work as historical topoi in *Six Metamorphoses*; my starting point uses Philip Brett's and Lloyd Whitesell's descriptions of Britten's pastiche of historical, Classical, Baroque, and modern musical styles in Britten's larger staged works (Table 2.1).[42] The topics I lay out in Table 2.1 are a few of the musical references, moments of significance, which functioning much like Agawu's topics, in Britten's work for oboe. Rather than isolated incidents, additional evidence of the musical reference's significance comes in their connection to the composer's larger, staged works, about which much more scholarly work has been undertaken.

---

[40] Agawu, 28.
[41] Agawu, 30.
[42] Philip Brett, "Britten's *Dream*." in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 259-80; Lloyd Whitesell, "Notes of Unbelonging," 214-233.

While Philip Brett and Lloyd Whitesell's pivotal work in queer musicology and Britten scholarship does not mention topic theory by name, they both find significant juxtapositions of historical styles in Britten's operas as a rhetorical strategy. Rather than solely propel an unfolding narrative, Britten's time-traveling, and shapeshifting musical sensibilities work to destabilize unquestioned norms, whether compositional or societal.

Table 2.1: Historical Topics in Britten's Operas and Six Metamorphoses

1. Fugue/fugato	The erudite staggering and layering of multiple entrances of the same musical subject
2. Baroque Lament	A descending melodic line, often tetrachord in a minor mode that repeats, connoting grief or entrapment in some kind of unfortunate fate
3. Baroque castrato/ counter tenor duet	A duet between two masculine characters, both voiced in the treble/soprano range, often employing some of the florid vocal embellishments common to Baroque arias
4. Dionysian winds (aulos or reed panpipe)	The mimesis of ancient, indigenous wind instruments, often in connection with Greek mythical creatures, pastoral settings, and the connotation of the wild, untamed world
5. Bacchanale	An orgiastic dance in reference to the Greek god of wine and revelry
6. Ancient Greek modes	Scales, *tonoi,* or octave species described by Cleonides, originally named for the geographic and ethnic regions of their association
7. Medieval Church modes	Melodic lines which employ the sound of the eight church modes, derived from the relationship between recital tone and final; and implied harmonies of early organum, including over drones and/or parallel 4ths/5ths

Methodologically, I bring the framework of queer temporalities into dialogue with some of the first published scholarship in LGBT music studies, a field established by Philip Brett's

insightful analysis of queer affect in Britten's operas.[43] Brett delved into the musical underscoring of such troubled characters and how Britten's nuanced musical language inspires empathy for those characters typically rendered flat and unsympathetic, turning an uncomfortable lens back on society and the audience itself.[44] Contemplating musical signs of difference, coded as queer in Philip Brett's work on Benjamin Britten's operas, I further connect these queer hermeneutics to how it is through the element of *time* that Britten troubles rigid categories of being, releasing the critical and liberatory potential in temporal play. In Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Philip Brett traced Britten's juxtaposition of a (faux) castrato male vocal part, harpsichord, and 17th-century recitative in juxtaposition with moments of a Wagnerian "endless melody" and Schoenbergian post-tonality.[45] Brett found that Britten musically confines of the opera's heteronormative lovers to a mortal, earthly plane, with "lines that are eternally syllabic, in even notes…[it] is a sure sign...that although they are conventionally 'good,' there is something wrong with them, or limited about them."[46] The juxtaposition of temporal topics represents a queering of chronology in which evoking the past questions something taken for granted about the present. Britten's intentional use of Classical and Baroque and modern topics, in tandem with his identification with the "outsiderness" of his characters who were immortal, ghosts, or exiled, highlights the violence and tediousness of societal norms: there might be "something wrong with…or limited about [the present]." Brett's work represents the very beginnings of an emerging subfield that was not yet identifying as Queer Musicology, but his analysis is no less relevant now. Eschewing the Oedipal practice of killing the theories that came before, I connect past

---

[43] Philip Brett, "Britten and Grimes," (first published *Musical Times 117*, 1977) in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty, 11-33 (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006).
[44] See Brett, "'Grimes Is at His Exercise': Sex, Politics, and Violence in the Librettos of *Peter Grimes*,"; Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas"; Philip Brett, "Britten's *Dream*."
[45] Brett, "Britten's Dream," 119.
[46] Ibid.

generations of queer thought with current, finding a productive dialogue in the analysis of this Britten work between queer temporalities and the field's beginning.

In Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid*, I identify with a yearning for another time and place where queer potentiality exists, even while showing the very need to camouflage and shapeshift to escape from violent norms. As with Brett's cornerstone work on Britten, in my close reading I do not seek a "gay chord," a "trans note," or to map biography onto music directly, but instead explore affective responses to isolation, gendered violence, and marginalization. I identify the epistemic value of camouflaging, shapeshifting, and changing physical form to survive. Such a reading troubles arbitrary binaries and the more recent tendency to flatten identity into discrete categories separated from the context and history that give them meaning.

METAMORPHOSIS AS ESCAPE IN "PAN"

Britten's *Six Metamorphoses* opens with an unmetered pastoral movement in which half-man, half-beast Pan pursues the nymph Syrinx and the ensuing persecution to the river forces Syrinx to transform into reeds as her only escape. Britten paints a mythical pastoral scene through historical topics, such as mimesis of airy pan pipes in an ancient mode or scale. He then narrates the changes of Syrinx's physical form through a striking chromatic modulation. There is a different temporal logic than that of a linear narrative or modern Western clock. Rather, this movement and some of the following align more with Aristotle's descriptions of the perception of time, for which he wrote that time's demarcations are dependent on the "number of change[s] in respect of the before and after."[47] The brief movement challenges listeners to contemplate the scene prior, during, and after the unwelcomed pursuit. Despite opening without a meter, Britten's temporal considerations are significant from the first of the six metamorphoses, articulated through historical *topoi*, unfolding melody, and pitch collection mutation.

---

[47] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 8.

Britten's pastoral neoclassicism in the first metamorphosis, "Pan," flows freely in legato phrases, in imitation of what could be the "reed pipe which was Syrinx" (Example 2.1).[48] Where the pattern of connected stepwise motion ends, abrupt leaps jut out as a marked sounds. While the collection of notes in the movement fits within two medieval church modes (Lydian and Hypolydian), the stepwise motion and the forced leap all derive naturally from the way a panpipe is played. The melodic intervals that reflect the modal pitch collection and physical acoustics of a panpipe represents an older or indigenous logic of tonal organization.

Designated as notes of importance through repetition and agogic accent, "Pan" at first revolves around a pitch center of E, with additional emphasis on A, C-sharp, G-sharp, and F-sharp as resting points, before a final cadence on D. From first glance at the key signature may indicate an A Major tonal area; however, the emphasis on the whole step down from E to D and the upper neighbor F-sharp makes the movement sound modal rather than tonal: it *sounds* old. The mode of the opening and concluding sections follows the outlines of a Lydian final which rests a fifth below, or a fourth above, the recitation tone. I would argue that the historical topic is not merely the church modes or chant, but the modes happen to source the same ancient sources at which Britten hints. Jeremy Yudkin describes the melodic modes of plainchant as codifying in the 8th and 9th centuries, following its standardization under Charlemagne; however, their sources are even more antiquated, drawing from "Byzantine melody classifications and Greek music theory as transmitted to the Middle Ages by Boethius…"[49] Rather than conforming to diatonicism more traditional to tonal works of the 18th-20th centuries, the modal pitch collection, agogic accents, and melodic arc point outside of the established tonal language.

---

[48] Britten's inscription, Benjamin Britten, "Pan," *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952).

[49] Jeremy Yudkin, *Music in Medieval Europe* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989), 66.

Example 2.1: Benjamin Britten, Six Metamorphoses after Ovid*, "Pan," mm. 1-4*
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.

There is an additional layer of significance: the meanings that arise from an embodied performance that pivots between two gendered subjectivities. When the oboist is invited to embody the subjectivity of Pan, they are brought to face a distinctly masculine impulse. In centering the perspective first within Pan, performer and listener must embody the one who plays the pipes called "Syrinx," which Pan does with increasing sexual frustration. Where legato or slurred melody, revolving around pitch centers A and E, gives way to frantic staccato bursts of air, Pan blows leaping over the break, but only reaching an impotent B-flat 5 (Examples 2.2 and 2.3). Through a repeated chromatic intrusion, Britten instills a sense that the performer-as-Pan desperately wants A-sharp to resolve upward but is inhibited by this chromatic pitch ceiling. Looking at the A-sharp in the context of measures 7 and 8, the A-sharp is in tandem with the increase of velocity and volume, with both measures falling back to a-natural. Through the lens of an indigenous flute or shawm, one without modern technologies of metal keys, the fluctuation in pitch mimics change in air pressure: a post-tonal notation of a pre-modern sound. The significance here is a reframing of what some have called a "chromatic canker" in Britten's operas; my analysis discovers the chromatic "problem" *is* the forceful push of air over the pipes.[50] Britten and the performer draws attention to an embodied act of forcing air with the marked

---

[50] Mervyn Cooke, "Be Flat or Be Natural?," 102-127.

chromaticism. Whether diaphragm of the performer or ear drum of listener, the sound waves

unmistakably alter the physical bodies of those participating in the music, consensual or not. I

would argue the social and emotional implications of such a physically embodied meaning is one

that Britten and Boughton, together, ask us to contemplate.

Example 2.2: "Pan," mm. 7-9
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49

Example 2.3: "Pan," mm. 13-15 indicate plagal D accented through upper, lower range limit and conclusion
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49

Syrinx does escape Pan's pursuit via metamorphosis into reeds, however, the myth and

notation narrate that she is cut down for his music, literally objectified. The chromatic pivot, A-

sharp or B-flat, disturbs the serenity of the initial modal melody, marking both Pan's violence and

Syrinx's physical transformation. Her metamorphosis solidifies with the chromatic modulation.

Landing on the plagal frustration of D is one more indication that neither her escape nor his desire

is truly fulfilled (Example 2.3). Rather than presenting a poetic language that romanticizes

fixating a (feminine) object of adoration, as was the case for what Classicists refer to as the *puella*

of Ovid's erotic poetry,[51] Britten's erotic text depicts the gravity of a particular kind of gendered violence.

Britten's deeply empathetic portrayal, which complicates Ovid's poetic meaning, parallels the 20th-century composer's treatment of texts he set to opera: nuanced and layered musical texts that invite queer readings. Though Britten draws directly from Ovid's Classical text, in this case, he eschews a simplification or romanticization of the ancient erotic poetry. Disrupting what is typically depicted as a male gaze upon some object of adoration queers the singular gaze that usually underpins the Classical genre. In *Britten's* first metamorphosis, it is not just Pan's lust we experience, but Syrinx's desperation to escape. Holding these simultaneously in one body, as a performer or listener, is a painful reminder of the *asymmetry* of gendered experiences, the power and pleasure that underlined western 20th-century heteronormative desire. Syrinx's musical transformation is less about adhering to gendered *mores* regarding chastity and more about an effortful turn from the violence of "compulsory heterosexuality,"[52] which in this instance is depicted as beastly.

REFLECTIONS, INVERSIONS, AND ECHOES IN "NARCISSUS"

Through entirely different compositional means, Britten borrows contrapuntal techniques from multiple centuries in his fifth movement, "Narcissus," developing a cunning, layered text-painting of Ovid's poetry. Depicting the mythological hunter who fell in love with his own reflection, the notes of "Narcissus" literally reflect over an axis, in a counterpoint displaced by time. At first, this appears and sounds acoustically like a second voice in the distance. By measure 10, everything Narcissus expresses in the lower register, marked *mezzo-forte* to *forte* dynamic immediately precedes a *pianissimo* inversion in the upper register (Example 2.4). The visual symbolism and instructions make clear to a performer what the performer unveils over time to a listener: it is not a second voice but a reflection of the original by which Narcissus and

---

[51] Laurel Fulkerson, *Ovid: A Poet on the Margins* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).
[52] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-60.

listeners are seduced. Britten denotes in written instruction to a performer that "from this point the notes with upward stems represent the reflected image of Narcissus, and those with downward stems Narcissus himself."[53] The fifth metamorphosis, thus, develops through a displaced counterpoint of two voices, representing Narcissus and what turns out to be his reflection; at first hidden, it is through this temporally-displaced counterpoint and physical transformation of motives his seduction and metamorphosis unfolds.

Example 2.4: "Narcissus," mm. 11-14
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Example 2.5: "Narcissus," mm. 15-20, turn from reflection to echo
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Contrapuntal motion between two voices, audible in the movement's responsorial structure, becomes visible on the staff as an inversion over a real axis. Converging to a center point, on either side of which are similarly shaped melodic statements from the two "voices," is an obvious center line on which the performer could fold their sheet of music if they wished. What becomes clearer to the close reader of Britten's text is that the reality of two voices is a

---

[53] Britten's inscription, "Narcissus," *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952).

deception. A discrete relationship between subject and answer in the form of a hidden inversion reflects over an additional abstract axis, meaning "the symmetry is realized in pitch-class space rather than in pitch space."[54] The additional abstract axis exists not on the score but in the space between two sets of dyads through which an imaginary pole runs, most visible on a pitch-class clock (Figure 2.1). The significance of this second axis arrives as a heavy apotheosis at the convergence of the two voices, a point after which the central character has transformed upon his recognition of self-reflection.
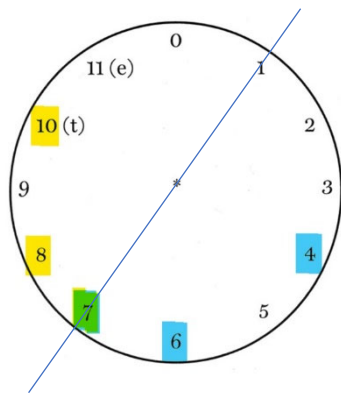
Figure 2.1: Pitch-class "clock" showing the abstract axis of the two "voices" in "Narcissus," m. 11, highlighted in blue and yellow, respectively. Pitch class 7, or G, is highlighted green to illustrate the shared note through which an axis of symmetry runs.

The multiple axes of symmetry simultaneously suggest both 18th-century counterpoint and post-tonal set theory as keys to illuminating the nature of relationships between the characters of this classical tableau. Both theoretical approaches focus on the melodic intervals of a linear progression and the ways that the subject develops through inversion, retrograde, diminution, or augmentation. When I utilize set theory in this and the following sections, I focus on the

---

[54] Straus describes such an axis of symmetry in his analysis of Bartok's String quartet No. 5 as being more obvious by plotting dyads on a pitch-class clockface because of the octave displacements that hide the fact of inversional symmetry. Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, third edition (London: Pearson, 2004), 135.

identification of related subsets through sharing a prime form, a method that allowed me to find

further discrete connections among the notes.[55]

Table 2.2: Form including expressive marking, imagery, pitch center and real axes of reflection in "V. Narcissus," Six Metamorphoses after Ovid

| A	*Lento piacevole, pp,*	Narcissus alone (mm. 1-9)	pitch center C
A'	*Espressivo, mf*	Narcissus and reflection (mm. 10-23)	pitch center C; C-sharp axis
A''	*Tranquillo, pp,*	Narcissus/reflection as inseparable (mm. 24-29)	D axis; C final axis (m. 29)

Britten structures the movement around a subject, "A," comprising 5 motives: a, b, c, d,

and e (Example 2.6), some of which hint at Baroque origins while other motives push into post-

tonal territory. Beginning with a slow descending C, B-flat, A-flat, G, the solo instrumental

envoicing of Narcissus opens with a motivic reference to a Baroque descending

tetrachord/lament. The upper tessitura's answer, representing his reflected image, appears first

through two exact inversions, in m. 11 by I_2 over a real axis of C-sharp 5 and over an abstract axis

that passes through C-sharp and G (represented as 1 and 7 on the clockface, Figure 2.1). In mm.

12-13, what we discover to be the voice of Narcissus's image in the water reflects in exact

inversion by I_1 (Table 2.3). What begins as an exact inversion over real and abstract axes

gradually alters, first, so that the notes of the two voices may share the same subset of a larger

collection. Eventually, the two voices meet abstractly so that the reflection is no longer inverted

but itself transposed, thus sharing the exact pitch classes despite being displaced by register

---

[55] In identifying "normal forms" and "prime forms," I indicate notes with the pitch class numbering system referred to in Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-tonal Theory*: 0 refers to C natural, any octave; 1 refers to C-sharp, etc. It is common in post-tonal theory to use "t" to refer to B-flat (to avoid confusion using the Arabic numeral 10) and to use "e" to refer to B-natural. Pitch classes in <> are in "normal form," rearranged not chronologically but from lowest to highest in its most compact form; Pitch classes in ( ) are in prime form, that is most compact form possible, and transposed to 0. "I" refers to inversion and the number of semitones it is transposed by, e.g. "I3." For more information, see Joseph N. Straus, *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, third edition (London: Pearson, 2004).

76

(Example 2.5, Table 2.3). Drawing from Baroque and 20th-century contrapuntal techniques and

topics, Britten develops the subject through a form of counterpoint, stretto, inversion, and

fragmentation that could be at home in either works of Bach or Bartok.
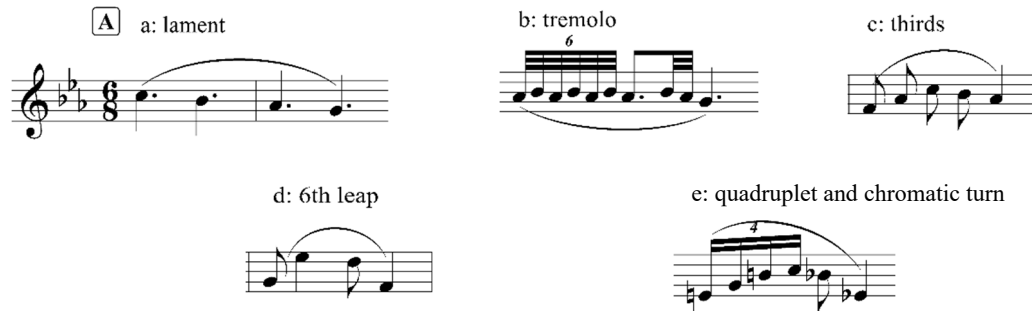
Example 2.6: Motives from "Narcissus," recreated in Finale

The counterpoint and its significance to the narrative becomes even clearer when I take

the two voices, which were displaced in time, and superimpose them on a staff. Where the first

measure of counterpoint converges in contrasting motion from a tritone, out to a sixth and perfect

octave, the second motive and its answer create a voice exchange (Example 2.7). In m. 14, the

inverted statement of tremolo motive "b" is only approximate, meaning that the inverted

statement is just off from being in exact reflection of the original; however, the approximate

inversion shares a complete subset, <578>, or F, G, A-flat. Though the second voice becomes

distorted in its reflection, it comes to share the same pitch classes as the original. As counterpoint,

the voice-leading appears textbook, with a clear voice exchange and contrary motion from octave

to imperfect consonance. The two voices, Narcissus and reflection gravitate closer, even sharing a

pitch collection, though the inversion or reflection becomes less and less exact with each answer.

The original voice and his reflection, though temporally out of sync and distorted through

approximate response, become inextricably intertwined, drawn to each other by sharing the same

kind of pitch collection. It is the difference between real and simulacrum of the reflection in water

that is uncanny. What at first listen may sound like two separate voices, one answering the first's

call, becomes more clearly a reflection, slightly distorted version of the first voice. A call and

response construction eventually turns out to be abstractly related, inverted over an axis of

symmetry. Extracted, this hidden inverse relationship between the two voices mirrors the poetry

of Narcissus' tale: his turn from a feminine other, who echoes his phrases with her own, back to

his own reflection.

Table 2.3: Pitch classes of each lower octave phrase (Narcissus) and upper octave response (Reflection), shown here in normal form, or the most compact form.

Measure(s)	Narcissus	Reflection	Relationship
11	<78t> or G, A-flat, B-flat	<467> or E, F-sharp, G	I_2 – inverted/reflected by a distance of two half-steps
12	<58t0> F, A-flat, B-flat, C	<1358> D-flat, E-flat, F, A-flat	I_1
14	<578> F, G, A-flat	<578> F, G, A-flat	Reflection over real axis, shared pitch classes
16	<2357> D, E-flat, F, G	<t2> B-flat, D	
17-18	<0347te> C, E-flat, E, G, B-flat, B	<03458e> C, E-flat, E, F, A-flat, B	I_5, inversion of the same prime form: (012569)
19	<56> F, G-flat	<8t> A-flat, B-flat	
20	<3568> E-flat, F, G-flat, A-flat	<68> G-flat, A-flat	Subset of original
21	<568t> F, G-flat, A-flat, B-flat	<568> F, G-flat, A-flat	Subset of original
22a	<68te> G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, C-flat	<356> E-flat, F, G-flat	Shared common tone G-flat, hinting at larger shared collection
22b-23	<8te1> A-flat, B-flat, B, C-sharp	<e134> B, C-sharp, D-sharp, E	Both subsets of same larger collection

Example 2.7: "Narcissus," mm. 10-16, recreated in Finale with counterpoint aligned rhythmically with Narcissus, voice exchanges marked with dotted lines

If there is a moment of modulation, not between key areas but physical alteration of motivic body, it is signaled by hemiola motive "e," in mm. 17-18. The pitch sets of motive "e" represent two iterations of the same hexachord (012569) transposed and inverted, so that at the first glance, their similarities are hidden. As a moment of transition, the motivic change signals its importance through a near completion of an aggregate (reaching eight distinct pitch classes for the first time) and implied voice exchange. that presents an expansive voice exchange over two octaves and emphasizes not one, but two tritones (B, F; B-flat, E), around which everything pivots.[56] After the point of pivot, every answer to Narcissus's expression comes no longer in inversion, whether exact or approximate, but in transposition: it is no longer a reflection, but an echo. Narcissus's voice turns from reflection to echo, as he turns *from* the pursuit of Echo towards his own reflection.

What begins with long expressive phrases—separated by reflection—fragments as the two lines meet. Narcissus reaches his reflection in the water at the C-sharp 5 axis just before the caesura (Example 2.8) Attempts to separate from his reflection are unsuccessful, as some tendril,

---

[56] I take inspiration from Michael Klein's discussion of emotional apotheosis through a completion of the aggregate, a similar, if more on paper, use of hexachordal combinatoriality. Thus, neo-Baroque counterpoint finds new emotional expressive opportunities through 20th-century post-tonal musical language. See Michael Klein, "Narrative and Intertext: The Logic of Suffering in Lutoslawski's Symphony No. 4," in *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 121.

slur or stem, keeps the two tethered. Narcissus, seduced by his image and the dangerous allure of water, is transfigured. Two decades later, Britten's vocal unraveling of Aschenbach (*Death in Venice,* 1973) into two registers, as the metaphorical voices of Apollo and Dionysus, would echo this queer musical coding in "Narcissus."

Example 2.8: "Narcissus," mm. 21-24, Narcissus and Reflection become intertwined
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Queer tropes of "singing duets with oneself" have long been ascribed to homoerotic texts, pre-1750 and post-1900.[57] These queer expressions are simultaneously old and new. In present contexts, "singing duets with oneself" can mean the kind of self-love that challenges a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,[58] loving someone of the same gender in a society where heterosexuality and the subordination of women is compulsory,[59] and it can mean the kind of intentional equity between partners–an equal exchange of power and responsibility.[60] Britten's fifth movement, "Narcissus," playfully engages with the historically problematic rhetoric of what

---

[57] Nadine Hubbs' considers one such duet with Saint Teresa in Virgil Thompson and Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Emily Wilbourne similarly describes 17th-century homoerotic tropes of mirroring, and Lydia Hamessley writes of 17th-century Sapphonic poetry through reflections of self. Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 45. Emily Wilbourne, "*Amor nello specchio* (1622): Mirroring, Masturbation, and Same-Sex Love," *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 13 (2009): 54-65. Lydia Hamessley, "Henry Lawes's Setting of Katherine Philip's Friendship Poetry in His Second Book of Ayres and Dialogues, 1655: A Musical Misreading?" in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 126-7.

[58] bell hooks, *feminism is for everybody: passionate politics* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000); And hooks, *all about love* (New York: Perennial, 2001).

[59] Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-60.

[60] Suzanne Cusick, "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight," in *Queering the Pitch* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 67-83.

it meant to be considered an "invert," a term that was more frequently used in the early 20th-century to describe a person with same-sex attraction. Interestingly, the psychological treatise that coined the phrase "invert," drew examples from evidence of same-sex love in Ancient Greece.[61] First described in 19th-century medical circles as a kind of problem of abnormal psychology, Britten's return to Classics reframes discourse within the Greek acceptance of same-sex desire. Through the questions raised in the above counterpoint of voices, the violent hegemony of compulsory heterosexuality is shown to be a more *unnatural* construction than all that exists outside, before and, possibly, after a restrictive present.

"PHAETON" AND THE QUEER FAILURE TO PROGRESS

Britten narrates the classical myth of Phaeton, the subject of his second metamorphosis, through an entirely different musical vocabulary from the surrounding movements, drawing from a melodic and rhythmic palette that depicts the quick, brash actions of a youth. Britten sets the youth who "rode upon the chariot of the sun for one day" in bombastic triplets that outline tetrachords of dominant sevenths, cycling in a way that common-practice tonality would describe as "non-functional" (Example 2.9). [62] Whether Phaeton can grow out of the phase in which we first find him ultimately determines the trajectory of his metamorphosis: will he become "productive" in the eyes of a paternalistic overseer or find himself condemned for his deviant *modus operandi*? Rather than juxtapose historical *topoi,* for "Phaeton" the temporal logic and the musical drama unfolds through the transformation of the movement's tetrachords, whether they move towards a rational functionality or something else entirely.

---

[61] John Addington Symonds, *A Problem in Greek Ethics: An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion, 1873* (London: Privately printed for the *ΑΡΕΟΠΑΓΙΤΙΓΑ* Society, 1908).

[62] Britten's inscription, "Phaeton," *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* (London: Hawkes and Son, 1952).

Example 2.9: "Phaeton," mm. 1, 3, 6, and 9, showing cycling through "non-functional"
tetrachords per conventional voice-leading
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Riding in waves of seemingly perpetual motion, each phrase of Phaeton follows the outlines of an arpeggiating tetrachord, or four distinct pitches that give each statement its character. From the cues to a performer, this opening character is one that is lively (*vivace*) and marked by detached triplets that reach upwards in an outline of a chord that neither sounds settled nor stable. In the first section, A, the prime form of the tetrachord transposed for each statement is (0258), meaning that no matter how the tetrachord appears and what the starting note is, the intervallic make up of it is reduceable to the same form (Table 2.4). Each statement of (0258), maintains its rhythmic consistency in arpeggios of what, if we were speaking of functional tonality, would be a dominant 7th. While the inventory of intervals is the same for each statement, drawing from the same prime form (0258), it is the interval between the collection of pitches in each phrase that is equally important and unusual, especially if we come with the expectation of a neoclassical tonality. The four discrete pitch centers of each phrase, instead, combine to form a larger, abstract (0258); transposed and inverted, it no longer spells out a Dominant 7th, thus, in hindsight rendering arbitrary what would be the label of functional tonality.

82

Example 2.10: "Phaeton," mm. 34-7, descent into the river
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Increasingly abstract in its relationship to the tetrachord of each phrase, the connection is only clear in a pitch class analysis of set theory, especially visible on a pitch class "clock."[63] What setting these notes on a pitch class "clock" makes exceptionally clear is that the common tone, "7," or "G," sews each tetrachord together (Figure 2.2). The relationship between the initial P(0258): <047t> (C, E, G, B-flat), and the final tetrachord after the metamorphosis in A', is transposition by the furthest possible transformation: tritone, T_6(0258): <6t14> (G-flat, B-flat, D-flat, F-flat). The clock shows that the two phrases are related by tritone, but also share two common tones <t,4> (B-flat and E/F-flat) (Figure 2.3). The two common tones are separated by six half-steps; equidistant from each other within the 12-note aggregate, or any octave, they are polar opposites as plotted on a PC clock, representing an abstract tritone relation. Between its first presentation and the stark fortissimo statement at the bottom of the oboe's register, the tetrachord has moved as far as possible without yet changing its composition.

---

[63] In post-tonal theory and analysis, a pitch-class "clock" involves a clock face that shows the twelve possible chromatic pitches in Western Music, identifying what is used in a collection, set by circling, or marking the pitch class. Doing so elucidates otherwise hidden intervallic relationships, such as possible inversions, symmetry, combinatoriality, or limited modes of transposition.

Table 2.4: Structure and phrase organization by tetrachord, "Phaeton," Six Metamorphoses after Ovid. Larger structure: A (Vivace ritmico) B (legato pp) A' (Agitato) Coda (pp A tempo)

Form/phrase and measures (mm)	Common name of Tetrachord or collection	Respelled as Pitch Class (PC) set	Prime form and transformation by transposition and unordered intervals (T_n)[64]	Imagery
A. *Vivace ritmico, marcato*				Riding the chariot
(a) mm. 1-2	C Mm7	<047t>	P(0258)	
(b) mm. 2-5	E-flat Mm7	<37t1>	T_3(0258)	
(a) mm. 6-8	C Mm7	<047t>	P(0258)	
(c) mm. 9-12	A Mm7	<9147>	T_9(0258)	Higher and higher
(a') mm. 13-15	C Mm7	<047t>	P(0258)	
(d) mm. 16-18	G Mm7	<7e25>	T_7(0258)	
B. *Legato, pp*				In the distance
(e) mm. 19-20	A mm7	<0479>	(0358)	
(f) mm. 21-23	D M9	<2679>	(0237)	
(e) mm. 24-25			(0358)	
(f) m. 26			(0237)	
(g) m. 27		<69t0>	(0236) - implied	
A.' *Agitato*				
(a'') mm. 28-30	Octatonic "01"	<69t0> and <01346>	(0236)	
mm. 30-32				
mm. 32-35				
(a'') mm. 36-37	G-flat Mm7 – "river bottom"	<6t14>	T_6(0258)	River bottom
Coda *pp. A tempo*				
mm. 39-41	Chromatic	<689t>	(0124)	"compression" and ripples
m. 42	Chromatic	<479te0>	(012358)	"air bubbles"

---

[64] By unordered pitch intervals, again drawing from Straus, I mean the number of semitones between the first note of each statement, essentially showing how each (0258) returns transposed. If these pitch intervals were themselves organized into normal form, then prime form, they would reveal their own hidden (0258). Straus, 8.
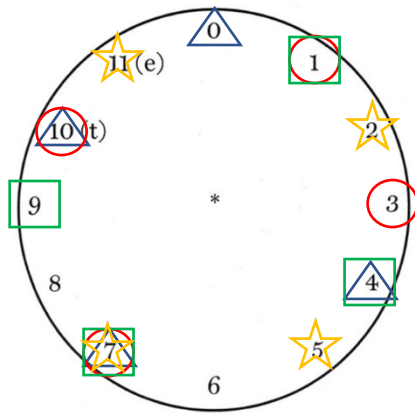
Figure 2.2: The four (0258) tetrachords from mm.1-18 marked on the PC clock to show common tone "G" or "7"
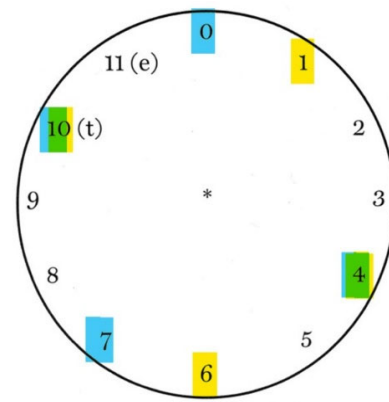
Figure 2.3: "Phaeton's" opening tetrachord <047t>, or C, E, G, B-flat, and final transposition <6t14>, G-flat, B-flat, D-flat, F-flat, showing tritone relationship and common dyad.

  Speaking on two levels, aside from the abstract relationship among the tetrachords Britten demonstrates a more audible mimesis of physical movement and transformation of the subject. The middle development, marked by a stark change in dynamics to pianissimo and shift from the blunt *marcato* to a connected legato phrasing, presents a changing distance between Phaeton and the observer. The upper register (0358) tetrachord (E, G, A, C) gives a sense of riding off into the horizon. However, this expanded arpeggio (a 9th instead of 7th) soon compresses down to (0237) (D, F-sharp, G, A) with a foreboding shift into the A' section, marked "Agitato." As Phaeton moves closer to the water, he freefalls. In metaphor to how sound waves would behave in rapid movement towards an assumed observer, the intervals contract from a quasi-diatonicism into total chromaticism, ending only when Phaeton transforms into the ripples of a river into which he was hurled. Sinking into oblivion, Phaeton utters the final statement of (0258) in the lowest register at *fortissimo* at a transposition of a tritone to the original statement. Again, because this statement represents the furthest possible transformation, with the final tetrachord retaining two common tones <t,4>, (B-flat and E/F-flat) this utterance still exists as the same prime form, thus, substance. In the final tetrachord statement, though distant, Phaeton is still recognizable. True transfiguration of his form comes with the first (0124) (F-sharp, G-sharp, A,

B-flat) in upper register, legato and *pianissimo* as in section B (Example 2.11). The compression of intervals from a consistent subset of octatonic collection into chromatic marks the physical transformation of Phaeton.

Example 2.11: "Phaeton," mm. 39-42, compression of tetrachord to (0124) (F-sharp, G-sharp, A, B-flat) marks change of character, final imagery of air bubbles
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

A significant change in character and physical matter occurs, but it does not musically represent a change that is "productive" for the subject of the movement. Comprising modes of limited transposition, octatonic collections offer symmetry and repetition in their intervallic patterning, but less of a sense of a need to resolve somewhere that underpins chord progressions and linear melodic lines in traditional Western tonality. The octatonic collections that constitute much of this movement, thus, represent a stark departure from the tonal neoclassicism that characterized the works of contemporaries like Richard Strauss. Western tonality's value of goal-oriented progress, demonstrated by a drive towards resolution and a hierarchy of tonalities in relation to a home key or tonic, mirrored a society that was deeply hierarchical and governed by strict codes of polite society what actions and sensibilities were appropriate any given time. I have mentioned previously how the striving melodic thirds of this movement offer interesting queer intertext. Brett and others identify the same naïve triadic impulse in *Young Apollo* (1939) to be expressions of Britten's adoration of Wulff Scherchen, a work that uses the last lines of Keats "Hyperion," in which Phaeton's mother Clymene uses a seashell to make sound.[65] But where *Young Apollo*'s naivety sounds in the simple outlining of A Major, Phaeton's movement in

---

[65] Jennifer Doctor, et al, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," in *Grove Music Online.* 2001, updated 2013 https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).; Caird, 48.; John Keats, "Hyperion"

subsets of octatonic collections destabilizes the goal-oriented progress straight timelines represent. He does not develop from this stage into a more functional tonality. When Phaeton does depart from his starting tetrachord, he moves the furthest possible in register, dynamic, and quality (tritone, T_6) without evolving somewhere expected. The youth's inability to act properly, his failure to grow out of a "stage," is what sends him into a chromatic plummet towards the water. The final statement of his tetrachord, augmented and transposed by tritone, emerges from the symbolic bottom of the river (Example 2.10 and Table 2.3). Phaeton does not eventually grow out of the stage but rather becomes preserved in another mode of limited transposition, which represent the rising bubbles of his last gasp.

<center>AFFECTING TIME IN "NIOBE"</center>

The myth of Niobe offers another critique of the valuing of goal-oriented progress, through an overt questioning of patrilineal lineage. While Ovid introduces this critique, Britten's musical narrative differs in affect considerably. Niobe appears in the Everyman's Library edition of *Ovid: Selected works*, the edition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* found in the Britten-Pears estate, suggesting Britten had access to this myth translated in its entirety.[66] Unlike at least four of the other movements that likewise appear in the Everyman's *Ovid*, however, Niobe does not explicitly signify a river or water as a key *locus*, but rather a specific mountain that exists in present-day Turkey. Water does carry meaning in Ovid's lines: there is water weeping ever from the peak of mount Sipylus, which Ovid tells us is Niobe transformed. What follows at the end of Ovid's book VI in the Phrygian region is a black pond populated with frogs – metamorphized commoners who hop and squirm fearing the same fate. Her narrative is summarized succinctly by the index of the 1946 Harvard edition, translated by Frank Miller:

> Daughter of the Phrygian king Tantalus and of Dione, one of the Pleiades, daughter of Atlas, VI. 172, 174, 211; wife of Amphion, king of Thebes, VI. 178, 271; mother of seven sons and seven daughters, on account of her boastful pride in whom she aroused

---

[66] Jennifer Doctor, et al, "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin," https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

the wrath of Latona, VI. 165; at last, in her stony grief, she was changed to a stone and carried to her native Mount Siphylus [*sic*], where the tears still flow down her stony face, VI. 305.[67]

In Britten's musical setting of "Niobe," both the performer and listeners are challenged to embody the affects of sorrow, grief, and lament that result from Niobe's actions. Reading Ovid's poetry on Latona and Niobe, however, I am struck by how violent and vivid the descriptions of the deaths of all fourteen children and the suicide of her husband are. Arrows and barbs, spurting blood, muscle tears and gristly details of pierced throats and lungs take up 73 lines (in the original Latin),[68] where the actual expression of grief of Niobe is afforded but 4.[69] Her metamorphosis to inanimate, inexpressive rock takes 9 lines.[70] Ovid, in his text, prioritizes the affect of indignation representing the perspective of the deity who punishes Niobe. The poet presents a tale of caution and humility, warning those who would claim power unjustly and self-deify. In Ovid's telling, the gods Niobe insults respond severely to Niobe's claims of immortality and the importance of her lineage. Is it too much to read into this poetic indignation Ovid's disdain for the emperor who banished him and claimed a divine right to rule? Regardless of the reasons behind Ovid's interest, the fable still resonates today, speaking to the ability of Ovid to question not only his present, but future-presents as well. The question remains, how does Britten choose to tell this bloody tale and with whose perspective are listeners invited to identify?

Affect, Tonality, and Time

At first glance, this movement appears and sounds tonal, opening on a D-flat Major triad. The affect, however, is somber from the start, owing to the repeating descending motive F, D-flat, A-flat, and a feeling of F Minor coexists with the D-flat Major.[71] A few jarring "chromatic

---

[67] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, translated by Frank J. Miller, Vol. 2, 475.

[68] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.224-297.

[69] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.299-303.

[70] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 6.303-312.

[71] I use the phrase "feeling of F minor" because it is more of a sense felt from the starting/ending pitches and agogic accents, whereas there is actually more evidence of a dual tonality between D-flat Major and B-flat minor.

problems" counter the opening basic ideas in each phrase, emerging every other measure, giving a sense of passing back and forth between the oboe's darker, covered timbres of D-flats and A-flats to exposed, raw sharp color of A-naturals, G-naturals, and E-naturals respectively (Example 2.12). By the end of the ninth measure, the first fermata and third breath mark, the oboist has reached the chromatic aggregate, sounding every pitch class at least once. But this is not twelve-tone in the technique or sound of the Second Viennese School. While there is not so much a central pitch, there are home tonal areas: A-flat Major, D-flat Major, and F Minor (and their most closely related transformations). These tonal "homes" feel comfortable from the beginning stability of the triad outlined, which makes disruptions to that home area jarring. Again, it is not so much in D-flat, or any one key in the classic tonal sense, but the tonal areas that revolve around D-flat and A-flat, represent audible stability. Whether that stability is the desired state of either Niobe—or the listener is—another question.

Example 2.12: "Niobe," mm. 1-3
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

While the opening and closing triad give stability, a sense of home, the mode is always uncertain due to the opening descending major third that could represent F as V of B-flat Minor or F as iii of D-flat Major, or even F as i of F Minor. The following measure, with its A-natural "problem" troubles these latter areas, as it gives an impression we have passed through the veil into the realm of the relative minor. This space still seems connected, at least structurally, to the opening triad. In a Schenkerian sketch, B-flat might be explained as an upper neighbor of V, and indeed it does return to rest on A-flat. Measure four, however, is where another tonal area is more effortfully reached through the outlining of a GMm7, or V7 of C Minor. Here an A-flat apex is

achieved, but unlike the lower octave A-flat resting place of the previous measures, this gives a sense of non-structural, chromatic upper neighbor tone that reinforces G-natural (Example 2.13).

Example 2.13: "Niobe," mm. 4-7
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49

The emotional apotheosis comes with the mimesis of sobs of mm 14-20. A large-scale descending line breaks into compound melody and two linear progressions can be traced from the D-flat6 apex, m. 16, to the C-natural5 convergence of contrasting motion (Example 2.14). If considered one voice, however, rather like the visual representation of a vocal wave form in a spectrogram, the connected notes in the final two measures before the pause (mm. 19-20) rise and fall to reflect energy expended before coming to a rest on a visible axis of C natural. The difficult large melodic leaps gradually condense to a center pitch (like the reflection in Narcissus, but for a different effect): mimesis of sobbing. The slowing surface rhythm and tempo, the gradual diminishing melodic intervals from an extreme leap of a 7th (C6, D-flat5) eventually to a minor second (B-natural4, C5) reflects that this charged catharsis diminishes into stasis.

Example 2.14: "Niobe," mm. 19-21, "sobbing"
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49

The time signature marked "(4/4)," with additional indications of *Andante* and quarter note = 60, suggests to a performer that she should begin with a pulse similar to a resting heartbeat. As with the previous movements, there are breath marks indicating pauses in the

phrasing, and fermatas over rests at the end of sections. While "Niobe" begins in a steady meter, by measure 5 the meter is in flux, with two of the expected beats missing before the short breath or pause. The following measures are afforded more time, expanding to five and six beats in measures 8 and 9, respectively. From the way the eighth notes are beamed throughout the movement, I assume that the three note groupings beginning in measure 7 are to be played within one beat as a triplet, which also reflects most recordings of this work.[72] Looking at the phrasing, measure 5 does not seem to be robbed of two beats as much as the evolution of phrase "a" into "a'" (a-prime), earning additional time. The same cannot be said for later, in what I am calling the "development" because of its function, when rhythmic diminution robs the phrases of their full temporal value in the escalation of emotional energy. While the three first basic ideas begin identically, they intensify in pitch, mode, and time (Example 2.15).

Example 2.15: phrase "a," m. 1, rhythmically diminished by m. 10
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

Dividing the movement by its tempo and expressive markings reveals further how affect itself becomes an organizing structure and how time is implicated in this method of organization. "Niobe" opens *"Piangendo"* (*mf* and *Andante,* m. 1), which can be translated as a "crying (out);

---

[72] Alan Vogel, *Oboe Obsession* (Delos, 2000) CD and EP; Jiří Krejčí, *Britten Oboe Works* (Supraphon A.s., 2018) EP; Thomas Indermühle, *Britten, Haas, Hindemith* (Camerata Tokyo, 1996) EP; Heinz Holliger, *Metamorphoses*, [Original: Universal International Music B.V., 1994] (Decca Music Group Limited, 2016) EP

weeping; mourning" and "shedding tears of strong emotion and pain."[73] Following this, the

"development" is marked *"Espress. e rubato"* (Example 2.16), an instruction to be expressive

with time itself, sometimes "robbing" notes of their full temporal value while adding some length

to others. Perhaps this instruction carries another double meaning of expressing loss, or

something *robbed* from the speaker, instrumentalist and listener, a part of deeply embodying

grief. This section comes in the center of a longer musical sentence, following the diminution of

the original motive, "a," literally robbing the original dotted-quarter note rhythmic character and

condensing it into straight eighths (m. 10, Example 2.17). Where this expression of temporal loss

was notated explicitly (mm. 10-13), it now carries through the whims of the player who will

determine the degree of *tempo rubato*.

Example 2.16: "Niobe," m. 15, espress. e rubato
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

"Animando" (m. 17) marks the middle of the development. It is the emotional climax of

the movement and the point where the triplet mimesis of sobbing reaches its most animated

moments. In contrast to the absence of expression following the pause, Niobe is still musically

alive. The marking "*Lunga*" (m. 20), meaning "long; lengthy; or far," accompanies a fermata

over the rest, with a possible double meaning of referencing a medieval neume[74] and distance in

time and space.[75] *"Senza espress."* (*pp.* m. 23) follows the *lunga caesura*, and animation

---

[73] "*Versare lacrime per forte emozione, commozione, dolore.*" For definitions to this uncommon Italian musical term, which is absent from many conventional Italian/English dictionaries, I turn to the rough-edged, but ubiquitous *Google Translate* https://translate.google.com/?sl=auto&tl=en&text=piangendo&op=translate (Accessed Feb. 25, 2021)
[74] "*Nella notazione musicale medievale, nota di valore pari a due brevi*" *Google Translate* https://translate.google.com/?sl=auto&tl=en&text=lunga&op=translate (Accessed Feb. 25, 2021)
[75] "*Lontananza nel tempo o nello spazio*" *Google Translate* https://translate.google.com/?sl=auto&tl=en&text=lunga&op=translate (Accessed Feb. 25, 2021)

solidifies into the inanimate, an absence of expression (Example 2.17). Starting *pianissimo* and diminishing until nothing, the first basic idea turns into the faint outlines of a "Taps" arpeggiation. With such a diminuendo into the upper register, this should sound on the oboe like the whisper tones or overtones that naturally voice over a flute opening or reed. Niobe has lost all color, calcifying forever to stone.

