

The

OPEN SPACE

magazine

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From the Editors:

Our interest in cultivating the widest possible range of styles, formats, subjects, mediums — and sizes — of the pieces we publish has finally led us to an impasse: a number of submissions which we value very highly simply exceeded our capacity to accommodate everything in a single issue. So we are publishing, almost simultaneously with the present issue, our 10th anniversary issue, No. 11 (Winter 2009), which will offer several long and unusual texts, bearing in various ways on the subjects our contributors have been addressing since our beginning in 1999. The contents of Issue No. 11, adding up to 228 pages, are listed below:

Issue No. 11 (Winter 2009): 10th Anniversary Issue

Texts for/of/with/Images/Music

Andrzej Turowski: Lech Twardowski: paintings-energies
Charles Stein and Harvey Bialy: image/text
Eric Lyon: Deer Park (for Jim Randall)
Patrick Fadely: noise (for Benjamin Boretz)
Brad Bassler: A Rhetoric of Dislocations (for J. K. Randall)
Pedro Rivadeneira: Corporalmente
Arthur Margolin: On Jim Randall's When The Birds Come Calling
David Hicks: J. K. Randall Celebration: Notes
J. K. Randall: Sentences
Daniel Goode: Torture by Music

Special Supplement: to Issue No. 11: A CD-ROM Harvey Bialy and Charles Stein: images/texts

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dorota czerner

at sea
a projection remembered

slurry rain drops melt
the window solid
particles in a mixture
of muddy snow and the air
color the sea indigo

below golden
fields bloom rape
seed and lupine turmeric
yellow red kashmir chili
pepper powdery red dark
an odd flax blue
container tops flutter
in the wind the rectangular blocks
heavy and silent the load
of frozen chicken
the moon
soaks up water
like a silvery moss

“...a girl dreams of a voyage so deep the vessel wrapped in salt opens a fist holding
a mango street...”

he talks about another ship a cargo
of rotten wheat
a boiler which
rats of calcutta
upon all his voyages
dreams
silence
grinding
tzitzikas
of the projector
locust
a conveyor belt upon which

images
swimming
suspended
bounced
behind
transparent
other
images
tattered
pulverized

a collision
of mist
and a fusion of
a cracked boiler
off-message
grinding
tzitzikas

silence

“...there’s a ghost inside each sailor
revolving
rotating about
a glistening mast...”

weightless ocean waves the lips of the horizon now parted now revealing touching the blue moist
dark space the lips the waves all sealed

a shipway towers above the dock

tangled cables
flow down
the vertical cranes

the rigid lacquered disc
heavy
on the whitened sky
drills
and scrapes
a burr hole
into the bone of silence

it is noon

a nameless man
in a red hard hat
holds a rattling Aztec headdress

orange flamesparks
fill Montezuma’s open lungs

out of a machine

a horizontal fan

spews jewels and fireworks

iron feathers fly into the wind

plucked

noon

above the black row of chairs
the ghosts of large fish spawn
seeds of light onto the screen

colors flicker beneath the surface

RED LEAD

RED LEAD

RED LEAD

from the left to the
right from the left slowly
to the right then the center
part up and down slow
slow from the right
again a stroke to the
center a brush traces
rust shadows

the man in a watermelon helmet
tries to solve the sliding
square-puzzle at a wag of
the giant tailfin thick paint
licks the metal

a bright red line across the sky swelling inside the white clouded brim of the horizon growing pain
stretching until the skin bursts under the strain of gravity waterlogged weightless ocean waves the
lips now parted revealing now now touching the blue moist dark space the lips the waves all sealed

oil trickles and shining seals die
vessels roll in pools of light
abandoned pregnant with
memories and rats infested
with huge bellies they swim
softly in sand

behind the wall a mouse is scuffing
a faint sound ebbs till voices distant gone
hope
feet slowly life ebbs
sifts through soft steps afloat through
metal taste on the tongue
on the tongue acrid
rust-eaten sands spill

September 2008, Woodstock

Peter Hutton's "At Sea"

Russell Richardson

I was lucky enough to hear about a rare screening of Peter Hutton's new film, 'At Sea' recently. Being somewhat familiar with his lapidary work in silent 16 mm film in this age of noisy, high definition video, I was glad to sit in a darkened room with only the flutter of the projector as soundtrack, in itself deliciously evocative.

The film is a departure for Hutton in that it is a full one hour long and takes in a variety of places and settings. His earlier films are so focused on the where of the filming, one can almost say he is primarily a filmmaker of place.⁽¹⁾

Formally, the film is divided into three sections following the 'life' of a modern ship. As Hutton explained, his youth was spent as a merchant seaman, first on the Great Lakes, then on world shipping lanes on smaller, intimate vessels. His decision to revisit a changed world – that of giant container ships - was thus not an exercise in nostalgia, nor necessarily a lament for times past. Hutton's strength is in his ability to see what is in front of him. There is no theory being worked out here, nor any imposed narrative. The desire to be interested in what is in front of the camera is the motivation for a very sure-footed *seeing*. I do not know whether Hutton would make such claims for his films, but what they also illuminate is the lack of such seeing in many (most?) other films.

Section one is shot in color, in a high technology Korean shipyard. The sheer size of the ships (200 ft tall) and the abstract framing of blocks of red-lead, white and black paint, set against the gantries and scaffolding, which appear to be a uniform schoolbus yellow, splits the frames (of workers welding, measuring, painting) into a Mondrian like mosaic, flattened even more by the use of long lenses. Hutton choreographs the slow moving cranes in a waltz of shifting and occasionally startling perspectives. We see his painter's eye at work and begin to glimpse a central, elusive quality of his method: there is a present and palpable sense of momentum and physicality to Hutton's measured sequences.

In section two – genuinely 'at sea' on board a container vessel from Montreal to Hamburg one sleet filled spring – the themes evident in the first section are amplified. The checkerboard of the container deck – a rectilinear patchwork quilt of container tops, covering a football field in area – once again recalls painterly grids, here filled in with the commercial oranges, yellows and sky-blues of container companies. Or Klee.

But these analytical (and businesslike) grids are counterpointed by the first shots of the sea itself, under various lights, seen at various angles, and in variously inclement weathers. By allowing these shots a respectful length and lack of narrative intention, Hutton allows the images to be and permeate the viewer's inner mind. We are not incited to analyze or explain (how could you 'explain' the sea, anyway?) but to perceive.

There is a telling moment: a white wall and a near white sky are split by a thin red guard rail. We watch this statement of Renaissance proportion as the fixed camera stares out overboard. Slowly, a third band of color appears between railing and sky: the dark gray-blue of the sea. But this is not static, and our notions of equilibrium are challenged as the pitching and rolling of the ship throws the horizon into incline, first left to right, then right to left. At the crest of each swell, the camera shudders, momentarily weightless. Again, the vast mass of the ship and its momentum is perfectly conveyed.

As in all of Hutton's work, the elements (not simply 'the weather') are a constant, tacit subject. Hutton delineates these with subtle nuances of light, and clearly demonstrates that film feeds off light and lives with it, unlike video with its more analytic render. Here we have full ranges of dark to dim; fleeting surface detail; near transparency of slivers of sleet melting down the bridge window; the ghostlike glow of the setting sun on winedark containers, a block against the water.

The third section in black and white was initially the germ of the film and the first sequence shot. It shows the shipbreaking yard in Bangladesh. Here, the last voyage of the ships is to be beached full throttle onto the mudflats at high tide. As the waters ebb, armies of ill-equipped workers swarm over the superstructure like ants, dismantling the vessels literally by hand. The only concessions to 19th century technology (never mind 20th or 21st) are welding torches. Even these – with the oxygen and acetylene tanks as tall as a man, carried on barefoot workers' shoulders – are few and far between. We see one fellow stripped to the waist, balanced precariously on an oil drum, wielding a sledgehammer as he forces a spike through the 1/2 inch steel of the lower hull (to vent explosive gas/air mixtures, we are later informed). The image is of a Bengali Sisyphus. At times like this, one appreciates the ghostly silence of Hutton's film. Again, we feel the huge mass and grotesque disproportion between man and technology. Finally, the sequences end with almost tender images of a shift's end, as the workers drift back to shore, battered but somehow relieved, reminiscent of nothing so much as the Frères Lumière's 'Leaving the Factory' from 1895, suddenly rendered contemporary.

Peter Hutton's film has no polemical 'first world/third world' axe to grind, but it does kindle thoughts of what happens during the life of a modern ship – born in a high technology surgery, worn out doing (sea)donkey work all over the world, and finally dismantled piece by piece, by hand on a tropical beach turned Breughel canvas.

That these steel mountains are birthed on land, and die on land is a poignant fact with mythic echoes. Hutton's film drives you to consider wider, deeper questions about life cycles and the whole problematic of the Industrial Revolution itself, embedded in various time slices simultaneously in various countries and cultures, but – apparently – itself a thing of the past.

At the death, what remains is the mysterious beauty and power of the sea, captured from the inside by Peter Hutton's remarkable contemplative film.

His film about chimneysweeps in Lodz, Poland and his various Hudson River films

A Tribe Called Chris: pop music analysis as idioethnomusicology

(with apologies to Charlene): "I've never been to paradise, but I have actually been to me."

Chris Kennett

The somewhat rambling introit:

Hello there; my name is Chris. If you don't mind, I'd like to tell you quite a few things about myself, and then I'd like to do some musical analysis for you. Once I've finished, I'm hoping that the reasons for doing both of the above will be come clear; but if they don't, I'd like to apologize in advance for having wasted your time.

Right, then. Here are some general things you should know about me (in no particular order):

- 1.0 I am a man. I'm 43 years old, white, and a bit fat.
- 2.0 I am English, and have lived all my life in England.
- 2.1 My formative years were in a leafy suburb of London, where the East End –the traditional home of the “chirpy Cockney” (think of actor Bob Hoskins being himself, but *don't* think of other actor Dick van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*) – becomes a bit more respectable.
- 2.2 I was born with my feet turned in at right-angles to one another, and I spent much of my first decade in hospital undergoing several operations to correct this. As a result, I received Lego bricks, books, the time to develop at my own pace, and absurd amounts of love and support; hence the narcissism implicit in the subject for this article, probably.
- 2.3 When I got to prep school, I was placed in a class of students four years older than me, because my reading and math age were assessed at that level; I held my own and was accepted in this class, mainly because my stern steel crutches and pudding-bowl haircut made me look a good deal cuter than I really was, and I could make my classmates laugh with relative ease, which helped bring out their more protective, big-brotherly instincts.
- 2.4 When I could walk without crutches, I went to a public school (U.S. translation: I went to an expensive private school) founded in 1629 by the then Archbishop of York, a school whose only claim to fame is that William Penn was a student for a short period before he was expelled for being a Quaker. (That always seemed a bit harsh to me.) It was a good place to learn about friendship, one's place in the world, the British class system and so on, but the school had a policy of not allowing 9-year-olds to sit in classes full of 13-year-olds, so I had four years of doing *exactly* the same coursework, and I went from being comfortably top of the class and a paragon of virtue to being dead bottom, and a bit of a bully at times. Sorry about that – but it was *incredibly* frustrating: I felt like I was being punished for being clever.

A Tribe Called Chris

- 2.5 I played the piano from the age of three, and was really quite good at it by the age of eleven, when I passed my Grade VIII piano exam. My aunt was a semi-pro player, and taught me; she had a Schroederesque love of Beethoven, but I hated him, and I couldn't get with anything earlier than Schoenberg.
- 2.6 I led a pretty unremarkable middle-middle-class life in other respects: father on the lower rungs of the highest tier of management at Reuter's News Agency, and mother a published children's author and home-worker; so there was enough income for a fairly high standard of living, and enough debt to make such consumption problematic.
- 2.7 After eliminating a range of possible, if unlikely career goals – monk, lock-keeper on the River Thames, and so on – I went to three decent Universities in the affluent South of the country, to tread the (then) traditional BA/MA/PhD path into music academe.
- 2.8 I now live to the West of London, in a semi-rural part of Buckinghamshire favoured by ageing rock stars from Bjorn from Abba to Ozzy Osbourne.
- 3.0 In music, I like a lot of complementary, occasionally contradictory things.
- 3.1 I like stuff that moves the heart and the head equally – which for me means: Pérotin, Machaut, Weelkes, Bach, (O.K. – even late Beethoven now), Brahms, Second Viennese types, Ligeti, Carter, Ellington, Monk, Mingus, Miles, Drum 'n' Bass, U.K. Garage.
- 3.2 Actually, that's not the whole story: I also like a lot of sentimental, simplistically solipsistic, melancholy guff from the likes of Dowland ("My bonnie lass she cant stande ye syght of me, fa la la, &c."), Peter Warlock, and any musician with a Portuguese/Brazilian bone in her body.
- 3.3 Actually, *that's* not the whole story: just like everybody else, I like all sorts of tunes at different times and in different situations – I loved Prog Rock and the Sex Pistols in the 'seventies, Reggae, New Romantic and Free Improvisation in the 'eighties, and Drum 'n' Bass in the 'nineties. This point, while blindingly obvious, is actually quite important, so I'll come back to it later. Pretty much the only things that leave me cold are Mozart and Country and Western. Sorry if you like that sort of thing, but there it is.
- 4.0 I love other stuff, too; 4.1, below, can act as a synecdoche for the whole list, and possibly also as one of the duller lonely hearts ads in the *New York Times*:
- 4.1 Football ("soccer", if you must), and that world-renowned club, Leyton Orient, in particular; football, and the Superbowl XV-winning Oakland Raiders team in particular; cricket and its stats, as seen in the annual almanac known as *Wisden*; baseball (Oakland again) and its stats; travel humidors that look straight out of James Bond movies; cooking (current signature dishes include eel and venison salad, bucatini with lemon, and sloe-marinated spring lamb with anchovy crust); ironing shirts; the all-too-few women with whom I have enjoyed carnal knowledge; alcohol in all its ingestible forms, but Alsace Riesling, English I.P.A. and Islay malt whisky in particular; the English penchant for litotes, oxymoron and catachresis; punctuation; the art of Bosch, Vermeer, van Ruysdael, Samuel Palmer, Claude, Kirchner, Schiele, Magritte, Hopper, Bacon and Kapoor; egregiously polysyllabic neologisms (see title); running with an idea slightly *too* long (see this list); pseudonyms; teaching and learning set theory, Schenker and sociology; the wonderful way sports commentators can help a language evolve to a

new level of Joycean chewiness: “He bobbed the carom” (Jon Miller, E.S.P.N.), or “The ref was vertically fifteen yards away. He has a moustache” (Kevin Keegan, I.T.V. (U.K.)); the Carolinas, Cornwall and Catalunya; under-used *mots justes*, such as tmesis, ampersand, and defenestration; the glorious bittersweetness of life.

The potted summary of the rambling bit:

I realize that I've gotten far too much enjoyment out of prattling on about how wonderfully complex I am as a person; so I'll stop now. But you can sum up all of the things most precious to me thus, and probably in this order: people, sports, music, gourmandizing, irony, and paradigmatically dully male lists. Oh yes, and synthesis through opposition. Now, if it's not too late, I'd like to do some musical analysis, of sorts. I'm going to talk you through some aspects of an instrumental song by Herb Alpert from 1966, “Tijuana Taxi”, because I think that it will live beyond eternity. You may well disagree with some or all of the analysis – indeed, you may question whether it constitutes an analysis at all – but that's fine by me; in fact, it would probably help my argument if you did so.

The meat of the article, part I: beginning to analyze Herb Alpert's “Tijuana Taxi”

The analysis of commercial music has gathered momentum noticeably in the last three decades. Jazz has its own, sometimes problematic tradition of detailed discussion of its musical content, and a parallel tradition of being valued pedagogically in university music departments and in conservatoires; but the attempt critically to engage with the sonic detail of heavy rock, say, or techno, is a much more recent phenomenon. O.K.: so is the music itself; but to get published in, say, *Journal of Music Theory* or *Music Analysis* on pop music would have been unthinkable only a decade ago; and the burgeoning roster of Bachelor's level degrees in commercial music in the U.K. bears further testament to this trend. This is because we're getting a better handle on what makes commercial and Western classical music different from one another. Tagg (from 1979 onward), Brackett (1985), Covach and Boone (1997), Moore (1993; 1997; 2003), Krims (2000), Middleton (2000) and their kidney have developed their own distinctive but partially overlapping analytical methodologies based on the principle that, in the absence of score-driven composition in most commercial music, the only feasible analytical 'text' is the sonic content of the recording – possibly mediated by analysis of lyrics, iconography and/or contextual socio-history.

