New Music's 'World Brain':

Technocratic Internationalism at the ISCM Festival

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In 1937, Paris hosted a vast, six-month celebration of science, technology, and learning: the International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life. Although Europe's ideological and geopolitical fissures cast long and menacing shadows, many attendees remained deeply committed to international cooperation, and to cultural and intellectual exchange. In mid-August, for example, the World Congress of Universal Documentation added its name to the lengthy roster of smaller, more specialized meetings held under the umbrella of the Exposition. Librarians, bibliographers, and other experts in the field descended on Paris from across Europe and beyond, drawn by their shared aspiration to rationalize the classification and circulation of information. Some insisted that their concerns were solely technical (the expanding possibilities of microfilm were enthusiastically discussed). But others saw the larger aims of the congress as being of profound cultural, social, and political consequence: the transmission and advancement of human knowledge and, for the most openly idealistic delegates of all, the concomitant development of the shared understanding and values necessary to achieve world peace.[1] As a setting for an intellectual-political project in this vein, the Exposition could hardly have been more fitting. Since their beginnings in the middle of the nineteenth century, such events had generated

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[1] The congress was held on the margins of, though was not officially connected with, the Month of Intellectual Cooperation spearheaded by bodies affiliated with the League of Nations. See Jonathan Voges, 'Scientific Internationalism in a Time of Crisis: The Month of Intellectual Cooperation at the 1937 Paris World Fair,' in *Placing Internationalism: International Conferences and the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Stephen Legg et al. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 104–17. For a contemporary report, see 'Documentation Congress Step Toward Making "World Brain": Paris World Meeting Sees Microfilm as Useful Tool in Libraries and for Publishing Unprinted Material,' *Science News-Letter* 32, no. 861 (October 9, 1937): 228–9.

much of their considerable spectacle and public appeal from their apparent capacity to compress everything that could be known into a single time and place: typically, and significantly, the modern imperial metropolis.

Just a few weeks before the meeting of the documentalists, an influential musical institution had made its own, seemingly quite different contribution to the 1937 Exposition's all-embracing remit. The International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) was founded in 1922, and still exists today. During the interwar years, the period of its greatest prominence and prestige, its principal activity was to organize an annual festival of contemporary music, hosted in a different European city each year. In late June 1937, the event came, for the first time, to Paris. By then, the ISCM had established for itself a simultaneously marginal and crucial role in the institutional landscape of Western art music. On the one hand, although they comprised an influential elite, its adherents had limited financial resources, and their shared commitment to musical modernism only ever partially overrode their many internal disagreements and rivalries. On the other hand, as its place in the calendar of the 1937 Exposition implies – and the illustrious list of French government officials on the Paris festival's honorary committee confirms – the organization was widely esteemed as a preeminent initiative of post-First World War musical internationalism and a leading advocate of 'new' or 'contemporary' music.[2] Alongside events such as the Donaueschingen Music Days in southwest Germany (Donaueschinger Musiktage, founded 1921), the ISCM helped to establish the contemporary music festival as an enduring mechanism of cultural and social exchange – and thus as a powerful tool for shaping what, and who, has been judged to contribute most meaningfully to music's recent history.

[2] The honorary committee was headed by Albert Lebrun and Léon Blum, President and Prime Minister of the Republic (although, in a sign of the turbulent times, the latter would resign from government shortly after the festival began); 'Comité d'Honneur du XV^{e} Festival,' in *Société Internationale pour la Musique Contemporaine: XV^{e} Festival* ([Paris]: 1937), vi, London, British Library.

To a large degree, the fact that the ISCM festival and the World Congress of Universal Documentation both took place in Paris that summer was just a coincidence, the musicians and the bibliographers being just two of the assorted groups of hangers-on that international expositions tended to attract. Even so, the proximity of the two events might fruitfully prompt us to consider their affinities. Both can be situated in the same broad field: a field of internationalist thought and activity that prioritized knowledge circulation and technical expertise as essential to ensuring peace, prosperity, and progress, and thus as vital matters of global governance. Whereas it was obvious how bibliography belonged to that tradition, the case of 'contemporary music' was more complicated. After the First World War, internationalism's technocratic strand would have a significant and lasting influence on this newly emerged genre category and 'art world': a network of people, institutions, and practices, nested within the larger ecosystem of Western art music.[3] But that influence was never simple or limitless; it coexisted with, and was often overshadowed by, other discourses and priorities. As a sonic, time-bound art form, for which there existed no universally accepted criteria of 'objective' judgement, music could not straightforwardly be treated as information or data. Its more elusive and ineffable qualities, highly prized by many musical modernists even in a sober age of neoclassicism and New Objectivity, resisted outright disenchantment or rationalization. From a twenty-first-century perspective, complications along these lines are compounded by the fact that, even one hundred years later, it takes a certain effort to make interwar technocratic assumptions and practices visible. The regulative ideals involved still suffuse the normative internationalism of contemporary music and higher education.[4] For better or worse, we swim amidst these currents too.

[3] Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1982).
[4] In her account of early twentieth-century musicological internationalism (to which I will return), Tamara Levitz argues that music scholars 'have not fully acknowledged, or perhaps even known a lot about, their profession's internationalist bias. […] Rather than research the historical specifics of international relations, musicologists have tended to romanticize and even naturalize internationalism as an idea'; Levitz, 'The Musicological Elite,' *Current Musicology* 102 (2018): 43. A similar claim might well be extended to the field of

Not least for that reason, musical internationalism warrants more sustained historicization and critical scrutiny. Attending to the reciprocity between circulations (of people, music, and ideas) and borders (geopolitical and disciplinary), this chapter outlines one possible approach: examining how high-cultural institutions have adopted and transformed internationalist practices and fantasies of information management, as they have sought to serve both their own interests and the larger cause of international understanding. In recent years, there has been something of a resurgence of interest in early twentieth-century musical internationalism, and the ISCM in particular.[5] Emphasizing the deep historical connection between liberal internationalism and imperialism – a connection nowhere more obvious than in the World's Fairs tradition – I build on that growing body of research here by developing insights from recent studies of nineteenth-century intersections between the histories of music and science concerning the formation, disciplining, and transfer of metropolitan knowledge under the conditions of colonial modernity.[6] Focusing primarily on the ISCM's first decade, I show how both the bureaucratic process used to determine festival programs and the quasi-bureaucratic habits of attending to contemporary music the event encouraged – habits characterized above all by acts of comparison and cataloguing – can be

contemporary music, the history of which has also been marred by 'international' institutions enacting damaging forms of exclusion – as described in, for example, George E. Lewis, 'A Small Act of Curation,' *OnCurating* 44 (2020), https://www.on-curating.org/issue-44-reader/a-small-act-of-curation.html (accessed October 2022).

[5] Significant publications include: Anne C. Shreffler, 'The International Society for Contemporary Music and Its Political Context (Prague, 1935),' in *Music and International History in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2015), 58–90; Sarah Collins, 'What Was Contemporary Music? The New, the Modern and the Contemporary in the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM),' in *The Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music*, ed. Björn Heile and Charles Wilson (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2019), 56–85; Sarah Collins, Barbara L. Kelly, and Laura Tunbridge, eds., 'Round Table: A "Musical League of Nations"? Music Institutions and the Politics of Internationalism between the Wars,' *Journal of the Royal Musical* Association 147, no. 2 (2022): 557–628. The standard reference text on the ISCM remains Anton Haefeli, *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM): Ihre Geschichte von 1922 bis zur Gegenwart* (Zurich: Atlantis Musikbuch-Verlag, 1982) [henceforth *IGNM*].

[6] See especially James Q. Davies and Ellen Lockhart, eds., *Sound Knowledge: Music and Science in London, 1789–1851* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016). On ideological and geopolitical entanglements between twentieth-century internationalism and imperialism, see Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin, eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

understood as means of attempting to delineate and manage a vast, superabundant field: the unfolding history of the musical present. The ISCM attempted to resolve that problem in a 'non-political' way. Although the organization thereby achieved a prominent and in some respects unique status in European musical life, significant frictions and obstacles also inevitably ensued.

Recontextualizing the ISCM's technocratic aspect casts fresh light on the institutionalization of musical modernism in this formative period. 'Rationalizing culture,' to borrow a phrase from Georgina Born, has long been understood as one of the key stories, perhaps *the* story, of the arts in the twentieth century.[7] In the academy at least, that seemingly impersonal and inexorable process has often been narrated in pessimistic, even eschatological tones (despite, or perhaps because of, our own complicity). But for many in the early twentieth century, it was a vital cause for optimism – a beacon of hope – that needed urgently to be pushed further and faster. It was also, more prosaically, a highly effective strategy of cultural politics, especially for those seeking to cultivate alternative value systems and circuits of transmission to the ones associated with established concert institutions and the rapidly developing marketplace for popular music. Rationalization at the ISCM festival was thus not only, or even primarily, a top-down effect of the growing reach of the state or the so-called 'culture industry.'[8] It was also embraced – albeit in response to certain structural incentives and constraints produced by those larger forces, and not without resistance and critique – in a more voluntary, bottom-up way by musicians themselves.