Example 2.17: "Niobe," mm. 20-26, Niobe turned to stone
Six Metamorphoses After Ovid, Op. 49
© 1952 By Hawkes & Son (London) LTD. Administered By Boosey & Hawkes.
All Rights Reserved. For The Sole Use Of Cyril Komp, University of Georgia.

While "Niobe" represents a closer approximation of traditional tonality, the movement's organizing logic defies classical form. Affect and its relationship to time governs the unfolding narrative, especially the affect of grief from loss. Britten's choice of grief rather than wrath indicates that his empathies are not solely with the deity, but human suffering, in opposition to Ovid's own evocative descriptions. Britten's use of fluctuating meter and expressive instructions to the performer relating to temporality helps the music convey the embodied affect of sorrow. Rather than a classically governed organization of affect by tonal area, it is meter, surface rhythm, and experiences of time that the musical drama of "Niobe" sounds and is deeply felt.

SITUATING BRITTEN'S NEOCLASSICAL IDENTITY

Understanding Britten's musical language from the post-war period in which *Six Metamorphoses* emerged means situating his unconventional neoclassicism with how the disciplines of musicology and music theory define the style. It is curious to me that the understanding of neoclassicism predominant in music scholarship and among composers of the 20th century is not an understanding shared by the disciplines of art history or comparative literature. Could the disagreement in what constitutes neoclassicism speak to the compositional

motivations of the artists (musical, rhetorical, or visual) in question, the contexts in which they

lived, as well as the interests of a scholarly discipline? I am focused on the significance of the

moments Benjamin Britten deviates from expectations established by his musical contemporaries,

fellow countrymen, and the scholars of music.

The Harvard Dictionary of Music and Musicians, a primary reference text for students of

music history, aligns "neoclassicism" with the following sensibilities:

> A stylistic classification most commonly applied to the works of Stravinsky from
> *Pulcinella* (1920) to *The Rake's Progress* (1951). Its chief aesthetic characteristics are
> objectivity and expressive restraint, its principal technical ones, motivic clarity, textural
> transparency, formal balance, and reliance upon stylistic models… [Neoclassicism]
> preserves a degree of tonal centricity, as well as characteristics of clarity and expressive
> detachment.

For his focus on the sounds of pre-Enlightenment: pastoral scenes, and the pagan rituals of rustic

gods, Britten's work for solo oboe diverts from the above-mentioned sensibilities of restraint and

formal balance. In fact, the work seems topically closer to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* than

Stravinsky's "neoclassical" pieces that comply with the *Harvard Dictionary's* definition. Very

little about the *Metamorphoses* conveys expressive restraint, unless the restraint furthers Britten's

narrative interpretation of Ovid's poetry (such as Niobe turned to stone).

In contrast to Britten's pathos, Whittall confirms the *Harvard Dictionary*'s outlining of

the aesthetics of emotional detachment, clarity, and formalism, by highlighting the very words of

contemporary composer-theorists. Boulez apparently stated that "Stravinsky's and Schoenberg's

paths to neo-classicism differ basically only in one being diatonic and the other chromatic…Both

composers adopt dead forms, and because they are so obsessed with them they allow them to

transform their musical ideas until these too are dead."[76] Countering Boulez's harsh rhetoric,

Whittall considers the use of older forms in the 12-tone works by Schoenberg to be very much

alive, exhibiting "a remarkable synthesis, a continuation of the forceful expression and complex

---

[76] Arnold Whittall, "Neo-classicism" in *Grove Music Online* 2001 https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com
(Accessed 5 Feb. 2021).

motivic coherence."[77] The positive connotations of Whittall's above words reflect Schoenberg's own rhetoric in which he used to distinguish himself from the parody of "pseudo-tonalists…trying 'to-go-back-to,'"[78] and what Schoenberg held as a loftier, more naturally forward-thinking pursuit.

The discourse on neoclassicism and the names of composers aligned with the label reflect musical values of the composers, theorists, and institutions considered above; their words are not detached from the social-political environments of their time. Implied in the rhetoric is the idea that while a nostalgic or parodic neoclassicism is regressive, an *avant garde* abstract formalism represents progress. It may seem strange today to include Schoenberg among the neoclassicists, the discussion above shows that contemporary theorists considered his trajectory as a natural step in the evolution of high art music. The marked words of a "second school" of neoclassicism that includes even Schoenberg, connects the two Viennese schools in the same thought. Representing an attempt to draw a straight line from Bach to Mozart and Beethoven to Schoenberg, there is a clear nationalist interest reflected maintaining such a connection. A discussion of "dead" or "living forms" also suggests an organic development. The resulting argument represents Schoenberg's transformation of previous musical forms as a way of evolution forward and as natural progress. Such an understanding of neoclassicism relies upon a rhetoric of straight, goal-oriented progress that holds up the already dominant cultural values of German-speaking Europe.

From the ubiquitous textbook, *A History of Western Music*, the idea of looking back to a predecessor or older form is also tied to a performance of a national or ethnic identity, but Burkholder, Grout, and Palisca center their discussion of neoclassicism in France.[79] They write that "Neoclassicism originated in France as a rejection of German Romanticism, whose associations with intense emotions, irrationality, yearning, individualism, and nationalism became

---

[77] Ibid.

[78] Schoenberg quoted by Whittall, concerning *Der neue Klassizismus* op.28 no.3, his cantata (1925).

[79] J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th ed, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 2014).

increasingly suspect in the wake of the wanton destruction of the war."[80] For Ravel, looking to

the past memorialized his French predecessors, compatriots lost, and nodded to the French

tradition of courtly dances in *Menuet antique, Pavane pour une infante défunte*, and *Le tombeau*

de Couperin. Notably absent from Ravel's orchestral edition of *Le tombeau*, a monument to both

the French composer Couperin and countrymen lost in the war, are the two movements of his

subsequent piano suite that reference Baroque forms that originated outside of France and were

favored by Bach: the toccata and fugue. For both the French and German composers cited in

these works, 20th-century neoclassicism represents an impulse to connect with an idea of the

history of national heritage, an important part of which meant projecting an image of themselves

as having a connection to past composers of masterworks. In his compositions, Britten diverts

starkly from such a nationalistic view of neoclassicism, leading me to believe that his time

borrowing aesthetics in *Metamorphoses* are not based primarily on musical predecessors.

From *Oxford: New Grove*, another common first resource in music studies, Arnold

Whittall presents a more complicated understanding of neoclassicism. In addition to the

sensibilities I have discussed above, he includes music with:

> some kind of extended tonality, modality or even atonality [rather] than reproduc[ing] the
> hierarchically structured tonal system of true (Viennese) Classicism, the prefix 'neo-'
> often carries the implication of parody, or distortion, of truly Classical traits. The advent
> of postmodern sensibilities since the 1970s has made it possible to see neo-classicism not
> as regressive or nostalgic but as expressing a distinctly contemporary multiplicity of
> awareness.[81]

The above definition feels more applicable to Britten's mid-century works, especially considering

his conscious step outside a "hierarchically structured tonal system." Even here, however, Britten

does not quite fit because the early postmodern parodic quality described above still relies on an

18th-century Classicism (hierarchical tonal structure, instrumentation of the Viennese symphony,

strict forms and repetition) as an *Ur trope*. While Britten does exemplify a "multiplicity of

---

[80] Ibid*,* 798.
[81] Arnold Whittall, "Neo-classicism" in *Grove Music Online* (2001) https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com
(Accessed 5 Feb. 2021).

awareness," his post-war references to the past do not extend compositional techniques in the emotionally detached way described above. In contrast, Britten's engagement is with a pre-18th-century Rome where, even today, the ancient Forum exists steps from the affecting sculptures by Bernini and paintings of Caravaggio.

The field of Art History offers an understanding of neoclassicism that more overtly references the ancient classical world Ovid occupied. Appearing in works from the 1600s-1800s, a visual connection to the Classical world arose from the phenomena of young adults taking Grand Tours around southern Europe, where they would survey old Roman sites.[82] The fascination with Classical sites led to the discovery and excavation of sites in Rome and Pompeii, a fascination which manifested in an explosive output of "neoclassical" artwork, architecture, and sculpture. Marilyn Stokstad and Michael W. Cothren

describe the sensibilities of neoclassical paintings that:

> reflect the frozen forms, tight compositions, and shallow space of ancient relief sculpture. Because the ancient world was considered the font from which British and European democracy, secular government, and civilized thought and action flowed, its art was viewed as the embodiment of timeless civic and moral lessons. Neoclassical paintings and sculptures were frequently painted for and displayed in public places in order to inspire patriotism, nationalism, and courage in defense of the state.[83]

Here is another rhetoric of nationalism that the "looking back" to Classical times supposedly supports. Pacifist Britten, who was openly critical of British imperialism and subtly critical of the monarchy, certainly did not set Roman poetry of Greek mythology to inspire nationalism or defense of the state. While Britten's source material is more similar to the neoclassical artists of previous centuries, in that he focuses on an ancient classical text, his intention and effect still seems different. Britten references a distant "then and there," in terms of both time and geography, troubling rather than reinforcing the social norms and political actions of the water-locked nation he called home.

---

[82] Michael W. Cothren and Marilyn Stokstad, ed.s, *Art History*, fourth ed., vol. 2 (Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011), 911.
[83] Michael W. Cothren and Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 911.

The post-1750 artistic values of balance, symmetry, and order, mastering of affections (movement between and appropriate use of affect) and its ties to cultural and scientific Enlightenment is really the aesthetic to which most 20th-century composers, music theorists, and historians refer as "Classical." With contemporary ties to a nationalist rhetoric (Ravel in *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Schoenberg as a "second Viennese school"), and a rhetoric of "natural organic evolution" (Schoenberg), any reference of a pre-18th-century original, what aesthetics of the "Classical" period of 1750-1825 itself referred to in architecture and operatic settings, is lost. Instead, it is replaced by the illusion of an always-extant rationalist logic of dividing the world into discrete categories (national borders and styles) and dichotomies (sex and gender): a feedback loop that reinforces what values they hold by representing them as natural, always in the past and forever in the future.

Britten's pairing of older music styles with newer ones exhibits a "multiplicity of awareness," perhaps an awareness of the cyclical nature of styles and trends as he calls attention to (even) older references in juxtaposition with modern reiterations of Classical sensibilities. Britten, like Ovid's Pythagoras from *Metamorphoses*, draws attention to the cycles of renewal, change, and refashioning rather than erasing historical fact to reinforce a present norm. Britten's use of historical *topoi* in his opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* also questioned the present through a similar multiplicity of historical styles. Philip Brett traced Britten's use of multiple historical topics throughout the opera, identifying his use of Baroque signs such as a (faux) castrato male vocal part, harpsichord, and 17th-century recitative in juxtaposition with moments of a Wagnerian "endless melody."[84] Brett found these historical topics in juxtaposition to Schoenbergian post-tonality and interpreted these self-conscious references as contextualizing the different temporalities between the immortal characters derived from Classical mythology and Shakespeare's mortal, quotidian characters. Britten creates intentionally brief, contained allusions

---

[84] Brett, "Britten's Dream," 119.

to other times, which work as a subtle commentary. Britten musically confines the opera's heteronormative lovers to a mortal, earthly plane, with "lines that are eternally syllabic, in even notes…[it] is a sure sign...that although they are conventionally 'good,' there is something wrong with them, or limited about them."[85] Britten's juxtaposition of temporal topics represents a queering of chronology in which evoking the past questions something taken for granted about the present. Britten's intentional use of Classical, Baroque and modern topics, in tandem with his identification with the outsider-ness of his characters who were immortal, ghosts, or exiled, highlights the violence and tediousness of societal norms: there might be "something wrong with…or limited about" the present.

Fluidity and Time

A musical amnesia that forgets pre-Classical past occludes the history of fluidity in gender and the sexed body on the stage. Martha Feldman writes of the proliferation of castrati, "pants roles" and a pre-1750 valuing of bodies that could not reproduce bloodlines and create lineages.[86] In its expressive detachment, conventional 20th-century musical neoclassicism largely erases the sometimes (homo)erotic art and poetry of Ancient Rome and Greece on which the first classical period referenced. Among ceramic art, the reliefs, sculpture, and poetry express a ubiquity of homoerotic social orientations and occasionally reference a fluidity in gender. Ovid, for example, wrote of gender or sex change as natural as the changing seasons in *Metamorphoses*, "we might wonder that the hyena changes her nature and that a creature which was but now a female and mated with a male is now a male herself…"[87] Rather than superimposing identity labels of the 21st century onto the past, I suggest that we take from these classical texts an openness to the idea of fluidity in all natures or roles we have come to think of as rigid. On the

---

[85] Ibid.

[86] See Martha Feldman, Preface to *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), xii; and Feldman, "Castrato de Luxe: Blood, Gifts and Goods," in *The Castrato*, 133-174.

[87] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.408-411, English translation by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946).

nature the fluid changing of states and forms of everything, Ovid further states, through

Pythagoras' voice:

> nothing in the world keeps its form. All things are in a state of flux, and everything is brought into being with a changing nature. Time itself flows on in constant motion, just like a river. For neither the river nor the swift hour can stop its course; but, as wave is pushed on by wave, and as each wave as it comes is both pressed on and itself presses the wave in front, so time both flees and follows and is ever new. For that which once existed is no more, and that which was not has come to be; and so the whole round of motion is gone through again.[88]

The metaphors of elements, especially water characterize the ancient poets' and philosophers'

words about the fluidity of identity and nature, thinking of time in terms of cycles of changes,

from the river that flows as time, the flood that renews everything, the waves that push and

connect past with future.

For literature scholar SunHee Kim Gertz, *locus* as a literary reference in Ovid's poetry

becomes a technique for marking memory for the future, places ripe with enigmas that connect

past and present.[89] Gertz is not merely concerned with influence, a common concern in

researching the lineages of musical or literary sensibilities and styles; rather, she is concerned

with seeing Ovid's relationship to prior texts like Plato's dialogues as a *locus*, that for Ovid and

writers centuries later "shares their interests and that, in comparison, more explicitly links

passion, language, myths, wisdom, and the divine."[90] She also writes:

> I do not focus here on the relationship of influence between the two poets. Rather, in this study, I intend to explore how both poets [Ovid and Marie de France] engage their material to reveal reflections, tensions, and echoes of prior images and narratives– those brightly colored fibers that allow narratives to go beyond a text's boundaries.[91]

Here, in using memory, voice and location as a way to communicate through time, Gertz breaks

out of the limiting narrative of a linear, singular influence. I build on her example by considering

how thinking about space and time together, i.e. considering temporalities, helps me to question

---

[88] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.177-185.
[89] SunHee Kim Gertz, *Echoes and Reflections: Memory and Memorials in Ovid and Marie de France* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2003).
[90] Gertz, 36.
[91] Ibid., 36-7.

the limiting perspectives of the linear constructs in Western music studies and renewed

structuralism of gender studies. Gertz's poets of focus—Ovid and Marie de France—used the

myths to create what she calls the enigma, a way to question the present contexts in which poets

found themselves. In her readings of Maria de France, for example, she finds an avoidance of "the

static, potentially monumental quality of imitation...she creates living memorials...what is

important here is not so much *that* Ovid influenced Marie, as *how* Marie responds to his

poetry."[92] Very different times, geographies, socio-political identities are implicated in Gertz's

reflections, but the connection between the two poets is through affect and the act of questioning.

Gertz writes "[Marie] shapes her poetry to evoke him, to suggest interchange and imagined

conversations with a favorite writer, an exchange she articulates by creating pieces that take on

the quality of responses and questions, of conversations like that between Phaedrus and

Socrates."[93] She finds these time-transcending dialogues at the locations of living memories, as

opposed to the congealing of meanings in monuments and written text dislocated from context.

Locations she identifies as teeming with meaning are places where land and water meet. Whether

real or imagined, such as Socrates' invocation of Sappho and Anacreon by the Ilisius river,

references to water permeate Ovid and Marie's poetry and stand out as places of significance.[94]

Converging at the Water's Edge

Water sources hold significant weight in the *Metamorphoses,* especially as a unifying

element for the six myths that Britten focuses on. Narcissus finds his reflection in the pool of

water after escaping Echo (who we hear from afar); Arethusa flees to the river, melds into its

form before flowing down into a fountain; Syrinx nearly escapes Pan at the edge of water before

she is cut down in her new reed form; Phaeton is flung into the river after flying the chariot

---

[92] Ibid., 37.
[93] Gertz, 37.
[94] Gertz writes, "This is the space where Socrates recalls prior, more inspired, words on love such as those uttered by Sappho and Anacreon. And this is also the place to which, after wading in the river, the philosopher returns to correct his blasphemous counter-speech and utter a palinode to love…" 32-34.

recklessly. *Loci* such as rivers represent another form of "paradigmatic *topoi*" in which *"loci* [in the *Metamorphoses*] function as gateways to new perspectives."[95] Throughout Britten's works, a body of water as a *locus* has come to represent danger, but also, knowledge and escape.

The themes of Britten's works and Ovid's poetry that collide at the *locus* of where water and land meet include the poetics of exile from community (*Peter Grimes*); the duality of danger and escape water represents (*Death in Venice*, *Six Metamorphoses*); neoclassical references to pre-modern times; innocence and violence (*Lucretia*). These themes, well documented within Britten's operatic oeuvre, are significant, not just in Britten's selection of poet and text, but also in the references to real locations: an embodied performance that brings all the mentioned themes to a point of intersection. Boughton's premiere of the work entailed the following vision:

> Ben wanted Joy to play the Six Metamorphoses after Ovid standing on a raft, but she felt unsafe, so a compromise was reached and she stood on an island. Ben was very disappointed, but Joy was right to be suspicious of that raft. On a later occasion it broke away from its mooring and drifted off down the Meare carrying the choir and the madrigals with it. Joy DID play the piece standing on a barge two years later.[96]

The significance of these pieces as a kind of "water music" becomes clear in close readings of the particular myths portrayed. Water unites all six movements, and as with the sea in *Peter Grimes* and the canals in *Death in Venice,* it represents both danger and escape. All of these details converge in short work for Boughton. Her June 14, 1951 birthday premiere on an island in the middle of a body of water for the Aldeburgh festival bridges several seemingly contradictory oppositions: the incidental pieces and large staged works; land and sea; masculine and feminine subjectivities, past and present.

Water binding the six metamorphoses Britten set for Boughton to play, the element and *locus* connotes danger, as with the stagnant pools of *Death in Venice*, the reflection of Narcissus, and the unwieldy sea in *Peter Grimes*. Water harbors secrets and threatens to undermine order. While never without danger, it offers the only form of escape, or attempted escape, for the

---

95 Gertz, 33.
96 Francis, "Joy Boughton: A Portrait," 65.

mythical individuals Britten selected from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. What else does this say for those who would attempt to escape the violent norms of their own time and place? I think it is significant that Britten concludes the collection with "Arethusa, who flying from the love of Alpheus the river god, was turned into a fountain," especially when Britten envisioned Boughton's performance on a raft, escaping down the river. While the importance of the smaller unaccompanied work is sometimes overlooked for the larger, staged works that bookended its composition, *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* represents a convergence of the key themes and influences that Brett and others have identified in the larger works. Themes of exiling, silencing, and marginalizing the voices of queer, pacifist, and musical others have long been the topic of Britten research since Philip Brett's 1977 essay, "Britten and Grimes."[97] Ovid was similarly concerned with exile, speaking to the silencing of anti-authority speech, power difference between gender and class, cycles of violence and victimization.[98]

I would argue that between Ovid's perspective and the multiple subjectivities that Britten considers in *Six Metamorphoses,* there is another takeaway for the field of queer musicology. Even as an artist exiled in some ways, Britten's work here is not the work of one sole artist in isolation, but as with his operas, collaborative in meaning and derivation. The possibility of collaborative texts certainly complicates what Brett had described as a trend to read biography onto musical narrative, especially in ways that essentialize and pathologized LGBT creators and texts.[99] I would offer that we are not as fixated on a note-to-note correlation of meaning or one singular reading, as much as we are open to collaborative texts, close readings, uncanny performances, and queer listenings: iterative rather than forgetful and ever questioning what is taken for granted as natural.

---

[97] Philip Brett, "Britten and Grimes," (first published Musical Times 117, 1977) in *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*, edited by George E. Haggerty (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006): 32.
[98] Fulkerson, *Ovid*, 68-78.
[99] Brett, "Grimes Is at His Exercise," 35.

CHAPTER 3

QUEER REMIXES: TEMPORAL DRAG AND EDM'S CONTINUITY IN STROMAE'S

AUDIO-VISUAL TEXTS

Come, be lords and princelings of douche-dom, hear my clarion call. Annointeth thyself with gel and heavy body spray, maketh the sign of the devil horns with thine hand, let there be high fiving…for this is the kingdom (music intensifies) and the power…You just press a button and…and people respond?! – Anthony Bourdain speaking of commercialized EDM, *No Reservations* (Oct. 2005)

"This dialectic – the constant interplay between exploitation and some measure of autonomy – informs all of the history of those who have lived under capitalism." – John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity" in *Finding Out*, 46

The story of EDM (Electronic Dance Music) is one of a tension between the creative play

of underground scenes and resistance to the seductive incentives of commercialization. As with

many mainstream representatives of media that have been commercialized over time, the image

of EDM today often eclipses the rich history of the style, flattening it into a singular,

monocultural product. Yet EDM was and is not one thing; rather, under its acronymic umbrella

cluster vastly different sensibilities and subgenres that have emerged over time, in different

physical locations, all traceable to three specific places in the immediate post-disco United States.

In the pages that follow, I ask: how and where do communal memories of the early underground

scenes survive? How did a subversive queer of color music scene and the mainstream musical

style that followed contribute to what we call EDM today? In this chapter, I investigate the

methods practitioners and communities find to engage with the spirit of early EDM and how they

revisit EDM's underground spaces through communal memory. I focus on one artist, in

particular, who calls upon the musical techniques and sounds of these earlier DJs and recreations

of physical spaces where rich musical encounters occurred. Despite a more recent

commercialized turn, I inquire into how one European EDM artist, whose point of contact was

through mainstream dance music and the virtual sharing of dance scenes, invokes the deep history

of America's queer of color underground dance scenes through sound, topoi, music video, and choreography.

Stromae, the alias of Paul van Haver, an EDM artist of Rwandan-Belgian descent who creates and performs in Belgium and France, is one such time-traveler and his USB midi keyboard is his time machine. Stromae first gained fame among Francophone audiences through his creation of video "*leçons,*" brief videos posted to YouTube, in which he breaks down each layer of the process of creating a song. Following his first album, *Cheese*, and performances at Afropunk Festival (Paris), and Trans Musicales de Rennes (Rennes, Brittany) among more high profile venues in Europe, Stromae acquired increasing recognition while remaining relatively obscure to mainstream audiences in the U.S. Throughout his career Stromae has presented himself as an auteur, a modern-day Mozart, indicated in both his stage name "Stromae" and its *verlan*[1] "Maestro," which anagram to form his production label, "Mosaert." Though he presents as a kind of auteur, he emerges not from a vacuum but a rich history of both popular and *avant garde* electronic music, sounds and topics from multiple generations of creators that he cannily references.

I situate Stromae within the matrix of EDM, post-EDM creators, and their socio-cultural contexts because he both draws from and parodies music styles of the past and present. I also want to avoid describing his biography and works within the rhetoric of sole-artist genius. To do so would obscure the most interesting layers of his audio-visual texts: how he calls intentionally on the past, including disparate genres and spaces, to compose a work that renders his creative processes visible, exposing the seams that hold the audio-visual text together. While it is the producers of EDM who more commonly self-identify in this role of track creation today, the history of the genre speaks to the experimental artists who transitioned more freely between the roles of producer and DJ, such as early DJs Larry Levan of Paradise Garage and Frankie

---

[1] *Verlan a l'envers* is a clever vernacular French slang in which spoken syllables are reversed, originally a way for youth and those involved in subversive or illegal activities to evade authorities.

Knuckles of The Warehouse. Stromae calls upon this deeper past in the fluidity of his musical

roles, process-oriented creations, and engagement with the sound of vinyl, even without the use

of turntables. Through identification of styles and influences in Stromae's musical texts, I find

hints of the ethos of EDM's roots: it was a style always-already expressed by underground, queer

of color scenes, DIY in its creative development of technology, not to mention, weird, ironic, and

at times, uncanny.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC: A TEMPORALLY QUEER GENRE

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) refers to a diverse collection of musical styles that first

emerged in the urban dance sites of the northern and midwestern US after the reign and fall of

disco in the 1970s. Now geographically dispersed, EDM's early branches developed into dozens

of subgenres and produced a significant influence on mainstream and alternative subgenres today.

What unites most of EDM's subgenres is a regular beat, for dancing, and the involvement of

electronic tech at one or multiple stages of the process of playing, mixing, recording, rerecording,

processing, producing sound. At its roots, EDM emerged from three diverse geographical areas

and dance music scenes that fostered safe spaces for variously othered people, but especially

represented the creative collaborations of predominantly queer people of color in New York City,

Chicago, and Detroit. For this reason, I employ Micah Salkind's adaptation of "queer of color" to

mean those spaces and cultural products whose participants represent a variety of ethnicities and

sexualities, including some straight and white clientele, but *centered* the presence and artistic

contributions of Black and Latino gay and trans members.[2] The creators of this early iteration of

EDM combined the sounds of the previous decades' disco, along with lesser-known records of

r&b, funk, and punk records. These early DJs and producers combined the sound of less-

distributed records with their own developments in technology that allowed for the isolation of

samples, combination of multiple singles, looping of sections, or mechanically produced

---

[2] Micah E. Salkind, *Do You Remember House?: Chicago's Queer of Color Undergrounds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

percussive and melodic layers intended to make music that inspired dancing on the floors of their respective clubs. Since EDM has gained more play in mainstream music channels of distribution, the style has developed beyond its initial dance clubs to refer to an umbrella of music genres. Heard via the radio, music festivals, streaming, commercials, and quickly self-produced via apps, EDM is seemingly ubiquitous, now usually identifiable by its generic markers of a steady beat, electronic instruments, and processed sounds.

Contemporary EDM is indebted to waves of queer music experimentation, what was once described in scholarship as a rise from the ashes of disco, at dance clubs that served predominantly queer people and people of color.[3] Disco developed in localized, mostly Black and gay dance clubs.[4] By the end of the 70s, however, disco had achieved a peak in mainstream success it was never able to hold onto thereafter.[5] Widely regarded as the line of demarcation for the death of disco is the infamous "Disco Demolition" event held between two White Sox baseball games. As a White Sox promotion in 1979, in exchange for reduced entry to Comiskey Park, attendees were invited to sacrifice a disco record.[6] The offerings were then blown up in the outfield to the cheers of a frenzied crowd.[7] Rather than represent an isolated act, this symbolic

---

[3] Salkind, "Like a Phoenix from the Ashes: Socio-sonic Memory and Proto-House Geographies," in *Do You Remember House?*, 23-46.
[4] Notable outliers to this historical narrative involved the "walking DJs" of New York, which were predominantly Latino; finding themselves on the outside of both mainstream and queer clubs, Latino DJs developed a community and alternative spaces for spinning, trading, and mixing, including streets and basketball courts. Kristie Soares, *Bodies Ablazing: Taking Space and Making Time in BIPOC Party Cultures*, Virtual Panel on Reggaeton, Perreo, EDM, Disco, and Brazilian Funk, the American Studies Association, New Orleans (Nov. 5, 2022).
[5] Brewster references the debaucherous queer club Sanctuary and the tamer Haven as two such New York City disco scenes that gay men frequented, even as their resident DJs including Francis Grasso were often straight. It was while DJing for these clubs that Grasso perfected techniques for mixing: matching beats to play two records simultaneously for stretches and developing the radio technique of the "slip-cue," starting records precisely on beat by holding them stationary via a felt mat. Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey* (New York: Grove Press, 1999), 134-6.
[6] The entrance fee was not totally waived, but for sacrificing a record, it would be reduced to a symbolic 98 cents (to match WLUP's location at 97.9 fm). Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 25.
[7] Salkind dives into the social implications of this key event and the symbolic meaning of a hegemonically straight, masculine, white crowd violently destroying cultural artifacts of the queer of color underground in Chicago as gentrification of the city was actively occurring. Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 23-46.

ritual reflected racist and homophobic epithets percolating within the capitalist ecosystem of commercial music. The performance proved a violently symbolic act:

> When Dahl, [a radio promoter for WLUP,] drove a Jeep onto Comiskey's center field between games that fateful July night, dressed in camouflage fatigue lest the violence of the militaristic exercise be lost on anybody, the stadium's mostly white crowd had already lost control; hundreds of intoxicated patrons stormed the grass while thousands of disco, r&b, and soul records went up in flames.[8]

The promotional stunt left the field unplayable for the next game. The act also signified that commercialized and heteronormative White rock culture would successfully drive disco back out of the mainstream by the 80s. In the public's view, disco was dead. Early Electronic Dance Music, thus, emerged like a phoenix from disco's remnants in predominantly queer-of-color clubs in the late 70s, early 80s.

More recent scholarship and oral history work, however, complicates the notion of a simple line marking the end of disco and the beginnings of early EDM, proposing that there was more of a continuum between the two styles.[9] Micah Salkind's project, *Do You Remember House?*, combines a critical oral history of early participants and shapers of EDM with a thick description of the music and spaces they congregated, finding the musical timeline is much more complex than a one night marking disco's demise and EDM's rise. Salkind fills in the vital history of music and culture—as it mapped onto real locations in Chicago's South side—that contributed to the mainstream antagonizing of disco, the commonplace veneer of a color-blind aesthetic preference even while there the city's subconscious connected disco to a musical and social lineage that was Black and queer.[10] While the organizer of the infamous Disco Demolition, Mike Veeck, conceived of a promotion not necessarily born from his own discophobia or individually-held ill intent—Veeck had previously organized disco promotion nights—he was

---

[8] Salkind, 25.
[9] For the origins and a critical unpacking of the common rhetoric involving House music's rise from the "ashes of disco" like a phoenix, see Salkind, "Like a Phoenix from the Ashes: Socio-sonic Memory and Proto-House Geographies," in *Do You Remember House?*, 23-46.
[10] Salkind, 25-6.

adept at reading the changing trends and sentiments of the surrounding community. Salkind writes that "perhaps the most troubling aspect of Demolition fracas was that it all took place under the guise of what Dahl continues to insist was race-neutral cultural preference, rather than an overtly homophobic and racist cultural politics."[11] What Veeck and Dahl tapped into on that explosive night was the increasing irritation at the loss of control over physical neighborhood and commercial boundaries as north-bound African American migrants found space in South Chicago neighborhoods, commercial districts, and, finally, radio waves. Salkind connects these bubbling resentments, racism, and homophobia with discophobia, to the public to scapegoating of the idea of disco in 1979. In oral histories of the events, Salkind found that the records offered for admission to the park and ultimately destruction were not necessarily recent mainstream disco, but overwhelmingly older Black music records, showing that the proponents of a white Chicago Rock hegemony had actually connected disco to its Black music roots of Blues, Jazz, Soul, Funk, Gospel, and R&B, in the collective subconsciousness of the city even while the mainstream disco reaching the public had been packaged as whiter for easy consumption.[12]

Salkind, Brewster and Broughton show that disco, and the House music that arose from disco's "ashes," were actually crossover styles and the places that celebrated the music were significant sites of multi-ethnic and sexual identity and multi-generational congregation.[13] By connecting the socio-economic changes and forces to the elimination or creation of music venues, this work clarifies the pressures that led to the disco demolition frenzy at Comiskey Park and how dance music survived the following decade underground, sometimes in the very homes of DJs. At its roots, EDM began as a style with a non-commercial, community building *raison d'être* born from the combination of old records, new collaborations, and DIY adaptations of technology by

---

[11] Ibid.
[12] Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 23-46.
[13] Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*; and Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton*, Last Night A DJ Saved My Life.*

"multiple, overlapping generations of stewards" that allowed people to commune with dance music in ways both physically and profoundly spiritual.[14]

In these queer-of-color underground scenes, three early branches emerged simultaneously, named for the spaces and styles they came to represent. "House" emerged from Chicago's Warehouse, headlined by such figures as DJ Frankie Knuckles.[15] Meanwhile, "Techno" developed in Detroit's late-night rave clubs. "Garage" emerged in New York city, named after the Paradise Garage, which first opened as a predominantly Black and queer club in 1977.[16] The development of EDM styles following the notorious Disco Demolition exceeds a tidy linear timeline: the story is not of just one place or person, but many localized scenes in which dance music survived and different subgenres flourished in coterminous development.

Evidence of "crossover" among events, self- and indie-pressed records, and DIY. cassettes that circulated in the late 1970s through the 1980s, speaks to how multiple music scenes crosspollinated from within a city to internationally.[17] The import of the three post-disco styles to the UK, for example, led to the development of further subgenre: Acid-house. From the influence of Italo-disco or Jamaican dub on the NYC garage scene and Chicago's house DJ's connection to NY, Knuckles and Levan's tours abroad, are infinite points of influence and collaboration possible even during the initial flourishing of dance music in the late 70s into the 80s. I focus my need-to-know history of EDM, however, on its roots in New York City and Chicago, which were eclectic in sound and temporally queer. House and garage simultaneously invoke/d both the past and the future, queering the straight capitalist logics of the marketable single by remixing,

---

[14] Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 6.
[15] Kembrew McCleod, "Genres, Subgenres, Sub-subgenres and More: Musical and Social Differentiation within Electronic/Dance Music Communities," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13 (2001): 62.
[16] Mark J. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006): 39.
[17] See Salkind's chapter, "The End of the First Decade: House Music Crosses over and Moves out," *Do You Remember House?,* 119-144.

combining, looping, distributing self-made copies, and collaborating among participants in a network of underground dance scenes.

Paradise and Garage

While the three distinct geographic areas allowed EDM to develop simultaneously as three distinct branches, the style was first born from the experiments of DJs that went from spinning records in New York City's queer clubs on to their residencies at clubs that developed significant and loyal clienteles. Paradise Garage was the one such important space for the musical and physical expressions of sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities in the city. A nightclub located in New York City's West End, at the 82 King St Garage, from 1977-1987, Paradise was also the experimental playground for residential DJ Larry Levan. As the reputation of the club and its resident DJ grew, the mythos of the space led to the eventual coining of a sub-genre of EDM onto the labels on records marketed to reproduce what Levan, his associates, and his audience had collaboratively created.[18]

Paradise Garage was a members-only dance space that participants reached by ascending a long ramp behind a garage door. Remembered by participants as akin to "entering a spaceship,"[19] participants "could feel the beat the second that your foot touched the ramp. Once inside you were consumed by the music. It would actually eat you up and spit you out a better person 8 hours later."[20] Open on the weekends and without officially selling food or drink, it was also allowed to stay open all night and into the day that followed. The names most associated with the space included Michael Brody, who opened and owned the club, Mel Cheren, who

---

[18] Brewster and Broughton describe through truly disturbing imagery how different the sounds of emerging EDM scenes were around the country despite all being indebted to disco by describing how "each took a dramatically different set of chromosomes from its mother, all were born from disco's broad hips." *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*, 270.

[19] jonathan goode commenting: "When I would enter the PARADISE GARAGE. IT WOULD BE LIKE ENTERING A SPACESHIP," on *Larry Levan - Live At The Paradise Garage [1979]* Old Skool Rewind Official, YouTube (Dec 31, 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39JerMg2IQE (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).

[20] K. Lee Talon commenting on *Larry Levan - Live At The Paradise Garage [1979]* Old Skool Rewind Official, YouTube (Dec 31, 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39JerMg2IQE (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).

financially backed the endeavor, in addition to Levan, the iconic DJ who shaped the sound of post-disco dance music, who designed its distinguished sound system with Richard Long. Participants describe how Levan's constant work on the tech and physics of reverb made the space transformative: "The sound was ridiculous. I haven't heard anything like that since. The sound, at times, would make you feel like you were on a spaceship, shooting through space at the speed of light. It was a sonic magic trick that blew your mind."[21] Levan's early death at 38 fueled the mythos surrounding the experimental, Black and queer DJ's legendary sets as well as the space he cultivated. Paradise Garage may not have the mainstream name recognition of the straighter, posher Studio 54, but this above-ground-underground club had a lasting impact on the development of Electronic Dance Music styles, technologies, and the shifting roles of DJs.

The (Paradise) Garage was more than just a place for music and dance. Long time attendees cite it as a truly safe place where all could congregate, especially ethnic and sexual minorities, referring to Paradise as "home" and "church" and "family."[22] It became a place of fulfillment for those who weren't getting their spiritual, social, or emotional needs met in the biological families and religious congregations that ostracized them. It was to participants a space for "spiritual freedom" and "the absolute best of humanity."[23] The sound technology helped create a rapturous space. Micah Salkind writes "the sermonic function that the RLA [sound system] helped accentuate, a role especially meaningful for queer folks alienated from the Black church,

---

[21] Rene Galafuze further comments: "Everywhere you stood on the main dance floor sounded as if you were in the middle of the dance floor (even behind the speakers)." *Larry Levan - Live At The Paradise Garage [1979]* Old Skool Rewind Official, YouTube (Dec 31, 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39JerMg2IQE (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).
[22] L Rod comments: "Paradise Garage was a Sanctuary for the Soul...all kind of people came together and worshipped God through Music and was able to without prejudice or indifference. No alcohol served, just chicken soup for the Soul." Ibid.
Also mentioned in various comments by participants in a video documenting the Larry Levan Street Party commemorating legacy of Levan and Paradise Garage from the words of participants at the 2014 block party, produced and edited by Jonathan Ullman and Raymond Rodriguez, ed.s, *What Is The Paradise Garage?* (Larry Levan Way, 2014)" (Go Go Patience C+P, 2014) Vimeo https://player.vimeo.com/video/100114366?h=37a9669771 (Accessed Oct. 2, 2021).
[23] Jonathan Ullman and Raymond Rodriguez, ed.s, *What Is The Paradise Garage? (Larry Levan Way, 2014)*.

would be further developed by house music's progenitors in Chicago."[24] Paradise also became a

space for new generations of DJs to begin, as participants described The Garage as: "My home

for ten years...my musical education."[25] Levan cultivated a space for queer visual and

performative artists to collaborate and experiment, counting such figures as friend Keith Haring,

who painted Grace Jones' bare body for her iconic performance there, among regulars.[26] A

generation of DJs in NYC cite the environment and sounds fostered in Paradise and ministrations

of Levan as a musical education.[27] It was a space, and it became a sound, and it is a style of EDM.

Paradise officially closed its doors in 1987 and despite Larry Levan and Brody passing, it

lives on in those that remember and try to recreate the feeling of the space. In coming together for

a dance party in front of the garages in 2014, participants described the block party as "a family

reunion [for] everyone that grew up in here."[28] Reminiscences from the past three decades ache

with a bittersweet mix of heartbreak at the club's closure, the friends and chosen family lost to

AIDS, and simultaneously a joyous optimism that sometime in the future it will reopen. Jon

Pareles wrote one such account in the *New York Times* (2000):

> The former Paradise Garage at 84 King Street is now just a garage again, where Bell
> Atlantic parks its trucks. Mr. Charen [sic] dreams of turning it into a club, and he nurtures
> the hope that his book could make it possible...They could buy the building, put it back
> the way it was and leave it, then turn it over to 24 Hours for Life. Every night of the week
> would be a different party. Everybody who works there would get paid, but the profits
> would go to a community chest of charities. And if it happened in New York, it could
> happen in London, in Tokyo, in Paris. I have Larry Levan's ashes, and I want to put up a
> glass enclosure. Like the pope is in the Vatican; Larry's ashes would be in the Garage.[29]

In 2015, the space was remembered and marked on the virtual map of the NYC LGBT Historic

Sites Project (Figure 3.1). Devastatingly, in 2018, it also became the first site of the project to be

---

[24] Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 57.
[25] Jonathan Ullman and Raymond Rodriguez, Ed.s, *What Is The Paradise Garage?*
[26] Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*, 288.
Keith Haring and Grace Jones' pivotal performance at the Paradise Garage remains one of the few events at
the space for which there is photographic evidence. Bill Bernstein, with forward by Nona Hendryx, *Disco:
The Bill Bernstein Photographs* (London: Reel Art Press, 2015).
[27] Jonathan Ullman and Raymond Rodriguez, Ed.s, *What Is The Paradise Garage?*
[28] Ibid.
[29] Jon Pareles, "Paradise Garage: A Gay Club That Forever Changed Night Life," *The New York Times*
(June 18, 2000).

physically demolished (Figure 3.2).[30] Despite its closure and demolition, the memory of a

collaborative space cultivated between DJ and audience lives on in the virtual memorials of

remixes of Levan's sets, videos of block parties on the street in homage to the garages, and

techniques passed along through such mediums as YouTube, Vimeo, and other democratic, open

source means.
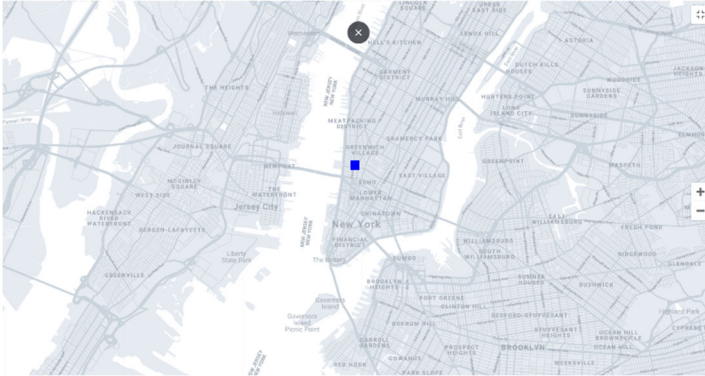
Figure 3.1: On the map: Paradise Garage marked on the virtual interactive map of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project

Figure 3.2: Left: the flyer for the final dance party in the space before its lease ended. Right: The Garages of 84 King St, where the Paradise Garage was open on weekends 1977-1987, demolished 2018.

---

[30] "DEMOLISHED: Paradise Lost," *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* (2018) https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/2018/04/13/demolished-paradise-lost/ (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).

Chicago's Warehouse

Many similarities underscore the ethos of Paradise and Chicago's early EDM club, the Warehouse. As with Paradise Garage, the space of Chicago's Warehouse club, eventually known as "The Music Box," offered a safe space to dance for attendees who were frequently marginalized along the axes of sexuality and/or race. Both began as non-profit, membership-only, non-alcohol serving private venues. Additionally, the rhetoric in the remembrances of House take on a certain religiosity, as the physical spaces "offer[ed] hope and salvat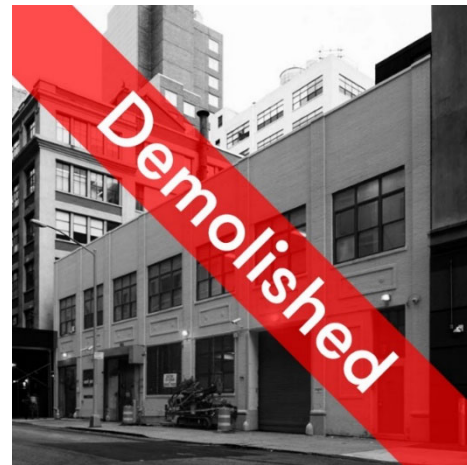ion to those who had few other places to go," and where interaction with sound promised a form of spiritual transcendence for a weekly presence of a faithful "congregation."[31] Long and Levan's virtuosic use of sound in space, which inspired what Mel Cheren called "disco evangelism," influenced how aesthetic decisions in the DJ technology and technique of Chicago's Warehouse affected the bodies present through reverberating sound.[32] Salkind locates this musical spirituality as one of the many traits that traveled from the queer clubs of NYC to Chicago and flourished in its queer of color spaces contributing to the spirit of house. From oral histories of dancers, producers, and participants at the Warehouse, Salkind has a catalog of "rapturous audiences" and "ecstatic vocal performances" that echo the comments from Paradise participants.[33] Both spaces also created safe spaces of confinement that paradoxically allowed for "social expansiveness": a more open expression of identity and a self that was less free outside the club's walls. Like jazz clubs in Harlem during 1920s and 30s, the creation of small spaces of Black music experimentation allowed for collaborative musicking undertaken by audience and performers together.[34]

The Warehouse, located in an industrial area of Chicago, was repurposed into a dance club in 1977, when the inside of the three-story factory transformed into a queer sanctuary. 206

---

[31] Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*, 292.
[32] Mel Cheren, *My Life and the Paradise Garage: Keep on Dancin' 2 Vols.,* edited by Brad Rumph (New York: 24 Hours for Life, 2000), 182.
[33] Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*, 57.
[34] Salkind, 59.

