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Editorial: (En)Sounding the Future

(Jeanne Cortiel and Christian Schmidt, Bayreuth)

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(En)Sounding the Future

As we started planning this issue, our initial idea and working title was the untranslatable German term "Zukunftsmusik." Quite literally, this means "music of the future" and little did we know that this term not only existed in colloquial German (in the sense of a utopian vision of something that will only come to pass in the not-so-near future) but, in fact, had a concrete musical history that connects with none other than Richard Wagner.[1] Even though originally linked mostly with the music of Franz Liszt, the term quickly became associated with Wagner as he published his essay "Zukunftsmusik" in 1860/1861. As first used, the term was meant as a slanderous term for music that went beyond existing traditional contours of what was considered to be acceptable music. This polemical connotation, to some extent, has stuck in the German figurative usage of the term "Zukunftsmusik," which denotes utopian dreams of things not yet imaginable. While "Zukunftsmusik," thus, continues to refer to something outrageously futuristic, the general inflection of the term is overly optimistic rather than polemically ridiculing, as the usage was in Wagner's times. Going beyond this narrow sense of "music of the future," sounds of the future as used in the title of this special issue does not imply utopian desire but more generally refers to the various ways in which sound is deployed to create a sense of futurity, whether aspirational (involving hope) or anticipatory (involving fear and risk).

American Sonic Futures

For the longest time, America has viewed itself and has been viewed by others as a forward-looking, future-oriented culture, "the great nation of futurity," as the journalist John O'Sullivan put it in 1839.[2] American cultural history has been significantly shaped by utopian, chiliastic, and millennial movements, ideologies, and belief systems, as well as their dystopian and apocalyptic counterparts. It has thus been seen as a fundamentally visionary culture, which literally puts vision at the core of this particular way of thinking about the future and futurity. Most of the conceptualizations of the future thus come to life through references to the sense of sight: the imagination, envisioning, speculation. Yet the anticipation of the future acts bodily upon the present moment through all of our senses. Indeed current theories of perception in cognitive science and philosophy of mind see sense perception generally linked to prediction and thus oriented towards the future.[3] Though this concerns

[1] For an extended discussion of the history of the term "Zukunftsmusik," the historical and musical context in which it was coined, and the originator of the term, cf. Christa Jost and Peter Jost, "'Zukunftsmusik': Zur Geschichte eines Begriffs," *Musiktheorie* 10 (1995), p. 119-135. Wagner's essay is usually cited as "Zukunftsmusik" in English even if the title is routinely translated as "Music of the Future." See Richard Wagner, "'Zukunftsmusik' ('Music of the Future')," in: *Judaism in Music and Other Essays*, trans. William Ashton Ellis, Lincoln, NE 1995, p. 293–346.

[2] John O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *The United States Democratic Review* 6.23 (1839), pp. 426–430, http://digital.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=usde;idno=usde0006-4 (accessed 29 June 2015).

[3] Andy Clark, "Expecting the World: Perception, Prediction, and the Origins of Human Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* CX, (2013), no. 9, pp. 469–470.

largely the anticipation of the immediate future, all future-making involves the full range of perceptive abilities. What, then, is the role of sound in creating a sense of futurity and shaping future worlds?

By listening to the "sounds of the future," this special issue engages some of the ways in which music evokes potentialities and helps us think about possible (or indeed impossible) futures, thus seeking to expand the scope of future studies more broadly understood. The distinction between potentiality as "localized" and possibility as "non-localized" modalities[4] is helpful here. We would not go so far as to say that vision and sound have a homologous relationship, but it seems to us that sound tends to call upon potentiality rather than possibility, properties of things in the immediate vicinity (within earshot) rather than entire possible worlds and the relation of things within them. Commenting on this difference between vision as distancing and sound as evoking a sense of closeness, Bruce Johnson has pointed out in a discussion of "Jazz as Cultural Practice" that "[v]ision is, more than any other sense, the faculty of distancing, control, intellectual analysis and analytical focus," whereas sound centers on and is strengthened by "physical proximity."[5] When it comes to thinking about the future, then, envisioning can be regarded as an attempt to control that future whereas giving oneself up to being enveloped by the sounds of that future entails a much more visceral engagement with it. Thus paying attention to the sounds of the future, this issue also attempts to widen the range of future studies by questioning the primacy of the visual sense and to listen to that which is ensounded and thus highlights the bodily experience of anticipation – which may or may not work in concert with envisioned worlds. The central question of this issue, then, is how hearing – in cooperation with vision and other senses – helps us engage with the future. More precisely, the aim is to analyze soundscapes and "musicscapes" in various media to understand more fully how they help to evoke an unknowable, potentially dangerous and destructive, future.