This is all fine and large as a principle – clearly, to treat pop music as if it were classical, and to apply the value-systems of the latter (especially that of canonizing by complexity) to the former almost inevitably would put pop music at a disadvantage – but there remain some problematic questions posed by this approach, to my way of thinking. Is 'sonic content' that which is appraised by the analyst in real time on first, casual hearing, or in step time after repeated listenings with high levels of concentration, for example? And what happens if there isn't much to say about the 'sonic content' of one track, but lots to say about the music of another? Does that imply (probably falsely) something about relative quality, or worthiness to be analyzed? But I'm getting ahead of myself; so here's the first half of my analysis. If you got the chance to hear the 1966 recording of “Tijuana Taxi” in its full glory, either as you read the next bit, or just before you go on, that would be great.

A Tribe Called Chris

This analysis was made after a single listening to the song on Saturday, May 3rd, 2008, at just before 3 p.m., but it represents the culmination of over twenty-five years' worth of regular listening to the same song, in the same place, typically at about the same time of day on a Saturday – which clue is much more germane to the analysis than it may seem at present.

I'll start with a quick summary of the rhythmic, harmonic and formal structure of the song, detailed in the figure below. The descriptive names in the leftmost column refer to the two types of melody line in the song – “Tune” or “Solo” improvisation on the “Tune”, or “Middle” – both of which are repeated extensively, with little or no development, throughout the two almost identical verses. The numbers in the rightmost column refer to the number of measures each section takes, and each column in between these two represents a single measure in quarter time:

Fig. 1: Herb Alpert: “Tijuana Taxi” (1966) – as heard on May 3rd, 2008, 2.57p.m.

Intro	Drum	Boing	Drum	Drum	F	F	F	F			8
-------	------	-------	------	------	---	---	---	---	--	--	---

Verse 1:

Tune	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	C	-	F	-	10
Tune	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	C	-	F		9
Middle	C	-	F	-	D	-	Gm	-			
	Bb	Bbm	F	D7	Gm	C	F	-			16
Tune	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	<u>C</u>	-	<u>F</u>	-	10

Verse 2:

Solo	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	C	-	F	-	10
Solo	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	C	-	F		9
Middle	C	-	F	-	D	-	Gm	-			
	Bb	Bbm	F	D7	Gm	C	F	Boing			16
Outro	F	C/G	C	F	D7	Gm	C	Drum			
	C	Drum	C	Drum	C	Drum	F	Boing			16

Key:

Drum	One-measure drum break (no backing harmony)
Boing	Onomatopoeic sound of bouncing, squelching ball, made on old-fashioned motor horn (no backing harmony)
-	Same harmony as previous measure

Rhythmically, the song is pretty consistent, with a straightforward shuffle feel to the drum part, the drummer giving in to a slight tendency to hemiola in the one-measure breaks accorded him; similarly, the melody line, played mainly on trumpet, mixes on-beat and syncopated rhythms, the former at the start of melody segments, the latter towards their end, in a way typical of the Tijuana Brass house style evidenced by all those massively popular 1960s and '70s albums that Alpert

released. This is all a bit ironic, perhaps (but rather charming also), given the fact that none of the band (including Alpert himself) had an ounce of Latin blood in them.

The harmony of each verse is straightforward, repeating I-V-I or I-(V/II)-II-V-I cadences for the most part, with temporary inflections of IV in both major and minor mode in the middle of each ‘Middle’ eight – or, rather, sixteen.

In terms of formal structure, there are some slightly surprising extensions of a predictable eight-measure hypermetric scheme, with the final V-I cadence of each segment taking twice as long as the rest of the harmony of each segment might make us expect; this extension occurs three times, at the beginning of each verse, and also at the end of Verse I (this example is underlined above in fig.1). In addition, the final perfect cadence of each segment, having set up a pattern of extension from two to four measures, is sometimes contracted to three measures (the second hypermetric unit of each verse), but is extended further in the outro to ten measures (italicized above), in order for the stepwise melodic descent from C to F to be interspersed with one-measure drum breaks.

So far, so not-very-analytical; with one sole exception (to which I’ll return below), I’ve not gone beyond telling you what any listeners with a basic knowledge of harmony and an ability to count could discover for themselves.

If you *really* wanted me to be a bit more ambitious, I could try and see the melodic line of each “Tune” or “Solo” section as a series of descents either from the eighth degree of the scale or from the fifth degree down to the first (see fig.2):

Fig.2: Not-quite-Salzerian(-let-alone-Schenkerian) Reading of “Tune”/“Solo” Urlinie

either 8	7	6	5 4 3 2 1
or 5 4	4 3	3 2	2 1
A C FEDCBb	G Bb EDCBbA	F A DCBbAG	G A CCCBbAGF
I V(or II)	V I	V7/II II	V I

But what would that benefit a simple, catchy pop song such as this? As soon as I posit such descents, my Schenkerian training is likely to try to argue them as “structural”, or at least goal-directed in some way; and the sheer welter of (often barely) hidden fifths and octaves – not to mention several other common-practice-tonal solecisms that would have had Schenker fulminating about the song’s lack of “content” in one of his *Yearbook* series – makes it really hard for my ears to allow for such a problematic reading so clearly outside the compositional and aesthetic tradition of the song.

Moore: canonizing by complexity

I had a similar problem the first time I read Allan Moore’s otherwise excellent Cambridge University Press handbook on The Beatles’ *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* album (Moore 1997) – how defensible is an *Urlinie* from the eighth degree down to the first in “With A Little Help From My Friends”, say, when you have to posit imaginary fifth and fourth degrees to complete the descent because they’re there neither on the surface nor at some middleground level?

I know I'm being slightly disingenuous here: Moore takes pains to underline the fact that his graphs are not to be construed as Schenkerian, but as "Schenker-tradition" (1997: 26); indeed, he confirms his own "unease at the growing tendency to treat popular music as the linear continuation of classical tonality" (: 27). Also, at least since *Rock: the Primary Text* (Moore 1993), Moore has outlined an analytical strategy focusing (*pace* Moore) on the full range of "possible interpretations that a song or piece affords" (1993: 24), foregrounding the truism that one interpretation of a recording is just that – one person's non-normative way of understanding a musical text, arrived at through several immersive, concentrated listenings (through hi-fi speakers or headphones, without interruption or diversion) to the recording at home, or in one's office – and nothing more absolute than that. And yet, Moore's single published, voice-leading-led reading of a single song in a book which forms part of a well-respected series of analytical studies of single great works, surely is likely to come across *ex officio* to readers familiar with others in that series as being exactly the sort of normative, canonizing-by-complexity analysis which offers little room for other affordances, nor for any other conclusion beyond a confirmation of the *meisterwerk* status of the song under analysis.

Tagg: being led by the lyrics

For parallels with Moore's strengths and weaknesses, I'm going to examine a couple of other related methodologies from the two other triumvirs of U.K. popular music analysis, though I could have picked on many others. Firstly, Philip Tagg's analysis of Abba's "Fernando" in Richard Middleton's *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* (Tagg in Middleton 2000: 71-103) outlines a methodology which stresses the need to begin any analysis with the "analysis object" (: 80) – the sound recording – as a kind of neutralist bridge between what he calls the "guild mentality" (: 76) of formalism at one extreme, and the at times "exegetic guesswork" (: 77) of musical hermeneutics at the other. The analysis object thus forms the starting-point of what Tagg calls an "hermeneutic-semiological method", in which a thorough parsing of every parameter of the analysis object is followed by what he terms "interobjective comparison" (: 82-83) of the object with other similar objects, in order to suggest, and to corroborate as neutrally as possible, a range of possible paramusical, associative or affective meanings to various structural levels of the analysis object. It follows that the wider and deeper the range of interobjective comparison, the richer the range of meanings available to the analyst. However, one wonders, for example, at the relevance – let alone defensibility – of a comparison of a single instance of ic6 (G# to D, via E) in the chorus of the song ("There was something in the AIR that NIGHT") with others from Gluck's "ch'e farò senza Euridice?" in order to confirm the museme as "a stereotype of 'longing'... but also a typical pre-cadential sign of the imminent relaxation of tension." (: 95)

Notwithstanding this, here is an analytical strategy with lots of potential; but, as with Moore, as soon as Tagg lifts the hood of his chosen analysis object, most, if not all of this rich provisionality tends to be submerged in an often beautiful, frequently idiosyncratic, but always normative reading.

For Tagg, the result of such exploration of musical and extramusical process "can be said to conjure up a postcard picture of a young European woman alone against a backcloth of a plateau in the high Andes. Periodicity, vocal delivery, lack of bass and drums, and other musical aspects say that she is sincere, worried, involved in a long-ago-and-far-away environment... [having] taken part, together with her 'Fernando', in a vaguely-referred-to freedom fight." (: 94) Now: I don't know about you, but I have to say that periodicity and the absence of bass and drums *never* connote to me sincerity, worry, a past history as a freedom fighter, half-remembered holiday romance or anything else – even with lyrics which, with the right amount of aural squinting, *might conceivably*

begin to imply some kind of Latin American holiday romance recollection. Even then, this is surely the lyric, and not the music, which is the overwhelming contributor to such a reading; and an entertaining visit to the internet-based treasury of misheard and misunderstood lyrics, www.kissthisguy.com, will soon underline the pitfalls of such hermeneutics where pop lyrics are concerned, and where the exigencies of creating rhymes in a second language might outweigh semantic meaning. For my part, I still can't hear the second half of the chorus from another Abba song, "Winner Takes It All" ("Beside the Victory/That's our destiny"), without thinking of the historic warship of Admiral Lord Nelson moored in Portsmouth, England, H.M.S. Victory, and wondering why this is the "destiny" of "the loser [sic, to my ears] standing small".

Middleton: unique gesture or generic stereotypicity?

Secondly, Richard Middleton's analysis of Bryan Adams's power ballad, "Everything I Do" (Middleton 2000: 104-121), shows the potential for a single reading of a single song to achieve absolute internal consistency in spite of contextual *naïveté* through the analysis of gesture:

"Perhaps the most striking feature here is the pervasive arch-shaped vocal intonations, typical of the ballad genre – and indeed of the entire bourgeois song tradition, from at least the Renaissance period. Gesturally, this suggests a bodily and psychological reaching out, an assertion of energy and control, but always in the knowledge that this will be followed by a gathering in, a return to the safety of the Self's own little world. All the phrases in the main section of the song follow this pattern, though the first (A) starts with a descent, not an ascent, an initial drawing in or invitation to the listener: and this is emphasized in the first appearance of A by a tonic pedal under the chords shown in the diagram, establishing at the outset a bedrock quality of 'home'." (: 113)

This analysis is sensitive, honest and carefully thought through in all but one aspect – that of genre. Certainly, the use of melodic shapes which go up down – "pervasive arch-shaped vocal intonations" – are "typical" of ballads "from at least the Renaissance period"; but, even if we allow the implied comparison of the style of "ballad" denoted in "power ballad" with the Renaissance or medieval one that *Grove* might define, such pitch contours are also typical of many other aspects of western music compositional style from Léonin to Leona Lewis. In other words: music tends to go up and down quite a lot – but this could hardly be said to connote "a bodily and psychological reaching out" in every case. Let's carry on:

"The arch principle operates hierarchically... over the span of the whole song... there is a (slightly undulating) large-scale arch... This large-scale arch form is underpinned by the harmony. In A and C the chords move away from the tonic – so that they can return there subsequently... In B the harmony is pushed up to II – a minor triad, lying a good way from I both in terms of distance on the harmonic series and of pitch-consonance relationships – screwing up the tension (the nerves tense). In the bridge, the chords move through a circle of descending fourths – or, as it actually sounds, a circle of rising fifths. Gesturally, the effect of this is interesting. The rise in pitch and the sharp-ward move increase tension, but the lack of leading notes, and the feeling of a succession of plagal (IV-I) cadences, seems to soften this, producing a more receptive, lump-in-the-throat kind of tension. I feel this as a gradual opening-of-the-arms invitation and appeal. And the repetition inherent in the sequential technique – this is the most iterative part of the song – generalizes this: one feels

the whole audience joining in this gesture, as against the I-You individualism constructed before and after this." (: 115)

In other words: the move away from a tonic and back to it connotes a kind of woolly, cigarette-lighters-in-the-air group hug. Again, however, such a move is not exactly unprecedented in western musical history; what would Schenker say?

The meat of the article, part II: Recording-as-text, or Analyst-as-text?

The above is deeply ironic, when one considers that Middleton castigates other analytical readings of pop music for their positivism when he states that, too often, "listening is monologic. What the analyst hears is assumed to correlate with 'the music', and the possibility of variable aural readings is ignored" (: 4). However, I've gone into some detail about Middleton's reading in order to underline that, in spite of misunderstandings about what we might term "power-ballad common-practice", and of the hardly astonishing truisms about verse-chorus structure or divergence from and return to the tonic in pop music, such a reading is clearly the result of a great deal of intensive reflection; and the reader does not have to be a qualified psychiatrist to understand from such analysis a good deal about the status of the work under analysis for the analyst. For Middleton, the song is a very reassuring and personally meaningful song, just as the Abba tune is for Tagg, and the Beatles' *oeuvre* represents for Moore. All three are of a broadly similar demography (white, British, baby-boomer generation, with a solid classical music education and a later-developed expertise in musical semiotics as two suns at the center of their commercial music-analytic system); this may go partially to explain their choice of methodology. It certainly helps explain why so many fine analysts of that generation tend to concentrate on "great" works of the white rock and pop repertoire, rather than either the music ancestry of black origin (say, Son House) or the vast swathes of music designed with catchiness or danceability or profitability at their core instead of richness of affordance possibilities ("happy house" music, for example, or releases of cover versions by *American Idol* contestants).

None of this is unduly problematic, necessarily; but it does underline the relatively small chance of anyone from the edges of, or from outside of that demography reading the song in the same way, even if all other parameters of the listening experience remain the same for me as they were for Moore, say. Indeed, the chances of replicating the listening conditions of Moore's analysis are pretty slim in a mass-mediated world of ubiquitous music where we are as likely to hear snatches of Bryan Adams in an elevator, or to recognize "Fernando" as a backing track to a TV advertisement for candy bars aimed at kids too young to have heard the music first time round, as we are to spend many hours listening immersively to the track under analysis. Thus, each analysis so far has been more revealing about the analyst and the listening conditions of the analysis, rather than it has been about the music *ipse*.

With the above in mind, it's time to revisit my analysis of "Tijuana Taxi", which is followed by a rather confusing spot of self-critique. It is important to remember at this point that I'm extrapolating my analysis from the recording-as-text, but in particular from a specific instance of my listening to this recording, through large speakers in an outside location.

The meat of the article, part III: back to “Tijuana Taxi”

Several things strike the listener on hearing the formal, structural, harmonic and timbral patterns detailed in the first part of my analysis of “Tijuana Taxi”. Firstly, the repeated, bouncing nature of the “Boing” at start and finish suggests the trajectory of a ball launched into the stratosphere and returning, flaccidly, to earth. The fact that the “Boings” are created using an old-fashioned motor horn, in which an airtight rubber bulb is squeezed and then released by the percussionist’s fingers in order to blow air through the horn, creates up a visual analogy to match the sonic one.

Secondly, the compositional desire to avoid minor keys (save ii), not always successful (for example, IV transforming into iv at the Golden Section of each verse), involves the listener in an heroic fight against depression, but, at the same time, the harmonic simplicity of the majority of the song connotes the balsamic security of historical continuity. Thus, the bittersweet counterpoint of high and low, major and minor, predictable and surprising, as established at the first “Boing”, is paralleled by the harmonic strategy of the song. Other parameters contribute to this reading, such as the tense equilibrium between higher and lower frequencies which gives the chance for the trumpet’s shimmering brilliance to shine through the texture.

