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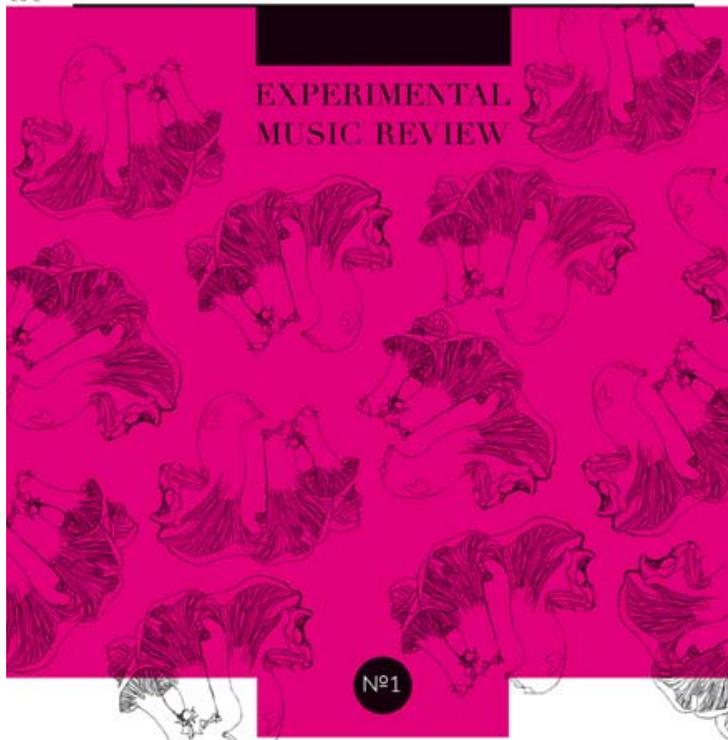
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# TACET

**EXPERIMENTAL  
MUSIC REVIEW**



N°1

## **WHO IS JOHN CAGE?**

**FLUX** Philip Gentry • Sarah Troche • Jean-Yves Bosseur • Xabier Erkizia • Seth Kim-Cohen  
Michael Pisaro • Sophie Stévançe • Mattin • John Cage • The Library of John Cage  
**INFLUX** Matthieu Saladin • Eadu Malfatti • Toshiya Tsunoda • Jérôme Noetinger

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## WHY ?

To the question "Why create a journal like TACET?" there is an immediate simple response: because one does not already exist. This is not however as simple as it seems nor is it sufficient.

First off, it is a question of creating a space of reflection, of research and debate that allows for a rhythm that is different from magazines and fanzines as much in terms of frequency as in the contributions themselves. Additionally, TACET has the ambition of contributing to the institutional and intellectual awareness of so-called experimental music in all its diversity, from a certain jazz, a certain rock, to electronic and improvised music, in passing through composition, conceptual music and certain non-musical sound practices.

The pages of TACET are open to the most varied and unexpected proposals, its bilingualism offering, in terms of diffusion, more possibilities than any other existing publication in the field. TACET addresses thinkers/researchers as well as wandering poets and anonymous artists, not to mention those who are all of these at once and vice-versa.

To place the first issue in the wake of the imposing and centennial figure of John Cage is above all to situate TACET precisely in the field that it intends to cover, that of knowledge that is at once within and outside of the academy. This first theme is also a way of underlining that exactly what animates this inaugural "godfather" must also be carried through each issue: contemporaneity, multi-disciplinarity, audacity and freedom in form as in thought.

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## WHAT ?

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## THE MAIN AUTHORS

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## PHILIP GENTRY

Philip Gentry teaches music history at the University of Delaware, USA. He is currently working on a book examining music and politics in the United States during McCarthyism.

*The Cultural Politics of 4'33": Identity and Sexuality*

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## SARAH TROCHE

Sarah Troche, agrégée in philosophy, is currently completing a thesis entitled "Chance and memory in art and music in the twentieth century"1 at CEPA (Centre d'Esthétique et de Philosophie de l'Art at Paris I), under the direction of Anne Mœglin-Delcroix. She has taught philosophy at the universities of Lyon III and Paris I. A member of the editorial board of the journal Geste, her publications in journals and collective works (Gestes à l'œuvre, Le jeu d'échecs comme représentation du monde, Nouvelle revue d'esthétique, Philonsorbonne) focus mainly on contemporary music and the philosophical aesthetic of contemporary and modern art.