The study of anticipation is a wide and varied enterprize across many disciplines that can hardly be described as a coherent field of research. From prolepsis in narrative in general,[6] to future speculation in science writing, science fiction, utopia and dystopia,[7] to the future as "fact" in anthropology[8] or risk assessment to the future

4 Barbara Vetter argues for this distinction in the context of modal logic: "A potentiality is localized in the sense that it is a property of a particular object. That I have the potential to write this book is first and foremost a property about me; it is a property that I possess. Possibility, on the contrary, is not localized in this way. Its being possible that such-and-such is not primarily a fact about any one particular object; it is a fact about how things in general could have turned out to be." Barbara Vetter, *Potentiality: From Dispositions to Modality*, Oxford 2015, p. 2.

5 Bruce Johnson, "Jazz as Cultural Practice," in: *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz,* ed. Mervyn Cooke and David Horn, Cambridge 2002, pp. 96–113, here p. 101.

6 See e.g. Mark Currie, *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time,* Oxford 2006, pp. 29–50.

7 This is a very broad field of research bridging science and technology studies and science fiction studies. Major recent contributions in this field include Colin Milburn's *Nanovision* (Durham 2010), Sherryl Vint's *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (Toronto 2007), *Speculate This!* by the writing collective Uncertain Commons (Durham 2013), and Mark Bould's *Science Fiction* (London 2012).

8 See e.g. Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact,* New York, NY 2013.

catastrophe as shaping social force in sociology,[9] scholarly interest in anticipation is diverse, and in part contradictory. Judging from sociological accounts such as Ulrich Beck's theory of the world risk society, thinking about the future has steadily gained significance since the end of World War II. Similarly, historian Daniel Rosenberg and anthropologist Susan Harding identify an increased concern with the future as well as a "crisis in modern futurity" in the present moment.[10] The ways in which societies or cultures conceptualize the future has been seen as a major characteristic of historical transformation. From very different angles, sociologists Ulrich Beck[11] and Elena Esposito[12] both posit the rise of the modern novel and the rise of risk or probability calculation as conjoint ways of dealing with contingency in the early modern era and Rosenberg and Harding define modernity through a rejection of prophecy and reconceptualization of the future as open.[13] Yet while there is consensus that conceptualizations of the future are historically specific and crucially indicative of the major paradigm shifts that created "modernity," futurity has been shown as a fundamentally embodied experience shared across species[14] and cultures.[15] As such, a sense of the future grounded in the past serves to characterize self-aware engagements with the world. Both of these ways of thinking about futurity – future-making as human universal and thinking about the future as culturally and historically specific – are relevant to studying the role of sound in practices of anticipation and aspiration, and both are fundamentally grounded in a sense of the past through personal, communal and historical memory. Arjun Appadurai's work on futurity enters precisely at this juncture, and he usefully distinguishes three "human preoccupations that shape the future as a cultural fact"[16]: In what he calls "imagination," memories serve to create maps for the future; this practice is complemented by "aspiration," which is associated with desire for the good life and which he sees as "the political counterpart to the work of the imagination,"[17] and "anticipation," which he associates with the fear of undesirable outcomes and risk. In this sense, aspiration and anticipation are not separate practices but give a particular valence to the practice of future making. Although sound can be seen as participating in all aspects of shaping futurity, it is in anticipation and aspiration as Appadurai defines them that the need to study sound becomes most apparent, even though Appadurai, as most other commentators, links them with the visual.

9 See e.g. Ulrich Beck, *World at Risk,* trans. Ciaran Cronin, Cambridge 2009.

10 *Histories of the Future,* ed. by Daniel Rosenberg and Susan Harding, Durham 2009, pp. 3–4.