The ISCM served as a nexus through which those associated with it attempted to organize both themselves and their art form on an international scale. Their efforts, I will

[7] Georgina Born, *Rationalizing Culture: IRCAM, Boulez, and the Institutionalization of the Musical Avant-Garde* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995).
[8] The Frankfurt School of course looms large here. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,' in *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94–136. One critique Adorno directed at the ISCM is discussed below.

suggest, had two main legacies. First, the festival's regulated display of contemporary music – and the conventions adopted by critics to make that display amenable to verbal description – contributed in distinctive ways to the formation, legitimization, and circulation of frameworks and categories that would do much to determine how the history of early twentieth-century musical modernism has been understood and taught to this day. Second, although far from purely rational in practice, the process of determining the festival programs (via an international jury of elite musical modernists) helped to cultivate emergent notions of musical expertise and associated forms of cultural-administrative labor. Closely related ways of thinking about and wielding musical knowledge loom large in current accounts of the festival-centered culture of high modernism that arose after 1945.[9] But due partly to the enduring tendency to treat the Second World War as a self-evident historiographical rupture, their larger genealogies have rarely been explored. In this and other respects, a renewed focus on the ISCM as an imperfect, provisional mechanism of cultural rationalization points us toward relationships and trajectories still obscured by the once-hegemonic model of music history that prioritized musical works and stylistic trends as its primary objects of knowledge: the very model, ironically, that the festival itself inherited and tended to promote.

Technocracy and encyclopedism

At once the most anxious and the most idealistic speaker at the World Congress of Universal Documentation was also the most famous: the British writer H.G. Wells. Like a growing number of his contemporaries in the 1930s, Wells believed that the world stood on the brink of a catastrophic total war. Guided by a Darwinian view of the grand sweep of human history, he identified one key factor as both a root cause of this predicament and a potentially transformative remedy: the organization of knowledge. In a series of lectures and essays from

[9] In addition to the texts cited in note 93, below, see Jennifer Iverson, *Electronic Inspirations: Technologies of the Cold War Musical Avant-Garde* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

1936–7, culminating in his address to the congress in Paris, he described an alarming disjunction between, on the one hand, the haphazard and limited ways in which information and learning were collected and distributed through localized institutions such as universities, and, on the other, the rapidly increasing interaction between previously distinct societies and the daunting scale of the difficulties facing the international community as a whole. His proposed solution was to create what he called a 'world brain': a network of experts who would prepare a universal encyclopedia containing all human knowledge. Only through this 'new social organ,' he proclaimed, could the world 'pull its mind together,' and develop a 'common ideology' to 'dissolv[e] human conflict into unity.'[10] Apparently immune to the subconscious urges of Freudian psychology, the collective intelligence envisaged by Wells as a utopian model of global governance would concern itself not so much with facilitating a more abundant or widespread circulation of knowledge as with systematizing its flows into strictly hierarchical patterns of accumulation and radiation (Figure 1).

Wells's was in many respects a maverick stance. In its advocacy of science and education as panaceas for social and political problems, and its yearning for a world government led by a benevolent elite of technical experts, the 'world brain' proposal reiterated key features of the idiosyncratic worldview that its astonishingly prolific author had advanced many times before over the previous years and decades.[11] But the scheme also expressed widely held premises and aspirations, and drew clear inspiration from existing models of international cooperation. Driven by a conviction in the value of planning, information sharing, and expertise, many early twentieth-century intellectuals, scientists, civil servants, and others espoused an agenda of 'technocratic internationalism' and pursued its characteristic organizational and institutional forms. As historians of technology have

[10] H.G. Wells, *World Brain* (London: Adamantine Press, 1994 [originally published 1938]), 86, 122, 123.
[11] W. Boyd Rayward, 'The March of the Modern and the Reconstitution of the World's Knowledge Apparatus: H.G. Wells, Encyclopedism and the World Brain,' in *European Modernism and the Information Society: Informing the Present, Understanding the Past*, ed. W. Boyd Rayward (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 223–39.

observed, this type of internationalism did not cohere into a unified movement, but rather operated as 'a very influential background ideology' across a wide range of fields and political perspectives.[12] Drifting readily into Wellsian fantasies of total mastery of knowledge, an important facet of that ideology stressed how the expert-led exchange of information and ideas should benefit the individuals involved, their home countries, and the larger international community. Consequently, although historians sometimes draw a distinction between technocratic internationalism (in the narrower sense of cooperation on research, policy, and infrastructure projects) and cultural internationalism (initiatives promoting international understanding through artistic, educational, and intellectual exchange), in practice these two strands were deeply intertwined, and cultural-internationalist endeavors often involved a significant technocratic component.[13]

From the middle of the nineteenth century, technocratic internationalism developed as a mode of attempting to govern the very conditions of industrial modernity of which it, too, was a product: new media and communications technologies; an expansion and intensification of global trade; increasingly complex and far-reaching national and colonial bureaucracies; and the formation of modern university research disciplines and their epistemic communities. It manifested itself most concretely in a remarkable proliferation of inter-governmental and non-governmental international organizations, many of which sought to foster transnational communities of specialists and enable them to coordinate information and standards.[14] An important early example was the International Telegraphic Union,

[12] Johan Schot and Vincent Lagendijk, 'Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks,' *Journal of Modern European History* 6, no. 2 (2008): 199.
[13] On this distinction, see, for example, Simon J. Potter, *Wireless Internationalism and Distant Listening: Britain, Propaganda, and the Invention of Global Radio, 1920-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 5.
[14] Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea* (London: Penguin, 2013), 94–115; Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 11–18; Emily S. Rosenberg, *Transnational Currents in a Shrinking World: 1870–1945* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 11–42, 127–75; Brigitte Schroeder-Gudehus, 'International Science from the Franco-Prussian War to World War Two: An Era of Organization,' in *The Cambridge History of Science*, Vol. 8: *Modern Science in National, Transnational, and Global Contexts*, eds.,

founded in 1865 to facilitate the expansion of communications networks. In musical life, the imperative to establish shared technical norms as the basis for international exchange, for both commercial and more idealistic reasons, gave rise to a series of international conferences held between the 1880s and the 1930s to establish a universal standard for concert pitch.[15] Most international meetings, publications, information bureaus, and related initiatives in this vein positioned themselves as 'non-political.' Indeed, because they typically sought to disaggregate 'technical' questions from 'political' ones, they provided apparently neutral common ground, albeit often in provisional and unstable ways, for individuals with clashing interests or beliefs.[16] At the World Congress of Universal Documentation, for example, Wells – whose politics have most often been categorized as an eccentric kind of socialism – shared a platform with the General Director of the Prussian State Library, a functionary of the Third Reich.[17]

Yet international cooperation on this basis clearly had political intentions and effects, on several levels. Within specific fields, international conferences and the like were highly effective mechanisms of cultural politics and cultural diplomacy, with great potential to enhance the status of particular experts and epistemologies. That potential was exploited perhaps most effectively, or at least most enthusiastically, by proponents of liberal internationalism, such as the officials at the League of Nations who in the 1920s set up technical agencies to tackle economic, social, and humanitarian problems on an international

Hugh Richard Slotten, Ronald L. Numbers, and David N. Livingstone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 43–59.

[15] Fanny Gribenski, 'Negotiating the Pitch: For a Diplomatic History of *A*, at the Crossroads of Politics, Music, Science and Industry,' in *International Relations, Music and Diplomacy: Sounds and Voices on the International Stage*, ed. Frédéric Ramel and Cécile Prévost-Thomas (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 173–92.

[16] On the tendency to 'technify' particular issues (that is, to define them as 'non-political'), see Schot and Lagendijk, 'Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years,' 198–99.