However, the rationale for some aspects of the sonic experience remains obscure, at least for the moment: why the exotic instrumentation (brass-led, with motor horn and marimba at the forefront of the texture at times), for example? Is the listener forced consequently to use the music, redolent of holidays in sunnier climes, as an exact counterpoise to the disappointments of the listening situation?

Similarly, for the whole of the second verse, the dynamics drop down significantly, almost to the point of inaudibility, before returning suddenly to full volume just before the return of the sub-orbital ‘ball’; a list of names is incanted as this ducking takes place, perhaps underlining the ritual aspects of the listening experience.

Finally, the drum fills and extended middleground descent from 5 to 1 in the outro cause the listener to re-interpret the final “Boing”: is this the end of something, or merely a prelude to a more significant event?

The meat of the article, part IV: time for some honesty

I’m hoping that, by this point, I’ve completely lost you, and that, particularly if you’ve had the chance to listen to the song before or while reading the above analysis, you disagree fundamentally with almost all of the previous section. Indeed, most people hearing this song for the first time hear the “Boings” as the blaring of a real motor horn from a real taxi cab – the “taxi” of the title, perhaps, or maybe something more connotative of a holiday way down south; or, probably by association with the benighted *Carry On* series of mildly salacious British slapstick comedy movies from the 1950s to the late ’70s, some kind of knockabout comedy show theme tune. It follows, then, that either I’m a bit weird, or this is not an honest analysis; and yet I would defend my analysis as being 100% truthful, if you forced me to do so – and it’s not *that* much further towards the left field bleachers than Tagg’s holiday romance, Middleton’s group hug, or Moore’s Schenker-tradition masterpiece, is it?

So: why all this obsession with bouncing balls, depression avoidance, “Boings”, significant events, bittersweet disappointments and so on? Well, the main reason that I found this analytical meaning in the song on the Saturday in question (and on over twenty Saturdays per year from August to May

A Tribe Called Chris

for all of my life from teenager onwards), is because, for me and 5,000-odd other lost souls, "Tijuana Taxi" is not about any of the things most listeners ascribe to the song – slapstick (or perhaps, in this context, it is?), sunny holidays, taxi journeys, appropriate accompaniment to an episode of *The Simpsons* and so on. My reading of "Taxi" is entirely dependent upon the fact that, for the last 35-odd years (apart from a brief, toe-curling flirtation with Tina Turner's rock anthem, *Simply the Best* – which they certainly weren't), the Herb Alpert tune has been the song to which my football team, Leyton Orient, lollop onto the pitch at home games. Thus, all of my references to features of the recording-as-text – indeed, as my reference to sudden drops in dynamics and incanted lists of names demonstrates (the 'drop in dynamics' only occurs on matchdays when the PA announcer uses a ducker in order to allow his demagogic announcement of the starting team players to be heard), my creation of the *text itself* – is connected inextricably with my by-now Pavlovian response to the music as the angelus of a feast of "total football". Change the listener's demography or prior lived experience, and you change the very nature of the text.

Indeed, in such situations, there is no music *ipse*, as the individual listening experience *becomes* the text. The only people with any likelihood of sharing much of an overlap with my analysis of the song are fellow Orient fans. On a train or a bus in London, anyone who has a downloaded ringtone version of "Taxi" will be an Orient fan; and my PC is set up to play an mp3 file of the song at every booting-up.

With that in mind, my analysis might start to make a sort of sense. The mighty O's play in the third tier of professional football in the U.K., and at that level the standard of play is about as cultured as an M.L.B. fan watching double-A ball might expect: some passing play is very good, but the majority is a million miles away from what Manchester United and similar teams achieve: more often than not, the ball is hoofed aimlessly up into the sky in the generally forlorn hope that a fellow team-member might latch on to the end of its trajectory. Indeed, many Orient supporters wear neck braces for much of the year, to protect their neck muscles from the trauma earned from watching the tennis-like orbit of the ball; given that, the "Boing" sound makes sense as a mickey-mousing metonym of the motion of the ball as it bounces. Similarly, the epistemological dissonance between the sunny, football-fiesta music and the woeful spectacle likely to meet the jaded eyes of the season ticket-holder as soon as the music stops is the sort of masochistic parataxis which many true O's fans learn to relish early on in their careers. As for the "balsamic security of historical continuity", the music provides the sort of reassurance that one knows what one's getting: they've always been mediocre, and always will be, but we love them for it.

At the same time, for me more than for many of my fellow fans, as someone who celebrates the bittersweet-humored irony of things, and who loves the synthesis of opposites, then my use of the music of Herb Alpert as a cipher for all that makes life such a rich experience is entirely logical, and my analysis entirely defensible, albeit probably for me only. In order for anyone else to understand why on earth I should have such cognitive strategies, you need to know about *me* – what is important to me, how I was brought up, my own personal ragbag of contradictions, the ways I use music – as much as about the music itself.

In a sense, then, what I've described as a musical analysis isn't really anything of the kind: it owes as much to ethnomusicology as to analytical musicology, as a reasoned account of the way in which I use music as a means of making sense of my life. The only significant place at which ethnomusicology and I part company is perhaps in the size of the tribe: my tribe consists of me and of me alone, and thus this musical analysis is personal ethnomusicology – *idioethnomusicology*, in fact: the study of a tribe called Chris. That's why I bothered to give you too much information at

the start of this piece – because my analysis would be every bit as daft, rhapsodic and ultimately meaningless as the others I've cited above without this data.

To a dedicated Chrisologist, my delight in the richly dislocating post-modern humor of Puccini's aria from *Gianni Schicchi*, 'o mio babbino caro', makes perfect sense – but only because it was used in the U.K. recently, seemingly randomly, to accompany a T.V. advertisement for a department store selling sofas at half price, and because I cannot associate the aria any more with the diegesis of the opera as a consequence of this. During this commercial, several settees are cut in half, in slow motion – by a man wielding a laser gun, or a woman with a samurai sword, or another with a circular saw, while the aria soars anempathetically in the background. There is no synergy between the structure of the sound and that of the visual tracks, nor between the speed of the music and that of the editing; and that's just the sort of reflexive absurdist situational humor, whether intentional or unintentional, which the best work of Oliver Wendell Holmes, P. G. Wodehouse, Woody Allen or the Monty Python team embodies. Thus, for me there is no point in analyzing the musical structure alone in this case, because, post-ad, the object of analysis only ever can be the bizarre multimedia extravaganza described above.

Of course, this approach makes it extremely unlikely that the listenings-as-text of any two analysts-as-text, with two different collections of cultural baggage, will overlap entirely, or even significantly, even given the identity of other parameters of the experience – say, two people hearing the same song in the same store at the same time. Nevertheless, if we analyze the structures which constitute an individual listening-as-text – and these are the realm of idioethnomusicology, of the analyst-as-text – it might be possible to hypothesize where and how such overlaps might occur. In a mass-mediated musical world, lived life as a locus for meaning-creation, rather than the recording-as-text as a source for meaning-affordance, may provide more promising understanding of contemporary musical usage, allowing for the equitable analysis of Bach, Berio, Blige and Babyshambles in an environment where any of them might be used to advertise toothpaste, or to engender uncontrollable *saudade* in the listener, or to block out the noise of unwanted conversation on a train.

So where does that leave pop music analysis? Increasingly, in the realm of the social-anthropological, it would seem: the music sociologist Tia de Nora, in her exemplary 2000 volume, *Music in Everyday Life*, exploring mundane, personal uses of music – at the gym, in the supermarket, or in the car – encapsulates the situation most appositely when she describes music as “a dynamic material, a medium for making, sustaining and changing social worlds and social activities.” (de Nora 2000: 40) In other words, without these social and personal meaning-creation structures, in the modern world where music is everywhere, music cannot exist. De Nora describes music as “a technology of self” (: *passim*); “Tijuana Taxi” is the cornerstone of my self-building strategy. What about you?

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moments of air

catherine lamb

She continues to sweep all day,
moving a tower,

the empty space, and the mass of it
when it moves in this way.

There is a crease in the top layer

breaking apart,

(a spore lands again).

The world is contained—
in the manner in which it contaminates

the air,
opening.

A young boy is standing outside his family's house with a large, clear plastic garbage bag in his hands, across the street from the window where I work. The night before they had a gathering and he is about to pick up the empty bottles in the front yard. As he lifts the bag and opens it, it catches wind. Now he is holding, out in front of him, an enormous, cylindrical, shimmering wind-sock, larger than his body. He has his arms outstretched for many minutes; watching the object's movements and form. He holds it above him — very slowly pulling it down until he is surrounded by it. The wind blows against the walls of the object and it collapses against his own form.

In this moment, my neighbor across the street has become the world. He has invited it in and become absorbed by it (as I am watching his intent and decision with the object and the air).

The manner in which the composer, the performer, and the audience listens is in proportion to the world and its existence. That a musical experience can be so vast in its differentiation from being to being has everything to do with how one listens. That a repetition (as in memory to past experience) is of consequence to one's own sensations. Any listener's intent and experience with a piece of music has as much inference and importance as the inception of the original, because it is belonging to the world.

Morton Feldman once remarked that there are no composers, only listeners.

A being has a choice in the matter when it comes to hearing music. At any given moment, an individual can choose to listen in whatever space of intent one can allow for. Or, one can allow for the ethereal...for sound to float in the air as a manner in which to focus on something else in that moment (as background or entertainment).

There is a continuous composition in the Gold Line train running from downtown Los Angeles to Pasadena. It is more apparent in particular cars. I wrote down the number of the last car I experienced it in: #5336. The composition is an ostinato figure, beginning around an F below middle C. There are three pure tones in the area where the two cars meet. They move stepwise, staggering with a sort of lilting consistency, you could call it a rubato pattern reiterated. It reminds me of Debussy's *Des pas sur la neige* from his *Piano Preludes* in form and movement. The second tone sits atop the first just so, a narrow minor second (the tones overlap for a moment and then hold their own). The third tone comes in, always unpredictably, yet when it has arrived you realize it has been precisely placed, and creates a settlement. It seems to be a 7:6 minor third from the first tone at its most stable point, yet mostly it wavers. The tones move in this sequence, overlapping, overtaking, never forced. When I listen to this movement (in particularly rare cars and on rare days it consumes me) I am overcome with the need to burst into tears and often I miss my intended stop. Perhaps it is the moment its presence emerges from the sound of the brakes, the fragility from which the tones are breaking apart.

If you are looking at layers upon layers of white paint on a rough wall you can still see the texture beneath, and when the sun hits the paint enough, even when it is muddled, all the colors you could ever hope for are there — (this is as you or I may hear a tone). A tone's sustain (as bow on string), its presence, contains absolute chaos. In the adding of another tone, that chaos in the singularity breaks away and we are then made to focus on the affect of two tones in their fusion (if allowed to continue its sustain). We may discern their beating quality, their sub-harmonic and overtone spectrums combined, a tone appearing up high or down low as the difference between the two equate. The space in which two tones inhabit is infinite and frightening. In adding a third tone, a chord stabilizes. A lengthened lyricism opens up the spectrum, rather than suggesting continuity of line as in a phrase. Lyricism re-forms into new principle, and the elapsing of sound moves with the world.

And as the singularity and then the fusing of tones are imagined, the world is present. An intended sound coexists with the world (its cooling air systems, its thunders, its streets, and its birds). One could say, for instance, that John Cage's *4'33"* is the world itself. And from this, one is opened to listening more intently.

When I was studying music in India I met regularly with a violinist. One day she was showing me a composition. I remember wanting to focus my attention on a particular aspect of its sound, asking whether it would be alright if I were to alter it slightly. She became furious and asked whether I thought I was God, and how could I think of myself as higher than the music itself? I later came to understand that she was participating in Deleuze's theory on the need for repetition in society, as a "moral dilemma". The need for something "good" to be repeated over and over again (much like the need to practice a scale correctly, over and over again).

Later I met Mani Kaul, who introduced me to Dhrupad music, which makes a point that you may reiterate something a thousand times and never repeat it. That an iteration is the same as the world which is constantly shifting. To me, this dissolves the feeling of ownership and makes an intent that of the world.

"Eternal return cannot mean the return of the Identical because it presupposes a world (that of the will to power) in which all previous

identities have been abolished and dissolved. Returning is being, but only the being of becoming..."

Gilles Deleuze, from *Difference & Repetition*

Because of the world, I cannot call the train engineer the composer of the piece that occurs in car #5336 of the Gold Line. Any piece of music I have ever loved belongs to no single being. Works of such composers as Satie, Cage, Feldman, Young, Scelsi, Tenney, Radique, Lucier, Nakamura, Palestine, Pisaro, Frey, Slavniks, and Oliveros (to name such a few) have all taught me about the intention of listening. Their work is of a collection of the world that is proportionate to the conscience of my generation of musicians in Los Angeles. And yet, their work is in the air. One may own an intent, but one may not own an object. A piece of music is of the world.

Christian Wolff made a point that in the act of the creation of a score, one should examine what "misinterpretations" would make the piece differ too greatly from the composer's intent and to make those portions as clear as possible (as to guide the performer towards its original form). My friends and I have heard recordings of Wolff's music in which we wonder whether or not the performance would be to his liking. I believe that he would take a stance that it is not important as to whether he *likes* (aesthetically or otherwise) particular interpretations of his scores or not, but that whether the performer(s) followed the score. In this aspect (radically, politically, or, rather humbly), allowing a score to be the world itself.

As an object contains matter belonging to the world, a score is clearly of a composer's intent, yet belonging to the world.

I am thinking of Eva Hesse's sculptures and the continual alteration of their forms. Her works with latex were glowing, smooth, weightless...now discoloring, drooping and cracking. Her original intent is still there although the forms are clearly changing (the moment they become the world).

"Objects contain the possibility of all situations."

Ludwig Wittgenstein, from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, line 2.014

I remember listening to an interview with Terry Riley documented from the early 1980s. He was explaining that to him, the mark of a good performance is when you are unaware of the performer or the composer, but only the music. That when one walks away from it, one walks away with an experience in the world. There is no sense of the physical nature of the performer, or the athleticism it took to execute. Perhaps there is no feeling of being "impressed" at all, but that the listeners were allowed (or allowed themselves) to be changed.

As a composer of music, I have the need to remind myself over and over again that my control lies in what I am (unearthing). I can envision a clear function, a clear feeling, a clear visual form to the work. As it sits in the world, I can imagine its performance — how the performers will feel playing, whether or not they will feel comfortable, bored, excited, pleased, or scared. There is this awareness and then there is the allowance for it to be the world. We can only envision, let go, imagine, let go, create, let go, unearth, let go. Once we let the objects go, they are the air.

The first time I listen to a piece of mine being performed I usually experience something comparable to an utter feeling of horror. I often wonder what sort of beast I have

released into the world. It is the feeling of lack of control — the recognition that the work is its own creature, somewhere from a portion of me, yet disconnected and belonging to the world. It just is, and there is an actuality that there is nothing I can do about its presence. That others have intentions of their own *must* be accepted. We can hold aesthetics and principles very dear and hope that there is an engagement with them. We hope that another will understand our intentions. Mostly, I have come to realize that what makes a performance interesting is whether or not the performer had an intention, like my neighbor across the street.

Now I look forward to the horror feeling. If it is not there, then perhaps my intent has created something predictable or contained. If I were content as it were, feeling as though the piece were truly mine in the listening, that everything had gone as planned, what would I be containing? An intent in the world lives in its quiet yet persistent presence, and is unique to each individual.

And what is containment?

James Tenney's *Koan* (1971) from his *Postal Pieces* exists in the world. The violinist (or violist) plays a "fairly slow tremolo" over two strings, with a slow ascending glissando from the low string to the high string, so that there is always a juxtaposition of one open string and the moving pitch on the other. The instructions are direct, yet the world emerges from them. That a violin is being played becomes unimportant. The size of the room, the pace the performer takes, how much tonal space is lingered and rubbed approaching and leaving consonances, the small inconsistencies that occur when the violinist has the intention of playing consistently and balanced, become apparent.

