

## Introduction

On a hazy July morning in North Adams, Massachusetts, I walked into the third floor of MASS MOCA, where a group of young students had gathered to rehearse Louis Andriessen's *Workers Union*<sup>1</sup> (1975) at full intensity. The relentless rhythm of the band, consisting of vibraphone, brake drums, electric guitar, violins, piccolo, piano, and kazoo, resonated through the brick walls of the museum complex, a converted factory that houses the Bang on a Can Summer Music Institute. Andriessen walked into the rehearsal space, paid compliments to the musicians, and greeted the guitarist Mark Stewart, who leads the group. Following a casual introduction, he told the group: "The piece should sound *difficult*. You make it sound too easy – this isn't Cuban jazz!" Jolted by his comment, the students – many of whom were not acquainted with Marxist ideology and the social context in which the piece was composed – tried to give a harsher edge to the sound of relentless rhythms played in unison. Three days later, *Workers Union* was showcased along with post-minimalist works by David Lang, Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and Steve Reich in a six-hour marathon concert. The boisterous energy and response from the audience generated an atmosphere of a pop or rock concert more than that of a typical contemporary music event.<sup>2</sup>

As a radical anarchist turned "guru," Andriessen has influenced a host of young composers and musicians through his residencies at the California Institute for the Arts (1983), Yale University (1986), Duke University (1991), Princeton University (1996), and other institutions in the United States. Along with Reich, Glass, and Adams, Andriessen's music has been canonized in the repertoire of Bang on a Can, the group that presented Andriessen's *Hoketus* in their inaugural marathon concert in 1987. In recent years, his music was featured in one-to-two-week-long festivals in Tokyo (2000), London (2002) and New York City (2004).<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands, some refer to Andriessen as an "American" composer because he openly demonstrates a fondness for American culture (from cowboy films to boogie-woogie to Janet Jackson).<sup>4</sup> At the same time, his music abounds with references that are simultaneously grounded in the vernacular traditions of jazz and popular music, the modernist traditions of Ives, Stravinsky, and Cage, and the contrapuntal traditions of Machaut, Gesualdo, and Bach.

Andriessen's music presents a provocative case study for examining the social and aesthetic implications of new music that crosses stylistic and

ideological boundaries. For much of his career, the Dutch composer was understood as an iconoclast who challenged and resisted the musical establishment and its hallmark institutions, among them the symphony orchestra. Informed by a socialist agenda since the 1970s, he has composed music that comments on political or philosophical concepts in order to reinstate music as a social ritual and as an arena for controversy and provocation. His political stance is encapsulated in the statement: “My duty is to steal music from the commercial-music world and make some more intellectual use of it. It’s a symbol of anti-capitalism” (Schwarz 1996). It is also telling that his recent compilation of essays bears the title *Gestolen Tijd: Alle verhalen* (“Stolen Time: Telling Everything”). Intended as a *double entendre*, the title refers to the act of composing *in time* and “stealing” musical materials from other historical periods (2002a: 11–12; 2002b: 12).

While challenging mainstream modernism and the commodification of music, the constructivist strains in Andriessen’s compositions keep him inextricably bound to the modernist traditions of European and American art music. Along with that of Charles Ives, Igor Stravinsky’s presence looms large throughout Andriessen’s evolution as a composer from both an aesthetic and a compositional perspective. John Adams comments: “Andriessen took two quintessentially American musical languages, be-bop and minimalism, filtered them through the refracting rhythmic techniques of Stravinsky and produced a genuinely original sound” (Schwarz 1996). Like Stravinsky, Andriessen has repeatedly declared himself an anti-romanticist, upholding classical objectivity over sentimental expressions of subjectivity. And following Stravinsky, Andriessen composes by means of absorption, synthesis, and reinterpretation of existing styles. To this end, he has written widely about his aesthetic stance, his models and inspirations, the dialectical constitution of his music, the meaning of irony, and numerous other topics (2002a; 2002b).