[17] Voges, 'Scientific Internationalism in a Time of Crisis,' 110.

basis.[18] A related initiative was the League of Nations's International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation (ICIC), a predecessor to UNESCO whose early members included such luminaries as Henri Bergson, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Marie Curie, and Albert Einstein. The ICIC first convened in Geneva in early August 1922 – less than two weeks before the founding of the ISCM – to discuss matters such as postwar economic conditions for artists and researchers, international cooperation between universities, and the necessity of international coordination in the field of bibliography.[19] From 1926, its Sub-Committee on Arts and Letters proposed, but mostly abandoned, various music-related initiatives concerned with collating information and agreeing international standards, including the creation of a world catalogue of sound recordings.[20] Even when framed as standing outside politics or traditional diplomacy – something of a stretch especially in cases where they were formally affiliated with the League of Nations – liberal-internationalist initiatives to support networks of experts and the advancement and circulation of knowledge were frequently accompanied by a moralizing rhetoric about peace and international understanding: a rhetoric that had its roots in the Enlightenment principles of a universal human community and of the capacity of intellectual progress and a rational political order to improve society.[21]

[18] Susan Pedersen, 'Review Essay: Back to the League of Nations,' *American Historical Review* 112, no. 4 (2007): 1108–12; Patricia Clavin, *Securing the World Economy: The Reinvention of the League of Nations, 1920–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[19] 'Annex 416a: The Work of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation: Report of the Committee, Approved by the Council on September 13th, 1922,' *League of Nations Official Journal* 3, no. 11, part 2 (November 1922): 1303–15. See also Daniel Laqua, 'Transnational Intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations, and the Problem of Order,' *Journal of Global History* 6 (2011): 223–47. A separate International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation, affiliated with but semi-autonomous from the ICIC, was established in Paris in 1926.

[20] Christiane Sibille, 'La musique à la Société des Nations,' *Relations Internationales*, no. 155 (2013): 89–102; idem, 'The Politics of Music in International Organizations in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,' *New Global Studies* 10, no. 3 (2016): 265–72.

[21] At the turn of the century, no individual better exemplified this idealistic streak than the Belgian bibliographer and peace activist Paul Otlet (who in 1895 founded the International Institute for Bibliography, the organizing body of the World Congress of Universal Documentation, which he also attended). See Daniel Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), 181–210; and Alex Wright, *Cataloging the World: Paul Otlet and the Birth of the Information Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

At a moment of great geopolitical peril, Wells turned to the encyclopedia, the Enlightenment intellectual project *par excellence*.[22] Though inspired by the larger tradition of technocratic internationalism, what he proposed clearly sat at its extreme, utopian edge: synthesizing all human knowledge was, of course, an impossible dream, and it does not seem likely that fulfilling it could have had the astonishing geopolitical effects he envisaged.[23] Perhaps, though, it was a blessing that he was so impractical. Although he has sometimes been credited with foreseeing present-day information technologies, Wells was not at all inclined toward the extreme libertarianism later associated with Silicon Valley. As a political vision, the 'world brain' was innately elitist and anti-democratic. Echoing the concern with 'order' exhibited by many of the initiatives to promote intellectual exchange undertaken in interwar Europe, it placed a troubling emphasis on discipline and control.[24] Following postcolonial and decolonial critiques of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, the supposedly neutral, 'objective' universalism Wells attributed to his narrow coterie of benign experts reads today more as a means and pretext for political domination.[25] As the many circumstantial and ideological connections between encyclopedism and the World's Fairs imply, internationalist visions and practices of information management belonged to a broader lineage of 'hungry' epistemologies, 'ecstatic accumulations,' and 'fantasies of total possession': familiar high-imperial strategies of comprehending and ordering the world in order to facilitate and legitimize colonial rule, expropriation, and violence.[26] Wells, it should

[22] His speech at Paris duly nodded to Diderot; Wells, *World Brain*, 124.
[23] Practical and ethical issues with the 'world brain' are situated in Wells's political thought more broadly in Rayward, 'The March of the Modern and the Reconstitution of the World's Knowledge Apparatus.'
[24] Laqua, 'Transnational Intellectual Cooperation, the League of Nations, and the Problem of Order.' On the apparent contradiction between liberal ends and authoritarian means in Wells's politics in the 1930s, see Philip Coupland, 'H.G. Wells's "Liberal Fascism,"' *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 4 (2000): 541–58.
[25] See, for example, Walter D. Mignolo, 'The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism,' *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 721–48.
[26] Davies and Lockhart, 'Introduction: Fantasies of Total Description,' in *Sound Knowledge*, ed. Davies and Lockhart, 1–26; Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020). See also Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993).

be noted here, had long been fascinated by eugenics, and indulged in fantasies of annihilating non-white or otherwise 'deficient' people.[27] Although many of the activities to which they gave rise were admirable on their own terms, technocracy and encyclopedism were imperial, illiberal pillars of liberal internationalism, all the way down to their intellectual, political, and material foundations.

Synoptic imperatives

The tensions characteristic of internationalism's technocratic and encyclopedic strands – altruism and self-interest, freedom and discipline, universalism and pluralism, utopianism and banality – also pervaded the emergent musical internationalism of the early twentieth century. In 1899, following the examples of colleagues in other academic disciplines, musicologists embraced self-consciously 'international' modes of cooperation by founding the Internationale Musikgesellschaft (International Music Society), which held conferences in cities including Leipzig, London, and Paris before its dissolution at the outbreak of the First World War. In 1927, it was reborn as the International Musicological Society (IMS), and soon began to organize further conferences and publish the multilingual journal *Acta Musicologica* (the activities for which it remains best known today).[28] Although the economic and political challenges of the 1930s largely stymied these plans, the IMS initially hoped to create at its headquarters in Switzerland an international bureau 'available to all members for information, suggestions, and enquires' that would undertake tasks such as surveying research topics in different countries, procuring copies of primary sources, and (of

[27] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880–1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), 118–51. Alexander W. Cowan's chapter in this volume, on the development and commodification of listening tests designed to 'measure' musical talent, investigates direct links between the eugenics movement and musical culture in early twentieth-century America.
[28] On the IMS and its ties with the earlier IMG, see Dorothea Baumann and Dinko Fabris, eds., *The History of the IMS (1927–2017)* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2017).

course) coordinating the efforts of bibliographers.[29] One reason such a bureau presumably seemed so attractive is that it would complement and augment the kinds of accumulative, totalizing projects – encyclopedias, complete editions, and other such monumental apparatuses – already central to musicology at a national level in its early history as a university research discipline.[30]

Given that it had emerged, in part, from the academy, technocratic internationalism could be accommodated quite straightforwardly by an international body dedicated to musicology (albeit with a degree of underlying tension with the field's enduring strain of gentlemanly antiquarianism). For institutions more immediately concerned with music as a performing art, the idea of promoting expertise and sharing information was potentially attractive – not least as a readily available model for justifying elitism and explaining what an 'international' organization was for – but required some creative reinterpretation. The early history of the ISCM reveals that process of translation and adjustment in action. The organization developed out of a festival called the 'International Chamber Music Performances in Salzburg 1922' (Internationale Kammermusikaufführungen in Salzburg 1922). Attended by composers including Bartók, Hindemith, Milhaud, and Webern, its six concerts of chamber music from various European countries and the United States were presented by the Austrian organizers as:

> a *kind of world review of contemporary composition*, based on which it should be possible for the music lover to form a vivid image of that which is being produced today in the domain of serious music in individual countries: an image of the nature, goals, and developments of the art of music.[31]

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[29] 'Dieses Bureau steht allen Mitgliedern für Auskünfte, Anregungen und Nachforschungen zur Verfügung'; 'Die Gründung der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft,' *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft/Bulletin de la Société internationale de Musicologie* 1, no. 1 (1928): 4–5. Translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[30] Alexander Rehding, *Music and Monumentality: Commemoration and Wonderment in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 141–67.

[31] 'als eine *Art Welt-Revue zeitgenössischer Tonkunst gedacht*, auf Grund deren es dem Musikfreunde möglich sein soll, sich ein lebendiges Bild dessen zu schaffen, was auf dem Gebiete der ernsten Musik in den einzelnen Ländern heute hervorgebracht wird, ein Bild der Art, Ziele und Fortentwicklungen der musikalischen Kunst'; Heinrich Damisch and Rudolph Réti (on behalf of the Committee for the Performance of International Chamber Music in Salzburg), circular letter to journal editors, June 14, 1922, Salzburg Festival Archives, Salzburg.

