

## ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MYSTICISM IN 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY VIOLIN MUSIC

Paul Bagley, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2014

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School of Music

“Mysticism,” according to the Oxford dictionary, can be defined as “belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect.” More generally, it applies to the aspects of spirituality and religion that can only be directly experienced, rather than described or learned. This dissertation examines how mysticism fits into the aesthetic, compositional, and musical philosophies of four prominent composers of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries—Ernest Bloch, Olivier Messiaen, Sophia Gubaidulina, and John Zorn, with a cameo by the Jewish composer David Finko—and how their engagement with the concept of mysticism and the mystical experience can be seen in a selection of their works featuring the violin: Bloch’s *Baal Shem* suite and *Poème mystique*; Finko’s *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, Zorn’s *Kol Nidre*, *Goetia*, *All Hallow’s Eve*, and *Amour fou*; Gubaidulina’s *In tempus praesens*; and Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*. These works exemplify the mysticism shared by these composers, despite their different religious and cultural backgrounds, particularly their belief in the transcendental nature of music. This belief is expressed in their works through programmatic, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and formal elements, all of which display, to a greater or lesser degree, the influence of mystical philosophy and symbolism.

MYSTICISM IN 20<sup>TH</sup> AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY VIOLIN MUSIC

by

Paul Michael Bagley

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## CD TRACK LIST

## CD #1

Recorded March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 8:00pm in Ulrich Recital Hall  
Tawes Hall, University of Maryland, College Park

- [1] *Kol Nidre*, John Zorn  
Paul Bagley, violin  
Kristin Bakkegard, violin  
Karl Mitze, viola  
Geoffrey Manyin, cello

*Baal Shem: Three Pictures from Chassidic Life*, Ernest Bloch

- [2] Vidui  
[3] Nigun  
[4] Simchas Torah  
Paul Bagley, violin  
Hui-Chuan Chen, piano

- [5] *Lamentations of Jeremiah*, David Finko  
Paul Bagley, violin

- [6] *Poème mystique*, Ernest Bloch  
Paul Bagley, violin  
Hui-Chuan Chen, piano

## CD #2

Recorded April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 at 8:00pm in Gildenhorn Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park

*Goetia*, John Zorn

- [1] Intense, frantic  
[2] Freely, *legatissimo*  
[3] *Perpetuum mobile*  
[4] Fast, erratic  
[5] Lightly flowing  
[6] *Cantabile*  
[7] *Rubato*  
[8] Briskly  
Paul Bagley, violin

*All Hallow's Eve*, John Zorn

- [9] Matins  
[10] Lauds  
[11] Vespers  
Paul Bagley, violin  
Karl Mitze, viola  
Geoffrey Manyin, cello

- [12] *In tempus praesens*, Sophia Gubaidulina  
Paul Bagley, violin  
Christopher Koelzer, piano  
Geoffrey Manyin, tam-tam

CD #3

Recorded April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Smith Lecture Hall

Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park

*Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, Olivier Messiaen

[1] Liturgie de cristal

[2] Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

[3] Abîme des oiseaux

[4] Intermède

[5] Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus

[6] Danse de la fureur, pour la sept trompettes

[7] Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

[8] Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

Paul Bagley, violin

Jessica Albrecht, cello

Emily Robinson, clarinet

Michael Langlois, piano

[9] *Amour fou*, John Zorn

Paul Bagley, violin

Seth Castleton, cello

Jolie Lin, piano

MYSTICISM IN 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY VIOLIN MUSIC  
by Paul Bagley

“Mysticism,” according to the Oxford dictionary, can be defined as “belief in or devotion to the spiritual apprehension of truths inaccessible to the intellect.” More generally, it applies to the aspects of spirituality and religion that can only be directly experienced by the individual, rather than described or transmitted. Just as mystical traditions tend to exist on the margin of mainstream religions (which thrive on more concrete and communal expressions of spirituality), 20<sup>th</sup> century composers who sought to express or evoke the mystical often found themselves likewise on the periphery of the main trends of “serious” music. Composers such as Ernest Bloch, Olivier Messiaen, David Finko, Sophia Gubaidulina, and John Zorn all developed their own highly personal philosophies about religion, spirituality, and music, which they steadfastly pursued, often at the expense of both social and professional acceptance and recognition. This dissertation examines, through a selection of their music for violin, both the ways in which these composers’ music reflects each one’s individual spirituality and mysticism as well as common themes to all of them, such that would justify classifying them together as “mystical” composers, despite their superficially different musical idioms. One unifying trait is that all of these composers were interested in balancing spontaneity and intuition with thought-out, structured approaches to composing. This might sound obvious, but when one considers their contemporaries such as serialist, aleatoric, and minimalist composers, this balance is a notable trait. Furthermore, they unabashedly drew upon more traditional tonal and formal resources when it suited their expressive needs. These traits parallel the nature of mystical traditions, which seek to aid the attainment of indescribable personal mystical experience by means of codified rituals and symbolism. Most importantly, all of these composers believed that musical ideas can arise directly from inspiration and intuition and convey an experience beyond that describable by analyzing aspects of form, harmonic and melodic language, etc, even when these aspects contribute to

the symbolic meaning of the work. Although the mystical experience itself may remain indescribable, the paths these composers have taken towards it can be traced to roots in Judaism, the occult, Christianity (Russian Orthodox and Catholicism), and Surrealism. The first section, on works by Jewish composers, focuses on the role of insight and intuition in the compositional process, as well as programmatic content that relates to specific mystical, religious narratives and liturgical elements. The second and third sections examine music that is more pervasively mystical, incorporating mystical philosophical and symbolic elements in all aspects of the compositions.

### **Part 1: Jewish Mysticism**

The works of John Zorn, David Finko, and Ernest Bloch all express their mystical leanings through the lens of their Jewish heritage. Their mystical philosophies are reflected in the role of inspiration in their composing, as well as their incorporation of programmatic elements and traditional religious melodies. Bloch additionally expressed his pluralist leanings by incorporating both Jewish and Christian references in his *Poème mystique*.

