Journal of the Society for American Music (2021), **15**, 287–304
doi:10.1017/S1752196321000183

CAMBRIDGE
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

"The Hall Does Not Make the Space": Disrupting Concert Hall Norms in Hannibal's *One Land, One River, One People*

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Abstract

Hannibal's cheering and shouting along with his request for audience participation during the 2015 premiere of his composition *One Land, One River, One People* caused a stir and created discomfort among the Philadelphia Orchestra audience. I interpret his work as an example of a successful musical direct action within contemporary orchestral music. By exposing and subverting the traditions of the classical concert experience, *One Land, One River, One People* highlights social boundaries within the genre of classical music itself. I apply Robin James's (2015) concept of Multiracial White Supremacy, or MRWaSP, to contemporary orchestral classical music of the United States. Under late capitalism, MRWaSP helps to explain the potential appeal to an orchestra of commissioning Hannibal, who is known as a "genre-crossing" composer rooted in classical and jazz. Yet I argue that the way in which Hannibal performs his identity along with the piece's inclusion of audience participation allow the music to resist functioning as expected under MRWaSP. Rather than promoting a sense that—as one might expect from the title—we are all "one people," I see the piece as revealing racial difference and as speaking truth to power.

On a Friday evening in November 2015, Hannibal cheered and shouted in Verizon Hall as the Philadelphia Orchestra accompanied by vocal soloists, the combined choirs of two Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and an uneasy-seeming contingent of the audience premiered his new work, *One Land, One River, One People*. The concert program described the theme of the week's concerts as "love of nation." In remarks from the orchestra's then-president Allison Vulgamore offered before the performance, the piece was about "coming together." Yet after experiencing the work myself, I found that it was somewhat the opposite, and helpfully so. Although Vulgamore's interpretation is supported by certain superficial aspects of the piece, by subverting listener expectations Hannibal's *One Land, One River, One People* denies the audience an anticipated sense of social unity. In doing so, this piece poses a political challenge in a way that contrasts with many attempts at political contemporary classical concert music.

I interpret this piece as exposing social boundaries within the genre of classical music itself. Rather than promoting a sense that—as one might expect from the title—we are all "one people," I see the piece as revealing difference. In particular, my interpretation of this piece is informed by its performance practice, including audience participation and the composer's actions during the performance. I also argue that multiple aspects of Hannibal's performed identity allow him the access to make such a political action. The impact of a piece such as *One Land, One River, One People* is made complex by the manner in which the piece challenges social boundaries. As such, the piece presents the listener with a challenge that most social-justice-oriented classical concert pieces do not. Andrea Moore, Marianna Ritchey, and William Robin have recently observed that appeals to progressivism along with stylistic idioms that can be associated with "genre-crossing" are popular within twenty-first century western art music, but that most examples of such music ultimately support neoliberal society because they mask

relationships of domination.[1] In contrast, *One Land, One River, One People* highlights such relationships. In asserting that the piece was challenging and created a stir, I primarily draw on autoethnography and a review in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. While Hannibal's identity presentation allows for a unique mode of accomplishing such discomfort, the piece's ability to present a challenge may offer guidance for strategic incorporation of social justice or political themes within contemporary classical music.

In interpreting the piece as protest, I do not ascribe author intent to Hannibal, with whom I did not make personal contact until after completing a draft of this article. I recognize that it may seem counterintuitive or even oxymoronic to argue for an emphasis on strategy while simultaneously downplaying intent. Yet if I had asked Hannibal whether he agreed with my interpretation and he said he did not, this would not have undercut the potential strategic value that I believe the piece contains.

My argument can thus be seen as a sort of hermeneutics of social movement strategy. In fact, Hannibal told me that he liked my idea of the piece as "uprooting norms," though his explanation for his actions taken during the piece and for those he requested of the audience was somewhat different from my interpretation. I also acknowledge comments Hannibal has made to the media, other works of his which may appear to be "more overtly political," and an existing academic interview. I argue that his piece works as a political challenge whether or not it was his goal, and interpret *One Land, One River, One People* as non-violent direct action.

I approach this analysis as a white, male-appearing, and non-binary identifying person who is part of a professional-class, predominantly white multi-ethnic family in which I grew up listening to classical music. I also approach this topic as a musicologist and composer who at the time of the piece's premiere was enrolled in a PhD program at a nearby university whose college of music has close ties to the orchestra. Also, in order to finally meet Hannibal, I participated in a masterclass series that he organized with four orchestra members, who subsequently performed one of my compositions after an initial draft of this article was submitted for publication.

Hannibal's Background

Born as Marvin Peterson, the composer has gone by several names including Hannibal Lokumbe; Hannibal, Man of Jonah; and mononymously as Hannibal. The instability around his name contributes to a sense of mystique, described later. I refer to him as "Hannibal" in keeping with the usage of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which was instructed when it first performed his work to refer to him professionally as such.[2]

Hannibal, who is Black, was raised in the segregated south. According to a column about Emmett Till in the *Times-Picayune* not written until 2018, three years after the performance, Till's mother regarded Hannibal himself as "a kind of adopted son."[3] His relationship with Mamie Till is never mentioned in Hannibal's interviews or biographies. Hannibal learned music theory in eighth and ninth grade from a music teacher at Booker T. Washington High School whom he describes as a "gift from God."[4] He was introduced to both the classical and jazz canons, and describes *Principles of Orchestration* by "the great Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov" as a useful reference guide.[5] Hannibal recalls that he "saw value and genius in each of them. It was proof that in music there is no need for a caste system."[6]

[1]Andrea Moore, "The Omnivore's Dilemma: New Music and the Question of Critique" (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Boston, MA, October 31–November 3, 2019); Marianna Ritchey, "'Amazing Together': Mason Bates, Classical Music, and Neoliberal Values," *Music and Politics* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 17; William Robin, "Balance Problems: Neoliberalism and New Music in the American University and Ensemble," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 3 (2018): 749–93.

[2]Darrin Britting, email message to author, January 26, 2018.

[3]Jarvis DeBerry, "Emmitt Till's Murderers Are Long Dead: A Reopened Investigation Won't Change That," *Times Picayune*, July 14, 2018, https://www.nola.com/opinions/index.ssf/2018/07/emmett_till_case_reopened.html.

[4]Donald Dumpson, "Four Scholars' Engagement with Works by Composers of African Descent: A Collective Case Study" (PhD diss., Temple University, 2014), 82.

[5]Dumpson, "Case Study," 83.

[6]Dumpson, "Case Study," 86.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Hannibal lived through the integration of Texas schools, which he describes as disruptive to his music education. His new school had six music teachers, two of whom had degrees from Eastman, but he struggled in the racist, hostile environment of his new school. Of one white music teacher at his integrated school who eventually came to support Hannibal's talent, he declares "our mutual love for a broad range of music was our connection."[7] Hannibal attended North Texas State University from 1967 to 1969 and played in the college big band.[8] However, during college Hannibal says that he was "heartbroken" by his experience with academic music and left to avoid being "totally indoctrinated by the exclusively Eurocentric musical perspective" that was offered. Following a long and accomplished career as a jazz musician, Hannibal's 1990 oratorio *African Portraits* marked the beginning of his success working with major orchestras.