Jefferson, a green and cream brick building in art deco style, became the place of "an all-night, members-only, non-profit, juice bar that produced cultural programming for social dancers."[35] Promoter Robert Williams and various financial supporters transferred the model of queer NYC dance venues and juice bars to Chicago, developing what they first called "US Studios." Williams travelled to NYC to acquire a resident DJ with Larry Levan in mind.[36] Levan turned down the gig and they returned to Chicago with the lessor-known Frankie Knuckles, who had DJed alongside Levan at various queer venues in NYC, but unlike Levan, was still in need of a residency. Eventually US Studios became the Warehouse, and even later, the Music Box when Ron Hardy took the position as resident DJ. Of its structure, attendees remember the stark juxtaposition of a bright lounge upon entering the club and the descent into a dark, sweaty dance floor below.[37] Like Paradise, the primary focus was on creating an "underground" space for movement to music en masse. The creators also took their inspiration for the décor from dance spaces in NY, which had "helped to feature soaring ceilings, crumbling brick walls, and raw wood floors."[38] The requirement of membership and recruitment of attendees by existing members, also mirroring Paradise Garage, allowed for a safe place for diversity to flourish while the club maintained a reliable following.[39] The sound technology solidified the scene, which like Levan's Paradise could transform a space and transport the dancers of Warehouse.

Frankie Knuckles essentially founded Chicago's Warehouse, and with it a subgenre of EDM, upon his movement from NYC to Chicago at Levan's encouragement.[40] Imported to the Midwest were DJ skills and sensibilities nurtured while providing music for some of the same queer locales: Continental Baths and so-called juice bars in late 1970s.[41] Knuckles also used some

---

[35] Salkind, 48.
[36] Salkind, 48-9.
[37] Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*, 293.
[38] Salkind, 53.
[39] Salkind, 53-4.
[40] Brewster and Broughton, 294.
[41] Brewster and Broughton, 296.

of Levan's mixes, including recordings from Levan's group the Peech Boys, and labels from the NYC scene, such as Salsoul and West End Records.[42] After leaving the Warehouse, Knuckles also cultivated a following that traveled with him to emerging queer-of-color venues, such as The Power Plant. With the addition of private house parties, a network of music spaces developed where queer dance culture was centered, after the alleged demise of disco.

Many of Knuckle's sets involved looking back to disco classics, finding a way to transform these older records for survival in an era where "major labels felt disco burning their fingers."[43] This sonic looking back developed new techniques for creating remixes, "working on reedits of songs in an effort to rejuvenate old favorites, experimenting with the remixing of ideas he had seen DJs do back home."[44] When disco records became unavailable from labels who would no longer touch it, up-tempo, danceable music became scarce; Knuckles took on techniques to camouflage and transform unsellable songs. With a reel-to-reel recorder and the expertise of collaborator and friend Erasmo Riviera, a sound engineer, "Frankie would take weird tunes like 'Walk The Night' by the Skatt Brothers...or jazzy disco records like *A Little Bit Of Jazz* by Nick Straker, or *Double Journey* by Powerline and reedit them, extending intros and breaks, adding new beats and sounds, to make them work better for his dancers."[45] He states that he renewed "even stuff like 'I'm Every Woman' and 'Ain't Nobody' by Chaka Khan...completely reedit them, to give my dancefloor an extra boost. I'd rearrange them, extend them and rearrange them."[46] Remixes and edits also included reworking vocal lines to create innovative word play.[47] Broughton and Brewster write that, "Eventually, [Knuckles'] tape projects would become complex remixes, as he ran completely new rhythms, basslines and drum tracks underneath familiar songs. This kind of DJ creativity was at least half a decade old in New York...but in

---

[42] Brewster and Broughton, 296.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] quoted in Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life*, 297.
[47] Ibid.

Chicago it was very new."[48] Knuckles and his followers developed a distinct style of EDM in

Chicago House, even while they renewed techniques and sound sources acquired in New York's

scene.

While the garage scene is most closely associated with Paradise and Larry Levan, and

Chicago's house came from the new style of DJing Frankie Knuckles imported from New York

to Chicago, the house scene also came to defy confinement to one place or street, but developed

through "constellations of affiliated spaces."[49] In his nuanced exploration of the history and

present spaces of Chicago house, Micah Salkind situates his thick description of sonic spaces

with oral histories of practitioners and a critical understanding of the socio-political and economic

forces that surrounded the clubs. He describes how:

> Chicago's queer of color undergrounds formed in particular spaces left over when capital
> and industry moved to the City's suburbs during the 1970s…[These] undergrounds
> continued to take shape beneath and behind Chicago's cultural main streets throughout
> the 1980s, often produced as private non-profit or low-profit functions that have
> had…only tenuous relationships to mainstream media exposure.[50]

US studios and The Warehouse thrived on an ethos of community-building, not-for-profit, open

sharing of new and old music. Salkind finds that US Studios' "success and its role in the

development of The Warehouse were predicated in part on the fact that it wasn't originally

oriented toward generating surplus capital, but rather toward fostering collective mutual aid and a

culture of gift-giving."[51] By the 1980s, however, Warehouse became infiltrated more and more by

mainstream straight crowds, causing owners to double fees in the interest of making money. DJ

Ron Hardy took up the reigns and the Warehouse became the Music Box; the kids in attendance

began looking for ways to make the music they heard at home, leading to the double meaning of

"house" music. Recent work on the history and meaning of house music has proposed that both

---

[48] Brewster and Broughton, 297.
[49] Salkind, *Do You Remember House*, 12.
[50] Salkind, 11.
[51] Salkind, 51.

the underground, anti-capitalist queer musicking and the more mainstream, commercially viable

progeny both contributed to what practitioners, scholars, and audiences know house to be today.[52]

The Time-traveling Sound Worlds of Garage and House

Salkind locates "the spirit of house" in the music culture in the DJs, clubs, and private

venues that created a space that was "all-night, members-only, non-profit" and fostered "non-

egoistic, intra-artist support system."[53] As previously described, it is spiritual in the sense of a

congregation of practitioners who met weekly to elevate themselves through embodied ritual and

connection to one another through music. By "spirit," however, Salkind also means the aesthetics

and style of a music not easily unified through a singular shared trait, but by its ethos and

technique of construction often involving a reciprocal relationship with audience members. I

argue this community-building, anti-capitalist, DIY tech and time traveling sound underlines the

spirit of house, garage, and those EDM artists to follow who would connect with EDM's roots.

Knuckles mixed dance records that were not yet known, creating a desire in Chicago for

dance music that was non-commercial. From interviews with Knuckles associates, Salkind writes

that Knuckles, "brought an ear for unfamiliar tracks to his musical programming, but he never

played too far outside his audience's comfort zone. Rather…he worked to incorporate a *future*

classic repertoire of punk, funk, r&b, and disco with tracks that were already familiar to Chicago

dancers."[54] After disco was considered extinct by record producers, it fell upon Chicago DJs like

Knuckles to create their own up-tempo mixes with the aid of playback tech that had become

widely available with connection to the reel-to-reel magnetic tape.[55] According to Salkind, "Many

local Chicago hits form the mid-1980s circulated firsts on cassette tapes before getting

---

[52] Even though the more recent commercially viable sound created by straighter, whiter and masculine of center DJs, by the nature of mainstreaming, came to eclipse the public's imagination of what house represented. Salkind, "The Warehouse and The Music Box: Nurturing Chicago House Music Culture," in *Do You Remember House?*, 47-84.

[53] Salkind, 48.

[54] Salkind, 64.

[55] Salkind, 65.

commercial releases on the city's burgeoning new indie labels. These tapes contained sounds that listeners remember fondly for breaking with their expectations about what dance music could and should sound like."[56] Knuckles sets were "future classic repertoire" for his ability to collaborate with audiences to program new music that would become legendary favorites played on repeat, to be recalled even years later.

Larry Levan's aesthetic is equally impossible to contain to one decade, style or present-day genre. Described as more than eclectic, "Levan took this to extremes and was a determined manipulator of his clubbers' tastes, forcing unusual, sometimes bizarre records on them and making them work through his immense force of will."[57] His eclecticism included records that were on the margins for his dance mixes, singles which were not obviously danceable without remixing, and not yet cool. Some of the less obvious singles made popular by Levan's sets were Taana Gardner's "Heartbeat," Ronnie Dyson's "All Over Your Face," and Yoko Ono, "Walking On Thin Ice."[58] Levan's musical sensibilities at Paradise drew elements from multiple genres and decades. Producer Arthur Baker described that "by the turn of the eighties, [Levan] was experimenting with drum machines and synthesizers and, like Francois Kevorkian around the same time, forging a new electronic, post-disco sound."[59] As Paradise's mythos grew, Levan's selections and mixes became a driving force in record sales for attendees who wished to recreate the feeling of Paradise. The demand for garage records led to songs like "'Walking on Sunshine' [being] specifically *made* for the Paradise Garage."[60] The dramatically different styles sourced from the above singles showcases Levan's eclecticism and openness to experimentation with

---

[56] Salkind, 67.
[57] Brewster and Broughton, 281.
[58] Ibid., 280-2.; Adrian Hoenicke, ed, *Larry Levan at the Paradise Garage: Music Played at the legendary "Paradise Garage" (on 84 King Street by Larry Levan (ca. 1976-1987)* Public playlist curated by Adrian Hoenicke https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6FfOzR92xCHeP8eco8LX0u?si=821ec264ea0941bf (Accessed Feb. 6, 2023).
[59] Brewster and Broughton, 284.
[60] Arthur Baker on Levan's 80s group the Peech Boys, from interviews conducted and compiled by Brewster and Broughton, 284.

different styles of the past and present, as well as his insistence that an audience be equally openminded.

The musical sensibilities that emerged from the club, what eventually exported to the UK and Europe, became *Urtropes* of garage as a subgenre of EDM. Despite Levan's eclecticism and avoidance of any clear boundary or rigid category, he did refer to himself as "the granddaddy of [garage]" as a musical style.[61] Afficionados described this new style as "evolved from the more soulful, more gospel-inspired parts of disco: soaring vocal tracks with lush, melodic production, or jazzy instrumentals with a good deal of sizzling hi-hat cymbals."[62] Brewster and Broughton consider how this newly defined style might have been more reflective of specifically a "Jersey sound" of the Zanzibar club, however, where Levan is known to have played, and with Zanzibar's main DJ Tony Humphries.[63] Humphries stated his preference in style was to select music based on "the closer it sounds to a real band or something from the past."[64] While a supposedly small part of Levan's multi-hour sets, the few records that commemorate his legacy at Paradise, the YouTube posted sets, the street dance parties in his honor, echo the above sensibilities: "soaring vocal[s]" of both the vinyl and sometimes live female performers so favored in disco and R&B; the sounds of live acoustic big band brass and saxes, sometimes including a funk guitar and bass; or other modes he and Tony Humphries could "sound the past," with some occasional contemporary sound effects thrown in for good measure. Garage came to represent in the UK the sound of early EDM from a wider range than just the Paradise club, including the larger area of the City and New Jersey.[65] As with House, what became known as the sound of garage actually represented a network of influences, sounds, and spaces from dance music's queer of color past.

---

[61] Levan stated, "Garage is the main thing in the States, and I'm the granddaddy of it," from an interview in 1985, excerpted in Brewster and Broughton, 282.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid., 282-3.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 283.

"Heartbeat," one of Levan's biggest mixes is one in which there is indisputable proof of his intentional selection of an off-beat (or under-tempo) single and effect on the record's reception post-club performance.[66] In his mix, Levan prioritizes the characteristically powerful female vocal lead, with background vocals in counter melody, funky instrumental accompaniment, sound effects both electronic (synth flute glissandos) and acoustic (hand claps, hit hat hits, heartbeat mimicking bass drum) in origin.[67] The most interesting and original aspects about the mix, however, is not just what is happening in any one vertical layer, but how it unfolds over time. Over the course of the nearly ten-minute track, Levan builds layers over time, isolating each element. Introducing and reintroducing us to individual vocal or instrumental tracks and effects, when the totality of the whole hits, its sublime dramatic and layered complexity astounds, before it all drops out again for a minute of spoken vocal verse. Interspersed among the bursts of sassy speech-song are the instrumental layers, which Levan first isolates, then recombines. The chorus follows in similar fashion, "Heartbeat…makes me feel so weak," with Levan recombining the words for new emphasis.[68] The vertical layers and horizontal build of tracks and sounds, the emphasis on vocality, as well as the reinvention of disco's voices, would become significant to the DJs and EDM artists that intentionally draw from house and garage's founders.

An emphasis on vocality permeates Levan's mixes and collaborations and the ways the voice is manipulated through the various processes of recording and remixing reads as queer. Levan plays with sound effects imported from working with Jamaican Dub styles in 80s, for example, and the new combined style and tech creates echoes and vocal overlay, hand claps, recording on a reel-to-reel tape recorder. Such an exploration comes out in the vocality of the

---

[66] Brewster and Broughton describe how the floor cleared when Levan first played "Heartbeat," but through repeated introductions, it quickly became a favorite, and eventually the best-selling record at Charlie and Debbie Grappone's vinyl shop. They opened the shop after observing the Saturday morning exodus to the subway from Paradise and hearing repeated requests for the records that Levan was playing. Ibid., 280-1.
[67] Larry Levan, "Heartbeat (Club Version)," *Larry Levan's Classic West End Records Remixes Made Famous at the Legendary Paradise Garage* (2012 Remaster).
[68] Something about this track in hindsight is so uncanny, knowing that Levan's life was cut so short by a congenital heart defect.

"Acapella" which was created in part with electronic effects: echoes and overlay and instrumental tracks eliminated, rerecorded on reel to reel.[69] The vocal counterpoint in these collaborations can be read as a metaphor for what was happening via cross-country collaboration among the house and garage scenes. There is evidence that Larry Levan and Frankie Knuckles, the DJs who found their musical beginnings spinning records at the Continental Baths in NYC, continued to collaborate long distance via the spinning of each other's mixes, taping and re-editing, remixing.

Despite their eventual separation by geography, Levan's and Knuckles sets, mixes, and collaborations share some common sensibilities: emphasis on vocals, throwbacks, re-inventing some of the sounds of disco so that it could survive the present day, a connection and devotion to very active audiences, DIY experiments with technology, collaborations with artists and music creations as complex as any art composition. Salkind considers how some tape mixes, which were distributed and edited among networks of DJs in Chicago and NYC. He writes that "before having a commercial release for either ['Baby Wants to Ride' or 'Bad Boys'], Knuckles was experimenting with ways that they might actually be listened to in tandem, playing against the logic of industrial promotion."[70] Collaborative experiments with recording technologies and multiple singles that could be bartered, traded, and adapted created a queer musical network and a way around the heavy hand of the music industry.

What listeners and scholars commonly define as the "Chicago sound" describes the sound after Frankie Knuckle's first few years at the Warehouse. Vinyl distributors and shops began to label records "'House," short for "played at the Warehouse," which later morphed into a marker

---

[69] Some additional poignant examples I found from his performance group the *Peech Boys* include "Stay with Me," on *NYC Peech Boys*, and "Don't Make Me Wait," a song about sex, sets two tenor voices of the same range weaving in and out of melodic tangling with each other, an echo of any number of historically queer same-register vocal counterpoint. See especially around 7:00 into the mix. The Peech Boys and MAW, "Don't Make Me Wait" (2016 Remaster) *NYC Peech Boys*: see especially around 7:00 into the mix.

[70] Salkind found Chicago house DJs, Jenvon Jackson and Mel Hammond, "shared a much loved cassette with early versions of Knuckles' 'Baby Wants to Ride' and 'Bad Boys'," stating "it's the one where 'Baby Wants to Ride actually connects with 'Bad Boys.'" You know, it ends with these hand claps: 'tch, tch' and then the hand claps go backward: 'schp, schp' and then the bass line for 'Bad Boys' comes in…" Salkind, 67.

for vaguely the kind of music developing in Chicago, increasingly severed from the specific club, and it came to mean dance music made in one's house or wherever the party was decided. One such creator of new House music, Boyd Jarvis, states "I was dragging my two huge Vox speakers. I had two Garrard turntables, [on which] you can really blend, but you can't be doing any rugged scratching, and a McIntosh power amp. I would bring that shit out to the park."[71] Jarvis, who visited Paradise and "cited Larry Levan, Tee Scott, Nicky Siano, Grandmaster Flowers, and Pete 'DJ' Jones as favorite DJs," found the spaces created by these DJs as a prime inspiration for the sensibilities he brought into the recording studio, remarking that Paradise's "entire room was designed to be a big huge speaker."[72] Part of the transformation of House sensibilities became finding the technologies and practices that would allow for the kind of "bedroom" (or otherwise portable) dance music production. Jarvis did this through new tech, such as monophonic synthesizer, the Yamaha CS-15.[73] He describes experimenting with this new tech still required a good amount of creative DIY initiative:

> I was intrigued by the ability to shape and create sounds…Synthesizers can do some amazing things. I've created water. I've created wind. I've created chimpanzees jumping from tree to tree. I didn't have any drum machine at that time. I created an artificial kick drum with the synthesizer and I played it with my finger. The snare was also artificial. I created that using white noise. You can make a combination of white noise and a tone and you can create a damn good kick drum.[74]

While the sound of House took on synthesized instruments and tracks, the techniques of layering, weaving tracks, and presence of the hand of the dance music artist did not necessarily disappear.

---

[71] Michelangelo Matos, "Boyd Jarvis: Remembering the Architect of House Music," *The Village Voice* (Feb. 21, 2018) https://www.villagevoice.com/2018/02/21/boyd-jarvis-remembering-the-architect-of-house-music/ (Accessed Nov. 15, 2021).
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

All about Time: The Tech and Technique of EDM

Electronic Dance Music is all about time. Mark Butler writes that "electronic dance music supports experiences of time that are both rich and diverse."[75] Through his ethnographies of EDM, Butler found "fans often describe the music simply as 'beats' (as in 'let's go to the club and hear some beats'), and from this performance it is clear that the beat also defines the music as dance music."[76] He further considers how "without the emblematic beat the audience's dancing begins to dissipate. Because the beat commands such stature, removing it and bringing it back is one of the most powerful things a DJ can do...At the same time, there is an astonishing array of rhythmic diversity beyond the beat."[77] There are some subgenres with a noted absence of beat and the conventions that make EDM danceable; while EDM began as dance music, not all music under its umbrella was intended for dancing. Trance had a noted absence of danceable beat and "Chill-out" began as a way for creating a sonic atmosphere for the "chill-out" rooms of clubs. Whether the beat is fast, slower, or absent, it is one of the prime modes of identifying subgenres of EDM and combining tracks by DJs in real time.

DJs find creative ways to employ technology for "novel rhythmic experiences," and though tracks are often built from (simple) and repetitive layers, the possibilities of combinations and interpretations is what gives the style new meanings.[78] Towards the expressive potential of rhythm, Butler cites the examples of "tension built between mechanically precise patterns and those that bear a more 'natural' rhythmic profile or create combinations of layers that seem to repeat indefinitely without aligning."[79] The groove of Butler's text, *Unlocking the Groove*, refers to a cut of a perfect circle into a record, thus a pattern that could repeat endlessly over which DJs would have the possibility of experimenting endlessly with infinite combinations of layers.[80] Of

---

[75] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 5.
[76] Mark Butler, 4.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Mark Butler, 4-5.
[80] Mark Butler, 5.

the DJ's groove, Butler writes that they were "rarely lasting more than a few measures, they boil the notion of 'groove' down to its purest musical essence: a short configuration of bassline and percussion that unfolds in continuously repeating cycles."[81] Butler considers how musicians choose technology that facilitates musical-temporal relationships, without necessarily needing the newest, most expensive, or least accessible tech-for-tech's sake. Micah Salkind connects the development of the single-track 12inch record further to a form of Marxist, non-capitalist music making that privileged alternative modes of time and song structure.[82] In such techniques as isolating and repeating specific sections of the song, moving on, recombining, and cycling back, house DJs developed a "merry-go-round" technique that could make a 12inch record last as long as desired. Salkind writes that "in emphasizing the non-teleological circularity of a track's rhythmic and melodic structure, as opposed to its imposed linearity as a commercial product, [DJs like Mike] Ezebukwu stretched the affordances of the 12'' record itself, the very material properties that implied its potential uses."[83] From the legend of Tom Moulton's invention, the 12inch dance record became "a happy accident indexing a non-linear reciprocity between club and studio spaces in New York."[84] As with Chicago's House tape remixes, the 12inch record allowed for experimentations in sound combinations and new temporal experiences on the dance floor, largely free from the control of the industry. Collaborative exploration into DIY tech by DJs and producers found further anti-capitalist modes in the possibilities of the 12-inch single.

Distinctions between musical aesthetics of subgenre are possible based on their temporalities: how the style plays with space and time. Rhythm, tempo, and musical structure

---

[81] Mark Butler, 5.
[82] Salkind, 58. This temporal concept recalls the circular groove described by Pierre Schaeffer in his treatise on sound objects, as well as the rare perfect canon of Bach's time. Both are discussed by their seekers (early 18th-century composer societies and 20th-century musique concrete) with a rhetoric of a kind of mystical alchemy. Pierre Schaeffer, *In Search of a Concrete Music*, translated by Christine North and John Dack (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); David Yearsley, "Alchemy and Counterpoint in an Age of Reason," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 51, no. 2 (1998): 201-243.
[83] Salkind, 58.
[84] Ibid.

differed between the three styles that emerged simultaneously after disco's demise, and these styles were in some ways reflective of the physical spaces and geographies in which they emerged. Techno, for example, often ruled by an unrelenting drum machine and characterized by synthesized timbres, presented a clean, rhythmically precise style possibly owing to both Detroit's enthusiasm for German electronic groups, such as Kraftwerk, and more affordability of synthesizers, drum machines, and sequencers.[85] On the other hand, of the EDM subgenre of trance, Mark Butler found participants described "the way in which the 'song structures' of trance are determined by an ability to 'take the dancer out of this world.'"[86] Participants sought trance's ability to transport listeners through the manipulation of musical time, particularly in the elimination of surface-level beat in favor of the long-sweeping melodic and timbral changes. The music created specifically for "chill out rooms," fostered more than just a space, it is a temporality: a genre of music that created space and affect after raves and sets (and sometimes on tour buses between cities).[87] In the history of how EDM styles developed, how the music exists in time, at a beat level and how it is put together or produced, depended on the space and scene.

The types of scenes where music develops and the ways that participants and artists engage with music depended on the temporal nature of the events themselves. A rave, for example, "generally refers to a one-time, one-location, all-night dance party," while clubs differ "from raves as geographically stable locations that usually close earlier, as well as music festivals and bars."[88] Butler further distinguishes the "club night" as "a recurring (usually weekly) event on

---

[85] I don't mean to suggest here that there was one sound or that techno was any less varied than house or garage. Ashley Zlatopolsky calls the scenes that developed between disco and techno at predominantly queer clubs, which were open late, "wildly diverse musically." My emphasis here is on the relative distinctions that were related to questions of the temporality of subgenres (tempo, rhythm, and experiences of time) that emerged between disco and EDM. Ashley Zlatopolsky, "The Roots of Techno: Detroit's Club Scene 1973-1985: The forgotten history of the clubs and DJs that helped birth Detroit Techno," *Red Bull Music Academic Daily* (July 31, 2014) https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2014/07/roots-of-techno-feature (Accessed Feb. 6, 2023).
[86] Mark Butler, 10.
[87] Ibid., for instance, see The KLF's albums of music in transit, for example, *Come Down Dawn* (KLF Communications, 2021) EP.
[88] Mark Butler, 44, fn 35.

a particular night, often featuring a specific genre of EDM," an occurrence that might alternate

venues or continuously transform the same space on a weekly basis.[89] Alternatively, a "circuit

party," free from the jurisdiction of the clubs and powering through the night, more resembles a

rave.[90] The temporalities of spaces—how sound was designed to reverberate in a space over time

and how the temporal aspects of different styles of EDM were determined by the space they

would occupy—is key to understanding the aesthetics of EDM's subgenres.

EDM is all about time and is at its roots a temporally queer music style. It is the sound of

underground communities and artists who collaborate, transition among different performative

roles, and develop novel musical texts from remnants of historical popular and dance music.

Through the collision of old sound and new technology, practitioners can deftly comment on

problems of the present. DJs also historically created the space for a brief reprieve from the

scrutiny of a dog-eat-dog capitalist and homophobic society. As a larger umbrella genre, EDM

represents a decades long struggle with commercialization and appropriation and misconceptions

and apparent in many of its musical texts is a self-consciousness of this struggle.

TIME TRAVELING WITH STROMAE: SOUDNING EDM'S PASTS

How the musicians of the past influenced the musicians of today is a common, logical

place to start when unpacking the derivation of sounds, but that is not quite the whole story of

why the music of more recent EDM artist Stromae sounds the way it does. There is an

intentionality to Stromae's references to a musical past and an openness to welcoming voices or

sounds of the past into his mixes. Track names, particular surface rhythms, timbres, lyrics, retro

filters or other sound effects, as well as the way the music comes together through the layering of

discrete tracks reference EDM's past. What it suggests is something other than a linear, forward

moving temporal logic of the past influencing the present and future, or a one-sided appropriation

---

[89] Mark Butler, 44.
[90] Ibid.

128

of the present stealing from the past. Rather, Stromae's modes suggest a conscious time traveling back and forth.

Stromae takes us to dance music's past with wit and humor, and in doing so, we revisit some of the physical and social spaces that gave rise to EDM's distinctive styles. Hinted at in some of the track names, "*Bienvenue chez moi*" (Welcome to my house) and "House'llelujah" are homages to House styles of the 80s-90s. Part homage to the style born in the Chicago Warehouse scene, with DJ Frankie Knuckles at the helm, the timbres, rhythms, and beats, and words infuse a humorous self-conscious commentary about the social practices that followed the styles. "House'llelujah" combines the obvious reference to House with Gospel vocals and religious iconography, bringing the scene to a church in his "*clip officiel*" (official music video, not a *leçon*) for the song. Appearing larger than life on multiple screens, he inflects in his congregation of would-be dancers the "spirit" of house, some of them swaying and bending with the force of the sound waves. Once dancers are filled with the impulse to dance, Stromae wanders among his flock in a priest's garb, alone in standing still while he outstretches his arms and looks to the sky. Stromae brings the metaphor many of those who religiously attended Chicago's house scene had to life.

"Alors en dance," Stromae's first viral hit, sounds at first like it could reference any generic EDM hit. On a closer listen, however, he references (whether intentionally or unintentionally) a rhythm and synth percussive layer present in Levan's mixes using samples from Debbie Malone's "Rescue Me," Seduction's "Seduction," and Mr. and Mrs. Dale, "It's You."[91] The funky synthesized saxophone in rhythmic and melodic counterpoint with the synth (short-long-long-long-short-short-long-long-long) is another classic garage sound that has found itself appropriated more recently in EDM for its retro or dated sound. Stromae's lyrics and music

---

[91] Luke Godjer, "# 74 1990 PARADISE GARAGE LARRY LEVAN LIVE FULL TAPE REMASTERD (delirious night)," posted to YouTube (May 12, 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=izNQWSMctvI (Accessed October 23, 2021). Starting around 17:30, he adds layers to the sample of classic house track: Mr. & Mrs. Dale, "It's You*," History of House Music Volume Two* (Essential Music Group, 2007).

video narrate the routine of a person who lives for the weekend circuit party. While this escape might seem like the euphoric freedom described by the frequent attendees of Paradise, Stromae's message here is revealed to be more pessimistic. His protagonist is stuck in a late capitalist loop of suffer, work, party, forget, and repeat: the meaning of the refrain "*alors en dance*" transforms from "let's dance" to something more like "and, thus, we dance."

In witty musical irony, several tracks that found their way onto Stromae's first album, *Cheese* (2010), call back to Acid-House, a style that emerged in the UK upon EDMs import. A sonic distinction of this subgenre developed from manipulations of timbre, changing the waveform of the envelop of sound over time. Mark Butler considers, for example, how House DJs such as DJ Pierre used tech to change the envelop of sound (using the Roland TB-303), so that it is even less recognizable as a sampled or real-world instrument.[92] Developing a sound that has been described by proponents as "buzzy and squelchy," the constant manipulation of overtones means that the sound "envelope is constantly in flux."[93] Stromae processes the instrumental layers in a way reminiscent of Acid-House effects in his track "Je Cours," for example, finding an especially buzzy bass during the refrain, "je cours." In another single, "Cheese," the transformation of real piano chords into the "squelchy" timbre of acid, mimics the processing of sound envelope in real time. The counterpoint of timbres escalates with the addition of a synthesized sound reminiscent of the *Twilight Zone*: a simple sine wave form that bends in pitch, it sounds like some of the earliest ARP synthesizers. In another first album track "Silence!," each iteration of the arpeggiated motive sounds more processed than the last, until all dissolves into white noise, only to be cut off by silence. Showing the process of processing, "Silence!" draws out the key timbral marker of Acid House that gave it its name. Stromae's use of a particular timbre, which indexes the technologies and techniques from a specific time and place, instills an ironic self-effacing humor that shows cognizance of how the subgenre would be

---

[92] Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*, 68-9.
[93] Ibid, 69.

received by some in the 2000s and 2010s. Throughout his first album, Stromae parodies the highly synthesized and processed timbres of 21st century house, showing a self-awareness of the sound markers of marketable EDM-pop singles, benefiting from this packaging all the same.

If Stromae's first album parodied more recent conceptions of house, garage, and acid, his second album, *Racine Carré* (2013), dove more sincerely into emulating older and eclectic sound worlds. "Merci," from *Racine Carré* references the sound of garage with intentional disco timbres (sweeping synth strings and sampled backup vocals) over a square beat at a moderate tempo. With multiple versions of the track: instrumental and one with vocals, the song can also function like Ultra High Frequency's "We're on the Right Track," a favorite of Levan and other garage DJs because it had an instrumental B-side for mixing and elongating tracks. Stromae's track lends itself to remixes as has no clear end and would easily be looped in on itself or combined with other tracks, which it was, repurposed for the soundtrack for *The Hunger Games*, with new voices including New Zealand vocalist Lorde (Ella Marija Lani Yelich-O'Connor) and Kanye West. It's a track that plays well with others.

Stromae remixes sounds from the history of EDM, but he also weaves these tracks with references outside of the sound palette of EDM, drawing influence from Afro-Caribbean and Cape Verdean music he says he first connected to at familial gatherings. In interviews, Stromae has stated that his first music performance was hip hop, and that he discovered many more modes of expression from the past and decided to continue to explore those: "I decided to do something different than imitate hip hop music [that] I could listen to."[94] He considers his song, "Ave Cesaria," as exhibiting "example[s] of influences from before," which brings him back even further to when he was "five to ten" when "we don't really choose our music, and we have to listen to—[at] our family parties and [so on]—that was the music of our parents: like Congolese

---

[94] Gilles Peterson and Stromae, "Stromae English Interview with Gilles Peterson," recorded at Brownswood Studios, London, UK, produced by Mistralproductions.com, posted to YouTube (Apr 22, 2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vBuXVGh5Q6M (Accessed October 21, 2021).

rumba, like salsa…and now I am a young adult, I agree with them: this music is [as] nice as hip hop music, as dance music."[95] Among his important influences, in his interviews, Stromae names Belgian singer Jacques Brel (c. 1960s), Cape Verdean vocalist Cesária Évora, and Euro 90s Dance Music. Stromae prides himself on being able to emulate expressive performers and styles from multiple decades. On recalling how an elderly woman and her grandchild approached him in on a street in Italy, he states, "that's the best compliment, probably, to be supported by people who are not in the same generation as you."[96] Drawing from various points of the past, Stromae has found his music speaks across generations.

In each song from his second album, Stromae creates a new persona for the narrative of the sound world, doing so while channeling from voices of his past. I hear in Stromae's vocal timing and sincerity of the persona he creates on stage a link to the famous Belgian predecessor, Brel. In listening to Brel's "*Ne me quitte pas*,"[97] and in "*La valse a mille temps*," I find the roots of Stromae's own adroit word play, with Brel's waltz meter, vocal assonance and consonance, and poetic rhythm that flows faster and faster as a dance topic. Belgian journalists and music critics have also noticed what seems to be an uncanny connection to Brel.[98]

Cesária Évora surfaces even more frequently and obviously in Stromae's tracks and videos. Stromae's official video for "Ave Cesaria" recreates a joyful family gathering with a live band, shot through a video filter to imitate a home video. The song speaks on two levels: part love song and tribute to his favorite singer. His lyrical verses are in a florid, rubato style that is reminiscent of Evora's time-bending phrasing style. In one verse, he sings, "no one had eyes for

---

[95] Peterson and Stromae, "Stromae English Interview with Gilles Peterson."
[96] Ibid.
[97] Jacques Brel, "Ne me quitte pas," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZzyFQ-Qh18 (Accessed October 21, 2021).
[98] Tijl Nuyts finds a connection through Brel and Stromae's onstage role-play of personas for different songs, but also in Stromae's "Belgitude," an emulation of past Belgian visual and musical artists including a Belgian symbolist movement. Tijl Nuyts, "Mussels, Magritte and Maeterlinck: The Universal 'Belgitude' of Stromae," translated by Kate Connelly, *The Low Countries* (Jan. 25, 2023) https://www.the-low-countries.com/article/stromae (Accessed April 10, 2023).

you (Stromae's translation)/ but me, cos [sic] I knew how to listen to you…Hats off! As barefoot you trod…bare you are and bare you remain the barefooted diva for evermore/ In life, Cesaria, in death, too/ Obrigado, we thank you/ We are your soldiers, at attention we stand/ you fooled us all, huh/ gone we thought you/ but back you came…" (Stromae's translations). Here, Stromae pays tribute to the first musician who moved him, who he draws from in his moments of florid vocality. But he also draws attention to the strange moments when a personal favorite, little known in her time, experiences a renaissance of post-humous interest. As with Larry Levan's reworking the voice of Taana Gardner, he seems to be saying, "I liked her before it was cool."

Stromae's live performance of "Ave Cesaria," creates a scene is as intimate as a large concert stage can be, using lighting and sound to alter the audience's feeling of space. his tribute to Évora, has him sitting on stage at a small cafe table, pouring shots and toasting the audience.[99] When the live instruments start, playing the syncopated rhythms, timbres, and cyclical chord pattern of *morna*, the stage falls dark on Stromae, and illuminates on a background in a sunset orange the silhouettes of the instrumentalists. When Stromae vocalizes on the verse, the spotlight is on him again, still sitting at the small table. He has affectively created a cafe scene on stage: Stromae as the patron, vocalizing his thoughts, with a small band in the background. Stromae eventually gets up and dances in fluid, feminine gestures like his favorite vocalist, Evora. Every live performance from his second album brings a story to life or pushes the boundaries of genre and place.

In addition to his past-channeling vocality, Stromae finds ways to stage particular moments of the past on stage and through vintage imagery and sonic technology for what he refers to as the *Clips Officiels* (official music videos) of *Racine Carré*. Through the manipulation of timbre, he occasionally infuses the mix with the sound of a phonograph record,[100] or an

---

[99] Stromae, "Ave Cesaria," *Ave Cesaria - Stromae Concert MSG 2015* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvHdxqWWEkg (Accessed August 3, 2021).
[100] Stromae, *Tous les mêmes (Official Video)* UMG, posted to YouTube (Dec. 18, 2013) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAMWdvo71ls (Accessed October 21, 2021).

electronic synthesized instrument like a harpsichord.[101] Through the framing of a music video

through black and white or sepia lenses,[102] through the lens of a square-framed VHS filter,[103] or a

classic set like a 50s diner on the recreation of a vintage show, Stromae creates his own retro

filters.[104] And while at first glance, this might appear like the kind of nostalgia that longs for some

idea of a past, his framing actually calls both past and present into question through his multiple

coterminous frames and juxtaposition of different decades and sound worlds between each track

on *Racine Carré.*

Stromae's envoicing of Brel and Évora is uncanny because the resemblance is not just in

the costuming and borrowing of older musical styles, but also in the vocal intonation, inflections,

and subtle rhythms that make a voice distinct. In these moments of conscious borrowing, Stromae

is like a medium channeling the voices of ghosts. Stromae draws on evocative and beloved voices

that, at first, seem strange when paired with mainstream EDM. However, when I think of the

history of Levan, Knuckles, and other early DJs, who salvaged expressive vocalists from lesser-

known records to build their repertoire through the combination of rhythmic, melodic, and vocal

layers, Stromae fits. Évora and Brel were the records he heard as a child, and by borrowing the

voices of his own family's LP collection, he builds on the past in the ethos of Levan and

Knuckles. His choice of vocalist may be different, but the eclecticism and time-bending

combinations throw back to EDMs roots.

Unlike Levan and the DJs that followed his lead, Stromae does not sample whole records

of existing danceable music, but in his live creation of isolated tracks that become the layers of

his complex songs, Stromae revives the modes of NYC's and Chicago's EDM. He occasionally

---

[101] Stromae, "Repetto X Mosaert" Moseart (March 31, 2017), single.

[102] In black and white lens complete with vintage VW bus: Stromae, *Je Cours* (March 5, 2011)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIrI_MOfxG0 (Accessed July 25, 2021).

[103] Stromae, *Ave Cesaria, clip officiel* (Sept. 24, 2014) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rO1VDCZh_Ko
(Accessed July 25, 2021).

[104] Opening like vintage soap opera on a small tube-tv with knobs: Stromae, *Te Quiero* (June 21, 2010)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7YLWQNw7lM (Accessed July 25, 2021).

recreates the space of the Paradise Garage or Knuckle's Warehouse through adaptations of the

techniques and ethos of Larry Levan and the "spirit of house." Even without using the same

samples, Levan and Stromae prioritize "full-length vocal verses and choruses" their multi-layered

texts, mixed live.[105] Stromae's attention to how sound reverberates in real space recalls Levan's

constant engagement with a live crowd and tweaking of sound technologies for acoustic control.

Mel Cheran described how Levan "[told] a whole story in the songs…And he would talk to you

with the music,"[106] which anticipated the worlds created in each song of Stromae's second album.

These aspects of sound production and its contribution to meaning are not reduceable to one

element, but nonetheless serve as the foundations of Stromae's sensibility and multi-layered

dance music.

Stromae's polyglot and poly-vocal musical texts call into question the pervasive rhetoric

of a linear narrative of influence and creation. Through his own record "classicism" and the

development of a sound palette built from "novelty and familiarity," like Frankie Knuckles

ground-breaking sets, Stromae draws on the past in his own synth-EDM-pop to create a time-

bending "L repertoire."[107] Destabilizing linear musical timelines in this way, Stromae unsettles

expectations of performative roles including gender, questions our relationships to others,

ourselves, and technology.

Stromae comes at an interesting window of time: after the closure of iconic first EDM

spaces like Paradise Garage but at a point when many club attendees were building community

and finding new connection online. Memories and sounds of a space that no longer exists were

beginning to be preserved via an online community of uploaded recordings, comments and chats,

and occasional block parties in Levan's remembrance. The point of entry for both Stromae and

these sound communities is YouTube. Stromae found YouTube and Vimeo to be similarly useful

---

[105] Pareles's description of Levan's sets, "Paradise Garage: A Gay Club That Forever Changed Night Life," *The New York Times* (June 18, 2000).
[106] Ibid.
[107] Salkind, 64 and 66.

platforms for trying new mixes, experimenting with audio-visual text, and interacting with feedback from a virtual, global audience.

"*LES LEÇONS INSOLITES DE STROMAE*"[108] (THE UNUSUAL LESSONS OF STROMAE)

In a series of video *leçons* (lessons) Stromae renders visible the process of composition and production, his making materials and methods accessible. His pedagogic collection consists of 28 numbered *leçons*, now existing in a curated playlist of the 28 videos on YouTube.[109] Stromae's official account posted the first, "*Leçon n°1 'Up saw liz'*" on January 30, 2009, and the videos span the next five years, until "*Leçon n° 28 'ta fête'* (hymne red devils)," posted March 17, 2014. Today, the *leçons* have reached anywhere from a couple hundred thousand to several million views apiece. In each video, he demonstrates in real time, in spaces that range from his studio to the canals of Venice, how each isolated layer of a song can be recorded, tweaked, and built into a complex whole. Some lessons include music bits that Stromae makes up on the spot, to demonstrate how to use a sound or rhythm in combination, while other lessons breakdown songs that had already been released on a larger album. By showing the process of electronic music production live in videos posted to an online community, Stromae connects back to the roots of garage and house EDM production, when DJs like Larry Levan were mixing live on scene and who inspired such a following that the communal memory of the space is kept alive via YouTube communities.

I began my investigation into Stromae's *leçons* by compiling a worklist (Appendix A), annotating every section of the video, noting sounds, technology, timbres, his performing space

---

[108] Inscription appearing in *leçons* beginning with "*Leçon n°15 ...roi Baudoin*" (Oct. 17, 2009) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uqjOw08BhWw&list=PL242C4EE2F91357FA&index=15 (Accessed April 15, 2021)

[109] I am including a few "unnumbered": *Leçon n°23* bears the title: "*La dernière leçon de stromae 'Humain a l'eau'*"; In the gap between *Leçons n°24* and *n°27* is his music video for "*Formidable (ceci n'est pas une leçon)*," which is nonetheless included in the 28-video YouTube playlist "*Leçons de Stromae*." https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL242C4EE2F91357FA (Accessed July 28, 2021).

and context, as well as considering the narrative unfolding as he built each song layer by layer.[110]

From coding what I had transcribed, I found several themes persist across the video lessons. Early *leçons* check in with Stromae at his small studio, at his computer with two small electronic keyboards. While later videos bring Stromae to real world locations, equipped with an even smaller keyboard, he can assign sounds to the keys routed through and into a MacBook. No matter the location or themes, Stromae constructs almost all his *leçons* the same way: with sections he refers to as "*chapitres*" (chapters). Each *chapitre* is a short video segment in which Stromae introduces a layer to the musical texture, often in the form of 3-10 second clips that will be looped. Early in his video subscription/catalog, Stromae sets up the expectation for *chapitres* that introduce the beat, additional rhythmic interest, a melody, sometimes a counter melody, and what he calls "*l'interpretation*," or the interpretation of the meaning that arises from the layers of music plus the visual narrative. Stromae's *chapitres* become structural markers, on whose repetition he can set up certain expectations, so that when he does deviate it creates space for self-parody.

There is a playfulness and a speed in the creation of layers; the sense Stromae has no definite goal for each of these segments but just to see what results from his experiment. Stromae's tracks created in real time on video include the components that would have been achieved by looping samples of 12-inch records and recording on electromagnetic tape: Loops and loops of 3-6 chords that return to I, beginning again attacca. There is a rhythmic layer (les batterie) sometimes lines up with the larger harmonic rhythm; vocal layer(s) during the chorus repeat with the larger harmonic rhythm loop. In an unusual turn, Stromae reveals these audio-

---

[110] I first came to Stromae's *leçons* at what became known as his last, *Leçon n°28* "Ta fête (hymne de red devils)" (Mar. 17, 2014), because of its higher publicity Stromae's video had obtained from its connection with the Belgian football team pre-2014 world cup. This lesson is perhaps the starkest contrast in production quality between *leçon* and *clip officiel*: the former has Stromae camping in the center of a soccer pitch, working out each layer of "*Ta fête*" on his two-octave midi, a MacBook, and Reason; the latter video throws an actor to battle through an elaborate labyrinth, as Stromae, in an outfit that plays on Belgian imperial clothing, leads a population of onlookers. Both videos begin in a soccer pitch but could not be more different in budget and scope.

visual texts to be constructed deliberately with relatively simple technology and means accessible

to an amateur. Subsequent videos and *leçons* trope and play with previous molds. The *leçons* are

approachable and whimsical as much as they hint at ironic commentary about less ideal parts of

our post-modern society.

Stromae typically starts his structure with a chord progression, synthesized on his

keyboard, usually titled "*Chapitre 1: la composition*," but there are some variations to this

wording, such as "*le piano*" of *Leçons n°20* and *n°21*. The purpose of this *chapitre* is to create a

foundational layer for the entire song, or section of the song, out of just a few chords that will

easily form a perfect loop when the progression repeats. Following this is typically the percussive

layer, what Stromae labels "*les batterie*" or "*les percussions*." At this point, he records this

percussive layer while playing back the chord progression, laying down both tracks precisely with

a metronome (which is not recorded). The sound of timbre of this layer can vary, but often recalls

the shallow staccato hit of a drum machine, simulating the sound of a Roland TR-808.[111]

Sometimes preceding or following the percussive layer is some kind of bass line or ostinato, such

as "*la basse*" in "*Te Quiero*" (*Leçon n°20*).[112] Stromae's *basse* is not even necessarily bass in

range, just in its function of single notes in a pattern that repeats in counterpoint with the melody

and countermelodies. It does not always work harmonically, as one would expect in a pop song,

especially evident here, as the timbre has been processed to mimic the acid sound of the TB-303

(mentioned earlier). In the case of many of these sonic and rhythmic layers, Stromae's selection

of timbre and sample underperforms the technology available to him in the 2010s, which is part

of his retro-oriented and amateur-centered sensibility.