Greatly enthused by what was claimed to be 'the first attempt that has been made since the war to bring musicians of all countries together, regardless of political differences,' some of those present determined to create an international organization to take forward the festival's agenda on a more permanent basis.[32] Meeting in a Salzburg coffee house, they elected the British musicologist Edward J. Dent as their first president. (A committed internationalist, Dent led the ISCM until 1938, became president of the IMS in 1932, and served on the ICIC's Sub-Committee on Arts and Letters between 1928 and 1930.[33]) They also agreed to structure the new institution as a federation of national sections: an established model of international cooperation that worked with, not against, the powerful cultural and political logics of nationhood.[34]

Faced with rapidly shifting challenges and opportunities in the wake of the First World War, the ISCM's founders were at once idealistic and pragmatic. Although like many other cultural and technocratic internationalists they insisted that their initiative was 'non-political' – a claim underpinned by prevailing discourses of aesthetic autonomy – they genuinely believed in the capacity of their art form to promote international understanding and reconciliation.[35] But in adopting internationalist rhetoric and practices, they were also driven by a more immediate aim: to intervene in the conditions for the performance and reception of modernist music. The war and its aftermath had severely disrupted transnational networks and patterns of circulation just at a time when new modernist vanguards in music were defining themselves. New idioms, techniques, and aesthetic values had proliferated, with significant variation between different countries and traditions. Motivated by the

[32] Edward J. Dent, 'A New International,' *The Nation and Athenaeum* 31, no. 23 (September 2, 1922): 746.
[33] Thanks in part to Dent's influence in both organizations, early IMS congresses were held in conjunction with ISCM festivals at Liège in 1930 and Barcelona in 1936.
[34] Dent had a second spell as president in 1945–7. For a detailed account of the 1922 festival and the ISCM's founding, see Haefeli, *IGNM*, 38–59.
[35] The paradox of a 'non-political' internationalism has been extensively discussed in the literature on the ISCM. See Haefeli, *IGNM*, 190–232; Shreffler, 'The ISCM and Its Political Context'; and Collins, 'What Was Contemporary Music?'

perception that these innovative movements were unfairly marginalized by mainstream concert institutions, the ISCM was conceived above all as a project of patronage and advocacy: perhaps by joining forces with their colleagues abroad, modernist musicians could overcome the indifference and hostility they often seemed to face at home.[36]

The idea of creating a '*world review of contemporary composition*' – within a highly Eurocentric frame of reference – remained central to that project, in ways that registered some of the overlapping anxieties to which the upheavals of modernism had given rise. In the first place, there was a widespread feeling of disquiet about living in, as Dent himself put in 1925, 'a state of complete musical chaos.'[37] For the pessimistic, this impression genuinely reflected European culture's trajectory of decline and fragmentation amid the turmoil of modernity.[38] Another possibility, though, was that the problem was really one of perspective. More music, in more diverse idioms, seemed to be being composed and published than ever before. A plethora of new journals specializing in contemporary music sprang up immediately after the First World War, many of which proudly declared their internationalist values.[39] But whereas academic and literary periodicals such as T.S. Eliot's *The Criterion* – launched in October 1922 with the intention to contribute toward the 'circulation of influence of thought and sensibility between nation and nation in Europe' – published the very essays, poems, and other texts that researchers and writers labored to produce, music journals could only *report on* new works and concert life.[40] While it was thus easy to read about new music,

[36] The idea of internationalism as a response to marginalization emerges clearly from subsequent eyewitness accounts of the ISCM's founding: see, for example, Rudolph Réti, 'Die Entstehung der IGNM,' *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 12, no. 3 (1957): 113–17. Another factor in this sense of marginalization was antisemitism: a significant proportion of the musicians present in 1922, especially those from central Europe (such as Rudolph Réti), had Jewish family backgrounds.
[37] Dent, 'Introduction,' in Adolf Weissmann, *The Problems of Modern Music*, trans. M.M. Bozman (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent, 1925), v.
[38] To give just one example: Paul Dukas, 'Les tendances de la musique contemporaine' (1924), in *Les Écrits de Paul Dukas sur la Musique* (Paris: Société d'Éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1948), 667–71.
[39] Such journals included *Anbruch* (Vienna, 1919), *La Revue musicale* (Paris, 1920), *Melos* (Berlin, 1920), *Modern Music* (New York, 1924), and *Sovremennaya muzïka* (Moscow, 1924).
[40] T.S. Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber, 1948), 116, quoted in Carlos Reijnen and Marleen Rensen, 'Introduction: European Encounters: Intellectual Exchange and the Rethinking of Europe (1914–1945),' in *European Encounters: Intellectual Exchange and the Rethinking of Europe 1914–1945*, eds.

opportunities to hear it in performance were much rarer. Under the media conditions of the early 1920s, the circulation of sound remained a basic challenge for musicians (one that the approaching development of electrical microphones and international radio broadcasting would mitigate only partially). As Rudolph Réti, one of the organizers of the 1922 chamber music festival in Salzburg, argued in an essay introducing the event, if recent trends in music were less widely recognized and understood than those in literature or visual art, this was above all because books and paintings were more amenable to mechanical reproduction. ('Words about music, however,' he wrote, 'the only widely available substitute […] are more insubstantial than shadows.'[41]) Perhaps, then, the difficulty of assembling the heterogeneous pieces of musical modernism into a coherent whole actually stemmed from the absence of a suitable vantage point – or listening post – from which they might be surveyed and compared: one that would need to be 'international.'

The pressures of what Richard Taruskin termed 'patent-office modernism' had raised the stakes of staying informed.[42] Just as (idealistic pronouncements notwithstanding) scientists were often motivated to take part in international endeavors by a fear of missing out on the new discoveries and techniques of their rivals, musicians faced with an apparent acceleration in the rate of music-historical change and modernist discourses that framed 'progress' as a historical or ethical necessity worried about falling behind.[43] Anxieties about belatedness were most acute in modernism's so-called 'peripheries,' as Sarah Collins has observed regarding the ISCM's British section.[44] But especially in the immediate aftermath

Carlos Reijnen and Marleen Rensen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014), 20. There was, of course, a longstanding tradition of music journals reproducing music in notation, whether as musical examples or score inserts. But these practices were better suited to some kinds of compositions than others (large-scale genres such as operas and symphonies were always problematic), and, in any case, the gap between the print medium and the experience of music as sound or performance.

[41] 'Worte aber über Musik, der einzig vielgebotene Ersatz […] sind wesenloser als Schatten'; Réti, 'Die Salzburger Idee: Worte zum Beginn,' *Anbruch* 4, no. 13–14 (July 1922): 193.

[42] Richard Taruskin, *Music in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[43] Schroeder-Gudehus, 'International Science from the Franco-Prussian War to World War Two,' 50.

[44] Collins, 'What Was Contemporary Music?,' 58–59, 68–70.

of the war, some in the 'center' were also apprehensive about their ignorance of what was happening elsewhere. To combat the 'one-sided and ever more one-sided way' in which German musical life was now developing, argued the Berlin-based critic Adolf Weissmann in 1921: 'The world traffic in music must be reestablished. The barriers between peoples must fall completely. Germany must take delivery of foreign music from the mouth and the hands of foreign artists themselves.'[45] The following year, he became the first chair of the ISCM's German section, which launched its local program of activity by inviting the French-Swiss conductor Ernest Ansermet to conduct the Berlin Philharmonic in the German premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*: a work which, as Weissmann noted, 'the war and the insularity it caused had kept from us previously.'[46]

Musical experts and administrative labor

As a self-consciously postwar initiative, the founding of the ISCM was driven to a great extent by the desire to enable the innovations of modernism to be heard, assessed, and categorized, and in this way to renew cultural and intellectual exchange. Initially, the organization was envisioned as a year-round network for circulating not only musical works, but also new ideas about music and its recent history, and information about significant developments in member countries. Each national section, it was imagined, would submit regular reports on premieres and other notable events in that country. These would be compiled and circulated by the ISCM's central office in London, which would also publish

[45] 'Doch ist nicht zu leugnen, daß sich das deutsche Musikleben einseitig und immer einseitiger entwickelt. … Der Weltverkehr der Musik muß wiederhergestellt werden. Die Schranken zwischen den Völkern müssen ganz fallen. Deutschland muß aus dem Mund und aus den Händen fremder Künstler selbst die fremde Musik entgegennehmen'; Adolf Weissmann, 'Deutschland und die Weltmusik,' *Melos* 3, no. 1 (November 1921): 5. Consistent with this agenda, subsequent articles in the same issue of *Melos* included reports from French, Italian, and American writers on recent musical developments in those countries (all of which had fought against the Germany in the First World War).