*Cage as Frankenstein: Monstrosity and Indeterminacy of Performance*

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## JEAN-YVES BOSSEUR

Jean-Yves Bosseur counts among the first French researchers and musicologists to have attentively focused on the œuvre of John Cage. In this interview, he retraces the singularity of his research in France, but also more amply, the "conflicts" accompanying the reaction to an œuvre not legitimized by orthodoxy. We asked the question of a possible Cage legacy from both the points of view of university research as well as today's musical practices. While this legacy appears problematic within the presuppositions the œuvre itself implies, it would still be necessary, in order to contemplate such a legacy, for Cage to have disappeared – which twenty years after the composer's death doesn't seem in the least obvious.

*The Question of Cage's Legacy*

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## XABIER ERKIZIA

Musician, producer and journalist from the Basque Country. He works primarily by and with sound, creating works for various media and formats, such as sound installations, recordings, musical compositions, works for radio, phonographic recordings, soundtracks for films... Since the year 2000 he has participated in organising the ERTZ Festival [an event occurring annually in Bera, Navarra] and, since 2003, he has co-ordinated the AUDIOLAB Sound Department at the AUDIOLAB Contemporary Art Center in Donostia-San Sebastián. Mr. Erkizia has published various essays and articles on the phenomenology of sound, both in the musical press and in specialised newspapers or magazines. He also works regularly with various communication media.

*Listening To Our Own Deafness*

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## SETH KIM-COHEN

Seth Kim-Cohen is an artist who has presented work at venues including, the ICA London, the ZKM in Karlsruhe Germany, Issue Project Room, Tate Modern, Diapason Gallery, the Singapore Biennial, Grand Projects, Peer Gallery, and PS 122. Kim-Cohen holds a PhD from the London Consortium, University of London. In 2011/12 he will be Visiting Artist in the Sound Area at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He has also taught at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, Pratt Institute, and Yale University.

*I Have Something To Say, But I'm Not Saying It*

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## MICHAEL PISARO

Michael Pisaro is a composer and a member of the Wandelweiser collective. He holds the Roy E. Disney Family Chair in Music Composition at the California Institute of the Arts, in Southern California.

*Nicht alles, nicht nichts: etwas. The opposing tensions of John Cage's 0'00" and Roaratorio*

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## SOPHIE STÉVANCE

Sophie STÉVANCE possesses a triple training: as musicologist, violist and opera singer. Several books have been published in her areas of research: interdisciplinarity (Duchamp, compositeur, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2009 - Académie Charles Cros Prize, 2010), research and creation (Composer au XXIe siècle, dir., Paris, Vrin, 2010),

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contemporary French music (Tessier... L'itinéraire du timbre, Millenaire III, 2006 - Académie Charles Cros Prize, 2006), the history and aesthetics of fringe music (Musique actuelle, to be published by Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal). Editor-in-chief of the Canadian music magazine Intersections, Sophie Stévanca has also written a number of articles (on Canat de Chizy, Neuwirth, Scelsi, Dutilleux, Copland, Dalbavie, Tagaq, Léandre...), reviews and biographical notes (MGG, Éditions des Femmes), and is currently dedicating herself to the modernisation of Inuit throat singing, with the collaboration of Jean-Jacques Nattiez, and to the analysis of the interactions in current music, thanks to a major grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

*John Cage Tunes Into the Redefinition of the Musical Field by Marcel Duchamp and the Emergence of a Conceptual Music*

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## MATTIN

To be yourself is all that you can do | (All that you can do). Hey, be yourself is all that you can do | Even when you've paid enough | Been pulled apart or been held up | Every single memory of the good or bad | Faces of luck | Don't lose any sleep tonight | I'm sure everything will end up alright | Someone falls to pieces, sleeping all alone | Someone kills the pain, spinning in the silence | You may win or lose | To finally drift away

*Cage as a cage: Towards Conceptual Improvisation*

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## MATTHIEU SALADIN

Matthieu Saladin holds a PhD in Aesthetics and is research associate at the IDEAT (Université Paris 1 - Panthéon-Sorbonne, CNRS). His work focuses on the aesthetics of experimental music. He is also an artist and musician. His practice is a conceptual approach, reflecting on the history of forms and processes of creation, as well as the relationships between art and society.