---

[111] For a sample of the range of sounds this drum machine can create, see Doctor Mix, "The Roland TR-808 In Action," YouTube (Oct. 31, 2017) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KC7UaUD5rEA (Accessed Feb. 6, 2023)

[112] Stromae, *Leçon n°20: "'Te Quiero': depuis Le beau vélo de Ravel au Cinquantenaire »* (June 6, 2010) Posted to YouTube (June 7, 2010) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YURbB7gkGbc (Accessed Feb. 6, 2023).

Occasionally there is also a counter melody or nonsense vocal that adds sonic interest. In a few of these *leçons*, Stromae uses either foreign (including English, Portuguese, or Creole) or nonsense syllables, so that vocalisms become another way to add timbre, pitch, and rhythmic interest. Many of these layers overlap on top of one another in a kind of counterpoint, but some underscore contrasting sections that make up the expected structural segments of House, Techno, or Trap, etc. Occasionally there are additional layers, but the final presented in each *leçon* is what he sometimes refers to as "*le texte*" or "*l'interpretation*," in which the fully constructed track is played back in its entirety and Stromae lays down lyrics live. The *l'interpretation* is the segment where everything comes together and Stromae's lyrics play off the combination of timbres and rhythms he previously set by creating an imagined persona of someone who would have the musical layers as a soundtrack to their thoughts.

Variations in the expectations Stromae has set up in his subscripted lessons become rhetorical ways to transport viewers to another space entirely: sometimes uncanny. In *Leçon n°9 "Je rêvais d'un autre monde,"*[113] (I dreamt of another world) (May 28, 2009) The *chapitres* names narrate the unexpected: "*chapitre 1: l'inspiration*"; "*chapitre 2: 'quand tout a coup'*" (when all of a sudden)*; "chapitre 3: 'les v…synthetiseurs.'*" Stromae commits a vocal fumble as he and his collaborator come up with titles on the spot. There is a sense of improvisation, especially with the lessons that are not in his studio. Stromae's voice is in heavy vocoder as he records "*revais d'un autre monde*" and transports himself magically to his studio in a snap to finish the production by adding "*chapitre 4: le batterie*" (the drums) and his own unmediated vocal lyrics.

Stromae embraces imperfection, small failures, and being vulnerable at times, balancing serious topics with silliness and charm.[114] He disarms his viewers with charm and wordplay, the

---

[113] The first *leçon* in which Stromae has a guest host, "Comment faire avec... P.Diazz," visiting his studio.
[114] Silliness abounds, for example, in *Leçon n°10*, "Jump to it" (Jun 12, 2009). In "*Chapitre 1: comment manger une gauffre d'anniversaire*" (how to eat a birthday waffle) the video opens on a bite-sized square of

unexpected, arising in the form of unusual "scenes," sometimes flamboyantly strange characters, rare vulnerability in masculinity, and of course, through the interaction with sound in space. In *Leçon n°21*, Stromae sits in a tiny boat. Stromae's *leçon* in "Silence!" and irony could be a Seurat painting, with his French pointillist scenes of leisure by the water. Counterpointed in Stromae's audio-visual scene are opposites that would never be naturally thought of as pairs. The water is calm, inspiring Stromae's first *chapitre*, "*le calme*," with a pointed and disjunct synth-piano appoggiatura motive that leaps into the nature scene. *Chapitre* 2 presents "*la sérénité et la grosse caisse*" (serenity and a bass drum) a bass drum on the upbeat and legato long-held chords on what Stromae calls a "*unique timbre: syphonie electronique*" (a unique timbre: electronic symphony). Earlier, I described how Stromae takes the processing of timbres in this tract to its extreme, in what might be seen as a reference to the sound of acid-house and its TB-303. Placing this sound in such a natural setting, disrupting the solitude with his shout of "Silence!" add to the ironic humor that infuses his *leçons*.

Figure 3.3: Leçon n°21: "Silence!": "il est étonnant que la barque ne coule pas sous le poids de son talent" (it is astonishing that the boat does not sink under the weight of his talent)[115]

---

waffle, birthday candle lit, perched precariously on the keyboard, two people unseen sing "*joyeux anniversaire*" (happy birthday) to Stromae.
[115] Comments by Papymuzo (7 years ago) *Leçon n°21: "Silence!"* posted to YouTube (July 5, 2010). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGmJQ_B89iI (Last Accessed Sept. 27, 2021).

It is in another boat, *Leçon n°24 "les leçons c'est 'tous les mêmes'"* (lessons are 'all the same') (Feb 14, 2013), that Stromae introduces us to the playful, uncanny bi-gendered drag persona(s) that are the subject of my following case study. Stromae is, once again, in a boat. But unlike the peaceful solo drifting on a pond in a local park of *leçon n°21*: "Silence!", here Stromae sits in a Venetian gondola, steered by a Gondoliere in his traditional garb. The most visually striking aspect of the scene is Stromae's divided, dual drag persona: Stromae's right half is masculine and his left half is in his hyper-feminine drag persona, Andrea. His asymmetrically divided drag contrasts the reflections of the buildings in the water of the Venetian canals. The choice of place is poetic: Stromae describes it as a way to celebrate Valentine's Day in a place known for romance. However, his completely sincere bi-gender drag cuts through the cliché of the place, as does his sampled musical topics that range from 19th to 21st-century dance.

Included in the structuring elements of his music are the elements of space and manipulation of how sound reverberates in space. Where is a *leçon*? In layering electronic music, the locations of Stromae's *leçons* are themselves a layer of the music meaning making. Early *leçons* regularly check in with Stromae at his small studio, at his computer with two medium electronic keyboards. Later videos bring Stromae to real world locations, equipped with an even smaller keyboard, he can assign sounds to the keys routed through and into a MacBook; the portable equipment means he can record anywhere and everywhere. *Leçon n°17* "House'llelujah" (May 17, 2010),[116] for example, finds Stromae crouching, perched on the balls of his feet and the edge of a rooftop in Paris, a storm looming in the background. His equipment has shrunk to a MacBook and small two-octave midi keyboard (nouveau materiel: un petit klavier). He points, like a weathervane, in different directions, first to Notre Dame, the Eiffel tower, and the sea weather: "*Notre dame qui est juste là-bas.... la tour Eiffel bien évidemment juste là.... et le temps*

---

[116] In one video post, Stromae spells the title of *Leçon n°17*: "House'llelujah," in another he spells it "House'leluya" (Figure 3.4); I keep my reference to both the *leçon* and song consistent to the spelling on his album *Cheese:* "House'llelujah."

de mer qui est juste là-bas" (Notre Dame is just over there…the Eiffel tower is of course right there…and the sea weather, that is right over there). Space relates to time for the temporalities of Stromae's *leçons*. He shows the construction of audio-visual text in real time, marked by the movements of the sun or recordings on transit via train and other timely spaces. Additionally, Stromae references past spaces, genres of EDM through set, space design or choice of venue.

Stromae - Leçon 17 "House' leluya"
1,712,732 views • May 17, 2010   👍 9.2K   👎 259   ↱ SHARE   ≡+ SAVE   •••

Figure 3.4: Leçon 17, "Chapitre 4: l'interpretation (sous la pluie)" (Chapter 4: the interpretation (under the rain))

Other choices of space are designed to disrupt unwitting participants and our expectations of the business-as-usual of a space. In *Leçon 22: SummerTime à L'Air Libre (Rennes)*, Stromae is on a train. This time, desktop computer speakers are plugged into his MacBook as he whispers to the camera; visible in the seat in front is reading material held aloft by a passenger who faces forward. Between the first three *chapitres* we can see through the window the travel from the countryside to the city. Creating mixes specifically for transit is not new to EDM, but an idea that

nods back to chillroom and post-show mixes, such as those by The KLF (formerly known as the Time Lords), who produced an album of their post-show transit from city to city.[117]

The first *chapitre* begins with Stromae, whispering on the train to Rennes, the city where a prominent music festival is held each Summer. He adds the expected chords via "le piano" – Stromae plays, the two-octave keyboard beneath the fold-down tray, snickering at his eccentric public behavior, not yet too obtrusive. We can hear him turn the sound up with each layer. In "*chapitre 1,5 'et quand y'en a plus ?'* (and when there's more?), Stromae adds a swooping sound effect to the layer of the chord progression. The sound has movement, a feeling like the pit of your stomach on an accelerating or decelerating train; it pulls every chord change. By the start of *chapitre 2*, we've arrived "à Rennes." Now seated in the back seat of a car, Stromae adds percussion. *Chapitre 3* opens *"à l'air libre"* (outdoors) with Stromae sitting in the open air as the sun rises, in a parking space in front of the theater. Here he adds to the mix a wild sound: higher pitched and between a voice, soprano saxophone, and electric organ. Traversing locations, from Belgian country to the city becomes another way of showing time passed during the course of the *leçon*.

An added layer of timing is on the macro-level of programing: this summer release is about teasing for an event in the coming months. Indeed, the final segment, *chapitre 5,* serves as an announcement and ad for his upcoming event titled "à l'air libre" du 8 au 12 decembre dans le cadre des "Trans Musicales de Rennes."[118] When the scene cuts to Stromae on stage in *chapitre 4*, "comme d'habitude…" (as per usual), the theatre and audience currently empty. He lays down the lyrics (in French) over the mix playing still from the small computer speakers; upon reaching the chorus, "Summertime" (in English), the sound changes resonance to the studio-produced

---

[117] For recent example, see "Atlanta to Mobile" on *Come Down Dawn* (KLF Communications, 2021) EP
[118] A music festival, dating back to 1979, now held in Rennes, Brittany, each December, said to have boosted the careers of Lenny Kravitz, Bjork, Daft Punk, and Stromae, among others. Olivier Nuc, "Les Trans Musicales, révélateur de talents" *Le Figaro* (Dec 3, 2014) and https://www.lestrans.com/ (Accessed July 29, 2021).

sound. When it returns to the verse, we return to the sonic physical space of the theater. Stromae is playing with sound in space and space in sound, much in the way of the 20th-century electro-acoustic experimentalists Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Henri, Éliane Radigue, and, yes, Larry Levan.

In *Leçon n°19*: "Peace or Violence" (May 31, 2010), Stromae sits in the middle of a pedestrian bridge across a river, a tiny two 8va keyboard and his MacBook are perched on his lap; an amp is the only other tech beside him on his right. On his left, in a cage, is a dove or pigeon. Boats pass underneath throughout the video. As with his previous *leçons*, being outside carries the extra measure of time lapsed; the video was made simply and quickly in real time, as the sunlight has not changed.

In *chapitre 5, "l'interpretation,"* Stromae pulls an elaborate performance stunt planned in response to his beat, newly added lyrics in French, and hand gestures. The meaning of the lyrics calls us to question whether the hand gesture "V" represents victory/peace or violence. To a viewer in 2010, the hand is metonymic for a larger question of whether actions taken by developed nations to secure "peace" are really actions of violence from another perspective.[119] With the introduction of the third layer, the sound that breaks all, his diegetic voice morphs into a processed background sound. In the final verse, Stromae releases the mourning dove from the cage; it flies toward the camera man, who is forced to duck, before it escapes down bridge towards the bank. This was a one-shot, done in real time, but the sound of music in space is clearly manipulated later so that it sounds like the viewer is inside the club, or listening over headphones. Stromae manipulates sound in space and space in sound, much in the way of the

---

[119] This *leçon* dialogues with some of his other videos and *leçons* that consider the effects of colonialism and other structural violences, for instance, in *Leçon n°[23]:* "*La dernière leçon de Stromae 'Humain à l'Eau'*" (The last lesson of Stromae, "Human overboard") (Dec 21, 2012), *chapitre 3 l'interpretation* – As he lays down the lyrics, patterns and figures of indigenous tribes appear. Stromae's lyrics challenge all forms of colonialism, including pseudo-help from Western/northern mission trips, neoliberalism and docu-tourism, presented from the perspective of the indigenous. His words make stark comparisons between colonial actions, inequality and the destruction of the environment. The meaning of "humain a l'eau" (man overboard) becomes clear when he states (don't be surprised/ it smells, smells like a *coup d'Etat*).

144

20th-century electro-acoustic experimentalists Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Henri, Éliane Radigue, and, yes, Larry Levan.

Stromae uses technology that is more accessible, ubiquitous, and simple sound bites to build the layers of what becomes a complicated musical text; he presents it in a way designed to teach, exposing what goes into the construction when it was more typical of music production to conceal and present music as always-already perfect. Stromae draws on this DIY ethos by adding yet another technology and layer: the audio-visual narrative and masterclass that shows each layer, from music sample to drum machine to lyrics, building on the next in real time, in the way that DJ tutorials in the style of garage or house persist on YouTube today. Stromae questions what has become taken for granted: the process of constructing musical texts, particularly that of commercially successful EDM. And he is deliberate about making the means accessible, sharing the process in what he refers to as video "*leçons*."[120] So many years after The KLF, a.k.a. The Timelords, released *The Manual: (How to Have a Number One the Easy Way)* in 1988, Stromae shows through accessible technology in quotidian settings, how to construct a multi-layered electronic music text.

Mark Butler argues that certain new technologies were welcomed into EDM scenes because they contributed to musical processes that were already in practice. He writes that in addition to sampling and editing via tape, "on the other hand, analog synthesizers, pre-MIDI drum machines, and vinyl records are also essential...Clearly, obsolete technology is just as much a part of EDM's fetishization of the machine as is the latest gizmo, and the simple tool can be just as important as the most complex of devices."[121] Sounding dated was a part of the aesthetic. It is this aesthetic and DIY ethos with a conscious attempt at using the most accessible, portable

---

[120] Only the most financially privileged are living with the cutting-edge technology advertised in the commercials with music groups like Kpop's BTS: the new folding/unfolding phones, the latest iphone. The same can be said for new medical technologies; the rest of us are living in the techno-past. To live in the future, or the most recent present becomes a classed, and often racialized and gendered, temporality.
[121] Mark Butler, 68.

technologies and techniques that Stromae emphasizes in his *leçons*. Stromae describes "*Leçon n°11 'remix de Up saw liz' Live sur NRJ'*" (Jun 26, 2009), essentially a live remix of his first *leçon*, as "Comment faire une… émission radio !" (How to do a…radio show!). He goes as far as to name the specific tech he uses in this *leçon*: "iMac with Mac OS X, Reason 4 (a very user-friendly music software), Evolution Ekeys 49 (Midi Keyboard)."[122] Rather than being taken as product placement, the naming of technology represents an effort towards being transparent. Throughout Stromae's *leçons*, he is transparent in his process so that almost any technology capable of recording and playing sound—especially if it can loop sound—will work. The musical layering could be done with free open-source software, such as Audacity, or the most rudimentary cassette recorder and metronome. The emphasis in this *leçon*, as with most of his *leçons*, is on the "how to..." rather than overcompensating with technology.

Stromae is not the first to play with temporality by playing with the stylistic expectations established in EDM by the 2010s, but perhaps his 21st century audio-visual creations are about returning to what was always-already a temporally diverse style, or multiplicity of styles. His mental catalog of styles, which Stromae draws from in the creation of sonic layers in real time, leapfrog over the more recent conceptions of EDM DJ/producer as someone who only presses a button. Stromae connects to a history of scenes, DJ collectives, intricately layered music, and accessible technologies.

<center>*TOUS LES MÊMES*</center>

In 2014, performing in a drag or androgynous persona in a music video presents an engaging, even trendy, eye-catching visual, but not unheard of; queer had currency in the 2010s. How can this mode of performance and self-presentation relocate its alternative, transgressive qualities present in the alternative scenes of previous decades? Stromae troubles our notions of congealing identities by renewing our focus on what it means "*to queer*," meaning, to borrow

---

[122] Stromae, "*Leçon n°11 'remix de Up saw liz' Live sur NRJ'*" (Jun 26, 2009) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMa102qLG_4 (Last Accessed Sept. 27, 2021).

from Freya Jarman-Ivens, that he acts "to make strange [and] to render unfamiliar" that which was only ever "allegedly stable."[123] In this second case study I find Stromae's contrapuntal gender play in "Tous les mêmes," queers or questions notions of normative gender performance, particularly through *temporal* means. Stromae's bifurcated drag self queers the timing of one persona per act expected on the drag stage. Stromae also challenges what is taken for granted about the present through references to specific figures or musical moments from the past (Thriller dance; toreador; tango) and through manipulation of sound, especially timbre. Coterminous drag unsettles even today's viewers, reading as queer uncanny, and references to the past in vocality and choreography undermine notions about normative gender roles in compulsory heterosexuality.

Stromae's work in the medium of music video distinguishes him from other present-day EDM and house music artists who often create from a position of relative invisibility. As discussed previously, Stromae deviates from this to make the creative process transparent in his video *leçons*, explaining how each distinct layer of his songs is constructed. Similar care goes into his video production, where every minute detail including the camera angle, lighting, choreography, and use of space contributes to the work's meaning. The visual layer is as intricate and deliberately manipulated as the sonic, evidencing Stromae's training at the Brussels film school. In "Tous les mêmes" Stromae exploits these layers to mix signs that index music and dance styles and genres that fall outside of the norms of EDM. Many of these signs, to be discussed, allude to topics from both the 19th and 20th-centuries, and appear juxtaposed, in opposition to one another. Stromae manipulates his voice, dissects his body into distinct male and female halves, and moves through equally divided spaces with an exaggerated gait (Figure 3.5). "Tous les mêmes" shows how Stromae subverts the construction of gender by working away *at* rather than *within* its inherited sign systems.

---

[123] Freya Jarman-Ivens, "Introduction: Voice, Queer, Technologies," in *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 16.

Figure 3.5: Bifurcated drag in "Tous les mêmes "

Uncanny Sounds

A destabilizing counterpoint between past and present and between gendered roles

arrives in the opening bars of the song. An immediate aesthetic opposition indicates that timbre

itself will play a key role referencing times other than this one and, thus, in shaping the narrative

meaning of the song and music video. Tinny muted trumpets squeeze through the dusty, shallow

space of a phonograph speaker, marked by the visual cue of a turntable as diegetic sound. When

Stromae's voice first emerges, it breaks through a barrier of recorded, canned sound via an

electronic mimesis of a skipping record. This auditory "interruption" visually coincides with a

breakdown of the fourth wall as Stromae, lying in bed with alternate partners turns to reveal his

bigendered division of self, making unsettling eye contact with the camera. The overt queering of

the visual text is accompanied by a simultaneous queering of the mediums of sound production.

While the symbol of the turntable is commonplace in the styles with which listeners have first

associated Stromae, that is hip hop and EDM, this is one of many methods of "rendering the

familiar strange." The record one imagines producing this sound involves not the samples manipulated by a DJ, but the sound of an antique phonograph. This uncanny moment throws the listener into questioning where the edges of narrative and real world begin, as the gaps among the real, the narrative, and the recording within recording immediately invite the criticism of sign systems.

In just these first twenty seconds, Stromae establishes certain musical and visual oppositions, which considered with his other works intertextually, highlight the "asymmetrical valuation" ascribed to personas and characteristics that are considered to be markers of feminine, female, or ethnic others. Among the marked traits in "Tous les mêmes" are acoustic sounds and the use of diegetic sound, as well as metric dissonance and asymmetrical rhythmic motives rather than the square, straight rhythms more typical of both EDM generally as well as Stromae's earlier work. The way these marked moments map onto meaning comes in the connection of coterminous musical signs to specific topics. The opening trumpets in parallel thirds, for example, along with the pervasive syncopated rhythm, first present in the rhythmic play between both hands of the opening piano indexes a specific older dance topic: the Cuban *son* (Example 3.1).

The lyrics, poetic meter, and rhyme scheme for "Tous les mêmes " similarly add to the oppositional play that undermines binary gendered opposites (Table 3.1). The unfolding form has a foundation of a repeating refrain with contrasting verses, to which one may also assign two distinct personas: the refrains give voice to a male persona and the verse to a female other. The verses are eight line stanzas with a rhyme scheme of a-b-a-b, that mirrors in poetic meter the asymmetry of the two-measure clave rhythm that characterizes the Cuban *son*. Stromae's voice enters on beat two and sets up a metric dissonance from the start, as he voices the persona of a fed-up girlfriend. His feminine persona, vocally inspired by Cesaria Evora, plays with time (rhythm, meter, and phrasing) for sensual expression that refuses to be temporally contained.[124]

---

[124] I will later connect with McClary's descriptions of the curves of Carmen's voluptuous phrasing in the "Habanera." In her song "Petit pays" (Little country), for example, Evora waits; an instrument segues,

The arrival of the first refrain marks the division of the song through exaggerated change in timbre, swaggering rhythm and deeper, more guttural vocal inflections, embodying a cliché machismo.

Example 3.1: My piano reduction of "Tous les mêmes," note the trumpets in thirds above a syncopated Cuban son.

The first refrain exhibits a much squarer metric division, with a layer of clapping hits on back beats two and four while an electronic beat pounds one and three. The rhythmic piano returns from the intro, now playing the augmented syncopation of the brass layer from the first verse. The chords add crunchy dissonance to a vocal melody without much variance in contour. Like a tired and banal fight rehearsed often between two partners, neither melody nor lyrics alter for the refrain, which opens each time with the lower-pitched vocal line "Rendez-vous, rendez-vous..." (Table 3.1) The refrain's rhyme scheme is more forced relying on a half rhyme between

---

silence, and then she dives in syncopated to the next verse, stretching the time just enough to inflect good trouble.

150

"*règlement*" and "*sûrement.*" Stromae ends the couplet somewhat redundantly with "*règles*," a repetition that draws attention to the word's multiple meanings: regulations, settlements, restrictions and menstrual periods. Where the first poetic octave was elegant in its rhythm and assonance, the refrain is much cruder, abrasive, and the elongation of voiced consonants "r" and "v" only add to the confrontational sound. Where the verses, gendered feminine gradually adapt, taking on characteristics of the masculine refrain, from acquiring the EDM beat to evening out the asymmetry of the lines, the refrain remains stubbornly the same. It is the ultimate failure of the two to reconcile that is transgressive.

Table 3.1: Gendered song structure and lyrics showing the asymmetrical opposition between a feminine verse and masculine refrain

Verse 1 (f)	Rhyme scheme and sound	Melodic contour and rhythm
Vous les hommes, vous êtes tous les mêmes	Softer consonants « a »	Varied and wide melodic range; fluid rhythm
Macho mais cheap,	« b »	
bande de mauviettes infidèles	« a » (approximate rhyme)	
Si prévisibles,	« b » (approximate rhyme)	
non je ne suis pas certaine	« a » (assonance with « mêmes »)	
Que tu m'mérites,	« b » (assonance with « cheap » and "-visibles")	
vous avez d'la chance qu'on vous aime	« a »	
Dis-moi merci	« b » (near rhyme with "mérites")	
Refrain (m)		
Rendez-vous, rendez-vous, rendez-vous au prochain règlement	« c » - harsh consonant sounds	Repetitive, narrow range, monotonous
Rendez-vous, rendez-vous, rendez-vous sûrement aux prochaines règles	« c » internal rhyme	

Until this point all interaction in the video has occurred within the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, domestic spaces that are typically gendered as feminine. A third of the way in, we will see "femme" Stromae exit this domestic space into the public space of the street. The openness and the nighttime setting could connote a potentially more threatening, masculine space, as it has typically appeared in music video; alternatively, the environment could be read as a freer space for gender play precisely because the inhabitants cannot easily be bifurcated and the outdoor space is open to contain. Only the pink and green lighting inside a café now illuminates the once clear gender/color boundaries. However, as if bound by the divide between the two gendered worlds, Stromae stops dead upon "*c'est la monde à l'envers,*" a phrase that literally means "the world is inverted." The accompaniment halts and Stromae's divided self turns to face the camera, again breaking the visual boundaries of the narrative with unsettling eye contact, and he accuses the viewer, "*toi t'y pensais,*" (you were already thinking it). Stromae breaks into the refrain, no longer bound to one visually gendered side or the other. As he maneuvers, he multiplies, bi-gender doubles seem to emerge from his body at every turn. The brass interlude following the refrain initiates an ensemble dance scene that similarly invites multiplies meanings. Assembled in a "V" formation that nods to Michael Jackson videos, Stromae and his shadows alternate between their bipolar sides, through turns of foot and hand and pose, as brief allusions to ballroom dance versus the harder-hitting movements that nod to hip hop. Every movement is a little strange, however, and the out of context choreography and exaggerated movements, painfully articulated with rigid joints and contorted appendages, seem more a nod to the monstrous creatures of Jackson's *Thriller* than any other work (Figure 3.6).

Returning to the domestic space with the third verse, the viewer encounters a recapitulation of the first scene; however, it soon becomes clear that the visual structure has become dislocated from the poetic structure. Previously, the verse served as separate a space for Stromae's feminine half, and the freedom to vacillate between categories was only afforded the section of street dances underscored by brass interludes. Now the visually gendered worlds

152

alternate much more quickly, causing an uncanny ventriloquism where *her* verses, phonation and phrasing emerge from *his* mouth, and even the posture, movement, and hand gestures of one character seem to bleed into the other's body.

Figure 3.6: "Tous les mêmes," in a Michael Jackson "V" formation

The visual plane has come unstuck in relation to the underlying structure of the recorded song and the effect is unsettling. This temporal rupture is key to Freya Jarman's concept of the "queer uncanny": understanding of the word "as a verb, 'to queer' suggests a process, and one of upsetting, making strange, unsettling...suggest[ing] this in multiple languages through its connection with the act of questioning and of enquiry."[125] Queer temporal gestures question and "dramatize incoherencies*"* in ways that "brin[g] the precarious nature of the [sonic gestures and their meanings] to the foreground."[126] Throughout "Tous les mêmes," Stromae foregrounds the precarious relations between expressions of masculinity or femininity, a sexed body, and the lexicon of visual or sonic signs the members of a particular group use to express belonging to gendered roles.

Towards the end of the second ensemble dance, Stromae's Doppelgänger appears, charging in a fencing pose from the masculine green-lit half of the street to scatter his shadowed

---

[125] Freya Jarman traces the etymology of "queer" to the German "*quer*" – "transverse, oblique, crosswise," and the middle French "*querir*" – "to seek, to ask, to inquire." *Queer Voices*, 15-16.
[126] Ibid., 17.

dancers. A woman, she mirrors Stromae in his patterned attire and shares his divided gender presentation. The two face off, opposing each other in a tango posture "made strange" by the uncomfortably concave backs and spider-like jointed movements (Figure 3.7). The two trumpets from the diegetic sound of the phonograph in the intro return now to underscore this paired dance. The legato melody of the trumpets in parallel thirds, the elongated rhythms and phrases, and a sharp reduction in the previous busyness of the earlier polyrhythms highlight the sudden isolation of the two dancing figures. When one of the trumpets begins to move more contrapuntally, the dance changes. Now, in an allusion to the *paso doble*, Stromae's doppelganger is converted into a turning cape, to be turned and controlled by her taller and more stable partner.

Figure 3.7: "Tous les mêmes," (2:42) tango made strange.

Most of these dance sequences occur during the brass interruptions between verse and refrain and take place in the a-gendered space of the street, marking these scenes as potentially significant areas of sign play. The generic expectations of EDM, collide with the pervasive Cuban *son* rhythm and vintage trumpet timbres, as well as with the Jackson choreography, and play between fencing, tango and the *paso doble* of the final duet. There reaches such a level of complex troping that it illustrates what Jarman-Ivens refers to as "exposing the sign-ness of [every]thing."[127] In the final dance scene, Stromae and his doppelgänger alternate between a

---

[127] Freya Jarman-Ivens, "Identification: We Go to the Opera to Eat Voice," in Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities and the Musical Flaw (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 37.

dance in which the female embodies an "asymmetrical valuation" by becoming an object – a cape – for the male subject.[128] This objectifying choreography immediately follows the more egalitarian rivalry between dancers of the tango, the contrast thus exposing the sign systems and rituals that codify gender.[129]

Stromae's performances of gender are subversive precisely because he refuses to work within the inherited signs of gendered characters in music video and the expected sound of commercial EDM. His division of the self into two distinctly gendered entities disrupts the notion that one performs merely a single gender at a time. Typically characters who are non-gender conforming are seen as having two choices for their self-presentation: androgyny or drag. Stella Bruzzi, in her work on k.d. lang, has considered the androgyne a compromise in the form of commodification, losing the subversive play between gaps of signs for what Bruzzi calls a more "homogenised, conventionally ambiguous androgyny."[130] Stromae is clearly not androgynous; if anything he is presenting a bigendered fracturing to avoid occupying an ambiguous middle ground. Judith Butler, in regard to the second choice, has considered the ways in which drag loses subversive potential. Concerning drag, she states:

> It would be a mistake to take it as the paradigm of subversive action or, indeed, as a model for political agency… If one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the "reality" of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks "reality," and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance...ostensible reality is coupled with an unreality,

---

[128] There is some discussion in Object-Oriented Feminist theory, about further ways to challenge gendered objectification, see: Katherine Behar, *Object-Oriented Feminism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

[129] Beyond this point, it is no longer the subjects of the video who turn their gendered profiles, but the gaze of the camera itself that revolves around the two figures that now straddle the boundary between the two visually gendered worlds. As Stromae and his double confront each other presenting their profiles to the camera, both perform the gendered opposites of the other. The musical form seems to break down as well, disintegrating from the distinct alternating sections of verse and refrain into a succinct call and response: "Tous les mêmes... J'en ai marre," or "You're all the same… I've had enough," within the space of one line. By the looping outro, Stromae and his double are back to back. Stromae, presenting his femme side to the camera, traipses off with an ape-like masculine gait into the green-filtered half of the street. She, a little more poised with her masculine half towards the camera, glides directly into the pink-filtered screen. As the camera pans out, the viewer is left with a three-dimensional tessellated pattern comprising bi-colored, gendered spaces, until the pattern is one that matches the tunics both Stromae and his double wore.

[130] Stella Bruzzi, "Mannish Girl: k.d. lang – from cowpunk to androgyny," in *Sexing the Groove*, edited by Sheila Whiteley (New York: Routledge, 1997), 192.

we think we know what the reality is, and take the secondary appearance of gender to be mere artifice.[131]

Stromae's drag performance is subversive because it denies the reality of any gendered norm; he is simultaneously drag queen and drag king (Figure: video still). He literally divides the self into two as well as the spaces he moves through, embodying both voices of a quarrelsome heteronormative relationship. Stromae performs a consciously stylized dance that spirals from clearly divided binary spaces and selves into an almost incoherent mixture. The final confrontation between his own divided self and his female alter ego is one in which both are left to spar and parry the other in an alternating and dangerous choreography of fencing and dance. According to Butler, cultural subversion is to be found precisely in the "vacillation between the categories,"[132] thus Stromae and his double's bigendered drag ultimately calls into question the reality of both genders. Though individuals do not literally possess female and male halves, this division and their stylized movements highlight the gendered sides of individuals that emerge in the choreography of their lives. There is a sense from his music video that Stromae is calling out the unfortunate nature of gender (and some music) to repeat "plus des mêmes," or "more of the same."

<center>CARMEN</center>

A reference to a 19th-century opera by French composer Bizet, or novella by French author and historical preservationist Merimee, could very well fall into the trap of nostalgia or nationalism. That is, however, neither the intention nor the effect of Stromae's only animated music video. Instead, Stromae's melodic, lyrical, and visual time travel undermines something about this present time, our 21st-century capitalist, screen-obsessed time. Stromae adapts *Carmen's*[133] opening line of the "Habanera," "l'amour est comme l'oiseau rebelle" (Love is like a

---

[131] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 1999), xxii.

[132] Ibid., xxiii.

[133] For clarity and consistency, I italicize *Carmen* when referring to either Bizet's opera or Stromae's music video; when I am referring to solely the sound of Stromae's song, I use quotations, "Carmen," and italicize

rebellious bird), to be not about love but false and transactional connections represented by the symbolic bird of the Twitter logo. The allegory continues throughout the animated short underscored by music almost entirely derived from Bizet's "Habanera." The musical borrowing is strategic in capturing just how seductive capitalist social media is. While not specifically about queer identities, Stromae draws from an older musical text that was not shy in its depictions of ethnic and sexual differences, and he does so to question something that has become so normalized in his current time, that to question his own incentives to participate in platforms that are almost obligatory for social interaction and career formation today, thus, a dangerous inquiry. In "Carmen," Stromae employs the most famous music of Bizet's opera to question our addictive relationships to a seductive social media.

As with all of Stromae's music videos, "Carmen" is multilayered and each part, symbol, and sound is rich in meaning. In more than name, Stromae references the Bizet opera in melody and lyrics, adapting the "Habanera" from the 19th-century opera. It is more than just a catchy tune and yet another appropriation of the best-known Bizet "number" or Cuban rhythm for color. Through wordplay and visual symbolism, Stromae's reference to the past turns a critical mirror back on a present-day Western culture that has its roots in a racist and sexist abuse of human capital. Taken in tandem with his *leçons* and "*Tous les mêmes*," which also samples a Cuban *son* rhythm among other more subtle connections to both Merimee's novella and Bizet's *Carmen* in choreography and theme, Stromae finds the potential in re-appropriating music that utilized difference as a reinforcement to dominant social organization.

Tessellations: The Visual Narratives on Repeat

Carmen's animation opens with a sunrise (or is it sunset?) on a blue bird flying through a pink sky, underscored with real birdsong (songbird tweets and mourning dove calls). The bird

_____

the album on which it appears, *Racine Carré.* When Carmen appears in my text un-italicized and without quotes, I only refer to the person, the character in Bizet's opera. Where I refer to the aria, an excerpt from Bizet's opera, I also use quotation marks: "Habanera." While a non-specific reference to the dance music genre is neither italicized, capitalized, nor in quotation marks: habanera.

lands on a windowsill (Figure 3.8). As it does so, the real samples of chirps modulate downward until they morph into an insidious sounding synth bass—at first in the even rhythm of the bird tweet (one--and--two--and…), then morphing to match the rhythmic ostinato of Carmen's "Habanera" (one---a-two--and…). Bird and audience look in through the window on a boy, who sits at the edge of a bed, eyes glued to the screen of a smartphone. Stromae's acousmatic voice vocalizes Carmen's chromatic descending melody, "*L'amour est comme d'oiseau de Twitter…*" and it becomes apparent that the blue bird is symbolic for the Twitter logo.

Figure 3.8: Stromae, Carmen*, Opening (0:04)*

Throughout the video are subtle, and some not so subtle, references to well-known figures: the first is a woman singing in the poster behind the animated boy we come to identify as Stromae. Over his shoulder, pictured singing into a microphone is Cesaria Evora, the subject of dedication of Stromae's song "Ave Cesaria," from his second album *Racine Carré*. This first subtle reference to a past or present figure is most tied to his sound and her vocal stylistic mannerisms and the connection of his feminine vocal drag personas (*Tous les mêmes* and *Carmen*) with sounds of the African Diaspora. Evora seems to be looking over Stromae, a watchful presence to warn him of straying from a path of authenticity and integrity. There appear additional symbolic references to public figures throughout the video, however, the appearance of these latter figures seems to fulfill a different function in Stromae's visual narrative.

"L'oiseau de Twitter," the small blue bird that landed on young Stromae's window is always eating: spaghetti as Stromae dines alone (Figure 3.9), birthday cake at Stromae's empty party, popcorn; the allegory of consumer culture is supported in the lyrics as well:

> Et c'est comme ça qu'on
> s'aime, s'aime,
> s'aime, s'aime
> Comme ça, consomme,
> somme, somme,[134]
> somme, somme

It's not long before the bird grows and haunts the steps of Stromae as he develops into a young man. The looming dangers of false connections with the people in our lives becomes an undercurrent theme throughout. It raises the question of what does it mean to be a consumer? Who is consuming what and what is consuming us?

Figure 3.9: Stromae, Carmen*: he "consumes," we "consume" and "are consumed."*

The middle of the video shows Stromae as a young adult, going through common scenes of life without finding meaningful connection, but rather consuming, like the bird. His relationship with a girl appears one-sided and comes with a warning that revenge is always

---

[134] Shortened versions of "consomme" (we consume) or "consommé" ([we] are consumed) but carry additional connotations of "somme" (we are); "Faire un petit somme" (take a nap/ be sleeping); "Faire la somme de" (to add up [to]); and "sommer" (to summon).

possible via social media. Stromae continues to follow the symbolic signs of late capitalism: from graffiti on a brick wall, a vintage painted ad, to billboards and neon arrows, the signs implore the viewer to "follow us!/ Follow/ friend or follow/ Follow Us and Like Us" (Figure 3.10). Accompanying the visual signs are the lyrics (You care and no one cares/ And that's how we love, love, love/ and that's how we buy, buy, buy), pointing to the one-sided, self-serving nature of the capitalist culture.

Figure 3.10: Stromae, Carmen*, Following the signs of capitalist social media (1:54).*

Marking the last third of the video (1:56), the Twitter bird captures the back of animated Stromae's shirt to throw him on the bird's back as it runs along a flock of similarly engorged Twitter birds who carry caricatures of present-day celebrities and allegories for the consumers of social media. Obama rides a giant Twitter bird branded with the American flag. The Queen of England is unmistakable in her modest pink skirt and coat, hat, pearls and purse; she turns, smiles, and waves.[135] After dumping its humans into the mouth of the massive Twitter bird-beast (Figure 3.11), Stromae's own engorged Twitter bird flies upward; the sky turns from a stormy

---

[135] Stromae's foresight here is uncanny. One can imagine if the video were made post-2016, what other public figures active on Twitter would be implicated.

darkness to bright blue (like the blue sky) and the bird shrinks to be once again an innocuous blue songbird. The visual narrative ends where it began, revealing that the cycle continues.

Figure 3.11: Stromae, Carmen*, "That's how we like/ are consumed" (2:44).*

In a return to its opening visual, *Carmen's* animation closes with the sunset (or is it sunrise?) on a blue bird flying through a pink sky, underscored with real birdsong (songbird tweets and mourning dove calls). The bird lands on a windowsill, looking in on a girl, who sits at the edge of a bed, eyes glued to the screen of a smartphone (Figure 3.12). Our view turns to the wall from the inside and we see, next to the window with a small Twitter bird, the tessellated pattern of birds in a wallpaper—a reference to the backgrounds of many Stromae videos (*Tous les*
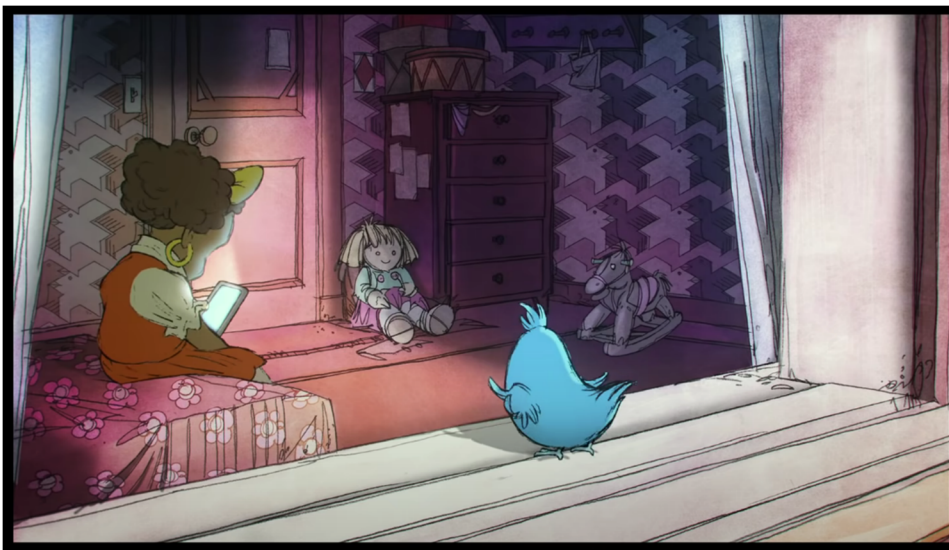

Figure 3.12: Stromae, Carmen*, closing (3:13)*

mêmes) and personas from his album *Racine Carré* (Square Root). Tessellations, like the cycles of the rhythmic ostinato, repeat without end: zoom in and one individual can be identified, but it is not until panning out that the whole insidious, interlocking pattern comes into view.

Lyrical meanings

Stromae's lyrics for "Carmen," presents simultaneously multiple possible connotations, never operating on just one level. As with his spiritual and musical predecessors, Jacques Brel and Evora Cesaria, words are selected for sound, consonance, and assonance, as well as meaning; some words are chosen for their colloquial meanings as well as dictionary meanings; other words are chosen for their ability to index overarching themes, such as Stromae's references to capitalist social exchange. And some words seem to speak on all levels at once. As I investigated lyrical meanings, the critical question in my inquiry seemed to be: why this word and not another of similar meaning?

Extraneous meanings like this are a particularly queer framework, from a kind of double-speak and code switching necessitated for survival or finding one another, to the additional meanings found in queer explorations of the sound of the voice. It is Carmen's vocalic excess that marks her as dangerous in Bizet's *Carmen,* and her ability to linguistically dupe the narrator that undermines his reductive vision of her.

One example of the kind of queer double-speak occurring throughout "Carmen" comes in what I call section [B], Stromae's solo lines that answer the chorus "*Prends garde a toi!*" He raps:

> Ah les amis, les potes ou
> les followers
> Vous faites erreur, vous avez
> juste la côte

I had some difficulty finding the meaning at my first attempt translating, possibly because I was searching for one, tidy word-to-word translation. Each phrase and word in fact suggests many possible meanings at once. Considering how the words sound, the last word, "côte," hits with a harsh ending sound, underscoring the more disjunct rap style he uses in [B]. The sound cuts with

162

a hard "c" and stops abruptly on the "t," rhyming with the middle of the phrase, "potes"

(buddies/friends). The internal phrase rhyme and hard consonant sounds characterize the

syncopated rap. This percussive vocality sounds a sharp contrast to the previous verses,

characterized by Bizet's evocative descending chromatic melody, sung in what is closer to, but

not quite a bel canto style:

> D'abord on s'affilie,
> ensuite on se follow
> On en devient fêlé,
> et on finit solo
> First we join,
> Then, we follow each other,
> We become broken,
> And we end up alone.

The consonance here, connecting each line is the softer "f" and "s" as well as playing on the

difference in vowel sounds "i" (ee) of "*affilie*" and "o" (oh) of "follow" and "solo" and the "e"

(ay) of "*fêlé*." Just the change resonance via vowel seems to mimic the descending line of the

melody: the situation and affect of the speaker declines.

In addition to the extra sonic meaning is the intended message evident in the phrases

taken as one, which Stromae summarizes the meaning in his own translation:

Ah les amis, les potes ou les followers	"Network of friends or followers?
Vous faites erreur, vous avez juste la côte	No, no, you're just popular."

Here, Stromae means to question our assumptions that "friends" or followers on social media are

truly friends. Additional connotations of individual words add to this interpretation. That

someone could be in the wrong or "mistaken" ("*Vous faite erreur*") about "*les amis, les potes ou*

les followers" suggests a grand self-deception. That someone has *"juste la côte"* suggests that all

they are left with is the "rating" tick or "mark."[136] Even more layers emerge to the sound,

---

[136] "*Marque servant au classement, au repérage (de livres, de documents…)*" (Mark used for filing, locating books, documents, etc.) translate.google.com (Accessed August 5, 2021)

considering "*la côte*" also sounds similar to "*la coûte*" (the price or cost of something). The toxic capitalist structure is not lost from the perspective of Stromae's vocal critique: it is always present, not unlike the "habanera" rhythmic ostinato.

Including himself among figures that are lauded for their progressive stances, rather than just the obvious harm of a common Twitter troll or the inflammatory political tweeter in chief, shows the system itself to be flawed. Stromae's lyrics add the additional focus on just how capitalist and transactional virtual social interactions are. For users what is rewarded in the form of "likes," ratings (*côte)*, followers is the appearance of following trends, seeming *in* with the times. In times where appearing inclusive or progressive is marketed through a social "rating," the rating rather than the good action itself, develops the more lucrative incentive. All actions, statuses and images become transactional in this way, to the point that disengagement with social media (even if the person is committed to doing good without reward or recognition) is met with scrutiny.[137] To question this normalization of transactional social media, to show it as seductive and simultaneously paint himself as seducer queers the discussion, turning our attention to what we take for granted as normal. Stromae shows how systems work through us as actors and on us as unwitting participants.