[46] 'Der Krieg und die durch ihn verursachte Abgeschlossenheit hatte dieses Werk bisher von uns ferngehalten'; Weissmann, 'Berlin,' *Die Musik* 15, no. 4 (January 1923): 305.

an international journal and oversee an international lending library of contemporary scores.[47] At their most ambitious, the organization's founders hoped to serve the twinned causes of modernism and internationalism by building something like their very own world brain.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, though, most proposals along these lines proved expensive and difficult to coordinate, and were quietly dropped.[48] Instead, the peripatetic festival – which reliably attracted support from local officials and musical institutions eager to present the host city in a favorable light – emerged as the ISCM's chief mechanism of international collaboration and exchange, and the primary means by which it sought to foster more informed and comprehensive perspectives on contemporary music. Apart from its mobility, the festival's most distinctive feature was the system used to select the music performed in its main program. Each year, delegates representing each of the ISCM's national sections elected a jury of five eminent musicians, who were then entrusted with choosing the music for the following year's festival (Figure 2). The bulk of their selections had to be made from scores sent in by the sections, some of which set up their own national judging panels to decide what to submit.[49] The international jury was chaired by Dent throughout his tenure as president, although he did not officially have any say about what music was chosen.

To ensure balance, it was stipulated that all the jurors in a given year had to be from different countries. But as Dent insisted in advance of the first meeting of the selection committee in 1923:

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[47] Dent, 'Plans for Salzburg,' *The Nation and Athenaeum* 32, no. 18 (February 3, 1923): 696; 'Werbung zur Mitgliedschaft,' in *Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (Gegründet in Salzburg, 1922) Sektion Deutschland: Satzung* [*c.* 1922–23], 3, Heinz-Tiessen-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, 2109.

[48] Similar ambitions would resurface during the mid-1930s, when new political pressures led some to argue that the ISCM should be reimagined and the scope of its activities expanded. See 'Musikfeste und Musikalischer Alltag (Vorschläge, Einwände und Impressionen, anlässlich des Prager Festes der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, 1935.),' *Musica Viva* 1, no. 1 (April 1936): 1–8. One of the few concrete results of this push was a two-day conference called 'Music and Life' held alongside the 1938 festival in London. In 1949, the ISCM finally met its long-held goal of publishing an international journal (*Music Today*), but this only ran for one issue.

[49] Initially, there was some debate about how big the jury should be and the extent to which it should restrict itself to the submissions of the national sections; from 1924, the conventions were quite settled. See Haefeli, *IGNM*, 97–98.

> that does not mean that they [the jurors] have been elected by the Council of Delegates to represent their own individual countries. They were elected from A to Z solely and simply based on their merits as personalities who are best suited to fulfil this duty, as men of international vision and with knowledge and understanding of modern tendencies in music. When they convene in Zurich, they must leave their nationality aside and consider the music presented to them only with the eyes of a musician.[50]

Echoing the rhetoric of bodies such as the ICIC (whose 'personalities eminent in the various branches of knowledge' purportedly worked in 'complete independence' of their national governments), Dent presented the jurors' expertise – and their rigorous focus on the immanent value of 'the music itself' – as enabling them to transcend provincial biases and interests.[51] Even if, as we will see, the musicians appointed rarely seem to have lived up to this ideal of objective, non-partisan judgement in practice, the mutually beneficial partnership between them and the ISCM enhanced the status of both parties, in a way that mirrored the new 'economies of prestige' associated with the proliferation of cultural prizes in the early twentieth century (many of which were awarded by panels of experts).[52] Cultivating prestige in this way was essential to legitimizing not just the ISCM itself, but also the challenging and sometimes confrontational aesthetics of 'contemporary music' more generally. Empowering an international body of musicians to elevate a handful of their peers to a position of judgement, the jury system functioned as a means of validating musical quality and significance distinct from both the academic strictures of the conservatoire and the commercial imperatives of the marketplace. In theory at least, these musicians had freed

[50] 'das bedeutet nicht, daß sie von dem Delegierten-Rat gewählt worden sind, um ihre eigenen, einzelnen Länder zu vertreten. Sie wurden von A bis Z einzig und allein einfach auf Grund ihrer Verdienste gewählt, als Persönlichkeiten, die diese Pflicht am besten zu erfüllen geeignet sind, Männer von internationalem Weitblick und mit Kenntnis und Verständnis für die modernen Tendenzen in der Musik. Wenn sie sich in Zürich zusammenfinden, müssen sie ihre Nationalität beiseite lassen und die ihnen vorgelegte Musik nur mit den Augen des Musikers betrachten'; Dent, 'Ziele der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Neue Musik,' *Der Auftakt* 3, no. 4 (1923): 108.

[51] International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, Minutes (First Session), 1922, quoted in Sibille, 'La Musique à la Société des Nations,' 94, n. 20.

[52] James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2005). A landmark recent study of one such prize in music is Marina Frolova-Walker, *Stalin's Music Prize: Soviet Culture and Politics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016).

themselves from arbitrary traditions and fickle audiences to become accountable only to themselves.

If this was a liberatory step in some respects, in others it served to establish a new kind of closed shop. The ISCM's jurors were elected in a vote; but, like all technocratic endeavors, the process was far from truly democratic. Just as, according to Tamara Levitz, the deeply colonial ideology and geopolitics of a League of Nations-inspired internationalism helped early twentieth-century scholars including Dent to forge the 'elite, white, exclusionary, patriarchal profession' of modern musicology, the ISCM affirmed a restrictive ideal of the musical expert that would facilitate analogous exclusions in the field of contemporary music for decades to come.[53] Dent's description of the jurors as '*men* of international vision' is revealing in this respect. Women contributed significantly to ISCM festivals from the outset, chiefly as performers; but the selection committee usually consisted of composers and conductors, and these professions were dominated by men. Until 1979, Nadia Boulanger was the only woman to serve on an ISCM festival jury.[54] Geographical and racial limits proved similarly persistent. The ISCM has long been valued by musicians from modernism's global 'peripheries,' for whom it has offered access to forms of exchange and recognition from which they have otherwise been marginalized.[55] But although even early on the organization's scope was in theory more expansive – sections founded in countries outside Europe included those in Argentina (1924) and Japan (1935) – throughout the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, all the musicians elected as festival jurors were from Europe or the United States.[56]

[53] Levitz, 'The Musicological Elite,' 44. The argument about 'exclusive internationalists' is foregrounded especially in the section on the IMS, at pp. 12–18.
[54] Boulanger was elected to the jury three times (in 1932, 1934, and 1951).
[55] Björn Heile, 'Musical Modernism, Global: Comparative Observations,' in *The Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music*, ed. Heile and Wilson, 175–98.
[56] The only figure who might be claimed as an exception was the composer and pianist Joaquín Nin-Culmell (brother of the writer Anaïs Nin), who served on the jury for the 1941 festival in New York: but although his parents were Cuban, he was born in Berlin and lived in the United States (where he had returned in 1939 after spending several years in France and Spain). The almost total dominance of the juries by European and North

The ISCM's emphasis on 'international' diversity did not, then, preclude a significant degree of homogeneity in other respects. Yet those involved in the organization's internal politics were often more vividly aware of the differences in their attitudes and interests. Whereas scientific methods and knowledge were widely assumed to be universal (even when presented as unique to the 'civilized world' or treated as a matter of national competition), aesthetic judgements unavoidably involved delicate questions of tradition and taste.[57] Debates about the election of jurors and conversations at jury meetings themselves were kept confidential, thus preserving the ISCM's veneer of 'non-political' international cooperation. But both stages of the process exposed profound tensions within the organization, many of them stemming from rivalries between countries (or groups of countries) and, relatedly, from a foundational equivocation between an eclectic understanding of the 'contemporary' and a more circumscribed and radical conception of the 'new.'[58] In the photograph of the 1931 jury in Figure 2, Alban Berg clutches the score of the Symphony, Op. 21, by his friend Anton Webern (which was indeed selected for performance), as if it might lend him strength in his 'very depressing' task of arguing 'alone against 4, sometimes 5 opponents (a Frenchman, an Italian, a Belgian, and a Pole (+ an Englishman)).'[59] At the meeting of national delegates at that year's festival in Oxford, the vote to decide the 1932 jury had to be repeated multiple times after the French, Italian, Polish, and Spanish sections protested angrily that 'the Latin countries were not adequately represented.'[60] Although the delegates eventually agreed to

American musicians only began to loosen (though was by no means overturned) in the 1970s and 1980s, when musicians from South America and East Asia started to appear regularly on the program committees. For an overview of ISCM festival locations, programs, and juries, see 'Previous Festivals,' https://iscm.org/wnmd-world-new-music-days/previous-festivals/ (accessed December 2022).

[57] Geert J. Somsen, 'A History of Universalism: Conceptions of the Internationality of Science from the Enlightenment to the Cold War,' *Minerva* 46 (2008): 361–79.

[58] Whereas in most languages the ISCM was known by the nearest equivalent to its name in English, in German it was called the 'Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik': the International Society for *New* Music. On the terminological and conceptual issues involved, see Haefeli, *IGNM*, 262–85; and Collins, 'What Was Contemporary Music?'