Genre, Identity, and Neoliberalism in Framing the Concert

Hannibal's large-scale piece was the second half of the program where it was preceded by Copland's *Appalachian Spring* suite. Copland's communist sympathies were not mentioned in the program, nor the outsider identity markers of Copland, a gay Jew, or of Hannibal. Instead, the program booklet reads: "for [these] composers, the job at hand was discovering the elements of melody, rhythm, and instrumental color that most vividly captured their national accents and sensibilities."[9] Interpreting the piece as a display of American nationalism would justify Vulgamore's sentiment that the piece was about coming together. Indeed, rhetoric around "American national" sound in classical music has historically erased its creators' "othered" identities or "transgressive" politics.[10]

On the surface, the title *One Land, One River, One People* suggests a post-identity framework of unity. Within such a framework, we don't need to worry about divisions of race or class or the way those play out in classical music; instead we are all "one people." Moreover, the composer's experience as a jazz musician and incorporation of "bluesy" sounds might also suggest that the work is "post-genre," which philosopher and popular music scholar Robin James describes as directly related to the problematic idea of "post-identity."[11] While James's discussion attends to popular music, the concept of classical music aspiring to be "post-genre" seems useful in this historical moment. Journalist Peter Dobrin's description of Hannibal's style captures its potential to be heard as post-genre:

> Hannibal's style walks an elegant line. The jazz idiom is pronounced. Recent spiritualists such as Gorecki are an influence. The vocalists move toward opera, then gospel. Styles blend and morph. As a piece of theater, it follows the dramatic contours of a Bach mass. As social conscience, it carries the peace and humanity of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.[12]

Dobrin's language choices focus on musical style, but identity issues are just below the surface. To James, "post-genre" music is appealing in contemporary society because it assumes that racial equality has been achieved; it is thus also "post-race." Yet James notes that "post-genre" usually describes music by white artists who branch out from traditionally white genres. To be "post-genre" tends to require white privilege; it is desirable to hegemonic audiences when white artists borrow from people of color but not the other way around. Whereas white artists may "use post-genre musicianship to demonstrate

[7]Dumpson, "Case Study," 86.

[8]Barry Kernfeld, Grove Music Online, "Peterson, Hannibal (Marvin) [Marvin (Charles); Lokumbe, Hannibal; Hannibal],"accessed January 29, 2018, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-2000352300?rskey=FhUpwf&result=1.

[9]Allan Kozinn, program note for *One Land, One River, One People*, Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Verizon Hall, Philadelphia, November 13, 2015, 14.

[10]Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004).

[11]Robin James, "Is the Post- in Post-Identity the Post- in Post-Genre?" *Popular Music* 36, no. 1 (2017): 21–32.

[12]Peter Dobrin, "Philadelphia Orchestra Composer Hannibal Finds Humanity amid the Loss," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 18, 2017, http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/arts/philadelphia-orchestra-hannibal-charleston-shooting-alabama-bombing-20170618.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

their commitment to and capacity for … respectable diversity," argues James, non-white artists are more often expected to musick in a way that audiences will perceive as corresponding to their racial identity.[13]

James might consider Hannibal, as a person of color, unlikely to be accepted as "post-genre." Nevertheless, I suspect his classical concert music is acceptable to pass as "post-genre" because aesthetically the piece is mostly in a (white) accessible, classical idiom that borrows from other (Black) idioms. Although Dobrin's description gives a sense of a non-hierarchical intermingling of styles in Hannibal's work, few would listen to *One Land, One River, One People* and not identify it within the umbrella of classical music. Classical music today frequently borrows from other genres; many of the contemporary classical composers with the largest audiences such as Ludovico Einaudi, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe are regularly praised for "transcending" genre.

Meanwhile, the Philadelphia Orchestra as an institution would be appreciated by its audiences, donors, and the wider public for commissioning a person of color whose music has non-classical influences. Orchestras may yearn to cross genre to appeal to audiences' cultural omnivorism. The orchestra's incorporation of diversity would help it retain approval under what James terms Multi-Racial White Supremacist Patriarchy, or MRWaSP.[14] James' acronym MRWaSP, which she directs readers to pronounce "Mr. Wasp," pays homage to the traditional "WASP" [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] concept and also situates it within patriarchy. James argues that MRWaSP is a more efficient form of white supremacy for a globalized, neoliberal hegemony because purporting to be inclusive by embracing forms of "diversity" and "multiculturalism" is less resource-intensive than cultural border-patrolling and exclusion.[15] Similarly, Nadine Hubbs, drawing on research by sociologist Bethany Bryson, notes that "contemporary high-status, middle-class Americans distinguished themselves not by cultural exclusiveness—for example, listening only to classical music (as in Bourdieu's 1960s)—but rather by cultivating broad, inclusive, often global musical knowledge and tastes."[16] This cultural omnivorism had limits, however; listeners appreciate symbolic multiculturalism in the form of "high status types of music that are popular among non-Whites" while excluding low-status genres.[17] That "high-status, middle-class Americans" remain an essential part of the classical concert hall audience could speak to the appeal of music engaging in "genre-crossing" between classical and jazz in particular.

MRWaSP and post-racial discourse can be understood within neoliberalism, described by Ritchey as "the increasingly hegemonic form of contemporary capitalism that privileges free market competition as the best means of ensuring individual rights and solving social problems."[18] Adam Kotsko calls neoliberalism a political theology that presumes meritocracy and suggests that we are always "on the clock" such that any action we take is best understood in terms of branding or networking or other potential market value.[19] Neoliberalism represents various practical dangers such as the erosion of the welfare state and rising inequality, but also an ontological danger of the reduction of humanity itself to its potential market value.[20] MRWaSP fits within neoliberalism because with human bodies to be understood for their market value, the work of race and gender to exclude and objectify is deregulated and invested in capital production.[21]

MRWaSP represents globalized hegemony; therefore, to say that it is a useful concept to understand the actions of a large cultural institution such as a symphony orchestra is not to accuse the specific

[13]James, "Is the Post- in Post-Identity," 25.

[14]Robin James, *Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015).

[15]James, *Resilience Melancholy*, 12.

[16]Nadine Hubbs, *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 3.

[17]Bethany Bryson, "'Anything but Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes," *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 5 (October 1996): 887.

[18]Marianna Ritchey, *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), 2.

[19]Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism's Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 6.

[20]Kostko, *Neoliberalism*, 43; Wendy Brown. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015).

[21]James, *Resilience Melancholy*, 11.

symphony orchestra of any ill intent. This idea is historically situated. The idea of multiculturalism as patriotism may be declining in the United States (as suggested during the Trump presidency), though perhaps less so in the cosmopolitan cities that more often maintain symphony orchestras. While a thorough analysis of the state of multiculturalism in contemporary US society would be beyond the scope of my present research, for 2015, the year of the premiere of *One Land, One River, One People*, MRWaSP can be a useful concept.

