Conclusion

> Does "great" music need to be memorable? I would have said "yes," were it not for some glaring exceptions. For example, *The Rite of Spring*. I have heard this so many times, even lectured about it. But apart from fragments of melody such as the opening bassoon solo I recall nothing that I could write down. Yes, I do remember those chugging string chords, the battering timpani, the blazing brass, but not with any real precision. Is this good enough? I really don't know. But of one thing I am sure. My own feeling tells me that there can be nothing of permanent value in music which eludes the memory to such an extent that when it is finished, we can recall nothing with any precision, and with the passing of time, becomes no more than an ephemeral memory. Inevitably, a large portion of our modern music falls into this category, so that it probably has less value than we believed.[1]

THUS WROTE REGINALD SMITH BRINDLE in 1998, five years before his death. One might ask whether much of the music in this book is "memorable"; but I think that this is ultimately the wrong question. I did not write this book as a way of arguing that the music it analyses is "great" (with "greatness" being determined by a piece's "memorability" or some other arbitrarily selected criterion). Nor is it intended as some kind of canon-expanding gesture (although that is exactly what any project such as this is always in danger of becoming). Rather, I have attempted to show how some of the most pressing compositional questions of the mid-twentieth century—Is twelve-tone serialism the only way forward? Is tradition dead in the water?—were responded to by minor figures in the history of British musical modernism (with the exception of Bennett), who were in turn associated with one of British modernism's most revered performers, Julian Bream. The answers they provided to the musical questions posed by iconoclasts such as Boulez were, as we have seen, varied, both in terms of technique and ethos. The following tenet, though, seems to have been shared and fundamental: the pursuit of new musical ideas and "ways of doing things" need not be allied to a love of difficulty, or to the pursuit of the "immemorable"; it is also about broadening the possibilities of musical expression, and of giving us a new but related language to think in. Eschewing Darmstadt- and even Second-Viennese-style modernism for the most part, the composers featured in this book strove to write

1 Reginald Smith Brindle, "Memory Hither Come?," letter to the *Musical Times* 139, no. 1864 (1998): 2–3, 3.

Oliver Chandler, *A Twelve-Tone Repertory for Guitar: Julian Bream and the British Serialists, 1956–1983*. GFA Refereed Monograph Series, vol. 4.

music that was aligned in important ways to tradition, while making full use of new methods and ideas. The bonds of that alignment are sometimes strained; perhaps sometimes even superficial. Attempts to write "organic" music in a post-tonal language are usually doomed to failure in any case: that is what it means to be a modernist. But that failure speaks to something important: it represents an acknowledgment of that which is compelling in tradition, but a simultaneous awareness of the fact that one kind of musical language cannot adequately represent all that we think and all that we are; we must continue to explore.

The guitar is an eminently portable object, a musical amphibian at home in all manner of styles. Smith Brindle, ApIvor, Wilson, and Bennett wrote music for the instrument that reflected this hybrid spirit: they strove for their music to "make sense," at the same time as expanding what it meant for music to "make sense" at all. In this way, my narrow selection of repertoire might be seen to open out onto something broader: namely, a much-overlooked, pragmatic, and modest path that one might follow within the rhizomatic network that was twentieth-century modernism. Whether it leads somewhere illuminating is ultimately for the readers of this book to decide; Smith Brindle himself clearly had his doubts. I have merely tried to hollow out a small space for contemplation and to block out some of the ambient noise, so that these musical works might be heard once more over the competitive cacophony of history.