rather as a bizarre testament to both the remarkable benevolence, but also the basic befuddlement, of Germany's enduring embrace of American radicalism.

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Hold on to Your Dreams: Arthur Russell and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973–1992. By Tim Lawrence. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice. By Kyle Gann. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

Since the late 1980s, musical life in New York City's downtown scene has proved a fruitful ground for research. Beginning with the work of Samuel Gilmore, scholars such as Bernard Gendron and George E. Lewis have explored the ways in which diverse populations lived and made music together in the geographically bounded space of lower Manhattan during the last quarter of the twentieth century.[1] The two books under review here contribute handsomely to this expanding field of study. Kyle Gann's *Music Downtown* reports on the scene as it existed in the 1980s and 1990s and is a collection of primary sources describing musical activity below 14th Street. Tim Lawrence's *Hold on to Your Dreams* is a biography of one of downtown's pivotal and, until recently, nearly unknown figures—composer-producer Arthur Russell. Because of his explorations of experimental music, disco, and pop music, Russell was able to forge associations among diverse musicians and to take the lead in bringing them together.

Gann is a staunch advocate for downtown composers, and his *Music Downtown* is an essential contribution to our knowledge of the scene. Selected from his hundreds of articles written while he was music critic of the *Village Voice*, Gann's collection can be thought of as a sequel to Tom Johnson's *The Voice of New Music* and provides a first-person view of musical activity from 1986 until the century's end.[2] Included in *Music Downtown* are interviews from the period with Robert Ashley, Yoko Ono, Carman Moore, Glenn Branca, Maria de Alvear, and others. Also included are essays on music, society, and aesthetics as well as concert reviews that document Gann's critical concerns. Gann's collection of essays reads like a serialized novel, replete with riveting characters and high drama. He even pens a comic murder mystery

[1] Samuel Gilmore, "Schools of Activity and Innovation," *Sociological Quarterly* 29/2 (Summer 1988): 203–19; Bernard Gendron, *Between Montmartre and the Mudd Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); George E. Lewis, *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and the American Experimental Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[2] Tom Johnson, *The Voice of New Music: Writings from the Village Voice, 1972–1982* (Eindhoven, the Netherlands: Het Apollohuis, 1991).

that playfully literalizes the narrative effect: "Who Killed Classical Music? Forget It, Jake—It's Uptown" (106–9). Gann uses his critical voice to draw a clear battle line between two camps—downtown's heroic postmodernists on one side, and the Eurocentric Pulitzer Prize–winning modernists on the other. With this fundamental opposition in place, Gann articulates the aesthetic, financial, and institutional concerns of the social circles in which he moved and forms these concerns into concepts that have gained traction in musicological, critical, and even popular discourse. Postminimalism, maximalism, and "alternative classical" are some of his terms that have entered our musical lexicon. His essays also detail other enemies stalking New York's musical landscape—the pluralists and multiculturalists who take money and attention away from U.S. classical music (97–99), the macho chauvinism of the Reagan administration (119), and the culture wars enflamed by the rising religious right (224–28).

Music Downtown is a richly varied body of work, and Gann's introduction draws out the broader themes that emerged from his years of writing about contemporary classical music. He defines downtown music not only in terms of aesthetics, but also in terms of modes of production and circulation. Gann describes downtown as "a deeply felt and collective response to an oppressive economic and cultural situation" (6), brought on by the transformation of New York's economy after 1945 and the flight of industry from the city, leaving flexible spaces appropriated by Manhattan's creative class. He argues that the neo–avant-garde's avoidance of, or lack of access to, institutions of high culture (identified as midtown's Carnegie Hall and uptown's Columbia University) led to the "invention of downtown"—a moment Gann specifically pinpoints as the concert series organized by Yoko Ono at her loft in 1960 (24). Gann's claim, made in an interview from 1992, is, however, not historically accurate, and his reasons for assigning such a specific date to the birth of downtown are not expanded on in his introduction to the volume. Gann could perhaps have used his opening remarks instead to contribute further to a genealogy of downtown, taking into account its history as a space for alternative, do-it-yourself music since the 1920s.[3] This suggestion is not to discount the importance of Ono—also discussed in Brigid Cohen's work—but rather to invite further consideration of the connection Gann himself makes between Ono and an earlier generation of downtown experimentalists consisting of John Cage, Edgard Varése,[4] and Stefan Wolpe (23).[5] Exploring such associations between the events he details and other historical movements would have made the introductory discussion more valuable. As it stands, Gann's curious positioning of Theodor Adorno as a prophet of downtown's inevitable emergence is unconvincing. Despite

[3] See, for instance, Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Stansell, *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century* (New York: Owl Books, 2000); and Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

[4] Varèse was active in the downtown scene while he resided in the United States. He lived and worked in Greenwich Village and was active in the Eighth Street Artists Club.