Koan for String Quartet (1984) subsequently emerged from the seemingly simple (or grueling) task given to a violinist on a post card. With the addition of the other instruments, the harmonic structure came into being. The tonal form emerges over time, from the center, then branching out until there is root movement in the cello. The piece is released to the air in its precision of performers playing in tune (it becomes something like a barber shop quartet). Yet, there is something about the piece that becomes so unfathomably superhuman. I cannot think of the lovely man who wrote it, only the world of sounds that occur from the functionality of its performance. Because of its precipitation of acts (and much like the experience in car #5336), I am overwhelmed. Although my intent for listening (to the same recording, over again) changes (thus the piece changes) I am continuously struck by its form.

Friend Tashi Wada has numerous pieces involving two violinists playing "as slowly as possible" a descending glissando down the length of the G-string. Each piece is entirely different as the intent changes. I am thinking of *Duet*, *Revision* which involves the intent of the two musicians as they coexist (playing essentially in the same rate of motion and tone, descending, together). There is a stunning, slow wave of moving partials and spectrum as the two are adjusting. The instructions read,

"The players descend as slowly as possible always maintaining their present relationship, which varies from moment to moment."

The two performers are focusing on their differences (when attempting to play in unison). In this way, the piece becomes entirely centered on the intent of the two violinists listening. Alvin Lucier wrote,

Catherine Lamb

“Careful listening is more important than making sounds happen”.

My generation follows this collective awareness of how one is able to be in the world with sound. We are left with our own individual intentions.

I vividly remember walking with a friend out in the bird estuaries/sanctuaries in the Puget Sound. We both watched as an enormous flock of dark brown-feathered birds were passing in front of us. Suddenly, the entire flock turned white as they had in that very moment, all decided to change direction and we were left looking at their downy bellies.

3 VIEWS OF SESHUTEI

MICHAEL FOWLER

ABSTRACT

Situated within the grounds of the famous Zen temple of Joeiji in Yamaguchi-ken lies a karesansui (dry garden) in the southern compound. As a less famous companion to the Muromachi karesansui at Ryoan-ji in Kyoto, this serene example of austere Japanese garden design is used as the basis for a media translation. Examining and responding to the confines of the site in terms of its spatiality and texture, as well as examining the process John Cage used in his Ryoanji series provides a way in which to transcribe the garden as a textscape, completed through 3 digitally manipulated variations representing three views of the garden.

1 The karesansui at Ryoan-ji

At the Buddhist temple Ryoan-ji (the peaceful dragon) in Kyoto, lies one of the most studied and visited gardens in Japan. Contained within a site approximately the size of a tennis court, bounded by a raised veranda and 3 low masonry walls is an expanse of raked gravel articulated through the careful placement of 15 rocks. The garden is unassuming, though a powerful spatial presence, and a superb example of a Muromachi period (1336-1573) karesansui: 'in its purest form without water, without plants, without even a tree.' [1] This garden is a stunning example of Zen design principles, and the nature of the Muromachi dry garden as an analogue to Western 20th Century abstractionism is a commonly inferred comparison.

As most visitors are, Cage too must have been overwhelmed with the vista created from the vantage point of the veranda of the abbot's quarters to which one views the garden. Looking back across the space 'the largest group [of rocks] is in the foreground while the others decrease in size as they increase in distance: in a brilliant use of built-in perspective the modest space thus organized appears far larger.' [2]

As an embodiment of Zen principles, the karesansui at Ryoan-ji suggests an enveloping space that exists beyond the confines of the low walls that border the garden. The use of shakkei (borrowed scenery) is manifest through the use of

low walls, that while producing an obvious edge or containment plane, originally also allowed a view of 'Otoko-yama [hill] and the long winding bed of the river Yodo. . .' [3] This particularly prevalent design feature allows the garden to become multi-dimensional, indeed 'the interaction between form and space is one of the keys to Ryoan-ji's compelling suggestiveness, it is a living lesson in the Zen concept of nothingness and nonattachment.' [4]



Figure 1: The karesansui at Ryoan-ji temple Kyoto

The nature of the karesansui at Ryoan-ji to simultaneously usurp the space beyond its immediate foreground by juxtaposing itself as a projection onto that distant landscape, is somewhat of an exploration of what Kinoe and Mori have identified as the opposing forces of uchi (inside) and soto (outside) within traditional Japanese architecture:

the "uchi" (interior) and "soto" (exterior) are not completely separate and isolated. . . The uchi is opened toward the soto and both are designed to harmonize each other. [5]

Cage's visits to the garden in the 1970s (while visiting Daisetz Suzuki) became the focal point for a series of explorations of his impressions of the structure and

nature of the experience of the karesansui.

2 Ryoan-ji as a media translation

As a work that is described by the composer as a representation of the karesansui at Ryoan-ji, John Cage's musical version of the famous Kyoto garden first appeared as an oboe and percussion piece in 1983, some years after a similar series of etching and drawing experiments he undertook at Crown Point Press (where R=Ryoanji).

The musical work is a rather literal usurping of garden materials for the notation of musical events. After acquiring 15 stones from various places, and of varying geological types, he used them as templates to trace around and procure melodic shapes. Cage used 15 rocks as a type of symbolic or numerical representation of the dry garden's contents which is of the same number (see Figure 1). The process of tracing became a means by which sonification of the garden would be initiated. By drawing around I-Ching-selected stones of his collection, he devised a method by which composition arose from the necessity to create a musical content that was 'free of memory,' while alluding to the materials, texture and the aesthetics of the garden.

Each of the steps involved in the creation of the musical score was equally well-removed from any pre-meditated decisions about representation. The extensive use of the I-Ching for acquiring thematic densities, points of occurrence, micro-tonal pitch deviations etc. allowed a complete construction of an unintended musical landscape.

In the performance notes to the score Cage states: 'Each two pages are a "garden" of sounds. The glissandi are to be played smoothly and as much as is possible like sound events in nature rather than sounds in music...the score is a "still" photograph of mobile circumstances.' [6] This observation is suggestive of Cage's desire that the work captures, or at least reflects, some essence of the spatiality of the original garden. Because the garden can be viewed from myriad points along the raised veranda, there is a sense that it frames a series of micro-scenes. In fact, there is a curious geometrical phenomenon on the site in which from any point on the raised veranda only 14 of the 15 rocks are clearly visible.

Perhaps as some parallel allusion to this feature, Cage's musical work contains a few instances of polyphony: 'where there are two or more parts active at the same time their relationship in time need not be exactly the one delineated. Each part should be played or recorded independently of the others but within the same total length of time and following the general outlines of proportional notation.' [6] Using multiple pre-recorded parts allows for the possibility of separate sound systems (as in Variations IV, or spatial projections that could re-connect the musical material back to the geometry of the garden.

If each 2-page section of Ryoanji are representations of the grouped rocks, or smaller “gardens” unto themselves, the additional use of obbligate percussion was created as an analogue to the bed of raked gravel to which the 15 rocks lie fixed within. The percussion part is scored for two instruments of different, though resonant material and are: ‘... the “raked sand” of the garden. They should be played quietly but not as background. They should even be imperceptibly in the foreground. They should have some life (slight changes of imperceptible dynamics) as though the light on them is changing’. [6] The rhythmic structure of the percussion part embodies constancy without any discrete reference to an audible process or plan. The entire part vacillates between bars of 12, 13, 14 and 15 beats, in which consistently there are only five active beats (sounds) occurring each measure.

Cage’s Ryoanji is an intriguing work on a few levels. It can be read as a musical landscape that has been formed through adapting garden materials as templates, i.e. the creation of a musical topography taken straight from nature. Similarly, it is a work that examines differences in scale by using rocks as template-links between the original karesansui and the musical score, though the sense of a immediate translation of the dry garden is lost in the abstractions of I-Ching determined tracings that work to disconnect the musical topography from the nature of the garden’s spatial characteristics.

As a soundscape, the work proposes to provide a musical equivalent to the source garden, and the extensive use of chance methods to remove intention causes the sonic outcome to be a rather clever representation of myriad and simultaneous musical translations of the garden occurring simultaneously. If Cage’s Ryoanji is like an auditory complement to the meditative visual qualities of refinement and proportionality most often mentioned by visitors to the site, then it is a representation of the instantaneous combination of different views and experiences of the site outside of the unfolding of time. For Ryoanji, musical structure is not bound by the unfolding of time as a measure of the articulation of form, but simply the flow of thematic material as a potential for the representation of a multidimensional landscape that is defined by the viewer.

3 Sesshu’s garden at Joie-ji

During the Muromachi period, the influence of Buddhist aesthetics within garden making was facilitated through contemporary ink-painting. Perhaps the most recognised figure in the adaptation of ink-painting to landscape making, was the monk/painter Sesshu Toyo (1420-1506), who had studied his art in Ming China before living the latter part of his life in southern Japan creating landscape gardens. Sesshu’s style is immediately recognizable, and the connection of his paintings to that of the gardens attributed to him can be traced through the ‘strong angular forms that characterize his paintings.’ [7]



Figure 2: The karesansui at Joei-ji temple, Yamaguchi, is attributed to the famous monk-painter Sesshu Toyo (1420-1506)

In Yamaguchi Prefecture lies a garden attributed to Sesshu known as Sesshutei within the Joei-ji temple. In fact there are two gardens extant on each side of the Buddhist temple. The lesser known of the two, the karesansui that lies to the south of the temple complex, like its contemporary at Roan-ji, consists of a number of rocks placed within an expanse of raked gravel. Here, a similar spatial configuration of rock groupings occurs, though twelve of the fourteen rocks are placed within the raked gravel, while two are offset within the moss hills that form a transition between the gravel and the walls.

From the raised veranda of the temple, like its Kyoto counterpart, a stunning vista is created as one looks downwards and across the space. The allusion to mountains and water is even more striking at Sesshutei, with the moss hills providing an unbroken line connecting the raised viewing space (i.e. a view from the clouds) down across a slope to the sea of gravel and islands spreading outward across a bay. Also, too, the meeting of colors gives a dramatic effect as the bright green moss offsets the subdued static grey of the rocks, and the stark white walls that actually provide an open (soto) aspect, rather than articulate a definitive boundary to the garden.

As a parallel to Sesshu's translation of ink-painting to landscape gardening, Cage's expression of the Ryoan-ji dry garden as both a musical work and visual composition (where R=Ryoanji), suggest a similar desire for the aesthetics of a composition to sit outside of the particular media to which it is bound. By composing with chance-operated drawing procedures, the aesthetics of the resulting work was not bound up in perceiving or manipulating sonic materials or structures, but rather a conceptual process mediated through the negation of intention: 'Margarete Roeder, his friend and longtime art dealer, says that he used drawing activity as a kind of meditation. He often spoke of writing music "instead of sitting cross-legged," . . .' [8]

3.1 '3 views of Sesshutei'

As a model for translating from the 3-dimensional to the 2-dimensional, Cage's process of using rocks as templates to manufacture a musical topography was intriguing, though somewhat misjudged as an equivalent to the source garden whose geometry and proportions seem well-considered and premeditated. But Cage's intentional un-intentionalism is striking as a tool for the representation of the myriad layers of the garden and its many views. Because the connection to the garden at Kyoto with the musical work Ryoanji is facilitated only through a scaled usurping of materials for a topographic process (itself chance-derived), the work is more an imagined soundscape for the garden than a direct reflection of the cartesian drama that it played out within the site.

What is striking about the dry garden at Ryoan-ji, like Sesshutei, is the spatial composition that seems controlled, balanced and completely premeditated. This common characteristic between the two contemporary karesansui formed the basis for my own exploratory examination and adaptation of Cage's topographic process within the visual field, through the creation of '3 views of Sesshutei.'

Whereas Cage used materials, or a material-as-texture connection to the Roan-ji garden to transcribe it both into a visual work outside of time (where R=Ryoanji), and one that unfolds in time (Ryoanji), I considered a process in which chance would be used to manipulate the visual structure of a photographic representation of Sesshutei.

This initial composition into the issues and processes of how media might be used only as a utility to deliver an aesthetic idea were achieved firstly through a simple text-based representation of a fixed view of the garden from the edge of the veranda (see Figure 2).

3 Views of Sesshutei



Figure 3: View 1 of '3 views of Sesshutei'



Figure 4: View 2 of '3 views of Sesshutei'



Figure 5: View 3 of '3 views of Sesshutei'

What is represented in "View 1" (Figure 3) is the boundary between the gravel and moss (i.e. the governing division that articulates both the color spectrum and texture map of the space) as well as the prominence of the stone islands (represented through varied typefaces). In spatial terms these two elements of division (i.e. the boundary between moss and gravel) and unification (the connection of the moss covered rocks to the 'shore') are the focus of the three views, whose differences are orchestrated through chance methods of digital manipulation.

The reduction of the 'View 1' (JPG) into a plain text file of characters enabled a chance reading through the file in which single characters and line combinations were variously copied, deleted, repeated and moved within the file without knowledge to the reference points or spatial relation of the manipulated part to that of the original JPG image. What results from this chance method of manipulation are two abstracted views (see Figure 4 and 5) of the text representation of Sesshutei.

Each view retains the larger structure of the original interpretation of the garden, though each contains small spatial or textual elements that are copied, extracted, manipulated and juxtaposed across the page. This simple process reveals a first attempt to understand a method to which the spatial essence of the garden can be remapped.

4 Afterthoughts

As an initial experiment into how media translation is actuated, '3 views of

Sesshutei' unlike Cage's Ryoanji is centered on the sense that the spatial structure of a karesansui is, overwhelmingly, where meaning resides. By reading the gardens in this fashion, the viewer appreciates how the relationship between the garden's elements find a harmony through the play of texture, proportion and density.

Cage's post-1950s ideas about form as merely the division into parts, and his ideas about the life of sounds and the distinction between auditory relationships born from premeditated structure and those discovered without looking are duly reflected in the method by which he composed the soundscape of Ryoanji. But in creating '3 views of Sessutei' I sought to sample the source garden. By directly using information from it in the form of a digital picture, an abstraction has already occurred. A 3-dimensional construct of natural materials is captured as data that is further transformed into a 2-dimensional picture when viewed through software. Whereas Cage used rocks on which to construct his work, I used raw data from the garden for abstraction. In each case, the karesansui is represented through an investigation into materials that offer an entry point for a working process to occur, be they digital or natural

By applying chance methods to the construction of '3 views of Sesshutei,' I discovered that such methods enabled an unmediated, non-hierarchical attention to the composition's inner parts and details. In a similar way to how multiple viewings of Sesshutei have always revealed something different in the garden, using chance to manipulate 'View 1' of the 3 variations allowed some pocket of 'unseen' information to be suddenly revealed. In many ways the spatial information that is embedded within the structure of the document acquires a materiality, and is used in an iterative way to embellish a new perspective on the structure.

References

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the first 10 tracks of "JKR pass 3"

steve greene

A note about “JKR Pass 3”

In the mid 70’s at Bard College a bunch of us became interested in what Ben Boretz was doing at the music department. It was a close-knit group and as Ben said at one point later on “it really seemed like we were all colleagues back then exchanging ideas writing and making music together”. I guess that was true in many ways; it was a very creative bunch. Many of the things that were learned still resonate with me on a daily basis. It was a close group for sure and we all cared for one another living through musical issues, personal issues and most everything in between.

Ben had come from a whole world before Bard, one that we had never experienced. I remember how a few of us were talking one night and the question came up: “Whom can Ben talk to?” (about things beyond our scope), and someone said “He can talk with Jim Randall” And we all felt good at that moment that Jim was there for him and by consequence for us as well. Surprisingly, I have never met Jim Randall but certainly his vibe has come across my path in many ways over the years.

I received the CD collection JKR Pass 3 in the mail from Ben who has been very kind in sending along Open Space issues to me. The issues received far outweigh the coin sent out. I remember looking at that CD and thinking, “this is really something, all the people that have participated in this and all the history, this is good, this is important.”

The following pages are responses to tracks 1 through 10 of the JKR Pass 3 CD collection. I worked on this from March through September of 2008 and hope to get the rest real soon.

LISTENING TO STEVE MACKEY'S "ACCIACCATURA"

OH SHORT HOW
CAN AN ANGLE CRAWL THAT WAY?

WAVERING

UNTIL
IT GETS DONE

PERSISTING AND COMING
THE STORY IS WAITING; "I'LL SHOW YOU A CORNER THAT HAS NO BOX."

