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Research Statement

I am interested in the intersection between music and religion, ethics, trauma, and social conditioning. I think there is an interesting, if not vital, question about the ethics surrounding how music has been and is being used in the art of manipulation.

I'm deeply invested in how sound has been used to influence people. I want to study music in religion, in particular, how sounds are used to carry tradition and devotion and to create feeling. I'm fascinated by the untold stories carried through sound and how we understand those sounds in spite of them. How is music used to promote exclusivity? How does music itself become exclusive? There's seemingly no end to the amount of people that have been conditioned by religious sound. I'm attentive to what that music means to those whom have been rejected by the status quo. In that respect, I'm interested in how those same sounds that have been used to control people might be used in reparative work.

My master's thesis aims to criticize the conventions of the Western canon. It seeks to gain an understanding of what we do about music produced for (or at least surrounding) malfeasance. And since much of that music has been the foundational music of this society's culture, what does the proclivity towards music used in the service of oppression reveal about the society the music represents? In a culture that is today so ethically and socially conscious, can we truly remain ambivalent to this problem?

The introductory chapter, "Music in the Service of Oppression," examines how selective listening in regards to the canon reveals a progressive cultural decline, a breakdown in our value systems both in and out of music. It asks, what is a healthier way to think about culturally damaged music? The subsequent chapters, "Political Outcry in *Mathis der Maler*" and "Laura Kaminsky's 202-456-1111" are case-studies examining the ethical concerns drawn from the introduction. If the introduction is a testament to listening, these chapters investigate what it means to listen deeper, better, and fuller. What does navigating the multiple layers of broken history in Hindemith's composition reveal about his relationship to the Reich? What can we learn from understanding the full social context surrounding Kaminsky's composition?

Subsequent chapters will ask similar questions regarding Dmitri Shostakovich's relationship with his own government, as well as white Evangelicalism's reception to Kanye West's recent album *Jesus is King!*