Social media promises incentives that may prove lucrative in a social market of signs: the appearance that staying signed in will lead to opportunities. Stromae calls us to question the depth of this form of engagement, however, and how we are seduced into valuing performative over substantial actions. At worst, what participants unwittingly support is a system that amplifies the

---

Derived from a comparison of multiple translated documents with this phrasing, found at: https://www.linguee.com/english-french/search?source=auto&query=juste+la+cote (Accessed August 5, 2021)

[137] In one of many emergent studies on the pressures of social media, Diana Bossio and Avery E. Holton studied the increasing expressions of journalists to disengage from social media and the pressures they felt to continue to be present on platforms within their professional capacities regardless of their wishes. Diana Bossio and Avery E. Holton, "The Identity Dilemma: Identity drivers and social media fatigue among journalists," *Popular Communications: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 16, no. 4 (2018): 248-262.

racist, misogynistic, homophobic, and transphobic voices; creates an echo chamber for conspiracy theories; and incentivizes a toxic culture of scapegoating others. Stromae's video, *Carmen,* predicted the immense power to cause chaos that a Twitter handle can wield, especially in the hands of an unhinged political leader.[138]

There are additional serious harms created and even incentivized by social media platforms just beginning to come to light. New research and testimony from PhDs working inside of Facebook reveals the ways algorithms, political ads, no fact checking and targeting specific groups, turned and radicalized everyday people.[139] By design, these mediums allow a free market of social expression where abusers or even non-acquaintances can stalk, dox, and target people they disagree with or want to control.[140] Such a free-for-all of ideas in tandem with toxic algorithms actually creates a space where vulnerable and othered groups cannot exist. Further, the limit of speech to 140 characters in tweets, or easily consumable Facebook statuses, reductive Instagram memes, brief YouTube clips, flattens conversations about social inequities. It instead creates a space where competitive individualism thrives; scapegoating others and throwing around buzzwords without intention is rewarded, while any nuance and complexity is actively disincentivized.

---

[138] The banning of Trump from Twitter: For Matt Leece, 29, a music professor in Bloomsburg, Pa., the Twitter suspension [of Trump' was akin to a clearing of the air: "It's like living in a city perpetually choked with smog, and suddenly one day you wake up and the sky is blue, the birds are singing, and you can finally take a full, nontoxic breath." Sarah Lyall, "100 Days Without Trump on Twitter: A Nation Scrolls More Calmly," *The New York Times*, April 17, 2021.

[139] See recent and ongoing testimony of *The Facebook Papers*: "The Facebook Papers and their fallout," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2021; Olivia Solon and Teaganne Finn, "Facebook whistleblower tells Congress social network is 'accountable to no one,'" *NBC News*, October 5, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/facebook-whistleblower-tell-congress-social-network-accountable-no-one-n1280786 (Accessed October 24, 2021).
And Rachel Martin talks to Yael Eisenstat,"Ex-Facebook employee speaks out about the spread of false information" *NPR Morning Edition*, October 25, 2021.

[140] Racist and sexist abuse led Leslie Jones, for example, to leave the platform Twitter altogether, finding it impossible to exist in the toxic space; she became targeted for her role in an all-woman cast of the new *Ghostbusters.* Lucina Fisher and Brian McBride, "'Ghostbusters' Star Leslie Jones Quits Twitter After Online Harassment," *ABC News*, July 20, 2016.

Formal Break-down

Considering how Stromae pushes generic conventions, I have had to adapt some language to describe the form in a way that makes sense both in EDM and as an adaptation of an operatic number. This is by no means the only way or the one right way of describing form. Some structural labels I borrow from theorists of dance music include an intro, a "riff" or "hook," a "crescendo or drop," followed by the riff/hook and outro. Additionally, in EDM there is usually a "breakdown," preceding a build before the drop. Recent descriptions about form in EDM, written by the creators of EDM, seem to be about energy flow: bringing people into a dance floor and the fluidity of energy once there.[141] Energy of the music and dancers is done through a "breakdown," "build" and "drop," with these three sections sometimes preceded by the "intro."[142]

Bizet's Habanera

Bizet's "Habanera" is set in a large da capo Aria, (A B A), but that doesn't mean it's conventional in form. First, every phrase, section, and even the scene that follows the number are "portamento" and "attacca subito," respectively; Carmen spills over the established boundaries and threatens order with her vocalic excess. This is far from being a discrete "number" expected of the Opera Comique. The characteristic bass ostinato continues throughout the entire number, altering only for the one modulation and simple progression I ii V i/ I ii V I. Even this progression is not as linear, goal-oriented as it seems because upon arriving at I, the next phrase has already begun. It is more cyclical.

Despite being elided, sections A and B can be distinguished by the change in character and contour of the melody and the one modulation, but this too is unusual in mode. The key slinks from D Minor to D Major, obvious in the bass ostinato and key signature, but not so

---

[141] For examples of how unscored electronic dance music can be analyzed using these structural markers, see Mark Butler's Appendices in *Unlocking the Groove.*

[142] For an idea of how contemporary amateur EDM artists describe forms of EDM, I also consulted: "3 successful track arrangements for pop and EDM, explained," *Music Radar* https://www.musicradar.com/how-to/3-successful-pop-and-edm-track-arrangement-structures-explained (Accessed October 24, 2021).

obvious at first in the melody, which retains its descending chromatic line for eight more measures. What I label as the true start to B, if there can be such a demarcation, is where the melody changes in character to match the affect of the mode: from chromatic descent to simple rising/falling diatonic melody with a French march-like lilt in a dotted rhythm.

Stromae's "Carmen"

In the case of "Carmen," Stromae takes Bizet's Da Capo Aria form (large scale AB|A) and adapts to more closely fit some of the expected sections of contemporary electronic dance music (A. Verse/Break-down B. Pre-chorus and transition/Build up C. Drop :|) in order to focus the energy, thus affect, of the narrative. The two repeating sections might be described as "Refrain or Chorus," in that they repeat with the same words over the same music. However, the form can simultaneously be described in terms used by EDM afficionados, which labels sections by energy level and functionality. Adding to the complexity, the "verses" (new text to the same melody both times it appears), which utilize Bizet's chromatically descending melody, might also bear the label "break-down" for how the phrases function (see Table 3.2). The descending melody stalls the energy before the percussive section that follows. I refer to the following less melodic section as [B] "pre-chorus," or in EDM terms: the "build" (Table 3.2). This transitory section is marked by an operatic chorus (not a "chorus" of a popular song section but "chorus" as the collective vocalization of reason): "Prends garde a toi!" (Beware!), before Stromae lays down a syncopated rap of novel lyrical material.

Table 3.2: Formal Breakdown of Stromae's "Carmen" (timings from "Carmen," on Racine Carré*)*

Section:	Intro (0:00-0:03)	[A] Break-down/ Verse (0:03-0:15)	[A'] Refrain/ verse; Call-response (0:15-0:27)	[B] Build-up/ Chorus (0:28-0:40)	[C] Drop (0:41-1:07)	[A] Verse (1:07-1:22)
Layer						
Bass Ostinato	Birdsong to Square eighths	Habanera bass rhythm (elect. Bass)		Habanera rhythm	Boom-Bass; Habanera rhythm muffled	Habanera rhythm
Key areas implied		C Minor	C Minor	V of C Minor	F Minor?	
Voice(s)		Carmen's Melody, Chrom. Descent	Call and response: collective voices from Bizet "en garde" leaping motive; Stromae solo speech-song, chromatic until end, then leaping motive	Refrain by Stromae's voice multiplied, narrow melody (G-G-G—A-flat-A-flat-G—G-F-F-G)		Carmen Chrom. Descent
Percussive			Snare Drum sound sample; militaristic		Trap drum machine	Drum machine continues
Other Sound FX	Birdsong			Electronic "annoying" faux-bird 3-note descending motive	"annoying" e-bird sound amplified	
Lyrics	None	Opens like *Carmen*: "l'oiseau…"	Refrain : "Prends garde à toi"; solo improv-like rap answer	"Prends garde à toi/ Si tu t'aimes…"	Refrain: "Et c'est comme ça qu'on s'aime, s'aime"	Quotes *Carmen*: "L'enfant est un…"

168

Section:	[A''] Refrain/ verse; Call-response (1:22-1:34)	[B] Chorus (1:34-1:48)	[C] Drop (1:49-2:13)	[B'] Chorus – Stromae solo (2:13-2:27)	Coda/ Outro (2:27-3:08)
Layer					
Bass Ostinato		Habanera	Habanera + Boom Bass	Drops out	Habanera Begins two 8va up, to apex, then again in bass – turns into birdsong
Key areas implied					
Voice(s)	Call and response: "Prends garde"- speech/rap, less melodic, more desperate sounding	Refrain by Stromae's voice multiplied		Refrain by Stromae solo	No vocals; 8 beats in: synth voices drone counter melody (me-re-ti-do; me-re-fi-sol)
Percussive	Drum machine and militaristic snare – down to snare alone		Trap drum machine	Drops out	drum machine
Other Sound FX	+ annoying e-bird			Annoying e-bird	New voice sound FX on syncopated rhythm, nonsense syl. 16 beats in: electronic "croak" on syncopated *son* rhythm
Lyrics		"Prends garde à toi Si tu t'aimes…"		"Un jour t'achètes…"	New: "Un jour t'achètes un jour tu aimes"

[A] Verse or "Break-down"

Following the transfiguration of bird tweet into the habanera rhythm, Stromae's

voice enters with the unmistakable melody Bizet wrote for Carmen to seduce her audience. The

vocal line descends chromatically from C4, slinking down an octave (compared to the chromatic

descent from D5 to D4 in the original). Rather than an even descent, the melody varies in its

melodic rhythm. Susan McClary has written how this temporal variation is part of the

"voluptuous tim[ing]" that characterizes Carmen as seductress, allowing the audience to hear her

as dangerous in her ethnic and gendered excesses to the codes of chaste femininity that were

embodied in her foil, Michaela.[143] Stromae makes this reference to the opera even clearer with the

opening lyrics: "*L'amour est comme/ l'oiseau de Twitter*," which mirror Carmen's statement

about mutability of affections, "*l'amour est un oiseau rebelle*." Stromae adds that "*On est bleu de

lui/ seulement pour quarante-huit heures"* (The sky is blue for only a couple of days). As was the

case with Bizet's *Carmen*, he seems be addressing the fickleness of a certain kind of love or

connection, but his focus is on those connections that exist today only in virtual social spaces

Call and response between the collective chorus of reason, "Prends garde à toi!" and

Stromae's individual speech-song narration characterize the second half of [A]. I still consider

this to be part of the verse because, while the Greek chorus-like refrain "Prends garde…"

interjects, Stromae's lyrical line still borrows from the chromatically descending melody, with

new words set to this melody when it returns. Further, the collective interjection of the chorus is

taken directly from the second half of the A section of Bizet's "Habanera," what might be called

smaller phrase "b." However, Bizet affords Carmen the modulation to parallel major; the voices

nagging Stromae keeps him in his opening mode of C Minor. This chorus of reason, made from

---

[143] McClary adds, "If Carmen were consistently just an 'Oriental,' she would not pose nearly so great a
threat. Instead she slips unpredictably from the 'exotic dance' of cabaret entertainments to high opera,
throwing cultural boundaries of class, race and sexual propriety into confusion at a time when those
boundaries were felt to be under siege." Susan McClary, "The Musical Languages of *Carmen,"* in *Georges
Bizet:* Carmen, edited by Susan McClary, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1992), 57-8.

Stromae overdubbing his own voice many times, voices the striving motive from the opera that is militaristic in counterpoint to Carmen's previously legato, chromatic line. Aside from the key remaining in the minor mode, what is distinct here is that solo-Stromae never articulates the repetitive command, "Prends garde à toi," only the collective chorus utters this command and sentiment. As with Bizet's number, the collective interjection first rises, then falls in contour, but the antecedent and consequent are separated by Stromae's verses, creating an incomplete then definitive cadences to the period even without the harmonic accompaniment of woodwinds and strings. As stated, Stromae's answer to this first interjecting "call" borrows from the chromatic aggregate of the opening melody, but completes only a subset before repeating, further lending to the function of this section as the "break-down." The melody literally breaks down so that energy can be built back up.

[B] Chorus or "Build-up"

What I refer to as [B], the chorus, or "Build-up," announces its arrival by the collective coupe of the solo voicing. Where Stromae began the opening verse in Carmen's chromatic descent, then responded to the collective striving call of reason, now there is only the collective, uncanny multiply-recorded selves on the staccato, militaristic melody. The consistent rhythm, phrasing and melody marches this section towards the "drop," building up energy along the way. From a narrow, wave-like contour, the phrases begin to rise with each statement, vocally emphasizing each new reflexive pronoun: (re-)"Garde à nous, garde à eux, garde à vous…" (Watch us/keep to ourselves, watch themselves, watch yourself/selves).

[C] Refrain or "Drop"

Where Stromae's "Carmen" began with many elements from Bizet's "Habanera," the section that follows the Chorus drops nearly all the resemblances to its source material. In the confines of a much more concise track, Stromae crafts an anticipation of the key moment many participants would come to expect on the EDM dance floor of the 2010s: it is a fractional pause between the gradual building of layers and texture and energy until a peak, silence, then

something wild happens. The electronic bird sound amplifies, the bass drops. This is the moment dancers of contemporary EDM, especially subgenres like dubstep, instinctively know to let loose. The section also marks arrival of the refrain that repeats without change:

Et c'est comme ça qu'on s'aime, s'aime, s'aime, s'aime Comme ça, consomme, somme, somme, somme, somme	And that's how we Love (each other), love Love, love Like that's how [we] consume Consume/Buy/are, consume consume, consume

Repeated four times each appearance, with its own internal repetition of vowel and consonant sounds, the words become one more layer of sound. Our ears can almost completely hide the subliminal message "to consume." [144]

[A''] (Mal)Development

In the return of [A'], following the call "*Prends gardes…*," Stromae leaps out of the melody and rhythm of Bizet's "Habanera." Stromae's vocality grows more desperate and impatient, sometimes rushing the even faster surface rhythm and attacking the harder consonants. With the new leap, the melody sounds less recognizable from Carmen's slinking chromatic line, sounding more like a childish taunt. With its faster surface rhythm and internal rhymes, and new dissonant leap to an appoggiatura on the sound *"é-moi"* this section draws our attention to the lexical meanings and word play (Table 3.2).

---

[144] Shortened versions of "*consomme*" (we consume) or "*consommé*" ([we] are consumed) but carry additional connotations of "*somme*" (we are); "*Faire un petit somme*" (take a nap/ be sleeping); "*Faire la somme de*" (to add up [to]); and "*sommer*" (to summon).

Table 3.3: Internal rhyme and wordplay in "Carmen's" verse

Antecedent	Consequent	Poetic effect
(Prends garde à toi)	(Prends garde à toi)	
'Mais j'en connais déjà	Et, s'il le faut, j'irai	assonance and consonance
Les dangers, *moi*	m'venger *moi*	assonance and consonance/ complete rhyme
J'ai gardé mon ticket et,	Cet oiseau d'malheur,	
s'il le faut,	j'le mets en cage	
j'vais l'échanger, *moi*	J'le fais chanter, *moi*'	*Repetition and vocal emphasis*

Voluptuous Time

McClary considers how it is through specifically the manipulation of time that the seduction of the Habanera unfolds: "While there is never any question of tonal or melodic orientation in this phrase, her erratic means of descending through the tetrachord (and, subsequently, the remainder of the scale) reveals her as an expert in seductive rhetoric. She knows how to hook and manipulate desire."[145] Carmen's manipulation of rhythm paints her persona, producing the "excess" that troubles and seduces: "What is set up as normative rhythmic motion from d^2 to $c\#^2$ is halted on c-natural^2, where she plays with our expectations not only by lingering, but also by reciting irregular triplets that strain against the beat."[146]

In Merimee's novella, controlling time is about gendered dominance: Don Jose's time piece becomes symbolic of power, control, masculinity. Carmen robbing him of his time piece, thus, becomes allegory for "dangerous" femininity: "Diana/Carmen has found him out and robbed him of his prowess."[147] Undermining the predictability of musical time, "robbing" time through her vocality and musical numbers, Carmen's manipulation of time is a dangerously queer excess that Bizet must, thus, control by the end of his opera. This number of the opera is

---

[145] McClary, "The Musical Languages of *Carmen*," 76.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Peter Robinson, "Merimee's Carmen," in *Georges Bizet:* Carmen, edited by Susan McClary, 1-14, Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 8, 11.

contained but threatens to exceed framing and contaminate future scenes: "the provocative eroticism of the 'Habanera' makes it a kind of Pandora's box. And its energies spill out immediately—attacca—into the next scene, the first yet that is not organized as a symmetrical set-piece."[148] Perhaps Stromae's setting of Carmen's melody on repeat, his vocality in drag that crosses both gender and time, is a way of exceeding such containment. In doing so, Stromae becomes the voice of Carmen as his persona reflects too late on his own self-interests in a capitalist social economy.

The "Habanera" remains the most obviously recognizable and appropriated "number" from Bizet's Carmen. As such, to 20th and 21st-century ears, much of the original context is lost. Even the opera, when taken in as a whole, carries different meanings for audiences today. McClary writes that Carmen:

> operates in large part on the basis of its transgressive mixture of codes, genres and styles. Bizet's first audiences recognized this transgressive mixture and responded accordingly. But because we no longer possess their expectations with respect to genre, we now tend to hear the opera as an unruptured entity: whether listening to the placid lyricism of Micaëla or the third-hand Cuban strains of the "Habanera," we hear only...Carmen.[149]

The opera's intertexts, semiotics of exoticism, and "sampling" of musical "others" would have been apparent to Bizet's peers and publics alike because of how they transgressed or grated against the generic expectations of the Opera-comique stage and the music histories that fed into the development of this genre. Part of understanding how individual numbers from the opera were stylistically transgressive comes in tracing the sources of the material that was used because it would have sounded definitely-not-French to 19th-century French ears.

A "habanera" (of Havana) comes from a Afro-Cuban folk dance song; the "Habanera" from Carmen derives from "El Arreglito" composed by Sebastian Yradier, a Paris-based Spanish

---

[148] McClary, "The Musical Languages of Carmen," 77.
[149] McClary, "The Musical Languages of Carmen," 44.

composer who himself set Afro-Cuban folk sounds as imitations of exotic musical cultures.[150]

Composites of Creole and Afro-Latin music Yradier collected in his travels, to Parisian

audiences, this would have been taken as a more authentic representation of Spanish music.[151]

According to McClary, "*El Arreglito*" "brings with it associations not with art music, but with the

popular music of the Parisian cabarets: it belongs to a social milieu quite antithetical to that of the

Opera-Comique. The intrusion of music from 'houses of ill-fame' on to the stage of the Opera-

Comique becomes one of the reigning tensions in *Carmen*."[152] Signifying more than mere

eclecticism, the intentional use of the music designed for vastly different physical locations,

representative of different social locations in a hierarchical society, grates against the genre for

which Bizet chose to compose.

A similar observation could be said of Stromae's experimentation in genre: that it is

through manipulation of music intended for different spaces and times that discrete social

categories come into conflict. The distinction between the effect of the two settings of *Carmen* is

that the asymmetry between the agency of audience and protagonist vs musically othered

characters apparent in Bizet's opera reinforces its hierarchy, where Stromae's narrative irony

challenges.

In Susan McClary and Naomi Andre's analyses of what *Carmen* means to listeners, they

do not consider the audience as a monolith: homogenous or unchangeable through time and place.

Andre argues, "that the identities of the opera's creators (the composer and librettist), the

interpreters (the performers onstage), and the people in the audience matter greatly and produce

multiple simultaneous meanings of an operatic production."[153] *Carmen* and the "Habanera" do

---

[150] McClary points out that Bizet cited in his own score, evidence to his research done on Yradier's music. There also exists a record of five Yradier songs in the Bizet's collection. Mina Curtiss, *Bizet and his World* (New York: Knopf, 1958), 474.
[151] McClary, "The Musical Languages of *Carmen*," 51-52.
[152] Ibid., 52.
[153] Naomi Andre, "Conclusion: Engaged Musicology, Political Action, and Social Justice," in *Black Opera*, 193-208 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018), 194.

not read the same way today as the musical text did for French audiences in the 19th-century. Even so, Stromae's musical borrowing works as a transgressive text because of his manipulation of expectations in genre (both opera and EDM), lyrics and word play, and in the creation of irony that comments on issues of his present day. In so doing, Stromae's sampling of the "Habanera" works differently than other 20th/21st-century appropriations. Drawing from its original reading as a transgressive text, in his music video *Carmen* Stromae questions an accepted norm about our societies today. In contrast to Bizet's musical transgression, instead of working as a way to paint a musical "other" as simultaneously dangerous and seductive, Stromae turns the mirror around to us, showing the seductive and dangerous qualities of a narcissistic and capitalist Twitter-dependent culture.

CONCLUSIONS AND RETURNS

As with "Tous les mêmes," in "Carmen," Stromae alternates a more fluid, melodic vocality with abrupt, machismo staccato hits. It is Stromae's more melodic vocality that recalls female predecessors, predecessors who themselves pushed the confines of gender. Stromae's "Carmen," and "Tous les mêmes," time-travels, making stops at multiple points in time, a pastiche of voices that challenged in their own decades. Through Stromae's voluptuous melodies in drag, I hear Marie Callas' Carmen, but I also hear Cesaria Evora's chromatic melody over *son* rhythmic bass in "Ausencia," and Grace Jones evocative cover of Astor Piazzolla, in "I've seen that face before (Libertango)." Grace Jones infused this latter piece of classical tango music, which Piazzolla composed to recreate the scene of a café, with lyrics about a gendered interaction with a stalker ("strange, I've seen this face before…"), to which Jones adds her own confrontation of the man in French, not unlike how Carmen outwits the narrator linguistically in Merimee's' novella. In addition to calling attention to gender in performance, all three of the above musical references, like "Tous les mêmes," recreate the spaces in sound where these gendered interactions and interactions with ethnic, nomadic, and otherwise othered groups would have taken place: cabarets, cafes, and city streets.

I want to propose a further connection. Perhaps Stromae's "Carmen," sampling the music of "houses of ill fame," was/is the ethos of Paradise (Garage). Larry Levan prioritized voluptuous vocality, including the expected soaring female melodies of disco records, but also the evocative voices of Cher and West End Recorded Taana Gardner, all with resonance with the queer crowds at Paradise.[154] Levan balanced his own carefully produced mixes with live mixes and performers, topping instrumental tracks. These were songs that people came to recognize through repeated interaction. Extraneous meanings, thus, emerge from the meaning of the record in its original context and new contexts created around the dance floor of Paradise. New significance develops through layers of interactions through time; rather than erasing the past contexts, Stromae's songs are iterative in meaning.

Unlike "Tous les mêmes," however, Stromae's melodic vocality in "Carmen" sounds rushed and anemic, with less florid and temporal liberties taken. Evora's poster watches over Stromae's avatar in the beginning of the animated video, as if to warn him, "*regardes toi*." It feels like a warning applicable to individuals entering the recording industry as well as other capitalist ecosystems: watch yourself, beware. The collective of voices from the past, which were implied in Stromae's melodic narrative verses, become completely corrupted by the bass "drop." It is simultaneously the peak of energy in the song and a topical reference to a newer, trendy, capitalist EDM. Stromae switches at this point to a collective voicing: "*Et c'est comme ça qu'on/ s'aime*," a collective address that speaks to how we all succumb to toxic and exploitative systems.

One might consider Stromae's DIY production of music videos in his *leçons* as the natural precursor to technology that would follow in the next few years: the rising popularity of YouTube stars, influencers on Instagram, and music video technologies made easy on TikTok. These new mediums allow almost anyone with a smart phone to be able to produce and share

---

[154] Larry Levan remixing Cher, "Take me home," *Larry Levan - Live At The Paradise Garage [1979]*; Taana Gardner, "Heartbeat," "No Frills," and "Work that Body," *Larry Levan's Classic West End Records Remixes Made Famous at the Legendary Paradise Garage* (2012) EP

high quality videos with music and sound effects. Additionally, YouTube was the point of access for a virtual community beginning to form around Larry Levan's legendary sets at Paradise; it did allow space for primarily Black, brown, and queer DJs and club attendees (and people who wish they had been there) to interact with and remember the music.

While TikTok and Twitter have been described as great democratizers, however, there are real dangers and incentives to cause harm in the ways Stromae draws attention to in *Carmen*. Former data engineer and whistle-blower Frances Haugen calls for regulations, stating that "until the incentives change, Facebook will not change."[155] Until the most recent unveiling of internal memos and concerns researchers have had about the algorithms of social sites including YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, Stromae seemed to be the only one calling attention to the potential for abuse, and simultaneously implicating himself.

"Repetto," Stromae's last mix…

Stromae's swan song, produced under his label "Mosaert," is the track "Repetto X Mosaert": beats which serve to underscore the collaborative music video about a former superhero losing powers.[156] Through the looping melodic intervals and beats are continuously varying timbres that borrow from various times: synthesized harpsichord, then strings, then celeste alternate with claps and the more expected EDM beats. Unlike the video, there is no voice to vocalize the narrative, just ostinati changing timbres. "Repetto x Mosaert" is Stromae's last sound, before hanging up his cape, just before he publicly confessed to the world he experienced burnout and distress at recognition everywhere he went.[157] Like the heroine in the video, who

---

[155] Haugen interviewed by Brandy Zadrozny regarding "Carol's Journey to Q-anon," a fictional Facebook account of a typical Republican, mid-western mom that was targeted by extremist ads within two days. Zadrozny, "'Carol's Journey': What Facebook knew about how it radicalized users," *NBC News*, Oct. 22, 2021, https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/tech-news/facebook-knew-radicalized-users-rcna3581 (Accessed Oct. 26, 2021).

[156] Yael Naim, "Coward," produced by Mosaert and Phantasm (November 16, 2016) https://mosaert.com/projects/coward (Accessed August 23, 2021).

[157] An interview with Stromae on the vlog *Hep Taxi* states "*Le succès, la pression et un travail sans relâche déclenchent chez #Stromae un burn-out. Il décide de mettre fin à sa carrière de chanteur. Dans notre taxi, il est revenu sur cette maladie qu'il regrettera toute sa vie.*" (Success, pressure and tireless work trigger a burnout at #Stromae. He decides to end his singing career. In our taxi, he came back to this illness that he

looks with nostalgia but pity at the costume she no longer wears, Stromae has retired his personas
and retreated to seek genuine human connection.

…or is it?

As I was wrapping up the first draft of this chapter, Stromae emerged this very week,
after six years. Without any explanation, because no one is owed one, a new video titled *Santé*
(Premiered Oct 15, 2021) appeared in the official Stromae YouTube account.[158] This time,
Stromae is not the focus of the camera, the essential but overlooked worker is; Stromae sings to
them by name, underscored by primarily acoustic instruments and Afro-Caribbean derived beats.
Making just one brief appearance on the monitor of a call center worker, Stromae pops up, hair
pulled back into two round buns, parted in the center, an androgynous white shirt and black
ribbon at the neck instead of the usual bowtie, face visibly softened by make-up and other means;
Stromae infuses a child-like playful joy in the coded dance meant to uplift spirits.

The tradition of toasting to each other's health is referenced in the name of the track,
"Santé." It is a song that logically follows the artist's career of party/dance music that is not
always what it seems, from his first break out hit "Alors en dance," to Belgian football club
favorite "Ta Fete." It's a key track just as we are all, globally, emerging from isolation
necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic to spend time with friends and family once again. But
this toast is directed towards one forgotten group in particular, united by class and the necessity to
work while everyone else parties or enjoys the safety of working from home. The visuals show
people of all kinds of working class and service-oriented jobs: blue collar and pink collar; people
around the world, indicated by the languages shown in the workspaces of people of all ethnicities

---

will regret all his life.) "Le burn-out de Stromae: les raisons derrière la fin de sa carrière" (Stromae's
burnout: the reasons behind the end of his career), *Hep Taxi* (Dec. 12, 2019).
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mv6RSzZ3zZs (Accessed July 25, 2021)
See also : "STROMAE SE CONFIE SUR SON BURN OUT (France 2)" *Actu Médias*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QJ8f7dXXjU (Accessed August 23, 2021).
[158] Stromae, *Santé (Official Music Video)* (Premiered Oct 15, 2021)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3QS83ubhHE (Accessed October 22, 2021).

and genders, from fishermen to maids to call center workers. It is not an "all lives matter" or colorblind naivety, however; in this audio-visual text, Stromae highlights a truly rare nuance to this kind of text: apparent in lyrics and their interaction with the visual narrative, difference of gender, race, and ethnicity and class are shown how they relate in a hierarchical and exploitative capitalist work economy. Even so, Stromae 'toasts' all those who cannot pause to celebrate, focusing on the small moments of joy that workers find in the face of an oppressive system.

CHAPTER 4

STAGING RESILIENCE: FINDING TIME FOR DRAG IN THE SOUTH

"Once again it's time to dust off the platforms, dig out the fishnets, detangle that beehive, polish
up the leather, perk up those falsies, fluff up your boas, and squeeze your fine self into something
fabulous. Ten years old this year, Athens' Boybutante Ball has become the most outrageous and
eagerly awaited annual party in Clarke County." – Melissa Link in the *Flagpole* (1999)

"Like Asgard, Athens isn't a place. It's a people. And we have good, kind, caring people. Also,
like Asgard, I have an army of magically undead creatures dormant beneath the surface waiting
for when I call on them to rule the land. So, that makes Athens special, too, I guess." – Local drag
queen celebrity Ming Vase (2018)[1]

Athens, GA, is home to an unexpectedly thriving queer performative arts scene. The

scene's thriving is unexpected not just because of the state of Georgia's historical suppression of

LGBTQ freedoms; the general hostility and marginalization queer Georgians face outside of the

state's largest city, Atlanta; but also, because there is no single established space for LGBTQ

Athenians to congregate. When I first called Athens, GA, home, as a master's student in the early

2010s, finding queer community on and off campus was difficult. However, I began to hear

whispers of seasonal or occasional events. There was no gay bar, but there was a "gay night" one

Tuesday a month at an otherwise very heteronormative venue. There was a drag show with a

huge following that, like Cinderella, appeared—fabulously extravagant—once a year, only to

disappear the next morning with little trace. Throughout the year, I encountered other fleeting

occasions, where small festivals devoted to inclusion managed to commandeer a street block.[2]

Such seasonal events continue to contribute to various collective identities of the city today,

which, like multiple cities in one, change depending on the week or the time. Identifying,

occupying, and celebrating the cyclical transformation of the physical spaces of a town is but one

---

[1] Ming Vase-Dynasty speaking with Gabe Vodicka, "Fit for a Queen: Our Athens Favorites Models Dish
on their Favorite Things," *Flagpole* 32, no. 9 (March 7, 2018): 20.
[2] Some of the festivals include LGBTQ Pride festivals, Human Rights Festivals, the Hot Corner festival
celebrating historically Black businesses, Twilight Bike races, and Athens' various music festivals.

of many ways that I found queer and alternative community persist through the means of an unusual temporality.

In this chapter, I explore how space is claimed in Athens through the rich audio-visual performances of an underground queer arts and drag scene. One event, in particular, continues to flourish into its fourth decade bringing together intergenerational community and marking space for queer memory: the annual Boybutante Drag Ball. Through playfully parodying the past in sound, voguing, and costuming, a lip-syncing choreography creates a multilayered, queer-coded performance legible to its intended audience. The events I analyze include local amateur drag troupes staging scenes from old cult films that have gained new queer interest (such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Bride of Frankenstein)* and Disney villains that have always had queer resonance (Ursula and the Sanderson Sisters). Through my participant observation, I discovered in these local performances that drag is as much about playing with time as it is playing with gender. Through a self-referential and time-layered drag, local queer events such as the Boybutante Ball create a sense of space and continuity, in which a real venue downtown can transform – even if for just one night each year – into a space safe and open to queer creativity.

Studying and participating in Athens' queer scenes meant catching seasonal and occasional transformations of downtown space. Understanding the rich history of the queer performative community likewise required looking to non-traditional and non-regular publications and ephemera. As with some of the previous case studies in this dissertation, I had to adapt a "scavenger methodology" in order to seek out and find meaning in those scenes that are not always obvious. Seeking again to find "different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behaviour," I altered the timing and mode in which I sought scenes to observe.[3] Traditional fieldwork in the social sciences proscribes that "the ethnographer write down in regular, systematic ways what she observes and learn while participating in the daily rounds of

---

[3] J. Halberstam, *Female Masculinity,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 13.

life of others," contributing analysis that leads to broad conclusions with wide application.[4] I have no issue with this mode of traditional fieldwork, except that it would adapt poorly to a study of queer events that, frequently excluded from traditional institutions, has existed in fleeting, irregular, and sporadic happenings. As such, what I do here is not research by this definition, but an open exploration of the world-making potential of occasionally-resurfacing, mostly underground queer arts scene.

Looking into Athens' past in more depth, I discovered that Athens *had* an extensive history of queer space: over the years there have been multiple venues LGBTQ patrons claimed as a homebase, or venues which held regular space for drag and queer performative arts. I found many such venues were closed and/or demolished in the interest of development and capital, but that the community found additional creative ways to mourn and mark the passing of such spaces.

What has happened in Athens could be seen as a microcosm of what is happening in cities around the U.S.: smaller locally controlled businesses and venues that are more inclusive have been vanishing. It was these townie-frequented locations that held host to many of Athens' queer events in the past four decades. Athens represents a perfect storm of contributing factors, including a red-hot real estate market, very few affordable homes and spaces, and an increasing investment of capital into the real estate of a town that becomes, as its central university expands in enrollment, increasingly dominated by short-term leasers.[5] The market of this small town, under the thumb of a large SEC football program, has adapted by catering to those temporarily

---

[4] Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

[5] The New York Times published an article on the increasing shortage of housing, with Athens-Clarke County as the city with the single largest decrease in available housing over the past decade (thus, becoming number one in the nation in more than football). Emily Badger and Eve Washington, "The Housing Shortage Isn't Just a Coastal Crisis Anymore" *The New York Times,* July 14, 2022. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/14/upshot/housing-shortage-us.html (Accessed Jan. 30, 2023). Contributing to this crisis in affordable housing availability are several contributing factors: the ever-increasing enrollment at UGA and the proliferation of short term rentals. This was a recurring headline boasted several years consecutively: "UGA welcomes largest freshman class," University of Georgia Student Affairs https://studentaffairs.uga.edu/uga-welcomes-largest-freshman-class/#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Georgia's%20class,start%20classes%20at%20UGA%20Aug. (Accessed Jan. 30, 2023).

here but flush with cash. This has resulted in the increasing proliferation of businesses that market to a tourist or short-term resident and have little invested in the long-term health of the town.[6] With the pricing out of Athens' townies who had long term investment in the welfare of Athens smaller businesses, weird art and performing scenes, the evacuation of beloved places follows.[7] Athens' weird, quirky, and queer scenes, still mostly supported by an intergenerational townie crowd were always-already here, before the football success and the rise of the University of Georgia's national standing. However, what was once identified as a student and townie a line of demarcation running down College Ave. right into UGA's arch, has moved further west over time, leaving much of the actual downtown area for the short-term residents and tourists (Figure 4.1).[8] Despite some gains in the legalization of gay marriage and the granting of partner benefits by the University, Athens' largest employer (which are still very limited), Athens' past was, in many ways, much queerer than the present.

---

[6] "The 'Airbnb effect' is to some extent remarkably like gentrification in that it slowly increases the value of an area to the detriment of the indigenous residents, many of whom are pushed out due to financial constraints." Gary Baker, "The Airbnb Effect On Housing And Rent," *Forbes* (Feb. 21, 2020) https://www.forbes.com/sites/garybarker/2020/02/21/the-airbnb-effect-on-housing-and-rent/?sh=484727c12226 (Accessed Jan. 30, 2023).

[7] Blake Aued, "The Hot Corner and Four More Historic Athens Sites in Danger of Disappearing," *Flagpole* (Nov. 11, 2020) https://flagpole.com/news/news-features/2020/11/11/the-hot-corner-and-four-more-historic-athens-sites-in-danger-of-disappearing/ (Accessed March 23, 2022).
"End of an Era: Caledonia and Atomic Close Their Doors on Clayton Street" *Flagpole* (Nov. 11, 2020) https://flagpole.com/topstory/2020/11/11/end-of-an-era-caledonia-and-atomic-close-their-doors-on-clayton-street/ (Accessed March 23, 2022).
"Community Members Share Memories and Reflections on Atomic and Caledonia" (Nov. 11, 2020) https://flagpole.com/music/music-features/2020/11/11/community-members-share-memories-and-reflections-on-atomic-and-caledonia/ (Accessed March 23, 2022).

[8] Just a few decades ago, the downtown was divided in equal halves. It was referred to as the "khaki line" for the ubiquitous khakis and polo worn by UGA male students, not by requirement but by tradition. The *Flagpole* 14, no. 45 (Nov. 15, 2000).
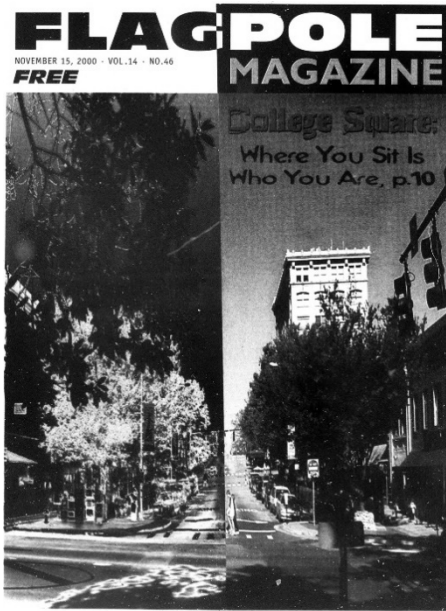
*Figure 4.1: "College Square: Where You Sit Is Who You Are," Cover
of the Flagpole altered to show the old "khaki" line on College Ave.*

Queer Venues through Time

Athens has occasionally played host to queer clubs. In my historical survey to follow, I
include venues that hosted regular drag performances, had advertised for LGBT themed events
(such as a gay night or lesbian social hour), and/or held dance parties that were mentioned by its
attendees to have a queer focus. Many of these venues no longer exist, especially the few which
were considered solely LGBTQ centered. The few which remain today have found much of their
support by assimilating into marketing mainstream shows, music, or events. What this fact speaks
to is the precarity of venues that can regularly create safe and welcome spaces for LGBTQ
community members.

Rockfish Palace (c. 1986-1991), located at 433 E. Hancock, was the site for the
Boybutante premier event, "1000 Barbaras," benefitting AIDS Athens and Project SAFE, on
Thursday, May 24, 1990.[9] Aside from being an occasional haven for drag, this music venue,
"located in the Fashionable Fish district," hosted such diverse and alternative acts as funk-reggae
Eek-a-mouse, Caroline Aiken's folk band, theatrical hard rock GWAR, Widespread Panic, and

---

[9] "Charity Barbaras?!" *Flagpole* 4, no. 20 (May 23, 1990): 5.

Michael Lanchowski's disco sets.[10] According to one attendee, partiers enjoyed the "old Palace's funky undersea ambience," which starkly contrasted the club that would take up its space following its closing.[11]

By the following year, after Rockfish Palace's closure, Boybutante found a new, permanent home at famed music venue The 40 Watt (1991-present).[12] The 40 Watt is named after the single lightbulb that illuminated a makeshift space where bands including, most famously, R.E.M., began to perform. The current 40 Watt club is not in the exact location of this original loft, but it bears its name in homage (Table 4.1).[13] Today, the 40 Watt is a major club on the touring circuit, a favorite performance space for local and visiting performers of every style of music. Occasionally, the 40 Watt has also hosted audio-visual experiments and films through projections on the screen behind the stage, among cabaret and, more rarely, spoken word performances. This venue at the western edge of Washington St. and downtown presents a simple façade with small marquee for listing shows and smoking area out front and a recessed entrance that affords space for enhanced security and ID checks before entering.

On a typical night, the expansive space inside the 40 Watt—painted mostly dark grey and black—is dark, but with only one level for attendees, feels more intimate than some music venues. The stage typically is set up at the front of the open space and hovers above the mostly standing audience. This open area is wider than it is deep and usually has a few circular tables at standing height, set back from the area just before the stage. There are two bars, one on either side of the open space. The more permanent, polished wooden bar on the right offers a large selection; the bar on the left, just past one of two sets of bathrooms, is much smaller and

[10] There is a conflicting start date of 1986 and 1987. "Flagpole's Athens Music History Walking Tour," *Flagpole* (August 10, 2011) https://flagpole.com/uncategorized/2011/08/10/flagpoles-athens-music-history-walking-tour/ (Accessed October 23, 2022).
"Athens Music History Self-guided Tour," Athens Welcome Center (2019) https://www.athenswelcomecenter.com/musichistory (Accessed October 23, 2022).
[11] Steven H. Hall, "Shake Your Bones at New Club," *The Red and Black* 100, no. 86 (February 26, 1993).
[12] Darin Beasley, "Lip Service – Manstyle!" *Flagpole* 6, no. 5 (May 15, 1991): 32.
[13] "About the 40 Watt" https://www.40watt.com/venue/ (Accessed Feb. 14, 2023).

makeshift. When the space is over-filled with attendees of a drag show, the two bars and

bathrooms are welcome options. I provide this description of a *typical* night because it is how the

venue transforms on *special* nights that is significant. Melissa Link (who has served as county

commissioner, 2015-2022, and occasionally written for the *Flagpole*) relayed in 1999:

> Just about everyone who has ever been to a Boyball, or even merely ventured to the end
> of Washington Street to hang around outside the 40 Watt hoping to catch a glimpse of a
> glamorous queen or two has a story to tell or an unforgettable image that embodies the
> outrageous and debaucherous spirit of the Boyball.[14]

The Boybutante drag ball and other queer events temporarily transformed and continue to

transform the space of the 40 Watt into something more: something that has the power to envision

a differently organized society welcoming to queer diversity.

Table 4.1: Locations of the 40 Watt club in Athens, GA, (1979-Present)

Address	Years	Comments on location
171 College Avenue	1979-1980	Pylon's rehearsal space above what became The Grill
101 College Avenue	1980-1982	Officially opened as a nightclub
256 W. Clayton Street	1982-1984	Formerly the site of the Caledonia Lounge
365 E. Broad Street	1984-1987	
256 W. Clayton Street	1987-1991	Reopened at previous Clayton St. location
285 W. Washington Street	1991-present	

---

[14] Melissa Link, "The 10th Annual Boybutante Ball "Apocalipstick Now: A Decade of Diva," *Flagpole* 13, no. 14 (April 7, 1999): 20.

Boneshakers (February 26, 1993--Saturday July 16, 2005; demolished 2006) emerged

"from Rockfish's ashes, a club for all to enjoy."[15] Proudly advertised as "Something for

Everyone," owner Mark Bell found a lucrative market in welcoming patrons of various social

identities and musical tastes.[16] While Bell did not initially envision Boneshakers as a gay bar, it

eventually became known as a favorite place for Athens' LGBT community, and in hindsight,

long-time Athenians often refer to Boneshakers as one of Athens' only gay bars.[17] Douglas

Martin recollects Boneshakers in his new book as one of a few Athens gay spaces, which used to

end each night with Madonna's "Justify My Love."[18] An ad that ran in the *Flagpole* along the

length of a page on May 26, 1999, for example, promised a different music scene every night of

the week:

> Every Wednesday Retro Disco Inferno, with DJ the Evil TJ…every Thursday
> Underground Cabaret with Sasha and Her Divas…Friday, May 28 Club Groovy, The Evil
> Tj Still Spinnin'…Saturday, May 29 Dance with DJ Isaac! Rocktha Discotek…every
> Monday Midnight Garden of Illusion [burlesque]…every Tuesday Country Rock/ Line
> Dancing Returns![19]

Opened in 1993, Boneshakers played host to "the start of weekly drag performances in the

community."[20] Located at 433 E. Hancock, the bar was one of a suite of nightclubs that shared a

building, their names and ownerships changing over time (see map, Figure 4.2). Boneshakers

closed in the summer of 2005 and the last party for the collective of nightclubs that shared the

soon-to-be-demolished building was held on New Year's Eve, 2005/2006. The closure "has not

stopped local performers, who have found other venues to perform at including Boneshakers

---

[15] Steven H. Hall, "Shake Your Bones at New Club," *The Red and Black* 100, no. 86 (February 26, 1993)

[16] *Flagpole* (May 26, 1999): 3.

[17] Douglas A. Martin, "Outline of My Lover: Q&A with Douglas Martin, Who 'Knew' A Certain Athens, GA, Musician," *Straus Media* (February 16, 2015) https://www.nypress.com/news/outline-of-my-lover-qa-with-douglas-martin-who-knew-a-certain-athens-ga-musician-EGNP1020000815308159997 (Accessed October 23, 2022).

[18] Ibid.

[19] Boneshakers Ad, *Flagpole* (May 26, 1999): 3.

[20] Chris Desantis, "Drag Queen Flaunts Mask: Theater major creatively hones alternate persona," *The Red and Black* 117, no. 157 (June 24, 2010): 1.

reincarnations such as Detour and Blur, as well as Little Kings on Clayton Street."[21] Even when venues closed, drag always found a way.