AND WHAT IS THIS G L E A M
AND WHY DOES IT KEEP PERSISTING?

MANY ROADS AND
ONE PATH
HOW DOES ONE GET OUT OF HERE?

EVER UPWARD TOWARDS.

MAYBE....

AND

RIDING THE TICKLED FANCY

OFF

OFF

TO

OUT THERE

Listening to Paul Lansky's "Composition Project For Seniors"

My my...

How could this be anything but fun?

I love the tinkly with the little sashay

and little bongo clipper she with a grass skirt woosh

woosh

but then...

someone always has to invade the party

here he comes,

it's little glummy with a glue orange caldron lantern lifting underhead 'bout fifty yards away

How will the dancers fare?

Koosh and longed ghosted

beaded and ting-ed

Round lickly trails and round barn yard taught grey

I kind of like this mess they are in.

They go

back forth

back

forth

back forth

the tension of two-ness

back

back

and more

back

and

once...

we were happy weren't we ?

I liked the tink and the skirt woosh ...

It was all carved with lilt ...

yes lilt

but now
wooden crusts have shut our eyes with moist fluid
And the dark rooms seem much lighter ?

...she
holds her hand soft

and she
her hand
soft she is

Light

oh

I am sorry

Once again another that place

Sah sah sah sah sah sah sah cur cur

This time This Time

they come with curfewed dark timber

wolved in marrow

This must have been formed from: some way other dark-way

How stinky can it get ?

Oh... I see it it's a ship

clasped

and righteous

very righteous

so,

la

la

la

ok,

Looks like I'll pay another quarter for the rollercoaster...

maybe we should all just weave baskets at this point:

“ Oh yes, my little darlings fly again !

bravo bravo ! “

but...

capture them before they hit the mainland...

oh

oh ...

aiieee....

Lots of cargo here will be damaged

oh

No, this is good

yay

y a y

y a y !

So,

Ok a little fanfare you know

yes thank you

now put my friends back in the jar

my clipper bongos and woosh sashay skirts

they'll come out again to play someday

Yes Paul yes that would be very nice.

boom.

Listening to Doug Henderson's "Footfalls For Jim"

**Oh my gosh.
Well now that we have entered hell...**

**Let's have a sit and see what's up,
don't sit there though it may be too hot.**

So...

La la, la la la...

**Ok, clearly there are flexibles
And a bunch of man-clammers.**

yes

.... and someone may be disgusted with the way their piano tuner left the job undone.

Hmmm...yes, i.e.

**"Oh Crisscross, why have you catapulted me?
I was so happy as a sound wave."**

**But down here in the cataracts of sweatshops I have the feeling one works all night and there is little room for
laughter.**

**Sound is being made.
And, I suppose whatever is being made it will be finished before the end of time.**

**And yet
it appears these sleigh bells may contain more than a trace of dark mercury... very dark merc. very dark merc.**

**Old yeller is barking from beyond the veil.
The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation has gone home.
Maybe the Kumquat tree will never grow...**

**So,
it may be these intentions are beyond my sniffer,
I see now their fannies are made of Bakelite charcoal
(without the micronite filter). It reminds me of the rustic china my father used to so fondly drink from**

And what would he say?

**And then there's a question:
How many flexible man-clammers can you fit into one box?**

I admire all their gusto but that one guy there seems to be a perfectionist and his clammer still looks the same.

Maybe some Rust-Oleum...

Maybe he needs a girlfriend.

**Oh that's right we're in hell
He is now his own girlfriend.
He will never get a date that way.**

**Well...
I see there's a guy that came over to help the perfectionist.
That's good.
They're battin' it around...battin' it around
Ta ta ta ta ta**

And yet, and yet it still it looks like a flexible man-clammer to me...

Maybe some ointment.

Maybe a Red Sox game.

Maybe a peace treaty

When will they get tired?

Don't they get tired?

Am I tired?

I don't know.

I want to run away

I want to go into town

I want to run away with the piano tuner.

LISTENING TO DAVID HICKS "INFLUX / PHREAKISH"

GOING EVERYWHERE AND YET

THAT DARN SNAG.

DOWN ELECTRIC DOMINO AVE.

I'LL PLACE A FEW CHIPS ON GLISTEN STREET AND SEE WHAT DEVELOPS ...

I JUST CAN'T SEE HIM GETTING OUT OF THIS SNAG

MAYBE HE'LL GET THROUGH THAT WALL THERE.

IT'S A 2 WAY WALL WITH NO ENDS, AND HE JUST CAN'T GET AROUND IT.

BUT...

IT ALL COULD HAVE ENDED RIGHT THERE ... RIGHT THERE

YES COULD HAVE

I COULD HAVE GONE ON VACATION

GOODBYE TO SNAG

GOODBYE TO CRACKERS WITH NO CRUST

I MEAN IS THIS THING JUST MAKING UP PROBLEMS FOR ITSELF?

A LOVELY TAIL THAT HAS NO END TO BE CHASED

So,

So now...

NOW A BIT BACK TO GLISTEN STREET YES

YES I LIKE IT HERE.

MUCH MORE ON TOP

RATHER THAN

WELL, YOU KNOW

*

HERE IT IS FUN

MAYBE WE WENT THROUGH THAT WALL AND I DIDN'T EVEN NOTICE.

WHERE'S THE LATCH...

WAS THERE A LATCH?

THAT'S COOL

I'M LIKEN THE WAY IT LOOKS ON THIS OTHER SIDE.

MORE BATHED IN 7UP

MORE BUBBLY

PULLING AT WHAT WAS ASKING IT TO COME BACK

AND APPEARING TO KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAS GONE ON BEFORE.

LIKE THE CANADIAN MOUNTIES BEFORE TRYING ON THEIR HATS.

(KIND OF LOOSE AND LIKING IT.)

SO PLAYING WITH IT AND

PERHAPS WHAT WAS DOWN DOMINO AVE. WELL ...

WILL NEVER QUITE RETURN NOW, RE-RUN, OR BECOME AGAIN YOU
KNOW

... HOW COULD IT?

ONLY BY REFERENCE

I GUESS

IS IT LIKE OPENING AN OLD ALBUM?

THERE ARE NICE MEMORIES HERE

ALTHOUGH THAT

IT IS NOT NOW

MAYBE IT IS REALLY TO SAY

AND THIS WILL BE ENDING SOON

AND WE WILL GO.

WE WILL GO ON VACATION FROM THIS PLACE

WITH SOME MEMORIES OF SOMETHING REMEMBERING ITSELF.

HOW FAR

WAS THAT DRIVE

AND HOW DID WE GET THROUGH

THAT WALL AND

I WILL BE REMEMBERING YOU SOON.

Listening to Hilary Tann's "Kilvert Hills"

push ing off

and

t r y i n g it out

and laying it out

becoming a 4 pedalumium curvy

falling a bit of unknowing

and stretching it out by way of melancholy ...

because you are so low?

I wonder

It is all held in place by threads of consideration

considering all the time

holding its breath making sure of the right move

then forgetting and

joking

until the next breath?

...the joke reassures the so low:

"We are still trotting within the fields here

and I will not let you get lower than low"

calling itself again

in circles

making a circle?

So,

perhaps tales that get retold get deeper

...or deeper into wandering about in itself

let's hold up a mirror and see if

a merry-go-round is remembering a same place... yet

when I step back and see this place

where I have been in

clearly it is made of threads that echo one another and

if touched

anywhere

Just once

the lattice comes alive

moving of its own generation

- and remembers itself -

again

and again



Listening to Mark Zuckerman's "Just Keyboard Respect"

Oh... the beginning of another movie in the corner.

See, right there

It keeps hanging out

a bat in the rafter up there

to the right

"Jinglis Clinkus Batus: A native of wire across spruce"

and spreading afty and stern

dancing wi'd da crickets

circadian at the center

and becoming most everything

on either side of it - - - - -

this is a stretchy ball game

right-o in the belfry you know

with a trickle tickle

perhaps that center wants a pickle

very pregnant yes yes

maybe it's time for non-rafter time

go to tango back hoe and crisp out yo

to... the home way?

Those of us that want to go home and I suppose that would be all of us... If this is not achievable and it seems in this case that home may never be realized then we must begin to dream

What is it about human nature that insists we wake up?
Why go away from a dream.

why not keep opening...

why must we always go back to what seems to be all our ducks in a row?

really a sense of place can be - -

And when something has originated in what we call in the heart “home” there need not be any fear. The resonance of what was will always be present even if it is just a glimmer.

However, It is possible in the case of Batus (a native of spruce across string) that we have woken up back into the 7th reel of the Late Night Show

I want to believe I guess that we are still dreaming

but it seems

we have woken up at the Rafter Café'

again

so let's get a beverage

It seems we will be hanging out here maybe forever

which is certainly ok.

It is an interesting enough place.

This high risking of marbled penetrations.

The dealing of the twelve decks of cards.

Our friend Clinkus has had a good run

I believe he may do this:

he may do this again and again every day.

Listening to John Rahn's "The New Mother / overture"

Silver upon grey upon silver

how will your garden grow

with tubular bells and granite wells

now

hear the Sirens of Calabash

,

One by one they enter with vivid

and deleterious not as the days of Helen but proper maidens now that desire dusk to begin their twilight dancing and I am
laughing because we now know that we have known each other . . .

their hair has become quite long

three parsecs of blonde smiling

and a dog howls backwards:

so how will your garden grow?

Over time . . .

over time

a thousand pictures in one breath

you the Sirens have been everywhere

I can see it in your tears

and want to go to another other place so

lift me out of your patient lasso grasp and laugh like we used to

those figures you had cut from silver paper

and placed upon grey walls do you remember?

soon now we will wake into the day of dry wells

and form chanting

grey upon silver

silver upon grey

waking cloudless Sirens into the garden growing

again growing again.

Listening to John Rahn's "The New Mother" (Not Bad Enough)

Cloud +

Negative -

At last the corporeal speaks:

“Should I be sad or is this just the beginning?

birth

Is it sad because of what I have left behind...

... because I am born means then that death is true?

I remember Sirens walking cloudless now.

Let us go back there.

Listening to Stephen Dembski's "Being, Hearing, Knowing Now"

Hello from whence...

the walls are long that confined you

How long it may not be possible to remember

so much stillness is around that door that you came from

and finally now you are out here

in the not-yet formed

There are so many places that are trying to be you.

Which brings the question: is it ok to be?

this shore is not as it was

step differently

place your heart close to my memory

this will be easier

I can hold a light

grasp

and pull you through...

The first note of Ben Boretz's "Postlude"

A Comanche cattle rustler
is lying as a mortician across a sundial in
a nameless desert loving him.

*

Duded up in blackest black a silver badge
crosses his breast now
it is day and it is night
it is all his.

Hair smiling and teeth squinting into the south wind is winding its
way and will,
and willed into cuffs circulating through his upper sleeve, the shirt
billows
off as easily as woman touches her hair... tonight the camphored
boots free
and skin and blood become all noon shifting stones under the
sundial, the
prairie dogs are laughing and his bones are so happy to be finally
released
finally into the ethers bare white light.

*

all of him is gone

*

Gone except for a sinew of tin

laying out all yellow resonance

into the nameless desert a radio is playing

a tin throated bird is singing

a sound is thinking

waiting for the next to speak:

"This is how into the outward I begin . . ."

ALIEN NATION: Felix Werder. The Antipodean Gothic

James Hullick

A biased and excessive arabesque-type extemporisation by Werder's student on Felix Werder, Werder's 2007 CD release 'The Tempest', the relevance of Werder to Gothicism in Australia and the Antipodean collection of 'Us'.

2007. CD release. The Tempest. By Felix Werder. Electrocuting music. 4 Compositions. Banker 1973. The Tempest 1974. Oscussion 1971. V/Line 1992.

1970's + Werder Gothically challenges the status quo in humanity against the machine = nobody wants to know. 2007 + Werder is a very old man + CD release = now the middle class necrophiliacs want to know.

Warren Burt. US born Australian composer and pedagogue. Burt + long time confidant of Werder = Warren wanted to know first – before the necrophiliacs. 30 years later. Electro tracks restored. With great care by Warren. Werder's sound revived. In friendship.

CD liner notes. First paragraph. First sentence. By Warren. "The German-born Australian composer Felix Werder was born in Berlin in 1922". CD liner notes. Last paragraph. Third sentence. By Warren. "The waves of destructive and negative criticism directed at Werder throughout his career are astounding." Last paragraph. Third and fourth sentences. By Warren. "Even (or especially) among members of the music profession, he has had to endure continuous charges of charlatanism and incompetence levelled against him. It is almost as if the anti-immigrant attitudes he encountered in the 1940s lingered on for decades in the form of engrained negative cultural attitudes." Disappointment. Making sound is not special-nice-fun-joy-goodpartytime-lovein. Further disappointment. Anglo-Aussie-g'day-mate-bollocks [btw Australian slang] = tendency towards racism. Last paragraph. Sixth sentence. "To this abuse he [Felix] has often responded with vitriol and sarcasm, a behaviour at odds with the prevailing polite blandness of Anglo-Australian social relations."¹ Werder bites back.

Consider Warren Burt. Burt: born in the U S A. Like Bruce Springsteen. Warren Burt. Immigrates to Australia. Not like Bruce. A small blessing. Warren is not like Bruce. Warren is much more like Werder than Bruce. A small blessing. Australian immigrants.

Immigrants in Australia. What are Australian immigrants? 40,000 years ago. Koori Ancestors + walk across + the floor of the Timor Sea + short eyeball journeys across water = ancient immigrant songs becoming song lines. Sonic tracery. Landscapes. Seas rise. The pathway incrementally swallowed. Water locked. Australian birth. Roughly 15,000 years ago. Birth in isolation. Land, harsh. Desert, harsh. Scrub, harsh. Little water. Heat, harsh. Harsh. Expanse. Oceanfists pummelling at the perimeter. Transparency in a harsh terrain. Survival is transparency. The nomad is social architecture in transparency. Transparent architecture. The material is transparency. Survival. A shadow spirit flung out like sand plumes invisible bar the shimmering or in the showering an

Ancient Gothic is born. Not the Gothic of today. No, no, no. Not contemporary. Not the Gothic of 1000 years ago. No not that neither nor. Not the Gothic of 2000 years ago. Pre-Aussie-g'day-mate Gothic. Pre-Europeanmiddleeasternasiananywhereelsemiddleagesdarkagesbronzeorlongbefore. Pre the word 'Gothic'. Pre-historic Gothic: inhaling the psychology of vast expanse exhaled. This soul is an ocean of barren plains. Infinitesimal footfalling in the expanding humming-line at eyetip. The body is stripped bare and barren in isolation scratching out in an ocean of plains. Ancestors. In stories swept in. In from the ocean-plains. In from an ocean of centuries eroded plain. Stasis. Equilibrium. Expanse. Shadow sapiens. Ancestor Gothic is centuries of myriad transparent organs blown thin and spider webs flickering thin over bush and sand. A natural Gothic minus stigma = rituals and rites = arabesques of nature celebration and fearing = sapien spirits more real than flesh in a Gothic nature way in ancient spiriting spun out or rolling for 40,000 long enough years to call a place of terracotta bleeding through the seeping flesh made spirit-home. And to be indigenous.

1770. A speck. The ocean meets the sky at the humming-line. Speck grows to smudge. Wind-buffeting. Thumpers roll. Beat the shore heavy or the primeval gong. Thumping and bowing and genuflecting messengers. Heralding the alien canoe. Flappings rowed by the wind-sheets bleached by the magic of white demons. Landfall. The Captain strolls. Then vanishes. Or never happening-like.