An orchestra's desire to commission a piece by a composer such as Hannibal can be situated within MRWaSP. Under late capitalism, orchestras struggle increasingly. The connection between institutional economic security and the need to appeal to some sense of worldliness and social justice is underscored in a recent fundraising appeal. "[Our] music sets a change in motion," proclaims a fundraising email signed by a principal player in the orchestra, "You realize you are not alone; you are part of a community of music lovers enjoying the emotion, power, and beauty of sound. … Together we can make a difference. Whatever we want in the world to create, to manifest, we can do it."[22] The precise change that the orchestra is supposed to enact is left open to interpretation. With the subject "Together We Come Alive with Music," the email contains sentiments that may be essential within today's classical music world, an acknowledgement that music must exist for more than itself. "Classical music today … means to do nothing less than change the world," asserts Dobrin in a news article on another of Hannibal's works presented at a Philadelphia church.[23] "The art form may or may not be up to the task," Dobrin astutely concedes. At the same time, the email underscores the present reality in which even principal chair musicians are responsible not only for "changing the world" but must also participate in fundraising work. In both senses, the musical ivory tower is no longer available. Under such circumstances, commissioning a person of color with an interest in social justice who perhaps can support "a community of music lovers enjoying the emotion, power, and beauty of sound" might be an appealing prospect. This desirability, in turn, potentially gives Hannibal power.

Even as US orchestras' financial positions decline, a symphony orchestra is a hegemonic institution. As Melanie Lowe notes, and marketing data supports, the overwhelming majority of "the makeup of today's classical concert audience is . . . undeniably educated and at least reasonably prosperous."[24] In Philadelphia this audience also appears overwhelmingly white relative to the population of the city itself. "Art" music belongs to those with social power, and is accordingly viewed in popular culture as elitist or snobbish.[25] Looking at the program booklet, there is little doubt who the Philadelphia Orchestra serves. Despite the orchestra's apparent appeal to progressivism in commissioning the piece, the target audience nevertheless signifies "power." When opening the program booklet for *One Land, One River, One People*, one first sees a full-page ad for Cartier watches. Then another full-page ad for Lexus. Then smaller ads for a luxury cabinetmaker, more Swiss watches, more luxury cars, an investment firm, luxury condos, several luxury retirement communities, a local hospital offering stylish luxury suites with personalized concierge service to enhance one's next visit, and an appeal to include another hospital's foundation in one's charitable portfolio. While there are also a few performing-arts-related ads, the bulk of the ads indicate the orchestra's assumed primary audience. The orchestra's best intentions aside, commissioning one composer with a background and racial identity that differs from most of the orchestra's musickers and powerholders would not fundamentally change an orchestra's positioning within a hegemonic space. It would allow it to make a symbolic stand for diversity that would be helpful to its survival within a society that values some non-challenging forms of multiculturalism.

[22]Jennifer Montone, marketing email, August 3, 2017.

[23]Dobrin, "Philadelphia Orchestra Composer Hannibal."

[24]Melanie Lowe, *Pleasure and Meaning in the Classical Symphony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 177; GfK, Spring 2017 GfK Reporter MRI, accessed August 25, 2018, https://www.gfkmrismartsystem.com/UniversityReporter/Report.aspx.

[25]Lowe, *Classical Symphony*, 167.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Performance

Yet elements of the piece's performance disrupted the ability to enjoy *One Land, One River, One People* as simply a MRWaSP commodity. Conspicuously the orchestra was accompanied by the combined choirs of three HBCUs, Lincoln University, Delaware State University, and Morgan State University, instead of the choirs that typically accompany the orchestra. Hannibal asserts "I can say to the power brokers at the major concert halls, No!' I know a white choir can sing my music, but there's something else the world needs to hear."[26] It is remarkable that Hannibal, who presents himself as very much an outsider in the classical music world, is able to make such a demand. In part, Hannibal's appealing position to the orchestra within MRWaSP provides him with this power. Hannibal's presentation of his personal identity furthers his power. The vocal soloists were people of color as well, and wore what I perceived as African-appearing clothing that was highly marked within the venue. The choir and conductor in contrast wore typical concert attire, as did the orchestra. These atypical features draw attention to the racial makeup of the rest of the ensemble and the audience.

During the concert, Hannibal was seated in the balcony. He was not introduced as the composer beforehand and looked different from his cover photo in the program. He appeared an outsider in the classical concert hall as a tall Black male with long dreadlocks and a Black beret. In his cover shot for the orchestra he appears rather androgynous looking (Figure 1). While he does not present as "post-identity," he is very much an "other" within classical music. He is hard to place exactly.

As the music progressed, Hannibal cheered, hooted, and howled joyfully, "mid-performance outbursts—the sort usually associated with medical emergencies."[27] While I slowly started to figure out that he was the composer partway through the forty-minute piece, there was a moment when I wondered if others were thinking: was this a renegade audience member who simply didn't know how to behave at the orchestra? Alas, one of the few people of color in the audience, drawing this much attention to himself. How embarrassing! Though in fact, this may have seemed especially marked because, probably due to families of the HBCU choirs, there appeared to have been more people of color in the audience than usual. This tension made me aware of minor aspects of the concert experience that I would normally ignore, having scrawled things in the margins of my concert program such as "house lights seem a little brighter than normal?" It seemed that some audience members never figured out he was the composer and gasped when he came on stage to bow at the end.

Making things more uncomfortable, the audience was instructed in the concert program booklet to shout "whoop" at certain points in the second movement. "We ask that you say it with as much reverence and as much power as possible," wrote Hannibal in the program, to "give a shout-out to the many unsung workers who helped build our great country."[28] Framing the request around workers who "build our great country" sounds agreeable and post-identity enough in that the workers are not specified apart from having a patriotic function, though on his website Hannibal references "songs which The Jonah People sang to gain strength and solace while working in adverse conditions, for little or no pay. . . . This term Jonah People was given to me by The Creator upon asking what name does The Creator give to those Africans, and the descendants of those Africans who were forced aboard the slave ships centuries ago."[29] But whether interpreted by the audience as celebrating the nation or referencing slavery, such behavior as whooping flagrantly violates the norms of a symphony orchestra concert; it seems more like a reference to a different musical practice, such as jazz, some forms of popular music, or music of the Black church. Accordingly, many in the audience did not seem to want to whoop at all. Christopher Small, while not condemning classical music, has noted that the social relationships of the classical concert hall correspond to a rigid, hierarchical, hegemonic

[26]Dumpson, "Case Study," 94.

[27]David Patrick Stearns, "Review: Orchestra Premieres Lokumbe's: 'One Land,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 16, 2015, http://www.philly.com/philly/columnists/david_patrick_stearns/20151116_Review__Orchestra_premieres_Lokumbe_s__One_Land_.html.

[28]Hannibal, program note for *One Land, One River, One People*, Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Verizon Hall, Philadelphia, November 13, 2015, 39.