[59] Alban Berg to Arnold Schoenberg, February 13, 1931, in *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence: Selected Letters*, eds., Juliane Brand, Christopher Hailey, and Donald Harris (London: Macmillan, 1987), 412.

[60] 'Minutes of the Tenth Council of Delegates of the International Society for Contemporary Music' (1931), Heinz-Tiessen-Archiv, Akademie der Künste, 2109.

elect Ansermet, Boulanger, Webern, and the composers Alois Hába and Heinz Tiessen, the arguments did not stop there. When these five musicians actually met in Berlin in late 1931, the discussions were, in Dent's words, 'very long and tiring': strong aesthetic convictions and even stronger personalities seem to have made constructive dialogue almost impossible.[61]

From previous experience on the jury, Tiessen had already concluded that a deprovincialized perspective on contemporary music was unattainable. Demands from his fellow German musicians that the ISCM should strive harder to meet 'a purely objective standard' of musical quality were 'illogical and impossible,' he wrote in 1929, because different countries held 'diverging conceptions of the nature of music.' Given that Germans assumed the right to determine how their own music was represented at the festival, 'we cannot at the same time demand that we also decide what the *other* [countries] for their part are permitted to consider as examples of their labor!'[62] The most sensible and courteous way forward, he advised, was for the jurors to create informal pacts, as he and Ravel had done in 1929, whereby each agreed to support the other's choices of music from their own country.[63] Given the extent to which, as Annegret Fauser has shown, Dent's activities as a scholar and administrator were driven by his desire to resist 'German' musical hegemony, he might well have approved of Tiessen's willingness to challenge established Austro-German orthodoxies about the universalism of 'absolute music.'[64] However, the deal with Ravel undermined not

[61] 'Haba chattered and clattered like a machine gun: Webern had outbursts of passionate tirade; Ansermet argued persuasively, Mlle Boulanger and Tiessen sat and smiled and did their best to keep the peace'; Dent to Clive Carey, December 17, 1931, The Papers of Francis Clive Savill ('Clive') Carey, King's College Archive Centre, Cambridge, FCSC/1/1/9. For another glimpse of such tensions, see Ernst Krenek's recollections of a bitter argument with Boulanger at the 1934 jury meeting in Krenek, *Im Atem der Zeit: Erinnerungen an die Moderne*, trans. Friedrich Saathen, rev. trans. Sabine Schulte (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1998), 862–64.
[62] 'die Forderung nach dem rein objektiven Maßstabe … unlogisch und unmöglich … der divergierenden Auffassungen vom Wesen der Musik … können wir nicht gleichzeitig verlangen, daß wir nun auch noch entscheiden, was die *anderen* bei sich als Beispiele ihrer Arbeit betrachten dürfen!'; Heinz Tiessen, 'Feste und Proteste,' *Mitteilungen der International Gesellschaft für Neue Musik: Sektion Deutschland E.V.* 2 (March 20, 1929): 3, Alban Berg Nachlass, Musiksammlung, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna, F21.Berg.450/2.
[63] Tiessen, 'Feste und Proteste,' 3; and idem, 'Die Neue Musik, die IGNM und ihre Deutsche Sektion vor 1933,' *Neue Musik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1958/59* (Mainz: Schott, 1959), 13–14.
[64] Annegret Fauser, 'The Scholar behind the Medal: Edward J. Dent (1876–1957) and the Politics of Music History,' *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 139, no. 2 (2014): 235–60.

only Dent's public statements about the jurors *not* functioning as national representatives, but also the whole notion of the international expert on which the system depended. If cultural values really were as relative and untranslatable as Tiessen seemed to be suggesting, no amount of knowledge or skill would ever allow a musician to transcend their own situatedness in a particular tradition and cultural context or, by the essentializing logics of the day, their origins in a particular nation, ethnicity, or race.[65] In this sense, there could never be a musical 'world brain,' only an assortment of more localized perspectives.

There was another, more mundane reason why the jurors could sometimes be irritable and struggled to engage deeply with all the music put before them: they had been assigned what even a prospectus for the ISCM acknowledged was an 'arduous' duty.[66] As suggested by the piles of sheet music in Figure 2 – at the piano, on the table, and in Berg's hand – the role centered on a very particular kind of paperwork (in the most literal sense). Musical works were assessed not in performance or in 'real' time, but as notated artefacts, whose sounds were imagined in the course of primarily visual scrutiny. (Dent's decree that the jurors should consider the submissions 'only with the eyes of a musician' was unintentionally accurate in this respect.) For all the potential thrill of encountering an undiscovered masterpiece, sifting in this way through the some 200 to 300 scores submitted by the national sections each year could be tedious and draining.[67] Despite its allusion to the centuries-old metaphor of the body politic – evocative of neural, cardiovascular, and other biological pathways of circulation – Wells's 'world brain' assumed a strangely disembodied notion of

[65] Tensions within the ISCM between 'cosmopolitan' notions of world citizenship and the 'international' structure of a federation of nations are explored further in Collins, 'What Was Contemporary Music?,' 61–65, 74–76.

[66] *International Society for Contemporary Music* [1928], 5, Berg Nachlass, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, F21.Berg.450/1. In a further example of the jury's role in securing the ISCM's legitimacy and prestige, the fact that 'musicians of such eminence should from the first have been willing to undertake gratuitously' such a task was cited in this context as 'a strong proof of the interest which the International Society has aroused in the world of music.'

[67] The prospectus referred to in the previous note estimated 200 scores. By the mid-1930s the figure was being reported as almost 300: see 'Contemporary Music Festival,' *The New York Times*, March 1, 1936.

pure knowledge (hence, perhaps, the willingness of his more recent readers to think of him as a prophet of the internet age). In reality, experts had their physical and cognitive limits, and musicians were no exception. Writing to his wife in 1928, Berg (whose health was never all that robust) described falling asleep in exhaustion on the sofa of his Zurich hotel room after a long day of travel, score reading, and wrangling with his fellow jurors.[68] Although their expenses were covered, the selection committee were not paid for their time.[69] Perhaps understandably, then, it was not always easy for Dent to persuade his 'very "work-shy"' colleagues to stick at their task, as he would regale a friend in an account of the 1926 jury meeting: 'Szymanowski is amiably lazy and partial to liqueurs: Bliss is much occupied with his wife: Honegger spends much of the mornings in bed: Scherchen works pretty well but gets restive at times!'[70] These figures had achieved an exalted status within a newly institutionalized 'international' music culture. But one of the prices they paid for it was having to fulfil the kind of mind-numbing administrative labor that defined the working lives of a growing number of their contemporaries, and from which their callings as Great Composers and Maestros had once perhaps been imagined as an escape.[71]

Barometric readings

The jury system did not just determine what music was performed: it also shaped fundamentally how that music was received. As demonstrated by the harsh criticism sometimes directed at the jury – such as the complaints Tiessen attempted to answer in 1929

[68] Alban Berg to Helene Berg, March 24, 1928, in *Alban Berg: Letters to His Wife*, ed. and trans. Bernard Grun (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 361. See also Berg to Schoenberg, March 30, 1928, in *The Berg-Schoenberg Correspondence*, eds., Brand, Hailey, and Harris, 366.
[69] In the 1920s especially, the costs of convening the juries were largely met by the Swiss patron Werner Reinhart. See Ulrike Thiele, *Mäzen und Mentor: Werner Reinhart als Wegbereiter der musikalischen Moderne* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2019), 27–33.
[70] Dent to Lawrence Haward, January 6, 1926, The Papers of Edward Joseph Dent, King's College Archive Centre, EJD/4/111/10/8.
[71] Berg was just one early twentieth-century composer who experienced this kind of trajectory personally: before an improvement in his family's financial situation allowed him to devote himself fully to music in 1906, he had worked as an unpaid trainee civil servant.