The most eclectic of these three composers is John Zorn (b. 1953), whose musical style is impossible to summarize succinctly. His influences range from serial music and jazz to Surrealism and the occult to traditional Jewish music. Reflecting this, he has produced everything from light jazz (he plays the saxophone) and film scores to atonal music for classical instruments. His greatest interest and affiliation is with the avant-garde, in that he blazes his own path, drawing from, examining, and questioning everything. Much of his music also expresses his Jewish heritage, such as film scores for Holocaust documentaries, the hundreds of works for his jazz combo *Masada* (fusing jazz and Jewish influences), and the present *Kol Nidre* for string quartet.

*Kol Nidre* is a renunciation of vows made on Yom Kippur. The purpose is to achieve reconciliation with God for any vows between oneself and God that are broken. For the recitation, two people hold the Torah scrolls while the cantor stands between them and



intones the *Kol Nidre* three times, at which point the congregation joins the cantor in responding. John Zorn's treatment retains the essential concepts of a three-fold repetition and dialogue between a smaller group and a larger one, but retains little of the well-known traditional Ashkenazi melody. As Zorn puts it,

“My piece has nothing in common with the traditional Jewish melody sung by cantors during this solemn ceremony, late Beethoven and Arvo Pärt seem more likely references here, but there is a spiritual resonance that is unmistakably Jewish. Sometimes the simplest things are the deepest, and I love the combination of intensity and peace in this haunting melody from my Jewish soul. *Kol Nidre* was written in one sitting in less than half an hour” (Zorn 1999, 3).

Here, Zorn exaggerates a bit in claiming no connection to the traditional *Kol Nidre*. Cantors regularly rearrange and personalize the traditional melody, and other commentators hear allusions to and snippets of the *Kol Nidre* melody in Zorn's work (Levin, 2014). Either way, Zorn's focus is on the “spiritual resonance” of the music rather than to overtly Jewish stylistic elements, and he also emphasizes the spontaneous, likely intuitive nature of his creative process for the piece. The work is not entirely free, however; its AA'BA'' form reflects the threefold repetition of the traditional melody. The present performance adds back in the contrasts of dynamic and mood characteristic of the cantorial version (not indicated in Zorn's score), and the quartet is seated to put the second violin and viola, who assume the role of the cantor, in the center, surrounded by the immutable Torah represented by the drones in the outer instruments.

David Finko (b. 1936) originally composed his *Lamentations of Jeremiah* in 1969 as a sonata for solo viola. At the time, Finko was still living in Russia, and was having difficulty getting his works performed. Finko viewed the viola, Jeremiah, and himself all as outcasts suffering discrimination. To him, the viola was “like the Jews in Russia or Blacks in America” (Finko 1985, 18). Likewise, the biblical prophet Jeremiah was scorned by the Israelites for prophesying that Jerusalem would be destroyed if they did not heed him and mend their ways. The Book of Lamentations, traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah, is a lament

over the consequent destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah would have been in exile while writing it, and Finko's choice of the topic had some self-prophecy in that regard. Ten years after its composition, Finko obtained a visa and left Soviet Russia for the United States, feeling it was dangerous to remain in Russia as a Jewish composer. The cost was great; Finko's father was fired from his job in retribution, and died from cancer just days before Finko departed. His mother passed away a few days later (Kaplan, 1999).

Like Zorn and Bloch, Finko regarded the "Jewishness" of *Lamentations* as coming through instinct and inspiration, regardless of the compositional techniques he employed:

"I was inspired by the biblical book of Jeremiah which I had read by chance. It seemed to me that I had employed ancient Jewish idioms which I knew by intuition. The harmonic progressions were influenced by Bartók and Hindemith, but the texture was inspired both by old Italian violin music and by the sonatas of Bach" (Finko 1985, 15).

Though Finko doesn't say it here, there is also likely some Russian spirit at work in the piece. As both Finko and Gubaidulina have noted, "Russian music is all about pain," which fits well with the subject matter of the *Lamentations* (Kurtz 2007, 192). Also, much like Bloch with Jewish music, even when Finko consciously sought to write non-Russian music (in his case an "American" septet), the consensus of the audience was that it was thoroughly Russian (Kaplan 1999). *Lamentations* is in four main sections with programmatic headings interspersed throughout. The fourth section begins with new material, brings together and summarizes elements of the previous three sections, proceeds to a frenzied climax, and finally dissolves in the "Tears of Jeremiah." Throughout, Finko employs a descending tetrachord motive, the traditional Baroque symbol of lamentation.

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) has generally been thought of as a predominantly Jewish composer, despite his own and his family's efforts to show him in a broader light. Bloch himself would point to the crucifix hanging on his wall, the Buddha statue on his desk, and other such objects as proof of his varied interests in religion and philosophy. Moreover, these were far from merely academic interests. Bloch was a pluralist, believing that no single

religion necessarily had a monopoly on spiritual, moral, or philosophical truth. His compositional style was similarly inclusive. Adhering to no particular school or style, Bloch picked and chose from several—from folk songs and Gregorian chant to German Romanticism and French Impressionism to forays into 12-tone and quarter tones—in accordance with what he felt suited his personal voice at the moment.

Despite his ambivalence towards identifying solely as a Jew, Bloch wrote many pieces that reflect his Jewish heritage, and these are by far his most performed pieces today. As intimated by his compositional style, Bloch's music, like that of Zorn and Finko, is Jewish largely in feel and by association, rather than by specific compositional elements. A notable exception is his incorporation of the Ahavah Rabbah scale, with its characteristic lowered second scale degree and augmented second, into many of his overtly Jewish works, including the present *Baal Shem*. Jewish folk tunes also appear, as in the middle of the *Simchas Torah*.

