

The “Bad Boy of Music” in Paris

George Antheil’s Violin Sonatas

by

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## ABSTRACT

An integral part of the avant-garde movement in 1920s Paris, the American composer George Antheil collaborated with writers Ezra Pound and James Joyce, violinist Olga Rudge, and befriended the likes of Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, and many others. In Paris, Antheil found great success as the provocateur of riots and scandal at his concerts, with a purposefully controversial compositional style. This document explores, in detail, his three violin sonatas composed between 1923 and 1924 at the behest of Ezra Pound for his violinist friend Rudge. The violin sonatas provide a fascinating perspective on Antheil's musical and personal life during his first years in Paris. The historical and personal contexts of the sonatas are examined, in addition to their musical repercussions for Antheil's compositional style. This document relies primarily on unpublished letters, writings and other memorabilia from collections held at The Library of Congress, New York Public Library, Columbia University, Princeton University, Yale University, and Indiana University. Antheil's published scores and autobiography, Linda Whitesitt's biography of Antheil and other literature pertaining to the period and person are also consulted. While a fair amount has been written on Antheil's more famous work *Ballet Mécanique*, which stylistically followed the violin sonatas, the lesser-known sonatas have received minimal attention or exploration. This document places these three works into their rightful context, as cornerstones of Antheil's musical style during his most avant-garde years in Paris.

For my mother and grandmother—I could not have achieved this dream without your  
love, support, encouragement and sacrifice.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

George Antheil was an integral part of the avant-garde movement in early 1920s Paris. The young American musician moved to Europe in 1922 to make a name for himself as a concert pianist, but after meeting his idol, Igor Stravinsky, turned his sights on composition. Stravinsky encouraged Antheil to move to Paris, the European center of artistic experimentation and freedom. There, Antheil collaborated with many of the greatest artists of time including James Joyce, Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Fernand Léger and Stravinsky, and found success as a riot-causing avant-garde composer and performer. When Antheil returned to the United States permanently in 1933 however, he failed to gain the same celebrity he attained in his early years in Europe and lived out the rest of his artistic life in relative obscurity.

Because of this Antheil is not well known today, even in educated musical circles, and his music receives only rare performances. While some scholarship does exist on Antheil alone, he is most often discussed in relation to other larger players of the time such as Stravinsky or Ezra Pound. Antheil's personal and individual role in the avant-garde artistic movements in Paris as well as his compositions from the early 1920s warrant deeper consideration. This document will discuss Antheil's first years in Paris through the lens of the three sonatas for violin and piano, written between 1923 and 1924 for the expatriate violinist Olga Rudge and poet Ezra Pound.

## I. Literature Review

Only one comprehensive work on Antheil exists, Linda Marie Whitesitt's *The Life and Music of George Antheil 1900-1959*. This work offers an overview of his life, a summary of his writings on music and a thorough discussion of his oeuvre, placing his works in chronological and stylistic context. Antheil wrote his own biography, *Bad Boy of Music* in 1945, and the volume includes extensive memoirs of his time in Paris.

The relationship between Antheil and the poet Pound has received a good amount of attention. R. Murray Schafer explores the relationship extensively in his book, *Ezra Pound and Music*, drawing from unpublished letters and writings of the two men. In his dissertation, *Pound and Music: The Paris and Early Rapallo Years*, Archibald Henderson, III similarly discusses the Pound-Antheil relationship from a literary perspective, again utilizing unpublished letters to support his argument. Pound's own publication, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* illuminates the artistic rapport of the two men and their similar musical ideas. Additionally, a number of articles exist that address the relationship, though none speak to the violin and piano sonatas which developed directly from this relationship in more than a few cursory paragraphs.

Margaret Anderson's biography, *My Thirty Years' War, Sylvia Beach and the Lost Generation* by Noel Riley Fitch, Hugh D. Ford's work, *Four Lives in Paris*, and Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* offer a well-rounded picture of Antheil's time in Paris from several perspectives. Stravinsky's published correspondence along with Aaron Copland's and Virgil Thomson's later recollections of the time and of Antheil offer insight into his life and work during the early 1920s.

Archival research makes up the majority of information collected for this study. The George and Böske Antheil Papers at the Library of Congress; the George Antheil Papers at New York Public Library; the Sylvia Beach Papers at Princeton University; the Ezra Pound, Muriel Draper and Olga Rudge Papers at Yale University; and the Antheil Mss Collection at Indiana University, provide an incredible wealth of personal letters, notes, manifestos and musical manuscripts. These primary source materials allow for a deeper understanding of Antheil as both a man and as a composer.

## II. Research Methodologies

Two main methodologies are used in this document: historical and musical analysis. Historical analysis places Antheil within the context of other musical figures of the period, the artistic climate of Europe at the time and his own personal history. This type of analysis also aims to place Antheil's musical style during the 1920s within the greater musical trends and movements occurring contemporaneously. A musical analysis of Antheil's first three violin sonatas places the works within Antheil's oeuvre and style of the time. Additionally, the analyses help support the claim that Antheil's violin sonatas provide the logical lead-up to the *Ballet Mécanique*, the culminating masterpiece of Antheil's early Paris style.

## III. Chapter Outline

This document is divided into seven chapters and a conclusion. The second chapter discusses Antheil's life before moving to Paris in 1923. It takes into account his childhood, his move to Europe and subsequent concert tours and his introduction to and



friendship with Stravinsky, which ultimately led him to Paris. Chapter three explores avant-garde Paris in the 1920s and Antheil's initiation into and participation in the artistic milieu.

Chapters four and five present Antheil's musical style of the early 1920s and provide analyses of his Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, Sonata for Violin, Piano and Drums and Sonata No. 3 for Violin and Piano. Chapter five also discusses the critical reception of these works. Chapter six offers perspectives on Antheil's constant musical and personal issues with his mentor and, in his own eyes rival, Stravinsky. Chapter seven proposes the set of three violin and piano sonatas as the natural forerunner to Antheil's best known and perhaps most avant-garde work, *Ballet Mécanique*.

## CHAPTER 2

### ANTHEIL BEFORE PARIS

#### I. Early Influences

Born in Trenton, New Jersey in the year 1900, Antheil was destined to become a radical personality and musician. In a 1958 interview, Antheil reminisced that at the age of three he requested a piano for Christmas, and stipulated “it was not to be one of those toy pianos that one bought in the toy stores.”<sup>1</sup> When his parents presented him with a toy piano on Christmas morning, he “didn’t say a word, ... took it down to the cellar, got a hatchet and chopped it up.”<sup>2</sup> Looking back on this moment in the same interview, Antheil said, “I like to feel that this is a symbol of my life. ... If music is not going to be everything that it must be and that I imagine, I feel that I must burn it up or I don’t want to have anything to do with it. In other words, I feel that I am a sort of musical idealist and creator. It’s all or nothing.”<sup>3</sup>

Antheil’s parents finally purchased a piano for young George, and he began piano lessons around the age of six. At the age of eighteen he began studying theory and composition with Constantin von Sternberg, a student of Franz Liszt, in Philadelphia. In 1920, Antheil began composition studies with Ernest Bloch, taking the train into New York. New York provided the perfect cultural landscape for the budding musician and composer. The Dada movement had just arrived in the city a few years before with

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1. George Antheil, “George Antheil Speaks,” recorded 1958, on *Antheil Plays Antheil, Other Minds* B00004W1TN, 2000, 2 CDs, disc 2.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp. Modernism was in full swing by 1920 and Antheil came into contact with the pianist Leo Ornstein, music critic Paul Rosenfeld, the artists John Marin and Alfred Stieglitz, as well as Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap of the *Little Review*.<sup>4</sup> New York supplied artistic inspiration and many important associations that would shape Antheil's life and career in the coming years.

Anderson took an interest in Antheil, writing later, "We had heard that there was a young composer of promise living not far from Bernardsville. . . . He wrote that it would please him to come if we were interested in modern musics. It was the musics that made us await his appearance with a certain expectancy."<sup>5</sup> Antheil went for the weekend to Anderson's Bernardsville, New Jersey retreat, which she shared with the opera singer and actress Georgette Leblanc and the pianist Allen Tanner. The group invited Antheil to stay on in Bernardsville and he readily accepted. He spent six months there, stewing in the collective artistic environment, living "the life of several musical colonies."<sup>6</sup>

Not only influenced by the people around him, Antheil also came into contact with many freshly published, imported scores including Stravinsky's *Renard* and *Histoire du soldat*.<sup>7</sup> Surrounded by all of these new ideas, Antheil began developing his own theories on music centered on the ideas of mechanism and technology. He wrote to Muriel Draper, the well-known supporter of the arts, "A kind of crystallization occurred to me Tuesday and Wednesday. . . . I realize now that I am afraid of no music, because I

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4. Carol J. Oja, "Ballet *Mécanique* and International Modernist Networks," in *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 74.

5. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 236.

6. *Ibid.*, 237.

7. George Antheil to Mary Louise Curtis Bok, December 1921, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

know completely the direction. ... My music seems to take the color of machinery. New steel is blue—white—a strange radiance.”<sup>8</sup> The first work Antheil composed in this new mechanical style was his solo piano sonata, Second Sonata *The Airplane* (1921), from which a series of technology-inspired works follow. The *Airplane Sonata* foreshadows many of the compositional ideas and techniques that come to full fruition in 1923 and 1924 including clusters, static repetition, ostinato (derivative of Stravinsky), irregular rhythmic patterns, and meter changes.

Though he disagreed with Antheil’s new mechanistic near-Dadaist ideas, his former teacher, Sternberg, introduced him to the woman who would act as his patron for the next two decades, Mary Louise Curtis Bok. Bok found Antheil’s latest compositions interesting and saw potential in the young pianist-composer. She enrolled him in the Philadelphia Settlement Music School, which would later become the Curtis Institute. In addition to providing an excellent education, Antheil’s new patron also provided a stipend to cover his living expenses. Bok maintained a fondness for Antheil and a strong belief in the merits of his music throughout his career.

Antheil described his twenty-one year old self as “rather audacious, and with a lot of, what we sometimes would call, chutzpah.” He went on to explain, “I went to a manager in New York who I knew needed, at that moment, a concert pianist to supplant Leo Ornstein. This man, Hanson,<sup>9</sup> had heard me play and had been very enthusiastic, ... so he took me to Europe, and that was the beginning of my concert career and also the

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8. George Antheil to Muriel Draper, December 28, 1921, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

9. Martin H. Hanson.

beginning of thirteen years in Europe.”<sup>10</sup> In preparation for his impending European tour, Antheil begged Muriel Draper to “send by mail as soon as possible some letters to people in London and Paris. . . . I know no one over there except Szymanowski, and Rubenstein and I don’t know their addresses.”<sup>11</sup> In the same letter, Antheil foreshadows his hopes of a relationship with Stravinsky, his long-time musical idol, saying, “Do you know Strawinsky? I am especially anxious to meet him, and I would like to have a letter to him if you think it should be.”<sup>12</sup> Antheil had secured a manager in Hanson and financial backing from Bok in the form of \$6,000, equal to \$83,829.29 in today’s market.<sup>13</sup> On May 30, 1922 the self-proclaimed audacious twenty-one year old set sail for Europe.

## II. The Bad Boy

Antheil began his European tour on June 22 in London with a concert at Wigmore Hall performing works by Chopin, Debussy, Stravinsky and some of his own compositions including *Street Sonata* and *Steel—Roads—Airplanes*. Antheil felt that in London he “encountered only profound boneheads. . . . Goosens was the only one who understood. I wept. They are fish. They write with incredible stupidity about ‘rattling, percussive music’. I deduct from their writings about the matter that they think the music

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10. Antheil, “George Antheil Speaks.”

11. Antheil to Draper, December 28, 1921, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

12. Ibid.

13. United States Department of Labor Statistics, CPI Inflation Calculator, accessed April 6, 2015, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>.

is bad.”<sup>14</sup> In one review the critic remarked that Antheil’s works were “unquestionably clever and possess some good idea, but fail somewhat for lack of direct association with their titles. In a few years time he will call them good studies in technique.”<sup>15</sup> Though the London critics were unsure of Antheil’s compositions, they did praise his pianistic facility and his interpretations of both his own works and the other twentieth century pieces on the program.

From London Antheil attended the chamber music festival at Donaueschingen where he heard the music of the young German modernists. This further clarified the young composer’s musical ideals, writing to his patroness, Bok, “We of twenty are frankly tired of the experiments of ‘Les Six,’ and of the clan-worshippers of Strawinsky and Schönberg. Coming fresh-eyed and eared to the scene it looks to us very much like the ancient fetish of Wagner, only this time it is the Three-Headed-God, Satie-Schon-Strawagnerism!”<sup>16</sup> In the same letter, Antheil proclaims himself the forerunner and even visionary of this new musical movement saying, “I am infinitely, to the future world of music, much more important than any of these young Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Germans. I know it. I am certain.”<sup>17</sup>

In order to develop his concert pianist career, Antheil settled in Berlin in July 1922. From there, he continued to tour central Europe, flooding each city with his wild

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14. Antheil to Draper, 1922, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

15. “George Antheil: Young American Shows Facility as Pianist and Composer,” July 1, 1922, in letter from George Antheil to Mary Louise Curtis Bok, August 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

16. Antheil to Bok, August 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

17. Ibid.

manifestos on modern music and its impending triumph. He insisted on being billed as the “futurist-terrible,” and continued to program many of his own compositions. He gave recitals in Budapest, Munich, Vienna, Berlin, and in other cities and was generally well received. Antheil recounted to Bok that upon performing Chopin in Munich, “the applause was almost deafening, and lasted fully over two minutes.”<sup>18</sup> Just a month later, in another letter to Bok, Antheil described his success in Budapest as “a greater artistic triumph than I ever had in my life,” and explained, “The audience was so wild with enthusiasm after the first movement of my ‘Sonata Sauvage’ that they thundered and clapped for five minutes, and would not allow me to continue the second movement until I had repeated the first.”<sup>19</sup> These rowdy receptions became a symbol of success for Antheil, and as he toured, he cultivated and encouraged this aura of unruliness. In his memoir, Antheil writes: “Riots came rather to be the order of the day at my concerts because I was one of the few pianists of that period *always* to end a concert with a modern group, preferably of the most ‘ultra’ order.”<sup>20</sup> Whether audiences greeted Antheil’s music with literal rioting or merely wild and appreciative applause is unclear. In either case, Antheil managed to make a name for himself as a revolutionary composer and performer.

While Antheil handled his audiences with skill, he struggled to do the same with his finances. While he recounted his concert successes to Bok, he simultaneously and constantly asked for money. Bok responded in a kind and motherly manner writing:

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18. Antheil to Bok, February 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

19. Antheil to Bok, March 4, 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

20. George Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music* (1945; repr., Hollywood: Samuel French Trade, 1990), 7.

As a human being, & a man, you must row your own weight—and take care of yourself. ... I gave you your opportunity to be heard—to study—to see other countries—& meet people—to the extent of \$6,000—a big sum. I expected it would bring you to a point where you would be able to make connections for yourself—& then float yourself, financially.<sup>21</sup>

She had planned for Antheil to teach and work beyond his performance career. Antheil however, had not seen it the same way. He had come to Europe to make a name for himself so that he could return to America a respected composer of the same ilk as Stravinsky or Schönberg. He wrote: “My success in America is assured but it will be so much more easier if I could go direct over with a great European reputation which I can now make ... and not just bring a bunch of good criticisms over as most young artists do. If I am a great European, the American critics will not dare to touch me.”<sup>22</sup> Mrs. Bok wired the American abroad another \$500, nearly \$7,000 today,<sup>23</sup> and promised to send more for the return boat fare to New York, if he so chose. Though Antheil returned to America in 1927 for his Carnegie Hall debut and made several subsequent trips, he would not return permanently for another decade.

### III. Berlin and Stravinsky

In August of 1922, while Antheil lived in Berlin with the American transplant César Saerchinger, he finally met his compositional idol, Stravinsky. He described the

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21. Bok to Antheil, March 18, 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

22. Antheil to Bok, February 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

23. CPI Inflation Calculator.



meeting in a letter to Bok as “the greatest event of my life.”<sup>24</sup> Even before meeting Stravinsky in person, Antheil idolized the composer, “He was my hero. I worshipped the brain that had conceived the colossal, world-shaking ‘Sacre du Printemps,’ the fingers that had actually written ‘Histoire du Soldat,’ ‘Renard,’ ‘Petrouchka,’ ‘Oiseau de Feu.’”<sup>25</sup> According to Antheil, the two spent the following weeks in Berlin spending every hour speaking about music and discussing new compositional ideas. Their time together ended “by [their] swearing the deepest and most eternal of friendship” to each other.”<sup>26</sup> Antheil found himself touted by a man he respected deeply, and he could not have been more pleased saying, in the same letter to Bok, “Strawinsky said that I was one of the very few in all the world who had a clear idea of music today. . . . So it is really true that the man who is without doubt the greatest living composer sees something really worthwhile in me.”<sup>27</sup> A few months later, Antheil wrote again to Bok to tell her, “Strawinsky, the greatest living composer has publically said before Hanson and several other people (publishers) that I was one of the most iconoclastic geniuses today. I do not know if he used the word ‘genius’ in a satiric way, for he is very fond of me.”<sup>28</sup> From Antheil’s standpoint, detailed in his correspondence, a mutual respect and admiration had grown between the young composer and his hero, though Stravinsky’s perspective remains unsubstantiated.

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24. Antheil to Bok, December 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

25. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 30.

26. Antheil to Bok, December 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

27. *Ibid.*

28. Antheil to Bok, February 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, 1921-1940, Music Division, Library of Congress.