– those who attended the ISCM festival were acutely aware that the works they were hearing had been chosen from a much larger field of possibilities. (Indeed, the jurors' names were usually prominently listed at the beginning of the festival program book.) Consequently, it was often claimed that the event offered a distinctively synoptic perspective: a 'musical mirror of its world,'[72] a 'cross-section of our generation's creative work,'[73] a 'unique panorama of contemporary music,'[74] or, in Dent's words, '[an] instructive overview of international contemporary production.'[75] Even a critic disappointed by the quality of the music at a given festival could nevertheless conclude that the event 'cannot be called a failure, for it's probably a true picture, or cross section, or bird's eye view, of the world's musical outputs today, sad as that view may be.'[76] In other words, these events were not simply, or perhaps even primarily, valued as opportunities to hear 'good' music. For an audience packed with composers, performers, critics, publishers, and other new-music insiders, they functioned, as one British critic put it in 1933, as 'assemblies of new works that give us barometric readings of music's activities all over the world.'[77] Of course, the programs were by no means so expansive as to incorporate the entire 'world's musical outputs' or repertoire from 'all over the world.' But such claims are revealing of the world-

[72] R.C., 'Paris Festival: The Contemporary Society and its Function' (1937), Edwin Evans clippings collection, Westminster Music Library, London.
[73] 'Querschnitt durch das Schaffen unserer Generation'; Willy Tappolet, 'Das internationale Musikfest in Genf,' *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 69 (1929): 326, quoted in Haefeli, *IGNM*, 162.
[74] 'ein einzigartiges Panorama der zeitgenössischen Musik'; Alfredo Casella, 'Zum internationalen Musikfest in Florenz,' trans. Paul Stefan, *Anbruch* 16, no. 3 (March 1934): 39.
[75] 'instruktive Übersichten über die internationale zeitgenössische Produktion'; Dent, 'Zum 13. Internationalen Musikfest in Prag 1935,' *Der Auftakt* 15, no. 7–8 (1935): 98.
[76] '[O]ne of the objects of the Society is, after all, informative,' the same critic continued. 'It aims at an exchange of ideas among the various nationalities and the various schools of musical thought, at the interplay of ideas and ideals'; César Saerchinger, 'Fifth International Festivals Shows a Confusing Disparity of Styles,' *Musical Courier* 95, no. 3 (July 21, 1927): 5. On the other hand, this understanding of the festival's purpose also left the jury open to the charge that they had selected a program that 'was in no sense representative of the world's musical situation' ('in keiner Weise bezeichnend war für die musikalische Weltsituation'); Heinrich Strobel, 'An die deutsche Sektion der I.G.N.M.,' *Melos* 9, no. 10 (October 1930): 434.
[77] Hubert Foss, 'Modern Music in Amsterdam: International Society,' *The Manchester Guardian*, June 16, 1933. As another British journalist wrote in 1930, 'It may be a right or it may be a wrong way to listen, but the temptation is irresistible to confront these international festivals of contemporary music with the question not "Is it good?" nor even "Do I like it?" but "Where is it leading?"'; 'Contemporary Music: The Festival at Liege,' *The Times* (London), September 5, 1930.

making power of the festival's synecdochical arrangement, whereby the music performed was interpreted as a sample shedding light on a larger whole.

One reason the festivals gave this totalizing impression of comprehensiveness was that attending them could be an intense and sometimes bewildering experience. In contrast to more conventional forms of data, such as bibliographic entries or statistics, performed music was bound to time in ways that complicated its potential assimilation as information. Both because it was tempting for the jurors to resolve any disagreements by admitting just one more work, and because the performance timings indicated by the national sections were sometimes inaccurate, the ISCM's programs of unfamiliar and often challenging repertoire routinely ended up being overcrowded. As one critic complained after the 1935 festival, each of the concerts, 'true to the incorrigible habits of such functions, was fully an hour too long and thus taxed most severely the assimilative capacities of even the best disposed hearers.'[78] With the festival's local organizers usually keen to supplement the jury's weighty programs with further concerts, social functions, and other events, some attendees understandably became overwhelmed. The demands were particularly severe at the 1930 festival in Belgium, which was scheduled in conjunction with the first congress of the International Musicological Society. A beleaguered Edwin Evans, chair of the ISCM's British section, admitted that he struggled to keep at it:

> As anybody who has attended a Festival of the I.S.C.M. can testify, it represents a strenuous week of music. Is it humanly possible for anyone to combine with it a strenuous week of musicology? Can one attend all the concerts and a daily assortment of lectures, and yet live and return home to tell the tale? I think not. For my part, I find that listening, with the concentration that new music demands, for several hours daily, is as much as I can undertake.[79]

[78] Herbert F. Peyser, 'Modern Works in Prague: Thirteenth Festival of International Society of Contemporary Music,' *The New York Times*, September 29, 1935. Copland reported a similar experience from the 1927 festival in Frankfurt: 'My own piece [*Music for the Theatre*] came last in a three hour program which finished the Fest and the poor fagged-out public could only be roused from its lethargy by the pin-pricks of a jazz mute'; Copland to Nicolas Slonimsky, July 14, 1927, in *The Selected Correspondence of Aaron Copland*, ed. Elizabeth B. Crist and Wayne Shirley (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 55.
[79] Edwin Evans, 'The Liége Festival,' *The Musical Times* 71, no. 1053 (October 1930): 898. An astonishment at the sheer quantity of music performed was a running theme in Evans's reviews of ISCM festivals, dating back to

Just as the jurors sometimes felt daunted by the piles of scores they were expected to survey, even enthusiastic and knowledgeable listeners were pushed to their limits by the programs thus produced. At both stages, the aspiration to construct a meaningful overview of contemporary music, and in this way to make the musical 'world' present and legible, always carried the risk of its own undoing through the simple problem of excess.

As the visuospatial metaphors of mirrors, cross-sections, panoramas, and bird's-eye views suggest, most critics at ISCM festivals shared a desire to fix the torrent of music they heard into a coherent pattern: a structure that would allow them to convey to their readers at home something other than chaos and confusion. Faced with the challenge of describing a program at once 'contemporary' and 'international' – and which therefore stimulated both a historical interest in tracing the unfolding development of new music and a more anthropological curiosity about the musical lives of others – they often turned to categories such as 'styles,' 'schools,' and 'tendencies': abstractions which encompassed both change over time and differentiations of geography or tradition.[80] In an otherwise ambivalent essay on the ISCM from 1934, Alfredo Casella praised the unrivalled capacity of its 'methodically constructed' programs to offer a 'conclusive summary of all current tendencies.'[81] A few years earlier, Adorno had identified a similar phenomenon at play in the work of the jurors, but depicted it in a more negative light:

> This form of decision by jury is one of compromise and not the selection of the best. This is not to testify in any way against the judges' *bona fides*, but merely to say that, given the utter diffusion of the musical style of today, the works cannot in the first instance be weighed up against one another according to their own inner logic [*Eigengesetzlichkeit*], but get related to directions [*Richtungen*], which are supposed to provide an objective criterion for selection[.]

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the 1922 chamber music festival at which the institution was founded: see Evans, 'The Salzburg Festival,' *The Musical Times* 63, no. 955 (September 1922): 628–31.

[80] As in, for example, Henry Prunières, 'The Geneva Festival: International Society for Contemporary Music Hears Varied Schools,' *The New York Times*, May 5, 1929.

[81] 'planmäßig aufgebauten … beweiskräftige Zusammenfassung sämtlicher Gegenwartstendenzen'; Casella, 'Zum internationalen Musikfest in Florenz,' 39–40.

For Adorno, the sheer eclecticism of 'contemporary music,' as the ISCM presented it, thwarted engagement with the uniqueness and integrity of a single musical work. Instead, to make disparate compositions 'at all comparable with one another,' dubious 'directions' were invoked, which 'distort the works themselves and force compromise.'[82]

All this talk of 'tendencies' and 'directions' might remind us of early twentieth-century music scholarship and its dominant paradigm of style criticism. As Rachel Mundy has shown, in this formative period for musicology as a modern university discipline, 'style' – conceived as a quasi-biological, evolving organism – emerged as an essential concept for scholars seeking to develop a form of historiography more 'scientific' than merely gathering facts about people and events or producing scholarly monuments to 'great men' as their nineteenth-century predecessors had done.[83] Taking inspiration from evolutionary biology – which enjoyed an extraordinarily wide-ranging influence in this period, thanks in part to the proselytizing of public intellectuals including H.G. Wells – music scholars learnt the habit of treating music examples analogously to biological and anthropological 'type specimens' in their capacity to instantiate particular compositional styles.[84] In the reception of ISCM festivals, we can see something of the same dialogue between species and specimen being called upon, albeit in less self-consciously 'scientific' ways, in an attempt impose order on the seemingly vast, unsettled terrain of the musical present. The resulting taxonomies were

[82] 'Die Form von Jurybeschlüssen ist der Kompromiß und nicht die Auswahl des Besten. Damit ist nichts gegen die bona fides der Richter ausgesagt, sondern allein, daß angesichts der völligen Diffusion des musikalischen Stils dieser Tage die Werke zunächst nicht ihrer Eigengesetzlichkeit nach gegeneinander ausgewogen werden können, sondern auf Richtungen bezogen werden, die ein objektives Kriterium der Selektion abgeben sollen; … die Werke selbst verstellen und den Kompromiß erzwingen … irgend vergleichbar miteinander'; Theodor W. Adorno, 'Die stabilisierte Musik: Zum fünften Fest der I.G.N.M. in Frankfurt am Main' (1927), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 19: *Musikalische Schriften VI*, ed. Rolf Tiedermann and Klaus Schultz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1984), 100.