Much like his avoidance of any one musical “school,” Bloch disliked institutionalized religion, calling it “a dogmatic and desiccated form, remote from nature, morbid, lifeless, a fairy-tale that has lost all meaning” (Móricz 2008, 104). Thus, it is no surprise that he chose to write a piece about Chassidic (or Hasidic) Judaism, naming the work after Chassidism's founder, Rabbi Yisroel ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov (d. 1760). Chassidism was a reaction against precisely what Bloch disliked in organized religion—obsession with rituals and laws at the expense of cultivating one's inner divinity and personal relationship with God. The basis of the movement was therefore joy and religious ecstasy: recognizing the divine manifested in every aspect of existence, and striving to achieve oneness with God. Bloch's *Baal Shem: Three Scenes from Chassidic Life*, for violin and piano, encompasses all of these themes. This can be seen on a general level in Bloch's compositional approach. He deliberately wrote the suite in a less “serious” or academic style than most of his earlier works, such as the Violin Sonata No. 1. There is little dense counterpoint, the harmonic language is predominantly consonant, the forms are loose and simple without extended

development, and the emphasis is on affective melody and, in the last movement, danceable rhythm. This immediacy of expression fits both the Chassidic subject and the dedication of the work to the composer's mother who, as Bloch's daughter Suzanne observed, "though having had little knowledge of serious music, would have understood these pieces and liked their titles" (Bloch 1976, 61). The pieces are thus meant to appeal directly to the heart, without need for formal musical training. Each one emphasizes a different aspect of having a personal, ecstatic relationship with God.

*Vidui* (or *viddui*) is a prayer of confession and resolution to avoid sinning similarly in the future. It is said whenever necessary, but always on Yom Kippur—the Day of Atonement—and when one is gravely ill. Unlike a Catholic confession, *vidui* is said in solitude, and addressed directly to God. Bloch's sparse piano part creates this sense of desolate solitude, while the violin conveys contrition, resolution, yearning for reconciliation and, at the end, expectant hope in the final major chord.

*Nigun* is a musical improvisation to bring one closer to God. The earlier Kabbalists had taught that union with God was only possible through understanding the interactions of the various levels of existence from divine emanation to the material world. In contrast, Chassidism taught that one could achieve a mystical experience of the divine directly through intense prayer or meditation (*devekut*), which could take the form of a musical improvisation or *nigun*. Though not a true improvisation (it is fully notated), Bloch's *Nigun* is very free, and affords the performer considerable freedom of interpretation and expression.

The primary message of the Baal Shem Tov was to be joyful at all times, and this is best represented by the holiday of *Simchas Torah* (or *Simchat Torah*), "rejoicing with the Torah." This marks the end of the old and beginning of a new cycle of Torah readings for the year, and is accompanied by singing and dancing around the Torah scrolls for several hours. Additionally, much of the congregation participates individually in the reading for the day. The main rising fifth motive of this movement appears in myriads of guises: sprightly, lyrical,

high, low, in large chords in the violin, and so forth, as if depicting each individual celebrating in his own way. The spirit of joyful dancing is enhanced further by Bloch's incorporation of a traditional Jewish wedding dance melody, the *mezinka*, in the middle.

As mentioned above, Bloch took an interest in a wide range of philosophy and religion. As he put it, likely in defensive overstatement,

“[m]y children did not receive any religious education and our life is not Jewish. She [his daughter Suzanne] has simply lived in the atmosphere of my books, my [statue of] Christ, my Buddha, a “Confucius” and Jeremy [by Michelangelo] that I have around me—one religion! And *my* only religion” (Móricz 2008, 153).

Written to contrast with the “tormented” Violin Sonata No. 1, the Sonata No. 2 or *Poème mystique*, a work of “faith and serenity,” shows Bloch's religious and compositional eclecticism. As with Zorn and Finko's works, the sonata's composition had an intuitive, subconscious element. It was inspired by an “emotional and ecstatic” dream “following a period of intense crisis and illness” (Velickovic 1997, 5). Outwardly, the sonata contains some of the augmented 2nds characteristic of Bloch's Jewish works, as well as a declamatory section in the middle that Bloch characterized as Jewish (Velickovic 1997, 6-7). However, this occurs within a setting of predominantly Impressionist or coloristic harmonic language, and coexists with sections incorporating Gregorian plainchant—the Credo as well as the Gloria from the mass *Kyrie fons bonitatis*. By the end of the work, these diverse elements are integrated into a seamless whole. Bloch's incorporation of diverse musical and religious elements in the *Poème mystique* thus expresses his belief in higher levels of expression and experience which transcend any single doctrine or religion.

## **Part 2: Occult Ritual: Demons and Goddesses**

On the surface, it might seem strange to pair works by John Zorn (b. 1953) and Sophia Gubaidulina (b. 1931)—a brash American saxophonist and a deeply spiritual Russian Orthodox Christian, respectively. Aside from their shared interest in the works of Webern and their long roads to recognition and success, they would seem to have little in common.

However, from another point of view, the pairing has a surreal logic. Surrealism, a major influence on Zorn, was defined by its founder André Breton as “based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought” (Breton 1971, 75). This particular association of Zorn with Gubaidulina highlights the mystical significance of numerology and ritual to both composers, as well as their belief in the musical experience—composing, performing, and listening—as revelatory, opening the mind and soul to experiences and perceptions beyond description and rational, logical contemplation. Both composers also employ their musical symbolism to embed concealed meanings and associations in their works, which they reveal only partially when discussing their music.