*The Fetish Character in Experimental Music*

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## RADU MALFATTI

1943 [?] born in Innsbruck | 1965 – 70 attended the Musikakademie of Graz | studied with Eje Thelin | talk to Sonny Rollins | has coffee with Luigi Nono | enjoys playing chess with Siegfried Fussy | read a lot, forgotten everything

*The Difference Between a Sea and a River is: Two Consistencies of Different Kinds*

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## TOSHIYA TSUNODA

Japanese composer Toshiya Tsunoda (1964) has introduced innovative concepts in the arts of "field recording" and of "collage". His sound work represents a radical rethinking of the concept of field recordings. Rather than being documentary or naturalistic, his pieces appear as unique music compositions concerned with the relation between space and cognition, rendering the vibration of objects audible, revealing the hidden beauty in each sonic detail. Tsunoda's work has been published by Selektion (Germany), WrK (Japan), V2 (Netherlands), Sonic Tiger (US) and Lucky Kitchen (US), among others. He currently lives in Yokohama.

*Field Recording and Experimental Music Scene*

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# MAIN ARTICLES ABSTRACTS

## MANIFESTO | MATTHIEU SALADIN, INTRODUCTION. JOHN CAGE TESTED BY A FEW "FIELD SITUATIONS"

"Who is John Cage?" On the occasion of the centenary of the composer's birth, this edition of TACET opens an investigation across a group of texts by researchers and musicians. It aims to revive essential problems that underlie Cage's oeuvre, but which continue to be profoundly at work in experimental music today.

## PHILIP GENTRY | THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF 4'33": IDENTITY AND SEXUALITY

John Cage's infamous silent piece 4'33" is a philosophical centerpiece of experimental music. This essay explores the historical context of the work's premiere in 1952, in which the audience apparently felt alternately insulted and discomforted. While many write off the work as a piece of modernist provocation, an influential strain of art criticism has proposed an "aesthetic of indifference" to explain the possibility of a coherent form of oppositional politics, in which the dangerous possibility of gay politics must be expressed in muted terms. The essay argues, however, that this can reflect an ahistorical approach to the status of identity politics in the period, especially given the nascent state of homophile activism in the 1950s. Rather than a simple "heterosexual/homosexual" or "closeted/out" reading of Cage's sexuality, I argue that we might consider a range of identificatory possibilities, each with its own set of politics that might influence our historical knowledge of the premiere of 4'33".

## SARAH TROCHE | CAGE AS FRANKENSTEIN: MONSTROSITY AND INDETERMINACY OF PERFORMANCE

In a lecture on indeterminacy given in Darmstadt in 1958, John Cage referred to *Music of Changes* as a "Frankenstein's monster", thus highlighting the irresolvable tensions and oppositions behind the creation of this piece for piano. While the composition of *Music of Changes*, resulting from the drawing of lots using the *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*), is non-intentional and "indeterminate", its performance, which must be submitted to the precise instructions set out in the score, is entirely "determined". The imaginative and theoretical power of the image of "Frankenstein's monster" dissolves if the indeterminate-determinate pairing is understood in terms of the classical opposition between "freedom" and "constraints". Understanding this metaphor presupposes, rather, the rejection of preconceived dualistic oppositions and, in their place, a reflection, taking Cage's writings and musical scores as our starting point, on the "human" and "inhuman" dimensions of his music. We will therefore subject the notions of "contingency", "monster" and "norm" to philosophical analysis, at the same time as drawing on Mary Shelley's novel. At the point where these various deliberations come together with an analysis of the different examples given by Cage in this lecture (in particular *Klavierstück XI* by Stockhausen and *Four Systems* by Earle Brown), we will attempt to identify the issues and difficulties of what is the focal point of Cage's music, a composition that is "indeterminate of its performance", committed to the "effectiveness" of that performance.

## JEAN-YVES BOSSEUR | THE QUESTION OF CAGE'S LEGACY

Jean-Yves Bosseur counts among the first French researchers and musicologists to have attentively focused on the oeuvre of John Cage. In this interview, he retraces the singularity of his research in France, but also more amply, the "conflicts" accompanying the reaction to an oeuvre not legitimized by orthodoxy. We asked the question of a possible Cage legacy from both the points of view of university research as well as today's musical practices. While this legacy appears problematic within the presuppositions the oeuvre itself implies, it would still be necessary, in order to contemplate such a legacy, for Cage to have disappeared – which twenty years after the composer's death doesn't seem in the least obvious.