Stravinsky is important not only to Andriessen, but also to a generation of Dutch composers who reinstated the constancy of pulse and renewed sense of tonality that defined a new orientation in Dutch music after World War II. In *The Apollonian Clockwork: On Stravinsky* (1993), co-authored with Elmer Schönberger, Andriessen upholds Stravinsky as the consummate modernist who helped redefine contemporary music in postwar Holland:

The true influence of Stravinsky has only just begun. It is an influence which can do without Stravinskianisms, without convulsive rhythms, without endless changes of time signatures, without pandiatonicism . . . Real influence is a ladder that one lovingly throws behind, just out of reach.  
 (Andriessen and Schönberger 1989: 6)

## Introduction

3

In keeping with the above, what Andriessen means by “true influence” extends far beyond simply appropriating Stravinsky’s signature styles and compositional *modus operandi*. In this regard, Andriessen’s orientation has clearly set him apart from other Dutch composers such as Ton de Leeuw and Klaas de Vries who have appropriated Stravinsky’s style more literally.<sup>5</sup> Taking Stravinsky’s anti-romanticist stance as a point of departure, Andriessen has instead developed an aesthetic ideology for the *Haagse School* (The Hague school), which has come to be known for its distinctive approaches to composition based on improvisation, fusion of popular and experimental idioms, and exploration of irony. David Wright aptly coined the term “concept” pieces to describe Andriessen’s major works from the 70s and 80s where music provides a paradoxical commentary on political and meta-physical themes (1993: 7).

Although the aesthetic and ideological underpinnings of Andriessen’s “concept” pieces from the 1970s have been widely written about, a comprehensive examination of his aesthetic position and reception of his music has yet to be undertaken. Maja Trochimczyk’s recent book offers an accessible introduction to Andriessen’s music, filled with useful interviews with the composer and his colleagues. Her uneven coverage of the repertory and reliance on categories (e.g., minimalism, mysticism), however, result in an uncritical historical evaluation of the political context and ideologies that have shaped Andriessen’s compositional orientation. Instead of reducing the characteristics of his music to familiar labels, I argue that the ideological underpinnings of his work need to be placed under closer scrutiny.<sup>6</sup> As much as he speaks of his American influences, Andriessen’s aesthetic stance has to be understood in reference to the zeitgeist of Dutch musical culture and examined within the broader contexts of twentieth-century artistic developments. In this respect, Robert Adlington’s monograph on *De Staat* is the first to probe deeply into this socio-political and ideological context in his detailed examination of one of Andriessen’s landmark compositions (2004a).

The term musical *poetics* thus invokes the aesthetic, ideological, and cultural contexts that have shaped the production and reception of Andriessen’s music.<sup>7</sup> The book chronicles the evolution of his compositional orientation over five decades, and among the topics considered are the influence of Darmstadt aesthetics on his compositions from the 1960s, the harmonic vocabulary and the montage technique that he inherited from Stravinsky, how the politically-engaged praxes of Bertolt Brecht, Hanns Eisler, and Vsevolod Meyerhold shaped his stance toward theater and opera, and his preoccupation with the expression of irony in his later works. Building on available resources, I set my commentary on Andriessen’s music in dialogue

with the composer's own words, the opinions of his students and colleagues, and perspectives culled from the work of Dutch and British musicologists. In addition, my analytical descriptions of Andriessen's music are designed to make the organization of form, motive, rhythm, harmony, and timbre accessible to readers as an aid to listening and contemplating the metaphysical or philosophical questions posed.