The pervasive influence of Surrealism is evident from John Zorn’s album covers, which often feature art or film stills from Surrealist artists such as Salvador Dalí (for the present two works) and Luis Buñuel. *Goetia* for solo violin and *All Hallow’s Eve* for string trio show the influence of Surrealism in their striking contrasts and juxtapositions of musical material and effects. Musical seizures erupt from quiet sections, *ponticello* playing alternates violently with *sul tasto*, brief glimpses of tonality surface out of atonality. In the trio, these contrasts often occur simultaneously. In addition to Surrealism, each of Zorn’s compositions reflects a unique blend of other influences. The present pieces represent Zorn’s interest in numerology, the occult, and with ritual in general. Indeed, Zorn sees music-making itself as a kind of magical ritual (Brackett 2008, 64).

In *Goetia*, the point of departure is the time-honored “mysterious alliance between the violin and the devil” (Zorn, 2007). When Zorn was composing the work in 2002, he was immersing himself in occult literature, including the works of Aleister Crowley, a prominent early-20<sup>th</sup> century occultist (Goldberg 2002). In 1909 Crowley published *The Goetia*, an edition and translation of the first chapter of the Renaissance grimoire, the *Lemegeton* or *Clavicula Salomonis Regis*. This book details rituals and magic seals—the latter included in

Zorn's CD liner notes—for the summoning and commanding of demons. It is interesting to note that Crowley himself saw the rituals not as evoking actual demonic beings to serve the conjurer, but rather as tools to reveal and draw out one's own undiscovered aspects and abilities—as windows into the mind (Crowley 2003, 3). As Zorn observes, the rituals are “meticulous and elaborate,” which led him to construct each of *Goetia*'s eight movements, or incantations, from the same sequence of 277 notes (Zorn 2007). Each incantation has its own character—likely evoking a different demon—and presents a different set of technical challenges, ranging through erratic chords, perpetual motion, pizzicato, double-stops, and even harmonics with simultaneous left hand pizzicato, all intended to convince the listener that, as was thought of Paganini, no violinist could play the work without infernal aid. At the very end of the eighth movement, a string of three septuplets arises out of the chaos, symbolically banishing the demons. In occult literature, seven is regarded as a holy number, and 777 in particular is seen as the godly counterpart to 666.

*All Hallow's Eve*, subtitled *Satanic Counterpoint for the Witches' Sabbath*, also has ritual and numerological aspects, though Zorn is less forthcoming about his specific extra-musical inspiration than with *Goetia*. Rather than Paganini and Crowley, this work, like Zorn's earlier string trio *Walpurgisnacht*, is overtly a tribute to the second Viennese school, specifically through numerological relations to Schoenberg and Webern's string trios. This is particularly appropriate as All Hallow's Eve (or Samhain in Wicca) is a festival of paying respect to and communicating with the dead, on the day when the veil between this world and the next is the thinnest. The first two movements of *All Hallow's Eve* comprise the same number of bars as the two movements of Anton Webern's string trio (193 and 65), while the total number of bars in the entire work equals that of Arnold Schoenberg's trio, 293 (Zorn 2013). The movement titles correspond to the major canonical hours of the Catholic Church (Matins, Lauds, and Vespers), and, in a characteristic play on meanings, the work contains several musical canons. However, the cover page of the score foreshadows that the content of

these offices will be anything but holy. Here, a demonic sigil and the numbers 6-6-6 surround an encircled inverted pentagram, all traditional symbols of evil, and employed in the present day by both Wiccans (not evil, but the source for Sahnain) and the Church of Satan. The number 666 in particular finds significant expression in the music. The “devil’s interval,” the tritone (comprising six half-steps), features prominently in the work, such as in the opening sonority, and particularly in the second and third movements. The second movement opens with three repeated [0,2,6] chords of six beats each, and closes with three consecutive bars of 6/4, further allusions to 666. The same [0,2,6] set, repeated canonically in the three voices, opens the third movement, and strings of tritones pepper the rest of the movement.

Like Zorn, Sophia Gubaidulina takes a deep interest in numerology and ritual, as well as the interplay between intuitive and formal procedures in composing. In all of her works she strives to express and evoke a deeply spiritual experience. According to Gubaidulina, who is Russian Orthodox, all of her works are religious, even if not openly; she takes the meaning of religion from a literal reading of the word: *re-ligio*, reconnecting the soul with God (Lukomsky and Gubaidulina 1998, 33). Her violin concerto, *In tempus praesens*, reflects these concerns in several ways, notably through its program, formal structure, and instrumentation.

Since *In tempus praesens* was written for the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, Sophia Gubaidulina’s initial conception of the work revolved around the meaning of their names, both derived from the Greek word for wisdom. There is a long tradition among both Jewish and Christian mystical writers of personifying Sophia (*Chokhmah* in Hebrew, *Sapientia* in Latin) as the feminine, creative aspect of God that interacts with the material world. Although Gubaidulina has not made known a specific narrative for the concerto, she has indicated that several layers of religious concepts and programmatic elements are at work. One is Sophia, embodied by the solo violin, who creates multiplicity from the unity of God, and strives to return to that unity. The orchestra, devoid of violins, opposes both Sophia and the desire for



unity for the majority of the piece, all the way until the final bars, where the D minor chord in the lowest voices finally fades away, leaving the D major of the divine shimmering in the highest register (Schmidt-Garre 2011). This final ascent towards heaven has precedent in other violin works with spiritual elements, such as Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto* and Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.

From a formal viewpoint, the concerto reflects Gubaidulina's interest in structuring her works according to mathematical proportions, which she employs here for the purpose of creating a mystical experience outside the ordinary, conscious experience of time:

In ordinary life we never have present time, only the perpetual transition from the past to the future.

And only in sleep, in the religious experience and in art are we able to experience lasting present time.

I think that musical form serves this very function: during its course it undergoes many events. A few of these turn out to be most important. (I call these architectonic nodes of form.) And they can make a kind of generalized shape, the shape of a pyramid, for example. (The episode of ritual sacrifice stands at the pinnacle of the pyramid of "In tempus praesens.") The integral experiencing of this pyramidal form produces lasting present time (Gubaidulina 2007).

