

University of Maryland, College Park
Music Scholars Lecture Series – Spring 2017
School of Music

presents

Brigid Cohen

Mingus and Varèse at Greenwich House, 1957

4:00 pm Friday, April 28, 2017

Leah Smith Lecture Hall (room 2200, Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center)

In 1957, Edgard Varèse led a series of improvisation sessions in Greenwich Village with jazz musicians, including Charles Mingus, Art Farmer, Don Butterfield, Teo Macero, Ed Shaughnessy, and others. Little scholarship has explored this episode, a lacuna that speaks to a wider, racially inflected rift in historiographies of jazz and non-jazz musical avant-gardes. Against this tendency, I bring new light to these sessions as a messy and fleeting exchange characterized by mutual curiosity and crossed signals, drawing from analysis of sessions recordings, original interviews, and archival research. Within a larger ensemble of musicians, I ultimately focus on Edgar Varèse and Charles Mingus in order to tell a larger story about race, citizenship, and the arts in downtown New York during a period of postwar, self-proclaimed American cultural ascendancy and national canon formation. I also ask what it means to grapple with the laden silences that characterize our archives and historiography.

Brigid Cohen is an Assistant Professor of Music at New York University. Her research centers on twentieth-century avant-gardes, migration and diaspora, and intersections of music, the visual arts, and literature. Her book *Stefan Wolpe and the Avant-Garde Diaspora* (2012) won the Lewis Lockwood Award from the American Musicological Society. She is currently writing *Musical Migration and the Global City: New York, 1947-1965*. Her research appears in such journals as *Musical Quarterly*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, and *Journal of the American Musicological Society*. It has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Academy in Berlin, and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.