Stravinsky was not alone in his endorsement of Antheil's music. The German composer and musicologist, Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, wrote an article in the summer of 1923 espousing Antheil's compositional innovations, "His style is today a most lively polyrhythmical homophony. He sets amorphous, motionlessly rhythmical blocks against one another and welds the tonality into a wonderfully clear, crystalline form. The construction of mechanical rhythms is self-evident to him. Every sentimentality in music appears to him absurd."<sup>29</sup> During this time, Antheil compositionally moved towards a style of music that relied on rhythm as its driving force rather than tonality or harmonic function. In an article later published in *Der Querschnitt* titled "Jazz," Antheil wrote, "We do not need quarter tone sonorities just yet. Let our youngest composers buy a drum or two and limit themselves to one or two lines of toneless rhythm for a year or more. Let them work with a pencil and learn dynamic draftsmanship. Let them experiment and create new musical dimensions."<sup>30</sup> Antheil firmly believed that atonality, quarter-tone tonality, and canonic Western tonality were all secondary to rhythm. "The explanations of Schönberg are all foolish and have but little intellectual bearing upon the real music of the future which will more likely follow the great genius Strawinsky," he wrote, referring to the older composer's rhythmic style in the *Sacre du Printemps*.<sup>31</sup> This idea of rhythm above all else dominated Antheil's compositional style during his early years in Europe and found its height several years later in his *Ballet Mécanique*.

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29. H.H. Stuckenschmidt, "Umschau: Ausblick in die Musik," *Das Kunstblatt* VII (July, 1923), 221-222, quoted in Linda Whitesitt, *The Life and Music of George Antheil 1900-1959* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press), 12.

30. George Antheil, "Jazz," [1922?], George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

31. Antheil to Bok, December 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

Antheil attempted to distinguish himself as singular, apart from the other modernist movements of the time. In a manifesto from 1923 he stated, “I believe exclusively in the hard musical object ... from which alone a new musical technique, the source of all music, is generated: the rhythm. In that sense I call myself a ‘futurist’. I am neither a ‘modernist’, ‘impressionist’, or ‘mathematician’: I want to make music hard as rock and begin with the foundations, where music is still fundamental and indestructible.”<sup>32</sup> In his early twenties, Antheil believed that music could and should be new and “could not accept under no circumstances the seriousness of someone who makes halfway good modern music on the foundations of the old mechanisms.”<sup>33</sup> At the heart of these new ideas and proclamations about the music of the future lay Antheil’s firm belief that he would be the composer to bring these into fruition. Antheil saw himself as a roguish intruder in the European musical scene, “A despised American from the most modern, the most cubistic, the most mechanistic cities in the world.”<sup>34</sup> Even among the American expatriates in Europe, Antheil desperately wanted to stand out. During his years in Paris he refused to study with Nadia Boulanger, the teacher to whom many other young American composers flocked, including Copland and Thomson. Antheil disregarded this natural pathway, and the support a relationship with Boulanger might have given him. At the same time, he blatantly discounted the music of his American colleagues. In 1923, he wrote: “Heretofore no American artist has dared to say anything in Europe. ... So far in American music every single one of our composers were

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32. George Antheil, “I call myself a futurist,” Berlin 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

33. Ibid.

34. Antheil, “Jazz.”

not great virtuosi, and upon musical paper struggled too much with their material and lost too much of it. ... I am a much more formidable antagonist.”<sup>35</sup> The support of both Stravinsky and Stuckenschmidt in Germany fueled his aggressive desire to be on top of the music world in Europe.

While Antheil felt that, in Stravinsky, he had found a mentor, confidant and friend, Stravinsky painted a somewhat less genial picture of the relationship. Later in his memoir, Antheil admitted “There are two versions of Stravinsky’s two months in Berlin—his own (the less accurate) and mine. ... The truth, as usual, probably rests somewhere near direct center.”<sup>36</sup> It seems likely that Stravinsky tolerated Antheil’s antics less for his intriguing musical ideas and more because of his manager, Martin Hanson. Stravinsky believed Hanson could help arrange an American tour and procure international publication for his works. In letters between Stravinsky and the conductor Ernest Ansermet, Stravinsky’s motivations become clear. In a letter to Ansermet from January or February of 1923, Stravinsky explained, “My principal objective is to publish the works that I compose. I will go anywhere, with you and with them, but they must find a way to arrange for publication. This matter is of the utmost importance, and if I am satisfied with their arrangements, they can then count on my participation in the trip to America with you.”<sup>37</sup> Stravinsky’s attention to Antheil may not have come entirely from an interest in the young composer’s work. Stravinsky also likely saw the mutual beneficence of a relationship between the two—Antheil would perform the seasoned

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35. Antheil, “Jazz.”

36. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 30.

37. Igor Stravinsky to Ernest Ansermet, January or February 1923, in *Selected Correspondence*, ed. Robert Craft, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982), 164.

composer's works and gain standing as a concert pianist and Stravinsky's works would be presented and published.

In the following months, Antheil's twenty-something antics began to frustrate and confound Stravinsky. Stravinsky wrote to Antheil on January 18, 1923 expressing his confusion, "I am quite surprised that Herr Hanson has left for Berlin without giving me notice of his departure. And since I have no news from you either, I ask myself what all this means."<sup>38</sup> Antheil consistently failed to follow through on his promises to Stravinsky. Stravinsky wrote to Ansermet several times asking him to "light a fire under Antheil,"<sup>39</sup> "*be persistent enough to convince Antheil.*"<sup>40</sup> By March 1923, Antheil could hardly be reached and Stravinsky wrote to Ansermet in exasperation:

I receive letter after letter from Antheil, who always asks me to inform him by telegram where I am or where I will be, so that he can come to see me. But he fails to give me his address and my telegrams do not follow him, because I just received one returned from Budapest with the notice that Antheil had *left!!* Yet this intelligent boy is astounded at my silence.<sup>41</sup>

Ansermet confirmed Antheil's youthful and rash behavior in a letter to Stravinsky written just after meeting the young composer: "He is in the process of betraying his sponsors by his exorbitant expenditure, the upheaval he has created in Berlin with Russian or Hungarian women, and the preposterous music he is writing."<sup>42</sup> Antheil seemed far more interested in traveling across Europe and wooing women, in particular Hungarian Boski

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38. Stravinsky to Antheil, January 18, 1923, trans. Mauro Piccinini, George Antheil Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

39. Stravinsky to Ansermet, January or February 1923, in *Selected Correspondence*, vol.1, 163.

40. Stravinsky to Ansermet, January or February 1923, in *Selected Correspondence*, vol. 1, 164.

41. Stravinsky to Ansermet, March 15, 1923, in *Selected Correspondence*, vol. 1, 167.

42. Ansermet to Stravinsky, March 16, 1923, quoted in Stephen Walsh, *Stravinsky: The Creative Spring* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), 633.

Markus, who became his wife in 1925, rather than concertizing and fulfilling previous promises. Stravinsky had gone so far as to arrange a December 1922 concert for Antheil in Paris. Antheil did not appear, choosing rather to travel to Poland with Boski.

During this time, Antheil chose to move out from under his manager's supervision. He wrote to Muriel Draper describing "M. H. Hanson swindling me out of a thousand dollars of concert money."<sup>43</sup> Antheil frequently cited this perceived dishonesty as a primary reason for his money troubles,<sup>44</sup> here to Draper but also to Bok. In the same letter to Draper he continued, "SO I am over here, and soon will be stranded."<sup>45</sup> Thus, stranded and nearly penniless in the rapidly inflating German economy, Stravinsky's forthcoming invitation to Paris provided the perfect solution. Exasperated with Antheil's exploits, Stravinsky wrote to Ansermet and Antheil on the same day, May 22, 1923. To Ansermet he wrote, "I have just received a letter from G. Antheil, as idiotic as the others."<sup>46</sup> In response to this "idiotic" letter, Stravinsky wrote to Antheil once more: "I am here [Paris] until June 20. My new ballet 'Les Noces' is being performed on June 13th. If you are interested in it and would like to see me too then you should come here."<sup>47</sup> Antheil and Boski entered Paris on June 13, 1923, just in time to see the premiere of *Les Noces* and *Pulcinella*. Antheil immediately fell in love with Paris,

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43. Antheil to Draper, 1923, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

44. It remains unclear whether Antheil was accurate in his accusations of theft against Hanson.

45. Antheil to Draper, 1923, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

46. Stravinsky to Ansermet, May 22, 1923, in *Selected Correspondence*, vol. 1, 168.

47. Stravinsky to Antheil, May 22, 1923, trans. Mauro Piccinini, George Antheil Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

reminiscing in his memoir, “After the grimness of Central Europe this was magic. *This was the city of Stravinsky’s music!*”<sup>48</sup> Paris, home to a constantly evolving avant-garde scene, was the only place that this young, promising composer could develop and evolve in the same circle of genius as Picasso, Léger, Ray, Hemingway, Pound, and many others.

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48. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 99.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANTHEIL IN PARIS

#### I. Paris and the Avant-garde

Paris was the center of avant-garde experimentation in the arts in the 1920s. The revolutionary artistic movements during this period paralleled and reacted to scientific and technological advances like Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity and the concept of space-time, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic work, and the beginning of assembly line production at Ford Motors. Cubism began taking shape in France with Picasso and Georges Braque as early as 1907, focusing on the translation of three dimensions into one by showing shifting viewpoints all at once.<sup>1</sup> In 1909, the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* published Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's 'Le Futurisme,' promoting a rejection of the past and revolution of culture in an effort to modernize it.<sup>2</sup> The Italian Futurist movement prompted the Vorticist movement in England with painter-writer Wyndham Lewis and poet Pound. The Vorticists fought against the remnants of the Victorian era, with the machine at the center of their ideals. "Their undoubted involvement with the age of mechanization was coupled with an awareness of its darker side. There is a curious innocence about Marinetti's admiration for the racing automobile, whereas Lewis saw the machine-age metropolis as an 'iron jungle', a severe and ferocious place where city

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1. *Grove Art Online*, s.v. "Cubism," (by Christopher Green and John Musgrove), accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T020539>.

2. *Grove Art Online*, s.v. "Futurism," (by Ester Coen and John Musgrove), accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T030277>.



dwellers were dehumanized and diminished.”<sup>3</sup> The Vorticist ideals in some ways point to the destructive power of the machine that would become devastatingly evident during the First World War.

Tristan Tzara founded the Dada movement in Zurich in 1916, and took the movement to Paris in 1920. Dada “suited the temper of a world disorganized by the war,” rebelling against morals, religion, philosophy and society.<sup>4</sup> Described by the anti-Dada paper *Non* as lunatics the Dadaists’ performances thrived on chaos, “At a matinee on January 23 [1920] Tzara was introduced to the public. He read aloud a newspaper article, while an electric bell kept ringing so that nobody could hear what he said.”<sup>5</sup> The anarchy, radical individualism and artistic innovation of Dada reflected the moral quandary of postwar Europe. Ultimately a power struggle between Dada’s biggest proponents, Tzara and André Breton, ended the movement. Breton took over the movement, and introduced Surrealism in 1924. Surrealism flowered out of both Dadaism and Freud’s work with the subconscious. The Surrealists sought to present the innermost workings of the mind completely unfettered by society’s rules or restrictions.<sup>6</sup> Inexorably tied to each of these artistic movements was the advent of the machine; the “‘machine-aesthetic’ was ... a pervasive and enduring element of all early twentieth-century art.”<sup>7</sup>

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3. *Grove Art Online*, s.v. “Vorticism,” (by Richard Cork), accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/art/T090158>.

4. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile’s Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1951; repr., New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 139.

5. *Ibid.*, 138-139.

6. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art Terms*, s.v. “Surrealism,” accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t4/e1639>.

7. Whitesitt, 14.

Each of these artistic movements and trends found their home in Paris at one point or another, drawing in both native and foreign artists. The 1920s saw an especially thick concentration of artists pouring into the city. Volumes have been written about expatriation in Paris during this period. Malcolm Cowley wrote: “The exiles of 1921 ... came to recover the good life and the traditions of art, to free themselves from organized stupidity, to win their deserved place in the hierarchy of the intellect.”<sup>8</sup> Labeled the “lost generation” by Gertrude Stein in the epithet to Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, these artists included Hemingway, James Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, Ezra Pound, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sylvia Beach, Malcolm Cowley, and George Antheil, among others. The expatriates and their European counterparts, Pablo Picasso, Jean Cocteau, Salvador Dalí, Fernand Léger, and others, made their home in Montparnasse on the Left Bank of Paris, shifting the city’s artistic center away from Montmartre.

Paris proved an incredibly fertile ground for experimentation and new ideas in music. Of his time in Paris, Copland wrote,

It was a fortunate time to be studying music in France. All the pent-up energies of the war years were unloosed. Paris was in international proving ground for all the newest tendencies of music. ... The watchword in those days was “originality.” The laws of rhythm, of harmony, of construction had all been torn down. Every composer in the vanguard set out to remake these laws according to his own conceptions.<sup>9</sup>

Along with Copland, many other young composers such as Thomson, Walter Piston and Roy Harris flocked to Paris to study with the great pedagogue Boulanger. At the same time Stravinsky was hard at work in Paris on *Les Noces* and *Mavra*, the impresario Sergei

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8. Cowley, 81.

9. Aaron Copland, *Our New Music: Leading Composers in Europe and America*, (New York: Whittlesey House, 1941), 219-220.

Diaghilev had revived the Satie-Cocteau-Picasso collaboration *Parade* and was mounting a new production of *Sacre du Printemps*.

In her *Thirty Years' War*, Anderson described the city in 1923, painting a picture of the artistic deluge during these years:

May, 1923, was one of those springs when everyone was in Paris. Or perhaps this is what happens in Paris every spring. ... Groups of insurgent artists prayed for scandal, hissing, booing, blowing on keys. ... Stravinsky gave his *Noces*<sup>10</sup> with the Ballets Russes. Milhaud, Auric, Poulenc and Marcelle Meyer played the four pianos. ... Picasso sat in Diaghileff's loge, determined to be seen without evening clothes. ... Satie was discovered in tears because his ballet (décor by Picasso) was applauded less than others. James Joyce was discovered at all the symphony concerts—no matter how bad. Juan Gris was making beautiful dolls. Gertrude Stein was buying André Masson. Man Ray was photographing pins and combs, sieves and shoe-trees. Fernand Léger was beginning his cubist cinema. ... Milhaud and Jean Wiener were beginning their worship of American jazz. ... The Dadaists gave performances at the Théâtre Michel where the rioting was so successful that André Breton broke Tzara's arm.<sup>11</sup>

Antheil and his fiancée Boski stepped directly into this vibrant, flourishing artistic milieu in June of 1923.

## II. Antheil's Induction into the Parisian Artist Elite

Antheil and Boski arrived in Paris just in time to attend the premiere of Stravinsky's *Les Noces* on June 13. This ballet would, in a way, haunt Antheil for the rest of his time in Paris. He never seemed to get far enough away from it for the critics to see his music without the shadow of *Noces* hovering over it, begging for an inevitable comparison and accusations of musical plagiarism. Despite the controversy that Stravinsky's ballets later provoked, Antheil and Boski enjoyed their first night in Paris.

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10. *Noces* is not italicized in Anderson's original publication. Italicization of titles has been tacitly unified throughout the document.

11. Anderson, 256-257.

According to his memoir, Antheil found *Pulcinella* enthralling while Boski favored *Les Noces*. Stravinsky greeted the two backstage and invited them to hear the electric pianola version of *Les Noces* the next day at Pleyel's, the pianola maker's shop. Antheil remembered, "It was more precise, colder, harder, more typical of that which I myself wanted out of music during this period of my life."<sup>12</sup> Just days after their arrival, Antheil wrote to his friend Stanley Hart, "I have met the following people here at the Russian Ballet Artur Rubenstein, Mararet Anderson, Georgette Leblanc, Jane Heap, Theodore Chanler, Tristan Tzara, Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Diaghilew, Strawinsky, Gilbert Seldes, Picabia, Ansermet, Picasso and the Comtessine Louÿs."<sup>13</sup> This first night was only the beginning of Antheil's time in Paris and his first introduction to the wealth of artists, musicians and intellectuals that thrived there.

After a few days in Paris, Antheil and Boski discovered an apartment for rent in the Latin Quarter above Sylvia Beach's famous bookshop, Shakespeare and Company. Beach had recently published James Joyce's *Ulysses* out of Shakespeare & Co., and it had become a center for young artists in Paris. The Shakespeare & Co.'s primary customers were writers such as Hemingway and Joyce, but Beach had a fondness for composers; besides Antheil, Satie, Thomson and Copland visited her shop regularly. Upon securing Antheil as her tenant, Beach wrote to her father, "I have found a new lodger for my third room above the shop. A young composer from Trenton. How lucky I

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12. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 104.

13. George Antheil to Stanley Hart, June 17, 1923, George Antheil correspondence to Stanley Hart, 1919-1931, Music Division, Library of Congress.

am to have those rooms to help me balance the budget!”<sup>14</sup> Through Beach, Antheil met Hemingway, Joyce, and Pound. Antheil was soon touted as the “literary man’s idea of a musical genius and was more hailed by other writers than by other composers.” In return, Antheil helped publish Joyce’s *Chamber Music* and Hemingway’s *In Our Time* in the German literary periodical, *Der Querschnitt*, for which he acted as a corresponding editor.<sup>15</sup> The bookshop became much more than a home for the Antheils. Boski wrote to Beach in 1937 reminiscing about living above Shakespeare and Co., “which never was just a bookshop, but the real center of all the artistic and intellectual activities in Paris in the early twenties.”<sup>16</sup>

As Antheil settled into Parisian life, he relied upon his friends and acquaintances to introduce him to the artistic elite. Antheil quickly contacted Anderson and she took him to “the Picabias. They had invited the young French writers, painters and composers to hear him play, and one of the older musicians whom every young musician in Paris loved—Erik Satie.”<sup>17</sup> At this tea, Antheil first encountered a “Mephistophelian red-bearded gent who turned out to be Ezra Pound.”<sup>18</sup> Pound immediately took an interest in the young composer, days later he wrote to his mother Isabel, “George Antheil appears to

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14. Sylvia Beach to Sylvester W. Beach, June 29, 1923, Sylvia Beach Papers, Correspondence, 1901-1970, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

15. Charles Amirkhanian, “Program Notes from Berkeley,” George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

16. Böske Antheil to Sylvia Beach, March 14, 1937, Sylvia Beach Papers, Correspondence, 1901-1970, Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

17. Anderson, 255.

18. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 117.

be a bright spark.”<sup>19</sup> In Antheil, Pound found a kindred spirit whose music displayed the “same rhythmic toughness [he] had previously admired in the Vorticists and Gaudier-Brzeska.”<sup>20</sup> In Pound, Antheil found a promoter and supporter, for “If one wanted to be recognized in musical Pairs, one had first to be properly introduced to the various all-powerful musical salons, and for this one had to have a sponsor whose opinion was worth something in them.”<sup>21</sup> Thus began a fruitful, albeit tumultuous relationship between the two great artists.