Regarding politics, I trace the ideological foundation of Andriessen's music to two interrelated trends in twentieth-century Dutch history: the institutional hegemony of the symphony orchestra in the prewar years and the social protest movements in the postwar era. Both were important in shaping Andriessen's seminal role as socialist composer and his anti-capitalist stance toward art. The opening chapter traces the evolution of contemporary Dutch music from the struggles waged by prewar composers against the conservative legislation that governed the production of music, up to the critical period in the postwar years when radical social reforms brought about a new infrastructure in support of the arts. In the early 1970s, the emergence of progressive political parties on the left ushered in an era of wide-ranging social, economic, and cultural reforms. Inspired by counter-cultural protest groups that demanded new modes of artistic expression and freedom, Andriessen joined the *Notenkraker* ("Nutcracker" action group) in an effort to remove institutional censorship in orchestras, give musicians the freedom to choose the kind of music they wished to play, and make music more accessible to people from all walks of life. Although the composers involved in the protests were not bound by a cohesive ideology, their efforts signaled a deliberate departure from the positivistic strain of high modernism<sup>8</sup> that reached its pinnacle in the 1950s. To defy the capitalistic commodification of the symphony orchestra, Andriessen vowed to write music exclusively for ensembles that performed for a social cause (Whitehead 1997: 4–7). His employment of music as propaganda is in alliance with the material aesthetics of the Marxist philosopher György Lukács; in shifting the emphasis of material aesthetics from its epistemological basis to the issue of agency, Lukács claimed that the power of art resides in its ability to intervene directly on the level of social praxis and human behavior (1970).

To this end, quotations and stylized allusions in Andriessen's music do not appear for their own sake, but rather serve as references embedded within an ideological framework. Likewise, rhythmic unison and repetitive rhythms are not minimal for an aesthetic reason, but rather for their social utility or use-value.<sup>9</sup> For Andriessen, foregrounding the use-value of music serves as an ideological *demystification*, emphasizing that the act of composing is never "supra-social" – that is, it cannot transcend the social conditions that give birth to it. His aim was to work directly – at the levels of

## Introduction

5

practicality and behavior – to challenge and subvert cultural authorities by mobilizing performers and audiences to act for socio-political change. The democratic ideal is embedded, for instance, in his decision to combine musical instruments from classical, jazz, and folk genres. Since 1980, Andriessen's compositions espouse metaphysical rather than political themes, yet the ideological shift that took place during the 1970s has left an indelible mark on his compositional orientation and his stance toward the function of music in society. Politics, in the broader sense, extends to the ramifications of his musical ideology in the formation of alternative music ensembles, his impact on younger generations of composers and musicians, and the reception of his music within and outside the Netherlands.

The book also examines Andriessen's techniques for incorporating quotations of and stylistic allusions to music from the past as a vehicle for advancing his political and philosophical vision of art. In exploring the aesthetic framework for understanding parodic workings in twentieth-century art forms, specific criteria are distilled from Mikhail Bakhtin's formulation of parody as a type of double-voiced discourse (1981) and Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody as a particular form of artistic recycling with complex textual intentionality (1985). Defining parody as a stylized discourse of *heteroglossia*, Bakhtin emphasizes the way in which this device appropriates "another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way" (1981: 324). Along with the comic and ironic, parodic discourse expresses two different intentions, meanings, voices, and expressions that enter into dialogue with one another within one context. The "dialectical" commentary Andriessen creates through a collision of two or more musical ideas is founded on such a principle.

In exploring parody in the context of twentieth-century music, Hutcheon characterizes neo-classical pieces such as Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* (1916–17) and Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* (1919–20) by the stylized distance created between the borrowed model and the parody where the *ethos* or underlying intent may be one of humor, satire, or simply a tribute. In the postwar era, she argues, parody takes a different turn, exemplified in works such as Luciano Berio's *Sinfonia* (1968–69) or Peter Maxwell Davies's *Antechrist* (1967) where the distance between the background text being parodied and the new incorporating work is signaled by "ironic inversion" or "ironic transcontextualization" (Hutcheon 1985: 15).<sup>10</sup> Distinguishing the effect of parody from pastiche, Hutcheon emphasizes the contradictory or incongruous grounding of a reference in a new context.