[29]"Projects," Hannibal Lokumbe, accessed February 12, 2019, https://www.hanniballokumbe.com/projects.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Figure 1. Photo of Hannibal in the program booklet for the performance of *One Land, One River, One People*.

system of human relationships.[30] Inviting the audience to whoop challenges the hierarchy. I ended up sort of half-whooping; I wanted to participate but found it highly discomfiting to be making noise when people on either side of me were not. Ultimately, I left the performance with a heightened awareness of the racialized, hierarchical nature of the concert tradition in which I was situated. It was troubling but moving, while the music was lush and exciting. It matters that the non-traditional elements of the piece index other genres of music, such as jazz or gospel. A random person shouting during the concert might feel more avant-garde and be equally alienating but would not have the same political meaning.

Hannibal's behavior can be interpreted to have stolen the show. *Philadelphia Inquirer* music critic David Patrick Stearns picked up on his performance as an act of theft:

> early on during concertmaster David Kim's bluesy solo, the composer's outbursts began. … [Interruption] was encouraged … overshadowing one of tenor Rodrick Dixon's more impassioned solos. Never mind that some of us were deeply interested in what Dixon was singing about. … The composer's "encouragement" not only stole the focus from his music, but its performers. You could argue that the piece is Lokumbe's and he can disrupt it if he wants to. But the concert wasn't his. It was ours.[31]

Stearns couches his critique in progressive, anti-patriarchal language—music belonging to the people, not the composer—that could be aligned with Small's theorization of the concept of "musicking" that decenters the position of the composer.[32] Stearns's argument is strengthened by the fact that young people of color were among the performers. Yet Stearns misses the possibility that to encourage

[30]Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

[31]Stearns, "Review." Stearns is apparently also anti-mononym, referring to the composer as "Lokumbe," while Dobrin, writing in the same newspaper, uses "Hannibal."

[32]Small, *Musicking*.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

audience participation can make the piece belong to the people, which often is especially true in performative spaces more typically occupied by Black people. Indeed, to some extent a degree of audience participation or at least reaction within a piece is found in most other genres of music. Classical music's current demand of "silent contemplation" throughout a performance is an extreme of presentational music rather than a global norm.[33] When the "silent contemplation" tradition arose in the nineteenth century, it reflected reverence toward the then-new idea of the "master" composer,[34] but at this point, the tradition is apparently so ingrained that it supersedes the actual composer's desire.

I see Hannibal as taking up the space as an occupation, disrupting its normal function for strategic political purpose and creating a useful sense of discomfort. Following the view of scholars on nonviolent direct action that successful acts of protest take place outside the realms of normal public discourse,[35] the disruption of the normal, unjust concert space is a condition of successful protest. To be "disruptive" could, in some contexts, support neoliberal ideals. However, in this case the disruption prevents the piece from serving the neoliberal ideals with which contemporary classical music is often aligned, even if under a guise of social justice.[36] Specifically, rather than a "disruption" that consists of a neat break from aspects of classical music that make it difficult to market in the twenty-first century, Hannibal's disruption heightens our perception of an ongoing struggle. I see Hannibal's piece as highlighting the extent to which, despite the title, we are not really all "one people." Lakeyta M. Bonnette argues that after the 1960s civil rights movement, activists increasingly had to contend with the illusion that racial equality had already been achieved, such that it became increasingly necessary for Black music to illuminate ongoing inequality while rejecting dominant, white culture.[37] Hannibal's music can be viewed in this light. *One Land, One River, One People* speaks truth to power by sending a direct message to an elite authority in a way that violates typical decorum and creates a disruption for a given physical space. In doing so, the piece may serve as a critique of traditions within classical music itself.

In fact, on his website, which was down directly after the premiere but was up again as of early 2019, Hannibal explains that the title was never meant to express the generic, unifying message that one might expect. He describes "coming to realize" the meaning of his title after being visited by the spirit of his great, great, grandmother:

> After living for sixty-six years in America as a Man of Jonah, I assumed that One Land referred to Africa, One River to The Nile, and One People to the African. This was cleared up by a visit from the spirit of my Great Great Grandmother, a Cherokee Shaman who escaped Andrew Jackson's death march known as The Trail of Tears. … She made clear to me that One Land refers to the physicality of humanity, One River the blood of humanity and One People the spirituality of humanity. The bulk of the text comes from her.[38]

Admittedly, Hannibal's original meaning for his title may have worked better for my analysis; his revised interpretation of its meaning is more universal, focusing on "humanity" in general instead of "Africa" and "Jonah People." Still, given the mention of "Andrew Jackson's death march," both of Hannibal's versions of the meaning of the title are imbued with politicized understandings of identity, power, and rejection of white supremacist violence.

[33]Thomas Turino, *Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 52.

[34]J. Peter Burkholder, "Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years," *Journal of Musicology* 2, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 115–34.

[35]Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books; Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973); Gene Sharp *Social Power and Political Freedom* (Boston: Extending Horizons Books; Porter Sargent Publisher, 1980); April Carter, *Direct Action and Democracy Today* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2005); George Lakey, "Non-Violent Action Defined," Global Non-Violent Action Database, August 18, 2011, http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/nonviolent-action-defined.

[36]Ritchey, "Mason Bates"; Ritchey, *Composing Capital*; Robin, "Balance Problems."

[37]Lakeyta M. Bonnette, *Pulse of the People: Political Rap Music and Black Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 38.

[38]"Projects," Hannibal Lokumbe.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The piece may also force musicians out of their comfort zone into new experiences. Percussionists played instruments invented by Hannibal; while playing new instruments may not have been a new experience for them, Hannibal's instruments had evocative, racially-marked names such as "Brother Martin's Emmett stick," which Hannibal writes on his website—though not in the program—is a reference to Emmett Till. As for the instruments, "the musicians in the orchestra love playing these concepts," claims Hannibal,[39] and it indeed may be a joyous piece to play. As Stearns's review highlights, however, the piece also has substantial divisive potential. Though concertmaster David Kim and conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin managed to seem unruffled despite the noise, watching the scene reminded me more of my experiences disrupting corporate board members at a shareholder meeting than of a typical concert.

As if to say the composer should know better, Stearns writes that Hannibal is "a seasoned composer, not some jazz interloper."[40] This statement seems not only racially charged, perhaps unwittingly, but ironic given the colonialist legacy of classical music. Classical music is not a pure, neutral musical form on which jazz could "interlope," but rather has appropriated global musical ideas since early modern European history.[41] While (white) classical composers can freely borrow sounds from other genres, Hannibal's foundations as a (Black) jazz musician are potentially marked as suspect, which is in keeping with James's idea of MRWaSP. Stearns excuses this, though, because Hannibal has proved himself by composing music for other classical (white) ensembles.

What Stearns cannot excuse seems to be the questioning of classical music's social traditions and bringing in other social traditions, such as cheering during a piece, that are borrowed from non-white genres. It appears that borrowing a social tradition from another genre is more taboo than borrowing an aesthetic or structural feature of another genre; Stearns wanted to listen to the concertmaster play a "bluesy" solo, but had no patience for audience participation. It may be that once one undermines the social traditions that underpin a genre, one eliminates the possibility for one's piece to function within a MRWaSP framework. This works especially well within a definition of classical music as a social construct more than an aesthetic one. Jazzy sounds aren't a problem; the orchestra would receive no criticism for playing Gershwin. However, undermining the hierarchical social structures of classical music creates unease.