The pyramid Gubaidulina mentions is a reference to the five sections of *In tempus praesens*, which, according to her initial diagram of the piece, are proportioned nearly symmetrically as follows: **I:301 II:488 III:789 IV:675** (488+187) **V:301** (Schmidt-Garre 2011). These are all related by the principle of the Fibonacci numbers (each number is the sum of the two adjacent smaller numbers), and thus the ratios of the consecutive sections approximate the golden ratio. Gubaidulina uses this mathematical principle as "a way out of an uncontrollable wave," a way to structure her works and shape her intuitive, subconscious musical ideas into a work of art (Moody 2012, 33).

If formal procedures, for Gubaidulina as well as Zorn, balance out the uncontrollable subconscious and intuitive aspects of the creative process, Gubaidulina employs specific instruments and performing techniques to delve even deeper into the subconscious, particularly those that transcend individual, fixed pitches. Percussion in particular, on account

of their inherent inharmonicity (she refers to it as an unanalyzable “acoustic cloud”), Gubaidulina sees as existing “at the boundary between palpable reality and the subconscious” (Moody 2012, 33).

They enter into that layer of our consciousness which is not logical, they are at the boundary between the conscious and the subconscious. This subconscious contains information beyond logic, perhaps in the soul. It is the space of the soul (Moody, 33).

Similarly, various violin techniques, such as harmonics and especially the *glissandi* that permeate *In tempus praesens*, are also “attempts to penetrate into the depth of sound, as if it were a metaphor for the soul” (Lukomsky and Gubaidulina 1998, 33). As a token to Gubaidulina’s orchestration of the piece and the significance of percussion in it, the present performance includes the tam-tam from the orchestral version. This gong, possessing one of the most complex sounds of all percussion, sounds at the four architectonic nodes of form.

### **Part 3: (Other)worldly Love**

For millennia, spiritual, religious ecstasy has been represented in terms of physical, romantic love; one thinks for instance of the *Song of Songs* in the Old Testament, or the Renaissance sculpture, the *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa*, by Bernini. Both forms of love have in common their irrational—or perhaps super-rational—nature, transcending logic and description and existing as pure, time-stopping experience. This theme of transcendental love permeates all of the works of Olivier Messiaen, including his *Quartet for the End of Time*. Indeed, his main influences, along with his synesthesia, were God’s love (through his deeply felt Catholicism), nature and particularly birdsong, and the legend of Tristan and Isolde’s all-consuming romantic love; the latter two he regarded as earthly reflections of the former (Bruhn 1998, vii). In the *Quartet*, Messiaen, like Gubaidulina, also explored the nature of time and sought to convey perceptions of time (and its absence) beyond ordinary human experience. Tristan and Isolde exemplify what Messiaen’s contemporaries the Surrealists prized as *amour fou*, roughly “mad love,” or irrational, all-consuming desire. John Zorn’s eponymous piano trio explores *amour fou* as expounded by the Surrealists, combining

Surrealist influences with Zorn's own numerological allusions, as well as compositional techniques and symbolism drawn from both Olivier Messiaen and Alexander Scriabin.

The representation of transcendental, divine love through sensuous experience lies at the core of Messiaen's compositional goals. In particular, Messiaen saw human romantic love and birdsong as earthly emulations of God's love, and employed them as symbolic thereof in his works (Bruhn 1998, vii). His own experience of music was enriched by his synesthesia, through which he perceived specific colors and textures associated with different sonorities. Messiaen intended his highly personal musical language to express sensuous experience while also conveying spiritual meaning through theological symbolism. This can be seen by juxtaposing two quotes from Messiaen, both concerning some of the building blocks of his musical language—his modes of limited transposition and nonretrogradable rhythms.

“One point will attract our attention at the outset: the charm of impossibilities. It is a glistening music we seek, giving to the aural sense voluptuously refined pleasures. At the same time, this music should be able to express some noble sentiments (and especially the most noble of all, the religious sentiments exalted by the theology and the truths of our Catholic faith). This charm, at once voluptuous and contemplative, resides particularly in certain mathematical impossibilities of the modal and rhythmic domains” (Wu 1998, 85).

“[The *Quartet for the End of Time*'s] musical language is essentially ethereal, spiritual, Catholic. The modes, realizing melodically and harmonically a sort of tonal ubiquity, bring the listener closer to infinity, to eternity in space. The special rhythms, independent of the meter, powerfully contribute to the effect of banishing the temporal” (Rischin 2006, 129).

Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, for violin, cello, clarinet, and piano, thus exemplifies both the sensuous and the spiritual-theological (he disliked the term mystical because of its connotations of vagueness) aspects of his music (Darbyshire 1998, 33). As would be expected from a composer with such intimate musical associations, the work, written in a German POW camp during World War II, is a vivid depiction of the vision in chapter 10 of the Book of Revelations, in which the seventh angel sounds his trumpet and declares, “there should be time no longer” (KJV, Rev. 10:6). Messiaen conveyed the program of these verses, as well as his own views on time, eternity, ecstatic experience, and divine

love, through his highly personal musical symbolism. Since Messiaen's own notes included with the printed score are fairly detailed, and space here is limited, I will address the above concepts in turn rather than conduct a movement-by-movement analysis.

The everyday human experience of time has many facets, and Messiaen employs several methods of symbolically transcending them. The first movement, "Crystal Liturgy," in Messiaen's words shows "the harmonious silence of heaven" (Rischin 2006, 130). His concept of this is characterized by the absence of human influence, and more generally the end of causality in eternity. The movement is composed of birdsong in the violin and clarinet above rhythmic and melodic ostinatos in the piano and cello. The ostinatos proceed inexorably, unchangingly, and at different rates, such that the movement would have to extend for almost two hours for the cycle to complete and all the elements to line up as at the beginning. The birdsong proceeds similarly unaffected by the other elements (Griffiths 1985, 94). Hence the symbolic meaning of the crystal, as André Breton praised it in *L'Amour fou*, as the opposite of "everything that attempts to found formal beauty on a willed work of voluntary perfection that humans must desire to do" (Breton 1987, 11). Thus the movement gives a glimpse of crystalline eternity removed from the human experience in which events influence each other, punctuated by birdsong equally devoid of causal relationships.