Furthermore, as with Bakhtin, Hutcheon distinguishes parody from intertextuality by privileging *authorial* intent over readerly response to a borrowed model or reference; as an internally "dialogized" discourse, parody

requires the decoder to unravel the encoder's intent in choosing a particular reference and placing it into a new context.<sup>11</sup> Thus, parody can be interpreted as a *marked* type of reference, a case whereby the composer re-contextualizes a stylized or literal musical quotation with intent to highlight it in a specific way. Sometimes parodic techniques are used to forge a contradictory juxtaposition of literary texts, such as when a quotation of Gesualdo's languid motet intersects with an agitated style of chanting that accompanies Machiavelli's text in Andriessen's *Il Principe* (1974). At other times, the parodic reference remains hidden, taking on an extra-musical and symbolic function; in the climactic passage of "Tao," the second movement of the *Trilogy of the Last Day*, Andriessen conceives the descending minor third motive (F-D) as a corollary to the death motive in Bizet's *Carmen*. On yet another occasion, the quotation of Brahms's waltz from his op. 39 no. 2 is transfigured into a theme of lament, as a satirical commentary, in *Rosa*.

The act of decoding parodic references with prescribed meanings does not exclude intertextual readings – cross-references to other music and texts – that arise independently of the *poietic* investigation centered on authorial intent.<sup>12</sup> Jonathan Cross argues for "the uncritical fetishisation of Stravinskian moments" in passages from *De Staat* that carry the imprint of Stravinsky's proto-minimal early Russian style, possibly without Andriessen's conscious attempt to imitate his predecessor (1998: 186).<sup>13</sup> Analysis of Andriessen's music often calls for negotiating the significance of references that arise from seemingly incompatible sources. It is precisely his strategy of recontextualization – how and why he alters the borrowed musical references to form a commentary – that renders his "concept" work meaningful in creating a multi-layered musical discourse.

In moving beyond authorial intention as one type of agency, it is also possible to construct readings of Andriessen's music as *text*, defined by Barthes as a "social space" that stresses process, context, and enunciative situation (1977: 164). Rather than please the senses, his music often provokes the listeners to contemplate the significance of the borrowed references. In this regard, there are aesthetic cross-currents that figure prominently in Andriessen's approach to incorporating historical models. For instance, following Brecht's theory of *Verfremdung* ("alienation" or "defamiliarization"), Andriessen often re-contextualizes borrowed musical references to create polemical and paradoxical commentaries on contemporary social situations (Bryand-Bertail 2002: 18–20; Willett 1992). Musical forms of alienation in Andriessen's music appear in the guises of montage, disjointed use of text as a form of narration, and other musical devices for fragmentation. As Joyce and Proust deal with the fragmentation of personality to

## Introduction

7

portray a dehumanized individual subject in literature, Andriessen deploys montage and discontinuous form to disrupt linear continuity in music. The spatial form and collage techniques in the *Ittrospezione* series already signal the transition to a full-scale adoption of montage in *De Staat*. Rather than unifying a composition through linear and sequential developments of themes and motives, montage gives rise to a collision of meanings through fragmentation and juxtaposition of elements. Already in *On Jimmy Yancey*, dissonant interruptions cut across the joyous references to jazz in a way that prevents us from hearing the piece as a simple parody.

In his “concept” works, Andriessen employs such strategies to encourage the audience to grapple with the contradictory nature of the questions posed. The ingenuity of Andriessen’s parodic approach thus lies in the particular type of misreading, the “good wrong conclusion” that he creates (Andriessen and Schönberger 1989: 6). Joseph Straus – after the literary critic, Harold Bloom – discusses the ways in which modernist composers, notably Arnold Schoenberg and Stravinsky, engaged in creative misreadings in their appropriations of musical elements from their predecessors (1990).<sup>14</sup> Andriessen takes the art of misreading one step further by adapting Stravinsky’s modernist strategy and dialectical form of commentary to his own ideological goal. His musical output is, however, surprisingly free of “the anxiety of influence” that, according to Straus, characterizes Schoenberg’s or Stravinsky’s relationship to their predecessors. Andriessen’s misreading differs from theirs in his appropriation of text and music within a musical commentary that does not necessarily aim at synthesis or closure.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Andriessen’s appropriation can be seen as an outgrowth of *dialectical imitation* involving an aggressive dialogue between a piece and its model, one of the strategies of imitation Martha Hyde identifies in Stravinsky’s neoclassical works such as *The Rake’s Progress*.<sup>16</sup> Such characteristics have also led Frits van der Waa to describe Andriessen’s music as “commentaries, essays in notes, meta-music” (1993).