Meanwhile, the music was enthralling. The piece is post-tonal yet tonally centric, characterized by an emphasis on stacked fourths and fifths along with tertian chords. Parallel stepwise motion for the choir creates a powerful, gripping sound that is also pragmatic for student singers. The text, which tells a creation story, feels spiritual even as the audience would be unable to place it within a specific spiritual tradition. Hannibal's compositional language tends toward the populist side of contemporary classical music. Like the title, this populist musical idiom fits with the post-identity reading of the piece; it can be seen as "bringing everyone together." Allusion to jazz is subtle. The music is still far more complex than that of an "alt-classical" or "crossover" musician such as Ludovico Einaudi and more like that of an academic composer.

Hannibal's Framing of his Work

While Hannibal is part of a history of African American composers who faced discrimination within orchestral music spaces, the desire of borrowing musical idioms from Black culture also has a long history in US classical music. William Dawson had a conservatory teacher who told him to avoid writing orchestral music.[42] Yet Dawson also had a white teacher who wrote a "negro symphony."[43] While

[39]Dumpson, "Case Study," 94.

[40]Stearns, "Review."

[41]Olivia Bloechl, "Race, Empire, and Early Music," in *Rethinking Difference in Music Scholarship*, ed. Olivia Bloechl, Melanie Lowe, and Jeffrey Kallberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 77–107.

[42]Gwynne Kuhner Brown, "The Serious Spirituals of William L. Dawson" (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Rochester, NY, November 9–2, 2017).

[43]Douglas Shadle, "'From the Negroes Themselves': Antonin Dvořák and the Construction of African American Identity" (paper presentation, Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society, Rochester, NY, November 9–12, 2017).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

predating a contemporary neoliberal structure of MRWaSP, the incorporation of Black musical ideas into a white genre was acceptable even then when done by a white composer, but not the other way around. Indeed, borrowing Black music has been privileged in prominent circles of US classical music since Dvořák's *New World Symphony*.[44]

Discussing his college experience, Hannibal recounts:

> My professor, while looking down his nose at me asked, "So what do you think you want to do to make money; what career do you think you want to go into?" I replied, "I will compose remarkable music for remarkable orchestras." With a smug, arrogant White-man smile I had grown to expect, he countered, "Don't be unreasonable. That will never happen. You people are good with your hands. Why don't you make furniture or something like that?"[45]

Hannibal's discussion of this memory shows his lifelong awareness of racism, such that it is difficult to make an argument that he could be, just a year after this interview, "post-racial." Indeed, in this interview for the music education dissertation of Donald Dumpson, who later conducted the choir rehearsals for *One Land, One River, One People*, Hannibal frequently comes off as far less conciliatory than in his official interviews promoting his music. Hannibal explicitly identifies with Afrocentrism, while identifying classical music with Eurocentrism.

In Dumpson's interview, Hannibal explicitly resists the principles of unchallenging multiculturalism behind MRWaSP.

> People ask me about multicultural this and multicultural that; I don't look at music from a multicultural perspective. … Every person, race and nation has stories, and I've always been wounded by the way in which the history of The Jonah People is treated and the lack of history that's been presented representing that history. Nothing is more dangerous than the mischaracterization of a person or of a people. That's horrible! That's called psychological warfare! That's what you do when you are getting ready to decimate people. You say, "What you are and what you have is not legitimate." On my birth certificate, it states that I am illegitimate. For someone to tell me that I'm not legitimate has been a great impetus for my work on matters relating to Afrocentricity! So everything I do is fed from that.[46]

Later in the interview, Hannibal expands on his dislike of institutional multiculturalism, precisely as implemented by large classical music institutions within MRWaSP in ways that support existing structures of power:

> I always found it a bit intellectually adolescent that people are just starting to try and implement multiculturalism. Now multicultural is the big thing. It always sounded to me like something people say because the government mandated it in order that the institution receives federal funding. That's my feeling about it.[47]

Hannibal's critique aligns with MRWaSP along with Bryson's observations that American elites like musical multiculturalism in ways that resist social integration.[48] Hannibal also expressed outrage at non-Black artists being commissioned to work on civil rights related projects, asserting "Jonah people need all the commissions we can get to personally express the struggle of the people of Jonah. If they can't find a composer who can write about the Civil Rights Movement and they don't want me, come

[44]Shadle, "'From the Negroes Themselves.'"
[45]Dumpson, "Case Study," 89.
[46]Dumpson, "Case Study," 93–94.
[47]Dumpson, "Case Study," 102.
[48]Bryson, "'Anything but Heavy Metal.'"

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to me! I'll tell you of some composers that are very worthy. Then, of course, they would call that reverse racism."[49]

Hannibal's official interviews promoting *One Land, One River, One People* use comparably amicable and unifying language to describe his past: "It's that village everyone always speaks of when they say, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' Well, I'm a product of that. I was raised by a village. I had many mothers, many fathers, many sisters, cousins, everything."[50] It is not that Hannibal completely sugarcoats his experience or erases racial difference per se, as he later continues: "[Music] helped me to deal with the violence that this society really was pushing me towards. Every time I look around, policemen are stopping me. Every time I go in a store, I get followed. It's a lot. The layers of that kind of treatment as a human being to another human being can create a monster."[51] In this interview intended as promotion targeted to the public, music is a force that allows Hannibal to "overcome" racial discrimination rather than a cultural product embedded with his own racial history. From this interview, we get the sense of a composer who is appreciative of his musical opportunity for enabling him to overcome hardship. Hannibal's official interviews offer a narrative that would be appealing to listeners and institutions, which in turn ensures his access to present his music which can create discomfort. Yet in the Dumpson interview, for a doctoral dissertation that would not be expected to be read so widely, Hannibal emphasizes that his musical experiences did not simply transcend his experiences of racism.

While expressing appreciation for a large classical music organization, Hannibal shows how the production of music can lead to the reproduction of racism.

> Don't treat the music of The Jonah People like it's something you do during the so-called Black History month. That's what I respect about the Chicago symphony. The president of the orchestra said we ought to treat [Hannibal's composition *African Portraits*] with the respect it deserved. It wasn't a special February concert. I told him, whatever you do, let's not do it in February just because it's Black History month. That's when the country seemingly says, okay—let the darkies out! Let them shine! Grease them up! Let's put them on display. It's your time to shine! It's like the Sundays we would be off on the plantation. We would be in town dancin'—singin' for massa' sitting on the porch with—you know, it's the same thing now; it's just different, but it's the same thing! I've run into that before. I've run into principal violinists not respecting my music, by not rehearsing it because they thought it would not be technically challenging. They paid a big price for that.[52]

Based on this passage, one wonders about how Hannibal felt that the Philadelphia Orchestra played one section of *One Land, One River, One People* without his interruptions at an MLK concert. Unusually, the copyright for the first section appears on the score as "Philadelphia Orchestra Association"; perhaps he was required to sign over his rights.[53] This would indicate that from his position of power to have a large-scale piece commissioned by the orchestra and dictate the race of its accompanying choir, Hannibal could not entirely escape being tokenized. After all, his capacity to be used as such a token was part of the source of his power to begin with. In the passage above, his language choices contrast sharply with the more conciliatory tone he strikes in promotional interviews and on his website. Even if he did want *One Land, One River, One People* to be understood as "timeless" and "universal," his interview with Dumpson shows that he views classical music institutions as part of a specific, vulgar, white supremacist history.