Over the years, one venue would open in the place of another, but after Boneshakers, these new queer spaces were always short-lived. Detour and club Blur were two of Mark Bell's further experiments in gay club ownership. Detour opened very late 2006 or January 2007, according to "Grub Notes" from August 16, 2006, issue of the *Flagpole*, which reported that the club will be open soon. The next mention of Detour, however, is not until January 2007, when the *Flagpole* suggests going there after seeing *Rent* at the Classic Center. In February 2007, the *Red & Black* reported on Detour as a new bar. By New Year's Eve, December 31, 2007, the club had already closed. Club Blur had an equally short tenure in the Athens downtown, advertising its "Grand Opening Weekend" in an April 9, 2008, issue of the *Flagpole* and closing Saturday, August 1, 2009.[22]

Figure 4.3: Advert for the opening of new LGBTQ club. Club Blur was open less than a year.

Figure 4.4: Go Bar opening, first ad, Flagpole (Aug. 25, 1999)

---

[21] Ibid.

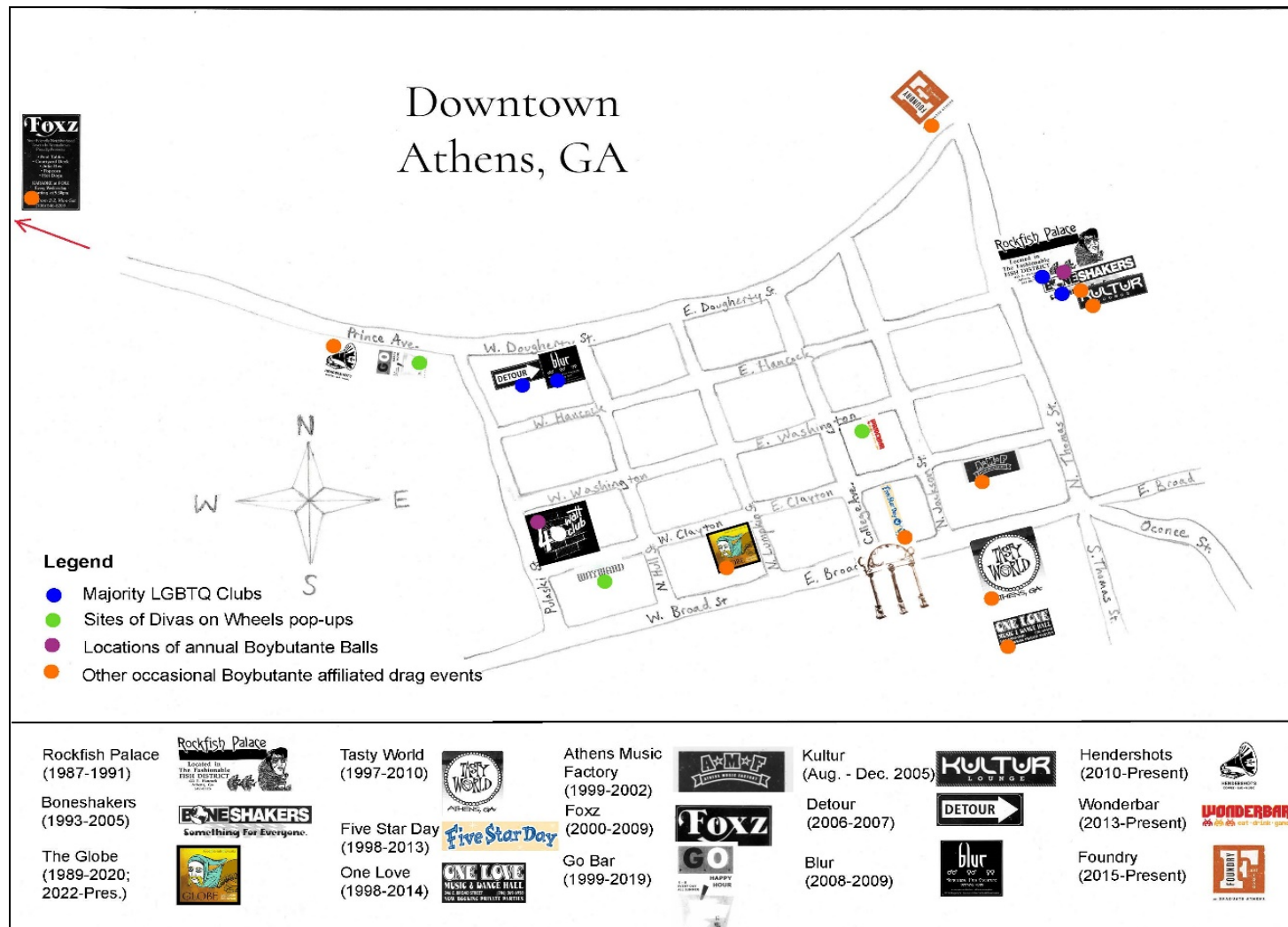[22] Gordon Lamb, "Threats and Promises," *Flagpole* 23, no 31 (August 5, 2009): 12.

Figure 4.2: Map of venues in downtown Athens showing the location of many spaces that played host to queer events. Map by author.

Go Bar (Aug. 25, 1999—Dec. 31, 2019) offered a tiny retro-themed dance space and bar with outdoor patio on the Western limits of downtown. Acquaintances have described Go Bar as a cross between being in a spaceship and a time machine to the 1970s, with a disco ball hanging from the ceiling and moving lights projected on three walls. What sometimes functioned as a fourth wall opened as garage door to the outside. There were small drag events held here as well as niche, themed parties and retro vinyl disco nights, and occasional poetry readings. A Flagpole advice columnist known by the alias Bonita Applebum wrote that she "consider[ed] Go Bar to have been Athens' only downtown queer space," and that she regretted not returning to say goodbye to the space before it closed on New Year's Eve, 2019.[23] Ironically, Go Bar probably owed its longevity to its ability to actually blur the lines between gay and straight, weird townie and mainstream college kid; it became the last stop of the night for many of Athens residents who desired a cheap drink and groovy dance music by DJ Mahogany.

Scenes as Texts and Queer Archives

The main difficulty in studying queer events such as the annual Boybutante Ball, which I attended from 2016-2021, is that the queer spaces and scenes are so fleeting. I sought out as many events as I could, from the highly advertised annual drag ball and street Pride festival, to the less often observed impromptu drag events around town. I recorded as many notes as possible on visual, audible, and spatial data so that I could render a more complete story. With a phone to take photographs of the stage, a small notebook, and an audio recorder for capturing music and the ways that sound frequencies reverberated in the physical space, I gathered the kind of sensory data that any participant could access, in the right place at the right time. I also collected whatever ephemera or paraphernalia that had been discarded on my way out of the venue: fans printed with the logo and program, posters, and flyers. Such ephemera confirmed performers' names, drag troupes, thematic numbers performed, sponsors, as well as dates, locations, and times. Digital

---

[23] Bonita Applebum, "Hey Bonita…Advice for Athens' Loose and Lovelorn," *Flagpole* 36, no. 11 (March 23, 2022): 11.

sites constituted an additional location that helped me contextualize the performances and follow key performers. In addition to confirming details from events in social media posts on accounts held by the Boybutante Foundation and the individual drag troupes, I found a treasure trove of thematic connections across more than a decade of drag posted to the YouTube channels of various drag troupes and performers.[24]

My research utilized historical and archival methodologies as well. Using the Digital Library of Georgia database of Georgia Historic Newspapers, I investigated all references to Boybutante and drag in local papers, the most references found in weekly paper, *The Flagpole* (1987 to 2012, where online records stop), and what physical copies I saved or could scrounge up covering shows after 2013, and the online archive of issues post-2013 available online at www.flagpole.com. As a "music rag," this "Colorbearer of Athens Alternative Music" also covers local and national politics, local arts and culture, and reviews and anticipates local events.[25] The non-profit independent weekly often printed saucy advertisements and evocative event descriptions for Boybutante and the other queer-positive events around town.[26] Reviewing hundreds of sources, from the search terms "Boybutante," "Classic City Kings," "drag," and other terms related to venues and specific troupes, I catalogued hundreds of ads and event descriptions. From these sources, I was able to construct a detailed timeline, allowing me to see how events developed, when venues opened or were closed, how space was won and lost through the years. I

---

[24] Instagram handles: boybutante (Boybutante AIDS Foundation); minvasedynasty (an Asian American drag queen performer at Boybutante and self-hosted events: Ming Vase); thekourtesans (The Kourtesans, a relatively younger Athens-based drag troupe); athensprideandqueercollective (Athens Pride & Queer Collective, occasionally posts media advertising and remembering events; misshethequeen (originally Athens, now Atlanta-based drag performer Misshe the Queen)'
ClassicCityKings channel on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCG5sVJ5kBnOu6pxJrwnq-Kw (Accessed April 2, 2022).
[25] Pete McCommons, "There's Something About a Newspaper: The Who, What, When, Where of *Flagpole* after 20 Years," *Flagpole* 21, no. 44 (Nov. 7, 2007): 10.
[26] I turned to this weekly magazine as a kind of unofficial, alternative source of local news, opinions, and events because it was the most frequent place Boybutante events were mentioned and because of the print's development over time as another space to commemorate or memorialize favorite venues and hangouts lost over time. When the iconic local vegetarian restaurant The Grit announced unexpectedly that October 2022 would be their last day, *The Flagpole* (both in print and online) became a space to process the grief of the restaurant's loss.

kept track of names of performers, noticing with amusement the inventions of new pun-based drag names, but more often, the same beloved performers returning year after year, from nearly the first show mentions to the present day.

While I was a participant observer in the queer Athens scene and listened closely to the voices captured in print, ephemera, and the media, I would not consider this study to be a true ethnography. I did not interview participants or performers myself, though that would constitute a well-deserved oral history project in the future. I did not regularly attend a site in the traditional method of sociologic observation.[27] Instead, the events I studied were themselves what Wayne Koestenbaum calls interruptions to the (straight) business as usual, or "to queer the pitch."[28] I sought to analyze the significance of queer staged performances as they built layers of meanings over decades, despite the events being disjointed in time and having no quotidian existence.

In my consideration of where and when queer events fit into the daily business of the city, I paid specific attention to the physical mapping of queer space in Athens. I contemplated local scenes and how power maps onto streets, venues, and bodies, and how some of that power fluctuates over time. In doing so, I consider Kristin Luker's suggestion to "see [scholarship] as socially embedded, [be] strongly committed to building theory in a cumulative way" and "deeply attentive to questions of power."[29] In my participation through "deep play"[30] I endeavored to employ Pauline Oliveros' concept of "deep listening"[31] and consider how these lenses contribute

---

[27] Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 1.
[28] Wayne Koestenbaum, "Queering the Pitch: A Posy of Definitions and Impersonations," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (London: Routledge, 1994): 1-5.
[29] Kristin Luker, *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008): 3.
[30] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 134, No. 4 (Fall, 2005): 56-86.
[31] Pauline Oliveros has described "acoustic space [as] where time and space merge as they are articulated by sound," and through "deep listening," one may perceive in sound much more than just pitch or timbre. Pauline Oliveros, "The Difference between Hearing and Listening," Lecture given at *TEDx Indianapolis* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QHfOuRrJB8 (Accessed Jan 1, 2017).

to a "thick description,"[32] or an attention to the many layers of meanings at work between any given performance, text, and context.

Employing the first person "I," I situated myself in the midst of rich layers of local queer culture. Thus, I include a degree of self-reflexive interrogation informed by what anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran terms "homework," and Bruno Nettl describes as "looking literally in one's own backyard."[33] In turning a lens back the town I call home, I aim to accomplish what Gelya Frank has described as "studying the familiar with methods designed to make sense of the strange."[34] Through these practices, I contemplate on how repetitive stagings queer existing physical structures and geographies, the ways power maps onto these geographies and bodies, and how I can give voice to the more hidden expressions of the eccentric, the queer, and others rendered invisible by the permanence of officially published text or more solid historical monuments.[35]

DRAGGING TIME AND BACKWARDS GLANCES

In my repeat attendance over the course of some 7-8 years, I discovered something curiously frequent in the theme, music, and costuming of local queer events. There, again and again, were segments of pop and alternative media from decades past, most of which was either queer-centered or had developed a queer following over time. In my analysis, I draw on Elizabeth Freeman's concept of "temporal drag" in her literary studies, in which she contemplates how

---

[32] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Original, 1973) in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic, 2000), 3-30.
[33] Kamala Visweswaran, "Feminist Ethnography as Failure," in *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 101.
Bruno Nettl "Redefining the Field," in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 186.
[34] Gelya Frank, *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue on Disability, Biography, and Being Female in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13.
[35] I am thinking, here, of a certain Confederate monument, that until its recent relocation, faced the famed arches of the university and the steps on which a temporary candle-lit memorial to transgender deaths existed one night each year. What is permanent and lasting speaks volumes to what a culture, institution, or state values.

histories are packed into a performative act.[36] Athenian "temporal drag" takes on present-day trends through a witty and campy donning of symbols of the past. Upon further investigating archival records, memories, and documentation of events from before my arrival to the Athens scene, I found further interconnections among shows of past and present. Amateur drag in Athens hardly emerges from a vacuum but, rather, builds its meanings from drag and pop culture of multiple times and places, including its own past shows. To read it as a singular moment in the present would be to miss the temporal layers upon which Athens' queer events build meaning. Athens' richly queer past contributes to the intergenerational reality of drag shows and LGBTQ events today and why so many of these performances build on meanings of references to the past.

The Boybutante Drag Ball, the beloved annual drag revue and party held each spring in Athens, GA, has connected generations through its dual purposes: celebrating and saving LGBTQ Athenians. From its start, the playful event has had the more serious motivation of sustaining the lives of queer community members through its support of local AIDS organizations.[37] Since its founding in 1989, the drag ball has featured a theme curated for its loyal audience, drawing them in like a family to share in revelry. Attendees came to expect a show with clever puns, not just in the names of the drag queens but the songs and over-the-top costuming and set design. The various musical selections provided multiple layers of commentary on the year's theme, commentary that was legible to a local queer audience through sound, lyrics, or extramusical associations.

The ball's most obvious entry into local queer hearts was to parody the sensibilities of the Southern culture many attendees had survived. Promotional articles, collected across the 33 years of Boybutante's history, hint at what need not be said explicitly in the show: the exaggerated

---

[36] Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism," In *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 59-93.

[37] As a locally controlled community-oriented organization, The Boybutante AIDS Foundation has a mission of remembering those lost, "providing funding for to provide funding for (1) programs that provide services to people living with HIV/AIDS, and (2) educational programs targeted at HIV/AIDS prevention and/or elimination of prejudice and discrimination against HIV/AIDS-affected individuals." https://www.boybutante.org/about (Accessed December 7th, 2021).

drawl of frequent MC Jacqueline Daniels, the heavens-reaching wig of Miss Thing, and the lively

drag tent-revivals of Coretta Scott Queen speak to the sometimes-biting, sometimes-loving,

imitation of what and who we know. It was for the tenth show (1999) that organizers revealed the

meaning of the portmanteau, "Boy-butante," identifying an initial parody of the "high-society

debutante scene in Charleston, S.C" after a road trip of the founding members to the historical

southern town.[38] The Boybutante Ball's annual tradition of debuting a new amateur drag

performer added to a parody of Southern social traditions.

The story of the ball's founding ethos has been retold in different ways throughout the

years, and its various founding narratives reveal an impulse to connect to something beyond its

southern roots. More conflicting narratives emerge from interviews with organizers, which both

recount Boybutante's roots in ball culture of the Northeast and align its sensibility with more

recent highly stylized parties of New York City in the 1990s. Lynn Barfield wrote for the

Flagpole in 1993, "Drag balls of this sort have been going on for years on the East Coast and

were the origin for voguing, that type of dance where you primp and pose and flaunt what you

have. (Sorry to burst your bubble Madonna.)"[39] Nods to New York club culture included an extra,

mid-season Boybutante event, "Studio 54: Back in the Groove" held at Boneshakers.[40] Studio 54

was a famously posh club frequented by New York's stylish youth with money to burn. While

Keith Haring and other gay artists did frequent the club, however, Studio 54 enjoyed much more

mainstream success than explicitly queerer dance clubs, such as the Paradise Garage. I suspect it

was not the rare queer element that Boybutante engaged with in this instance, but rather the idea

of the fabulous yet naive New York socialite which invited campy impersonation. Early

interviews with Boybutante's organizers also hint at a connection with more of New York's queer

---

[38] Melissa Link, "The 10th Annual Boybutante Ball "Apocalipstick Now: A Decade of Diva," *Flagpole* 13, no. 14 (April 7, 1999): 20.

[39] Lynn Barfield, "The Boys of Spring," *Flagpole* 7, no. 18 (May 12, 1993): 11.

[40] Mid-season event held at Boneshakers with Boybutante advertised, "The two groups famous for the biggest and the best parties in Athens for 10 years" recalled "Studio 54: Back in the Groove." *Flagpole* 12, no. 35 (Sept. 2, 1998): 22.

underground. Locally emerging drag houses, chosen families, and lineages of gay mentorship

mirrored that of the documentary *Paris is Burning*, which was released around the same time as

Boybutante's first official drag show.[41] Reaching deeper into New York's queer history,

Boybutante was also clearly intended a way to remember those lost to the queer community and

to connect with a larger narrative of American queer lineage.[42] Its tactics included drag ball

culture (that from its founding in the early 20th-century was inclusive in its attendance), with its

roots in New York City and Athens' own growing lineage of local performers. One of the

impulses behind Boybutante was to create in a southern town what New York City had in its

underground drag in the 1980s: a queer community that congregates for connection, to play with

the performative aspects of gender, and to cleverly comment on the ways class, gender and race

converge in regional heteronormative cultures. Boybutante found ways to play on popular culture

outside of the southern region, while sincerely drawing from the north's modes of queer

congregation and chosen family formation.

From its premier at the short-lived Rockfish Palace, the Boybutante Drag Ball has grown

from small charity gig to beloved annual tradition.[43] The first official ball arrived May 24, 1990,

though there are some recollections of a previous, casual ball held in a private home the year prior

(1989). This official premier was advertised the day before the event, as "a cotillion of very

special BOYbutantes which will take place at the Rockfish Palace…[and] include entertainment

by Coretta Scott Queen, the Armorettes, late night dancing (of course) and--oh, who knows what

may transpire…"[44] The third Boybutante (1992) was the first to be promoted multiple times

---

[41] Dorian Corey, Pepper LaBeija, Willi Ninja, Freddie Pendavis, Jennie Livingston, Paul
(Cinematographer) Gibson, and Jonathan Oppenheim, *Paris Is Burning* [Originally released 1990]
(Miramax Home Entertainment, 2005), DVD.

[42] Wanting to create something both intimate and in line with the history of the event, the organizers
dedicated its fourth ball, "Beauty Hurts," to a founding member who had passed. Promotional materials for
Boybutante's gatherings resemble Paradise Garage's posters for AIDS benefits as events promising food,
music, and queer performance art. Lynn Barfield, "The Famous Boybutante Ball: The Boys of Spring,"
Flagpole 7, no. 18 (May 12, 1993): 11.

[43] "Charity Barbaras?!" *Flagpole* 4, no. 20 (May 23, 1990): 5.

[44] Coretta Scott Queen and the Armorettes are some of the longest performing community members,
making appearances as recently as 2022. "Charity Barbaras?!" *Flagpole* 4, no. 20 (May 23, 1990): 5.

ahead of the event, however; the ball is also mentioned in articles written by locals who were not necessarily a part of the LGBTQ community.[45] By its third year, the event clearly expanded to include not just a local segment of the gay male population, most intimately acquainted with both the joys of drag culture and the horrors of the AIDS epidemic, but also invited lesbians as participants on stage.[46] In its fourth year, the number of attendees and the number of different events affiliated with Boybutante multiplied. The opening of Athens' first and only gay bar, Boneshakers (1993-2005), meant that the singular drag ball event could be expanded to a week-long celebration, with multiple themed nights designed to reach even more of the community.[47] The founding of Boneshakers, Athens' first designated gay space, also meant that drag could become a regular occurrence, with some troupes returning as often as weekly. Promotional events for the annual drag ball included mentions of the collaboration with Boneshakers for "Coretta's Tent Revival & Boy Ball Preview: starring Coretta Scott Queen and A Bevy of Special Guests…"[48] "Boybutante Week" grew to include an annual amateur drag search, "womyn's nights," drag bingo, disco and dance parties, contests and drag brunch on Sunday morning, intended as a recovery from the Saturday night ball (Table 4.2). The late 90s saw the emergence of an additional event, "Divas on Wheels," which celebrated the temporary takeover of local food and beverage establishments by drag queens who traveled among as many as six venues in one night. Across its first decade, Boybutante's charity drag events grew in size, inclusiveness, and in local prominence.

---

[45] Ort, "Ort's Picks," *Flagpole* 6, no. 19 (May 20, 1992): 17. Also adverts in *Flagpole* (May 6, and May 20, May 27, 1992). William Orten Carlton, or "Ort" (1950-2023) was the man known by locals today by this one syllable name, a long-time community member who has written about brews and events and known to share a conversation with whomever pulls up a bar stool next to him. The son of a Botany professor, Ort became a long-time townie and archive of obscure knowledge from phone numbers, zip codes, craft beer, and music. He was the first door man for the College Avenue 40 Watt club and the narrator to Athens music documentary *Athens, GA Inside/Out*.

[46] Hillary Meister, "Strap-on Some Rock," *Flagpole* 6, no. 20 (May 27, 1992): 25.

[47] Boneshaker's Ad, *Flagpole* 7, no. 18 (May 12, 1993): 9.

[48] Boneshaker's Ad, *Flagpole* 7, no. 18 (May 12, 1993): 9

Going strong now more than thirty years later, the Boybutante Ball remains one of the South's longest running drag events. Over time Boybutante grew from a one-time gig that raised $1500 for local AIDS patients to highly anticipated weeks-long annual events and over $1,000,000 raised cumulatively over its three decades. A decade after its founding, the annual Boybutante Ball (BBall) week had such a community following that tickets were no longer sold at the door but sold out at various local shops, and eventually online, weeks before the event. The programmatic expansion that had begun in 1993 continued; what had started as a one-night drag fundraiser turned into a weekend, then a week-long, then a season, then a multi-season affair.[49] Eventually, the Boybutante theme became so anticipated that its annual announcement earned its own party, typically occurring a month before the main ball. In its eleventh year, the Boybutante organizers ordained that the kickoff party itself should have a theme unique from the main week's events, which offered additional opportunities to pun on queer pop culture, film, and music.[50]

---

[49] In 1996, references on the events page as "the Boybutante weekend," events began with the amateur drag search at Boneshakers, Thursday May 16, on to the BBall Saturday, and conclude with Drag Brunch at Athens Catering Facility on Sunday. "F.B.I.: Flagpole Bureau of Information," *Flagpole* 10, no. 20 (May 15, 1996): 12.

[50] An ad for a "Kickoff Pageant" at Boneshakers and other lead up events: "Divas on Wheels III" and kickoff party at Five Star Day Café with live music also shows that tickets must be purchased in advance at various local shops in Athens, *Flagpole* 14, no. 14 (April 5, 2000): 28.

Table 4.2: Boybutante's development in its first decade

Boybutante Ball Theme	Date	Venue	Additional Associated Events	Other notes
1. "Night of 1000 Barbaras"	May 24, 1990	Rockfish Palace, 433 E Hancock St		
2. "'You don't have to say you love me:' Glamour, high camp, disco and love,"	May 16, 1991			
3. "One Hundred New Ways to Wear Your Hair"	May 22, 1992	40 Watt Club, 285 W. Washington St	First amateur spotlight	
4. "Beauty Hurts"	May 14, 1993	40 Watt Club	Coretta's Tent Revival (BBall Preview Party)	
5. "Miss Thing Impossible"	May 21, 1994	40 Watt Club		
6. "Interview with a Drag Queen"	May 20, 1995	40 Watt Club	Contests: "suicide drag,"[51] Cute Boy, Cute Girl, Miss Real and Miss Heinous	First Athens drag ball with local and national sponsors
7. "Seven Dragly Sins"	May 18, 1996	40 Watt Club	**Boybutante Weekend:** Coretta's Tent Revival (Mid-season promotion); Amateur drag search (Boneshakers); Drag Brunch	Advance tickets sold in Atlanta, LGBT bookstore Out Wright Books
8. "Designer or Nothing"	May 31, 1997	40 Watt Club	**Boybutante Week**: Underground Cabaret (Boneshakers); "Miss Thing Presents the Rocky Horror Picture Show" (Georgia Theatre); "Girls Night Out" (Boneshakers); "Camp Drag: the official Preliminary for Boybutante Ball" (Boneshakers); Drag Brunch (East West Bistro)	Boybutante weekend expands to a full week of events
9. "Nine Inch Heels"	May 30, 1998	40 Watt Club	**Boybutante Season**: "House Party Hell: Boybutante Preview" (Boneshakers); "Post-Twilight Dance Party: Flashback Saturday & DJ 43"; "A Good Ol' Country Picnic with Deonna Mann and the Underground	New drag troupe, Underground Divas emerges. Boybutante week

---

[51] An unfortunately-named raffle to enter the show, in which the attendee is taken backstage, put into drag and must perform to whatever the DJ plays. Lynn Barfield, "It's springtime in the Classic City, and you know what that means – it's Boyball time!!" *Flagpole* 9, no. 20 (May 17, 1995): 25.

			Divas. Benefit for the 20th Annual Athens Human Rights Fest" (Boneshakers); Athens Pride Picnic and Festival (UGA's Lake Herrick); Themed party to announce the theme of the ball, "Mayday, Mayday, BoyBall is Coming" (Boneshakers); "Let's Do the Time Warp Again: Rocky Horror Picture Show to Benefit Boybutante" (GA Theatre)	expands to collaborate with more local events: Human Rights Festival and Twilight Bicycle Race. First Athens Pride The *Flagpole* publishes a drag tutorial and Boybutante takes the cover page
10. Boybutante Ball X: "Apocalipstick Now, A Decade of Diva"	April 10, 1999	40 Watt Club	**Kickoff Party:** "The Closet Ball: Metamorph(a) Sissy" (Tasty World) **Benefit Events:** "Women's Night" (Foxz) Pulling Threads presents "Self-Made Man" (The Globe) Boybutante (Pre-ball) Disco: "Full Tilt Boogie" (40 Watt) Boybutante Post-Ball "Drag Brunch" (East-West Bistro)	First affiliated events with Lesbian and Drag King performance group Pulling Threads

Figure 4.5: Drag performers pose on stage at Boybutante 30: Divas Are Forever (April 13, 2019), photography by author.

Further iterations of Boybutante look back on its inaugural event to reconnect with its beginnings and celebrate its continuation. Significant anniversaries became a way to commemorate the ball's founding in some over-the-top way. The thirtieth annual ball, for example, promised an extravagant gilded celebration of the event's third decade with the theme, "Divas are Forever," that promised to bring fabulous bejeweled and gowned queens underscored by music from James Bond films past (Figure 4.5). An article detailing the tenth annual ball, "Apocalipstick Now: A Decade of Diva," revealed more of the ethos and ideas that motivated the founding of the ball and its nonprofit organization. The organizers used the focus of the anniversary, which expanded across that issue of the *Flagpole*, to add to the lore of the event's founding narrative and detail the remaining need for resources.[52] In addition to the annual ball,

---

[52] Melissa Link and Mike Landers stated in an interview marking the 10th annual Boybutante, that "Though it's a hedonistic celebration that could put any ancient Bacchic festival to shame, it is the cause behind it all that board members urge be remembered…'Lately, many believe the AIDS crisis to be over, thanks to new 'cocktail drugs'…But it's not true. The drugs eventually fail. And we are possibly in for a second large wave of AIDS infections. Here in Northeast Georgia, the number of reported cases has doubled in the last five years.'" Melissa Link, "The 10th Annual Boybutante Ball "Apocalipstick Now: A Decade of Diva," *Flagpole* 13, no. 14 (April 7, 1999): 20.

the tenth season promised more events than ever, from multiple kickoff events centering cabaret, amateur audience drag, to a local drag king production of *Self-Made Man*.

The 10th year also featured a series of midseason drag events which, like many of Boybutante's themes, played on retro cinema. Exactly sixty years to the day of the premier of *The Wizard of Oz* (August 25, 1939), and in the style of a vintage film poster, a week of themed queer events proposed to recreate, "OZ…Wicked Wednesday: The Emerald City Male/Female Review, Followed by Dancing with DJ Sexual Healan; Thursday: Crystal Cabaret, Nationally Renowned female impersonators; Friday: Back to School with Boybutante, Featuring The Armorettes…"[53] (Figure 4.4) The Emerald City Review and Crystal Cabaret promised to recreate some of the scenes from the iconic musical film. The gay male following of Judy Garland's stardom (a tangent to the cult of the opera diva) to contemporary lyrical subtexts, a themed Oz drag revue played on multiple layers of queer culture. Restaging various scenes from Oz in the newly opened
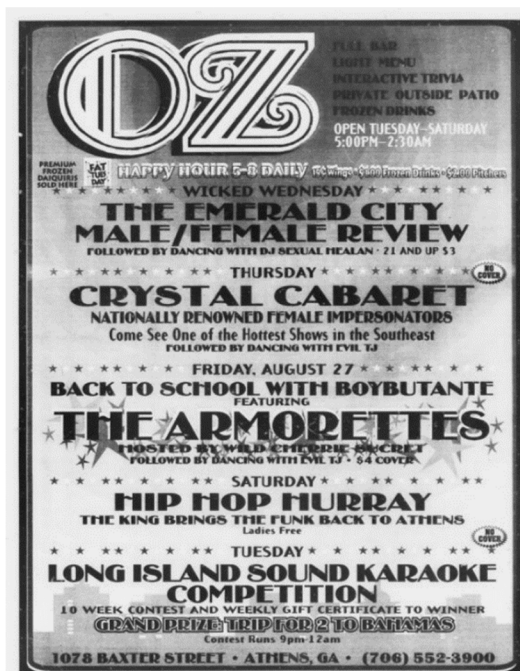

Figure 4.6: Ad for midseason Boybutante affiliated events, Flagpole (August 25, 1999)

---

[53] *Flagpole* 13, no. 34 (August 25, 1999): 22.

(and short-lived) club called Oz, presented a clever, possibly lucrative ploy. Oz itself was a short-lived venue, which was positioned by its founder as a competitor to Boneshakers for the same clientele.[54] The anniversary, its celebratory significance, and the fact that a new venue would welcome local drag became a selling point to increasingly loyal followers of the town's queer performative art scene.

Queer mythologization is a temporal mode based in revisiting queer cultural stories repeatedly and cyclically. A recurring motive in Boybutante's interpretation of themes is to commemorate the founding of the events with the celebration of media that has developed a queer following and shares a significant anniversary. Similarly, references to *The Little Mermaid*, a film that shares its anniversary with Boybutante (1989), appear throughout Boybutante's years, most recently in the 2016 ball, "20,000 Legs Under the Sea." Actresses and characters like Judy Garland's Dorothy become queer idols when performers retell a scene or song periodically before an audience of their community.

Themes for Boybutante Balls and their associated events often reference and play on past eras, particularly periods of cultural subversion or flamboyant style. Recent events include the 2017 "Hippy Ball," which drew its theme from the provocative musical, *Hair*. The theme was interpreted as being as much about the idea of the 60s expressions of counterculture as it was about the musical itself. The costumes worn by both drag performers and audience members reflected a reimagined 1960s. Technicolor "flower children" mingled among queer icons such as multiple iterations of 60-70s Cher, an Aretha Franklin, bell-bottoms, and go-go boots. Rather than an entirely accurate portrayal of a past decade (which was never the point), participants played with ideas of a time that represented a freer expression of sexuality and gender.

---

[54] Early ads state, "The Attitude, The Enigma, The Place – Oz," which was followed by an ad for Boneshakers stating, "No Enigma." A third ad for Oz then states, "truly cosmopolitan, no bones about it." This coded back and forth suggests there might have been a rivalry between these two queer spaces. It is not clear why Oz failed so quickly as a club, however; its ads ran for less than a year in the *Flagpole*. It must have closed by September 2000, as an ad in September 20, 2000, issue of *Flagpole* lists DanceFx as a new dance company at the same address, after which no more ads for Oz appear.

The following year's show drew from the decade of drag ball cultural roots, creating a show themed "The Roaring '20s: A Bootlegger's Ball" (Figure 4.8). The 40 Watt stage became a Chicago art deco extravagance, while the bars on either side nodded to the era's speakeasies. The throwback revue celebrated a period of artistic renaissance among poets, artists, and female impersonators in Harlem,[55] and a decade when women enjoyed hard won rights and relatively more freedom for self-expression following the culmination of nearly a century of activism by

Figure 4.7: Boybutante 28, Peace, Love, and Hair, photograph by author.

---

[55] James Wilson writes how "depictions of blackness and whiteness, male and female, homosexual and heterosexual, highbrow and lowbrow merged and coalesced in the theater and performances of the 1920s and 1930s." Rather than representing a reassuring form of color-blindness, Wilson describes the jarring, challenging, yet playful blurring of legible identities to audiences right when queer and racial identity categories were redeveloping in the eyes of politicians, scientists, and the public. The Harlem theatre even allowed for "performances and scripts [to be] mutable, depending on individual artists' contributions and the desires of the demographically shifting audiences." *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babes: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 3.

feminism's first wave.[56] Attendees of the roaring Boybutante ranged from flappers to mobsters

and bookies: creative role play on notorious characters from a time when underground clubs

became a place where musicians and patrons of various ethnic and sexual minorities could

mingle.[57]

Figure 4.8: Boybutante 29 Ad: Roaring '20s, Flagpole *32, no. 15 (April 18, 2018): 2.*

Engagement with the past can be a queer gesture. Mark Turner wrote about the

"backwards glances" of the queer men who cruised the streets of cities like London and New

York city over the past two centuries, with a particular focus on NYC's recent queer past.[58] For

Turner, looking back entails a queer temporal mode of navigating the streets that involves

knowing glances, recognizing members of a covert community without necessarily speaking, and

---

[56] Rory Dicker unpacks the double-edged swords that periods of newly won freedoms were, describing how periods of free expression for the individual came often at the expense of advocating for collective action. In her consideration of the ebb and flow of activist waves, "competitive individualism," and eventual backlash, she includes period of relative freedom of gender expression and sexuality in the Roaring '20s or the party girl of the 1980s, or the contradictions of a Spice Girl "girlie feminism" of the late 90s. Rory Dicker, *A History of U.S. Feminisms* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 11, 59.

[57] James Wilson describes how "in the smoky speakeasies, one might see people form Greenwich Village bohemia, the Brooklyn working class, and young gay men from Hell's Kitchen." *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babes,* 7.

[58] Mark W. Turner, *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London* (Reaktion, 2003).

looking back over the shoulder for connection or out of fear. Local drag events in Athens have

intentionally looked back to beloved community members and venues lost, and to remember

especially joyful events. These were community events that prided themselves on being multi-

generational and diverse in life experiences represented on stage. A backward glance is a way of

commemorating and preserving collective memory and an expression of joyful celebration in the

face of violent hegemonic norms. Rather than seeing progress as unflinchingly goal and future-

oriented, Athens' queer communities continually revisit the past to find connection in the present.

When queer community-frequented venues themselves began to be lost to the influx of

luxury housing and higher bidders, Boybutante-associated events became a way to recreate the

spaces lost and to preserve some memory of what used to exist. An attendee of the July 16, 2005,

Boneshaker's "Omega" closing show, David Commins wrote:

> With the closure of Boneshakers, drag troupe Classic City Kings gave a final show
> preceding Saturday's "Omega Bash" that was peppered with teary-eyed memories and
> heartfelt numbers. Many regulars found their way to the end of Hancock to bid farewell
> to one of Athens's queer-friendliest bars, and I'd be lying if I said it wasn't a good time.
> Despite the inevitable terminus, moods were high and folks seemed sure that this blow
> wouldn't shake the Athens' queer community.[59]

Despite the impending loss of space, the series of farewell parties were joyful revelries, leaving

Athens' queer residents with a sense that the queer nightlife was not at its end. When

Boneshakers closed and the building was slated for demolition, there was a final party to

recognize all the nightclubs once housed in 433 Hancock Ave. The New Year's Eve party

brought together the patrons and staff of Boneshakers, the newer Kultur Lounge, and historic

Rockfish Palace. The full-page ad in the *Flagpole*, in a shadowed font superimposed over the

toned shirtless body of a male model:

<center>

2005::NYE::2006
433's LAST BALL
(12 Midnight complimentary champaign toast)
433 East Hancock

</center>

---

[59] David Commins, "Club Notes: Alphas, Omegas," *Flagpole* 19, no. 28 (July 20, 2005): 28.

Which has been home to such famous nightclubs as the Rockfish Palace, Boneshakers, and most recently Kultur Lounge, is closing its doors following one of this cities *[sic]* most memorable New Years Eve parties.
From the early days of Widespread Panic at the Rockfish Palace to dance music played by world famous djs at Boneshakers, this venue has been an integral and vital part of the Athens music scene for over 15 years.
Come on down and party one last time to send off this fabulous venue before the great wrecking ball does its damage !!![60]

Though Boneshakers had closed earlier in the year, and Boybutante's first home Rockfish Palace had been closed for over 15 years, the regular attendees of both spaces found reason to meet for one last party before the wrecking ball. Shortly after, the building was demolished to make way for luxury condominiums. The physical spaces were lost to higher bidders, but the affective memory of the community created in the spaces persists.

In July of 2016, weeks after the attack on Orlando's Pulse Nightclub, Boneshakers owners devised a way to both remember their own queer space that had been closed a decade prior, the community Boneshakers cultivated, and to raise funds for the workers of Pulse who were traumatized and out of a job. Mark Bell considered how the attack on Pulse affected queer communities everywhere because the attack "kinda hit home not only because Pulse was a dance club but it was a LGBT nightclub."[61] That impact led Bell, a one-time Orlando resident, to connect and correspond with the owner and workers of Pulse, thinking of a way to "heal in numbers."[62] Recognizing similarities between the once extant Boneshakers and Pulse, Bell's intention was not just to create an LGBT-friendly vigil, but a temporary re-creation of the previously demolished space. Bell chose the venue that is annually transformed for the Boybutante Drag Ball and occasional disco nights, stating "the 40 Watt Club was the only viable option for their venue because it's the 'right place to do it.'"[63]

---

[60] "433's Last Ball," full page ad in *Flagpole* 19, no. 51 (December 28, 2005): 2.
[61] Mark Bell and Mauli Desai, "Boneshakers: LGBTQ club to reunite this weekend," *Red and Black* (July 22, 2016).
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

As a way to remember and recreate the space that Boneshakers once provided to the community, the event was held over two days: a Friday night cabaret show was followed by retro disco, and a "classic Boneshakers night" on Saturday, which presumably meant contemporary music DJs plus space to mingle and reconnect socially.[64] Without specifying what a classic Boneshakers night means, nearly every week from 1993-2005, a half-page ad in the *Flagpole* promoted Boneshakers' eclectic offerings, something for every night of the week, from drag and cabaret, to dance parties of retro disco to newer EDM. What is clear from some of the ads that proclaimed Boneshakers had "something for everyone" is that certain nights were completely committed to a theme: such as Wednesday's "Retro Disco Inferno," described as "Athens' longest running dance party." On other nights space was made at the pub for participatory shows or mingling, with a separate dance floor with its own DJ.[65]

As far as I can find, the event turned out to be a one-time remembrance, but it does not rule out future or current reunions that may be less advertised and unofficial. It was Greg and Bell's intention to create an annual event, if the first was successful. The owners of the demolished club strove for an inclusive event but more than anything else stated that they wanted to see the regulars who attended 1-2 decades prior.[66] Some of these regulars interviewed for the article expressed a wish to bring back not just music and dancing to a DJ spinning disco on vinyl, but also "a sense of family," a similar refrain that arose in the street party reunions outside of New York's Paradise Garage, after it closed.[67]

What does it mean to be a "regular?" It entails showing up on a recurring basis, sometimes the same time or day each subsequent week. Boneshakers was open long enough to

---

[64] Bell and Desai, "Boneshakers: LGBTQ club to reunite this weekend."
[65] Boneshakers ad, *Flagpole* 13, no. 45 (November 11, 1999): 3.
[66] Bell and Desai, "Boneshakers: LGBTQ club to reunite this weekend."
[67] Bell and Desai, "Boneshakers: LGBTQ club to reunite this weekend."; Jonathan Ullman and Raymond Rodriguez, producers and editors, *What Is The Paradise Garage?* (Larry Levan Way, 2014)" (Go Go Patience C+P, 2014) Vimeo https://player.vimeo.com/video/100114366?h=37a9669771 (Accessed Oct. 2, 2021).

gain regulars: people who showed up on the same day each week or month, expecting a similarly good experience and perhaps hoping to run into some of the same people. Today, there is no queer place that is permanent enough to host regulars.

<div align="center">QUEER STAGES</div>

When the 40 Watt transforms periodically for Boybutante events, it becomes a space where the memories from each event and what the space means to the community are renewed. Memories attached to physical space are accessed again, when organizers reconstruct the catwalk, even if the décor changes each year depending on theme. For one night each year, it becomes such a memory palace. I wonder too, if feelings of belonging and community can also attach to a space based on the affective associations, or can such fleeting feelings move with people around town?

Divas on Wheels

Within the first decade of Boybutante, Divas on Wheels performed one such intentional, yet temporary, occupation of physical space. Several times each year since the late-90s, Athens' favorite drag queens of Boybutante fame have traversed town, from venue to venue in an event they call "Divas on Wheels." It was essentially a pub crawl across town, far enough to require caravanning (hence the "wheels" and parody of "Hot Wheels" logo). The series began on a Friday night in one location and moved every hour or so to another location, usually downtown to the edge of downtown, and up to six venues in one night.[68] One advertisement reads: "DIVAS ON WHEELS Athens' favorite divas (AKA drag queens) *[sic}* take a bar-hopping performance tour of downtown Athens on Friday, Oct. 6 Manhattan Café at 8:30 p.m.; Tasty World at 9:30 p.m.; 283 Bar at 10:15 p.m., Go [bar] For a Drink at 12 midnight."[69] Another advert in the same paper revealed a conflicting final location (Figure 4.9). My research has shown that since 1999 Athens

---

[68] Many of these venues were friendlier to the queer community, townies, and other artsy and crusty Athens punks; however, none of the venues are explicitly for any one marginalized group, and a few venues, like 283 Bar are very normative in their day to day business.

[69] "Out There: What's happening this week," *Flagpole* 14, no. 40 (October 4, 2000): 14.

has been home to 3-4 "mobile drag" events each year.[70] Published descriptions of these events indicate that some events held in late March or early April were intended as kick-off parties for the Boybutante season. Others were more independent and had their own theme, pun-filled titles, and witty descriptions in occasional articles, inviting the same sense of play and audience participation that Boybutante events engendered.

Some ads for the traveling drag events omit mention of venues or schedule beyond the starting location. A 2003 ad for beloved local venue Tasty World simply relays: "'DIVAS ON

Figure 4.9: A rare advert for Divas on Wheels, Flagpole 14, no. 40 (Oct. 4, 2000): 30.

WHEELS' (Tasty World) Some of Athens finest 'ladies' host a dance night, performing your (and their) favorite tunes. Everything kicks off at 8:45 p.m."[71] With no listing of a full schedule with venues, fans of the troupe either followed the divas from venue to venue or relied on venues hosting acts later in the evening to post their flyers of that night's events. You had to be in the know to know where they would be or be willing to follow the drag journey from its inception. Other than fans in the know, the intended target audience of the shows are additional

---

[70] This number was difficult to estimate, however, due to the event's less frequent advertisement. I pieced this together by finding the occasional mention of a third or fourth show on wheels that year.
[71] "Out There: What's happening this week," *Flagpole* 17, no. 37 (September 17, 2003): 21.

unsuspecting patrons of venues, bars, pubs, and restaurants who would (hopefully) delight in an interactive drag improv. The absence of clear promotion or instructions for attendance at different venues along the route speaks to multiple motivations: a dedicated following, surprised unsuspecting new audience, and some safety in not announcing location.

In their ethnography on trans homeless youth in the southern United States, Brandon Robinson describes how queer youth have developed a different temporality for survival and avoiding targeted violence: a temporarily that by necessity does not allow the vulnerable or marginalized to stay in one place. Because there is often no established shelter, shelter is always ephemeral.[72] Robinson is describing an epistemology from how queer youth have developed a specific knowledge of how to navigate spaces, noting that their survival depends on their knowing more about spaces and their inhabitants than others who traverse or inhabit those spaces; knowledge of safe or open space also requires knowing exactly *when* that space is available. I recognize a similar epistemology of existing as trans in the south both my own experience and among other locals I've conversed with about how we travel through space. We share a similar awareness of having a spatial "app" in our memory that tells us what bathrooms are ok and *when* they are ok, what spaces we could quickly duck into to avoid hostility, and where we can meet friends who are diverse in their expressions of gender, all the while knowing that some of these safe spaces may change based on the day or hour. Queer knowledge of the ephemeral intersection of safe space and safe time is thus a key mode of both survival and community.