Finally, the book explores the broader cultural implications of Andriessen’s musical poetics through the prism of recent discourses on modernism, postmodernism, and minimalism in twentieth-century art. While different disciplines negotiate the “post” in postmodern differently, trends in music since World War II can be viewed at best as a *continuation* of modernism in a modified form (Silverman 1990; Pasler 1993). Modernist art, exemplified by Futurist, Fauvist, Cubist, and Dadaist movements, signifies a reaction against romanticism in its embrace of rationalism or objectivity. This modernist strain is evident in Andriessen’s predilection for organizing the formal structure of his large-scale compositions according to prescribed numerical proportions. In denouncing nineteenth-century romanticism as



bourgeois decadence, Stravinsky redefined music as a form of *speculation* in terms of sound and space (1970: 64). It is also in this sense that Adorno describes Stravinsky as the twentieth-century composer who attempted to reconcile the contradictions that lie between popular and “critical, self-reflective” music “from the outside” by assimilating stylistic forms of the past (Paddison 1996: 98). Andriessen strikes a rebellious stance that is kindred in spirit to Stravinsky’s, employing montage, parodic discourse, and “open” form to set up a dialectical tension between form and content. His aesthetic stance mirrors Arnold Whittall’s comment: “Modernist art... is not simply a reflection of what is often apocalyptically described as the chaos of modern society, but an expression of the special and unprecedented tension between the attempt to embody fragmentation and the impulse to transcend it” (1997: 158).

In other respects, Andriessen’s aesthetic stance seems to align itself with postmodernist discourses on art since the mid-1970s, be it a postmodernism of resistance and political engagement (Foster 1983), eradication of boundaries between “high” and “low” art (Jameson 1991), fragmentation and discontinuity in artistic expression (Harvey 1984: 44), or protest against institutionalized art and its ideology of autonomy (Huyssen 1986). In my interviews with the composer, however, he has expressly refused to be pigeonholed as a postmodern artist, since the label for him implies the reduction of art to pastiche, nostalgia, and late-capitalistic modes of commodification (Lyotard 1984). Instead of debating classifications, the real challenge lies in locating the cultural fields of production that have transformed the critical reception of Andriessen’s music over time, leading to a dislocation of his musical poetics from its pragmatic intent, i.e., music as social “ritual.” While he attained notoriety as an anarchist composer who vowed never to write for symphony orchestras, his music has been programmed alongside Stravinsky’s at the Concertgebouw – the site of protest in the 1970s – as well as by progressive-minded symphony orchestras across the continent.<sup>17</sup> K. Robert Schwarz describes Andriessen – much to the composer’s astonishment – as the icon of anti-establishment in the 1970s who has become an “elder statesman” of the mainstream (1996).

In exploring Andriessen’s musical poetics in one concrete sense, one needs to pay particular attention to the disjunction that has emerged between the composer’s ideal (lodged in a historical moment) and the changing reception of his music. What happens when young musicians listen to his protest works from the 1970s, stripped of their socio-political context of performance and adapted for mimetic modes of reproduction in today’s global culture? In what ways does his musical orientation “cross over” established genres of experimental music (e.g., John Cage), minimalism (e.g., Steve Reich),



and fusion (e.g., John Zorn), yet resist classification into one specific genre? Boundaries are also established through the different geo-political and cultural contexts in which his music has taken root. While Andriessen’s music receives regular performances in England, the United States, Germany, Poland, and Australia, it is rarely heard in France. How do his musical poetics mirror the unique social-democratic ideals that have shaped the musical culture of the Netherlands, yet collide with aesthetic ideals associated with other genres of new music? This book considers the multifarious grounding of Andriessen’s role as composer in the light of such questions.

While chronological in orientation, the following chapters delve into Andriessen’s musical language from distinct, yet overlapping theoretical positions. Issues pertaining to Dutch history, aesthetic ideology, and politics are central to chapters 1 through 3, while techniques of parody and intertextuality are explored in depth in chapters 4 through 7. Other analytical discourses, such as deconstruction and narrativity, take on importance in the discussion of his theatrical and operatic works in chapters 4 and 6, and theorizing the cultural and ideological differences that have shaped the reception of Andriessen’s music occupies the focal point of chapter 5 and the epilogue.