11 Beck, *World at Risk* (see nt. 9), pp. 4–6.

12 Elena Esposito, *Die Fiktion der wahrscheinlichen Realität,* Frankfurt a.M. 2007, pp. 7–12.

13 Rosenberg and Harding, "Introduction: Histories of the Future," in: *Histories of the Future* (see nt. 10), p. 4.

14 Recent studies in comparative psychology, for example, suggest that young children use similar strategies as scrub-jays to plan ahead for desirable resources. See Cristina M. Atance, Alyssa Louw, and Nicola S Clayton, "Thinking Ahead About Where Something Is Needed: New Insights About Episodic Foresight in Preschoolers," *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 129 (2015), pp. 98–107.

15 Clark, "Expecting the World" (see nt. 3), pp. 469–496. See also Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact* (see nt. 8), p. 293.

16 Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact* (see nt. 8), p. 286.

17 Ibid., p. 283.

Ensounding the Future

The idea that sound complements vision in creating a sense of anticipation based on past experience is very apparent, for example, in discussing the sense of dread in horror film,[18] and sound design in film is certainly an important aspect of studying the sounds of the future.[19] Beyond such narrow examples, however, there is a much broader field to study sonic futurity, including popular music, performance art, poetry, and fiction. As the essays collected in this issue exemplify, sound produces a more visceral, immediate and bodily sense of the future either as anticipation of disaster or as aspirational sense of futurity. In order to do justice to this immediacy of sound, our volume tries more clearly to differentiate between the realms of the visual and the sonic; or, perhaps more precisely, to point out the ways in which thinking about the future predominantly relies on visual rather than auditory terms. This predilection for the visual manifests itself in the very language we have at our disposal: from imagining (from Lat. imago, image) to envisioning (which already encapsulates a visual grasp on the future), speculating (from Lat. specere, to look), and contemplating (derived from Lat. templum, observation). In short, the vocabulary available to invoke the future almost exclusively refers to that which can be seen or visualized ahead of time, so that even words such as "to anticipate," which has no direct visual etymology, become linked to the visual sense in dictionaries by suggesting "to look ahead to" and "to look forward to" as explanation and synonymous expression.[20] This is to say, it is virtually impossible to speak about the future without employing visual metaphors, exemplifying for us quite practically just how strongly the visual sense determines our grasp of the future.[21]

[18] See for example Kirsten Moana Thompson's discussion of *Cape Fear* (1991) in her book *Apocalyptic Dread: American Film at the Turn of the Millennium*, Albany, NY 2007, pp. 36–44.

[19] The collection of essays on music in science-fiction movies edited by Mathew Bartkowiak (*Sounds of the Future: Essays on Music in Science Fiction Film*, Jefferson, NC 2010), which shares our volume's title, offers such readings but similarly limits its analysis to the sounds *to the images* of the future. As such, it is, perhaps, only logical that throughout his introduction to the volume, Bartkowiak uses the slightly oxymoronic phrasing of musical "visions," thus bringing together auditory and visual metaphors. In a slightly different approach to this issue, Kodwo Eshun deliberately mixes visual and auditory metaphors and terms in order to show the similarities between music and science fiction when he invents terms such as "Sonic Fiction or PhoneFiction." Moreover, by looking forward into the future, rather than back into its history, Eshun claims that we get a "much better guide to the present than [through] the past." Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*, London 1999, p. 00[–002], 00[–001].

[20] "Anticipate", http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anticipate (accessed 17 June 2015).

[21] And while this preference for and dominance of the visual certainly has been with us for quite some time - in fact, Appadurai's take on the future as cultural fact implies that it is a truly constant fact of human life as such – the increasing role of visual media, such as television, and especially Internet related technologies certainly has tipped the scales further in favor of the domain of the visual. As popular culture scholar Lawrence Grossberg has observed, even within the field of popular music vision more and more has taken over from sound and music itself as the most important element. And he argues "that the music video is also about the changing ratio, in rock and youth cultures, between sound and vision." Lawrence Grossberg, "The Media Economy of Rock Culture: Cinema, Post-Modernity and Authenticity," in: *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader,* ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg, London 1993, pp. 185–209, here p. 186. Especially in the realm of popular music, this increasing visualization of music has to be noted; not only in music videos as Grossberg rightly observes but clearly also as far as looks and outer appearance of pop stars more generally are concerned. In a related argument, Johnson has referred to the "cultural practice" of jazz music as an "earsite in an epistemology dominated by eyesight." Johnson, "Jazz as Cultural Practice" (see nt. 5), p. 104.