1788. White devils return. To imprisonment sentenced by white devils. Magic walls. Wide enough for devils and their magic. 14,000 miles thick. Penalisation. Sounds like penis. Sounds like penetration. 1788 + 'penalisation' = 'Seriously fucked. Mate.' And the agonising birth of Anipodean Gothic is born a birth tearing out and a harrowing burst from the waters cry out with the crows, and their glassy black eyes, stolen from the sockets of the spirit-singing-walkers for penalisation or spirit incineration and Imperial rape. Robert Hughes. Historian. "...not Utopia, but Dystopia. Not Rousseau's man moving in moral grace amid free social contracts." "Man coerced, exiled, deracinated, in chains."² Robert Hughes. More. "English lawmakers wished not only to get rid of the 'criminal class' but if possible to forget about it. Australia was a cloaca, invisible, it's contents filthy and unnameable."³ Antipodean Gothic. Born of dislocation. Born of punishment. Born of land rape or theft or whatever else you want to call it. Hughes. Again. "To most Englishmen this place seemed not like a mutant society but another planet – an exiled world." "It was remote and anomalous to its white creators. It was strange but close, as the unconscious to the conscious mind." And then Hughes is reaching foresight in hindsight through the generations: "In Australia, England drew a sketch for our own century's vaster and more terrible fresco of repression, the Gulag."⁴

No other country born-becoming like this. A penetration nation. A stolen nation. A jailhouse nation. The alien nation. In expanse. It is the social dismemberment. Like none other. It is the ultimate manic manifestation of the alien irrational = Anipodean Gothic = incognition smoothed over with pie crustings homemade and daintily yes yes yes welcomemade by the wedding rung fingers of fibreglass fifties-ladies who smile in the shop fronts orally. Ah, but the Australians hate the idea of being an irrational society. The reaction, therefore: so many – but not all – as not all never-mind the bollocks or a significant other Anglo-Aussies desperately cherish the bland. Pray-palms together, tips to the maker and meek-like posed that palliation the horror of life's Un-reason. And there are Australians like Werder too. Werder the Gothic provoking man with the pointy forefinger sharpening-tip-tongue two step. Werder celebrates the vital reality of the irrational. They hate him for it. He's the reminder of mass social dementia and the apathy of a morphination. This horrific isolation. Dislocation. Subjection. Loss. And a country sadly founded

on 'fuck you'. Mate. Sadly. Do not go gentle not gentle at all.

And it's only been 220 years. That's the plain – oceanplaned erosion exposed fact of it. Bald as a Prima-Donna at the May-time fair. If Koori people are indigenous. Everyone else is an immigrant. There's no bollocks about that. If the Koori is indigenous then everyone else is possibly thieving or accomplicing the very least of an uninvited guest with a taste for blindeye turning at the rape scene. This stealing nation, founded on lie and abuse and blood payment all round. And then the catastrophic question: how can we give it back when we've gone too far in the buggery-invasion? The cities exist now. Multiculturalism was always on its way to this land. So maybe it's about respect.

2008. The Australian Prime Minister offers an official apology to the Koori people. But we aren't leaving. The Empire stays. And we all politely pay in blood. So then where does the conversation go? Or an irrational impasse.

1940. July. 2542 Jewish aliens. Bullied onto ships. Deported from England. Werder becoming the convict. Lives out the Antipodean demon birth. Beginning with a 'hell-ship'⁵ named the *Dunera*. Conditions are squalid. Possessions taken by thieves dressed as thieves in soldiers' vaudevilles. Headed for Canada. Landfall in Australia. Bummer. Mate. Considered German national. Imprisoned for the duration of World War 2. Isolated. In camp. In desert. Magic walls. Wide enough for devils. 14,000 miles thick. Seriously fucked. Mate.

Suffering.

Boaz Bischofswerder. Liturgical Composer. Cantor of Berlin. Father of Felix Werder. Also bullied on to the *Dunera* and then writing out short songlines of underdeck nightmarish-shortwitheringtime story short story of brutality. By Boaz: "As we were pushed down, we were clubbed with the rifles and when a man and when a man slipped and when a man slipped, slipped and fell, those who followed fell over him, over him." "The sergeant swung his big stock as if to kill an ox. It was deliberate sadistic brutality."

ox. It was deliberate sad -."

ox. It ox. It ox

ox. It was deliberate sadistic brutality."

"Detached and apathetic, we encountered walls, detached and apathetic tables or apathetic and detached benches. We stopped caring as to what will come next."⁶

Nazis or white devils or Imperialists or colonial madness or simply irrational or as Werder wrote: "the internment policy represented a subtle British version of one odious Nazi doctrine – the doctrine of the eternal alien."⁷ In this alien nation.

The *Dunera*. Passage of imprisonment. The path incrementally swallowed. Felix elaborates: "As time passes and the *Dunera* event disappears into history, I am left a little wiser, a sadder man to realize that nobody ever learns anything from history. The same bourgeois idiots worship the same values they did then. They build their swimming pools in gold as they dance around the golden calf of their ignorance. The only people who learned from the *Dunera* were the ones who did not need the lesson in the first place. The Greeks were wrong after all. Aeschylus teaches that man must suffer to be wise. He is utterly wrong. Koheleth (Ecclesiastes) is right when he says, "The wiser you are, the more worries you have."⁸

Early 1950's. 6 years after release. The cruellest irony. Boaz falls seriously ill. Werder seeks medical care. Desperate. Werder joins the army who beat his father. Medical care is received. Boaz begins collecting pocket watches. And measures out the time.

By erosion stories 'til hardened. Antipodean Gothic is fuelled. And their retelling. Dis. Location. Emotional. Physical. The ache of a rock and a hard place. The persistence of sheer will against the nightmare. The stealing. The denial. The awakening. The passion for suffering reduction. Or working together. The spirit resuscitations. Excess and transgression or the resistance against the forgotten invisibility of the cloaca malaise. But there is moremuchmore vibrating in the vibration spaces and reverberant gapings spilling vibrately across the open shimmering plains or forests of sometime rain pouring out vibration to meet the humming-line in evening light where the skymoremoremoreskybiglungbillowing muchmoremuch hammers down on the humming-line of the retina-compassing horizontal. And within the nation we find Gothic variation, particularly between the bigtime cities Sydney or Melbourne. Sydney was a jail, and the orifice of the Criminal Gothic within that city must surely be Kings Cross - slung between barracks and CBD, the orgiastic fun park interface for civilian, officer and gangster. As Tim from the 'harbour town' pointed out to me recently - she's home of the plastic party-hat and 4 am. Or Melbourne born of greasy greed and the free-hold 1850s gold rush style in excess and transgression of all that glitters with nothing to do but party while life-gambling-gimps stand knee deep in crap, bottom-of-the-shaft-wise anus in a sacred land. We pound out muchmoremuch bigger holes than that today. Opulent and with Victorian opiated splendour, the tram city grew in thriving, and the entertainment only ever stopped with the last sorry draft. Or mostly though, we thieved this place off the Wurundjeri people with our trinkets. John Batman (1801-1839) and the founding gang bartered an annual fee - politely paraphrased as The Batman Treaty of June 6 1835. 40 blankets, 30 axes, 100 knives, 50 scissors, 30 mirrors, 200 handkerchiefs, 100 pounds of flour and 6 shirts. Now there's a piece of history we don't celebrate with a public holiday. Besides, it kinda makes you feel crook-looking when you look back sometimes.

And yet, and after all, Gothic is moremoremore than miserable stories and hardening.

262 AD. A 500 year thumping begins. The Goths. East Germanic. Thumping Roman Governments. New governments are established. Italy. Spain. City states. Or elsewhere. The Classical Empires. The Goths. Bitter residue. One pro. One anti. Two Gothic perspectives arise. Perspective one: the Empire perspective: Goth is alien. Barbarian. Tribal. Vulgar. Unacceptable. Perspective two: the Germanic perspective: Goth is home. Home style. Acceptable. Honest. Direct. Nevermind the bollocking.

Art. Architecture. Language. All mapping out the differences. Goth is is is. Cherish the arabesque and contrast. Complexity. Child-becoming of the Black Forest. Seeking out the pouring knowledge of suffering in flesh. Critique. Confront. Reality. Collectively. As is. And not what you'd like to be seeking out a reduction in suffering through suffering confronted in flows on to a knowledge of suffering then, a standard seeking improved of living but knowing that the suffering must play out its bitter game as bitterness in the unavoidable otherwise and framed: Birth. Paying in blood. A ragged collection of flickering broken light moments. Paying in blood. Death. Nature. Do it to ourselves or liberation = death.

Classical Empire is is is. Cherish the symmetry and the evenline. Monoliths. Child of Acropolistic purity. The pure knowledge-organing of power and wealth. Transform the imperfect life. Reality is purity. The monarch is purity. Order is right. Power. Wealth. Pleasure is coercion.

The pleasure empire is the blood-banker of the foe paying out for forking it out and then the slipstreamfreeride for the chosen adored and few: Birth. Recalcitrance. Purification. Pleasure. Death. Liberty and freedom = only for the pure colliding. And against purity then: This Gothic madness is excess. Or Gothic is this transgression. Gothic is the alien. This impure Gothic is then. And Gothic this is then the vehicle of terror. Hollywood horror Imperial and it amazes me that another colonial nation would make the film *Alien* when the colonies were impregnated by us the Anglo-morphic-film-makers or maybe that's why it's as horrific as narcissism or rather then is Gothic is irrational. That others might do to us what we do to those. This irrational. Irrational is. This. Irrational. Irrational. Irrational is irrational. Rational. This Irrational. Irrational. Irrational. Is Irrational this rational. This is.

1144. The curious fact of technological advancement. And the curious fact of the co-existence of old and new technologies in the Gothic way. Abbot Suger (c. 1081-1151). Commissions technologically advanced architects. Abbey of St-Denis. Rebuilt. First stoneorganbuiltstructureplace in the Gothic Architectural Style. A technological style. Gothic and the uncertain kiss of technological progress and questioning or wary while inventing laterally and the warning or Frankenstein. The pointed arch replaces the semi-circle arch. Arches reaching higher now. Replace these stonewalls with glass and light reaching higher now outstretched and interlacing lines in tracery. Flying buttress providing the key. Engineering the balancing act. The push and the pull of stone. Weights. Building skeletal. Weights lighter in weight and plumed in luminant tracery or light lines colored in from the sky-hammering down on the humming-line against glass colored in. Luminous. Towering in height. "Now this vision on earth descended from heaven"⁹ in transparency.

And this was an insult, yes, yes, yes a very deep insult, to the Romanesque style – a Mediterranean style born of the memory of great empires. This new technological style was full of maddening complexity and filigree. Slandered it they did and called it Gothic. Like those bastards from the north. As Gothic.

The Goths, the Germanic societies, of course, loved it. It was, in fact, the ultimate political incursion. The alien voice + technology = the dominant style. Goths and asymmetry had found the front page of the medieval vogue. And that's some kick ass advertising or billboard in the heart of the other land.

Contained in Europe + Classical Imperialism + Gothic Communities = a claustrophobic cauldron of boiling opposition. Rational. Irrational. Monarchy flinting with communalism. Like lovers who get off on a fight. One is the mother. The other is the father. One is the conscious as reality. The other is the subconscious as reality. Together bearing their litter of ADD children. And what better way to break the waters than with the ass slap of Revolution is the first gasp of lifebillowingintothe lungs and out. These children are communal government. Are parliament. Are communism. Are capitalism. Are democracy. Are the bastard military rule known in the vernacular as the fascist state. It's political. And the Gothic if it is to be understood irrationally or otherwise is political. The politics of challenging the illusion of purity and pricks who declare themselves god within a nutshell. And it is the acceptance to be living in contract with must-of be paying in blood. Must-of even when the hay is high time. Or the breathing is so low don't go, don't go, don't you go low or gentle into that good night.

1991. An essay. *The German Tradition*. By Werder. "In German art, the restless, the tortured and the limitless has always been a way of life – a life which gave no respite from poverty, despair and revolutions that culminated in the horrors of the 30 Years' War (1618-1648). This then is the world

of the German artist."

And Werder must-of course continues. "Albrecht Altdorfer represents the German Renaissance in Danubian Lands. His painting *The Battle of Arbel* is the epitome of complexity. The battle scene with its armies of thousands is completely dwarfed by the clash of swirling clouds in a screaming sky. So begins that German expressionism which reaches down the ages through Bach on to the famous painting by Munch of *The Scream* and on again to the music of Arnold Schoenberg." And there's more to course and on again: "It's a picture which, in its complexity, tells a narrative which requires time in the viewing. There you have the secret of German art."¹⁰ The beauty of complexity. But more importantly the aesthete is to directly ask: How is expressionism beyond Gothicism? Are they not merely words attached to the same gigantic complex phenomenon? Or is not rational is this then after all.

And then there is World War II. Fascism. German. The colossal failure of humanity. Rational irrationality in a bloody nightmare bastard of Imperial Gothicism.

And then there was 1956-1975. The Vietnam War. Misery again. Misery again. Misery again. Misery again. Misery again. Misery again. So as not to forget the bitterness of war. Just in case. 1973. Hullick is born. 1973. *Banker*. For synthesizers, percussion, guitar and piano. By Werder. A scathing Antipodean criticism directed at mongers of war and all who ride with Mars. And his bitch-demon dressed as Joseph Raymond McCarthy or more locally the Australian government who said yes yes yes. Original *Banker* LP liner notes. [As pointed out by Warren]. By Werder. "*Banker* is a music theatre based on the opera *Agamemnon* after Aeschylus. The title is taken from a passage in the play in which the poet talks of the futility of war. And angry hate prevails, they send forth men to battle and what now returns. Their vacant armour and a little dust in urns. For war's a banker, flesh his coinage."¹¹

The mostly Antipodeans hated Werder for this and his other tellings of it.

Do not go gentle or in Werder's words on *Banker*: "The classical instruments are symbolic of humanism which is eventually destroyed by the machine of war."¹² Synthesizers used to describe the shit things technology can do. A Gothic mistrust of new technology for the mindless. A Gothic aspiration that in combining old and new technologies to serve the humanistic pursuit of enlightenment that some alleviation of suffering must result for there to be worth in invention. Confront suffering with rage and moremuchmore rage against the dying of the light tracery. Flickering.

There is brutality in *Banker*. There is sarcasm. There is empathy. There is the overall feeling of hopelessness swallowed by an electric gonging and the heralds of State murder. An Australian hopelessness. The hopelessness of being pinned to the Antipodean backside of the Imperial-vision planet. The populist Australians hate to acknowledge it. But we are a small and infant country of outsiders and misfits. And there are many of us who in a desire to be liked by the hip guys will internationally kiss any arse we can get our lips on. We have wealth, prosperity and naivety in equal measure. There is no bill of rights. A piffling shadow of a constitution. And we freely pay in blood – in lashings all the moremuch up the ladder to nowhere. We are every other nation's foreign policy wet dream. Australia. The idiot half brother Government. Dragged into the bully-boys nonsense wars. Oh please bully boy, can we please make sure we die for no sane reason? While the women come and go, talking of Michelangelo. Werder knew it and made it known.

And then, for me and for Werder and Burt, the disappointing realisation. How many other musicians spoke out? Not many. Not in Australia. Don't have an opinion or you won't get a gig. It's like Australia in Iraq. Another monolithic paranoid catastrophe of moral colonisation, sanitized for those back before the flickering cathode back at home in our lounge-rooms. Australia fought there for years. And yet the general community of artists - and musicians in particular - show little dissent. Nobody gives a shit. [btw Australian slang]. Ours is a land peppered with poppy-eaters. And as long as you can spend then who cares anyway or bring on the debt as long as I get me mine and the working families get theirs. They have their pleasure. Pleasure as coercion. Like Marseilles on steroids with petrol and mobile phones. So the majority don't complain. They just quietly pay in blood. While the corpses pile up. Or the minority search determinedly for like-minds.

And it's not as if there hasn't been anything to bitch about over the past decade in Antipodes. The soaring cost of living. The soaring cost of housing. Squandering the massive incomes of the mining industry on poor governance and things that go 'ping'. An astronomical foreign debt. Fighting other people's wars. A contemporary immigration policy that has a habit of rivalling the draconian racism of World War 2. Multi-million dollar golden handshakes. Environmental rape. Global Warming. A third world nation within a nation where aboriginal communities are left to rot. The collapse of local industry. The skills shortage. Baby boomer locusts. A collective fumbling for the vision of our souls largely hocus-focussed and mediocriticised. And much more much residue from our volcanic or traumatic Antipodean evolution. In some ways I'd hate to be born today 'cause it's so far gone. Or maybe it's our job-of-work to do. But the children are still going to pissy when they surmise what we have squandered.