Notes

1. In Dutch the possessive noun is used without an apostrophe so that the title *Workers Union* is equivalent to *Workers’ Union* in English.
2. These observations are based on the author’s visit to the Bang on a Can Festival Summer Institute between 24 and 27 July 2003. Twenty-four composition students and performers were invited to participate in a series of workshops that included: Balinese gamelan instruction, courses in making instruments, improvisation, dance and choreography, and composition seminars. Unlike a standard concert where the audience is not allowed to talk or leave the hall, the festival attendees were free to move in and out of the concert hall, listening to the music broadcast on video screens throughout the vast space of the museum, which includes a café and an outdoor courtyard. Six hours of new music never felt so short and exhilarating. According to David Lang, Martin Bresnick introduced the idea of a marathon concert at Yale University in the early 1980s. Its format is also similar to the “inclusive” concerts that Andriessen and his colleagues started in Amsterdam in 1972.
3. Andriessen’s music has been showcased in the following festivals, among others: COMPOSIUM 2000 in Tokyo (May 21 through 28, 2000), *Passion: The Music of Louis Andriessen* in London’s Queen Elizabeth Hall (October 3 through 17, 2002), and *Sonic Evolutions* at Lincoln Center in New York City (May 1 through 15, 2004).

4. Based on a conversation with Dutch composers Sinta Wullur and Jan Rokus van Rosendaal in March 1998.
5. In De Leeuw's *Symphonies for wind-instruments*, for example, the composer quotes various "chorale" segments from the eponymous work by Stravinsky (Schönberger 1986: 4). De Vries, on the other hand, adopts Stravinskian idioms of changing meter, emphasis on brass and woodwinds, and chordal complexes in . . . *sub nocte per umbras* . . . (1989).
6. Ideology is defined as a system of representations (images, myths, ideas, or concepts) endowed with a specific historical context and functioning within a given society (Kristeva 1980: 15).
7. The term poetics is also an oblique reference to Stravinsky's *Poetics of Music* (1942) in which he discusses at length his aesthetic stance, philosophy, and the structural deployment of sounds in his music.
8. High modernism in music is associated with postwar avant-garde composers, e.g., Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Nono, Milton Babbitt, etc., who sought to systematize the structure of all musical parameters to rationalist means of control – for instance, integral serialism.
9. Marx defines use-value as the specific function which the raw material or product assumes in the labor process. As the position it occupies in the labor process changes, so do its determining characteristics (1977: 289).
10. For instance, Davies' *Antechrist* begins with the original thirteenth-century motet "Deo confitemini-Domino" presented in instrumental form; the new context then turns it inside out by breaking it down and superimposing it on related plainchant fragments.
11. According to Julia Kristeva, intertextuality signifies an impersonal, anonymous crossing of texts, where "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another"; moving away from traditional notions of agency and influence, she suggests that such relationships function like an "intersection of *textual surfaces* rather than a *point* (with a fixed meaning)" (1980: 36). In contrast, Hutcheon refers to Michael Riffaterre's view of intertextuality, where the experience of literature involves systems of words that are grouped associatively in the reader's mind. In the case of parody, she claims that those groupings are carefully controlled, like the strategies found in Eco's "inferential walks". The reader acts as decoder of encoded intent and the entire context that defines it (Hutcheon 1985: 23).
12. As a matter of fact, Michael Klein distinguishes between four types of intertextuality, partly informed by Jean-Jacques Nattiez's tripartition: *poietic* (authorial intention), *esthetic* (reader's interpretation based on social texts), *historical* (texts cultivated from a single time period), and *transhistorical* (texts cultivated from all time periods) (Klein 2005: 12).
13. Cross discusses the imprint of Stravinsky's style in Andriessen's music with reference to Bloom's revisionary ratio of *kenosis*, in which the precursor's style is manifested through fragmentation or reordering.