## **XABIER ERKIZIA | LISTENING TO OUR OWN DEAFNESS**

If what the various theoreticians of sound assert is true, our societies are characterised by their noises and, at the same time, these noises reflect, define and sculpt the society that generates them. Then what is the source of the strange relationships we maintain with silence? This is probably a question without an answer or, if you prefer, one more query with so many possible responses that none of them turns out to be valid. The silences invading us when we confront our own lack of knowledge drive us to activate certain self-defense mechanisms that reveal our limited ability to hear. If we ponder the issue, perhaps it is this: Beyond the sound of blood and of the nervous system is what John Cage heard in the anechoic room of Harvard University, but which he could not explain until he transcribed his famous silence onto a musical score. However, are we really capable of listening to our own deafness?

## **SETH KIM-COHEN | I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY, BUT I'M NOT SAYING IT**

Silence and secrecy have always defined the relationship of citizen to society. In the so-called "Information Age," the importance of understanding silence and secrecy takes on critical dimensions. As recent events involving Abu Ghraib, WikiLeaks, and the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Citizens United case, have made clear, the power of information comes down to access. "I Have Something To Say, But I'm Not Saying It" argues that in his performance lectures and specifically in "Lecture on Nothing," John Cage attempts unsuccessfully to suggest a silent substrate of experience, prior to or beyond the reach of signification. Comparing the text of "Lecture on Nothing" to related texts by Samuel Beckett and Wallace Stevens, and to related performance lectures by Robert Morris (21.3) and Carey Young (Everything You've Heard Is Wrong), the paper argues that Cage evades the complications and contradictions of the categories of "silence" and "nothing," opting for a transcendental mysticism. Relying on texts by Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Lydia Goehr, this paper argues that silence and nothing are untenable categories – philosophically, politically, communicatively, and socially. Nevertheless, despite Cage's avowed intentions, "Lecture on Nothing" engages a meta-discursivity that points to a critical potential in the nascent form of the performance lecture; a potential exercised in the works by Morris and Young.

## **MICHAEL PISARO | NICHT ALLES, NICHT NICHTS : ETWAS. THE OPPOSING TENSIONS OF JOHN CAGE'S 0'00" AND ROARATORIO**

This essay attempts to understand the divergent avenues the opened up as a result of John Cage's 4'33". I attempt to show that the two most radical consequences of his questioning of traditional framing structure of the musical work, were towards contraction (to almost nothing) in 0'00" and expansion (to a world or atmosphere) in Roaratorio. Both results may be heard as kinds of "silence."

## **SOPHIE STÉVANCE | JOHN CAGE TUNES INTO THE REDEFINITION OF THE MUSICAL FIELD BY MARCEL DUCHAMP AND THE EMERGENCE OF A CONCEPTUAL MUSIC**

This article presents the ties linking John Cage and Marcel Duchamp in the light of the musical and artistic conceptions of the inventor of the ready-made. In 1913, Duchamp formulated a series of objects to traditionally conceived music (expressionist, referential and formalist) and composed a "conceptual music" starting from a random series of musical notes and verbal summarily formulated instructions, and limiting the intervention of taste and the artist's touch on the object. Analysed from the point of view of the suspension of time and suspension of taste, this randomly-made music, plunged into the greatest and unredeemable aesthetic indifference, makes it possible to make sense of Cage's musical art with regard to the work of Duchamp. Thus, conceptual music illuminates Cage's own thinking in a new and original way. In return, Cage has for his own part been a catalyst for Duchamp's musical compositions to be known, and also for their composer to become known as such.