Necessary to causality but even more fundamental is the idea of linear time, or before and after. Messiaen dissolves this through rhythmic means, movement order, and stylistic diversity. For the music depicting the seven trumpets sounding in the 6<sup>th</sup> movement, Messiaen employed his nonretrogradable rhythms (i.e. rhythms that are the same forwards and backwards) to represent "time collapsing inwards towards eternity" (Pickstock 2008, 185). The order of movements is also nonlinear; the cello's Eulogy (movement 5) could just as easily be the final movement as the violin's Eulogy, both programmatically and musically. In fact, the composition of the work as a whole was entirely nonlinear. The movements for solo clarinet and trio were composed earlier in the war, and the two string Eulogies are reworkings

of still earlier pieces. This leads to a disjunction of style and time period that transcends “any logic to temporal succession” (Griffiths 1985, 101).

The sensuous experience of the divine can be seen throughout the quartet, but it comes to the fore in the 7<sup>th</sup> movement (in seven sections), which is no longer merely programmatic or symbolic, but the expression of an hallucinatory, ecstatic experience Messiaen had in the POW camp, comparable to the visions of John or Hildegard von Bingen (Peterson 1998, 224):

“In my dreams, I hear and see classified chords and melodies, common colors and forms; then, after this transitory stage, I pass into unreality and lose myself in a rapture to a whirling, a gyrating fusion of superhuman sound and color. These swords of fire, these pools of blue-orange lava, these shooting stars: this is the tangled skein, these are the rainbows!” (Rischin 2006, 131).

Along with the immensities of time and eternity, the abyss and heaven, the birds and the angels, Messiaen included human music as well. The two Eulogies, for cello and piano and violin and piano, express the human reverence and love of God and desire for unity with God (Rischin 2006, 130-131). The human nature of these movements can be seen in their simple texture (melody with chordal accompaniment) and form (ABA' and ABA'B'). The final movement also has a regular 4/4 meter. Here, rather than the representation of eternity and immortality as remote and impersonal, beyond understanding, we find a vision of eternity that attempts to bridge the gap between the human and divine. The tempos of the two movements (“infinitely slow” and “extremely slow”) lie at the edge of human possibility, both for the performer and listener. The final movement is comprised almost entirely of increasingly upward-reaching gestures, symbolizing the yearning for eternity and immortality. As Messiaen put it,

“[t]his movement is pure love. The progressive ascent toward the extremely high register represents the ascension of man toward his Lord, of the son of God toward his Father, of deified Man toward Paradise.” (Rischin, 131)

Unlike Messiaen, who discussed the *Quartet* at length and in considerable detail, John Zorn has said comparatively little about his *Amour fou* for piano trio. From Zorn’s publishing company website, Hips Road, we can glean that *Amour fou* is “a work of sensuality

combining eroticism with mystical transcendence in a world of Surrealistic French decadence.” More specifically, the description on Zorn’s recording label, Tzadik, says, “the piano trio *Amour Fou* explores love—obsessive love, mad love, doomed love in a compendium of moods ranging from Buñuel to Bataille, Scriabin to Messiaen.”

Appropriately, the cover photo for the CD is a still frame from Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí’s film, *L’Age d’or*, which deals with *amour fou* in defiance of societal constraints and prohibitions. In this and other Surrealist films, as in Zorn’s trio, concepts such as narrative and even clear temporal relationships between scenes dissolve in favor of a kind of continuity through symbolic associations and thematic similarity. Indeed, *Amour fou* plays out in short scenes or moods, as long as a minute or as short as a few seconds, each as volatile and idiosyncratic as the title suggests. Bataille’s influence is harder to trace specifically, but he too was interested in the expression of uncontainable passions. As for Scriabin and Messiaen, Zorn’s harmonic language is reminiscent of both composers, evoking their colors, contradictions, and mystical symbolisms. Zorn’s rhythmic symbolism is largely his own in its obsessive repetitions and irrational, contradictory numerological combinations, but also owes a debt to Messiaen’s rhythmic procedures and freedom from meter.

Zorn borrows several compositional techniques from Scriabin and Messiaen, both of whom sought to express spiritual ecstasy and transcendent experience in their music. This can be seen in Zorn’s expressive markings (written in French), which, like Scriabin and Messiaen’s, are more evocative than strictly musical, with indications such as “mysterious,” “incantation,” and “with a sexual charm.” More technically, Zorn builds his melodic and harmonic material from non-tonal subsets of the chromatic scale, much in the same way as Messiaen and Scriabin. Some of these sets correspond to Messiaen’s “modes of limited transposition,” such as the whole-tone scale and its symmetric subsets, like the French 6<sup>th</sup> sonority, [0,2,6,8]. Other sets are transposable but not invertible—in geometric terms one would say they possess reflectional symmetry but not translational (or rotational) symmetry.

An example in *Amour fou* is [0,2,3,4,6,9], which is symmetric about 3 and 9. Most likely, the use of these sets is meant to express the sensuous, irrational, contradictory nature of *amour fou*, as in Messiaen's voluptuous "charm of impossibilities." Other sets are more closely related to Scriabin's Mystic chord (or "chord of the pleroma"), intended to bridge the gap between the material world and higher planes of existence.