Electronic sound as a political tool; where Werder excels, I reckon, mate. Vietnam provided the *raison d'être*. It kept Werder at his critical best. The CD *The Tempest* bears three compositions written and performed during the Vietnam years. 1973 *Banker*. 1974 *The Tempest*. 1971 *Oscussion*. They all utilize electrocution as a means of throwing light on mechanisation at its bullshit worst. Beyond Vietnam and the machine of war the electronic interest wanes. Maybe Werder got bored. 1994. *Electrocuted Music*. An essay. By Werder: "Do let us consider whether communication in recognisable symbols is not at least as important as self expression. No one wants to prevent the artist from breaking new ground or experimenting towards an imagined solution, but to simply twiddle knobs and hope that something will happen is plainly nonsense. It is a distortion of the function of the artist in society to hail him as some sort of priest or prophet who advances mankind into some new world of solipsistic metaphysics."¹³ Werder turns from electronic sound as a voice of the machine age. He is a Gothic nature loving tree-hugger after all. And yet. Werder takes inspiration from these 'new' sounds of the electronic mechanised machinations, 'electronic music has forced composers to rethink, and hear afresh, the sound phenomena of traditional instruments, and so create an art which is meaningful in the twentieth century and applicable to twentieth century problems.'¹⁴ There is a new timbral and rhythmic awakening in Werder's work that supports a new intensity in his expressionist compositional life. The composer becomes philosopher, a philosophy born in pain. In alienation. In blood.

2008. As I sit here in my study and listen to these works, I find them so refreshing. They have a grainy realism about them and contrast so strikingly with the electronic music fashions of today. No regular back beats. No drones. No vacuous white noise. No algorithms. No slick production. No dilantants. No Gothic shells without organs. No bullshit. Just expression. Just politics. Just humanism. I hear the great things outsiders have done in this country. The revolution of the 8 hour day - Labour Day - and workers' rights. Koori vote. Australian Feminism. The Department

of Human Services. The all too short-lived period of free tertiary education, cut short by arsehole neo-cons who were educated for free. The public health system. The Apology so graciously received Koori-style.

Or considering and just as Werder is born in German Gothic and doppelganger expressionism, he is very much an Antipodean composer, an outsider amongst the outsiders, and absolutely-brutally not mistaken otherwise by the Germans. And his depth of honesty in local Gothic vision and commitment is clear through his pursuit of Antipodean issues – such as Australia in Vietnam - *in his music and at the time the issue arises*. It's one thing to say it on the street and another to imbed it in your art. It's a further further thing to generate your own unique artistic voice through the act of expressing issues. Werder did this: Electro-acoustic sound was very young when he created the Vietnam works, and his contribution is individual and bold. And this goes some way to explaining his disinterest in the fashions of international isms. Besides, any half-wit knows that if a contemporary art movement has been around long enough for you to bend down and pucker up, then you've missed the boat. Ironically, it is our dislocation, our otherness our strangeness of fruit that is our strongest suit. That's what the better-dreamed world wants to know. That's why this Werder CD is doing so well and that's why Warren Burt was so keen to make it happen. Warren understood.

Know that Werder has not been alone in his Antipodean plight. There have been other delicious recalcitrants. I remember the 20th century painter Albert Tucker (1914-1999), who's work so irrationally inspired me in my teenage years, and I remember his own Gothic defiance: "Tucker himself was a Gothic character, delighting in painting the dark side, the depths. The devil was real to him. The stories he told about his life were mesmerising, incantatory tales – florid, extreme, judgemental, passionate, evocative. Tucker elected to paint the human condition at its nadir. His best series, *Images of Modern Evil*, describes wartime Melbourne as it had never been seen before: a living hell of licentious, red-lipped, uncontrollable monsters who prowl the street, intent on orgiastic pleasures."¹⁵ The defiant ones are out there, palliated by the gentle flow of suburban dreams. And they emerge through time.

2004. Melbourne. My hometown. Werder's hometown. *The Melbourne Gothic*. An Article about visual artists. By Ashley Crawford. Melbourne art critic. "Over the past few years a new group has appeared in alternative spaces in Melbourne. While their works differ dramatically in style and approach they are linked by their intrigue into the world of ideas, the gothic, the grotesque; they share an awareness of film and a fascination with the creation of fictional worlds."¹⁶ Crawford names the visual artists in this community: Ricky Swallow, Sharon Goodwin, David Noonan among others. It has a contemporary sound too, though much more a current than personas or individuals. It shows up all the time and on its own time. There are noise artists like Darrin Verhagen and art music complexity guys like Chris Dench, there are alternative grunge artists, Nick Cave, comes to mind. It's a full-blooded scene in Melbourne – with all its glitter and resonances. Gothic is a vein running through, surrounded by others. Gothic is alive and well in Antipodes – mutated by the trinkets and issues of our times: "They also share an interest in contemporary life. It's as though they are into sampling and techno culture, things picked up from magazines and television. While there may be an underbelly, a dark side, they are also immersed in pop culture."¹⁷ The danger then is shape without substance. When I think of Werder's use of sonic asymmetry and mechanisation as an act of political defiance, I am aware of the pressure he places on the contemporary scene not to drop the baton. Or not to allow the meaningful opportunity to slip slide. Or maybe it doesn't go away, but waits. And it's bleeding through in the concert halls, the pubs, bars, theatres and galleries in creative spaces everywhere

Alien Nation

and that's part of the legacy of those like Werder or Albert Tucker – that the Gothic gallops on.
Like horses over the hill.

So now the Australians love Werder. *Dunera* and Vietnam were so long ago after all. As new waves of trauma roll into our shores, Australia has sought insulation rather than isolation. In the land of sheep's wool the political activist is tolerated and muffled in pleasantly presented segments on the evening news of blood to be quietly paid from within the padding of the magic pudding, 14,000 miles thick. To keep the memories out. Or immigration out. Or the devils in. So the others won't see. Politely smile and shake the hand as old-man-Werder-thankings humming on the humming-line and his old-man-rantings humming or fade into the noise of gentle night noise good night don't noise now go gently now or fade into the noise

of night traffic

in a stolen land.

Bravo. Encore.

Epilogue:

1983. Then there is my favourite Iranian Australian poet friend Mammad Aidani writes to his family back home: "I am so worried about you. I have not heard from you for so long. The war is still going on. I am so worried about my solitude, and lack of sleep, my deep isolation in this city and my mental restlessness and not knowing the language. I feel that I am suddenly buried within my memories."¹⁸

2008. Australia pulls out of Iraq. So that we can focus on Afghanistan.

It just never ends.

The Antipodean Gothic rolls on, with the tanks on the humming line horizontal far away from prime-time insulation and yet so close in and suffocated under the hammered by sky, ocean, land: this, expanse.

What is the mind?

Or P.S.:

By Werder. And acerbic back in black wit. From *Folie à Deux*. An essay. 1994. "The concert going public plays it safe. They barrack for the winning team of secure opinion. It takes its pleasures, like the good necrophiliac it is, with the dead works of art. No danger of conceiving a new idea here. The art executant becomes a sort of master embalmer, spending many years acquiring the skill with which to interpret the symbols of the past. He, too, has a vested interest in the status quo. Bertrand Russell, like the Bard, had a good quote for everything, and he defines a decadent age as one in which the appreciator is thought of more highly than the creator."¹⁹

Like water poured into water.

Transparency.

Or a fatal shore.

NOTES

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- ⁴ Hughes, Robert, *The Fatal Shore*, London: Collins Harvill, 1987, p.2
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- ⁶ *ibid.* p.47
- ⁷ *ibid.* p.61
- ⁸ *ibid.* p.60
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- ¹⁵ Burke, Janine, *Australian Gothic*, NSW: Random House Australia Pty. Ltd., 2002, p. XV
- ¹⁶ Crawford, Ashley, *The Melbourne Gothic* in: *Australian Art Collector*, Issue 24, April-June 2003, p.86
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*
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Aspects of Conceptual Composing¹

Volker Straebel

Dr. Annette Wigger in memoriam

The title of this paper refers to the exhibition *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*, which was presented by the New York Cultural Center in 1970.² “Conceptual” here appears as an adjectival description for an art that no longer defines itself fundamentally through the medium of its physical manifestation, but instead takes place in the realm of ideas, in light of which the medium in which these ideas are communicated loses significance. “Idea Art”³ designates the same concept, while the composite term “Konzeptkunst” soon caught on in the German language. “Conceptual Aspects” elevates what was initially an adjectival modifier to the status of subject: an aspect is first of all an aspect of something; “aspectare” denotes attentive regard or contemplation, which always necessitates a subject. The use of the word “conceptual” in “conceptual aspects” implies that above and beyond “conceptual art” (an art of ideas), there is the imagination itself, an elementary way of relating to the world through “imaginal regard”. The basic thesis of the following reflections is that there is as much opportunity for aesthetic experience on this level of “imaginal regard” as there is in dealings with physical artistic artifacts.

Aesthetic experience presupposes a relationship to the world. One would scarcely say that one had aesthetic experiences solely of or with oneself. Even authors who take a critical stance toward a pure aesthetics of reception concede that sensory perception of an object or event in the world precedes the aesthetic experience: “Das Kunstwerk [ist] als für den Sinn des Menschen dem Sinnlichen entnommen”⁴ (Hegel).

Perception presupposes the spatial as well as temporal presence of the perceiver and the object of perception. It always occurs in time: I observe an object, walk around it, and get to know it from various perspectives. The perceptual object thus constituted does not suddenly reveal itself as a concept, such as I might have of a cube, rather it *arises* as a function of cognition. Sartre formulates in this context: “on doit *apprendre* les objets.”⁵

So, too, with the perception of an occurrence: I observe an event that takes place in the immediate present, and likewise constitute a perceptual object, which this time, however, is experienced not as something perceived in time, then disengaged from it, but as something whose temporal core inheres.

Common to both cases of perception is that their objects, with their abundance of attributes, always exceed one’s consciousness of them, and so perception is never complete: “C’est cette infinité de rapports qui constitue l’essence même d’une chose. De là quelque

chose de *débordant* dans le monde des ‘choses’: il y a, à chaque instant, toujours infiniment *plus* que nous ne pouvons voir; pour épuiser les richesses de ma perception actuelle, il faudrait un temps infini.”⁶ (Sartre).

The image is thus different from the perception inasmuch as it is independent of the immediate presence, indeed even the existence or possibility, of what is imagined. Hume understood images and perceptions as contents of consciousness having different qualities: “Those perceptions, which enter with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*. [...] By *ideas* I mean the faint images of these in thinking and reasoning.”⁷ As memory or product of the imagination, therefore, the image lacks intensity in comparison with the perception.

Sartre interprets this assessment as a consequence of the illusion of immanence, in which he sees Hume’s understanding of consciousness and the contents of consciousness trapped. Namely, if one views consciousness not as “as a place peopled by small imitations [the images]”⁸ but as a structure that intends and indicates its objects in various ways (forms of consciousness), the assessment of consciousness and imagination as strong and weak perception no longer holds up. The perceiving consciousness slowly forms an eternally incomplete perceptual object, the imagining consciousness *posits* the imaginal object: “L’objet de la perception déborde constamment la conscience; l’objet de l’image n’est jamais rien de plus que la conscience qu’on en a.”⁹

That we can have not only perceptions but also images in an aesthetic mode has been shown most recently by Martin Seel in *Ästhetik des Erscheinens* [*Aesthetics of Appearance*].¹⁰ Even if one would not want to concur with Seel that an aesthetic experience necessarily calls for the special “appearance” of the aesthetic object, the concept of the aesthetic image as an “imagined manifestation” of the sensory encounter (perception)¹¹ nevertheless smoothes the way for an aesthetic experience beyond the immediate presence of the perceiver and the perceptual object. With this, it is possible to integrate objects and events (processes) that wholly or partially elude perception, due to their spatial extension, temporal duration or immateriality, into the art idiom.

An installation whose visual and/or acoustic elements go through constant random changes or non-repetitive permutations is an example of a perceptual object that cannot be perceived in its entirety, not just because of the structure of perception, but also due to the way it appears. In this case, every perception remains the perception of an excerpt that will not recur. (That art approaches natural beauty in this structure of essentially inexhaustible materiality is noted here in passing.)¹² But only when the installation is available to experience not just during public opening hours, but all its media can (potentially) be experienced continuously, does it establish a perceptual space whose presence matches the aesthetic imagination. Most long-term installations in public space achieve this, but so do some gallery works that, at the artist’s instruction, are not switched off when the gallery is closed.¹³

The aspect of the aesthetic imagination of real presence becomes especially vivid during long but time-limited events having the character of a performance (e.g. *calme étendue* by Wandelweiser composer Antoine Beuger, 1996/97, which lasts up to nine hours)¹⁴. A piece of music of nine hours’ duration necessarily eludes perception as a whole. The knowledge of its actual performance at the moment is available to an audience member who is absent from the room solely as an aesthetic image. Here the uncertain element of truth in such a projective image is in antithetical tension to the phenomenological structure of perception and imagination. When I leave the room, I can assume at any given time that the performance is going on, and something is happening in the performance space that follows the score (with which I’m familiar) and/or is related or similar to what I perceived at an earlier mo-

ment during the performance. This uncertainty nonetheless points to the uncertainty of any given *perception*, which can always deceive me. But my imagination cannot.¹⁵ Imagining, as a synthetic act, is always certain, for rather than telling me something about the world, it is solely the product of my assumptions.

(The contradiction may be aesthetically productive, but it is easily resolved: In imagining, consciousness posits an object that is not (necessarily) present or even existing; perception, on the other hand, posits an object that is necessarily present and able to be experienced through the senses. Projective imagination posits its object as present, but not at the moment, and not existing, and so implies a claim to truth other than that of simple imagination.)

The concept of aesthetic imagination also makes it possible to think about artifacts from different genres, performed at various times and places, as *one* work of art or music. An example of this is the long-term project *3 Jahre – 156 Musikalische Ereignisse – eine Skulptur* by Carlo Inderhees and Christoph Nicolaus,¹⁶ in which the authors establish a temporal sequence that extends over three years. At one-week intervals, premieres of ten-minute solo pieces by various composers and interpreters took place in Berlin's Zionskirche, and the arrangement of a 96-piece floor sculpture in the same space was altered. Going beyond the hermeneutic circle, whereby the part can only be understood in the context of the whole, but the whole only as the sum of its parts, here the perceiver's imagination is necessary to integrate the temporally discontinuous, heterogeneous individual elements into a whole. The aesthetic experience is formed in the complex melding of actual perception and recollective and projective imagination. That which takes place during the listening comprehension of a piece of music, the constitution of form in the listener's cognition while it is disengaging from the current present moment, now occurs in relation to a work still more diversified in terms of its media and spatiotemporal structure.

* * *

In the preceding reflections, I have compared sensory experience of the physical artifact, as was characteristic of aesthetic thought since Alexander Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* of 1750, with the aesthetic imagination. In the following, I would like to interrogate this figure of thought in the fields of conceptual music, conceptual art and performance art.

In his treatise *Musica*, Nicolaus Listenius in 1537 differentiated between the *musica practica* of the performance and the *musica poetica* of the composition: "Poetica quae neque rei cognitione, neque solo exercitio contenta, sed aliquid post laborem renquit operis, veluti cum a quopiam Musica aut Musicum carmen conscribitur, cuius fines est opus consummatum et effectum. Consistit enim in faciendo sive fabricando, hoc est, in labore tali, qui post se etiam artifice mortuo opus perfectum et absolutum relinquit."¹⁷ This enhanced the status of the work as musical text relative to the work as performance, and notation was no longer merely instructions for "setting music in motion", but a work in itself. It was a widely held idea among experts and aficionados around 1800 that music does not necessarily require performance.

However, this stance only makes sense in relation to *Tonkunst*, in which elements such as timbre, physical acoustic phenomena, or improvisation play no special role. The *opus perfectum et absolutum* is not solely a music aesthetical category, it also implies certain demands of the artifact under contemplation. Composing music and theoretical discourse about music are in a close reciprocal relationship.