## MATTIN | CAGE AS A CAGE : TOWARDS CONCEPTUAL IMPROVISATION

John Cage's anechoic chamber experience can be seen as the ultimate act of reductionist improvisation. By saying that there is no such a thing as objective silence, Cage closes the division between subject and object, the foundations of which have been called 'correlationism'. The French philosopher Quentin Meillassoux calls correlationism: 'the philosophical approach that cannot conceive the object in itself, because being is always linked to thinking and in doing so, it places subjectivity at the centre of the universe'. Nevertheless we can take Cage's realisation in the anechoic chamber as a point of departure and use our minds as instruments for improvisation. This is to be carried out in order to counter notions of self-expression as well as phenomenological approaches to sound. Taking into account the anti-correlationist thinking of Ray Brassier, this text asks whether it is possible to use improvisation as a form of conceptual realism, where one may try to constantly understand the relationships between concept and object, and subject and object. Instead of reproducing a certain sense of aesthetics, this conceptual approach aims at understanding how subjectivity is produced, on both the socio-economical and cultural register, as well as on a neurocomputational level. Through this exercise we can hopefully bring back the gap between subject/object and concept/object in order to achieve a non-anthropocentric understanding of reality. By this approach I mean to radically reconsider notions of individual freedom and collective agency, the types of questions that improvisation has always dealt with and that should now be put again at its core.

## JOHN CAGE | A COMPOSER'S CONFESSIONS

An address given before the National Inter-Collegiate Arts Conference, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, 28 February 1948. This is the original text of this lecture to which Cage frequently refers, because in passing he forecasts two of his more notorious compositions of the early fifties. The text was first published in *Musicworks*, 52 (Spring 1992).

## MATTHIEU SALADIN | THE FETISH CHARACTER IN EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC

Numerous musicians invested in experimental music seem not to be able to approach musical material other than by considering it as an entity in itself, disengaged from all socio-historic sedimentation and cultural orientation. This article argues that such an understanding of sound leads to the formation of a fetish character, that should be questioned, so as to determine the stakes and effects in experimental practices themselves. Firstly, following from the problematization of fetishism in art elaborated by Theodor W. Adorno, this study aims to consider the fetish character of pieces specifically in experimental music since the first experiments of John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer, where, according to the modalities of each, a listening to sounds as sounds arose. Secondly, the essay addresses this ideology of sound in itself as exemplified—in the association of technology with aesthetics—through the wonder and the research of a world of extraordinary sound that accompanies the symptomatic usage of contact microphones in experimental music beginning in the 1960s. Following from this, the paper suggests that the denial of a cultural pre-formation of musical material should be interrogated, so as to consider, in conclusion, the alternative solution that would consist in not repressing, in the experimental gesture itself, relations to the society that makes them possible.

# TACET CREATORS

## MÉTÉO PRESS

For the past 27 years, Mulhouse is at the heart of a musical event : the international Festival Météo. Originally focused



on the European free jazz and improvised music, it now includes electronic forms of experimentation and any aesthetic akin to musical creation. Its ambition is to create an interdisciplinary and international space of reflection for this music, in all its aesthetic diversity : from noise to improvisation, via electroacoustic, electronic, minimalist music, silent, indeterminate, conceptual, sound poetry, free jazz, field recordings, sound art, etc. We should specify that the experimentation does not belong to a specific genre of music, but depends on the artistic approach that leads the practice. The festival is a founding and active member of the Federation of Creative Music. To complete this action we have created Tacet. The idea is to fill an éditorial void, particularly visible in French language, providing a space for reflection and analysis about the music promoted by the festival and its historical precedents (concrete music, New Music, Darmstadt school, studio Philips, etc). Since the beginning, we have worked with a young PhD, Matthieu Saladin ; his dissertation focused on the aesthetics of free improvisation in Europe during the 60's and 70's.

## MATTHIEU SALADIN

Matthieu Saladin holds a PhD in Aesthetics and is research associate at the IDEAT (Université Paris 1 - Panthéon-Sorbonne, CNRS). His work focuses on the aesthetics of experimental music. He is also an artist and musician. His practice results from a conceptual approach, reflecting the history of forms and processes of creation, as well as the relationships between art and society.

## A PARTNERSHIP FOR CREATION

The establishment issuing from the meeting of the Ecole Supérieure d'Art of Mulhouse, the Ecole Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs of Strasbourg, and the Enseignements Supérieurs de la Musique [Higher Education in Music] at the Strasbourg Conservatory wishes, for at least three reasons, to become involved with the project being carried out by the journal TACET.

- >Envision artistic practice in its intellectual and theoretical environment
- >Contribute to a greater understanding of contemporary sound practices
- >Provide historical and geographical distance from aesthetics

In offering our students the opportunity to encounter theoreticians, musicians, and artists coming from diverse backgrounds, the Center [this is the first time the "Pôle" is coming up. Are you referring to "l'établissement"? It might be good to refer to it as such earlier] contributes to forging a community of thinkers. Organized in partnership with the Météo festival, the workshop that took place in August 2011 allowed visual arts students and music students to connect within the framework of a professional festival.