The obsessive, irrational, and contradictory nature of *amour fou* finds perhaps its highest expression in Zorn's rhythmic devices. Small fragments are often repeated incessantly, with contradictory numerological significance, as when a pattern of seven notes repeats thirteen times, or a pattern of seven notes is written in quintuplets, stopping mid-pattern at 39 (13x3) notes. The music is freed from the bounds of regular meter, and rarely do even two of the three instruments play in synchrony. Typically, each instrument plays rhythmic fragments in a different subdivision, such as triplets against duples against quintuplets. As with Messiaen, some processes only line up after a staggering amount of time, as when a 4:5 rhythmic relation between the cello and violin combines with a 7:4 relation between cello and piano, creating 35:16 between the violin and piano; i.e. after the first note, the violin plays 34 notes and the piano 15 before they sound simultaneously again. Though rational in a strictly mathematical sense, all of these rhythmic devices project a wholly irrational experience—the spinning in place of an obsessed mind and the timelessness of pure ecstasy—both equally divorced from the mundane experience of temporal progression.

It is this belief in the transcendental nature of music that characterizes all of these composers—Ernest Bloch, Olivier Messiaen, David Finko, Sophia Gubaidulina, and John Zorn—as mystical composers. Be it composing, performing, or listening, they felt that there is more to the musical experience than can be comprehended logically and intellectually. Furthermore, this belief informed their works tangibly, in ways that *can* be described, through programmatic, melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and formal elements, all of which display, to a greater or lesser degree, the influence of mystical philosophy and symbolism.

Annotated Bibliography

Bloch, Suzanne. 1976. *Ernest Bloch: Creative Spirit*. New York: Jewish Music Council.

The bulk of this book, authored and compiled by Bloch's daughter, is program notes to all of Bloch's major compositions, written by Suzanne and incorporating quotes from Bloch and others closely involved with the works. These are preceded by various articles by Suzanne, Ernest Bloch himself, and others touching on the different aspects of Bloch's personality, life, and career as a teacher and composer.

Brackett, John Lowell. 2008. *John Zorn: Tradition and Transgression*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

This book, the only scholarly volume devoted to Zorn's music, discusses Zorn's extremely diverse musical output with respect to his philosophical, artistic, and musical influences. Perhaps most significant is the precedent Brackett sets in adopting an entirely different type of analysis for each individual work, in correspondence with the particular influences on the piece.

Breton, André. 1971. "First Surrealist Manifesto." In *Surrealism* by Patrick Waldberg, 66-75. New York: McGraw-Hill.

In this charter document of the Surrealist movement (written in 1924), Breton sets for the Surrealists' goals and *modi operandi*. Chief among these are the employment of dreams and other nondirected thought processes in the creation of art, thereby revealing the inner workings of the mind.

—. *Mad Love*. 1987. Translated by Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

This is the English translation of Breton's *L'Amour fou* (1937), with an introduction and annotations by Caws. The book itself is a tribute to the Surrealist concept of *amour fou* and Breton's own stormy relationship with Jacqueline Lamba, through images, contradictions, ironies, unmediated feelings and associations.

Bruhn, Siglind. 1998. *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*. New York, NY: Garland.

This compilation contains articles about various theological aspects of Messiaen's works and compositional techniques. Individual articles can be found in this bibliography under their respective authors.

Crowley, Aleister. 1904. *The Book of the Goetia of Solomon the King*. Reprint by Celephaï s Press. 2003.

This book is an English translation of the first chapter of the Renaissance grimoire *Clavicula Salomonis Regis*, and contains descriptions of 72 demons and instructions for summoning them. Crowley's edition contains a preface wherein he states that the purpose of performing the rituals is not to summon actual demons, but rather to discover one's own hidden mental abilities.



Darbyshire, Ian. 1998. "Messiaen and the Representation of the Theological Illusion of Time." In *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*, edited by Siglind Bruhn, 33-51. New York, NY: Garland.

This article discusses Messiaen's techniques for expressing eternity and subverting the experience of time in his music, as well as the theological bases for these techniques. One main point is that Messiaen's musical symbolism is highly specific, hence he viewed his own works as theological rather than vaguely mystical.

Finko, David. 1985. "The Violists of Leningrad." *Journal of the American Viola Society* 2 no. 1: 13-20.

This article, written a few years after his emigration to the U.S., chronicles Finko's hardships as a composer in Soviet Russia, as well focusing on the musicians with whom he worked. A particular emphasis is placed on violists and works involving viola, including the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*.

Goldberg, Michael. 2002. "John Zorn." Interview in *Bomb—Artists in Conversation* 80. <http://bombmagazine.org/article/2501/john-zorn>. Accessed 28 April, 2014.

This rare, conversational interview with Zorn (who abhors interviews and rarely opens up) covers a wide range of topics from music and art to personal stories.

Griffiths, Paul. 1985. *Olivier Messiaen and the Music of Time*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This book focuses on the aspect of time in Messiaen's music, tracing his musical development chronologically. Along the way it discusses his interest in nature and birdsong and his Catholic faith, as well as other major influences such as Indian music and philosophy. One chapter is devoted to the *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Gubaidulina, Sophia. 2007. Program notes to *In tempus praesens*. Schirmer Music Online.. [http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?tabId=2420&State\\_2874=2&workId\\_2874=36157](http://www.schirmer.com/default.aspx?tabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=36157). Accessed 28 April, 2014.

Gubaidulina's program notes to her violin concerto *In tempus praesens* address the meaning of the title, and her intent to convey a sense of "lasting present time" in the work.

Kaplan, Susan and Beth Dembitzer. 1999. *Orchestra 2001 in Russia*. New York, NY: Four Oaks Foundation. VHS.

This documentary follows the Philadelphia-based contemporary ensemble Orchestra 2001 on its tour of Russia with composers George Crumb and Russian-American David Finko. The trip marked Finko's first return to Russia after his emigration to the U.S. in 1979.

Kurtz, Michael. 2007. *Sofia Gubaidulina: A Biography*. Translated by Christoph K. Lohmann. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

This biography covers Gubaidulina's life and works through 2004. Though it does not discuss *In tempus praesens* (composed in 2007), it covers her religious views and compositional techniques, such as the Fibonacci sequence, pertinent to the work.