It's an even taller order to completely transform the spaces of venues for an hour at a time, without even access to or control over a stage, as the travelling drag troupe Divas on Wheels attempts at least three times a year. Finding myself once in a chance encounter on the tour of the Divas on Wheels, the queens arrived unannounced to a captive audience of unwitting

---

[72] Brandon Andrew Robinson, "Coming Out to the Streets: LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness," *28th Andrea Carson Coley Lecture in LGBTQ Studies*, Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia, Athens (April 22, 2022).

participants; like a joyful photobombing, the impromptu drag became something completely unexpected and memorable. Everyone in the space was drawn into part of the act: the floor as the stage and the blushing straight men and their parties the subjects of drag queens who floated from table to table to gently mock, flirt, and lip-sync with the patrons. Such a mode of stage-less drag presented a way of inverting the usual business operations of any one space.

20,000 Legs Under the Sea

The inside of one music club made famous by the 80s Athens music scene became Boybutante's long-term host; how the event transforms the space and stage itself contributed to the sense of temporary stewardship. When the 40 Watt Club converts on one night each year into a queer stage for local amateur drag performers, it is no longer recognizable as the 40 Watt "as we know it," but transformed sonically and affectively into a place that exists outside of the normative space of downtown Athens. I consider this queering of normative structures as Muñoz calls, a place "neither here nor there,"[73] and in the consideration of stages as examples of performative politics of "perpetual becoming."[74] The empty stage is not one thing but an endless potential for future and the memories of past events it held.

The 27th staging of Athens' annual B-Ball, flyers promised entrance to "20,000 Legs Under the Sea." Normally, sound in this venue echoes from the tiled floor to the bare walls and wood-paneled bars, escaping into the ceiling space. But on this night, any sound had to pass through the great mass of bodies; either end of the runway stage to the front entrance were also framed by high-frequency-muffling velvet curtains. Even the humidity of just this inner space seemed to dampen the sound. The very way sound reverberated: the way low frequencies were lost or sustained where some high frequencies dissipated: we felt sound waves as much as heard them. It was as if the sound traveled through a different medium than open air: something

---

[73] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 105.
[74] Ibid, 98.

between air and *water*. The crowd was an overwhelming sweaty mass. It registered about 25 degrees warmer when we stepped into the inner room. It even smelled like the beach: salt, sugar, alcohol, cheap cologne, and the unmistakable scent of sunscreen. The stage itself queered the usual inner-venue: our queens commanded attention on a platform that had been erected temporarily, entering the space farther than the 40 Watt's permanent stage, as a runway that enveloped by the mass of people.

The supportive community that hugged the stage lent their voices (and dollar bills) in support of a succession of drag queens and kings that variously interpreted the sea theme. In this underwater seascape strutted sea creatures, fish, and the personified ocean herself in an elegant 18th-century style blue powdered wig and wide-hooped ball gown. Titanic was embodied in an elegant white pantsuit to lead us an emphatic chorus of "My Heart Will Go on." Donning the signature outfit of a succession of feminist political figures, the timing of Ming Vase's particular form of Titanic drag read as significant to this audience. The audience singing and swaying in unison, with more sincerity than irony, the self-consciousness was abandoned for collective catharsis. Paired with the song and its unmistakable overly sentimental 90's melody and orchestration, the visual and sonic signs carried even more meaning in the hindsight of the result of Hillary Clinton's 2016 election run. The hard-hitting hip hop and krumping drag kings postured themselves "on a boat," audibly shouting the lyrics to the hit by Andy Samberg's comedy music group, The Lonely Island. The swagger was palpable. In tanks and flip-flops, tattoos and sunglasses worn indoors, the drag kings bore a stark contrast to the campy glamour of the queens.

One act returned with resonance from its reinterpretation of a classic tale about feminine voice, agency, and power. In 1989, the Disney company released an adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, the story of a mermaid who trades her voice and identity to become fully human. The animated version renders a young female protagonist manipulated by the ruinous influence of Ursula, a villain based on infamous drag queen Divine. As a villain, the Divine-Ursula fed off of the fear and pathology of anything queer and all its connotations in the late 1980s. Within a few months of Disney's rendition, the original Athens drag ball was conceived. Promotional articles for the 2016 mermaid ball, thus, reminisced about its first impromptu stage, the cover of which bore the iconic drag-inspired villain (Figure 4.10).
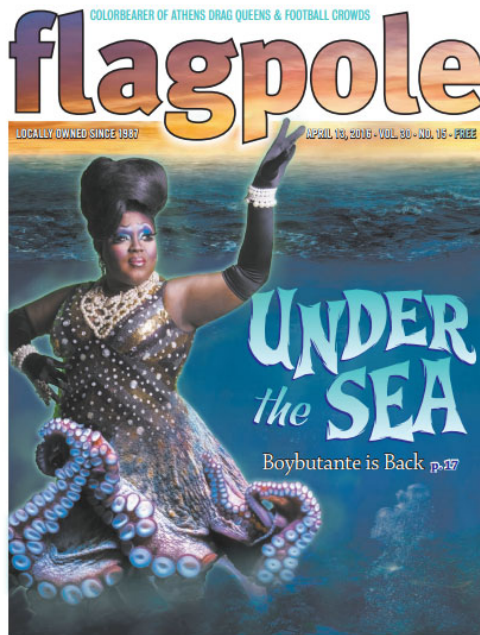
Figure 4.10: Boybutante on the cover of Flagpole*, April 13, 2016*

The most striking part of this restaging favorite numbers from the Disney movie arrived with the decision of who, protagonist or sea witch, would be embodied and envoiced. A six-foot-plus Ariel lip-synced dramatically past and elaborately painted, but flat, Ursula. Where the originally drag queen-inspired villain remained a two-dimensional rendering, here, Ariel as drag queen took up, negotiated, and commanded the three-dimensional space of the temporary stage.

While our mermaid queen lost her voice in lip-syncing, the blasting music and crowd-singing-as-one filled in its absence. There was an affective power in this collective voice, and it was embodied in each participant, felt physiologically in the way our vocal cords moved sympathetically with the performer's own lips. While I could not *hear* myself, my newly baritone range lost in all the low frequencies, I *felt* my own voice join the mass. No one of us was an individual as much as we became a collective voice. We become one singing, breathing, moving organism in this sea of sound.

José Muñoz connects considers a mode of temporal containment in the rhetoric of "stages" and how this relates to the envoicing or silencing of queer potential. When queerness is considered as stage, it becomes seen as "a developmental hiccup, a moment of misalignment that will, hopefully, correct itself or be corrected by savage pseudoscience and coercive religion."[75] Parents and other authority figures weaponize such language to "attempt to manage and contain the potentiality that is queer youth."[76] A paternalistic society often robs queer youth of their voices by requiring their assimilation or containment.

In his complex theory on temporality, Muñoz envisions the metaphor of containment that a stage represents and bends it to mean a literal, physical stage, which might offer physical containment, and paradoxically, freedom. Muñoz, through the analysis of Kevin McCarty's photography of queer stages, reframes how we think about queer "stages," asking "How do we stage utopia?"[77] Muñoz answers this by stating:

> The utopian performative charge of this image allows one to see the past, the moment before an actual performance, the moment of potentiality; and the viewer gains access to the affective particularity of that moment of hope and potential transformation that is also the temporality of performance.[78]

---

[75] Jose Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 98.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 99.
[78] Ibid., 103.

216

In Kevin McCarty's photographs of Catch One, a predominantly Black gay club in LA that

welcomes lesbians and trans people, and "a space that is not on the West Hollywood-centered gay

map of Los Angeles," Muñoz finds queer potentiality built into the temporary structures of the

stage.[79] Evoking a catwalk, and the "queer appropriation of high fashion," strings of bulbs and

glittering metal embellishments like giant sequins frame a stage that juts out into the audience.[80]

On a typical day, Athens' longtime music venue, the 40 Watt, offers a stage that is unadorned and

set back, a configuration that is conducive to keeping the spotlight on local indie bands and

visiting acts. However, for certain events, Athenians can count on the 40 Watt stage transforming

into a catwalk, reaching out to the audience's space for engagement, as it does on the night of the

Boybutante Drag Ball each year. Each year, the embellishments adorning the stage change,

depending on the theme, giving even the empty stage meaning in its potential for envisioning the

utopic. Muñoz describes utopia as involving "a politics of emotion...central to what Ernst Bloch

called a 'principle of hope.'"[81] Throughout this discussion, Muñoz acknowledges the value of

politics that emerge from so-called negative emotions, especially as they relate to the rejection of

harmful norms. However, his monograph is focused on hope in its relation to futurity and

building utopia that evokes another time and place in the present. His refrain throughout the book

is that,

> Utopia is not a prescriptive; it renders potential blueprints of a world not quite here, a
> horizon of possibility, not a fixed schema. It is productive to think about utopia as flux, a
> temporal disorganization, as a moment when the here and the now is transcended by a
> *then* and a *there* that could be and indeed should be.[82]

The transformation of space is one way of staging the utopian, or staging hope in the way that

Muñoz discusses, to envision a time and place where the powers structuring civic space, society,

and inequality of access are remarkably different.

---

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia,* 97.
[82] Ibid.

SELF-MADE MAN AND THE PERFORMANCE OF TRANSMASCULINE BIOGRAPHY

Local feminist theater group Pulling Threads premiered their original work, "Self-made Man," in an event affiliated with the 10th Boybutante Ball. Held upstairs at the Globe (April 1999, and again in May, 1999, at The Sanctuary) the troupe sought to channel the spirit of mid-century trans man and jazz musician Billy Tipton ten years after his death.[83] *Flagpole* contributor Mary Hammes wrote, "A finer story could not have been invented for Athens' adventurous performance collective, Pulling Threads, which has molded Tipton's story into 'Self-Made Man,' an ambitious project of images, commentary and music."[84] The show brought together some of Tipton's own music and his own midcentury comedic vaudeville performances that played on gender, building on a growing list of performances of Tipton's biography and works. This 1999 adaptation of Tipton's life was part of a national celebration of the late performer that included the folksinger Phranc's tribute song, "Tipton" (1991); the short biopic, *Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man* (1995); the play about Tipton's life by Eduardo Machado, *Stevie Wants to Play the Blues* (1990);[85] the Carson Kreitzer New York and London-premiered play bookended by an original jazz score, *The Slow Drag* (1996);[86] Jackie Kay's novel, *Trumpet* (1998); and punk band The Video Dead's tribute, "The Legend of Billy Tipton."[87] Clearly Tipton's life and work were topics of conversation at the time.

The various takes on Billy Tipton's life have themes in common: deception, passing, love, identity, trans-racial and transgender relationships, and jazz. Each interpretation approached

---

[83] I use the label "trans man" here rather anachronistically, but deliberately because of the information it gives a present-day reader about how Billy Tipton lived: socially as a man. The label certainly did not exist in his time. Mary Jessica Hammes, "Pulling Threads Presents Billy Tipton, Transgender Pioneer of the Swing Frontier," *Flagpole* 13, no. 14 (April 7, 1999): 21.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Sylvie Drake, "Stage Review: 'Stevie' Has Jazz and Drama, but Lacks a Subtext," *Los Angeles Times,* Feb. 19, 1990.

[86] D.j.r. Bruckner, "Theater in Review: A Jazz Artist and Father Turns Out to Be a Woman 'The Slow Drag' American Place Theater," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1996, 18.

[87] Chris Park, "Billy Lee Tipton (1914-89) - Jazz Musician" occasional blog of the activities of the *LGBT History Project* (Feb. 16, 2012) https://lgbthistoryproject.blogspot.com/2012/02/billy-lee-tipton-1914-89-jazz-musician.html (Accessed Feb 13, 2022).

these themes from different directions, however, allowing audiences to read the protagonist either as a woman in drag or as a trans man, without a satisfying consensus on Tipton's identity. A central disagreement emerges how a person of the past fit into present-day social categories. The matter of this question is significant to both historical narratives about LGBTQ communities as well as Athens' own local amateur drag community. Rigid social categories and gendered signs are dependent on the social contexts of their times for their definitions. Reading Billy Tipton's story *out* of its time throws past and present understandings of gender and sexuality into chaos, but also show how flat a singular, rigid definition can be.

Discrepancies in the pronouns and identities attributed to Tipton throughout the various tributes to his life and performance art complicate notions about identity as a temporally fixed category. Though he stepped on stage in the role of a man and jazz performer, Tipton's gender identity has been impossible to pin down definitively. As biographer Diane Middlebrook describes from interviews with his wives, children (adopted), and other family, Tipton was selective when he performed as a passing man, returning home as the "Dorothy her" [sic] parents expected.[88] While Middlebrook adamantly states that Tipton wasn't transexual – she sees the role Tipton played as just a gender role on stage that sometimes extended into the bedroom—Tipton's own chosen family, wives and adopted children did not learn of his gender crossing until after his death and the examination of his body by paramedics.[89]

Middlebrook and journalists that took up the titillating story either write with a rhetoric of insidiousness or fraud. These sensationalized takes either assert that Billy Tipton duped everyone in his life, or the writers attempt to psychoanalyze Tipton's motivations in a way that would erase the possibility of a cross-gender identification. J. Halberstam characterizes Middlebrook's "highly publicized biography of Tipton" as "dangerously close to claiming that Tipton's life as a man was

---

[88] Diane Wood Middlebrook, *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).
[89] Sally Lehrman, "Billy Tipton: Self-Made Man," *Stanford Today* (May/June 1997) https://web.stanford.edu/dept/news/stanfordtoday/ed/9705/9705fea601.shtml (Accessed Feb 13, 2022).

simply the result of his overwhelming ambition to perform as a musician."[90] Middlebrook writes,

for example, of Tipton's "shrewd" selection of younger naïve women partners who might serve to

cover up a "magician's grand deception."[91] However, Tipton's musical and comedy career

brought him into collaboration with a number of gender-crossing artists and spaces where gender

crossings were commonplace. Advertisements for the Billy Tipton Trio from the 1950s to the

1970s show the band playing frequently alongside various "female impersonators," including Lee

Leonard, who eventually transitioned socially and medically, becoming known as Liz Lyons

(Figures 4.11 and 4.12). Many of the cabaret performers Tipton associated with did not confine

Figure 4.11: Ad in the Spokane Daily Chronicle *for a show featuring the Billy Tipton Trio and Lee Leonard, among others*

Figure 4.12: Ad in the Spokesman Review *for a show at Allen's Tin Pan Alley featuring the Billy Tipton Trio, pictured lower right (Tipton is on the left in this photo)*

---

[90] J. Halberstam, "Unlosing Brandon," in *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 57.

[91] Rhetoric from Middlebrook's biography, *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998): 177. Discussed in Halberstam, "Unlosing Brandon," 57.

their gender performance to the one acted out onstage but eventually, like Tipton, lived that gender in their private and social lives, often with great risks and little reward.

Attendees of the Athens' music play about Billy Tipton found not just a tribute to Tipton's life, but a thought-provoking re-imagining of his cabaret acts. Hammes writes that what was also original to this particular local performance was the integration of new live music: "Local jazz musician Kit Holmes as Billy Tipton and local folk/punk/skronk band Blue Stockings (Lysa Sullivan, Noel Beverly, Jen Cwiok), as 'The Drag Kings of Swing,' have crafted four original songs reflective of Tipton's music and life."[92] The local drag king group was no stranger to experimental performance art; this piece followed their adaptation of "Laurie Foos' book Ex Utero, in which a woman's womb falls from her body in a crowded shopping mall."[93] In this rendition of Billy Tipton's story, the troupe's focus was not the performance of a linear biographical narrative, but rather, "interpret[ing] the feelings and experiences Billy (nee Dorothy) might have had…accomplished through highly sensory, emotional moments linked together in a series of vignettes."[94] To tell Billy Tipton's story, local drag king troupes found it necessary to eschew chronology for the kind of time traveling that people naturally do when they revisit memories and process heightened emotional events. They performed Tipton's biography in a temporal mode that connects distinct periods of time through affect rather than a linear, straightforward narrative.

The Pulling Threads' show involved a reinterpretation of a Tipton and George Mayer comedic skit; in this contemporary staging:

> Both actors hold cardboard cutouts of suited men, their faces and hands poked through cutouts in the head and wrists. Holmes carries several layers of cardboard; at key moments in the routine, when Tipton's jokes shift to personal topics of family or gender, she sheds a sheet of cardboard. Female bodies in various states of undress are revealed each time: it is evident through this calculated motion, as well as through Holmes' thoughtful facial expressions, that we are simultaneously witnessing an undressing of

---

[92] Hammes, 21.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

character. Holmes once more wears a male cutout in the end, proclaiming: "I'm a self-made man!"[95]

The Pulling Threads' performances illustrate the liberatory potential of play through layers of gender. The show focused on Tipton finding a sense of agency through the exploration of layering gender expression (through dress, hair, and movement) over time. Hammes wrote:

> We see Billy achingly closer-up in a delicate scene performed by Holmes and Rhodin, who together at that moment make one symbiotic Billy Tipton. Holmes wordlessly hands the seated version of her/himself various items of clothing, and Rhodin, dreamlike, murmurs aloud returning memories of watching Billy's parents dress. The scene is permeated with a sense of wonder and discovery: Billy radiates tender concentration as s(he) lovingly caresses a pearl necklace, a tie. Finally, the two embrace, reconciled, and dance, briefly.[96]

Pulling Threads brought together the markers of what would have been seemingly incongruent gendered identities to their audience. Performed a few years after Leslie Feinberg's heartbreaking novel, *Stone Butch Blues*, both stories highlighted the complexities of existing as a fugitive of both gender and time in the 20th-century. Navigating contexts that necessitated passing and creatively manipulating gendered signs for survival, sometimes characters and people that are not easily identifiable through 21st century identity frameworks and are thus often forgotten or misinterpreted.

Jackie Kay's novel based on Billy Tipton's life, which emerged months before Pulling Thread's local performance provides another productive exploration of the potential of gender and racial border crossings to undermine the harms of essentialism. In her analysis of Kay's novel *Trumpet* (1998), Margaret Homans finds a critical rumination on:

> the suffering that race and gender essentialisms can inflict on adoptees and positions the problems of transracial and transnational adoption in relation to queer, transgender, and diasporic thought. In solving her imagined character's problems, Kay demonstrates the transformative power of combining the hard-won lessons of these intersecting experiences of border-crossing.[97]

---

[95] Hammes, 21.
[96] Hammes, 21.
[97] Margaret Homans, "Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*: Transnational and Transracial Adoption, Transgender Identity, and Fictions of Transformation," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 123.

She further writes that family border-crossings are the makings of queer values, in that adoption itself entails a non-linear, non-patrilineal connection between people. Billy Tipton posited himself as the father to his adoptive children. In her novel, Jackie Kay reimagines the life of a black trans man and jazz musician who builds a cross-racial family with a white woman and their adopted biracial son. Homans finds that such ties invite "questions about the value normatively assigned to origins, birth, and reproductive lineage and to the identities and institutions they underwrite."[98] Communal connections built on love and empathy belie the arbitrariness of identities imposed or assigned based on genetic features or features at birth. It is this anti-essentialist orientation that Homans finds most striking about Kay's *Trumpet* and Tipton's own life. Homans' attention to the affective bonds among non-blood-related family refocuses readers to another significant form of queer orientation, rather than becoming distracted in a debate whether Billy Tipton was/is/could be a trans man. What I find most useful from the more nuanced readings of Tipton's life are what critical lessons arise from thinking about a musical figure who had to shapeshift for survival, who found relationships not based on a white supremacist patriarchal linear logic of progeny but, instead, chosen family. Queer performing groups often band around the idea of selecting one's own family in the face of paternal institutions, which govern access to resources, or the members own relatives who would control, disown, or condemn them.

Athens' own drag troupes exemplify the development of chosen family, sometimes sharing drag surnames, taking on mentees and new members, or simply banding together for decades within the same troupe. The alternative logic of chosen family guides many of the larger community's collaborations as well. Athens' drag troupes began in emulation of the queer voguing houses of NYC's history; with some troupes referring to themselves as "houses," with drag queen matriarchs, the idea of queer chosen family continues to be a foundation of local drag.

---

[98] Ibid., 123.

It is especially with local drag kings, however, that contradictions of gender identity, gender crossings via drag, and the fluidity of identity over time come to the forefront of the stage. While many of these performative kings began as self-identifying as the "L" in the LGBTQ spectrum, many if not most of the kings still performing today have physically and socially transitioned, presenting and self-identifying as trans men and/or non-binary. The Classic City Kings has been performing alongside the long-standing drag queen troupes of Boybutante's founding since at least the mid-2000s.[99] By 2005, the drag king troupe had earned the description of "Athens' first and only drag king troupe [which] has been breaking hearts and breaking rules for over a year."[100] Their emergence also arrived during a significant shift in Athens downtown geography and venue space. Following some of their regular shows at Boneshakers,[101] The summer of 2005 began a series of events to mark the closure of beloved spaces, displaced for luxury apartment buildings and other higher bidders for spaces once frequented by queer, alternative patrons. The Classic City Kings played an important role in marking the closure and remembrance of these venues.

The Classic City Kings earned a respected place in Athens drag scene, eventually also becoming one of many expected troupes on Boybutante's stage at the annual ball. Observing the Kings over time and on their virtual channels, it became clearer that the contradictions and complexities of gender were playing out on their own gendered roles and physiognomy. To this day, most of the Classic City Kings have transitioned physically and socially.[102] More recent events, outside of the Boybutante season, have included drag shows with many of the locally

---

[99] It is possible there were individual drag kings performing from Boybutante's start, but the first references to the Classic City Kings appears in promotional ads for an exclusively drag king show, a part of "Girls Night Out!" at Boneshakers (March 22, 2004), presenting fundraising and educational programming for *Breastfest*, local breast cancer awareness events. "Out There!" *Flagpole* 18, no. 11 (March 17, 2004): 14.

[100] Chris Hassiotis, "ABC: A is playing at B on C," *Flagpole* 19, no. 21 (June 1, 2005): 21.

[101] Chris Hassiotis, "ABC: A is playing at B on C," *Flagpole* 19, no. 23 (June 15, 2005): 17.

[102] Openly discussed in public social media posts via Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, and advertised events which fundraised for top surgeries.

well-known drag queens and kings to help fund transition-related surgeries for transmasculine performers.[103]

Writing about Virginia Woolf's time- and gender-bending novel *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), J.H. Stape notes, "This satiric short story focuses on the inadequacy of Victorian biographical method and the menacing triviality of certain kinds of fiction. It mixes genres to suggest that anecdote and mere chronology eventually falsify any individual's reality."[104] The story of the Elizabethan nobleman and poet who wakes up metamorphized into a woman, who goes on to live centuries and pass alternatively as man and woman, has been written about extensively in feminist literary and trans studies scholarship.[105] Readers from the time it was first published to today has identified the protagonist variously, first with a character who portrays a kind of dapper balladeering lesbian sensibility, to more recently with a character who may be alternatively trans-masculine or trans-feminine depending on the temporal direction the metamorphosis is read. Orlando may be considered a 16th-century man's soul trapped in a women's body, a trans trope familiar to an audience that followed such 90's narratives as Brandon Teena, tragically portrayed in *Boys Don't Cry* (1999). Alternatively, she may be read as a trans woman who gains the means of transforming her physiognomy to match a transfeminine persona, as she has more recently been read.[106] Despite seeming contradictory, all of these identifications have a claim to authenticity; identification with a character depends on the gendered social categories of a reader's time and the direction the gender crossing is perceived:

---

[103] I attended these and donated, but this was not among the events in which I took extensive fieldnotes.
[104] J.H. Stape, forward to Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, edited by J.H. Stape (Shakespeare Head Press, 1998): xii.
[105] Jane de Gay, "Virginia Woolf's Feminist Historiography in Orlando," *Critical Survey* 19, no. 1 (2007): 62-72.; Brenda R. Silver, "A Room of Orlando's Own? The Politics of Adaptation," in *The Margins of the Text*, edited by D.C. Greetham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 57-82; Kirstie Blair, "Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 141-166.
[106] Loretta Stec, "'In Process of Fabrication': Queer Time and Trans* Selves in Orlando and Transparent*,"* *The Yearbook of English Studies* 50 (2020): 181-198.

Orlando, Tipton, or a local drag performer can *be* or *have been* a lesbian and, presently, *be* or *have been* transmasculine.

J. Halberstam considers how the narratives of transgender biography call attention to both the constructed-ness and paradoxes of gender, and "biographical temporality."[107] They investigate the biographies of two transmasculine individuals who lived in two different times and onto whose bodies gender and history were mapped in distinct ways. Halberstam ponders the reasons for Brandon Teena's violent assault and murder for the revelation that his body did not match his social gender, and the significance of the remainders of his voice on police interview tapes. For Billy Tipton, it was not until after his death that the musician's life as a man came into question. Furthering Judith Butler's pivotal work on *Gender Trouble*, Halberstam writes, "it was the transgender subject in particular who symbolized the 'gender trouble' to which every subject is heir; in other words, the split between sex and gender, which is so readable within the transgender or transsexual body, reveals the constructed-ness of all sex and gender."[108] Pulling Thread's production of Billy Tipton's life playfully called into question the constructed-ness of any biography through its time-bending narrative and doubling of persona.

LIP-SYNCING AND SHADOW-CASTING: *BOO-BUTANTE*

The arrival of COVID in Athens, GA, like everywhere else in the country, led to the temporary shutdown of venues and live performances. For the first time since its inaugural ball, in 2020 there was no Boybutante. By the fall of 2020, many of the downtown venues did reopen, with young patrons flocking to venues and very few measures in place to mitigate the spread of the virus. As an event created in response to a deadly epidemic, however, Boybutante was more cautious in its return. Spring 2021 came yet Boybutante 2021 remained a distant thought given the risks to attendees without widespread access to vaccines. It became clear to the founders and

---

[107] J. Halberstam, "Unlosing Brandon," in *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 49.
[108] Ibid., 50.

board of Boybutante that, despite the very real need for monetary support for freelance drag

performers and the foundation, safety and health needed to remain the priority. During this

period, from the spring of 2020 through the spring of 2021, I observed a nearly complete

transition of events from in person to online. The names of Athens drag performers also began

appearing in advertisements for virtual queer events in Atlanta's Project Q Magazine.[109] With the

arrival of vaccines, organizers were able to establish a physically safer space to perform and were

aided by the 40 Watt's willingness to require proof of vaccine at the door. An in-person event

became a (very welcome) possibility.

Rather than waiting until spring 2022, the community was ready for drag to resume. The

board, which had cut its teeth organizing around the AIDS epidemic, conceived of a Halloween-

themed show which would celebrate life in the face of death, access to life-saving medicines and

vaccines, and community. Thus, "*Boo-butante*" was born. The first drag ball held since April 13,

2019, *Boo-butante* (October 2021) promised a headliner in RuPaul's Drag Race star, Detox, in

addition to the usual local suspects: performers, spectators and stage outfitted in ironic and

humorous interpretations of Halloween.

The 2021 production, headed by some of the original organizers of the first Boybutante,

was not the first Halloween drag show to be held in Athens and included multiple hidden

homages to various past local amateur drag shows. The first Halloween drag show ever held in

---

[109] Mike Fleming writes, "Meet LGBTQ Atlantans working the coronavirus quarantine for all it's worth through work, play, meals, self-care and downtime —lots and lots of downtime." Mike Fleming "Meet 11 Atlanta Insta-Qs making the most of lockdown" *Project Q Magazine* (April 2, 2020) https://www.projectq.us/atlanta/meet_11_atlanta_insta_qs_making_the_most_of_lockdown (Accessed April 2, 2020)
Patrick Saunders, "Atlanta drag performers go virtual in wake of coronavirus," Project Q Magazine (March 25, 2020) https://www.projectq.us/atlanta/Atlanta_drag_performers_go_virtual_in_wake_of_coronavirus (Accessed April 1, 2020).
Project Q Atlanta, "LGBTQ Atlanta helps salute healthcare workers fighting coronavirus" *Project Q Magazine* (March 30, 2020)
https://www.projectq.us/atlanta/lgbtq_Atlanta_helps_salute_healthcare_workers_fighting_coronavirus (Accessed April 1, 2020).

Athens was an event connected to the 1991 Boybutante.[110] As with the annual Boy Ball, its raison d'etre was to have campy fun while benefitting charity (Athens Area Homeless Shelter and Our Daily Bread soup kitchen).[111] Boo-butante would be one of few Boybutante balls held outside of the spring season, but it followed a history of smaller events that staged spooky characters.

Arriving Costumed

Every Boybutante has the tradition of participants dressing up according to a theme. I never questioned that Boo-butante would be different. My partner and I decided on a simple, but effective costume: we would both be black cats, specifically Binx from the 90's Halloween-favorite Disney movie, *Hocus Pocus*. We donned cat ears and tails that functioned and looked remarkably real. We found black masks to match our entirely black ensemble. Because we would wear facemasks, we decided make-up to be unnecessary (for whiskers, nose, etc.).

We parked in the deck for the first time, rather than a few blocks from downtown, because of our previous experiences being harassed by drunken student-aged men downtown. I recalled the last Boybutante, walking across the western half of downtown, supposedly outside of the "Khaki" zone of frat-dominated space. A massive party on the lawn just across Pulaski Street confronted the evening's attendees of the 40 Watt. Walking past it, a frat boy grabbed me by the suspenders, yanked back, and let them loose to painfully snap my back, mocking my clothing. Here was a sense that even our bodies in this space did not belong to us until we reached the safety of the 40 Watt.

We lined up outside of the 40 Watt, the line snaking around the block towards the western edge of downtown. There were a few clever costumes, including a very tall Elton John in his sequined baseball uniform. For the most part, however, people were not in costume. I cannot

---

[110] The *Flagpole* mentions Boybutante and other local favorites by name: a Halloween drag show at the 40 Watt catered by beloved local restaurants (the Grit and Weaver D's), MCed by the mayor, "CEO Gwen O'Looney," (a.k.a. the Mayor of Athens) and local performance artist Calvin Smith. Stephen Crawford, "Really Important Stuff: Scary Halloween Stuff," *Flagpole* 5, no. 27 (October 9, 1991): 5.
[111] Ibid.

stress enough how unusual this is. *Everyone* wears a costume to Boybutante; it is as customary as taking communion. Everyone had previously seen themselves as part of the experience: participants, not just viewers. We looked out of place, one week before Halloween, wearing cat ears, all black, and cat tails. Long-time Boybutante performer Kellie Divine rounded the corner and complimented the costumes of those in the long queue awaiting entry. And as usual, there was a backdrop set up near the sidewalk for photos. Clearly from the set-up of the space, from the sidewalk to the door encouraged participation, in the form of costuming, from spectators as much as performers.

Spooky Staging

We entered in about the first third of people, the floor still quite empty, so we had some choice where to establish our vantage point. There were identical sections roped off on either side of the runway, but instead of the usual VIP tables, there were just rows of folding chairs, small gift bags of Halloween candy on each seat. The next prime position, in the corner between the roped off VIP section and where the stage branches out was already occupied. We found a place just behind the rope, with a vantage that could see the stage, the runway, and some of the profile of the "T" at the end of the runway. Before finding our place, however, we stopped by the newly installed "gumball" machine that dispensed hearing protection. I knew from past shows we might need this; what I didn't know yet was that it wasn't the amplified music but rather shouting voices that would necessitate using ear protection.

The stage was decked out in a smorgasbord of Halloween decor: from the silly blow-up and cartoon figures to filmset-quality props. There was one particularly impressive life-sized mummy, hanging from a chain connected to the ceiling by its feet. The fake corpse was wrapped in actual bandages that tendrilled down and every few minutes it would come to life, bobbing its head and wiggling to the beat of the music. Several performers interacted with the prop in

provocative ways on their return trip up the runway to the stage and many of the drag MCs commented on it like it was a strange person who had decided to join them mid catwalk.

Hokey gravestone signs flanked the stage, white cloth bandages hung from the ceiling, and strings of lights provided ambience and illumination. There were several skeletons, one crouching near the entrance like a butler, with two more floating in a creepier fashion. A bony arm reached out from a dark cloak; the other skeleton resembled Freddie Kruger in hat, ribs exposed and long, claw-like fingers. It was not clear how exactly they were floating, presumably they were hanging from some sort of transparent filament. The lighting dimmed when the show began, tinted with purples, greens, reds, and/or oranges. Blow-up ghosts added additional lighting and camp. A macabre doll with blond hair and pale skin flanked the runway with outstretched arms, watching the audience with glowing red eyes. In the center of the stage, a child's blow-up castle formed a gated entrance, streamers like mummy wrappings dangling in the opening. At the top, an inflated orange Jack-o-lantern gave off the brightest light on the stage. The runway itself was outlined by smaller, battery-powered tea lights, probably for safety as much as set design. Despite a relatively un-costumed crowd, the stage was more elaborately disguised than I have ever observed at a Boybutante.

The Line Up

First up was long-time local performer, Lacie, totally committed to a Zombie persona. Halloween is her thing, so much so that she states, "I left my tits and ass at home...I live for Halloween." Her priority was what she called "death drag," complete with grotesque rotting skin and peeling bandages. Almost as if deliberate stark juxtaposition, Detox, the RuPaul celebrity, arrived second in a polished persona, moving slowly and pausing as if posing for Instagram, with an actual lit cigarette. She posed and puffed – to confirm that it was real, I noted the growing ashes on the end – and by the time she reached the end of the stage, I could smell the smoke. Maybe because of the cigarette, she did not lip-sync a word to the song. This somewhat taciturn

celebrity performance was out of character from the playful, totally invested camp that the local

performers usually put on, complete with engagement with audience members and over the top

lip-syncing.

Song selections and costuming by long-performing local drag queens created a continuity

along the theme of gothic divas. Lori Divine (of Boybutante's' tenured queens) flaunted multiple

striking costumes in a single set that linked Alanis Morrisette, the Sanderson Sisters ("I put a

spell on you"), and Annie Lennox. Karmella slinked down the runway as Cat-woman, posing to

Janet Jackson's "Black Cat." Jacqueline Daniels strutted out as an elaborate goth crow, covered in

black feathers reminiscent of Catherine O'Hara's fictional character Moira Rose (*Schitt's*

Creek).[112] Cher's "Gypsy Queen" followed the mum RuPaul celebrity with devastating lip-

syncing and Kellie Divine emerged as Bride of Frankenstein to embody the voice Evanescence's

Amy Lee. The veteran performers moved and sang to a playlist of multi-genre and multi-

generational gothic divas.

Kellie Divine's Bride was accompanied by a short, balding dapper trans masculine drag

king as Dr. Frankenstein. He was half her height, and that difference became part of the humor.

The two rocked out with to Evanescence's 2003 goth metal hit "Bring Me to Life (Wake me up

inside)," the very same song performed over ten years prior in a previous Bride of Frankenstein

drag performance, now immortalized on the Classic City King's YouTube channel.[113] Adding to

the camp, Divine fashioned her two to three foot tall "wig" from a cutout of two shades of foam

to form the zigzag headdress of Bride of Frankenstein's "do." The humorously mismatched visual

---

[112] Rose (O'Hara) wears a Crow queen ensemble from her fictional movie, *The Hills have Eyes (3?)*.
Schitt's Creek amassed a huge queer following when main character David Rose (Dan Levy) came out as
pansexual and marries his boyfriend in an extravagant finale wedding.
[113] Dr. Frankenstein and Bride of Frankenstein drag to Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor (Stokowski's
orchestration) for its association with melodramatic horror films. The scrawny Drag King Doctor, dressed
in a too-large white lab coat, glasses, and a faux-hawk, floats around a makeshift table, tilted with just the
shape of a very tall figure visible beneath a white sheet. Bach fades into a hard-hitting remix of "Bring Me
To Life (Wake Me Up Inside)" by Evanescence when the bride is revealed by the doctor. Classic City
Kings, "Dae Tripper and Chianti Milan - Bride of Frankenstein CCKshow 11/09," *YouTube* video, 5:04
(Nov. 28, 2009) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcZJD5uYR_A (Accessed April 7, 2022).

heights and homemade costumes added to the irony of pairing with such a serious, sincerely

belted song. Much of the crowd of younger attendees around us didn't seem to get it, and that's

ok. The number became a crowd pleaser for the long-time attendees, partially owing to Divine's

appearance at both the Boybutante Ball and Pride year after year and her longtime support of the

local trans community. The time-layered meanings of the self-referential performance, the

amateur and totally committed elements, and even the dated sound contributed to a live audio-

visual text that Athens queer townies could read to which we responded enthusiastically.

Athens Show Girl Cabaret was up next, working together on a shared theme in costuming

and movement. Their rendition of *Hocus Pocus* (1993) was another throwback highlight of the

night. In hindsight, this also became a set where the different values of performing drag became

starkest on the same stage. In this case, the character Binx was not a human in a cat suit, like

myself and my partner, but a hand puppet held by a drag queen playing a comically large child in

Figure 4.13: Kellie Divine as Bride of Frankenstein, photograph by author

a nightgown. The humor once again came through the drastic difference in size, while a 6-foot

plus child, the symbolic target of the *Hocus Pocus* witchery, talks to the soft-ball sized puppet

Binx as the song "Pussy" plays.

Rather than sticking to just the musical numbers, many characters act out movie lines like the cult followings of Rocky Horror did decades prior. Though considerably more innocuous, *Hocus Pocus* has developed an increasing cult following among the now-adult millennials who grew up watching Disney films. Nostalgia for the film's sentimentality and endearingly bad witch trio fuels the rewatch parties and costumes that appear every year around Halloween. In this performance, there was a "Billy," the zombie-like 17th-century colonist raised from the dead by the witches (Figure 4.14). The jest in drag-Billy's performance was in the colonial zombie's movements to the disco hit "Staying Alive," dancing and lip-syncing, despite the witches in the film production having rendered him mute.[114] Following this singular classic disco reference, the performance featured the best-known song from the film. Accompanying "I Put a Spell on You," the three iconic Sanderson sisters took command of the runway with their coordinated witch-walk taken from the movie, with each witch taking a step inside the back leg of the other, resulting in a sinister zigzag towards their target. Like Ursula, the Sanderson witches developed a queer

Figure 4.14: The Sanderson Sisters and Billy, Hocus Pocus, take the stage, photograph by author.

---

[114] This particular number also continued a Boybutante fascination with portraying characters rendered mute by witches, considering the Ariel drag of Boybutante 2016.

following: the exaggerated clothing (from the 16th-century feels very out of place in the present, 1990s), movements, and speech.

 The epitome of an audience engaging Halloween-themed stage production arrived with Athens newest and most active drag troupe (with over 100 shows in one year), The Kourtesans. The group enthralled with multiple sets in one as they individually and collectively reimagined the characters of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show.* Working together to bring to life scenes within and extraneous to the film, they were the second group in which all performers, costumes, and multiple numbers unite under one movie title (following the rendition of *Hocus Pocus*). In both cases, while whole scenes are acted out, selections lip-synced to the exact script, the costuming and movements created a playful distance from the original films. Here, Alex Suarez brought to life a gender-bending twist on the wheel-chaired criminologist (originally Charles Gray) who opens the movie as the supposedly objective narrator. Embodied in the film as an older suited man who sits in a paneled study, here, the Kourtesans reify the character as drag-able persona, with a femme suit and exaggerated makeup. Suarez's character abandoned the wheelchair and broke out in energized locomotion, running in heels down the to the "T" of the catwalk. While the character might seem unimportant in the original movie, I have seen the cult reproductions creatively reinvent the character, usually casting the criminologist as a pants role played by a woman. In this set, apart from Rocky, every character wore an additional layer of cross-gender drag, in the ways least expected. Beyond the criminologist, Frank-N-Furter is also in double drag: as a drag woman playing the "sweet transvestite" alien. Other musical numbers include a Rocky (the only one not in drag and who doesn't lip-sync) who comes out for "I Can Make you a Man;" Janet with her solo on "Touch-a, Touch-a, Touch-a, Touch Me"; the "Time warp," which had a majority of the drag cast doing their best pelvic thrusts while "Let's do the time warp again!" From Suarez to Cola to Semaj, their individual drag personas that make the Kourtesans so distinct as a drag troupe showed through, beneath the Rocky Horror costuming.

The Kourtesans' casting recalls the cult following that *Rocky Horror* developed and the frequent live performances of a secondary, amateur cast in front of the movie screening. The first cult following of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and its notorious audience participation emerged back in 1976 at showings of the Waverly Theater, now the IFC Center, of New York City. Interactivity born form repeated viewings, costumed viewers returned to the theater ready to quote and talk back to the film.[115] The film's own parody of B horror movies and science fiction gave new life to a following of self-identifying weird, nerdy, and queer audience. Across the nation, more groups popped up in similar fashion, some developing "shadow casts" who performed the film, including lip-syncing, in synchrony with the screen above them. Vera Dika writes of the ways that shadow casting Rocky Horror live in a theatre played on the temporal shifts hinted at in the movie itself: suspending time between neither then nor now. She writes:

> Because of the audience's voiced and gestural responses, the normally present tense of the theater experience is transformed and inverted to include all of the spatial and temporal modalities of the film itself. That is, the ongoing present tense of the film, along with its encoded pastness, now "lives" in the theater space.[116]

These casts directed audience participation and in their performances cast literal shadows on the original movie behind them, adding an additional layer of meaning to the audio-visual text, bringing the recorded past in contact with live performance art and audience participation.

The Kourtesan's Rocky Horror Picture set continued their reputation for their dark, grungy, yet playful drag that epitomizes drag's ethos to critique and disturb norms. Here, they recreated the idea of a slightly deranged cult movie shadow cast that exposes, rather than smooths, the layers of gender and time. The way the Kourtesans restaged Rocky Horror at Boo-

---

[115] Dave Harlequin writes that "For literally as long as this writer can remember, The RHPS has screened in theaters every single weekend all over America (and likely far beyond our borders, too) – with a rabid, furiously loyal fan base that has become as legendary and infamous as (and perhaps even more-so than) the highly-controversial film itself." Dave Harlequin, "Rocky Horror Picture Show: A How-to Guide for Audience Participation," *Nerd Nation Magazine* (Sept. 30, 2014) https://nerdnationmagazine.com/2014/09/30/rocky-horror-picture-show-a-how-to-guide-for-audience-participation/ (Accessed April 10, 2023).
[116] Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The uses of nostalgia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 112.

butante was reminiscent of the shadow casts done by cult followings of the movie, while reinventing the beloved characters a third or fourth time. Dika states that "time is circular for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* regulars. Going home is only temporary, and for some, the *Rocky Horror* experience will be repeated hundreds, even thousands of times...."[117] In referencing both the past and present and exposing the ways meanings layer over each other: in their *shadow drag* the meanings are iterative, especially poignant in the entire casts' sung finale of "Science Fiction, Double Feature."

REFLECTIONS ON FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTERS

Detox, the RuPaul celebrity so dominated the attention, and the newcomers so dominated the physical and aural space, that before reviewing my notes, I walked away with a feeling that everything had changed. There was something to the multi-layered sets, particularly those like the Kourtesans, which referenced cult film followings at the same time as the original productions. The layers created that queer potential for words and visual/sonic signs to mean more than one thing and comment on the present.

Detox could have drawn on this potential in her Bride of Frankenstein, with all the moments Frankenstein has been evoked by queer, feminist, and trans scholars and performance artists.[118] However, that was not how her set read to the present audience. In Detox's performance erased the history of past queer Frankenstein's/Bride of Frankenstein's to become no more than a vague reference to a popular costume, with the total emphasis on how much like a cis female, with legs, butt and breasts exposed as much as possible, she could pass. As she slowly made her way down the stage, stripped off her sheer robe and posed, the role she most clearly references in her choreography is that of woman-as-stripper, to which the audience responds reflexively with

---

[117] Ibid., 113.
[118] Jolene Zigarovich, "The Trans Legacy of *Frankenstein*," *Science Fiction Studies* 45 (2018): 260-272; Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1 (1994): 237-254; Anson Koch-Rein, "*Trans*-lating the Monster: Transgender Affect and *Frankenstein*," *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 30, no. 1 (2019): 44-61.

paper money. With the collapse of layers of gender and time there is no longer that gap, like the gap between shadow cast of Rocky Horror and the original, which itself was a campy play on horror films of its past (1930s-1960s). Detox, polished and completely passing in her professional drag, reduced the layers of meaning to one, thus avoiding the queer potential that it is to question, expose the seams, and challenge the present.