An emblematic figure of sound practices taught in art schools, John Cage interests many musician-researchers as well. In consecrating its first issue to his work, TACET fully inscribes itself in the approach to openness and research of the Alsace Center of Higher Education in the Arts. From 2012 on, teachers and students of the Center will be engaged in continuing through other forms, or in initiating new works, in full collaboration with the journal.



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TACET #2 | WINTER 2012/2013  
EXPERIMENTATION IN QUESTION

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Issue edited by **Matthieu Saladin – IDEAT (Université Paris 1/ CNRS), Le Quai – École Supérieure d'Art de Mulhouse**

According to one of the definitions of experimental music formulated by John Cage, the role of experimentation is to ask questions rather than to provide canned answers. This issue of TACET seeks to turn this saying back on experimentation itself, by examining its principles, manifestations and challenges, both historical (provided they question our contemporaneity) and current.

From a historical point of view, the expression “experimental music” has typically been used to describe the practices of musicians and composers, mainly Anglo-Saxons, reunited around the music and ideas of John Cage, or at least directly or indirectly claiming as such. Indeterminacy, process and the interest in “new” sounds are its major lines of research. However, this expression equally refers to previous musical and/or artistic trends (futurism with Russolo and the emergence of sound poetry, the first electronic music works in Russia, etc.) which have contributed to the bringing back of rules that governed sound creation to the drawing board. At the same time as Cage carried out his first experiments with chance, Pierre Schaeffer was also able to use the name “experimental music” in a very different sense. From the 1970s, the field covered by this expression widened under the momentum of improvised music, experiments carried out in the nebulous world of rock, minimalism and electronic music. Today, its application appears to have become so varied that its meaning is no longer clear, as ultimately, due to the lack of appropriate terms, it encompasses any musical practice with “suspect” noises.

The fact remains that this expression “defines” a field of particularly heterogeneous sound practices, or even one with antagonistic issues and modalities, at times. Whilst experimentation has been able to attempt to call into question a progressive thinking of modernity, equally, it has been able to contribute to it in its demands for novelty. Likewise, while a certain experimental tradition calls for the withdrawal of the individual into their project, other forms seek to experiment with limits, both amongst musicians and listeners, or to question relationships with the collective. But the ambitions of experimentation are also to seek to disrupt the boundaries between art and life – or between the arts (polyartistic dimension) -, to invest in the possibilities offered by new technologies as well as questioning their domination and exploiting their shortcomings. To this elusive diversity, however, responds the contextual and local aspect of experimentation as such, which is in a position to question the claim of general or continuous experimentation, or even the ontology of musical trends defined in and of themselves as experimental. Where is experimentation to be found, therefore, within the diversity of experimental music? When is there experimentation? What are the processes used? What may be the differences and the tensions between the multiple uses of the term, which also vary according to the cultures and the socio-

historical contexts? What are the forms of sound experimentation today? What movements can be observed, from one generation to the next, in the musical problems, but also the social and political problems that experimentation poses?

This issue of *TACET* seeks to address these questions from an interdisciplinary perspective (aesthetics, philosophy, musicology, cultural history, cultural studies, gender studies, sociology, political science, literature, psychoanalysis etc.) and it aims to bring together an ensemble of studies in which experimentation will be examined in the diversity of its forms and the heterogeneity of its problems. We await general analyses, special cases and cross-disciplinary studies.

The questions proposed in this call for papers are not exhaustive. They represent a few suggested general avenues of research for potential contributors. They do, nevertheless, seek to serve as a reminder that the TACET review expects in-depth studies with a well-argued subject. The Editorial Board will, in addition, pay particular attention to the editorial quality of contributions, considering that literary and poetic dimensions all have their place in the articulation and transmission of a thought. Authors are equally reminded that the journal is aimed at a broadened readership.

You can download the full version of the Call for Papers here: <http://www.festival-meteo.fr/documents/EN2.pdf>

Authors should first inform the Editorial Board of TACET of their proposal for an article by email, stating the title of their contribution and attaching an abstract of their proposal. The articles themselves should be sent by email before the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 to the following addresses: [redaction@tacet.eu](mailto:redaction@tacet.eu) and [matthieu.saladin@gmail.com](mailto:matthieu.saladin@gmail.com)