

Ambassador of the American Avant-Garde: David Tudor in West Germany, 1954-1972

Amy C. Beal

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ABSTRACT

While historians have recognized Tudor's importance to the development of the New York School's early piano music, close attention has yet to be paid to Tudor's almost single-handed dissemination of that music abroad. Correspondence between Tudor and German patrons as well as reviews of Tudor's performances in Germany show that he transcended his role as John Cage's right- (and left-) hand-man, both as a performer and as a composer in his own right. Moreover, far from being shadowed by Cage's controversial reception in West Germany, Tudor stood at the center of new music activities in that country from 1954 to 1972. As an ambassador of American music abroad, Tudor's presence at key music venues in West Germany over several decades helped establish a support network for American experimentalism and contributed significantly to Germans' acceptance of unconventional music from the United States.

My research offers a focused look at Tudor's influential performances and recordings at new music festivals, private venues, and state-supported radio stations in Berlin, Bremen, Cologne, Darmstadt, Donaueschingen, Düsseldorf, and Munich. The resulting narrative reveals the extent to which he must be considered a principal character in the growing chronicle of international avant-garde alliances. Specifically, this paper examines Tudor's concerts and recordings during the 1950s, his participation in Fluxus events in 1960 and 1961, his appearances with Merce Cunningham, and the German premiere of *Rainforest* at the 1972 *Pro Musica Nova* festival in Bremen. The primary source material presented here stems from extensive interviews conducted with eyewitnesses and unpublished correspondence and documentation held at archival collections in both Germany and the United States.

[FULL PAPER NOT AVAILABLE]