In addition to giving Antheil his first introduction to Pound and the Parisian salon life, Anderson arranged for his Paris debut. Anderson’s friend Georgette Leblanc, the opera singer, had begun a collaboration with the French filmmaker, Marcel L’Herbier. The final product, the film *L’Inhumaine*, tells the story of an opera singer gone mad. L’Herbier wanted to film “one scene in which a full dressed audience broke into a great uproar ... not a lot of film people, but real concert goers, and a real concert flurry.”<sup>22</sup> Antheil had caused concert riots all over central Europe, so Anderson thought his music and personality would suit the film. All of the artistic elite were invited to the performance, and the audience included Ray, Picasso, Cocteau, Joyce, Léger, Satie, Milhaud “and Heaven knows who else.”<sup>23</sup> Cameras had been hidden around the theatre to

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19. Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound, July 8, 1923, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

20. R. Murray Schafer, ed., *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 245.

21. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 119.

22. Antheil to Bok, October 7, 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

23. *Ibid.*

capture the planned riot. Antheil performed three of his most avant-garde piano works, *Sonata Sauvage*, *Airplane Sonata* and his newest *Mechanisms*. Several days later, Antheil recounted the event to Bok:

After the first movement of my newest sonata there was bedlam! ... They screeched, they whistled: another and equally strong part of the audience clapped and yelled bravo until they were quite hoarse. I thought the theatre would come down. During the second piece no one could hear a note. I could scarcely hear myself play. It was no longer a question of hearing ... it was a principle.<sup>24</sup>

Though the event had been carefully planned and carried out, it caused enough of a stir to make the Paris headlines the next morning. Antheil remembered, “From this moment on I knew that, for a time at least, I would be the new darling of Paris. I was notorious in Paris, therefore famous. Picasso would not have become famous in Paris unless he had first become notorious; the same was absolutely true for Stravinsky.”<sup>25</sup> This strategic event, more headlines than real art for both Antheil and *L’Inhumaine*, secured Antheil’s position at the forefront of the avant-garde in Paris.

### III. Ezra Pound: The Mephistophelian Red-Bearded Gent

As previously mentioned, Antheil’s music and his musical ideas echoed Pound’s own artistic ideals, and in this Pound saw a mutually beneficial relationship. In a letter to his mother just a few days after meeting Antheil for the first time, Pound wrote: “That bitch of an acquaintance Mrs. Bok has I believe done him dirt; ... Antheil also approves of my orchestration, so I naturally think him a genius (*sic*). Nobody but a genius could

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24. Antheil to Bok, October 7, 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

25. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 134.

approve of my orchestration.”<sup>26</sup> Pound was well known in Parisian circles as a discoverer of genius, and Antheil would follow in the footsteps of both T. S. Eliot and Joyce in Pound’s attention. Evidently Pound believed he could do a better job of fostering the young composer’s career than his current patron, Bok, though Antheil still relied on her financially for many years and Pound even helped to bolster his case when Antheil requested more funding.

While Pound helped introduce Antheil into the Parisian salon circles, Antheil provided Pound with music to support his manifestos descended from his Vorticist days in London. After hearing Antheil play his newest piano pieces, Pound wrote to his mother, recounting, “He is very solid. Next phase of Music for those fed up with the era of Debussy. Am trying to collect my wits for an article or manifesto on [the] subject.”<sup>27</sup> This manifesto ultimately took the form of a short book, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, which includes a lengthy article on Antheil, drawing heavily from Antheil’s unpublished writings. According to Antheil’s memoir, Pound had asked him early on if he had written anything about his musical ideas. Antheil handed over the “pronunciamentos (*sic*) on art and music which would have blown the wig off any conventional musician,” that he had written in Berlin a few years earlier.<sup>28</sup> Antheil later bemoaned giving Pound these manifestos in that they represented an adolescent

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26. Ezra Pound to Isabel Pound, 8 July, 1923, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

27. EP to Isabel Pound, 30 August, 1923, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

28. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 117.



outpouring of wild ideas that he could read over once or twice and then destroy.<sup>29</sup>

Instead, his fervent youthful ranting made up the bulk of Pound's *Treatise*.

In the *Treatise*, Pound held Antheil up as the newest and most modern iteration of his earlier Vorticist ideals. He wrote, "The Vorticist Manifestos of 1913-14 left a blank space for music; there was in contemporary music, at that date, nothing corresponding to the work of Wyndham Lewis, Pablo Picasso or Gaudier-Brzeska. Stravinsky arrived as a comfort, but one could not say definitely that his composition was the new music."<sup>30</sup>

Antheil's music filled the Vorticist artist vacuum Pound highlighted. The work includes a manifesto of Pound's own musical theories, a section on Antheil and his music and ideas and a set of Pound's writings with "marginalia" by Antheil. The text Pound took from Antheil's personal letters and unpublished writings makes Antheil seem both rash and juvenile. While the excerpts express Antheil's clear and innovative ideas on music, machines and time-space, his writing style translates as spiteful and undisciplined. Pound touted Antheil as the next greatest musician of the day, and with Antheil's own words attacked many of his contemporaries. In the span of four pages, Pound quotes Antheil as saying, Stravinsky "was nothing but a jolly Rossini," Les Six were merely imitators "with the utmost freshness and understanding," Wagner, Scriabin and even his own former teacher Bloch were "all a little fat," Bartók had "done much bird-stuffing with folksongs of Hungary," and Schönberg's "musical machinery [was] based fundamentally upon Mendelssohn."<sup>31</sup> This misrepresentation and the antagonism it caused likely accounts for

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29. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 118.

30. Ezra Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1968), 37.

31. *Ibid.*, 57-60.

Antheil's unfavorable memory of the volume. In his memoir, he wrote: "I do not know why I permitted Ezra to issue his book about myself. Perhaps it was because at that moment I could see no other way of blasting into the otherwise tight-as-a-drum salons."<sup>32</sup>

Despite the fallout from the *Treatise*, and the apparent split between the two men in later years, Pound and Antheil did help each other significantly during Antheil's first years in Paris. In her unpublished memoir, Boski remembered Pound with fondness:

He absolutely believed in the hard-edged, mechanical cubist music of George, like the aeroplane sonatas, music of the machines, Ballet Mécanique and he did everything in his power to have them published, performed. He begged or borrowed or even spent his own money for performances, such as rental of a hall, etc. and did not mind turning pages, which he did not too well and George used to have to nudge him when he got to the end of a page.<sup>33</sup>

In his own writings, Antheil downplayed Pound's support and involvement during his first few years in Paris. However, the existing correspondence between the two exhibits an advantageous relationship. Pound frequently assisted Antheil in procuring more money from Bok, arranging concerts, commissioning works and, as Boski wrote, even turning pages during concerts. Meanwhile, Antheil became an artist-collaborator with Pound advancing his artistic pronouncements with complementary music and even helping to write and orchestrate Pound's opera *Le Testament*.

Both Pound and Antheil struggled financially during these years and frequently commiserated over the issue. Antheil wrote to Pound in 1925, "I'm just talking about composers and writers in general, and how the situation lays. ... The reason you never saw more than 2000 bucks in your lifetime is because these animals we call people think

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32. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 120.

33. Böske Antheil, "Böske Antheil Biography," George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

that it ain't poetic for a poet to have enough to eat."<sup>34</sup> Pound could survive on his meager earnings as a writer with help from his wife, who came from a wealthy family. Antheil's musical career, however, proved to be much more expensive with publication costs, hall rentals and hiring musicians to perform his newest compositions. Pound's encouragement of Antheil's most avant-garde and revolutionary ideas, his help in arranging for concerts of Antheil's music and his aid in encouraging Bok to send the young composer more funding all fueled Antheil's composition between 1923 and 1926. In his little flat above Shakespeare & Co., he completed his *Symphony for Five Instruments*, three violin sonatas commissioned by Pound, a string quartet, and the infamous *Ballet Mécanique*. Although many have argued that Pound merely used Antheil to promote his own revolutionary artistic ideas and propaganda, the evidence suggests a much more complex relationship. Though Antheil downplayed the importance of Pound's support in his Parisian success later in life, the correspondence between the two men shows that Antheil significantly benefited from his association with the poet.

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34. Antheil to Pound, 1925, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANTHEIL'S MUSICAL STYLE 1920-1924

Antheil's earliest works of music, like many composers, attempted to imitate the great masters like Bach and Mozart. His early compositions feature the piano with a simple harmonic language. Composition lessons with Sternberg, beginning in 1919, greatly expanded Antheil's harmonic vocabulary. He enlarged registral usage and refined his use of dynamics. In *The Life and Music of George Antheil*, Linda Whitesitt states that Antheil's "Polonaise 1917" represents the break from his student style and movement towards what would become his signature style during his early years in Paris. "Polonaise 1917" includes a number of stylistic markers that Antheil continued to refine over the next decade, most notably his use of "rhythmically activated, contrasting blocks of percussive, nonmelodic, accented chords ... with no transitions between the highly differentiated short segments of musical material."<sup>1</sup> The "Polonaise" also includes abruptly shifting meters, percussive performance directions, extreme ranges and large five- and six-note chords in ostinato patterns.<sup>2</sup> Antheil further polished each of these stylistic devices throughout the next few years of composition.

The works written between 1919 and 1920 further solidify these techniques into a quintessentially Antheil style. These works include the "Sonatine Provinciale" (1919), "Fireworks and the Profane Waltzes" (1919), both for solo piano and the Five Songs, 1919-1920, for soprano and piano after Adelaide Crapsey. The "Sonatine Provinciale"

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1. Whitesitt, 81.

2. Ibid.

foreshadowed the Sonata for Violin, Piano and Drums in Antheil's distortion of a popular song melody placed over the dissonant, nontonal ostinato patterns like those used in "Polonaise 1917."<sup>3</sup> In the pieces written during this period, he began to use descriptive instructions like "over-sentimental—exaggerated" and "with mock coyness,"<sup>4</sup> another stylistic trait that would come to typify Antheil's writing in the coming years. Most importantly, the emphasis on repetition over development and contrast rather than transformation are extant in these early works.

In the next years Antheil composed two larger works, "The Golden Bird" and his first symphony. Antheil described his symphony floridly over several pages to Bok in a letter written in December of 1922, just after the symphony had been premiered by Schultz von Dornberg<sup>5</sup> and the Berlin Philharmonic, "I give you this description of my symphony as I see it today. Technically in actual writing down of notes and their clarification I have gone far beyond it. But Spiritually I am still much the same. You must remember always that the 1st Symphony was began at eighteen and finished at the age of twenty."<sup>6</sup> Just two months later, Antheil wrote to Mrs. Bok: "My little first symphony seems to me now long long out of date!"<sup>7</sup> Antheil moved quickly away from the lush style of his First Symphony, on to a more mechanistic and cool style of writing.

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3. Whitesitt, 82.

4. Ibid.

5. Though Antheil wrote that Schultz von Dornberg gave the premiere, it was actually Rudolph Schulz-Dornburg, the conductor of the Koeln Opera in the 1930s.

6. Antheil to Bok, December 1922, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

7. Antheil to Bok, February or March 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

In 1921, Antheil began to write about his new ideas of music to his friends and supporters. In December of 1921, Antheil wrote to Muriel Draper saying, “I realize now that I am afraid of no music, because I know completely the direction. These things come out in only half-moments, enormously compressed. Of course I had nucleouses (*sic*) before but now it seems that I am quite sure.”<sup>8</sup> Antheil attributed the new mechanical direction of his music to the industrial city in which he grew up:

I had been born in Trenton, New Jersey, across the street from a very noisy machine shop; thus, in all probability, giving (but without any scientific justification) ammunition into the hands of those who claim there is such a thing as prenatal influence. . . . I was still too young to know that factory district, broken machinery,<sup>9</sup> sand pits, smokestacks, and all that sort of thing, could not possibly be beautiful.

Antheil’s urban upbringing may account for some of the mechanistic influence in his music, but the Dada and Futurist movements arriving in New York during his formal musical training likely had a greater power over his artistic trajectory. Antheil composed his Second Sonata *The Airplane* for piano, in this new mechanical style in 1921. The musicologist, Carol J. Oja points out that Marinetti’s *Futurist Manifesto* from 1909 saw the airplane “as an icon of industrial society.”<sup>10</sup> Even before the airplane, trains had long provided composers with inspiration for mechanistically inspired works. In 1844 Charles-Valentin Alkan composed his *Le chemin de fer*, “the railway,” a five-minute long perpetual motion etude for piano depicting a train running down the tracks. Antheil was surrounded by this glorification of the machine with displays of Duchamp and Picabia’s

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8. Antheil to Draper, December 28, 1921, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

9. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 13-14.

10. Oja, 75.

Dadaist work in both Philadelphia and New York during his years of study.<sup>11</sup> The *Airplane Sonata* represents the confluence of Antheil's own innovative musical ideas with the simultaneous art movements in the cities in which he studied. In the *Airplane Sonata*, Antheil codified stylistic traits hinted at in his earlier works including driving rhythms, repetitive ostinato patterns, a marked lack of dynamic variance and the signature musical blocks from his earlier works.

A series of piano sonatas written in the same aesthetic followed the *Airplane Sonata*. The *Sonata Sauvage*, *Death of Machines*, *Jazz Sonata*, and *Mechanisms* all followed in step and served as the centerpieces of Antheil's European concert tours. When Antheil moved to Berlin in 1922, he came to possess a typewriter, facilitating the writing of hundreds of pages on his new mechanistic musical ideas and the climate of modern music. Antheil wrote extensively to Bok, Muriel Draper and his childhood friend Stanely Hart in addition to composing a number of manifestos, many of which would later find publication. In an article in the 1922 winter issue of *Der Querschnitt*, Antheil described his latest ideas on music:

For the immediate future there will be only two kinds of music, the banal and the mechanistic. Ragtime embraces the first and it is the nucleus of the second. The first will derive its energy from the pulse of the new people, and the second from the direct environment of those masses, the towers, new architectures, bridges, steel machinery, automobiles, and other things which directly function, and are aesthetically placed directly apart from the organization of the sentimental which the first includes. The second will be purely abstract and will derive its energy from the rhythmic genius of the solitary innovator whose sense of time-space comes up to the present moment, and who can invent new machineries for the locomotion of time, or the musical canvas, in such a way that we have a new musical dimension.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Ibid., 78.

12. Antheil, "Jazz."

Here, Antheil delineated between the two different styles he compositionally experimented with during the early 1920s. Antheil harbored irreverence for popular music and had difficulty composing real jazz. Instead, he developed a parodical and satirical stance on banal music. In his *Treatise* several years later, Pound supported Antheil's belief in the future of machine-music writing, "I take it that music is the art most fit to express the fine quality of machines. Machines are now a part of life, it is proper that men should feel something about them, there would be something weak about art if it couldn't deal with this new content."<sup>13</sup> In addition to delineating between banal and mechanistic music, Antheil mentions the idea of a new musical dimension, what he called time-space. The concept of time-space in music became the driving force of Antheil's composition in the following years. His violin sonatas and the later *Ballet Mécanique* all originate from this inspiration.

Antheil believed that the next frontier in music was not tonality or non-tonality, but rather time and rhythm. For Antheil, rhythm provided "the source of all music,"<sup>14</sup> and from that source the newest forms and compositional styles should develop. In 1925, he commented, "without rhythm we have nothing to give backbone to our melodies, or to even generate a harmony."<sup>15</sup> Perhaps Antheil's most revolutionary idea was that rhythm, placed carefully in time, lends harmony and melody their strength. In other words, harmony and melody are ineffective without the structure of rhythm and time. In an article titled "Abstraction and Time in Music," Antheil declaims "THE MOST important

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13. Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, 53.

14. Antheil, "I call myself futurist."

15. Antheil, "Jazz is a Bore," Paris 1925, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.



and least experimented-with part of music is TIME. Music has always been the adventures of TIME with SPACE. . . . No music can exist which is based upon such a superficial and primary thing as the ear.”<sup>16</sup> In a later article describing his *Ballet Mécanique*, Antheil raged, “Do you dare to deny that the canvas of music is time and not tonality . . . Do you mean to say that the very spaces in which you are working, and the finished space which is your goal . . . Does not interest you fundamentally, above all other things.”<sup>17</sup> This idea of time went hand-in-hand with Antheil’s mechanistic conception of music. He wrote music in the exact way he wanted the performer to play, with no rubato or personal influence. Antheil’s music at this time became truly “hard as stone.”<sup>18</sup>

While he declaimed the importance of time and rhythm, Antheil railed against harmony and tonality and composers who relied too heavily on those devices in their compositions. In 1924, Antheil felt that it was “about time that we discard all bunkum about ‘chords’ and ‘harmony.’”<sup>19</sup> The harmonic analysis of music especially bothered Antheil and he wrote, “The Germans are always analyzing chords, chords, chords . . . and there are no chords!”<sup>20</sup> Young composers were to avoid the “fatness of Wagner”<sup>21</sup> at all costs. Antheil wanted to “break through all the futile experimenting and new

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16. Antheil, “Abstraction and Time in Music,” *Little Review* (Autumn-Winter 1924-25), 13 in George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

17. Antheil, “My Ballet Mecanique: What it Means,” *Der Querschnitt* (September 1925) in George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

18. Antheil, “Jazz is a Bore.”

19. Antheil, “Abstraction and Time in Music.”

20. Antheil, “Jazz is a Bore.”

21. Antheil, “The Importance of Other Names,” n.d., George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

arrangements of old sentimentalities.”<sup>22</sup> In an 1923 letter to Draper he wrote, “Music must function swiftly, efficiently, and with new improved machinery, and not superinvolved ala Schönberg, or superreduced ala Satiestrawagnerism,”<sup>23</sup> Antheil fought a constant personal battle against his more successful contemporaries, frequently singling out the perceived shortcomings of Stravinsky’s and Schönberg’s music and, at every opportunity, sought to distance himself from them. Antheil clearly felt that he would be the artist to bring down the dogmatic traditions of Western classical music, writing to Bok in February 1923, “I have gone away from Strawinsky, Schönberg, everyone now, and stand entirely alone. My position is perilous.”<sup>24</sup> At this point, Antheil turned away from his career as a concert pianist to focus his energies on his passion, composition.

