

MUS 735

Discussion - Hitchcock, Chapter 8

Jim Novak

3.7.21

Listen to "Ionization" by Edgard Varese and "Banshee" by Henry Cowell. Register your thoughts and reactions. Try to listen until they sound familiar to you.

I really struggled with *Ionization* by Edgard Varese. The first listening gave me such a sense of confusion and discomfort, and I may have just had a difficult time rebounding from that. On subsequent listenings, some things have started making sense to me, or more accurately, certain aspects of the music have started standing out to me. I began to hear the sirens more prominently, making me feel like the piece was describing the war and the conflict that is inherent within. The snare drum stood out to me as well, as I believe I could hear a quasi-consistent motive played by the snare drum throughout the piece. Admittedly, I would need to listen more to really get my head around this piece. There was so much happening that escaped me. The recording I used for *Ionization* was:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1lpAXz79oAI>

I found that I had a much different reaction to *Banshee* by Henry Cowell. This piece is masterfully composed and if performed accurately, is terrifying! I heard three kinds of sound throughout the piece. There was a high pitched scraping sound, a more mid-ranged human screaming sound, and then actual pitches which I assume were plucked. The combination of these three sounds was powerful, frightening, and very effective in painting the picture of a banshee. Of the several recordings I listened to, this one had the absolute best sound that represented vocal distress:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNQFOpYC0BY>