As Kodwo Eshun's study of musical futures, *More Brilliant than the Sun*, shows, the intermingling of sound and vision is almost impossible to avoid. Lest he stifle the music's visionary (futuristic) qualities and pigeonhole its dynamic vivacity, he invents a variety of terms to refer to these sounds of the future: "the Rhythmachine"; "Futurhythmachines" – arguably, at least in part, this results from a similar lack of available vocabulary to talk about these things without unfairly restraining their critical reach. And while Eshun fears the stifling quality of genre boundaries in general, our own hesitancy to use existing vocabulary lies more in its deeply imbued visual slant than in a general resistance against boundaries. As Eshun himself describes his project in an interview (with himself) included in the book: "[A]t its simplest, it's a study of *visions* of the future in music from Sun Ra to 4 Hero [sic]."[22] In this respect, Eshun's hopeful title speaks to his book's aspiration to a brighter future for African (American) music as much as its own visual slant elucidates the imbrication of sound and vision in his analyses. Of course, "to elucidate" etymologically derives from making something lucid, i.e. light or clear, and thus also is as much a visual metaphor as is Eshun's own title.[23]

If you bracket the visual and focus on sound in thinking about future-making, what remains are the affective modes of aspiration and anticipation. Aspiration may indeed serve as a productive metaphor in trying to come to grips with the sounds of the future, not only because its semantic field is decidedly non-visual. Etymologically, aspiring derives "from Latin aspirare, literally, to breathe upon,"[24] which indicates at least two things: First, it references a bodily rather than a cognitive activity; and, second, it indicates the impossibility of concretely envisioning or imagining that very future as it renders a wordless breath. As such, aspiring in Appadurai's sense of the term – even if he clearly did not have the realm of sounds explicitly in mind when formulating his ideas – evokes the impossible task of giving voice (or breath) to potential futures that may never come about. Rather than envisioning a clear utopian scenario or image (i.e. "vision") of this very future, sounds simply "air" the potentially hopeful, yet always unknowable versions of the future they render. With its tactile etymology ("from *capere* to take"),[25] anticipation similarly serves as a fitting metaphor suggestive of the immediacy of sound. In his study of *Sweet Anticipation*, musicologist David Huron even goes so far as to see the ability to anticipate as an additional bodily sense: "In the same way that the sense of vision provides the mind with information about the world of light energy, the sense of future provides the mind with information about upcoming events."[26] What Huron's study highlights are the physical aspects of musical and/or sonic anticipation that are, in our

22 Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun* (see nt. 19), p. 00[–005], A[176], our emphasis.

23 "Elucidate", http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/elucidate (accessed 17 June 2015).

24 "Aspire", http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/aspire (accessed 17 June 2015).

25 "Anticipate" (see nt. 20).

26 David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation,* Cambridge, MA 2006, p. 355. In this study, Huron elaborates a "psychological theory of expectation" that is applicable most directly, but most certainly not only to music (p. vii). As a theory of (musical) expectation, Huron's *Sweet Anticipation* deals with future in a fairly delineated sense, i.e. the future that lies

conceptualization, addressed by both aspiration and anticipation. As affective modes of addressing the future, aspiration and anticipation do not constitute an additional sense of the future, as Huron implies, but are fully grounded in the auditory present, calling upon the basic sensations of hope and fear.

As complementary terms, aspiration and anticipation in this line of argumentation allow us to heed our own reminder to keep the respective senses apart, and they provide the beginnings of a non-visual vocabulary for talking about the future. In addition, and in response to this dearth of words, we would like to propose "ensounding" as a verb that refers to the manifold activities of sonic future-making that are at the center of this issue. More specifically, we define ensounding as (open-ended) way of making potentiality audible that serves as a counterpoint to envisioning as (more closely demarcated) imagination. In other words, "ensounding" refers to the process of sounds and/or music invoking things not (yet) there, which are being conjured viscerally in and through the sounds. Thus, "ensounding the future" not only means providing a soundtrack for/to a (possible) future but also and more broadly suggests an approach to the future that goes beyond the realm of things that are visually imaginable.[27]

Desiderata, Gaps, and Contributions

Quite obviously, the broad investigation of the temporal dimension of sounds as we propose it here requires more than the three paradigmatic case studies this volume presents. There is great potential in bringing musicology, literary studies and the study of popular culture together in a fully interdisciplinary conversation about how sounds participate in creating future, and we can only begin this conversation.