[49]Dumpson, "Case Study," 99.

[50]Hannibal, "The Fascinating Hannibal Lokumbe: Believing in the Healing Power of Music," interview by Susan Lewis, WRTI 90.1, 2015, audio, 14:25. http://wrti.org/post/fascinating-hannibal-lokumbe-believing-healing-power-music.

[51]Hannibal, "Fascinating."

[52]Dumpson, "Case Study," 101.

[53]The orchestra librarian was unsure of this and the artistic administrator did not respond to my inquiry. I decided against asking Hannibal when we managed to speak in person, first at a public masterclass series with orchestra administrators present and later for a few minutes after a concert.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The Concert Hall as Setting for Direct Action

Direct action includes forms of protest, noncooperation, or direct intervention that typically elevate conflict, and that go beyond institutionalized conflict procedures such as courts or voting.[54] While I argue that the orchestra's hegemonic positioning makes it a worthy target of direct action, my goal is not to position the Philadelphia Orchestra as an antagonistic, opportunistic, or racist powerholder. To suggest that its decisions are shaped within systems of oppression in general is not to condemn the orchestra specifically, much less its musicians. It is not as if orchestra members or even management have intentionally chosen to be part of such a phenomenon, and for any such institution to avoid or even minimize partaking in systems of oppression would require a concerted effort. While the Philadelphia Orchestra makes an interesting case study, I also do not mean to single it out from other prominent US professional orchestras, though certain other orchestras may attract an audience with more diversity, for example, a larger Asian or Asian American population. My point in emphasizing the orchestra's homogeneity is not to position it as malevolent, but rather to highlight Hannibal's "outsider" status within the space. Though Hannibal's residency as well as a 2019 commitment from the orchestra to program more women composers have been exciting, they do not eliminate the need for underlying rethinking of the structure and social practice of the classical orchestra, or at least a collective recognition that those social practices do not represent a universal ideal of musicking.

I do not have any reason to believe that Hannibal's relationship with the orchestra was antagonistic, especially because following the premiere he was given a multi-year residency. An orchestra librarian was enthusiastic about the piece and kind enough to offer me access to the orchestra's copy of the score when I couldn't locate it elsewhere. The four musicians—associate or assistant principals of their respective sections—who participated in the masterclass series Hannibal subsequently organized for young composers appeared enthusiastic about working with him as well. Still, when engaging in direct action it is important to distinguish between employees of the institution being targeted and the institution itself, whether it is a corporate or government entity or a non-profit cultural one. That many people within the orchestra likely supported the piece does not invalidate the orchestra as a target of direct action. Symphony orchestras have also been chosen in recent years for unpermitted direct actions including a Black Lives Matter protest at a concert in St. Louis and a Palestinian rights protest in Philadelphia; these protests received substantial media attention most likely due to the symbolic value of an orchestra.[55]

One could still say that the Philadelphia Orchestra was remarkably generous and permissive in allowing this piece to be performed. One might also wonder whether the Philadelphia Orchestra as an institution is willing to offer a week of programming now and then in order to promote an image of itself as forward-thinking and "diverse," essential for its success within MRWaSP and neoliberalism, especially if the piece is paired with popular classical works like *Appalachian Spring*. In 2018, the orchestra held a week of concerts entitled "South American Sounds" that oddly began with Gershwin's *Cuban Overture*. Hannibal is evidently aware of the risk of tokenistic multiculturalism based on his condemnation of Black History Month. The piece denies what Hannibal might have seen as the orchestra's attempt at the "financially mandated multiculturalism" of which he has such distaste from working in its usual function.

While the Philadelphia Orchestra's relationship with the piece is different from that of most institutions targeted by direct action, many of those institutions share with the orchestra a need to cultivate a positive public image to ensure their survival. The Philadelphia Orchestra actively consented to the piece, though I have been unable to find out much about the circumstances and details of the commission; they may or may not have realized how the piece would be received or interpreted. State

[54]Lakey, "Non-Violent Action Defined."

[55]Steve Giegerich, "Michael Brown Protestors Interrupt St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Concert," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 6, 2014, http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/metro/michael-brown-protesters-interrupt-st-louis-symphony-orchestra-concert/article_bfd2b377-8da4-56f8-aa8d-64bf714e0114.html; Benjamin Safran, "On Violating the 'Sanctity of the Concert Hall': Disrupting Culture," *Broad Street Review*, May 28, 2018, http://www.broadstreetreview.com/cross-cultural/on-violating-the-sanctity-of-the-concert-hall.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

institutions grant permits for expressions of dissent and celebrate themselves for doing so. Perhaps *One Land, One River, One People* can be compared to a march that gets a permit from the city, then deviates just slightly from the expected route. Or to use the categorizations of the Global Nonviolent Action Database, the piece could qualify as "guerilla theatre," the use of which has been documented in over thirty campaigns on the database from labor rights struggles to apartheid divestment campaigns.[56] While it is likely that the orchestra knew some of what to expect beforehand, I do suspect that some of it was a surprise, particularly because in performances of Hannibal's subsequent large-scale work they have made a point of introducing the composer beforehand.

Due to the acoustics of a concert hall as opposed to a street corner and the skill of the musicians involved, the structural content of the music and the text in *One Land, One River, One People* is able to be more complex and more audible than that of most protest music. Within the score, expressive markings are particularly unusual. Hannibal has stated that he finds it important for expressive marks to help musicians visualize the music in a specific way, noting that he would rather write "play like an eagle in the thermals" or "attack the note like a snake bite" than "soaring" or "staccato."[57] The expressive mark for the opening of the piece is "grandma, humming in the kitchen." In the section that involves the "whoop," the score describes the effect as a "serious depiction of field hollers." These markings in the score are not presented to the audience, but may still be an additional mode by which Hannibal "others" himself to the orchestra. These markings and instructions may be interpreted as inviting musicians to occupy a different subjectivity through the sound they make on their instrument, either directly embodying the subjects evoked in Hannibal's markings, or entering relationships with those subjects more tentatively as outsiders..