Levin, Neil. "Kol nidre." *The Milken Archive of Jewish Music Online*.  
<http://www.milkenarchive.org/works/view/494>. Accessed 28 April, 2014.

This article provides information on the origins, traditions, and development of the *kol nidre* across the centuries, as well as the relationship of these to Zorn's *Kol nidre*.

Lukomsky, Vera and Sophia Gubaidulina. 1998. "The Eucharist in My Fantasy." *Tempo* 206 (Sept.): 29-35.

In this interview, Gubaidulina and Lukomsky discuss Gubaidulina's thoughts on the concerto genre, as well as her view on mysticism, religion, history, and compositional symbolism, particularly the mystical aspects of timbre.

Moody, Ivan. 2012. "The Space of the Soul: An Interview with Sophia Gubaidulina." *Tempo* 66: 259 (Jan.): 31-35.

Here Gubaidulina discusses the importance to her of religious symbolism, and also her desire to achieve balance between composing through analysis and logic and composing through intuition, neither of which she believes sufficient to produce a work of art.

Móricz, Klára. 2008. *Jewish Identities: Nationalism, Racism, and Utopianism in Twentieth-Century Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This book discusses Ernest Bloch and Arnold Schoenberg's essentialist beliefs and their conflicted attitudes towards their Jewish heritage, looking at how these find expression in their music.

Peterson, Larry W. 1998. "Messiaen and Surrealism: A Study of His Poetry." In *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*, edited by Siglind Bruhn, 215-224. New York, NY: Garland.

Peterson examines Messiaen's poetry and finds similarities to Surrealist poetry in his use of illogical metaphors and preoccupation with love. A footnote also describes Peterson's conversation with Messiaen about the surreal hallucination that served as the basis for the seventh movement of the *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Pickstock, Catherine. 2008. "Messiaen and Deleuze: The Musico-theological Critique of Modernism and Postmodernism." *Theory Culture Society* 25, no. 7-8: 173-199.

This article examines the philosophical and theological beliefs underlying Messiaen's compositional style in relation to other 20<sup>th</sup>-century trends such as modernism and post-modernism, into neither of which, Pickstock argues, Messiaen fits. She also puts forth Sophia Gubaidulina as among Messiaen's spiritual heirs.

Rhoads, Bill. 2014. Hips Road Edition Online. <http://www.hipsroadedition.com/>. Accessed 28 April 2014.

The website of Zorn's publishing company, Hips Road, contains information about all of his published works, including brief descriptions, score samples, and audio clips.

Rischin, Rebecca. 2003. *For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This book chronicles the genesis, first performance, and later life of Messiaen's *Quartet*, in part through interviews with those involved with Messiaen and the piece. Several myths about the piece (often originating from Messiaen himself) are put to rest, and the book contains a discography and a translation of Messiaen's own notes on the work.

Schmidt-Garre, Jan. 2011. *Sophia – Biography of a Violin Concerto*. Germany: Arthaus Musik. DVD.

This documentary chronicles the composition and premier of Gubaidulina's *In tempus praesens*, following the composer and the work's dedicatee, Anne-Sophie Mutter through the compositional and rehearsal process. Both women speak about the spiritual and symbolic meaning of the piece, and Gubaidulina discusses the mathematical principles underlying its formal construction.

Velickovic, Ljubomir. 1997. "Musical Language and Style of Ernest Bloch's *Poème mystique*." DMA diss., University of Texas, Austin.

This dissertation discusses the genesis of the work, Bloch's musical language and stylistic evolution in relation to the *Poème mystique*, and concludes with a substantial formal analysis. It includes many quotes from Bloch and his close associates, and Velickovic also consulted Suzanne Bloch Smith (Bloch's daughter) for some of the information.

Wu, Jean Marie. 1998. "Mystical Symbols of Faith: Olivier Messiaen's Charm of Impossibilities." In *Messiaen's Language of Mystical Love*, edited by Siglind Bruhn, 85-120. New York, NY: Garland.

Wu considers the symmetrical aspects of Messiaen's compositional techniques—the modes of limited transposition, nonretrogradable rhythms, and symmetrical permutations. These symmetries are seen as a way to reflect divine order while their closed, circular nature anticipates eternity.

Zorn, John. 1999. *The String Quartets*. New York, NY: Tzadik. CD.

This CD contains four diverse contributions from Zorn to the string quartet genre, *Cat o'Nine Tails*, *The Dead Man*, *Memento Mori*, and *Kol Nidre*. *Kol Nidre* is the odd piece out on this recording, as the only work reflecting Zorn's Jewish heritage.

—. 2001. *Madness, Love, and Mysticism*. New York, NY: Tzadik. 2001. CD.

This CD contains the premiere recording of Zorn's piano trio *Amour fou*. The liner notes contain images from Luis Buñuel, Antonin Artaud, and Joseph Cornell.

—. "Madness, Love, and Mysticism." Tzadik Online.  
<http://www.tzadik.com/index.php?catalog=7065>. Accessed 28 April 2014.

The catalog entry for the above CD contains Zorn's most specific statements about the piece and its influences—the Surrealists, Alexander Scriabin, and Olivier Messiaen.

—. 2007. *From Silence to Sorcery*. New York, NY: Tzadik. CD.

This CD contains the premiere recording of *Goetia*, played by Jennifer Choi. Zorn's liner notes contain both information about the work as well as allusions to his influences through his choices of art, such as tarot cards by Salvador Dalí, demonic seals, and magical symbols.

—. 2013. *On the Torment of Saints, the Casting of Spells, and the Evocation of Spirits*. New York, NY: Tzadik. CD.

This CD contains the premier recording of Zorn's string trio *All Hallow's Eve*. In the liner notes, Zorn discusses some of the occult allusions in the work, as well as the influence of Webern and Schoenberg. The CD art features paintings of demons by Dalí and Michelangelo, as well as the *Witches' Flight* by Francisco Goya.