At this point, a word is in order on our usage of the phrase "popular culture," which is so prominently positioned in the title of this special issue. Even though we employ that particular expression quite deliberately, we do so in the broadest possible sense, neither restricting the "popular" to its merely quantitative dimension nor to any sense of "mass culture." As cultural critic John Storey helpfully clarifies in his attempt to define the notoriously slippery term "popular": "A great deal of the difficulty arises from the *absent other* which always haunts any definition we might use. It is never enough to speak of popular culture; we have always to acknowledge that

within a particular piece of music (which may or may not extend over a very long period of time; but even Cage's *Organ²/ASLSP*, eventually, will come to an end, albeit only in about 600 years). Perhaps tellingly, Huron himself cannot but mix his sensual metaphors as "expectation," of course, is yet another word for "to look forward to" things rather than to hear ahead to them. See "Expect", http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expect (accessed 17 June 2015).

27 In this sense, ensounding also goes beyond the much more narrow meaning of musical anticipation as understood in musicological terms as the "subjective experience accompanying a strong expectation that a particular event will occur; also referred to as the *feeling of anticipation*." As Huron stipulates in the glossary appended to his study, "In Western music theory, [anticipation also refers to] a type of melodic *embellishment* in which an expected note is immediately preceded by the same pitch. E.g. the 'ta' in the 'ta-dah' cadence." The glossary also points to "premonition A long-range feeling of *anticipation*." Huron, *Sweet Anticipation* (see nt. 26), p. 306, 409, 418.

with which it is being contrasted."[28] Such a broad definition of "popular culture" does very little service in identifying a particular object of analysis, but it does help us to signal a particular approach to musical culture. Such an approach enables us to bring together what Storey has defined as the two major divisions in popular culture studies, "between the study of texts (popular fiction, television, pop music, etc.) and lived cultures or practices (seaside holidays, youth subcultures, the celebration of Christmas, etc.)."[29] In this respect, studying American musical production necessitates a broad, interdisciplinary engagement that not only bridges the disciplinary divide between the more text-oriented approaches of the literary and cultural studies and the more score or music-oriented approach of musicology. It also necessitates the inclusion of an explicit focus on the people and bodies that perform and produce these sounds as offered by performance studies, which deal with the "lived cultures and practices" discussed by Storey. As a journal known for its interdisciplinary investigations of such matters, *ACT – Zeitschrift für Musik und Performance* seems like the perfect venue for our discussions and we are more than glad for being able to publish them in the context of this special issue.

Because of its bodily immediacy, music has been associated with presence rather than with the always absent future. Simon Frith's important "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music" may serve as an example for this tendency. In this essay, Frith delineates four "social functions of music,"[30] among them being music's ability to "shape popular memory [and] to organize our sense of time."[31] Yet even though he observes that "songs are organized (it is part of their pleasure) around anticipation and echo," he focuses mostly on the presence of music, "its ability to 'stop' time," and its ability to evoke memories, that is, the thorough nostalgia with which twentieth century popular music is so deeply imbued.[32] Rather than dealing with the potentialities and the sounds of the future that clearly also are at stake in popular music as his admission of the significance of anticipation shows, Frith clearly stresses the latter over the former, effectively disregarding the future-oriented temporal dimension that is also to be found in music. In the context of our discussion of sounds of the future, however, looking not (only) at the past but toward the future takes on much greater importance.[33] One desideratum for future studies, then, would be an extended analysis of the ways in which popular music provides potential segues and soundways into the future. An obvious starting point for such analysis could be studying the ways in which music videos combine sonic and visual takes on the future; for example, the particular ways in which Taylor Swift's music video *Bad Blood* (2015) combines elements of Hollywood feature film aesthetics with new sounds in

[28] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction,* Sixth Edition, Harlow 2012, p. 13.

[29] Ibid., p.14.

[30] Simon Frith, "Towards an Aesthetic of Popular Music," in: *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance, and Reception*, ed. Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, Cambridge 1987, pp. 140–144.

[31] Ibid., p. 142.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., p. 137.

order visually and sonically to render the post-human future in which the song's love story is situated. Arguably, music videos' stress of sound over image, after all the music is the primary medium, negotiates the mix of image and sound somewhat differently than science fiction films, thus providing interesting material for comparative readings of the two media.