Boybutante Balls encourage tipping the drag queens: all the money goes to the AIDS Boybutante Foundation. It's for a good cause. But in the past, and for other sets, the interactive act of tipping a drag performer always has that extra layer of camp: you know that this is a silly action, giving props an amateur performer, whose gender you can see ever so slightly beneath the layer of drag. Following Detox's set, young femme cis women climbed onstage un-costumed and, without ever opening their mouth to speak, posed like strippers for applause and affirmation. This newly donned old mode of an objectifying gaze towards women was reinforced via misogynistic and homophobic music playing before the event started. What was the message here? I left with the impression that something had changed. The queer potential to challenge a norm or what is taken for granted as natural was eclipsed in this capitalist exchange. Having a professional, celebrity drag star in the midst affected everyone, but could not erase the dozens of performers before and after who represented local, less polished drag.

Local drag troupes thrive through amateur play, in opposition to the professional or motivated by financial gain. In her second book, *How Soon is Now?*, Caroline Dinshaw focuses on the root of the word *ama*teur and what can be gained scholarly from considering the knowledge of those who deeply love doing something. She describes two approaches to Medieval studies that I find relevant here: the professional (like her, taking notes, studying history) and the pure motivation of the amateur (the man in a bathrobe with a recorder, playing history at the Medieval festival). She considers how the two sides may in fact be more intricately linked than previously thought, and that there is something worth pursuing in what she calls the "temporal

mishmash" of architecture and amateur/professional play/study.[119] Dinshaw asserts that "amateurs have something to teach the experts: namely, that the present moment is more temporally heterogeneous than academically disciplined, historically minded scholars tend to let on, and that some kind of desire for the past motivates all our work."[120] Boybutante and its affiliated events are at their most rich in meaning when amateurs of multiple generations of drag take the stage and reference the Ball's and U.S. queer history's complex past, even while celebrating a present moment when the community can congregate.

---

[119] Dinshaw, *How Soon is Now?*, xiv.
[120] Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: THE POTENTIAL OF QUEER TEMPORAL MUSIC STUDIES

Throughout this dissertation, I explore musical time travel between the past and the present. It is not exactly novel to consider how the past sounds in a composer's work. What distinguishes my analysis, however, from an investigation into an artist's use of classic techniques, or a piece's use of a historical quotation of music or text, is my focus on the affect and meanings generated by musical and performative engagement with multiple temporalities. The artists and texts that I study here all employ references to the past to question something about present norms, rather than connect to a lineage or tradition. I consider how performers, composers, and artists *queer*, or challenge, the contexts in which they live. These queer uses of time work to challenge present norms of social organization and offer visions of a time and place when queer diversity is freely expressed.

In Chapter 1, I introduce queer temporalities as a new framework for the analysis of music and its meaning to specific communities. In crafting this theoretical framework, I adapt Freya Jarman's concept of "queering" as a verb, which in its etymology means to question, rather than utilizing the more restrictive use of "queer" solely as an identity. My exploration of queer temporalities illuminates the experience and meanings of time and time periods, calling into question the social organization of temporality as well as how institutions of the present operate.

I delve into the literature that already expands across disciplines, finding several methods and approaches under the umbrella of temporalities. In this section, I consider historical ways time itself has been defined, how scholars are questioning the act of writing historical narrative and history, how queer archives form, the ways memory is performed as repertoire, the disruptive presence of ghostly sounds, how affect and emotions change experiences of time, and queer genealogies and life trajectories. I explore such an expansive literature review because the

engagement with scholarly work in queer temporalities in fields ranging from history, philosophy, and literature to performance and religious studies brought me to my research questions of what a queer temporal lens might mean for music. I then detail my methodology for queer archival research and the analysis of audio-visual texts: from music notation, music video, to reading performative art scenes as texts.

In Chapter 2, I consider Benjamin Britten's unconventional neoclassical style, using his *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* as a case study. As the author of Britten's source text, Ovid makes an interesting choice since the prolific Roman poet experienced exile around the time he composed the composite poem, *Metamorphoses*, an experience that would have resonated with Britten. I also contemplate the possibility that this musical text was the product of a collaboration between composer and intended oboist, Joy Boughton, finding evidence that the two had worked together for some decades. While considering these two musical identifications, I drew from Philip Brett's foundational work on meaning in Britten's operas, in which he found in Britten's musical language the empathetic portrayal of outsiders, the marginalized, and the exiled. In so doing, I found potential for Britten's musical text to empathize with its subjects who must change forms to escape gendered violence.

Throughout his musical language in *Six Metamorphoses*, Britten evidences his adeptness in using multiple historical styles, a practice which has sometimes garnered works a neoclassical label. However, rather than drawing from the Classical musical forms and sensibilities of late 18th-century, he engages with historical music topics that juxtapose periods before and after this monumental period in music study. In an act of neoclassical defiance, across the movements, Britten's idiosyncratic language varies between the mimesis of indigenous or ancient instruments to early Baroque counterpoint and Bartokian octatonicism. In doing so, his treatment of melodic intervals, topic juxtaposition, and implied harmonies contributes to the unfolding narrative of a mythical subject from Ovid's metamorphoses, who at a critical point in each movement, shapeshifts from one form to another.

240

In Chapter 3, I explore a lesser-known history of EDM and its early practitioners, exposing EDM as a style of music that has had a queer temporality from its inception. Delving into the history reveals an EDM that defies the generic stereotypes and misconceptions attached to the style today. I consider new research that posits that the three early branches of EDM developed conterminously, centering queer of color artists and participants. Contemplating the rich ethnographic work Micah Salkind undertook on the Chicago house scene, I investigate the memories of the space of Paradise Garage that remain and can be extracted from interviews, documentaries, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project, online videos and commentary, and from the in-person and virtual reunions held to commemorate the space and its impact. I found the history of the Paradise Garage to be an interesting point of entry for considering the work of a more recent EDM artist, Stromae, who utilizes the same mediums used by the Paradise Garage's memory keepers to promote his music, videos, and tutorials.

New research into the history of EDM shows that the dominant narrative of its rising from the ashes of disco to be false: EDM was really a continuation of disco, surviving in underground scenes, clubs, and the homes of DJs. Early house, garage, and techno, thus, flourished through the collaboration of their artists and participants. Through the adaptation of such technology as the reel to reel, cassette tapes, and the 12-inch record, early EDM artists created new loops, layers, and edits to each other's mixes, fostering networks of creative dance music exploration. In the trading of tapes and DJs' rediscovery of less commercially-successful records (and their B sides) of disco, R&B, salsa, and reggae, EDM DJs found agency in an alternative market outside the control of the music industry.

My interest in the continuity of EDM and the queer temporalities experienced by its participants led me to a performer who, through videos posted online, gained a significant following in the 2010s. Stromae (Paul van Haver) draws upon the roots of EDM in his fluid shifting of roles, from DJ to MC to producer, as well as through the techniques he used in constructing each song, building layer by layer. Building on queer dance music's consciousness-

raising ethos, through his use of clever wordplay and double meanings, Stromae comment on social norms. I focus on Stromae's video *leçons* to show how he isolates and creates specific sonic layers that build a more complex whole. Pedagogical in function, Stromae's *leçons* reveal in real time the process of his creations in an approachable way, on accessible technology. Even as he creates sounds on the spot, his rhythmic, melodic, and timbral choices work together to simultaneously layer distinct temporalities, referencing everything from dance topics from a 19th-century setting of a habanera, to Cuban *son,* to 21-century house. His deliberate referencing of the past sometimes functions as parody, sometimes as homage, and sometimes as temporal drag. While he has found a significant measure of commercial success in his sound creations, when Stromae does invoke past styles and texts, the effect challenges something about present society.

To highlight the critical potential of Stromae's music videos, I present two case studies in which I undertake close readings of his music videos, unpacking these audio-visual texts layer by layer. In *Tous les mêmes*, I find an effective challenge to compulsory heterosexuality, in Stromae's coterminous bi-gender drag. Underscoring Stromae's visual persona was an array of musical dance topics which pit into opposition different times and places: the expected four-on-the-floor beat of EDM/disco and syncopated rhythmic pattern of Cuban *son.* I find that the instability caused by temporal disjuncture is echoed throughout different aspects of the video. The song's formal structure, its lyrics, and even the choreographies all create a rhetoric that highlighted asymmetrical oppositions, calling the performative conditioning of gender roles into question.

My final close reading in this chapter examines Stromae's 2014 video, *Carmen,* named after the Bizet opera from which it borrows its melody and text. In his envoicing of the character of Carmen, borrowing her chromatic melody from the "Habanera," Stromae reveals the seductive incentives of participating in a market of *social* capital that exists only virtually. In the voice itself, I identify an uncanny channeling of the voices from the vinyl of Stromae's past (Cesária Évora, Jacques Brel, and Maria Callas' Carmen). Explicating the sound, lyrics, and the visual

symbolism, I find that the social norm that Stromae challenges in this video, through his vocal and sonic temporal drag, is compulsory social media. Implicating himself among several public figures, Stromae levies his critique at the larger social structures, as well as how they operate through unwitting individuals. The allegory presented in *Carmen* speaks to Stromae's career, as well as the struggles of his EDM predecessors to maintain agency despite market forces and a stifling industry through innovations on increasingly affordable and ubiquitous technology. I see and hear in *Carmen* an uncanny sampling and envoicing of the recorded past, a text which holds a mirror up to the present.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I consider the expressive potential of the queer performative arts scene in the town in which I've lived throughout my graduate studies. I dive into the history of Georgia's longest running drag show, considering the motivations behind Boybutante's rise and meanings in its themed drag balls. For decades, this southern drag show has made its *raison d'être* sustaining and celebrating the lives of its community members. Boybutante's longevity as an organization and its record of selling out every show since 1992 speaks to its beloved place not only among Athens' gay community but with townies in general. Through seeking events to attend, I find that despite there being no established place designated as a gay locale (in a town that has 80 bars per square mile), queer communities thrive nonetheless through the temporally ephemeral, occasional and seasonal claiming of space.

I contemplate how power mapped onto the real space of a college town's downtown. Tracing venues that came into and out of existence, I considered the pressures faced by venues that offer space to marginalized groups. I focused on the strategies of Athens' queer performers to thrive in the spaces that are, for so much of the time, dominated by a hegemonic collegiate masculinity.

While attending Boybutante's events over a period of six years, I describe how Athens' multiple amateur drag troupes often parody events, cultural figures, and ideas from the past in their sets, creating a clever multi-layered commentary. Many sets draw on older films that had

developed queer followings or performed a playful homage to a decade in American queer history, creating drag that was just as much about time as it was gender. My explorations show that through the crafting of multiple layers of self-referentiality, Athens' queer events build meaning over—and across—time. Athens' richly queer past contributes to the intergenerational reality of its drag shows and a continuity of LGBTQ events that extend from the 1980s to the present day.

In my final case study, I found that Athens' favorite drag troupes did not let even a pandemic halt their annual traditions, coming together belatedly in a ball held October, 2021 (outside of their usual April events). This Halloween themed *Boo-butante* offered additional opportunities for layers of campy, spooky, and monster-themed drag that could speak to an audience in the know. Especially in the amateur troupes' collaborative shadow-casting of movies that had developed a queer cult following (*The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, and *Hocus Pocus*), emerges an effective temporal drag. By exposing the layers of time that undergird the meanings generated by any performative role, these performances call into question the supposed naturalness of any social category.

Each of the four chapters could easily expand into its own dissertation, and a few truly deserve that depth of study. There is a definite need for a more robust musicology of electro-acoustic musics, whether popular or experimental. Gaps in the scholarship can lead to misconceptions about a style or its history, as has occurred in the case of EDM. Such historiographic lacunae risk reducing rich histories into overly reductive essentialisms. If we are to truly endeavor for a more inclusive musicology and ethnomusicology, underground and alternative musics, like EDM, once deemed too lowbrow for serious study should be seen as worthy of deeper understanding. Stromae's oeuvre evidences that these musical texts can be complex and enjoyable, inviting close analysis, passive listening, and at the same time, danceable.

The American South equally deserves more oral histories and ethnographies on its rich and diverse queer cultures and drag practices. A project like this seems especially urgent now,

considering the recent politicization of trans identities and drag events, the closure of beloved

queer spaces, and the dwindling population of those who were first on the scene in the 1980s. As

recently as February, 2023, multiple state legislatures have voted to criminalize drag or reclassify

it as "adult entertainment," thus not allowable in public and requiring clubs to obtain the same

licenses as strip clubs.[1] This political backlash is strong and effective, especially if all that is

needed to shut things down is to make an owner or performer feel like it's not worth the risk.[2]

From my research, I predict that what will likely happen is not queer extinction, but being driven

back underground, especially in places where state law and market forces are hostile to queer

culture. Queer performances will continue to thrive on the margins and in liminal spaces like

occasional nights and queer talent will continue to be celebrated and critiqued, whether by word

of mouth or in alternative publications.

Throughout this expansive project, I draw from multiple disciplines to develop my own

queer temporal lens for music analysis. I spotlight music and interaction with music of multiple

genres and places: popular styles as well as art music, classical instruments and electronic, music

video and live drag, as well as distant and local. This dissertation may be unorthodox in its scope

and presentation and the artists it brings into juxtaposition; however, my choice and order of

chapters is deliberate, intending to parallel the development of queer musicology as a field.

Philip Brett and the other contributors to my very well-worn copy of *Queering the Pitch*,[3]

presented the kind of compassionate theory which invite me to retroactively consider why I, too,

had found myself musically inclined towards Britten, particularly his works for oboe. Avoiding

the pitfalls of essentialism the scholarship did not require the reader to necessarily identify as a

---

[1] Jaclyn Diaz, "At least 9 GOP-led state legislatures want to restrict or criminalize drag shows," *NPR* (Feb. 8, 2023) https://www.npr.org/2023/02/08/1151731736/at-least-10-state-legislatures-trying-restrict-criminalize-drag-shows (Accessed Feb. 8, 2023).
[2] Wendy Williams in conversation with Diaz, states "You don't know what's going to happen. Is it worth continuing running a bar after six years? Is it better that I just put the bar up for sale and do something else? Not because I'm scared, but just cause is it worth the hassle and the headache of dealing with it?...I don't know if it's worth it to tell you the truth." Ibid.
[3] Which I only recently realized has Pan on the cover, playing the pipes.

mid-century gay British man to identify deeply with its pathos.[4] Additionally, the queer music

study that emerged from further collaborations of the early LGBT Music Study Group of the

American Musicological Society allowed a queer trans-masculine shapeshifter like myself to find

meaning in the words and notes written by two empathic gay men, Brett and Britten.

In contemplating music and meaning in Britten's works, about whom so much has

already been written, I aim to reconnect with the literature that first showed me that queer music

study was a legitimate field, and one that might be equal parts liberatory and healing. Philip

Brett's compassionate work helped queer musicology find its identity. I, like many other

emerging LGBTQ music scholars, found resonance in Brett's explorations of marginalized or

persecuted characters and the deeply-felt consequences of being exiled for refusal to conform—

which Brett achieved in showing without essentializing identity or pathologizing difference for

the justification of violence. Brett's studies raised questions of what it means to represent the

collective voices of societies implicated in violent actions,[5] voice those who are persecuted,[6]

ghostly,[7] and otherworldly;[8] he asked us what it means for any of us to be *musical*?[9] Through his

work on musical "others," Brett considered what meanings arise from embodied musical

performance, and between bodies performing,[10] and his work strongly influenced my

---

[4] Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 9-26 (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[5] Philip Brett, "'Grimes Is at His Exercise': Sex, Politics, and Violence in the Librettos of *Peter Grimes*," in *Music and Sexuality in Britten*, edited by George E. Haggerty, 34-53 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[6] Philip Brett, "Britten and Grimes," *Musical Times* 117 (December 1977); reprinted with a new postscript in Brett, ed., *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 180-96.

[7] Philip Brett, "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas" in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 235-256 (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[8] Brett, "Britten's *Dream*," in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie, 259-80 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[9] Philip Brett, "Are you musical?" *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1816 (June 1994): 370-376.

[10] Philip Brett, "Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire," *19th-century Music* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1997), 149-176.

consideration of the meanings generated by a small work like *Six Metamorphoses* and their continued reverberations today.

Since Brett's pivotal work, the field of queer musicology has expanded to explore the performativity of identity, meanings around vocality and embodiment, and intersections with critical race theories. Contemporaneous with these developments was musicology's expansion, especially in the subfields of feminist and queer musicology, to consider popular music styles and their close readings. I envision queer temporalities as both a subfield and a continuation of these scholarly developments. Rather than an Oedipal theory that kills what came before it, queer temporal music studies takes the discipline's past, present, and future into its scope. Because it is also diverse in methodology, queer temporalities offers many points of entry for scholars who may apply any number of methods, from queer archival practices to closer score study and ethnography.

I employ queer temporalities as an anti-essentialist mode of questioning the naturalness of the present. I did so by finding epistemic value of those exiled to the margins, rendered invisible or bodiless by the current modes of analysis. Was this not always the project of queer theory? While queer methods and LGBTQ identities are often regarded as recent, contemporary, or new, it is worth considering how queer subjectivities existed long before the 19th-century coining of "homosexuality" as heterosexuality's marked other. And while there seems to be a trend to re-essentialize difference, even if strategically, this rhetoric has also been used to silence the perspectives of those who occupy social borderlands and who may change positions or identities over time, such as those who might contribute to a trans* epistemology. My envisioning of queer temporalities creates space by finding the times in which diversity in being, thought, and expression thrive.

While drafting my case studies, I came across more and more forays into queer temporal music studies, leading me to the question: is this becoming a trend? More music scholars seem to have contemporaneous observations of what I see as a significant development in literary,

247

sociology, philosophy, and religious studies.[11] For many of us, queer temporalities do not culminate in one article before we move on to another theoretical buzzword. Queer temporalities offer a way to grapple with the philosophical pitfalls of essentialism, the paradoxes that arise in considering identity, subjectivity, and agency in texts as well as ethnographic research. Queer temporal frameworks illuminate the element of time and the context it brings, allowing us to view the construction of social roles, identities, and their histories in new ways. Using this framework, social constructions, such as "man" or "woman," are no longer flattened into discrete, immutable identities, but shown to be always already in flux. When things once considered to be natural or inevitable come into question, the histories and supposedly objective studies on which they were based are shown to be only facets of a larger truth at best and false at worst. While questioning present norms, rather than inherit a purely negative affect of critique, however, queer temporalities offer a vision of hopeful alternatives. If what is normal in the present is revealed to be narrow and limited, then there erupts a vision of a potentially infinite number of futures or presents in which those marginalized, queer, or strange can, and do, flourish.

---

[11] Just a few of these new explorations include: Sarah Taylor Ellis, *Doing the Time Warp: Strange Temporalities and Musical Theatre* (London: Methuen Drama, 2022).
Georg Burgstaller, "Time Re-Covered: Double Temporality in Olga Neuwirth's Hommage à Klaus Nomi," in *Postmodernity's Musical Pasts* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020), 168–91.
Shereen Inayatulla and Andrea Silva, "A Conversation Rewound: Queer and Racialized Temporalities in *Hamilton*," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 2 (2018): 265–71.
Larissa Wodtke, "The Irony and the Ecstasy: The Queer Aging of Pet Shop Boys and LCD Soundsystem in Electronic Dance Music," edited by David Madden, *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 11, no. 1 (2019): 30–52.
Steven Greenwood, "Say There's No Future: The Queer Potential of *Wicked*'s Fiyero," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 12, no. 3 (2018): 305–17.
Jessica Gabriel Peritz, "The Castrato Remains: Or, Galvanizing the Corpse of Musical Style," *The Journal of Musicology: A Quarterly Review of Music History, Criticism, Analysis, and Performance Practice* 39, no. 3 (June 2022): 371–403.
Marquita R. Smith, "Visions of Wondaland: On Janelle Monaé's Afrofuturistic Vision," in *Popular Music and the Politics of Hope: Queer and Feminist Interventions* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 31–47.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Agawu, V. Kofi. *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Allen, Stephen Arthur. "'O Hurry to the Feted Spot of Your Deliberate Fall': Death in Britten, 1936-1940." In *Rethinking Britten*. Edited by Philip Rupprecht. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Alteveer, Ian, et al. "Before Yesterday We Could Fly: An Afrofuturist Period Room." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (Winter, 2022).

Anderson, Reynaldo. "Afrofuturism 2.0 & the Black Speculative Arts Movement." *Obsidian* 42, no. 1/2 (October 2016): 228-236.

Andre, Naomi. *Black Opera*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018.

Anzaldúa, Gloria*. Borderlands/la frontera: The New Mestiza.* (Originally pub. 1987) San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012.

Anzaldúa, Gloria*. Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Babcock, Barbara. "Not in the Absolute Singular: Rereading Ruth Benedict." In *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, 104-130. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Badger, Emily, and Eve Washington. "The Housing Shortage Isn't Just a Coastal Crisis Anymore." *The New York Times,* July 14, 2022.

Banfield, William C. *Black Notes: Essays of a Musician Writing in a Post-Album Age.* Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2004.

Bashant, Wendy. "Singing in Greek Drag: Gluck, Berlioz, George Eliot." In *En travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, edited by Corinne Blackmer and Patricia Smith, 216-241. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Basiliere, Jae. "Staging Dissents: Drag Kings, Resistance, and Feminist Masculinities." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44, no. 4 (2019).

Behar, Katherine. *Object-Oriented Feminism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

Bernstein, Bill. *Disco: The Bill Bernstein Photographs.* Forward by Nona Hendryx. London: Reel Art Press, 2015.

Bickley, Tom, and Monique Buzzarté, ed.s. *Anthology of Essays on Deep Listening*. Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2012.

Biehl, Joao, and Peter Locke. "Deleuze and the Anthropology of Becoming." *Current Anthropology* 51, no. 3 (June 2010): 317-351.

Blair, Kirstie. "Gypsies and Lesbian Desire: Vita Sackville-West, Violet Trefusis, and Virginia Woolf." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 50, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 141-166.

Blank, Hanne. *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.

Bossio, Diana, and Avery E. Holton. "The Identity Dilemma: Identity drivers and social media fatigue among journalists." *Popular Communications: The International Journal of Media and Culture* 16, no. 4 (2018): 248-262.

Boyd, Nan, and Horacio Ramirez, ed.s, *Bodies of Evidence: The Practice of Queer Oral History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Boynton, Susan. "Writing History with Liturgy." In *Representing History, 900-1300: Art, Music, History*, edited by Robert A. Maxwell, 187-200. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Bray, Karen. "The Madness of Holy Saturday: Bipolar Temporality and the Queerdom of Heaven on Earth." In *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 195-217. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Breen, Margaret Sönser. *Narratives of Queer Desire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Brett, Philip. "Are you musical?" *The Musical Times* 135, no. 1816 (June 1994): 370-376.

Brett, Philip. "Britten's Dream." In *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*. Edited by Ruth A. Solie, 259-80. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Brett, Philip. "Britten and Grimes." *Musical Times* 117 (December 1977). Reprinted with a new postscript in *Benjamin Britten: Peter Grimes*. Edited by Philip Brett, 180-96. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Brett, Philip. "Eros and Orientalism in Britten's Operas." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 235-256. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Brett, Philip. "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 9-26. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Brett, Philip. *Music and Sexuality in Britten: Selected Essays*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Brett, Philip "Piano Four-Hands: Schubert and the Performance of Gay Male Desire," *19th-century Music* 21, no. 2 (Autumn, 1997): 149-176.

Brewster, Bill, and Frank Broughton. *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life: The History of the Disc Jockey*. New York: Grove Press, 1999.

Britten, Benjamin. *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid*. London: Hawkes and Son, 1952.

Bronski, Michael. *A Queer History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2011.

Brooks, Daphne A. "'Bring the Pain': Post-soul Memory, Neo-soul Affect, and Lauren Hill in the Black Public Sphere." In *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 182-203. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Brooks, Kinitra D., Alexis McGee, and Stephanie Schoellman. "Speculative Sankofarration." *Obsidian* 42, no. 1/2 (October 2016): 237-248.

Brown, Autumn, and adrienne maree brown. *How to Survive the End of the World: Learning from the apocalypse with grace, rigor and curiosity*. Podcast and site. https://www.endoftheworldshow.org/ (last accessed April 21, 2019)

Bruzzi, Stella. "Mannish Girl: k.d. lang – from cowpunk to androgyny." In *Sexing the Groove*. Edited by Sheila Whiteley. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Burkholder, J. Peter, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th ed, New York: W. W. Norton and Co, 2014.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge Classics, 2011.

Butler, Judith. "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time." *The British Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 1 (March 2008): 1-23.

Butler, Mark J. *Unlocking the Groove: Rhythm, Meter, and Musical Design in Electronic Dance Music.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.

Caird, George. "Six Metamorphoses after Ovid and the Influence of Classical Mythology on Benjamin Britten." In *Benjamin Britten: New Perspectives on His Life and Work*. Edited by Lucy Walker, 46-55, Aldeburgh Studies in Music 8. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009.

Cantrell, Jaime, and Amy L. Stone. *Out of the Closet, Into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2015.

Caputi, Jane. *Goddesses and Monsters: Women, Myth, Power, and Popular Culture.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.

Case, Sue Ellen. "Toward a Butch-Femme Retro-Future." In *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Case, Sue Ellen. "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic." In *Camp*, edited by Fabio Cleto. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999.

Cheng, William. *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good.* Forward by Susan McClary. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016.

Cheng, William. *Sound Play: Video Games and the Musical Imagination.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Cheren, Mel. *My Life and the Paradise Garage: Keep on Dancin' 2 Vols.* Edited by Brad Rumph. New York: 24 Hours for Life, 2000.

Cooke, Mervyn. "Be Flat or Be Natural?: Pitch Symbolism in Britten's Operas." In *Rethinking Britten.* Edited by Philip Rupprecht, 102-127. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Corey, Dorian, et. al. *Paris Is Burning* [Originally released 1990]. Miramax Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Cothren, Michael W., and Stokstad, Marilyn, ed.s. *Art History*, fourth ed., vol. 2. Boston: Prentice Hall, 2011.

Curtiss, Mina. *Bizet and his World.* New York: Knopf, 1958.

Cusick, Suzanne. "On a Lesbian Relationship with Music: A Serious Effort Not to Think Straight." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology.* Edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 67-83. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Cvetkovich, Ann. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Daniels, Brandy. "Excess and the Enactment of Queer Time: Futurity, Failure, and Formation in Feminist Theologies." In *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 178-194. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

"DEMOLISHED: Paradise Lost." *NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project* (2018) https://www.nyclgbtsites.org/2018/04/13/demolished-paradise-lost/ (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).

Dicker, Rory. *A History of U.S. Feminisms.* Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008.

Dinshaw, Carolyn, et al. "Theorizing Queer Temporalities: A Roundtable Discussion." *GLQ* 13, no. 2-3 (2007): 177-195.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities Pre- and Postmodern*. Series Q. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999.

Dinshaw, Carolyn. *How Soon is Now?: Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

Doctor, Jennifer, Judith LeGrove, Paul Banks, Heather Wiebe, and Philip Brett. "Britten, (Edward) Benjamin." *Grove Music Online* (2001, updated 2013) https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed 2 Oct. 2019).

Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Eidsheim, Nina. *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Fassler, Margot. "The Liturgical Framework of Time and the Representation of History." In *Representing History, 900-1300: Art, Music, History*, edited by Robert A. Maxwell, 149-171. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010.

Feldman, Martha. *The Castrato: Reflections on Natures and Kinds*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2014.

Francis, Sarah. "Joy Boughton: A Portrait." *Double Reed News* 26 (orig. Feb. 1994, reprinted in *The Double Reed*, February 2004): 63-66.

François, Anne-Lise. "Fakin' It/Makin' It: Falsetto's Bid for Transcendence in 1970s Disco Highs." *Perspectives of New Music* vol. 33, 1-2 (1995): 442-457.

Frank, Gelya. *Venus on Wheels: Two Decades of Dialogue on Disability, Biography, and Being Female in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Freeman, Elizabeth. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010.

Fuentes, Franklin. "A Franklin Fuentes Video Mash-up 'A Night At The Paradise Garage: A Retrospective." Uploaded to *YouTube*, May 12, 2012. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_qdm8OhzZA (Accessed Oct. 21, 2021)

Fulkerson, Laurel. *Ovid: A Poet on the Margins*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

Fuss, Diana, ed. *Inside/Out*. New York: Routledge, 1991.

Gay, Jane de. "Virginia Woolf's Feminist Historiography in Orlando." *Critical Survey* 19, no. 1 (2007): 62-72

Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 134, No. 4 (Fall, 2005): 56-86.

Geertz, Clifford. "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture" (Original, 1973). In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays,* 3-30. New York: Basic, 2000.

Gertz, SunHee Kim. *Echoes and Reflections: Memory and Memorials in Ovid and Marie de France*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2003.

The Godfather of Disco // Mel Cheren // West-End Records. Uploaded to YouTube, Feb 3, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuBGPj-klT8 (Accessed Oct. 12, 2021).

Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination.* Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Gordon, Avery. *Keeping Good Time: Reflections on Knowledge, Power, and People*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

Green, Adam Isaiah. "Queer Theory and Sociology: Locating the Subject and the Self in Sexuality Studies." *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 1 (March 2007): 26-45.

Haden-Guest, Anthony. *The last party: Studio 54, disco, and the culture of the night*. New York: William Morrow, 1997.

Hahn, Tomie. "Embodied Metaphors in *Nihon Buyo*." In *Women's Voices across Musical Worlds*, edited by Jane A. Bernstein, 308-325. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.

Hahn, Tomie. *Sensational Knowledge: Embodying Culture through Japanese Dance*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2007.

Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998.

Halberstam, Judith. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.

Halberstam, Judith. "Keeping Time with Lesbians on Ecstasy." *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 11 (2007): 51-58.

Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

Halberstam, Judith. "What's that Smell?: Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives." In *Queering the Popular Pitch*, edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga, 3-25. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Hamessley, Lydia. "Henry Lawes's Setting of Katherine Philip's Friendship Poetry in His Second Book of Ayres and Dialogues, 1655: A Musical Misreading?" In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*. Edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 126-7. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Harvey, Jonathan. "Afrofuturism, Cyborgs & the Fate of Imperialism in Bill Campbell's Sunshine Patriots." *Obsidian* 42, no. 1/2 (October 2016): 218-227.

Hatten, Robert S. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation. Advances in Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Headington, Christopher. *Peter Pears: A biography.* London: Faber, 1992.

Hoke, James, N. "Unbinding Imperial Time: Chrononormativity and Paul's Letter to the Romans."   In *Sexual Disorientations : Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 68-89. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Holsinger, Bruce Wood. "The Flesh of the Voice: Embodiment and the Homoerotics of Devotion in the Music of Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)." *Signs* 19 (Autumn 1993): 92-125.

Homans, Margaret. "Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*: Transnational and Transracial Adoption, Transgender Identity, and Fictions of Transformation." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 39, no. 1 (Spring 2020: 123-150.

hooks, bell. *all about love.* New York: Perennial, 2001.

hooks, bell. *feminism is for everybody: passionate politics.* Cambridge: South End Press, 2000.

Hubbs, Nadine. *The Queer Composition of America's Sound.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

Iton, Richard. *In Search of the Black Fantastic: Politics and Popular Culture in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Jarman-Ivens, Freya. *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw.* Critical Studies in Gender, Sexuality, and Culture, edited by Patricia T. Clough and R. Danielle Egan. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Jemisin, N.K. *How Long 'Til Black Future Month?* New York: Orbit, 2018.

Jemisin, N.K. "How Long 'Til Black Future Month?" (Sept. 30, 2013) https://nkjemisin.com/2013/09/how-long-til-black-future-month/ (Accessed April 1, 2023).

Jennex, Craig, and Maria Murphy. "Covering trans media: Temporal and narrative potential in messy musical archives." In *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music and Gender*, edited by Stan Hawkins, 313-325. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017.

Jordan, Mark D. "In Search of Queer Theology Lost." In *Sexual Disorientations : Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 296-308. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Klein, Michael. "Narrative and Intertext: The Logic of Suffering in Lutoslawski's Symphony No. 4." In *Intertextuality in Western Art Music.* Bloomington: Indiana UniversityPress, 2005).

Koestenbaum, Wayne. *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1993.

Koestenbaum, Wayne. "Queering the Pitch: A Posy of Definitions and Impersonations." In *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology*, edited by Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, 1-5. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Kotrosits, Maia. "Queer Persistence: On Death, History, and Longing for Endings." In *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 133-144. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Levan, Larry. *Larry Levan - Live At The Paradise Garage [1979]*. Old Skool Rewind Official, posted to YouTube, Dec 31, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39JerMg2IQE (Accessed Oct. 4, 2021).

Love, Heather. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007.

Luker, Kristin. *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

Lyall, Sarah. "100 Days Without Trump on Twitter: A Nation Scrolls More Calmly." *The New York Times*, April 17, 2021.

Mark, Christopher. "Contextually Transformed Tonality in Britten." *Music Analysis* 4, no. 3 (October 1985): 265-287.

Matos, Michelangelo. "Boyd Jarvis: Remembering the Architect of House Music." *The Village Voice*, Feb. 21, 2018. https://www.villagevoice.com/2018/02/21/boyd-jarvis-remembering-the-architect-of-house-music/ (Accessed Nov. 15, 2021).

Mbowa, Aida. "Abbey Lincoln's Screaming Singing and the Sonic Liberatory Potential Thereafter." In *Taking it to the Bridge: Music as Performance*, edited by Nicholas Cook and Richard Pettengill, 135-154. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013.

McClary, Susan. "Excess and Frame: The Musical Representation of Madwomen." In *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

McClary, Susan. "The Musical Languages of *Carmen*." In *Georges Bizet:* Carmen. Edited by Susan McClary. Cambridge Opera Handbooks. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

McCleod, Kembrew. "Genres, Subgenres, Sub-subgenres and More: Musical and Social Differentiation within Electronic/Dance Music Communities." *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13 (2001): 59-75.

McKittrick, Katherine. *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Middlebrook, Diane Wood. *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Muñoz, Jose Esteban. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Nealon, Christopher. *Foundlings: Lesbian and Gay Historical Emotion before Stonewall*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Nettl, Bruno. *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

New York Times, The. "The Facebook Papers and their fallout," *The New York Times*, October 25, 2021.

Noaks, Susan. *Timely Reading: Between Exegesis and Interpretation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Oliveros, Pauline. "The Difference between Hearing and Listening." Lecture given at *TEDxIndianapolis* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QHfOuRrJB8 (Accessed Jan 1, 2017).

Oliveros, Pauline. *Sounding the Margins: Collected Writings, 1992-2009*. Edited by Lawton Hall. Kingston, NY: Deep Listening Publications, 2010.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. English translation by Frank Justus Miller. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946.

Pareles, Jon. "Paradise Garage: A Gay Club That Forever Changed Night Life." *The New York Times*, June 18, 2000.

Patel, Geeta. "Ghostly Appearances." In *Secularisms*, edited by Janet R. Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, 226–46. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Pellegrini, Ann. "Queer Structures of Religious Feeling: What Time Is Now?." In *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies*, edited by Kent L. Brintnall, Joseph A. Marchal, and Stephen D. Moore, 240-257. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018.

Pellegrini, Ann. "Touching the Past; Or, Hanging Chad." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10, no. 2 (April 1, 2001): 185-194.

Peraino, Judith A. *Listening to the Sirens: Musical Technologies of Queer Identity from Homer to Hedwig*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalisms in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Quiroga, José. *Cuban Palimpsests*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Randel, Don Michael, ed. "Neoclassical." In *The Harvard Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Reagon, Bernice Johnson. *If You Don't Go, Don't Hinder Me: The African American Sacred Song Tradition*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-60.

Robinson, Brandon Andrew. "Coming Out to the Streets: LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness," *28th Andrea Carson Coley Lecture in LGBTQ Studies*, Institute for Women's Studies, University of Georgia, Athens, April 22, 2022.

Robinson, Peter. "Merimee's Carmen." In *Georges Bizet:* Carmen. Edited by Susan McClary, 1-14. Cambridge Opera Handbooks. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Salkind, Micah E. *Do You Remember House?: Chicago's Queer of Color Undergrounds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Samuels, David W. *Putting a Song on Top of It: Expression and Identity on the San Carlos Apache Reservation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004.

Schaeffer, Pierre. *In Search of a Concrete Music*. Translated by Christine North and John Dack. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading." Introduction to *Novel Gazing: Queer Readings in Fiction*, ed. Sedgwick. Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Shahani, Nishant. *Queer Retrosexualities: The Politics of Reparative Return*. Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2012.

Shaw, J. Brendan. "'I don't wanna time travel no mo': Race, Gender, and the Politics of Replacement in Erykah Badu's 'Window Seat.'" *Feminist Formations* 27, no. 2 (2015): 46-69.

Silver, Brenda R. "A Room of Orlando's Own? The Politics of Adaptation." In *The Margins of the Text*. Edited by D.C. Greetham, 57-82. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Slominski, Tes. "Doin' Time with Meg and Cris, Thirty Years Later: The Queer Temporality of Pseudonostalgia." *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, 19 (2015): 86-94.

Soares, Kristie. *Playful Protest: The Political Work of Joy in Latinx Media*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2023.

Stec, Loretta. "'In Process of Fabrication': Queer Time and Trans* Selves in Orlando and Transparent*," The Yearbook of English Studies* 50 (2020): 181-198.

Steinskog, Erik. "Performing race and gender: Erykah Badu between post-soul and Afrofuturism." In *The Routledge research companion to popular music and gender*, edited by Stan Hawkins, 242-252. Abingdon, Oxfordshire, United Kingdom: Routledge, 2017.

Straus, Joseph N. *Introduction to Post-Tonal Theory*, third edition. London: Pearson, 2004.

Stryker, Susan. *Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution*, 2nd ed. New York: Seal Press, 2017.

Sunardi, Christina. *Stunning Males and Powerful Females: Gender and Tradition in East Javanese Dance*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015.

Symonds, John Addington. *A Problem in Greek Ethics: An Inquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion, 1873.* London: Privately printed for *the ΑΡΕΟΠΑΓΙΤΙΓΑ* Society, 1908).

Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Taylor, Timothy D. *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology, and Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Tedlock, Barbara. "Works and Wives: On the Sexual Division of Textual Labor." In *Women Writing Culture*, edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah Gordon, 267-286. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction.* Boulder: Westview Press, 1989.

Traub, Valerie. *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Turner, Mark. *Backward Glances: Cruising the Queer Streets of New York and London*. London: Reaktion Books, 2003.

Ullman, Jonathan, and Raymond Rodriguez. *What Is The Paradise Garage? (Larry Levan Way, 2014)*. Go Go Patience C+P, 2014. Vimeo https://player.vimeo.com/video/100114366?h=37a9669771 (Accessed Oct. 2, 2021).

Välimäki, Susanna. "The Audiovisual Construction of Transgender Identity in *Transamerica*." In *The Oxford Handbook of New Audiovisual Aesthetics,* edited by John Richardson, Claudia Gorbman, and Carol Vernallis, 372-88 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Visweswaran, Kamala. "Feminist Ethnography as Failure." In *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1999.

Whitesell, Lloyd. "Notes of Unbelonging," in *Benjamin Britten Studies: Essays on An Inexplicit Art*. Edited by Vicki P. Stroeher and Justin Vickers, 214-233. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017.

Whittall, Arnold. "Neo-classicism." In *Grove Music Online* 2001 https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed 5 Feb. 2021).

Wiegman, Robyn. "Feminism's Apocalyptic Futures." *New Literary Histories* 31, no. 4, Is There Life after Identity Politics? (Autumn, 2000): 805-825.

Wiegman, Robyn. "On being in time with feminism." *Modern Language Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (March, 2004): 161-176.

Wilbourne, Emily. "*Amor nello specchio* (1622): Mirroring, Masturbation, and Same-Sex Love." *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 13 (2009): 54-65.

Wilson, James. *Bulldaggers, Pansies, and Chocolate Babes: Performance, Race, and Sexuality in the Harlem Renaissance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Womack, Ytasha L. *Afrofuturism: The world of black sci-fi and fantasy culture*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 2013.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*. Edited by J.H. Stape. Shakespeare Head Press, 1998.

Yearsley, David. "Alchemy and Counterpoint in an Age of Reason." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 51, no. 2 (1998): 201-243.

Yudkin, Jeremy. *Music in Medieval Europe*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1989).

Zlatopolsky, Ashley. "The Roots of Techno: Detroit's Club Scene 1973-1985: The forgotten history of the clubs and DJs that helped birth Detroit Techno." *Red Bull Music Academic Daily* (July 31, 2014) https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2014/07/roots-of-techno-feature (Accessed Feb. 6, 2023).

Zucker, Steven. Beth Harris, and Heather Graham. "Donatello, David." *Smart History: The Center for Public Art History* (Updated August 10, 2021) https://smarthistory.org/donatello-david/ (Accessed September 13, 2021).

APPENDIX A

PAUL VAN HAVER, A.K.A. STROMAE, WORKLIST

***Les Leçons insolites de Stromae* (The Strange Lessons of Stromae)**

Leçon n°1 "Up saw liz"

Leçon n°2 "Je cours..."

Leçon n°3 "En scène"

Leçon n°4 "Electronik"

Leçon n°5 "Bol de musique"

Leçon n°6 "Les excuses"

Leçon n°7 "La vie n'est pas biscuit" (April 23, 2009)

Leçon n°8 "Alors on danse" (May 8, 2008)

Leçon n°9 "Je rêvais d'un autre monde" (May 28, 2009)

Leçon n°10 "Jump to it" (Jun 12, 2009)

Leçon n°11 "remix de Up saw liz" (posted Jun 26, 2009)

Leçon n°12 "hoster une mixtape/podcast" (July 17, 2009)

Leçon n°13 "Up saw liz": 'comment faire un clip' de 'Up saw liz' tourne en Juillet (Jul 31, 2009)

Leçon n°14 "Les leçons insolites de stromae" (Aug 26, 2009)

Leçon n°15 "...roi Baudoin" (Oct. 17, 2009)

Leçon n°16 "Bienvenue chez moi" (May 10, 2010)

Leçon n°17 "House'llelujah" (May 17, 2010)

Leçon n°18 "Rail de Musique" (May 26, 2010)

Leçon n°19: "Peace or Violence" (May 31, 2010)

Leçon n°20: "'Te Quiero': depuis Le beau vélo de Ravel au Cinquantenaire" (June 6, 2010)

Leçon n°21: "Silence!" (July 5, 2010)

Leçon n°22: "SummerTime à L'Air Libre (Rennes)" (reposted Jan. 8, 2011)

[Leçon n°23] "La dernière leçon de Stromae 'Humain à l'Eau'" (Dec. 21, 2012)

Leçon n°24 "les leçons c'est 'tous les mêmes' (lessons are 'all the same')" (Feb. 14, 2013)

[Leçon n°25] *Formidable (ceci n'est pas une lecon)* (May 27, 2013)

[Leçon n°26 unaccounted for]

Leçon n°27 "Papamayé" featuring Stromae & major lazer (Sept. 8, 2013)

Leçon n°28 "Ta fête (hymne de red devils)" (Mar. 17, 2014)

Clip Officiel (Music Video)

Alors en dance (April 28, 2010)

Te Quiero (June 21, 2010)

House'llelujah (September 15, 2010)

Je Cours (March 5, 2011)

Formidable (ceci n'est pas une lecon) (May 27, 2013)

Papaoutai (June 6, 2013)

Tous les mêmes (December 18, 2013)

Ta fete (June 17, 2014)

Ave Cesaria (September 24, 2014)

Carmen (April 1, 2015)

Quand c'est ? (September 14, 2015)

Défiler (April 6, 2018)

Santé (October 15, 2021)

L'enfer (January 2022)

Music Video Collaborations Featuring Stromae

OrelSan - La pluie (April 11, 2018)

Other Videos

Stromae – "Te Quiero" ... ceci n'est pas un clip (May 28, 2010)

Bienvenue chez moi (ceci n'est pas un clip II) (November 2, 2011)

Dodo (Ceci n'est pas un clip III) : Prise de voix enregistrée live a l'astrolabe d'Orleans (October 14, 2011)

Live Performances on Video

Stromae. *Alors on Danse*. TEDxBrussels (February 2, 2011).

Stromae. "Tous les mêmes" version a cappella *L'été Indien* (September 21, 2014).

Stromae. *Full Performance (Live on KEXP)* (April 21, 2015).

Stromae. *Stromae Sings 'Tous Les Mêmes' Live Acapella, Takes On America*. TIME (September 29, 2015)

Stromae. *Racine Carrée (Live Full Concert)* Filmed at Montreal's Bell Center in September 2015. (Dec 9, 2015)

Stromae. October 1st, 2015. Tous Les Même (Acapella Version - Encore). Madison Square Garden.

Stromae. *Stromae: Tiny Desk Concert*. NPR Music (Dec. 5, 2022).

Solo Albums

Cheese (Moseart, 2010)

Racine Carrée (Universal Music Group, 2013)

Multitude (Universal Music Group, 2022)

Albums or Movies Featuring Stromae

"Meltdown" featuring Stromae, Lorde, Pusha T, Q-Tip, Haim. *Die Tribute von Panem - Mockingjay Teil 1* (Universal Music New Zealand Ltd. and Mosaert, November 17, 2014).