The musical score is otherwise mostly conventional for a work of twenty-first century orchestral music. Occasionally the score contains a surprising notational choice, and a few musical adjustments are written in pencil; perhaps Hannibal and Nézet-Séguin agreed to minor changes during rehearsal. Somewhat surprisingly, there are a few collisions between markings in the score. Nothing is inherently harmful about this, and his disregard for convention in this regard may be seen as part of his rejection of contemporary symphonic musical culture, which sanctifies the printed musical score.[58] When I attended a masterclass with Hannibal for emerging composers, I appreciated that unlike other composition masterclasses I have attended, Hannibal did not seem to emphasize minor notational details, though he did urge one young composer to include a copyright notice in her music and to select a performance rights organization. Still, one would not expect collisions in a score to be submitted to the Philadelphia Orchestra. The orchestra's music librarians were clearly fastidious; while I was looking at Hannibal's scores in their library, they chatted about some bad page turns in parts for another piece produced by a large, professional publisher. Ultimately, it seems that Hannibal is able to get away with a lot in the score perhaps but even more in the performance. As I argued above, his identity as a Black composer who writes in a jazz-inflected populist classical idiom aids in his access to the orchestra, but this alone feels like an insufficient explanation. Another factor may have allowed him to slip past both the orchestra librarians who would be guarding that his score kept to convention and, more importantly, orchestra leadership who would be guarding that the performance customs kept to convention and were welcoming to patrons.

One argument is that since Hannibal was arguably being tokenized by the orchestra, he could have been held to a "lower" standard musically, in the sense that features of his score or performance practice could exist outside orchestral norms. To be clear, even if the orchestra's overall programming would make Hannibal appear tokenized, this does not mean that he wouldn't have been taken seriously by the musicians and librarians, and there is nothing inherently "lower" about the music. Former Philadelphia Orchestra Librarian Bob Grossman writes that Hannibal does not have a publisher and instead "works directly with people in a spiritual way."[59] To Grossman, Hannibal himself seems to

[56]Lakey, "Non-Violent Action Defined."
[57]Dumpson, "Case Study," 88.
[58]Small, *Musicking*.
[59]Bob Grossman, email to author, April 25, 2017.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

come across as something "spiritual." Hannibal's creation of a mystical identity for himself combined with his assigned identity markers can strengthen his political power, such that arguably he can "get away with" music that might not seem to belong in the classical concert hall.

Philosophical and Spiritual Underpinnings

One way to see Hannibal's "othering" may be through Frank Wilderson's assertion that Black people are excluded from the "shared optimism" in everyday discourse that "presumes a 'natural' state of kinship."[60] To Wilderson, racial violence forces Black people outside of a shared sense of humanity and historical temporality. Hannibal is treated as an exoticized other because his humanity is outside the homogenized multiculturalism of MRWaSP. Helena Grehan notes that anxiety over the "other" as posthuman has deep roots in both modernist and postmodernist thought.[61]

In the predominantly white-led institution with which he works, Hannibal's embrace of the cosmic may also contribute to a sense that he is outside of everyday humanity. Some expressive markings in the score suggest cosmic implications, including "the earth is formed. It rotates in the mystical heavens," "the Black Hole," and "gamma ray burst." While seemingly Afrofuturist, Hannibal's website also notes his interest in Dogon spirituality. The Dogon are an ethnic group in Mali whom Hannibal writes are known for their "extraordinary knowledge and perception of astronomy." For me, his background —having grown up in the segregated South—already made him so different that I may have found it tempting as an audience member to "other" him as something extraterrestrial. Hannibal's website design is outer-space themed. His attire during the concert places him as Afrocentric against typical Eurocentric concert garb, which may further other him. Even his name change—the use of the name of a larger-than-life military leader from antiquity from the "othered," non-white city of Carthage who terrified Roman society—may contribute to a mythical identity within a Eurocentric classical music social space. We lose a frame of reference to whom he can be compared. Indeed, the idea of telling someone who is mythical to fix a collision in his score seems slightly ridiculous.

The obvious comparison to Hannibal in this way might be Afrofuturist composer and cosmic philosopher Sun Ra, another Black jazz musician who established an identity for himself—in a much more literal sense of actually presenting himself as non-human—as outside of everyday humanity. Also born in the segregated South, Sun Ra too was an innovator with regards to instrumentation, creating unusual instrumental voicings and futuristic keyboard sounds as early as the 1950s.[62] In a 1966 interview, Sun Ra said, "Well, the planet is in such a bad condition that it's inexpressible. It was bad enough but now it's got worse. They're not sure about their religions, they're not sure about their politics, they're not sure about education and philosophy, they're not sure about anything . . . so you've got complete confusion."[63] It seems reasonable to imagine Sun Ra and Hannibal feeling similar pain over the state of the world, yet Sun Ra goes further in distancing himself from his audience by using "they/their" rather than "we/our" to discuss the state of the world. Yet Sun Ra was more interested in creating new, otherworldly, Afrocentric alternate spaces in which to make music, whereas Hannibal retains a desire to bring existing places of musicking to an alternate Afrocentric world. Where Sun Ra brought his aesthetic to his own Arkestra, in works like *One Land, One River, One People* Hannibal instead transforms the social meaning of an existing hegemonic orchestra.

Rather than creating an alternative institution, Hannibal manages to push radical, structural change on an existing one, even if just for one week of performances. This action could be put in dialogue with Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's theory of the Undercommons, in which, drawing on Black radical tradition, they reject normative modes of order and governance along with supposedly subversive

[60]Frank B. Wilderson, III, "'Raw Life' and the Ruse of Empathy," in *Performance, Politics, and Activism*, ed. Peter Lichtenfels and John Rouse (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 183.

[61]Helena Grehan, *Performance, Ethics and Spectatorship in a Global Age* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[62]John Sinclair, "It Knocks on Everybody's Door," in *Sun Ra: Interviews and Essays*, ed. John Sinclair (London: Headpress, 2010), 19.

[63]Sinclair, "Knocks," 19.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

critique that takes place within normative modes of professionalism in spaces like the university.[64] At the same time, they do not literally leave the university.

Afrocentric but not necessarily Afrofuturist, Hannibal's alternate world does not exactly seem to be another planet. Where Sun Ra's musicians were wearing outer space costumes and setting loose battery-driven robots in 1950s Chicago,[65] Hannibal's costumes and performance practices are comparatively grounded on earth, just in a different genre. In fact, in a different genre they would not be out of place at all. When Hannibal calls for cheering in a smaller-scale piece performed at an AME church commemorating the victims of the Charleston shooting, the effect seems to fit right in. It could be that all Hannibal ever wanted was for an audience to be as comfortable cheering as if they were part of a Black church; perhaps the pushback and discomfort over *One Land, One River, One People* was disappointing to him. "A space does not define my association with the music," offered Hannibal when I asked him about this. "The ultimate success is when the spirit of my ancestors becomes present, and I acknowledge it with a response." A shout is his response, which he connects originally to the cotton field and later to the church. To him, music does not come from the hall, but from one's ancestors, and acknowledging one's ancestors supersedes any hall or any system of etiquette. "The hall doesn't create the space; my ancestors do." Composer intent aside, what in *One Land, One River, One People* Hannibal achieves, albeit not likely to everyone in the audience, is the creation of a helpful sense of alienation from the traditional etiquette of classical music.