One entirely different gap that our issue can name but does not fully address are the ways in which futures are ensounded differently along the axes of race, gender, class, age, and disability. Indeed we would argue that sounds allow for a less striated approach to the future for two reasons: Historically, sounds have not been instrumentalized in creating and maintaining difference to the same degree as visual representations. Moreover, unlike future visions, ensoundings do not represent concrete worlds but evoke sensations and therefore open possibilities rather than reiterating differences.[34] Drawing on Barry Shank's analysis of *The Political Force of Musical Beauty,* one possible line of interrogation would be precisely to analyze the ways in which music's aspirations and anticipations may shape a new and different form of community, which Shank, following Nancy, reads as a "communauté désoeuvrée."[35] Even though Shank's analysis does not mobilize the tropes of anticipation and aspiration, it clearly is in tune with our own thinking about sounds of the future as potentially open to unbound difference: As he states, the book's "basic argument is that the act of musical listening enables us to confront complex and mobile structures of impermanent relationships – the sonic interweaving of tones and beats, upper harmonics, and contrasting timbres – that model the experience of belonging to a community not of unity but of difference. The pleasures that derive from this experience are both aesthetic and political."[36] The precise texture of these pleasures would certainly make for stimulating analyses of the variously ensounded differences of the future.

Approaching the sounds of the future from different disciplinary angles, the three contributions to this volume point to three different conceptual domains each in itself highly relevant to the study of how sound contributes to making futures. While

34 For an intriguing discussion of the alleged visibility of race, cf. Linda Martin Alcoff, *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self,* New York, NY 2006. In a related argument, Paul Gilroy has pointed to the "growing dominance of specularity over aurality [that] might be thought of as contributing a special force to representations of the exemplary racial body arrested in the gaze of desiring and identifying subjects." Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*, Cambridge, MA 2000, p. 191.

35 Barry Shank, *The Political Force of Musical Beauty*, Durham, NC 2014, pp. 23–25. Importantly, Shank does not use "political" in a formalist or institutional sense. Rather, he focuses on the ways in which listening to music serves a community-creating function. Thus, he does not analyze the political uses to which music has been put but, rather, focuses on the sheer "force of musical beauty" that brings together people who need not share anything beyond the very enjoyment of this music. As he argues, the "ability to produce beauty, therefore, is an index of the ability to imagine a better future." p. 3. Beauty, per se, is not at issue in this volume and, arguably, neither the Black Metal studied by Pöhlmann nor the complex "lined-out singing" of the Baptists analyzed by Melillo qualify as "beautiful" by some standards. Most importantly, however, they diverge from Shank's dictum in that they do not claim to imagine a *better* future in the first place.

36 Ibid., p. 1.

by no means exhaustively covering this vast field, each of the three essays exemplifies how closely circumscribed studies of particular sonic examples can help more precisely to describe the sonic dimension of anticipation and aspiration. Moreover, the essays identify and meticulously analyze particular "sounds of the future." What they provide is not so much a (visual) glimpse but an (auditory) earful. As such, they do more than simply embellishing future visions with a musical soundtrack. Rather, these sounds are attempts to ensound (potentially better but often also much darker) futures. Listening to these sounds means going beyond the narrow understanding of musical anticipation as a form of listening ahead to the sonic resolution of musical tension and the ways in which melodic structures often work with suspense and anticipation, i.e. the listener is listening ahead, waiting for a sonic resolution of tension. Refusing to present clearly discernible visions and speculations of the future, the sounds of the future are much more than soundtracks to the images of the future. Taken together, these three essays lend an ear to the very sounds of the future that might elude our critical grasp as long as we concentrate only on – and look out for – the visions of the future. Bridging generic gaps between literary, sound, media, film, and music studies, these three readings of contemporary sonic practices cover only small terrain on the ground of sonic future studies. But in so doing, they demonstrate the advantage of crossing disciplinary boundaries and keeping one's critical ears attuned to the music to be heard elsewhere – be it in a different genre, a different key, or from a different time and place.

