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Eric Drott, *Music and The Elusive Revolution: Cultural Politics and Political Culture in France, 1968-1981*. Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2011. xiii + 347 pp. Notes, bibliography and index. \$70.00 (cl). ISBN 978-0-520-26897-8; \$29.95 U.S. (pb) ISBN 978-0-520-26897-5.

Review by David Looseley, University of Leeds, UK.

This is an impressive work of admirable erudition. It manages to contribute significantly to the understanding of both May 1968 and musical culture in contemporary France while remaining entirely readable. It is impeccably researched and rigorously argued, bringing together a variety of sources and disciplinary perspectives in a genuinely original synthesis: among them, cultural and intellectual history, reception studies, musicology and French cultural studies.

Much of the book is devoted to what might loosely be called 'popular' music, though 'popular' is construed in different ways and 'classical' music does appear in one chapter. Anglophone accounts of French popular music other than the familiar 'literary' *chanson* are still relatively rare, though their number is certainly growing. Those accounts issuing from French studies departments in universities are often ground-breaking and inventive, but there is a danger, particularly in countries like the UK where research agendas are inflected by research-assessment exercises with significant financial implications, that horizons will be restricted to the theoretical or methodological approaches that French studies as a discipline has evolved: postcolonialism, gender and identities, text-and-image, and so on. Hence the interest of a volume produced instead by a musicologist, albeit one well versed in French culture and society generally and skilled in interdisciplinary approaches. Drott's book therefore takes the anglophone (and indeed francophone) study of French popular music a major step forward.

His overarching theme is how the events of 1968 impacted upon French music from 1968 to the Mitterrand victory of 1981. Within this loose framework, he is concerned with a range of relationships between music and politics and, more specifically still, with the ways in which genre mediated those relationships. His thesis is not only that different genre cultures responded differently to May and its aftermath, but also that the genres in question acquired different political meanings and functions. After a historical survey of the place of music in the uprising (chapter one), he illustrates this thesis with four contrasting case studies involving particular genres: *chanson* (chapter two), free jazz (chapter three), rock (chapter four), and the democratisation of *la musique contemporaine* (i.e., contemporary classical music). The book is full of novel arguments, insights and approaches. And although, occasionally, the 'genre' thematic creaks a little under the pressure of such diversity, that same diversity makes for the book's richness and significance.

In chapter two, Drott compares the musical responses to May of three committed singer-songwriters: Dominique Grange, Léo Ferré and Évariste. The choice of the first and third of these is particularly welcome. Although *la chanson française* has been studied for quite some time, Grange and Évariste, largely forgotten today, rarely appear. Yet examining their work alongside the iconic Ferré, still highly revered, illuminates all three. It is especially useful to see their songs subjected to expert musicological as well as literary analysis, since this holistic approach illustrates just how far meaning in *chanson* is

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created collaboratively by words and music; the music, in fact, as with Ferré's "L'été 68," "tips the balance" (p. 98) by clarifying the song's lyrical ambivalence.

Chapter three argues that, while France distinguished itself from the UK and US in that the impact of pop and rock during May was marginal, in the case of jazz it was a different matter. This produces an excellent account of the centrality of free jazz during and after 1968, in which the author underscores the links that some insisted on making between musical improvisation and insurrectional spontaneity, despite the fact that the free-jazz milieu actually contained a wide variety of political opinion. He also identifies the opposing threads of postcolonial particularism and French republican universalism that ran through debates about free jazz at the time. For jazz to become legitimate in republican France after the Second World War, it had to be presented as a universal art, even though a particularist case for it could be and was readily made. Most French critics thereby failed to see the diversity of the free jazz movement because they attributed to it a unity and singularity it did not have.

Chapter four goes on to enquire why French pop and rock were not implicated in the insurgency of May. This had much to do with a French music industry still unwilling for commercial reasons to promote emerging French bands because it could not think outside the established traditions of *chanson* and *variétés* or the already successful rock groups from Britain and America. The chapter also pertinently unpicks the vexed post-1968 relations between the musical counterculture and *gauchisme*; or, as he puts it, a genre culture and a political culture. The last chapter examines attempts in the form of both cultural policy and "compositional practice" to democratise contemporary classical music—perceived as elitist and difficult—by means of what became known in the 1960s and 1970s as *animation*, a nebulous, contested notion which was finally laid to rest when Jack Lang became Mitterrand's Minister of Culture in 1981. The chapter is particularly stimulating when it deals with how the public taste for popular music was assumed by well-intentioned *animateurs*, ministers and even Bourdieu to have little or no cultural content. This was a long way from the conviction—by then well established in anglophone cultural studies—that popular tastes represent an *alternative* culture.

Each of these chapters is helpfully structured in essentially the same way: a thorough narrative of the genre's nature or evolution, an unpicking of the debates to which it gave rise, and a close encounter with one or more specific instances of the genre at work: festivals in the case of rock, for example, or the work of the Atelier lyrique du Rhin and the Atelier Théâtre et Musique in the case of contemporary music. The illustrative sections usually include musicological analysis. This common structure is pursued in each case with imagination and diversity. Readers may not always agree with Drott's interpretations, but the virtue of his method is to raise complex and usually neglected questions and come up with his own, always suggestive answers. The book should be of interest to historians, musicologists, and cultural and French studies scholars for many years to come.

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