As a composer, Antheil’s position was not as lonely or precarious as he may have thought. Mechanistic music, as seen with Alkan’s 1844 *Le chemin de fer*, had already had a long history. Other composers besides Antheil experimented with the piano as a percussive instrument and the connection between rhythm and the machine aesthetic. The performance indication for the final movement, “Ragtime,” of Paul Hindemith’s 1922 *Suite für Klavier, Op. 26* could almost be excerpted and placed in one of Antheil’s piano pieces to achieve exactly the same effect. Hindemith asks the performer to “Play this piece very wildly, but always very strictly in rhythm, like a machine. Regard the piano

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22. Antheil, “Manifesto of Musico-Mechanics,” [1923-1924?], George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

23. Antheil to Draper, 1923, Muriel Draper Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

24. Antheil to Bok, February or March 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

here as an interesting kind of percussion instrument and handle accordingly.”<sup>25</sup> Similarly, Cowell had begun using tone clusters as early as 1913 in his *Adventures in Harmony* and they rapidly became an integral part of his compositional style.<sup>26</sup> After the premiere of Antheil’s first two violin sonatas,

Some of the critics said he struck the keyboard with the palms of his hands, and compared him with another American pianist named Cowell who gave a concert a few weeks before. (Cowell struck chords with his forearm.) Antheil boiled over at this, because he detests whatever is not precise and clean-cut. His chords are complicated, but always definite.<sup>27</sup>

Antheil consistently fought back against any comparison to either his contemporaries or to those composers who came before. Though the compositional trends of the early twentieth century undeniably influenced Antheil, he nonetheless managed to create his own unique style and form—rhythmically driven, percussive sound in time.

In a letter from August of 1923, Antheil bemoaned the fact that he did not spend the last two years purely composing music. He wrote to Bok arguing against the goal of becoming a concert pianist, “I should have been writing music. . . . No matter what the hardship, I should have continued only to write music. You are right, that is the divinest part of me, even Strawinsky has said that I am a terrible musical intelligence.”<sup>28</sup> Antheil

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25. Paul Hindemith, *1922, Suite für Klavier, Op. 26* (B. Schott’s Sohn, 1922), 19. “Spiele dieses Stück sehr wild, aber stets sehr stramm im Rhythmus, wie eine Maschine. Betrachte hier das Klavier als eine interessante Art Schlagzeug u. handle dementsprechend.”

26. Grove Music Online, s.v. “Henry Cowell,” (by David Nicholls and Joel Sachs), accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2249182>.

27. William Ivy, “Young Trenton Composer-Pianist Startles Music World of Paris,” *Trenton Times*, January 1, 1924, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

28. Antheil to Bok, August 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

believed the “essence of a great composer is in the fact that he actually composes, arranges in new patterns, derives great spiritual and intellectual excitement out of these new arrangements and implications.”<sup>29</sup> Antheil believed he would be the composer to revolutionize classical music, bolstering this opinion on the rioting and vehemence with which he was customarily received. In yet another piece he wrote, “It seems safe to assume that those who come in for the greatest amount of ridicule are the ones most to be watched. If a composer were not really dangerous to conservative music, its champions would not bring out their typewriters and write millions upon millions of words about and against him.”<sup>30</sup> Antheil exalted and cherished positive reviews of his music and performances, and fought vehemently against any disapproving press and yet, paradoxically believed this disparaging press validated and upheld his revolutionary musical ideas. During his early years in Paris, Antheil practically invited the press to criticize his music by composing provocative, demanding works. The three violin sonatas exemplify this antagonistic stance as well as the compositional ideas of mechanism, rhythm and time discussed in this chapter.

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29. Antheil, “The Essence of Musical Revolution,” n.d., George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

30. Antheil, “Modern Music....and how it gets that way,” n.d., George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

CHAPTER 5  
THE VIOLIN SONATAS

I. Commissioned for Olga Rudge

After moving to Paris in June of 1923, Antheil went hard to work on completing a quintet for flute, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, and viola, stylistically based on Stravinsky's 1920 *Symphony for Wind Instruments*. Into the piece, Antheil wove his "first impression of our new local Paris. ... It is full of little themes heard on our own street corner, ... it is Paris in our summer of 1923."<sup>1</sup> Antheil's introduction to Pound interrupted the completion of the little symphony when Pound issued a "hurry-up call for *several* violin sonatas. Not one, mind you, but several; his idea was, he said, to arrange a concert for me with a friend of his, Olga Rudge, the concert violinist. ... At this concert, he explained, he would take care to see that all of important Paris was present, the really important Paris that mattered."<sup>2</sup> Antheil saw the opportunity as a career-making one and immediately set to work on two violin sonatas. He completed these for a December 1923 premiere, with a third sonata following in 1924.

Like Antheil, Rudge had been born in a small American city, Youngstown, Ohio, and after studying violin in the United States, moved to Europe to make her career. She gave many recitals in the major European cities beginning around 1916. By the time Pound encountered her at a London recital in 1920, Rudge had already established herself

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1. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 121.

2. *Ibid.*

as a fine concert violinist.<sup>3</sup> The two formed a romantic partnership, though Pound was already married to Dorothy Shakespear. Pound, who had already “bludgeoned his way into a number of *musical* salons” for Rudge, saw the potential for a beneficial musical association between Rudge and Antheil.<sup>4</sup> The up-and-coming young composer could help Rudge develop her position as an interpreter of modern music and the established concert violinist could give credence to the relatively untried composer’s work.

Rudge herself was “A striking, poised young artist with dark hair bobbed and parted in the middle in the high fashion of the Twenties,”<sup>5</sup> and upon meeting her for the first time, Antheil described her as a “dark, pretty Irish-looking girl, about twenty-five years old and, as I discovered when we commenced playing a Mozart sonata together, a consummate violinist.”<sup>6</sup> Both Rudge’s appearance and her particular style of playing the violin heavily influenced the music he wrote in the violin sonatas. Antheil made special note in his memoir that while he had heard many violinists, none had “the superb lower register of the D and G strings that was Olga’s exclusively.”<sup>7</sup> Antheil immediately decided after “looking at her Irish adrenal personality, . . . the sonatas must be as wildly strange as she looked, tailored to her special appearance and technique.”<sup>8</sup> Even in later years, Antheil acknowledged Rudge’s supreme ownership of the violin sonatas. In a letter

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3. *Grove Music Online*, s.v. “Olga Rudge,” (by Charles Amirkhanian and Archie Henderson III), accessed March 24, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/43768>.

4. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 119.

5. Anne Conover, *Olga Rudge and Ezra Pound* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 2.

6. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 121.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, 122.

he wrote to her in 1927, Antheil mentions that “Szigeti wanted to play both fiddle sonata, and almost begged upon his knees for them,” but left the decision up to her saying, “They belong to you, absolutely.”<sup>9</sup> Antheil dedicated the First Sonata to Rudge, and the Second to “Ezra Pound, best of friends.”<sup>10</sup>

A close analysis of the three violin sonatas written between 1923 and 1924 will shed light on Antheil’s compositional development during his first years in Paris and point ahead to his masterpiece, *Ballet Mécanique*. There are several important stylistic traits that appear in each of the sonatas. These include structures centered on the “addition and manipulation of blocks of musical material”<sup>11</sup> with no transition between adjacent blocks, rhythm and its irregularity as the driving musical force and unpredictable silences, with the latter two related to his theories of time-space in music. Formally, each of the three violin sonatas is built on the principle of a percussive, chordal ostinato in the piano over changing meter while the violin plays irregularly spaced melodies and motives. At the same time, the extremes of each instrument and the limits of each musician’s techniques are tested. Antheil asks the violinist to transition from pizzicato to bowed and from the IV string to the highest tessitura of the I string in a split second in addition to playing behind the bridge and pressing the “bow to the point of scarping, producing a percussive scratch.”<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, the pianist treats the piano like a battery of percussion instruments with *glissandi* up and down the keyboard and an entire cadenza of

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9. George Antheil to Olga Rudge, 1927, Olga Rudge Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

10. George Antheil, *The Works for Violin and Piano*, ed. Ron Erickson (New York: G. Schirmer, 1995), 71.

11. Whitesitt, 96.

12. Antheil, *The Works for Violin and Piano*, 69.

precisely notated clusters. This style of writing for the piano has clear roots in Antheil's earlier piano pieces, especially the *Airplane Sonata* and *Sonata Sauvage*. However, Antheil greatly expands the scope and breadth of his compositional style in the violin sonatas.

The premiere performance of the First and Second Sonatas did not receive kind reviews. Pound remarked, in his *Treatise*, that it may take some time for musicians to recognize the artistry in Antheil's works for violin and piano:

Both this composer and this executant, starting with the forces and iterations of the 1st Violin Sonata have acquired—perhaps only half consciously—a new precision. There is something new in violin writing and in violin playing. Violinists of larger reputation who looked at the earlier sonata and walked away, those who thought it “bizarre,” will possibly awake and find themselves a little out of date, and the initiative of the first performer, may in time receive its reward.<sup>13</sup>

The following sections elucidate the complexity and challenge of Antheil's three violin sonatas, highlighting their ingenuity and their rightful place in the musical history of 1920s Paris.

## II. Sonata No. 1, for Olga Rudge

Inspired by Rudge's violin playing and the promise of a proper introduction into the Parisian artistic salons, Antheil immediately began work on the First Sonata. Looking back in his memoir, Antheil realized “something important must have happened to me between my previous piano sonatas and this new ‘percussive’ work. There appears to be a whole world of difference between the former and the latter.”<sup>14</sup> This Sonata No. 1 for

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13. Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, 149.

14. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 122.



Violin and Piano exemplifies the influence that Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* had on Antheil. He could not help but be inspired or at the least influenced by the percussive and angular rhythmicism of Stravinsky’s latest ballet. At one point he became so frustrated with Stravinsky’s pervasive influence that he took a trip to North Africa to clear his musical ears. While the first and fourth movements of the First Sonata take heavy cues from Stravinsky, the middle movements tell the story of Antheil’s first Tunisian escapade in their exotic harmonic language and timbral ambiance. Each of the four movements, *Allegro moderato*, *Andante moderato*, *Funebre*, *lento espressivo* and *Presto* displays the same structural principles—contrasting blocks of musical material within a time-canvas. The movements are connected through a cyclical form wherein prominent themes of the first movement return throughout the final movement. Similarly, the first and second movements reiterate their first themes at the end of the movements.

The first movement of the sonata begins with an eighth-note ostinato in the left hand of the piano repeating the pitches G-E-D-A while the violin plays a jaunty, bouncy melody on top of it. This pattern and sound, with a low eighth-note ostinato accompanying the violin recalls the “Airs by a Stream” in Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat*, in which the bass retains a strict four note eighth-note pattern under the violin’s melody.

Figure 1. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 1-4.

The musical score for the first four measures of Antheil's Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, is presented in a two-staff format. The top staff is for the Violin and the bottom staff is for the Piano. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The violin part begins with a jaunty melody, and the piano part features a low eighth-note ostinato in the left hand.

Figure 2. Stravinsky, *Histoire du soldat*, “Airs by a Stream,” measures 1-4.

The musical score shows two staves: VI. (Violin) and C.B. (Cello/Bass). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 100. The Violin part begins with a whole rest in measure 1, then plays eighth-note patterns in measures 2, 3, and 4. A 'pizz.' marking is present in measure 3. The Cello/Bass part plays a steady eighth-note ostinato pattern throughout measures 1-4. A 'pizz.' marking is present in measure 1, and a 'p [sempre]' marking is present in measure 2.

At three moments in this section, eighth-note *sforzando* chords in both instruments interrupt the stable ostinato pattern. After the last of these interruptions, the violin segues into a new block with a one-measure cadenza.

A rapid succession of blocks follows displaying Antheil’s disregard for regularity of grouping. The first block is nine measures; the next is three, then five and five again. At the same time, only the first two measures of this section retain the same metrical marking of 6/8. After that the meter changes with each measure though the original eighth-note pulse remains absolutely constant. This metrical unevenness gives what could be a static passage incredible rhythmic propulsion and drive. Double bars and new tempo markings help demarcate the larger blocks of material. In the smaller and rapidly shifting blocks, Antheil distinguishes new material by altering the ostinato pattern, most frequently in the left hand of the piano.

A new large block begins at measure 58, marked *Allegro vivace*. This block of music becomes the source for much of this first movement and also for the final movement. The first time the block is heard, a constant eighth-note ostinato in the piano accompanies a syncopated violin melody in a high register. The motivic material Antheil

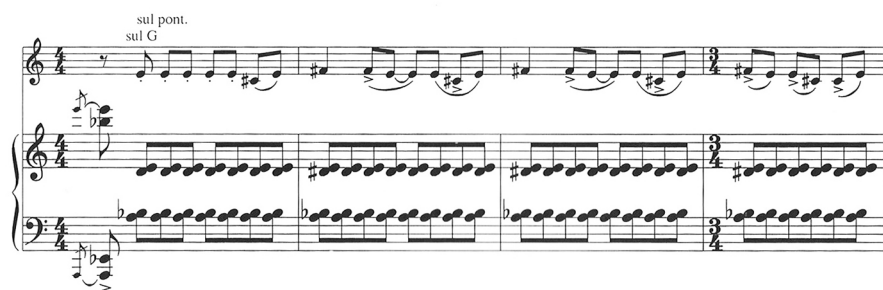
develops throughout the sonata only comprises the first measure of the figure, though the fourth measure in 3/4 does reoccur as well.

Figure 3. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 58-61.



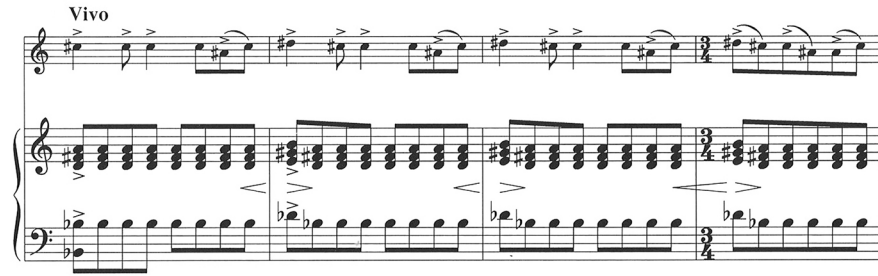
This pattern changes only slightly in measure 78, but the changes create an entirely different sound. The piano changes the ostinato from the treble clef C-C#-C to a clustered A-Bb-D#-E, and the violin moves two octaves down. Antheil adds several new instructions for the violin in this altered motive, to play only on the G-string giving it a darker tone, to play *sul ponticello* eliminating some of the pitch and adding extra noise, and to accent certain beats.

Figure 4. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 78-81.



This version of the motive reappears as the first motive of the final movement in the sonata. A third version of this motive appears in measure 158 of the first movement, this time beginning on C#. While the rhythm is played in exactly the same manner as the first iteration, Antheil notates this version differently.

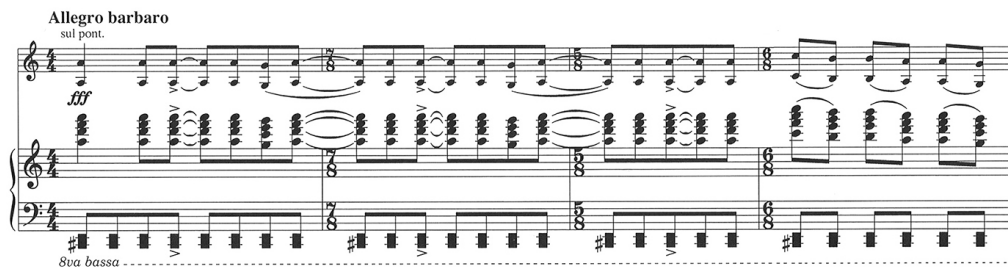
Figure 5. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 158-161.



By notating the rhythm in separate notes, without the ties of the first and second versions, Antheil ensures the performer understands the specific emphasis he intended.

The penultimate version of this pattern begins in measure 228, marked *Allegro barbaro*, which forms the central episode of the movement. This version is the furthest from the original iteration in measure 58. The melodic pattern occurs in the lowest register of the violin and is joined by the right hand of the piano, and both are accompanied by a cluster ostinato in the left hand in the lowest register of the piano.

Figure 6. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 228-231.



This iteration of the motive also occurs in the final movement of the sonata at a crucial moment. The last version of the motive in the first movement, marked *Allegro, rhythmic and mechanical* appears at measure 247. Here, Antheil rhythmically unifies all three voices (the violin and both hands of the piano).

Figure 7. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measures 247-250.

Allegro, rhythmic and mechanical  
arco  
sul pont.  
ff  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz

cluster: use palm of hand  
ff stacc. sempre  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz  
sfz

The previous examples display the simple ingenuity of Antheil's mechanistic writing. The kernel of each of these iterations is clearly seen in the simple and relatively non-aggressive primary version in measure 58. Each successive rendering becomes more violent and intense though Antheil makes only subtle changes to the material. More rhythmically irregular than their earlier counterparts, the final two versions display far more intensity and drive.