Sascha Pöhlmann, "Whitman's Compost: The Romantic Posthuman Futures of Cascadian Black Metal"

An ecocritical framework enables Sascha Pöhlmann's "Whitman's Compost" to connect contemporary cultural productions with historical predecessors, bringing American Black Metal in conversation with the poetry of Walt Whitman. Focusing on the two bands Wolves in the Throne Room and Skagos, Pöhlmann thus unfolds how this musical genre's move from Scandinavia to the Pacific Northwest effectively re-stages romanticism's earlier movement from Europe to North America. By way of a thorough analysis of the interplay between the sounds, lyrics, visuals, and performance of these two bands, Pöhlmann shows that Cascadian Black Metal formulates a musical philosophy of compost, of cycles of decay and regeneration akin to Whitman's romantic ideals, displacing human-centeredness and balancing precariously on the edge between fear and hope. Doing so, Pöhlmann productively combines musicological and cultural studies-oriented approaches and shows that focusing exclusively on either does not allow a critical grasp of the musical and philosophical depth behind this particular sub-genre of metal. Such an evocation of compost can also productively be linked to post-humanist conceptualizations of life, since it potentially transcends a narrow focus on human futures by sonically including all forms of life into a cycle of birth and death. The blast beat of heavy metal, then, can be read as

an aspiration for a better future that, ultimately, may not be human – and thus may neither be anticipated nor desired.

Compost is present in both Whitman's poetry and Cascadian Black Metal less as a figure of speech or an image than as visceral sensation of decay and renewal that is best rendered through sound. *Two Hunters* by Wolves in the Throne Room stages such a presence of compost in its cyclical embedding of human voices and noises into the natural cycles of day and night which, ultimately, trump human visions of the future. Put differently, the sounds on this album do not create lyrical human-made images; instead, the album ensounds the future through nature's noise that makes itself heard over and against human-made destruction. Similarly, what Pöhlmann analyzes as Skagos's "posthuman compost metal" encapsulates an apocalyptic version of the future that is stoically rendered rather than tragically mourned as humanity's future is presented as of secondary importance – if of any. In this, both musical futures refuse to insist on humanity's inclusion in it even as nature musically aspires to survival. In these musical ensoundings of the future, "community itself has failed," as Pöhlmann argues, as natural regeneration is the only futurity ultimately available – rather than a restoration of faith driven by human volition. What remains in these sounds of the future, ultimately, are the sounds of nature as the only thing with truly transformative potential. Pöhlmann's lyrical examples, in the final analysis, thus show that the lyrics are in a sense upstaged by the music and the sounds that frame the respective musical albums.

Axel Volmar, "Klanglandschaften der new frontier. *Auditive Zukunftsvisionen und das Verhältnis zwischen Avantgarde und Kulturindustrie im US-amerikanischen Science-Fiction-Film"*

In the only German-language essay in this volume, Volmar explores culturally specific versions of ensounding by turning to the most paradigmatic of all future-oriented genres, American science-fiction film. In his analysis of sci-fi films from roughly the 1950s through the 1980s, Volmar delineates the ways in which these films use sounds – extra- and intradiegetic music, musical scores and filmic sound effects – to add an auditory dimension to the otherwise mostly visual futures of science-fiction film. Reading these sonic anticipations of the future with a focus on how they reinvent the American frontier, Volmar claims that the unusual sounds and previously unheard-of music are used to render the temporally and spatially distant settings audible, thus making them present and identifiable. Viscerally addressing two of our core senses, these films invoke what Volmar analyzes with the – deliberately contradictory – phrase "auditory visions." According to Volmar, auditory visions suture the gap between that which is heard and that which is seen. Moreover, the increasing intermixture and entanglement of intra- and extra-diegetic sounds undermine a clear-cut distinction between filmic vision and accompanying sound

effects; in focusing on this intermixture, Volmar convincingly analyzes the ways in which these filmic examples ensound futures that clearly go beyond (and perhaps slightly against the grain of) their visions, pitting sound against image, aspiration against anticipation in ways that speak to Pöhlmann's very different examples from poetry and song.