[83] Rachel Mundy, 'Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 67, no. 3 (2014): 738–42. The landmark primary text is Guido Adler, *Der Stil in der Musik*, vol. 1: *Prinzipien und Arten der musikalischen Stils* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911). To a significant degree concepts and rhetoric from the natural sciences entered late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century musicology via the more established discipline of art history. See Kevin C. Karnes, *Music, Criticism, and the Challenge of History: Shaping Modern Musical Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4–11, 38–47.

[84] Mundy, 'Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America,' 743–46, 754.

deeply entangled with the racialized schemas for classifying human difference that enjoyed widespread scientific authority and popular currency at the time. The British tabloid the *Daily Mail* was, perhaps, merely making explicit the logic that underpinned many of the acts of comparison and categorization encouraged by the festival's stylistic juxtapositions when in 1927 it irreverently likened the ISCM to a 'zoo' – a quintessential imperialist institution of ownership and display – whose 'several different tribes' included the 'Viennese Disintegrators,' 'Parisian cynics,' and 'savage Easterners.'[85]

For those beguiled by the fantasies of synoptic insight that the ISCM festival elicited, style criticism provided the foundational paradigm by which the multiplicity and abundance of 'contemporary music' were assimilated into music-historical narratives. Partly because so many of the critics who supported the organization and attended its annual gatherings in the interwar years were also active as music historians, reviews of the festivals often give the impression of having been quite self-consciously devised as first drafts of music history.[86] Indeed, it became quite common for authors to anthologize their reports on specific ISCM festivals in subsequent essay collections on 'new music' or the recent history of music more generally.[87] Such texts provide a vivid record of the emergence and popularization of the litany of styles, schools, and '-isms' through which the history of musical modernism would come to be widely narrated: categories that soon cast off their most overt vestiges of biological and racial rhetoric, but that, as Brigid Cohen has argued, never entirely transcended their foundationally essentialist assumptions about national character and

[85] 'Music Fun at Frankfort,' *Daily Mail* (London), July 5, 1927, Edwin Evans clippings collection.
[86] An early example in this vein (written by one of the organizers of the 1922 chamber music festival in Salzburg) is Paul Stefan, 'Ein Weltbild der Musik: Anmerkungen zu den Musikfesten in Donaueschingen und Salzburg,' *Anbruch* 4, no. 15–16 (September–October 1922): 243–45.
[87] See, for example, Adolfo Salazar, *La música actual en Europa y sus problemas* (Madrid: J.M. Yagües, 1935), 169–276; Robert-Aloys Mooser, *Regards sur la Musique Contemporaine 1921–1946* (Lausanne: Librairie F. Rouge & Cie, 1946), 102–17, 194–99, 259–64; and Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1960), 179–83, 193–99. The same practice was adopted by a long-time opponent of the ISCM and 'new music' more generally in Julius Korngold, *Atonale Götzendämmerung: Kritische Beiträge zur Geschichte der Neumusik-Ismen (Wien 1937): Erstveröffentlichung als Faksimile mit Vorwort, Kommentar und Anmerkungen*, ed. Arne Stollberg and Oswald Panagl (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2019), 289–345.

inheritance.[88] However, because performances and institutions were marginalized in the style-criticism paradigm, the ISCM itself faded from view in later histories of the period.[89] Its role in shaping what counted as musical knowledge and its influence on how modernist music was perceived and discussed were easily overlooked.

If concerts could offer 'barometric readings,' then music history was like the weather: something that just happened, beyond human control. Yet the supposedly objective and panoramic perspective implied by this metaphor was by no means a true 'view from nowhere.'[90] Significantly imbricated with contemporary technocratic and encyclopedic schemes, and administrated from metropolitan centers such as London, the aspiration to comprehend the recent musical past in this way was itself historically and geopolitically specific. In this chapter, I have sought not merely to rehearse familiar critiques of a music-historical epistemology whose claims to neutrality now appear almost self-evidently suspect, but also to reconstruct how and why the ISCM's technocratic practices produced musical knowledge of this kind: to crack open the black box of the barometer. In so doing, I have delineated a fluid array of confluences and collisions between, on the one hand, the intertwined histories of internationalism, imperialism, and science, and, on the other, the more mundane activities of everyday institutional life: the labor, power struggles, and contingencies that determined what ended up being presented and understood as 'contemporary music,' and that enabled the far from 'non-political' exclusions that

[88] Brigid Cohen, *Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 12–13. See also Mundy, 'Evolutionary Categories and Musical Style from Adler to America.'
[89] Inadvertently capturing the first stage in this process, Dent himself discerned a gap between the ISCM's public profile and his lived experience, without as such critiquing it: 'The press notices of our International Festivals, from 1923 to the present day, have very properly concentrated attention on the music performed; the administrative side of the Society has remained unchronicled except in its own minute-book. But the administration and organization of the Festivals was a serious matter to those concerned and a source of many difficult problems and emergencies'; Dent, 'Introduction' [1943, draft introduction to an ultimately unpublished book, provisionally titled *Music Between Two Wars*, celebrating the twenty-first anniversary of the ISCM's founding], Dent Papers, King's College Archive Centre, EJD/1/1/1/2.
[90] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

subsequent critical and historiographical discourses about musical modernism went on to naturalize.

The ISCM's retreat into the margins of music history was hastened by its considerable decline in status after the Second World War.[91] In the 1950s, better funded and more professionalized initiatives moved to the fore, including, most famously, the Darmstadt International Summer Courses for New Music (founded 1946). Yet just as the ISCM's own relevance was coming to seem more doubtful than ever before, the ripples from its interwar activities spread further and wider: the technocratic ideals and practices that it had pioneeringly assimilated into its initiatives were becoming more fundamental and pervasive in the field of 'contemporary music,' an increasingly institutionalized and bureaucratized domain in which international festivals had come to play a vital role. As epitomized by Milton Babbitt's apologia for 'the composer as specialist' in 1958, some composers in the United States especially began to go to great lengths to depict themselves as 'experts,' and to frame their unabashedly esoteric, socially isolated endeavors as a form of knowledge generation or quasi-scientific research.[92] Under the new circumstances of the cultural Cold War and expanding patronage by universities and private foundations, technocratic rhetoric was taken to new heights as a highly effective strategy of securing funding and prestige, and committee work for bureaucratic organizations became a normal part of a modernist composer's career.[93] Perhaps because the rhetoric placed such stress on its bearer's status as a

[91] On the ISCM's 'stagnation' after 1945, see Haefeli, *IGNM*, 286–344.
[92] Milton Babbitt, 'The Composer as Specialist' (1958), in *The Collected Essays of Milton Babbitt*, ed. Stephen Peles, with Stephen Dembski, Andrew Mead, and Joseph N. Straus (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 48–54. (This was Babbitt's original title, or so he later claimed, for the essay more notoriously first published as 'Who Cares If You Listen?') Complementary to my diachronic narrative here, the Introduction to the present volume outlines possibilities for resituating Babbitt's text synchronically.
[93] Studies that foreground the relationships between institutions, funding, bureaucracy, and prestige in new music's post-Second World War art world include: Born, *Rationalizing Culture*; Jann Pasler, 'The Political Economy of Composition in the American University, 1965–1985,' in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 318–62; William Robin, 'Balance Problems: Neoliberalism and New Music in the American University and New Music Ensemble,' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 3 (2018): 752–56; Eduardo Herrera, *Elite Art Worlds: Philanthropy, Latin Americanism, and Avant-Garde Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Michael Sy Uy, *Ask*

cutting-edge trailblazer, few seem to have appreciated that both this way of talking about musical expertise and the cultural-administrative labor that tended to accompany it recycled elements of discourses and practices which had already begun to crystallize and circulate earlier in the century, and which had emerged in part from the always at least latently imperialist politics of liberal internationalism. At mid-century, generational and institutional change, not to mention political upheaval and other traumas, overshadowed what can now be retraced as significant continuities between turn-of-the-century imperialism, interwar cultural internationalism, and postwar high modernism. Situated in this lineage, the ISCM festival offers a compelling case study in how artists and audiences have come to terms with both the opportunities and the limits of accommodating music within the knowledge economies and technocratic regimes of our 'administered world.'[94]

the Experts: How Ford, Rockefeller, and the NEA Changed American Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[94] Horkheimer and Adorno, 'Preface to the New Edition' (1969), in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, xi–xii.