The climax of the movement occurs in the alternation between this final “rhythmic and mechanical” iteration of the theme described in detail above, and a new *Prestissimo* block of music. Antheil composes this new material with a sixteenth-note subdivision, asks for each note to be accented and even adds Arabic numerals above the divisions of the measure to further clarify the rhythmic intent for the performer.

Figure 8. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro Moderato, measure 282.

The sixteenth-note rests with accents indicate that they should be played “with a very hard mental accent.”<sup>15</sup> After the climax, the movement returns to a shortened version of the opening block, a technique that recurs in both the Second and Third Sonatas as well.

The second and third movements of the sonata evoke Antheil’s journey to Africa with Boski in the summer of 1923. In a letter to Bok from October 1923 Antheil described his “new violin sonata which has all the strangeness of Africa, the smell of the earth of Africa, full of the smell of wild meats roasting.”<sup>16</sup> These two middle movements rely much less on rhythmic propulsion and far more on timbral effects and sound colors. In the same letter to Bok, Antheil detailed the indelible mark his trip had made remembering, “Arabs singing, a strange twirling music that sticks in my ears, a music that twists itself happily into a thousand oriental ornaments like their architecture and the magicians of the Arabian nights. ... Then I understood tranquility, preoccupation and

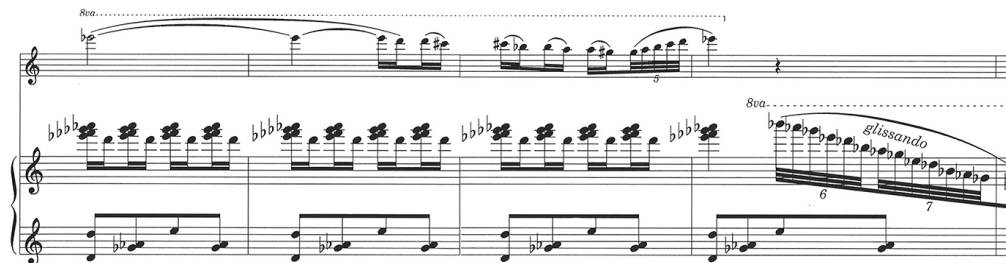
15. Antheil, *The Works for Violin and Piano*, 22.

16. Antheil to Bok, October 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

saintliness.”<sup>17</sup> The middle movements of the sonata are truly tranquil in comparison to the volatile and at times violent outer movements.

The opening of the second movement follows the same pattern as the first, beginning with an eighth-note ostinato in the piano left hand as the right hand plays a rhythmic melody above. The violin enters in measure 7 on a high E $\flat$  with a largely pentatonic melody. Here, the violin presents the “strange twirling” music that Antheil discovered in Tunisia. The violin statements move from high to low registers and back again in scalar patterns above the constant piano left-hand ostinato.

Figure 9. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, II. Andante moderato, measures 7-10.



The second movement has an overall palindromic form. It is not as perfect or mathematically advanced as the palindromic *Adagio* movement of Bartók’s *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*, but the framework of the blocks constitutes this mirrored form. The opening ostinato, melody in the right hand of the piano and scalar melody of the violin comprise the first musical block. Antheil maintains the eighth-note ostinato in the second block, accompanied by tied half notes in the right hand of the piano and a sixteenth-note melody in the violin.

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17. Antheil to Bok, October 1923, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

Figure 10. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, II. Andante moderato, measures 25-28.



A twelve-bar cadenza for the piano provides the central musical block. Measure 56 returns to the second block, though the piano right hand takes over the sixteenth-note melody and the violin adds interruptive *fff ponticello* glissandi. A slightly truncated version of the opening block returns in measure 70 to conclude the movement.

While Antheil does retain the structural block concept in the third movement, it is somewhat more difficult to delineate. The third movement also stands alone within the sonata in Antheil's use of the *tenuto* marking. In the previous two movements Antheil uses dots and accents abundantly, but only exceedingly rarely does he use *tenuto*. The opening theme of the third movement is comprised of bitonal clusters in the piano, over each of which Antheil marks *tenuto*. Accompanying this slow *Funebre* melody, the violin plays a stable eighth-note, sixteenth-triplet rhythm on the open G-string using the stick of the bow, *col legno*. This creates a percussive effect to accompany and contrast the piano's thickly written chordal melody. Both this movement and the second provide tranquil relief between the brutal outer movements.

The final movement of the sonata recapitulates both the spirit and several prominent motives of the first movement. Material from the first movement provides the basis for the first 58 measures of the final movement. Antheil borrows three different musical blocks from the first movement, shortens them into uneven groups of measures



(five, ten, eleven, etc.) and sets them up one in rapid succession. The blocks are strongly united by the unbreakable eighth-note ostinato in the piano. The subsequent block displays a complex rhythmic layering using the same pulse as the opening section, though here the eighth note becomes a sixteenth note. Above the sixteenth-note ostinato in the left hand, the right hand maintains a pattern of triplet sixteenth and quintuplet thirty-second notes, and above that the violin alternates between triplet sixteenth, thirty-second notes and quintuplet thirty-second notes.

Figure 11. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, IV. Presto, measure 63.



This pattern devolves and Antheil brings back the *Allegro barbaro* block from the first movement in measure 120, in alternation with the “very hard mental accent” block in measure 129. Antheil takes the *Allegro barbaro* material up one octave and breaks it down by adding unexpected rests between statements of the material. Antheil goes so far as to number the eighth note rests, reminding the performers again to be as exacting in their performance as possible.

Figure 12. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, IV. Presto, measures 153-154.

The movement ends with a coda of unison rhythm between the violin and piano—the piano in clusters and the violin pressing the bow “to the point of scraping, producing a percussive scratch.”<sup>18</sup>

In this sonata, Antheil adapted the musical ideas of the time to his own taste while, at the same time, continuing to develop his own earlier musical ideas. Looking back, Antheil wrote: “Here, within the first pages of this violin sonata, seems to be a new bravura not quite typical of another older, but I hope better, me; this combines with a perfectly legitimate synthesis of all that had been ‘wild and woolly’ in my previous pre-Parisian music.”<sup>19</sup> In the First Violin Sonata, Antheil expanded on compositional ideas introduced in the *Airplane Sonata* and quotes material from the *Sonata Sauvage* in the final movement. Antheil does not directly quote from *Sonata Sauvage*, but rather takes a small motivic idea and fleshes it out to a more mature musical end. Antheil utilizes the material in the same structural position in each piece, as a coda. While in the piano

18. Antheil, *The Works for Violin and Piano*, 69.

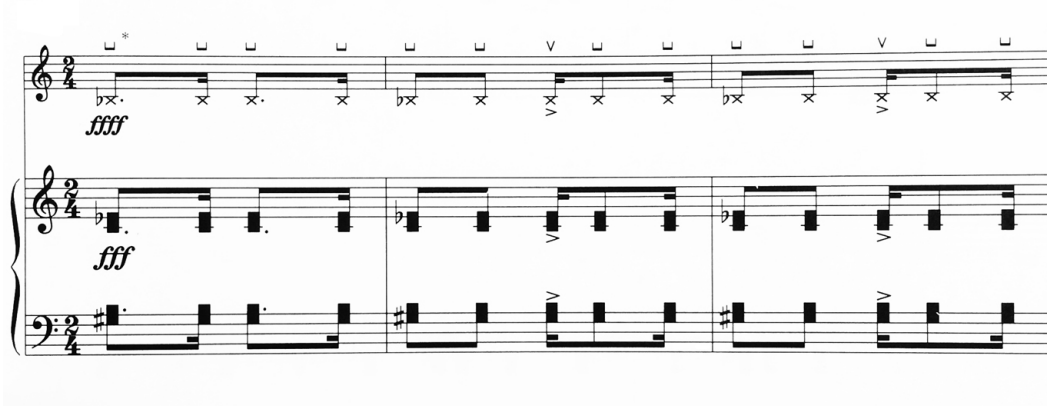
19. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 122.

sonata, the coda material only lasts for six measures, it is augmented to seventeen in the violin sonata.

Figure 13. Antheil, *Sonata Sauvage*, III. Ivory, Prestissimo, measures 28-29.



Figure 14. Antheil, *Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano*, IV. Presto, measures 229-231.



Rhythmically, these two examples are nearly identical, and Antheil uses clusters in the piano part in both. Antheil achieves an even more aggressive quality in the violin sonata by directing the violin to press the bow so hard that it produces a percussive scratch. In each piece, Antheil utilizes this material to drive the music to its conclusion. The augmentation of the material from six to seventeen measures corresponds to the expansion of form and structure Antheil explored in 1923 and 1924. In this First Violin Sonata, Antheil enhances and develops his earlier style while enhancing the percussive aspects of the writing.

The extreme control of rhythm and instruction to the performer exemplified in this First Sonata were part and parcel to Antheil's musical ideals at the time. In his *Treatise*, Pound commented, "We have all heard of tempo rubato ad lib., and so forth. To Igor Strawinsky we owe the revelation: 'No, you will *not* find any musical geniuses to execute this music. It would be better for the composer to write down what he wants the performer to play.'"<sup>20</sup> Later in the same volume, Antheil confirmed this belief in a comment quoted by Pound, "Ninety percent of failures are due to absolute incapability in the primary rudiments of music—rhythm."<sup>21</sup> So, in his compositions, Antheil made absolutely sure that the performer would execute his music exactly as he intended. A concert reviewer quoted Antheil as saying, "Nobody else will ever be able to play the stuff, despite the fact that I write my music with absolute accuracy, and leave nothing to 'interpretation.' But the complications of rhythm are so great that I am now experimenting with player-piano rolls. With the player-piano you can get things exactly right."<sup>22</sup> Antheil had already begun to sew the seeds of his most mechanistic work, the *Ballet Mécanique* in his Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano.

### III. Sonata No. 2, for Ezra Pound, best of friends

When Antheil completed the Sonata No. 1, Pound wrote to his father, "Antheil has done one damn good piano and violin sonata, and begun another."<sup>23</sup> Antheil

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20. Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, 46.

21. *Ibid.*, 79.

22. Ivy, "Young Trenton Composer-Pianist Startles Music World of Paris."

23. Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, October 3, 1923, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

composed the Second Sonata for Violin, Piano, and Drums in a single movement, formally structured in the same manner as the first, in contrasting musical blocks. While the First Sonata's texture can be described as "rhythmically pounding homophony," Antheil constructs the Second Sonata's musical blocks out of a percussive chordal accompaniment in varied jazz rhythms against dissonant melodies.<sup>24</sup> Antheil gives a description of both the structure and style of the sonata in his program notes for the work's 1927 Carnegie Hall premiere:

A composite composition somewhat relative to the Picasso 1918 cubist period in which Picasso assembled into one picture such banal commonplaces as café tables, mandolins, bits of actual newspaper, etc. The piano is treated percussively and is a many-teethed and pointed instrument against the, in this case, banal violin. The spirit of the music represents one phase of America—cubistic tin-pan alley. The thematic material is both original and from sentimental tunes long since become ridiculous. The whole goes into a final duet between bass drum and violin, in which the piano is abandoned, having gradually worked up to the percussive state where it finds its most complete expression in the drum rather than upon the keys.<sup>25</sup>

In this note, Antheil illuminates several important aspects of this composition in his program note. First, he explains the musical blocking structure in terms of Picasso's 1918 cubist period. Second, he clarifies that he did not compose all of the thematic material himself, but borrowed some melodies from "sentimental tunes long since become ridiculous." Lastly, Antheil highlights the conflict between "banal" and mechanistic music explored in the sonata by contrasting the "banal" violin against the mechanistic piano.

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24. Whitesitt, 98.

25. George Antheil, Sonata for Violin, Piano, and Drum, Program Notes for April 10, 1927 Carnegie Hall Concert, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

In this sonata, Antheil attempted to reconcile the idea of the “banal” versus the mechanistic, which he explored in his 1922 article “Jazz,” quoted and discussed in Chapter 4. There, Antheil describes banal music as deriving “its energy from the pulse of the new people.”<sup>26</sup> In the case of the Second Sonata, popular tin-pan alley songs like “In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree” and “Silver Threads Among the Gold” represent the banal. In addition to tin-pan alley, both ragtime and jazz influences appear in the sonata. Each of these styles developed as a popular music, music of the people, and as such represent banality in this sonata. Generally, throughout the sonata, the violin serves as the voice of the banal, though occasionally, the piano renders jazz-inspired ostinatos as well. In contrast, mechanistic music finds its inspiration in “the direct environment of those masses, the towers, new architectures, bridges, steel machinery, automobiles, and other things which directly function.”<sup>27</sup> The piano portrays the machine-aesthetic, in the beginning of the sonata working against the banal violin in crashing, discordant ostinato accompaniment. By the end of the sonata, the machine-piano destroys the banal-violin completely.

As noted above, jazz features prominently in the Second Violin Sonata. Jazz rhythms, or what Antheil thought of as jazz rhythms, provide the basis for the percussive piano ostinatos. In the same 1923 article in which he describes banal and mechanistic music, Antheil also describes jazz as “The product and folksong of a enterprising and daring blood that has left other lands in the spirit of materialism and dissatisfaction. Jazz is not a craze. ... And as for its artistic significance, the organization of its line, color, and

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26. Antheil, “Jazz.”

27. Ibid.

dimension,—its dynamic and mechanistic significance is that it is one of the greatest landmarks of modern art.”<sup>28</sup> Antheil composed several other works in this jazz idiom including the “Jazz Symphony,” for Paul Whiteman, who had commissioned George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue* only a year prior, as well as a Jazz Sonata (1923) for piano and later his opera *Transatlantic* (1928-1930). Antheil describes jazz both as a popular music stemming from the people while simultaneously representing the mechanistic. In this sonata, Antheil utilizes jazz’s dual qualities, allowing the piano itself to straddle the two musical worlds of the banal and the mechanistic.

Antheil repeats the formal procedures of the First Sonata in his Second, placing contrasting musical blocks side-by-side as well as the cyclical large-scale form of recapitulating opening melodies at the end of the piece. The blocks in the Second Sonata are generally quite short, creating a more frenetic and cubist-inspired sound than Antheil achieved in the First Sonata. The biggest difference between the two sonatas however, appears in the content of their respective musical blocks rather than the structural principles. In the first block, as in the First Sonata, the left hand of the piano provides a steady ostinato bass; while in contrast to the First Sonata, the right hand interacts rhythmically and melodically with the violin line. The right hand of the piano frequently provides the jazz element of the ostinato, bridging the banal violin line and the mechanistic left hand ostinato. The jazz rhythms rely heavily on syncopation within a consistent meter and represent Antheil’s synthesis of the medium, and not necessarily true jazz.

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28. Antheil, “Jazz.”

Figure 15. Antheil, Sonata No. 2, measures 19-20.



This type of stylized jazz maintains a constant presence throughout the sonata.

Above the percussive piano ostinatos, Antheil sets his melodic material. Antheil both composed melodies and borrowed them from popular tin-pan alley songs as well as Debussy's *Rêverie* and "Torna a Surriento," a popular Italian song. Antheil wrote in his article "Jazz is a bore," "If I should harmonize the hoochee-coochee in fifths I might earn the title of 'The American Bela Bartok (*sic*)'."<sup>29</sup> Perhaps this idea gave Antheil the foundation for the Second Sonata, for he does indeed harmonize the "hoochee-coochee" in fifths for several measures in the middle of the sonata. In addition to this reharmonization, Antheil expands or shrinks the original rhythmic patterns of the borrowed melodies. The material is disguised with aggressive accompaniment in the piano and demarked with performance indications like "suddenly sour," pointing to his sarcastic treatment of the clichéd melodies. Two examples of Antheil's borrowing and parody technique follow.

The first, and likely the most easily recognizable, interjection of borrowed material occurs in measure 52 and comes from the chorus of the song, "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree." The text of the chorus reads: "In the shade of the old apple tree/Where the love in your eyes I could see."<sup>30</sup> Antheil maintains the intervallic

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29. Antheil, "Jazz is a Bore."

30. Egbert Van Alstyne, *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree*, text by Harry H. Williams (Chicago, IL: Jerome H. Remick and Company, 1905), 4.



relationships of the pitches in the melody, with the exception of completing the line with a tritone instead of a perfect fourth. Antheil also remains close to the original rhythmic contour of the song, beginning with two eighth notes followed by three equal pulses. The percussive piano accompaniment appears as alternating cluster chords in syncopation, at a triple-forte dynamic.

Figure 16. Egbert Van Alstyne, “In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree,” measures 21-27.



Figure 17. Antheil, Sonata No. 2, measures 52-58.

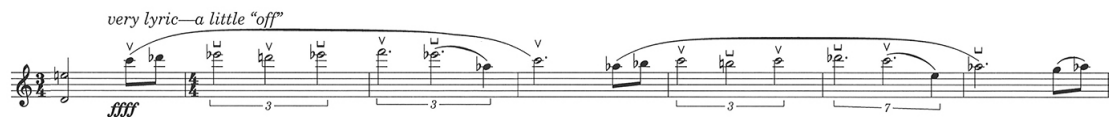
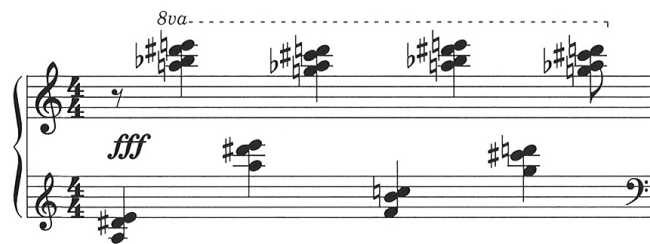


Figure 18. Antheil, Sonata No. 2, measure 53.