Much like in the Cascadian Black Metal in Pöhlmann's reading, the object of the soundscapes analyzed by Volmar is not harmony but productive dissonance – in this case between sound and image. It is precisely through this dissonance that sounds of the future in science fiction film help to both re-enact and counter the normative violence against the (ethnic or racial) other in the liminal space of the frontier. In order to create the defamiliarizing effect necessary for the science-fictional frontier narrative, films have incorporated avant-garde music or so-called New Music, new electronic forms of composing, and electronic instruments, creating a soundscape for the distant futures enacted on the screens. Doing so, these films operate on the border between avant-garde and *Kulturindustrie*, thereby ensounding not only the frontier between the familiar and the strange, 'us' and 'them' – today and tomorrow, if you will – but that between different musical cultures as well. Through these tensions, science fiction film is able to solve the paradox of 'future' sound and vision: Although both hearing and seeing require presence, the defamiliarizing effect of the dissonance that Volmar identifies allows them to point to a genuinely different time and space.

John Melillo, "Uncertain Revelations: Noise from the Old Regular Baptists to Susan Howe, Clark Coolidge and Morton Feldman"

From a very different perspective and spanning a wide range of sonic texts, John Melillo also engages with specifically American ways of dealing with the future by a focus on "noise," very broadly understood. Melillo shares with both Pöhlmann and Volmar an interest in the meaning-making power of dissonance. Through a close analysis of four very diverse forms of noise-making, Melillo disassembles the distinction between (allegedly) meaningful voice and (supposedly) meaningless noise and claims that the latter, on the contrary, allows the artists to make themselves heard. The point of departure in this tour-de-force through the genealogy of embracing uncertainty through noise in American culture is the tradition of Old Regular Baptist singing. Melillo argues that the characteristic piling of slightly off-key and off-tempo voices into a common noise had best be read as expressive of a "potentiality," a communally shared if individually distinct invocation of a shared future. In this communal performative act, masses of individuated yet connected bodies share in the singing of a future that is both singular and in common. This communal ensounding of futurity evades clear-cut readings in terms of utopia or eschatology but is as heterogeneous as the music is heterophonous.

Without presuming any kind of teleology or linear historicity, Melillo then traces similarly playful deployments of noise in twentieth-century music by John Cage and Morton Feldman. In his analysis of two of Feldman's compositions, Melillo observes a destruction of common musical elements, such as tone intervals or the sheer duration of the piece, that conspire to construct an uncertain futurity on the ruins, as it were, of music. Finally, Melillo turns to poetry and thus again to a quite differrent sonic genre. Clark Coolidge's poetry gives up referential narrative structures in favor of noiseful sounds, piling sounds on top of one another without apparent pattern. Like Old Regular Baptist singing and experimental twentieth-century music, this poetry refuses predetermined meanings and simplistic utopian or dystopian futures. The noise of Coolidge's poetry, according to Melillo, establishes a different relationship between sound and (referential) meaning by rearranging words with an ear to how they sound rather than a understanding of what they mean. In many ways similar to Coolidge, Susan Howe also plays with poetic sounds and referential meanings by citing bits and pieces from captivity narratives and rearranging these texts in incongruous poetic forms. Taken together, these literary and musical examples use noise to imagine futures whose uncertainties brim with possibility and potential. Ultimately, what Melillo analyzes as "communal life in terms of sensation," in this respect, is a form of Appaduraian aspiration, a form of breathing out (as singing and lining out) and uttering noise in the hope of creating new sensations, new voices, and, perhaps, a shared unknowable future that Melillo dubs "uncertain revelation."

In conclusion, the editors would like to thank the contributors for their truly incisive arguments that provided much food for thought (and, indeed, sonic inspiration). Moreover, we would like to thank the editors of *ACT*, especially Knut Holtsträter for his relentless work on this issue. Yet our gratitude goes beyond being given the opportunity to edit this volume (and beyond the wonderful working partnership with *ACT* during the final editing process of the special issue). What we are truly grateful for is the fact that *ACT*, a journal for music and performance, routinely opens its pages for contributions from cultural studies scholars, in order to make room for stimulating interchanges between musicology, performance studies, and cultural studies in a much broader sense. This introduction is probably best proof of our own theoretical and disciplinary backgrounds as predominantly 'textual' scholars. Nonetheless, we are firmly convinced that such truly interdisciplinary work is necessary if we want not only to discuss utopian visions of the future but engage with the future on a much broader front that includes all of the senses. Perhaps, then, these essays contribute not only to a more interdisciplinary study of the future but also to much-needed exchange and cooperation between these neighboring fields, which both, in one way or another, are listening to the "sounds of the future."

Jeanne Cortiel and Christian Schmidt