The connection between the spiritual and outer-space realms has a long history in African American thought. In a recounting of a 1927 sermon by southern Black preacher Rev. A W. Nix, his flock is invited to travel through the heavens, "through the First heaven, the Heaven of Clouds, and into outer space. … We'll pass on to the Second Heaven." Rev. Nix names each of the planets, ending with "Neptune, with her four glittering moons."[66] Graham Lock has observed that the space chants in the work of Sun Ra have commonalities with traditions of the Black church.[67] Unlike Hannibal, Sun Ra was hostile toward the Black church, which he saw as regressive. Nevertheless, Lock notes that Sun Ra's means of articulating a vision of Afro-futurism were steeped in nineteenth century Black cultural traditions. While Hannibal never makes claims of being from another planet, as with Sun Ra the idea of existence "outside a 'natural' [white, hegemonic] state of kinship" while tied to historical Black cultures can be helpful to understanding his social and political power.

Assessing the Impact of Disrupting Concert Hall Norms

While Stearns, the *Inquirer* critic, opposes or at least overlooks the potential of Hannibal's interruptions, I do relate—whether I like it or not—to the sentiment that it is important Hannibal is "not some jazz interloper." Before I heard the piece, knowing how many excellent composers there are in Philadelphia who can never get pieces played by the orchestra, I recall finding it a bit frustrating that one of the few world premieres of the season would be given to such an "outsider," in a geographical and cultural sense. Limited programming of local composers is a frequent issue with major orchestras; a 2018 article by Dobrin lamented that the Philadelphia Orchestra had not recently programmed any pieces by any of the Philadelphia region's many noteworthy women composers apart from Jennifer Higdon.[68] Hannibal had already achieved some success in jazz; did he really need my world too? Here

[64]Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2013).

[65]John Corbett, "Sun Ra in Chicago: Street Priest and Father of D.I.Y. Jazz," in *Pathways to Unknown Worlds: Sun-Ra, El Saturn and Chicago's Afro-Futurist Underground 1954–1968*, ed. John Corbett, Anthony Elms, and Terri Kapsalis (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2006), 5–10.

[66]Graham Lock, "Right Place, Right Time, Wrong Planet," in *Traveling the Spaceways: Sun-Ra: The Astro Black and Other Solar Myths*, ed. John Corbett, Anthony Elms and Terri Kapsalis (Chicago: WhiteWalls, 2010) 30.

[67]Lock, "Right Place."

[68]Peter Dobrin, "Why Adding Women Composers to the Philadelphia Orchestra Mix Isn't only Right, but also Smart," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 23, 2018. https://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/arts/philadelphia-orchestra-women-female-composers-20180823.html.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

he was, without so much as a college degree—which would not have been unusual at one point but is for classical composers today—with a privilege that most of us academic composers can only dream of. I was not unaware, of course, of the substantial privilege that belongs to most of us—particularly white, middle-class, male-appearing people like myself—who pursue doctoral degrees and academic careers as composers or music scholars. An important challenge for white academic composers would be to recognize that the power structures that make opportunities for such careers so limited are part of the same power structures that exclude marginalized groups including people of color. Our present situation as composers seems a bit like a microcosm of the larger political environment, in which political, cultural, or another institutional powerholders pit underemployed and marginalized groups against one another by factors such as race. Granted, most academic composers have too much cultural capital to be aptly compared to the white working class as my potential metaphor to the United States political environment would have it. Still, music that challenges oppressive power structures ought to be valued by all composers, whether academics or "outsiders." *One Land, One River, One People* is a rare piece in presenting such a challenge, a challenge that was successful on me, at least.

The actual impact of Hannibal's disruption of concert hall norms is difficult to measure, but it is at least worth considering that his actions were a spark that opened the way for the orchestra's subsequent efforts at rethinking concert hall norms. Hannibal's collaboration with the Philadelphia Orchestra continued in the form of a three-year residency, during which he collaborated with prisoners and with church-leaders toward a stated goal of liberation. In September 2017, the Philadelphia Orchestra premiered Hannibal's "Hymn for the World" as part of its "We're HEAR Week," described on its website as "a weeklong celebration . . . that kicks off the 2017–18 season of community service events." The concert was a "sensory-friendly" event, which at first glance seems ironic since Hannibal's work tends to be quite sensory-intense. The concert was free, although unfortunately it did not seem to be well-marketed and twenty-five hundred-seat Verizon Hall appeared only about 20 percent full. Still, the audience consisted of families of all ages—mainly with autistic and otherwise neuro-diverse children—and appeared substantially more racially and ethnically diverse than a typical subscription orchestra concert, though still majority white.

Despite some shortcomings, many of the concert's efforts to be inclusive as described on the orchestra website did sound perfect for Hannibal:

- A shush-free concert: Making noise and verbalizing is okay.
- Flexible seating: It's okay to move around or find another seat.
- Lights stay on at low levels through the concert
- Audience participation.

Perhaps this sort of concert format is exactly what Hannibal wanted all along. *One Land, One River, One People* underscores the extent to which our perception of the music is shaped by its performance context. The piece transforms a set of decorum that I argue symbolizes hierarchy, but that decorum is also even more literally exclusionary for certain neuro-diverse audiences. For the Philadelphia Orchestra to offer a concert in which performance context is so heavily altered in order to welcome a marginalized group is striking, albeit in line with recent practices of other ensembles in the United States. Three years after this sensory-friendly concert, responses to both the global pandemic and to protests following the murder of George Floyd have required that orchestras fundamentally reconsider concert hall norms and programming, including in Philadelphia.[69]

It is not often easy to measure the direct impact of any non-violent direct action, and *One Land, One River, One People* is no exception. Is it possible that, by forcing the audience into a different sort of concert experience, Hannibal played a role in opening the way for the orchestra to try other

[69]Peter Dobrin, "The Music World's Awakening to Women and Black Composers Will be Game-Changing," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* February 21, 2021, https://www.inquirer.com/news/black-composers-classical-music-representation-repertoire-20210221.html; A. Z. Madonna, "Making the BSO NOW online concerts less BSO THEN," *Boston Globe*, April 21, 2021, https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/04/21/arts/making-bso-now-online-concerts-less-bso-then/.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183 Published online by Cambridge University Press

sorts of concert experiences to welcome marginalized populations? Dobrin has since referred to Hannibal as the orchestra's "consulting conscience."[70] I have argued that Hannibal's performance practice is disruptive and divisive in a politically helpful way. That it lines up with practice that welcomes people normally excluded from symphony orchestra concerts underscores the power and opportunity for classical music that could come from breaking down the hierarchies of the genre's traditions.

Hannibal's strategy for challenging cultural norms, which reflects his life experiences, identity, and his history in jazz, does not necessarily leave most classical composers attempting similar musical direct action with a clear roadmap to follow. However, *One Land, One River, One People* demonstrates that a concert hall can be an effective place for speaking truth to power through music. Hopefully, other composers who are so inclined can devise other strategic musical direct actions that work for our own identities.

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[70]Dobrin, "Philadelphia Orchestra Composer Hannibal."

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Cite this article: Safran, Benjamin. "'The Hall Does Not Make the Space': Disrupting Concert Hall Norms in Hannibal's *One Land, One River, One People*." *Journal of the Society for American Music* **15**, no. 3 (August 2021): 287–304. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752196321000183