Antheil’s instruction “very lyric—a little off” and the *ffff* marking emphasize his sarcastic treatment of the borrowed material. Antheil quotes this same line again at measure 113, though only using the second half of the melody. Again, Antheil basically keeps the original rhythmic and intervallic contour, but changes the mood and style completely. In measure 113, Antheil asks for the performer to play the melody “suddenly sour,” while crashing chords in the piano accompany. Though Antheil does not alter the melody itself

to a great degree, the performance indications and the accompaniment clearly degrade the original song's sentimentality.

Later in the sonata, Antheil borrows from another tin-pan alley song, "Silver Threads Among the Gold." The melodic quote comes from the beginning of the verse, "Darling, I am growing old,/Silver threads among the gold,/Shine upon my brow today,/Life is fading fast away."<sup>31</sup> Antheil transposes the single line up a minor sixth and sets it against a tritone double-stop in the first two measures and thirds and perfect fifths in the following two. As in the previous example (figure 14 and figure 15), the rhythmic and intervallic content remains relatively consistent.

Figure 19. H. P. Danks, "Silver Threads Among the Gold," measures 5-8.

1. Dar - ling, I am growing old, . . . . . Sil - ver threads among the gold,  
 2. When your hair is sil - ver white, . . . . . And your cheeks no long - er bright,

Figure 20. Antheil, Sonata No. 2, measures 118-124.

Antheil marks the phrase "sweet," and with the tritone harmonization, clearly mocks the sentimentality of the tin-pan alley era music. In addition to these two famous melodies, Antheil borrows from Debussy's *Rêverie* in measures 64-67, the "hoochee-coochee" or "The Streets of Cairo" in measures 68-69 and again in 102-103, "Torna a Surriento" in measures 70-74, and "Cielito Lindo" in measures 156-168. Antheil treats each of the borrowed melodies in a similar fashion, maintaining the original contour of both rhythm

31. H. P. Danks, *Silver Threads Among the Gold*, text by Eben E. Rexford (New York: NY: Charles W. Harris, 1873), 1.

and melody, but transforming them through harmonization, register, musical instructions and the absence of context of the source material.

From the beginning of the sonata, the piano and violin appear at odds with one another, the piano struggling against the banal melodies of the violin with its cluster chord ostinatos and accompaniments. Towards the end of the sonata, the violin joins the piano in a fast ragtime, similar to the “Ragtime” at the climax of the “Three Dances” in Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat*. The dotted-sixteenth-thirty-second note groupings and the syncopated sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth grouping contribute to a similar rhythmic profile in both Antheil’s and Stravinsky’s violin lines.

Figure 21. Stravinsky, *Histoire du soldat*, “Three Dances—Ragtime,” measures 10-12.



Figure 22. Antheil, Sonata No. 2, measures 214-217.



Additionally, each of these moments appears at a climatic point in their respective works. Antheil wrote, “Ragtime embraces the [banal] and it is the nucleus of the [mechanistic].”<sup>32</sup> In that dual role, ragtime rightfully joins the banal violin with the mechanistic piano before the piano breaks into a cadenza of cluster chords in a tango-like rhythm. Antheil hints at the tango rhythm earlier in the sonata in the piano’s

32. Antheil, “Jazz.”

accompaniment to his parody of “Torna a Surriento” in the violin, though by the end of the sonata, the piano has destroyed all of the violin’s passé melodies.

After 48 measures of deafening cluster chords, “The whole goes into a final duet between bass drum and violin, in which the piano is abandoned, having gradually worked up to the percussive state where it finds its most complete expression.”<sup>33</sup> Antheil’s mechanism triumphs over the popular music past. The duet between the bass and tenor drum and the violin finds its roots in the music of Antheil’s journey to Tunisia, much like the second and third movements of the First Sonata. Additionally, this final duet recalls the “Three Dances—Tango” in Stravinsky’s *Histoire du soldat* in the texture of solo violin with percussion in a tango rhythm. Whitesitt describes this strange ending as the “emotional antithesis”<sup>34</sup> to the rest of the sonata in which the piano, a pitched percussion instrument, is ultimately tossed aside in favor of the drums while the violin rejects the banal melodies of the past in favor of a haunting non-Western one.

The disdain Antheil held for the music of the not-so-distant past clearly presents itself in his treatment of the various melodies, both borrowed and original, in the sonata. Throughout the movement, Antheil instructs the performers to play “sour,” “sweet,” “snappy,” “strutting,” “a little off” reiterating the trivial and dull nature of his musical quotes, not only of tin-pan alley, but also of Debussy. The closing unrelenting tango and non-classical coda serve to highlight Antheil’s acerbic wit and derision of the popular music style of the beginning of the sonata, and in the end, the triumph of modernism.

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33. Antheil, *Sonata for Violin, Piano, and Drum*, Program Notes.

34. Whitesitt, 99.

#### IV. Sonata No. 3, for Mrs. Christian Gross respectful homage

Antheil composed his Third Sonata for Violin and Piano in 1924, a year after the first two sonatas, though still for Olga Rudge. He dedicated the piece to Mrs. Christian Gross, a wealthy patron of the arts, and the owner of the home where Antheil and Rudge gave the premiere of the sonata in 1926. Antheil described the Third Sonata at length in a letter to Pound written during the composition of the piece:

The violin sonata is wild ... the fiddle of the Tziganes, but it seems mostly like Holy Poland. A few of the new themes have a certain new shape that I think is totally new to written music ... (organized music). It is barbaric, but not the barbarism of the first sonata which is often as not African (thus differing from Strawinsky, who is never African) nor has it the slightest barbarism of the *Sacre du Printemps* ... not the least. If there is an influence, it is rather Moussorgsky ... there is a part at the end which seems like a vast vast hymn sang by thousands of throats (although I make the violin and piano quite sufficient for the occasion) once Mongol, but now Christian, and hundreds of church-bells (not church-bells in America) (God!) ... Warsaw, Budapest, and furthestmost points of the East. I think that Olga will like it ... it gives her more to do, and show off with than the other sonatas.<sup>35</sup>

While the Third Sonata does have moments of barbarism and wild fiddling, it is generally far more subdued and serious in character than its predecessors. This sonata retains the formal principles Antheil had established by 1924, namely contrasting musical blocks and an overall cyclic form.

Antheil felt that the First and Third Violin Sonatas shared more stylistic traits and ideas than they did with the second. In 1954, Antheil reflected on his stylistic experiments during the early 1920s: “At that time I was composing in two styles—a synthesized jazz idiom and another I called my time-space style. In the first, I wrote a

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35. Antheil to Pound, 1923-24, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.



This straight rhythmic pulse and the intervals recall the flute melody in the “Mystic Circles of the Young Girls” in the *Sacre*.

Figure 24. Stravinsky, *Sacre du Printemps*, “Mystic Circles of the Young Girls,” measures 13-18.



While this comparison is not exact, the similarity of intervallic values and the stable pulse of each motive produces an analogous sound and tone. Whether or not Antheil intentionally drew inspiration for the theme of the Third Sonata from Stravinsky’s work, it permeates the entire piece.

The Third Sonata begins much like the first with a melody in the violin accompanied by an alternating eighth-note ostinato in the piano left hand and a quarter-note ostinato in the right (see figure 20). Whitesitt accurately describes the texture of the subsequent blocks as layered ostinato patterns in a hierarchy “where one layer, usually the top, functions, because of its less rigid character, as a synthetic melody.”<sup>38</sup> Because none of the ostinato lines present real melodic interest, the violin, often with a small ornament or in a clearer register than the piano serves as the equivalent of the melodic line.

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38. Whitesitt, 100.

Figure 25. Antheil, Sonata No. 3, measures 52-53.



Through much of the sonata, the right hand of the piano joins the violin line while the left hand provides a separate contrasting ostinato underpinning. There are, however, several occasions in which the violin provides the underpinning ostinato while the two hands of the piano merge. Antheil even utilizes three separate ostinatos, albeit very sparingly throughout the sonata. This is in contrast to the homophony of the musical blocks in the First Sonata, where the same rhythm and pattern is maintained across all three voices (violin, piano right and left hands).

As in Antheil's First Sonata, one motivic idea pervades the entire Third Sonata (figure 23). Antheil uses a much more melodic motive here however, with little complex rhythmic interest. This relative simplicity allows him to manipulate and develop the material far beyond its first occurrence. Antheil places the motive in different ranges across the violin, alters the rhythmic units, and changes the piano's ostinato accompaniment with each iteration of the material. One example of the development of the opening motive occurs at measure 232. Antheil presents the motive in diminution,





As the motive repeats, the piano transitions to a new accompaniment, this time even more active—a thirty-second-note scalar ostinato in the left hand with a repetitive glissando in the right.

Figure 28. Antheil, Sonata No. 3, measures 337-338.



This culminates in a five-beat long glissando across the entire range of the piano and a six-measure piano cadenza evoking the cluster cadenza of the Second Sonata. This is followed by a final iteration of the faster eighth-note derivation of the primary theme. By enlivening and speeding up the original motivic material, Antheil constructs an effective and exciting climax.

The final section of music recalls material from the first few pages of music and acts as a dénouement from the excitement of the middle blocks. A five-measure block marked *Largo* follows, growing out of a single measure early in the piece. Unobtrusive in the beginning, it is nearly forgotten by the time Antheil summons it toward the end of the sonata.

Figure 29. Antheil, Sonata No. 3, measure 12.



In the *Largo*, the violin states the melodic line from the beginning of the piece over a modified eighth-note ostinato in the left hand of the piano with a stable quarter note accompaniment in the right.

Figure 30. Antheil, Sonata No. 3, measures 361-362.



Following the *Largo*, Antheil restates the opening material over nearly thirty measures. The sole difference is a lengthy *accelerando* through these measures. This lengthy repetition is reminiscent of the First Sonata's outer movements in which Antheil employs this same procedure of extended repetition without development. The two musical blocks which followed the first theme at the beginning of the sonata appear again here, somewhat truncated.

The coda of the piece, like the previously mentioned *Largo*, comes from measure 12 (figure 26). These few measures, 361-365 and the coda, are likely the moment Antheil describes in his letter to Pound as “a vast vast hymn sang by thousands of throats (although I make the violin and piano quite sufficient for the occasion) once Mongol, but now Christian, and hundreds of church-bells (not church-bells in America) (God!).”<sup>39</sup> In

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39. Antheil to Pound, 1923-1924, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

the last measures of the sonata, the piano right hand joins the violin in the melody and all three parts give meet in a final ringing of bells in measures 403-405.

Figure 31. Antheil, Sonata No. 3, measures 402-405.



This final music, and the entirety of the Third Sonata, presents a much darker, less angular and aggressive Antheil than the music of the previous two sonatas.

Antheil composed the bulk of the Third Sonata in this more subdued style with the two large outer sections of the piece calm and rhythmically stable. The violin part sits in a low register for the first two hundred measures of the sonata, with frequent slurs and tenuto markings, completely uncharacteristic of the earlier sonatas. The contrasting fast, rhythmically agitated middle section is likely the wild fiddling of the Tziganes that would give Rudge “more to do, and show off with,” Antheil mentions in his letter to Pound.<sup>40</sup> While maintaining the internal musical block structure, Antheil creates the characteristic larger cyclic form, closing the sonata with the same subtle music with which it began.

In the *Treatise on Harmony*, Pound compared this Third Sonata to the contemporaneous *Ballet Mécanique*:

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40. Antheil to Pound, 1923-1924, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

If in the Ballet Antheil has mastered these long ‘durées,’ these larger chunks of time, in the third violin sonata, he has made a less obvious gain, for this sonata thinks in time’s razor edge. Whether this shows incontestably on its written pages, I cannot say, but it does show in its playing by the composer and by Miss Olga Rudge, who has borne the brunt of presentation in all three sonatas.<sup>41</sup>

The more subdued nature of the sonata allowed Antheil to finesse and temper his complex rhythmic style. While the First and Second Sonatas display Antheil’s youthful exuberance and his newest ideas on the composition of music, the Third Sonata displays a more stable compositional style. By the time Antheil composed the Third Sonata, his ideas had matured and the music exhibits a far more controlled version of the same stylistic concepts and ideas demonstrated in his earlier pieces.

#### V. Premiere and Critical Reception

Antheil’s first two violin sonatas received their premiere at the Salle du Conservatoire on December 11, 1923. Several small violin pieces by Pound along with Bach and Mozart’s Violin Concerto in A major completed the program. Antheil and Rudge had to interrupt their preparation of the December program for Antheil’s October 4 debut with the Ballet Suédois. Because of this, the pair doubled their preparation efforts in the first days of December. Pound wrote to Rudge on the first, “Poster excellently printed ... Also think it wd (*sic*) be wise for you to practice the Mozart and Bach, for a couple of days, by themselves. I mean DONT play the Antheil at all; but concentrate on the B. and M., so as to EEEElimminate [eliminate] the effects of modern music.”<sup>42</sup> By emphasizing the importance of the standard repertoire on the program for Rudge, Pound

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41. Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, 148.

42. Ezra Pound to Olga Rudge, 1 December 1923, Olga Rudge Papers, 1887-1989, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

reiterated his intentions to help advance her solo violin career, in addition to developing Antheil's compositional reputation.

Even before the first performance of the sonatas, Antheil's music caused an intense reaction in those who heard his music. Pound wrote to his father recounting Antheil's practicing:

George was making hell's own merry noise, lambasting the bass and yelling the violin part of his second sonata. The Swede, who is not a musician came down; I did nothing to calm his feelings ... so he went for consolation to the police. ... The commissaire de ditto asked me to call at his bureau; after 3/4 hour argument he write to his ledger. "Monsieur declares that in his quality of compositeur de musique it is necessary that he make of noise."<sup>43</sup>

Leading up to the performance, a number of promotional articles appeared. Francis Picabia wrote a concert preview in the *Ère Nouvelle*, in which he describes the First and Second Violin Sonatas, "One where he clearly finds the spirit of 'Rite of Spring,' and the other, written based on American songs ... indicates certainly a musical temperament very rich and individual."<sup>44</sup> Pound was quoted as saying "For fifteen years I have specialized in genius, and Antheil's music is, in my opinion, as powerful and as striking as Stravinsky's."<sup>45</sup> The artistic community surrounding Antheil and Pound heartily endorsed the upcoming performance.

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43. Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, 8 December 1923, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

44. Francis Picabia, "Ezra Pound et Georges Antheil," *Ère Nouvelle*, December 11, 1923, trans. Sabine Feisst, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

45. "American Musical Genius," *Daily Mail*, December 8, 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

The concert provided Antheil with a significant platform from which to present his newest and most percussive music for an audience packed with the Parisian artistic elite. Antheil described the performance in a letter to Bok just a few weeks later:

[The Salle] was crowded with artists, and critics. Igor Strawinsky was there ... and almost everyone else. The cream of the great artists were there...the great moderns in every branch. The audience was select and sympathetic, and instead of a great scandal, as I usually arouse, I had a great success. ... I missed the usual scandal, and was a little disappointed, and wondered all night if I was losing my bite! The next morning, however, reassured me.<sup>46</sup>

A large review of the previous night's recital appeared in the *New York Herald* the next morning entitled, "American Futurist Composers Heard in Paris Concert: Works by Mr. Ezra Pound and Mr. George Antheil Make Diverse Impressions." This article by Louis Schneider, as well as the other reviewers, took aim at Antheil's compositional style and technique.

Antheil's new violin sonatas received a barrage of negative and harsh criticism. In his article, Schneider asks, "Can this really be denoted music of the sonata, the violin, the piano?" and answers himself, "There is no music in this abuse of the ascending or descending 'glissando' of the piano, in these chords struck at hazard, which form, alone or with the piano the most excruciating discords." Schneider goes on to comment, "A jazz band seems more melodious beside these two works of Mr. George Antheil."<sup>47</sup>

Antheil responded to this particular criticism himself in "The Herald's Mail Bag," "Apropos to your French critic's remark ... The answer is: 'Cher Monsieur, such was the

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46. Antheil to Bok, January 1, 1924, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

47. Louis Schneider, "American Futurist Composers Heard in Paris Concert: Works by Mr. Ezra Pound and Mr. George Antheil Make Diverse Impressions," *New York Herald European Edition*, December 12, 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

composer's intention."<sup>48</sup> The original critic retorted with another small piece shortly thereafter: "Noise is not music, and Mr. Antheil is not even original. Little gamins in the back yards armed with tin horns, squeakers and drums can do just as much."<sup>49</sup> Whatever the reaction from the general public, even the music critics noted that the artists in the room, including Joyce, Ford Madox Ford, Léger and Duchamp "loved it; they ate it up."<sup>50</sup>

Reviews from the same concert and the subsequent performances of the sonatas followed in the same suit as Schneider's. The most frequent objections included the percussive and violent treatment of both violin and piano and the Stravinsky-like repetition of the First Sonata. Two excerpts from concert reviews follow, the first from the Salle du Conservatoire performance and the second from the London premiere of the sonatas at Aeolian Hall.

Mr. Antheil ... obstinately refuses to recognize the piano as a musical instrument. He depotentiates (*sic*) every beautiful thing of which it is capable. His effort is to be anti-Scriptural, but he is only impotently dissident. ... This inspection of Mr. Antheil's "music", re-convinces us that he is a young "Pagan suckled in some creed outworn". If he would endeavor to say something new (or even something old in a not too old way, as Mr. Pound has) instead of endeavoring to say something revolutionary, his product would come closer to intriguing the intelligence than at present it does.<sup>51</sup>

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48. George Antheil, "Just what was meant," letter, *New York Herald European Edition*, December 14, 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

49. Louis Schneider, "Noise Is Not Music," *New York Herald European Edition*, December 14, 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

50. Schneider, "American Futurist Composers Heard in Paris Concert: Works by Mr. Ezra Pound and Mr. George Antheil Make Diverse Impressions."

51. Irving Schwerke, "Notes of the Music World," [*Chicago Tribune* Paris edition, May 19, 1926], George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.