[5] Brigid Cohen, *Modernism Untethered: Wolpe, Music, and the Avant-Garde Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

such occasional infelicities, the vitality of the sonic and historical landscapes Gann describes is undiminished.

In one of his most insightful articles, "Let X = X" (147–49), Gann describes an aesthetics of subjectivity on the downtown scene through which certain composers were looking for "X"—a unique personal quality expressed by their music that would provide an alternative to the supposed objectivity of both serialism and minimalism. In this light, Gann's description also fits Arthur Russell, who might have been included among the composer-performers he discusses.

Tim Lawrence's biography of Russell follows a single thread of the narrative laid out in his previous book, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970–1979*.[6] Whereas *Love Saves the Day* was a wide-ranging account of 1970s dance music in which Russell seemed a minor player, *Hold on to Your Dreams* is an exhaustive study that maps downtown from the point of view of someone whose "life ended in near silence" (346) yet seemed in his day to be everywhere at once.

Beginning with Russell's youth in Oskaloosa, Iowa, Lawrence narrates an uncommon life. Early musical training on the cello led Russell to further study at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the Ali Akbar College of Music in the early 1970s. In 1973 Russell settled in New York City and briefly studied composition with Charles Wuorinen, thereafter finding mentors in Christian Wolff and Philip Glass while becoming close to Allen Ginsberg and living in the poet's building in the East Village. Russell's impact on the downtown scene was enhanced by his role as music director of the Kitchen Center for Video and Music in 1974–75. From that position, Russell shaped downtown's musical life, programming rock bands with the Kitchen's usual postclassical experimentalists while also advancing his own form of chamber disco with collaborators as varied as Jill Kroesen, Peter Gordon, David Byrne, Ned Sublette, Elodie Lauten, Julius Eastman, and Mustafa Ahmed. Lawrence also fleshes out Russell's role as a dance music producer and his participation in disco scenes of the Loft and Paradise Garage. Recounting Russell's decline and eventual death in 1992 due to complications from AIDS, *Hold on to Your Dreams* also provides an up-close glimpse of the personal toll of the AIDS crisis and the role of musical production as a survival strategy. Lawrence's history of downtown experimental music through dance music culture fills a lacuna in other accounts written thus far. Lawrence provides the crucial insight that dance music circulated along networks also traveled by New Wave and experimental music and drew on a common fund of musicians.

Despite Lawrence's excellent work, Russell himself remains somewhat absent in the text. The minimal presence of Russell's own voice in the narrative was unavoidable because few of his thoughts—other than those in some surviving letters from the 1970s and in a later interview published in the *SoHo Weekly News*— have been documented. Lawrence mitigates this lack by including extensive interviews with Russell's friends, family, collaborators, and romantic partners. The sheer amount of legwork in tracking down even the most minor collaborator is impressive. Such

[6] Tim Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day: A History of American Dance Music Culture, 1970–1979* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

detailed research allowed Lawrence to effectively reconstruct Russell's dispersed social network. With this focus on cultural and musical assemblages, Lawrence celebrates Russell's ability to make unusual sonic connections unconstrained by generic conventions. Building on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Lawrence calls Russell's practice "rhizomatic musicianship" (87–88), a type of lateral agency more interested in the pleasures of process than in finished products.[7] At the same time, however, Lawrence occasionally seems overly sanguine about the progressive politics of Russell's music making and its potential for liberation. He could, perhaps, have stretched his conclusions further and reflected on rhizomatic musicianship as a condition of late capitalism and a social position afforded by fundamental transformations in musical practice and circulation in the late twentieth century. A more overt engagement with recent work in gay studies would also have been welcome, although connections are readily apparent to those versed in the LGBT literature. Despite such minor concerns, *Hold on to Your Dreams* sets a new standard for musical biography by virtue of its research methodology and focus on seemingly minor figures. Lawrence makes a strong case for the importance of Russell's music to our understanding of late-twentieth-century cultural life and, perhaps most importantly, shows the value of historical biography written with an emphasis on musical mediation and social networks.

Ryan Dohoney

[7] Lawrence expands on the theoretical underpinnings of his work in "Connecting with the Cosmic: Arthur Russell, Rhizomatic Musicianship, and the Downtown Music Scene, 1973–1992," *Liminalities* 3/3 (November 2007): 1–84.