Mr. Antheil, by pursuing to the last extreme of absurdity the elements of rhythmic reiteration with which Stravinsky has made us familiar, in “Rite of Spring,” has contrived to say less in the course of a four movement work than any other person who ever put pen to paper.<sup>52</sup>

Antheil reveled in these reviews feeling that even negative press would help him further establish his European career. He wrote to Bok, “For over a week a newspaper battle raged. The press liked it, it afforded them some fun, and something interesting for their readers.”<sup>53</sup> A promotional article advertising another concert of Antheil’s music a year later succinctly described the critical reception of that first performance:

Wild, wild riot some men called it and others the music of music when Ezra Pound, George Antheil, Olga Rudge and company introduced Paris to percussive and horizontal minstrelsy at a memorable concert last winter. . . . Many of the critics liked it, many tore their hair. . . . Altogether there was quite a little state of things among the musical pundits for some time after.<sup>54</sup>

Antheil took all of this criticism in stride and defended his musical ideas. In an interview, Antheil reiterated that “Music is essentially rhythm,” and the piano “is a percussive instrument. It is like a chorus of drums.”<sup>55</sup> He also wrote to Pound, “So many people (who mebbe don’t count anyhow) think that I write all them funny noises by axcident

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52. “A Futurist Composer and his Audience,” Review of Aeolian Hall Performance, *Observer*, [1924?], George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

53. Antheil to Bok, January 1, 1924, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

54. “Paris to Hear Percussive Music Again,” [paper and date unknown], July 7, 1926 Salle Pleyel Concert, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Scrapbooks, 1922-1957, Music Division, Library of Congress.

55. Ivy, “Young Trenton Composer-Pianist Startles Music World of Paris.”

(*sic*),”<sup>56</sup> while Antheil carefully and exactly composed each of the clusters and “excruciating discords.”<sup>57</sup>

Though Antheil composed the Third Violin Sonata just after the first two in 1924, the work did not receive a premiere until the summer of 1926. One critic commented, “Miss Rudge has developed an entirely new violin technique for the interpretation of the tempestuous and, as classical players would say, ‘anti-violinistic,’ music of today.”<sup>58</sup> Antheil was never entirely satisfied with the Third Sonata, and he and Rudge did not take it on tour with them in the same way they had the earlier two sonatas. This is also evinced by Antheil’s attempt to connect the Third Sonata with the First, and ultimately his reworking of much of the melodic material of the piece with his Violin Concerto, composed in 1946.

Despite the less than warm critical reception of the violin sonatas, Antheil continued to compose in his own singular voice, expressing his radical musical ideas. While Stravinsky inevitably influenced his writing, Antheil managed to create a percussive, non-traditional sound that remains his alone. The “Bad Boy of Music” defended and supported his innovative ideas, frequently writing to the papers that criticized his music that whatever the critics did not approve of, he had indeed written on purpose. He constantly reveled in the conflict his music and his performances raised. Antheil’s “bad boy” persona lasted throughout his early Paris years. The disastrous 1927 premiere of his *Ballet Mécanique*, Second Sonata for Violin, Piano and Drums, and *Jazz*

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56. Antheil to Pound, 1923-1924, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

57. Schneider, “American Futurist Composers Heard in Paris Concert: Works by Mr. Ezra Pound and Mr. George Antheil Make Diverse Impressions.”

58. “Who’s Who Abroad,” *Chicago Tribune* Paris edition, June 15, 1926, quoted in Conover, 67.

*Symphony*, and the simultaneous failure of his Piano Concerto resulted in overwhelming negative reviews and press. This double catastrophe and the resulting fallout utterly deflated the young composer.

## CHAPTER 6

### ANTHEIL'S STRAVINSKY PROBLEM

#### I. A Friendship Gone Wrong

Chapter 2 explored Antheil's early relationship with Stravinsky. When Antheil moved to Paris in the summer of 1923, however, the two had a falling out and their relationship disintegrated. Six months later, Antheil wrote to Bok that he and Stravinsky had "become mortal enemies, because of a thing which is flaringly his fault, and a breach of the friendship he swore a year ago."<sup>1</sup> While Antheil entered Paris on good terms with Stravinsky, things quickly changed. According to Antheil's biography, the schism occurred when Stravinsky caught Antheil bragging to mutual acquaintances that he and Stravinsky enjoyed a great friendship and that Stravinsky believed his compositions of the highest order. Additionally, the twenty-two year old Antheil had been capricious and unreliable when he ignored the December 1922 concert Stravinsky had arranged for him in favor of traveling to Poland with Boski. These two circumstances likely contributed to the falling out between the two composers.

When Stravinsky no longer acted on his behalf or in support of his music, Antheil attacked Stravinsky's music, his person and the memory of their friendship at every available opportunity. Antheil wrote to Bok again in November 1924, "Strawinsky and I are not friends ... he asked to become a friend of mine ... and betrayed me ... because he did not like to have people talking about my music. ... I owe Strawinsky an unpayable

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1. Antheil to Bok, January 1, 1924, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

debt in music, but I see no reason why I should take into consideration the man.”<sup>2</sup>

Antheil’s musical debt to Stravinsky plagued him throughout his early years in Paris; nearly every review of a new piece of music faulted the composer for borrowing from or imitating Stravinsky. In this manner, Stravinsky quickly turned from a hero-mentor into a “bothersome [rival] who blocked his way and would sometime have to be pushed aside.”<sup>3</sup> Many composers during this period struggled with the same Stravinsky problem Antheil had—Stravinsky’s music continued to find great success and heavily influenced the music scene in Paris and around the world. Even Antheil had studied Stravinsky’s scores as a younger man, back in America. For the next few years, critics continued to disparage Antheil’s compositions for imitating Stravinsky’s, whether or not this was Antheil’s intent.

## II. In the Shadow of *Les Noces*

Problems arose for Antheil almost immediately after entering Paris. Not only did his friendship with Stravinsky come to an end, but the “pernicious Stravinsky sound”<sup>4</sup> of *Les Noces* became fixed in his ears. Stravinsky’s most percussive and rhythmically driven ballet premiered the same evening that Antheil entered the city. Its shadow hung over Antheil for the entirety of his time in Paris. As accusations of borrowing, stealing and copying arose in criticisms of Antheil’s music, he fought back attempting to prove that Stravinsky had stolen his ideas, and not the other way around. Antheil vented his

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2. Antheil to Bok, November 15, 1924, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

3. Hugh Ford, *Four Lives in Paris* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1987), 5.

4. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 127.

frustration in an unpublished diatribe he titled, “MAMA! (or ‘The Americans Don’t Like Us’):”

I had no opportunity to play in Paris until the autumn of 1923, but it is typical of my own landsmen solely that they found I had not only stolen the percussion ... but a theme from “Noces.” ... In 1914 “Noces” was already written, only then it was called “Noces Villageoises” and was scored for a colorful orchestra of strings, wood-winds, brass and percussion! but in 1923 Stravinsky knew that something more abstract was demanded by the style of the day ... so having found a good idea, he changed the whole orchestration ... and left out the colorful part o the title ... and served it up as steaming 1923.<sup>5</sup>

Here, Antheil blatantly accused Stravinsky of stealing his ideas on the fact that *Les Noces* changed entirely between its conception in 1914 and its premiere in 1923. Antheil believed his mechanistic ideas inspired and influenced Stravinsky during their time together in Berlin in 1922. In another manifesto Antheil wrote, “In Berlin, Stravinsky and I talked for days on end about percussive music, and as soon as Stravinsky arrived again in Paris, after his Berlin trip, he changed the orchestral score of ‘Noces’ into a version for four pianos and percussion.”<sup>6</sup> In the same article Antheil reminds the reader that his ultra-modern mechanistic works for piano had been performed all across Europe before *Les Noces* premiered in Paris in the summer of 1923.

Perhaps Stravinsky’s developing concept of *Les Noces* in the years before meeting Antheil in Berlin gave the pair much to discuss. Antheil accurately remarked that Stravinsky had originally scored the ballet for a much more traditional orchestra in 1914. However, Antheil seemed unaware that Stravinsky had struggled with and developed the instrumentation of *Les Noces* in the intervening years up to its Parisian premiere.

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5. George Antheil, “MAMA! (or ‘The Americans Don’t Like Us’),” April 1, 1925, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

6. Antheil, “Jazz is a Bore.”

Stravinsky had originally planned the work as a cantata, with voices and text; the original conception included two categories of sound; the wind, which would include voices, and the percussion, provided by two string orchestras, one playing pizzicato and the other bowed. The magnitude of forces required for this orchestration led Stravinsky to abandon the concept. By 1919, likely inspired by the chamber ensemble and percussion of *Histoire du soldat*,<sup>7</sup> Stravinsky had developed an orchestration for pianola, harmonium, two cimbaloms and percussion. The complications of synchronizing the pianola with live musicians and singers as well as the difficulty of finding a competent cimbalom player led Stravinsky to abandon this problematic orchestration.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately Diaghilev decided to produce the cantata as a ballet, forcing Stravinsky to resolve the orchestration.

Stravinsky settled on an orchestra of four pianos, a battery of percussion instruments and singers in 1921, still nearly a year before meeting Antheil.<sup>9</sup> Though Antheil knew of the early, more traditionally orchestrated version of *Les Noces*, and its final rendering, Antheil likely did not understand its nearly decade-long development. This may account for Antheil's belief that Stravinsky only changed the orchestration of the ballet after meeting him in 1922 and discussing mechanism and percussion at great length.

### III. Antheil's "Stravinskophobia"

Antheil could not escape the critical comparison of his music to Stravinsky's, whether Stravinsky stole Antheil's ideas in Berlin in 1922 or Antheil was more deeply

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7. Pieter C. van den Toorn, *The Music of Igor Stravinsky* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 157.

8. Igor Stravinsky to Otto Kling, May 26, 1921, in Robert Craft, *Stravinsky: Glimpses of a Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 343.

9. Eric Walter White, Preface to *Les Noces* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1998), xiii.

influenced by the older composer's music than he wanted to admit. Antheil eventually recognized Stravinsky's great influence in his music and credited him as a source of inspiration in later years. However, as a young man, Antheil believed he needed to out-do the master. He wrote:

A young composer can only show his strength by the caliber of his musical ideas. A young composer, if he has any guts in him, will tackle the last greatest, and not some great composer a way back, or middling back. He will appropriate all of the mechanical improvements that this last greatest composer has made ... wholesale ... and destroy him ... if he can.<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, Antheil refers to Stravinsky as the "last greatest" composer in this passage.

Several of Antheil's early manifestos on music describe Stravinsky's rhythmic style and technique and hold up his musical ideas as the path modern music should take.

In Berlin in 1923 he wrote, "The event of Strawinsky was necessary, he was a healthful and lusty antipode to the anemic and unmusical, but marvelously vertically calculated music of Schönberg."<sup>11</sup> Antheil grasped onto Stravinsky's rhythmic techniques, consistently reiterating that rhythm and not harmony furnished the future of music. In "The Essence of Musical Revolution," Antheil praised Stravinsky as a hero coming to save music from a deteriorating future:

[Stravinsky,] arriving on the musical scene circa 1911, saw about him a universal music almost completely bogged down by preoccupation with the melodic and the harmonic (in the esoteric and impressionistic works of Richard Strauss, Claude Debussy, & co.), and thereupon promptly proceeded to revivify music's flagging caveman pulse with the most astonishing rhythms of history, or at least since 50,000 B.C.<sup>12</sup>

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10. George Antheil, "Fanelli," *Transatlantic Review* (December, 1924), George Antheil Papers, Library for the Performing Arts, New York Public Library.

11. George Antheil, "Musical Neofism," Berlin 1923, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

12. Antheil, "The Essence of Musical Revolution."



While Antheil credited Stravinsky with returning to the rhythmic roots of music, he struggled to define his own independent voice within similar stylistic boundaries as Stravinsky. In “Mother of the Earth” Antheil argued, “Do we necessarily need to link all new rhythmic experimentation with Stravinsky’s ‘Sacre,’ or Rimsky-Korsakov’s ‘Scherezade’ (*sic*)? At the least sign of a break from the four Gods of music; 3/4, 2/4, 6/8, or 4/4, do we need to run to Stravinsky like little cry-babies and call ‘Father?’”<sup>13</sup> Inevitably influenced by Stravinsky’s music Antheil did everything he could to distance himself from the older composer, constantly defending himself against accusations of musical thievery from critics and friends alike.

In particular, Antheil’s two violin sonatas drew press and commentary comparing his music to Stravinsky’s. A chain of letters between Antheil and Pound expressed both Antheil’s indignity and frustration at the comparison. In 1925, Antheil wrote:

Nobody had a better right to the technic in which the two fiddle sonatas are written in than I. Likewise and most important of all ... I refuse to see any likeness, which I insist strongly upon! between “Noces” and my 1st sonata. Even though I did invent the technic first, I find ... HONESTLY ... that comparison is insulting. Mine is at no place faked or simply virtuose ... Strawinsky’s is at a thousand points. (*sic*)<sup>14</sup>

Pound wrote to Antheil in the same year:

Have at last heard from O [Olga], she says you want to revise the First Vilong Snata. Fer Pill’s sake LEAVE IT ALONE. If you have an acute attack of Stravinskophobitis, WRITE A NEW ONE. ... In ten years time no one will give a goddam whether Strav did or didnt etc. ... Let’tit ALONE. You’ve got enough else to do. (*sic*)<sup>15</sup>

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13. George Antheil, “Mother of the Earth,” *Transatlantic Review* (August, 1924), George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

14. Antheil to Pound, 1925, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

15. Pound to Antheil, 1925, Antheil Mss., Lilly Library Manuscript Collections. Indiana University.

Antheil responded in kind:

Please get me straight. This is the last time I am ever gona mention Strawinsky's name in my life in this connection. I AM NOT GONA REVISE THE 1ST SONATA. I NEVER SAID I WAS GONA CUT THE STRAWINSKY OUT OF IT. I simply wanted to make some things in the mss clearer. That would not affect the sound of it. STRAWINSKY COULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN THE FIRST SONATA IF HE TRIED. That's just all there is to it. HAS A SINGLE WORK OF STRWINSKY ANY GUTS ... ANYMORE??? If you answer that question we will stop the discussion. Everything is justified by it end. Where I come from don't make any difference. Its what I am. And I AINT STRAWINSKY. (*sic*)<sup>16</sup>

In this last letter Antheil seemed to acknowledge the Stravinsky influence on the Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano. Clearly the Stravinsky comparison, even two years after the first performance of the sonatas, viscerally bothered Antheil. While he admits to some “Strawinsky” in the sonata, he attacks the inspiration as gutless and asserts his individuality. Antheil's first three violin sonatas certainly have Stravinsky-like elements and ideas, though Antheil managed to create something entirely new and unique beyond that influence. The critics' inability to see beyond the Stravinsky to the Antheil in his own music tortured him.

From the vantage point of 1927, the slightly older Antheil saw his Stravinsky problem with a clearer head. He wrote to Pound, “You know that in 1924 I was very much hurt at the accusation of Strawinskyism that came down upon me. ... Personally I see no harm in a young composer being influenced in the beginning ... no one makes the world over for oneself, but it upset me unduly.”<sup>17</sup> Antheil badly wanted to make a name

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16. Antheil to Pound, 1925, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

17. Antheil to Pound, 1927, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

for himself in Europe and the world as the next and greatest modern composer, and began by seeking to understand the current acclaimed genius—Stravinsky. In notes for a lecture Antheil gave in the early 1940s, he commented:

When I was a young man I believed, in all sincerity, that every composer starts out the world of music entirely new, fresh, with no ties to the past. As I grew older, I realized that no one man creates the old world entirely a fresh; he only inherits it, polishes it up a bit, makes some alterations which may or may not be permanent, and then, again, passes it on to younger men—who, in turn, believe (as he did) that everything must begin a fresh again.<sup>18</sup>

Antheil took what he loved in Stravinsky's music and in many ways attempted to "out-Stravinsky Stravinsky."<sup>19</sup> In doing so, he ultimately created a uniquely Antheil sound and style that caused riots and commotion in audiences across Europe, just as he had dreamed, and just as his former idol Stravinsky had done years earlier.

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18. George Antheil, "Why Bad Boy?" Lecture Notes, [1945?], George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

19. Henry Cowell, "Current Chronicle," *The Musical Quarterly* (April, 1954), quoted in Whitesitt, 110.

## CHAPTER 7

### BALLET MÉCANIQUE AND BEYOND

#### I. Pointing to *Ballet Mécanique*

The summation of Antheil's compositional style during his early years in Paris is the massive *Ballet Mécanique*, composed between 1923 and 1925. Antheil wrote:

My original idea in writing the work was to both synthesize and expand the piano sonatas. Also to eliminate whatever effect “Les Noces” might have made upon me through the first movement of the First Violin Sonata—all this in a work of sufficient size that the public could, so to speak, see it better.<sup>1</sup>

Many stylistic experiments and ideas that began in Antheil's earlier piano sonatas and matured in the violin sonatas appear fleshed out and extended in the *Ballet*. Of the First Violin Sonata and the *Ballet*, Pound wrote, “I have said that the germ is in *Ballet Mécanique*;<sup>2</sup> perhaps I should have said it is in Antheil's First Violin Sonata, but I doubt if anyone would have found it there. The sonata has still a relation to older music; but after hearing the *Ballet* one can recognize the roots in the Sonata.”<sup>3</sup> Pound was referencing the “germ” of percussive and mechanistic music. While Pound referenced the *Ballet Mécanique* as the beginning of Antheil's work in mechanistic music, it was actually Antheil's last, and his most revolutionary.

More than a decade after its completion, Antheil wrote to Nicolas Slonimsky describing the *Ballet* in atypically clear and concise language. Antheil explained:

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1. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 139.

<sup>2</sup> The spelling of “mécanique” has been unified throughout the document.

3. Pound, *Antheil and the Treatise on Harmony*, 140.

I personally consider that the *Ballet Mécanique* was important in one particular and that is that it was conceived in a new form, that form specifically being the filling out of a certain time canvas with musical abstractions and sound material composed and contrasted against one another with the thought of time values rather than tonal values.<sup>4</sup>

The musical blocking structure technique Antheil utilized in the three violin sonatas foreshadowed this larger and more complex realization of the same concept. Antheil went on:

Now in order to paint musical pictures one must admit right at the outset that the only canvas of music can be time. Music does not exist all at once like a painting but it unrolls itself. ... Time is our musical canvas, not the notes and timbres of the orchestra or the melodies and tunes or the tonal forms handed down to us by the great masters.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout his career, Antheil used the ideas of visual art, especially painting, to describe his formal and structural procedure. His description of the *Ballet* was no exception:

I used time as Picasso might have used the blank spaces of his canvas. I did not hesitate, for instance, to repeat one measure one hundred times; I did not hesitate to have absolutely nothing on my pianola rolls for sixty-two bars; I did not hesitate to ring a bell against a certain given section of time or indeed to do whatever I pleased to do with this time canvas as long as each part of it stood up against the other.<sup>6</sup>

As Pound wrote in his *Treatise*, after hearing the *Ballet* or studying the score, one can identify the seeds of its compositional style in the violin sonatas. The idea of extended repetition without development, unexpected silences and the structural blocking principle all have roots in the violin sonatas, which fully matured in the *Ballet*.

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4. George Antheil to Nicolas Slonimsky, July 21, 1936, George Antheil Papers, Butler Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

Structurally, *Ballet Mécanique* follows from the single movement design of the Second and Third Violin Sonatas. And like the Third, it opens with the musical block that becomes the pervasive motivic material of the work. Whitesitt comments that the “texture of the composition is melody and accompaniment—a continuum and an accompaniment of incessant, energetic, rhythmically activated chordal ostinato patterns.”<sup>7</sup> The first musical block is highly reminiscent of the homophonic rhythmicism of the first movement of the Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano.

Figure 32. Antheil, *Ballet Mécanique*, measures 1-5.

The image shows a musical score for four pianolas (I, II, III, IV) and a double bass (8ba). The score is for measures 1-5 of Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique*. The time signatures are 3/4, 5/8, 3/4, 2/4, and 5/8. The music consists of dense, rhythmic chordal patterns.

Figure 33. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro moderato, measures 228-231.

The image shows a musical score for a piano and a double bass (8ba). The score is for measures 228-231 of Antheil's Sonata No. 1, I. Allegro moderato. The tempo is Allegro barbaro sul pont. The music features a melody in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

7. Whitesitt, 108.

The *Ballet* has a more audible melodic motive in the glockenspiel and the Piano I than the example of the sonata, though the comparison displays the same pounding homophonic ostinato style. Antheil uses sparing dynamic markings in the *Ballet*, further lending to the mechanistic sound of the work and allowing the rhythmic propulsion to stand as the main event. This is another compositional device Antheil first incorporated in the First and Third Violin Sonatas. In those examples, he uses almost no dynamic gradation in the most rhythmically active sections, which serve as stylistic precursors to the *Ballet*.

Antheil's use of extended and uneven silences can be seen in the Sonata No. 1. He developed and extended this technique in the *Ballet*. In the First Violin Sonata, Antheil contrasts irregular groupings of rests with motivic material, adding to the intensity of the piece as it reaches the climax.

Figure 34. Antheil, Sonata No. 1, IV. Presto, measures 161-163.

The musical score for Antheil's Sonata No. 1, IV, measures 161-163, is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 161-162) features a piano part with a melodic line and a glockenspiel part with a rhythmic ostinato. The second system (measures 162-163) continues the piano part with a melodic line and the glockenspiel part with a rhythmic ostinato. The third system (measures 163-164) shows the piano part with a melodic line and the glockenspiel part with a rhythmic ostinato. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'poco decresc.', 'f', 'pizz.', and 'sfz'.

Antheil produces the same effect leading up to the end of the *Ballet Mécanique*, but on a much larger scale. Instead of groups of six or seven eighth-note rests, the silences last for twenty, thirty-two, forty eighth-notes.

Figure 35. Antheil, *Ballet Mécanique*, measures 1211-1220.

The score for Figure 35 is divided into four systems, each representing a different set of measures. The time signatures and measures are as follows:

- System 1: Measures 1211-1214. Time signatures: 8/8, 16/8, 20/8, 64/8.
- System 2: Measures 1215-1218. Time signatures: 24/8, 32/8.
- System 3: Measures 1219-1220. Time signatures: 32/8, 40/8.
- System 4: Measure 1221. Time signature: 64/8.

The notation includes various rests and notes, with some notes marked with '8va' and '8ba'.

Antheil takes this idea of rhythmically charged rests to its culmination just before the end of the *Ballet* with a single measure of 64/8 where each eighth-note rest is notated separately in the pianola rolls.

Figure 36. Antheil, *Ballet Mécanique*, measure 1221.

The score for Figure 36 shows a single measure of 64/8. The notation includes various rests and notes, with some notes marked with '8va' and '8ba'.



In these final moments of the *Ballet*, Antheil's compositional evolution of this single element is unmistakable.

In the article, "My Ballet Mécanique: What it Means," Antheil details the development of the ideas in the piece as well as his hopes and plans for the extension of the same ideas.

The Ballet Mécanique is the first piece *in the world* to be conceived in one piece without interruption, like a solid shaft of steel. I am now writing a work which is four hours long and without interruption or the break of a second's time. After that I shall write on which is ten hours long. I started with mechanism and pieces that were only a minute long. Even these produced hysteria and riots. The time was too short and the nuclei too explosive. ... Now I hope to present you not with an explosion, but with the *fourth dimension* ... *the first physical realization of the fourth dimension*.<sup>8</sup>

What began as short, minute-long movements of piano sonatas developed into the nearly thirty-minute multi-movement Sonata No. 1 for Violin and Piano, and single-movement complex Second and Third Sonatas. In this final work, Antheil elongated and broadened his formal construction principles while maintaining the same concise motivic and ostinato writing that characterize his early piano works and the violin sonatas.

The version of the *Ballet* performed in 1926 in Paris and in 1927 at Carnegie Hall in New York presented more than a half hour of music. Antheil later revised the piece in the 1950s to make it "more concise" while retaining "its basic character."<sup>9</sup> Antheil had originally scored the work for sixteen synchronized pianolas run from a single control, but the difficulty of actually accurately synchronizing the large number of mechanical pianos proved too difficult a task. Antheil subsequently orchestrated the *Ballet* for one

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8. George Antheil, "My Ballet Mécanique: What it Means," *Der Querschnitt* (Sept 1925), George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Writings, 1915-1999, Music Division, Library of Congress.

9. George Antheil, "Composer's Notes on 1952-53 Re-Editing," *Ballet Mécanique* (Templeton Publishing, 1959).

pianola with amplifier, two pianos, three xylophones, electric bells, small wood propeller, large wood propeller, metal propeller, tamtam, four bass drums and siren. While the instrumentation including multiple pianos reminded listeners and critics of Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Antheil's use of the siren and airplane propellers reflects the trend of Satie's *Parade*, which Varèse would continue with his *Ionisation* a few years later.<sup>10</sup> The violin sonatas foreshadowed Antheil's inclusion of non-traditional instruments in the treatment or abuse, as some critics asserted, of the violin and piano and especially of the turn away from the piano to the drums in the final moments of the Second Sonata.

Antheil's early years in Europe and specifically in Paris led to the culmination of his mechanistic and time-space style in this one work, the *Ballet Mécanique*. In his memoir Antheil describes the *Ballet* as the capstone of this compositional period of his life:

After I had written it, I felt that now, finally, I had said everything I had to say in this strange, cold, dreamlike, ultraviolet-light medium. I could have written another "Ballet Mécanique," of course, but to have done so would have been for me repetitious, tedious. I always tend to write the same work over and over again, so to speak, until finally I get it as nearly perfect as I can, then I abandon it.<sup>11</sup>

Given the preceding account, one cannot ignore the three violin sonatas as considerable events in Antheil's compositional journey toward *Ballet Mécanique*. The violin sonatas represent a more mature Antheil than the early piano sonatas like the *Airplane* and *Sauvage*, and provide the link between those almost miniature works and the vast *Ballet*.

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10. Oja, 91.

11. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 137.

## II. 1927

It seems that Antheil's popularity waned primarily for two reasons—first, a marked and nearly immediate shift away from his most revolutionary style to a more conservative retrospective one post-*Ballet Mécanique*, and second, the fiasco of his American debut at Carnegie Hall in April 1927. In the wake of his *Ballet*, Antheil turned to a much more conservative and even neo-classical style of composition. He commented, “I felt that I had possibly gone too far in this matter of reaching out for purely new form” in the *Ballet*, and “I returned to study my First Symphony.”<sup>12</sup> Antheil began to compose a second symphony, his Symphony en Fa, dedicated to Bok. He described the work to her in a letter, “I have written a very great work, a more universal work, one which I believe ALL people, not merely modernists, or the old fogies will find MUSIC.”<sup>13</sup> In his newest symphony and the works following, Antheil found inspiration in Beethoven and limited himself “temporarily to the more simple 4/4 and 3/4 rhythms” in order to give maximal “attention to strong simple lineal development.”<sup>14</sup> In this style Antheil composed his Piano Concerto, Suite for Orchestra and Second String Quartet in addition to his Symphony en Fa. Each of these works has a classical multi-movement form in contrast to his single movement works in the mechanistic style.

The premiere of his Symphony en Fa met with unanimously positive reviews acclaiming Antheil's mastery of the symphonic form.<sup>15</sup> Both Walter Damrosch and Serge

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12. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 140.

13. Antheil to Bok, February 22, 1926, quoted in Whitesitt, 116.

14. Antheil to Pound, February 1930, Ezra Pound Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

15. Whitesitt, 118.

Koussevitzky expressed interest in Antheil's latest work, and Copland wrote that Antheil was one of the greatest talents in American music.<sup>16</sup> However, a far less genial reception greeted the 1927 premiere of his Piano Concerto. In his drastic change of style, he disappointed some of his greatest supporters, including Pound, and those who believed Antheil would continue in his revolutionary, bad boy ways. Many of those artists closest to Antheil found his new compositions to be passé, a mere imitation "of the latest and most elegant Parisian, ... the most recent neoclassicism of Stravinsky."<sup>17</sup> Antheil felt that Paris would never forgive him for maturing from a young revolutionary into a more serious and conscientious composer. His friend Thomson remarked in a letter, "You are going to have some trouble from now on living down Ezra's advertising. That you might some day write quiet music was an emergency that he didn't foresee."<sup>18</sup> Antheil's reputation of unruliness had grown with the publication of Pound's *Treatise* in 1927, which clashed immeasurably with his newfound compositional style. The same reputation, which bolstered his career in the early 1920s, became a contentious issue in the following years.

Just before the premiere of his Piano Concerto, Antheil prepared for his American debut concert at Carnegie Hall on April 10, 1927. The concert program included the *Ballet Mécanique*, Second Sonata for Violin, Piano and Drums, the First String Quartet and his *Jazz Symphony*. Donald Friede the American millionaire, who had hired Antheil primarily to purposefully make a riotous splash, promoted and publicized the concert in

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16. Whitesitt, 30.

17. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 197.

18. Virgil Thomson to George Antheil, n.d., quoted in Whitesitt, 118.

New York before Antheil arrived. For months, Friede’s preconcert publicity hyped Antheil’s scandalous performances in Europe and his status as an avant-garde and revolutionary composer. This advertising engendered animosity in the press before Antheil even set foot in New York. Friede also commissioned two enormous curtains from the set designer Joseph Mullen, which Antheil later condemned as “gigantic” and “tasteless” and writing, the backdrops “sent me back to Europe broke—and gave an air of charlatanism to the whole proceedings.”<sup>19</sup> Mullen’s work was both expensive and ultimately drew focus away from Antheil’s music. Lastly, the orchestration of the *Ballet* was expanded to include ten pianos and a genuine airplane propeller. Antheil later wrote of the performance, “Consider now the doubled number of pianos, the fantastically tasteless backdrop, and the airplane propeller! We certainly operated within a three-ring circus that night—visually as well as audibly.”<sup>20</sup>

Beyond these three egregious errors, the performance itself did not go well. The program opened with the string quartet, and, though well played, the giant curtain hampered the sound of the string instruments, and when Antheil turned to the drums in the finale of the Sonata No. 2 for Violin, Piano and Drums the audience laughed. Fortunately, genuine applause greeted the conclusion of the *Jazz Symphony*. At that point the curtain had to be changed and the stage reset for *Ballet Mécanique*, but because of a mistake, the crew had to reset the stage in full view of the audience, ruining the effect of raising the curtain on the mechanistic orchestra. Technical difficulties and malfunctions plagued the performance of the *Ballet*—the propeller pointed in the wrong direction and

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19. Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*, 193.

20. *Ibid.*

blasted directly into the audience causing one man to tie a handkerchief to his cane and wave it in surrender, and the carefully procured fire siren did not go off at the correct time, but instead nearly at the end of the piece and continued to go off long after the audience had stopped applauding.<sup>21</sup> The critical reaction to this catastrophic performance was deafening.

Cartoon visages of Antheil appeared in the newspapers the following morning, along with a number of unkind headlines. The negative reaction to the performance gravely disappointed even his staunch patron, Bok. She withdrew all of her financial support except a monthly stipend writing to the composer, “Any financial assistance other than this monthly check I do not now feel willing to furnish . . . You have come to America, bringing your product, with the results both you and I know.”<sup>22</sup> The humiliation of Antheil’s American debut tinted Antheil’s image and future in America. He returned to Paris disgraced and broke only to find that his Piano Concerto, given its first performance while he was in New York, had also received a certain amount of negative press.

Antheil’s contemporaries looked back on Antheil as an artist who did not live up to expectations. In October of 1927, his artistic ally Pound wrote to him, “I am not particularly interested in anything you have done since Ballet Mécanique. The third violin sonata an excellent piece of work, but am not sure it needed you to write it.”<sup>23</sup> Much later, Copland commented, “George Antheil, as always, belongs in a category of

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21. Donald Friede, *The Mechanical Angel, his Adventures and Enterprises in the Glittering 1920's* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948), 58-61.

22. Bok to Antheil, April 27, 1927, George Antheil correspondence with Mary Louise Curtis Bok, Music Division, Library of Congress.

23. Pound to Antheil, October 30, 1927, George and Böske Antheil Papers, 1875-1984, Correspondence, 1901-1984, Music Division, Library of Congress.

his own. In 1926 Antheil seemed to have ‘the greatest gifts of any young American.’ But something always seems to prevent them full fruition.”<sup>24</sup> Thomson similarly wrote:

My estimate of him as “the first composer of our generation” might have been justified had it not turned out eventually that for all his facility and ambition there was in him no power of growth. The “bad boy of music,” ... merely turned out to be a good boy. And the *Ballet mécanique*, written before he was twenty-five, remains his most original piece.<sup>25</sup>

Though Antheil went on to become a successful writer, film composer, and inventor, it is the music of his brash, unapologetic youth that left the most abiding mark on the early twentieth-century art world.

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24. Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963), 157.

25. Virgil Thomson, *Virgil Thomson* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1967), 82.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

I reached in under my left armpit in approved American gangster fashion and produced my ugly little automatic. Without a further word I placed it on the front desk of my Steinway and proceeded with my concert. Every note was heard.

— Antheil, *Bad Boy of Music*

The twenty-two year old Antheil found a home for his raucous personality and innovative musical style in avant-garde Europe. The profusion of art in post-WWI Berlin and Paris allowed the young composer to explore his most radical ideas in a welcoming and generous environment. Meeting Stravinsky in 1922 and his move to Paris utterly changed the course of his compositional career and artistic life. Similarly, Antheil's acquaintance with Anderson in America helped to catapult him into the press in Paris with his riotous October 1923 debut and opened the door to the Parisian artistic circles. There, Antheil also met Beach, Picasso, Léger, Joyce, Hemingway, and Pound, without whom Antheil surely would not have reached the level of notoriety and popularity he did in the early 1920s.

Antheil's musical style during his first years in Paris rapidly developed out of his early piano pieces like the *Airplane Sonata* and *Sonata Sauvage*. These earlier works bear the seeds of Antheil's compositions from 1923 through 1926 including the violin sonatas and *Ballet Mécanique*. Antheil's music turned the piano into a battery of percussion and, in the sonatas, the violin into a wailing, screeching violent instrument. He never felt tied to traditional boundaries of Western classical music, challenging the nature of the



instruments for which he composed and developing his own structural principle based on contrasting blocks of music in time. Building on Satie and Stravinsky, he tossed aside the concepts of harmonic progression and formal tonal structure in favor of rhythm laid out on a canvas of time as the most important elements of composition. While critics constantly censured his music for its similarity to Stravinsky's, Antheil nevertheless possessed his own clear musical voice. The sounds and effects he achieved in his early piano sonatas and the sonatas for violin and piano are unlike anything preceding them.

The three violin sonatas written between 1923 and 1924 for Rudge mark a pivotal moment in Antheil's career and development as a composer. The vehicle for Antheil's introduction into the Parisian salons, the sonatas allowed Antheil to further develop his musical ideas begun in his earlier piano sonatas and reaching culmination in *Ballet Mécanique*. The simultaneous failure of his Piano Concerto and disastrous debut at Carnegie Hall however led Antheil to bury his earlier works, including the violin sonatas, away in file cabinets. It was only at the urging of a friend composer Charles Amirkhanian that Boski, then widowed eleven years, allowed the violin sonatas to be performed at a sold-out concert in November 1970. After nearly half a century of non-performance, the audience evidently greeted Antheil's music with standing ovations (Charles Amirkhanian, January 27, 2015, e-mail message to author). Antheil probably would not have considered the concert successful without a true riot, but that 1970 performance opened the door for further performances of his music and a revitalization of interest in Antheil's place in music history. While Thomson wrote that Antheil ultimately became only a "good boy," his wild youth and unconventional music left an indelible mark on the music of the early twentieth century.

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