The idea that a work does not exhaust itself in performance, that the performance of

the work might even be dispensed with, was taken up in the 1960s by exponents of Fluxus and conceptual art. In 1964 Giuseppe Chiari explained that the actions in his piece *La Strada* “may be performed or [a] recording of the performance may be broadcast. Or they may be announced, leaving the spectator [sic] to imagine the auditive events they represent. The author prefers announcing nearly all the actions and performing or broadcasting only a few of them.”¹⁸ Four years later, Lawrence Wiener, in a statement that since has become famous, described the basic suppositions of minimal and conceptual art: “1. The artist may construct the piece. 2. The piece may be fabricated. 3. The piece need not be built.”¹⁹

The distinction between the work and the realized object or event, and the differentiation between the author and the person who executes or performs the piece, seem self-evident and not very spectacular in the field of music. In the field of art, however, they portended a scandal. The artist’s practical manual skills suddenly lost significance and the unique character of the work was radically called into question. Instead, certificates were created with instructions for carrying out the work, such as the wall drawings of Sol LeWitt. It was no longer an artifact produced by an artist that was being dealt with, but rather the legitimization, sometimes even the obligation, to realize a concept created by the artist.

The integration of elements of a musical performative aesthetic into the idiom of the visual arts was consummated during the American Happening movement of the 1950s. An important conduit for dissemination was the course in *Experimental Composition* that John Cage gave from 1956 to 1960 at the New School for Social Research in New York, which was attended by the Fluxus artists George Brecht, Al Hansen, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow and Jackson Mac Low, and others.²⁰

From George Brecht’s notebooks one can see that Cage conveyed his thinking using the musical parameters of frequency (pitch), duration, amplitude (volume), overtone structure (timbre) and morphology. Each parameter describes a field of continuous values.²¹ Not all the parameters of an event in a piece must be determined in detail – the various parameters may be designed in isolation from one another, a *modus operandi* wholly indebted to composition practice in serial music. Cage’s students were especially fond of pieces in which only the entrances, duration, or frequency of sounds were composed. In *TimeTable Music* by George Brecht,²² the arrival and departure times in a train station are interpreted as entrance points in minutes and seconds. Each performer (their number and the instrumentation are not prescribed) prepares his/her own part, and performs it with the others in unexpected simultaneity. Precisely concurrent entrances of several different parts are possible.

Al Hansen derived the structure of *Alice Denham in 48 Seconds* from the position of the letters in the name of the then famous centerfold model.²³ Each letter corresponds with the number that denotes its position in the alphabet. The first numeral denotes the number of sounds, the second numeral the number of seconds in which the sounds are produced. In all, there are seven time frames in which certain numbers of sounds are to be played, divided into two movements. But the sum of these durations lasts 28 seconds, not 48, as the title might lead one to assume.

ALICE DENHAM²⁴

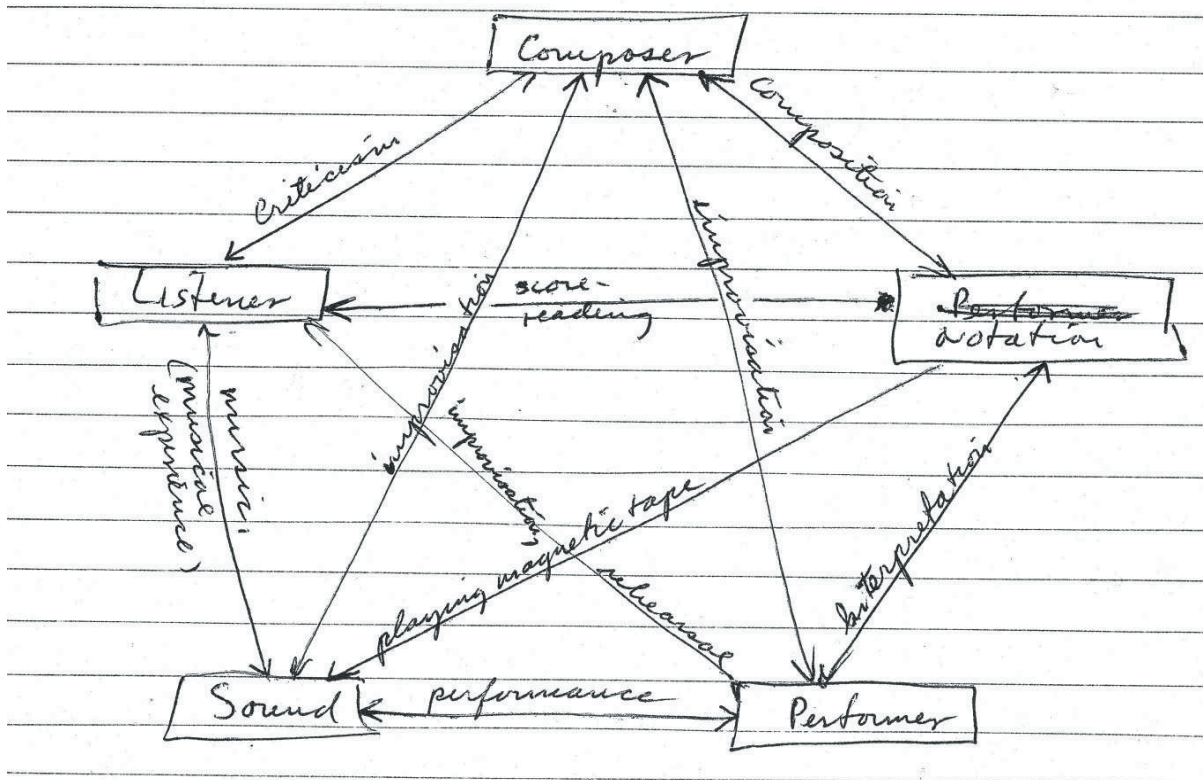
1, 12, 9, 3, 5; 4, 5, 14, 8, 1, 13

number of sounds	number of seconds
1	1
2	9
3	5
4	5
1	4
8	1
1	3

Alice Denham in 48 Seconds had its premiere in the Cage class, where it was done with acoustically interesting toys. The *Audio-Visual Group*, which came out of the Cage classes, later gave²⁵ performances that Al Hansen called *Music Happenings*.

Two other entrance and duration pieces became famous in the Fluxus concerts of the 1960s, *Solo for Sick Man* and *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* by George Maciunas, both from 1962. Maciunas did not study with Cage, but was quite familiar with his work through contact with the New York art scene. *Solo for Sick Man* lists 16 typical, usually noisy actions of a flu sufferer. Along with this list, there is a table in which seconds are to be filled in. Whether these signify duration or entrance times, and how these numbers are to be generated, remains open.²⁶ *In Memoriam to Adriano Olivetti* asks performers to use printed rolls of paper from Olivetti adding machines as parts, in such a way that each performer is assigned an action (with or without sound), which he/she performs when the assigned number is reached.²⁷ Here, though, a continuous pulse is established and simultaneously occurring actions in the timing are probable, since every performer uses another numerical sequence as a score. These performance pieces by visual artists can be understood as playful tentative steps into the foreign métier of music. But they also testify to the artists' awareness of the performative aspect, which up to then had not been taken into account.

In the notebooks George Brecht filled during the Cage classes at the New School, there is a draft for an unpublished article about *Notation and Performance*.²⁸ After several discarded attempts, Brecht finally arrives at a description of the relationships between composer, notation, performer, sound and listener in the form of a multidimensional diagram, which surmounts the linear relational structure of earlier models.²⁹ The *Composer* fixes a composition in *Notation*. This is interpreted by a *Performer* and translated into *Sound* in the performance. It is possible to have performances without an interpreting performer, namely by playing prerecorded music. The *Listener* hears the sound, whereby he/she first constitutes the music in his or her musical experience. But the listener can also read the notation directly. In an earlier model, Brecht also took into account the ambient sounds that enter into the listener's experience. As he defined it in this context: "The composer-performer interaction gives rise to sound free to be experienced. The sound-listener interaction is music."³⁰



In this thinking about the aesthetics of reception in music, listeners and their perceptions and experience acquire decisive significance. Now "the listener as virtuoso" appears.³¹ "For the virtuoso listener all sounds may be music."³² In the multidimensional diagram, George Brecht applies the term music solely to the relationship between the listener and the acoustic event. Brecht seems to view other elements of conceptual thinking about music as not necessary to the understanding of music. One is tempted to interpret this stance in light of his *Project in Multiple Dimensions* (1957/58), in which Brecht conceives of his artistic conduct as activity in a multidimensional mediated and semantic space.³³ Music for him – in contrast to John Cage – is not an integrative concept, but the aesthetic reception of acoustic phenomena, only one dimension of a multidimensional artistic situation.

Even before his encounter with Cage, George Brecht had dealt with aspects of chance in art. As a trained chemist, he was familiar with mathematical statistics, and as an artist he, like Pollock, had experimented with the chance application of colors in painting. He crumpled up long lengths of fabric, painted the outer surface, and then observed the result when the fabric was unfolded.³⁴ So for Brecht, the aleatory openness of the performance pieces created in the Cage classes probably was not a new experience. Brecht's involvement with music was guided much more by the visual artist's interest in critically questioning his own working processes. So he moved from performance pieces on the one hand and objects on the other to their combination in the Event.

In 1959 George Brecht had a solo exhibition at the Reuben Gallery in New York titled *Toward Events*. He later explained this title, commenting that he had been increasingly unsatisfied with the emphasis on the acoustic aspects of a situation and that "The word 'event' seemed closer to describing the total, multisensory experience I was interested in than any

other.”³⁵ Among the objects in the exhibition was *The Case*, a picnic basket filled with various objects. The instructions for dealing with the object note: “*The Case* is found on a table. It is approached by one or several people and opened. The contents are removed and used in ways appropriate to their nature. The case is repacked and closed. The event (which lasts possibly 10–30 minutes) comprises all sensible occurrences between approach and abandonment of the case.”³⁶ The visual artist thus integrates his sculpture of the packed picnic basket into a performative situation in which visitors to the exhibit interact with the sculpture in ways prescribed by the artist’s score. The recipient becomes a participant.

In other Events, the relation between author, audience, score, object and situation dissolves still further. The *Chair Event* from 1962 describes a sculpture in the form of a verbal score, one which Brecht himself also had (repeatedly) performed:³⁷

CHAIR EVENT

on a white chair

a grater
tape measure
alphabet
flag

black

on spectral colors

Just as with a piece of music, however, the score can also be performed by someone else. Or one reads the score and leaves it to the imagination (as we do now).

And so we return to the phenomenon of the aesthetic imagination. In aesthetic experience, the object disappears behind the image one has of it. This image need not be developed from a physical artifact by the perceiver him/herself, but can be conveyed by other means.

The Zionskirche project by Inderhees/Nicolaus mentioned earlier is communicated by documentation drawn up by the artists. Here the text and the work that can be physically experienced are in an ambivalent relation to each other – for a composer this is not unusual. Unlike scores that serve as instructions for performance, this worktext was created after the conclusion of the project, which cannot be realized again. Members of the audience actualize the idea of the work in their imagination in the mood of the never-to-be-repeated past. The not-now and no-longer of the actualizing imagination become the never-again of the perpetually bygone realization.

Swiss composer Manfred Werder takes this unique character of the performed (not the performance), borrowed from art, to an extreme when he specifies that the extrapolations of his *Stück 1998* [*Piece 1998*] may be played only one time. So not only is the performance unrepeatable, as with performance art that cannot be reproduced, but also that which is played. The listener hears this music knowing that the sound sequences heard will never be played again, and so finds him/herself in a state of heightened presence, thanks to the aesthetic idea of the work communicated qua language. A concept beyond the sound that cannot be experienced through the senses significantly shapes the aesthetic experience. It is in this way that,

through their reciprocal relationship with the audience, works of conceptual art and conceptual music overcome their self-contained objectification and become what they are in the movement between the perceiving and imagining consciousness.

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NOTES

¹ The first part of this paper is based on reflections that I first set out in the essay *Wahrnehmung, Vorstellung und Erfahrung. Phänomenologische Überlegungen zur ästhetischen Vorstellung* in the program book of the Donaueschinger Musiktage 2003. An earlier version was presented at the concert series of contemporary music ensemble *incidental music* in Berlin, Germany in 2005. Translation from the German by AK Lerner.

² New York Cultural Center (ed.): *Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects*. New York 1970.

³ cf.: Gregory Battcock, *Idea Art. A Critical Anthology*. New York: Dutton, 1973.

⁴ G.W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992: vol. 1, p. 52. "The work of art, as being for apprehension by man's senses, is drawn from the sensuous sphere." Hegel: *Aesthetics. Lectures in Fine Art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 32.

⁵ JeanPaul Sartre, *L'Imaginaire. Psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*. Paris: Gallimard, 1940, p. 18. "One must learn objects" Sartre, *The Imaginary. A Phenomenological Psychology of the Imagination*. Trans. Jonathan Webber. London, New York: Routledge, 2004, p.8.

⁶ Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 20; emphasis in original – "It is this infinity of relations that constitutes the very essence of a thing. Hence, a kind of overflowing in the world of 'things': there is, at every moment, always infinitely more than we can see; to exhaust the richness of my current perception would take an infinite time." Sartre, *The Imaginary*, p. 9.

⁷ David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby Bigge. London: John Noon, 1739 (Reprint Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), p.1.

⁸ cf. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 14 – "Nous nous figurions la conscience comme un lieu peuplé de petits simulacres." – "We depicted consciousness as a place peopled with small imitations and these imitations were the images." Sartre, *The Imaginary*, p. 5.

⁹ Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, pp. 20–21. "The object of perception constantly overflows consciousness; the object of an image is never anything more than the consciousness one has of it." Sartre, *The Imaginary*, p.10.

¹⁰ Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 2003: especially pp. 120–131.

¹¹ Martin Seel, *Ästhetik*, p. 131, and elsewhere: "Immer aber zeichnet sich das ästhetische Vorstellen durch eine imaginierte sinnliche *Gegenwärtigkeit* des Vorgestellten aus." (op. cit., p. 125; emphasis in original) – "But the aesthetic imagination always is characterized by the imagined sensory *presence* of what is imagined."

¹² It was Adorno who, rejecting Hegel, rehabilitated the concept of natural beauty in aesthetic discourse: "Kunst ahmt nicht Natur nach, auch nicht einzelnes Naturschönes, doch das Naturschöne an sich. Das nennt, über die Aporie des Naturschönen hinaus, die von Ästhetik insgesamt. Ihr Gegenstand bestimmt sich als unbestimmbar, negativ." (Theodor W. Adorno, *Ästhetische Theorie*, eds. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973, p. 113.) – "Art does not imitate nature, not even individual instances of natural beauty, but beauty as such. This denominates not only the aporia of natural beauty, but the aporia of aesthetics as a whole. Its object is determined negatively, as indeterminable." (Adorno: *Aesthetic Theory*. Trans. Robert Hullot Kentor. London, New York: Continuum 2004, p. 94.)

¹³ An example of this is the sound installation, signed as a "sound drawing", *Möwe* [Seagull] by Akio Suzuki in the SFB Sound Gallery in February 2002. Cf. Volker Straebel, *Horizont und Himmel*, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Feb. 27, 2002, Berliner Seiten BS4.

¹⁴ The individual parts are published by Edition Wandelweiser: Haan 1996, 1997.

¹⁵ cf. Sartre, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 21. Sartre, *The Imaginary*, p.10.

¹⁶ Documentation in Selbstverlag der Künstler, Berlin and Munich 2000, cf. also Volker Straebel, *3 Jahre –156 Musikalische Ereignisse – eine Skulptur*, in: Dissonanz Nr. 62 (November 1999).

¹⁷ Nicolaus Listenius, *Musica. Ab autore denuo recognita multisque novis regulis et exemplis adaucta*. Norimbergae apud. Johan. Petreium anno 1549, ed. Georg Schünemann. Berlin: Breslauer 1927: unpag. caput I.

"Poetic is that which is not content with just the understanding of the thing nor with only its practice, but which leaves something more after the labor of performance, as when music or a song of musicians is composed by someone whose goal is total performance and accomplishment. It consists of making or putting together more in this work which afterwards leaves the perfect and absolute." Nicolaus Listenius, *Musica*. Trans. Albert Seay. Colorado Springs (Colorado): Colorado College Music Press, 1975, p.3.

¹⁸ Giuseppe Chiari, *La Strada*, in: *George Maciunas und Fluxus Editionen*. Cologne: Galerie und Edition Hundertmark, 1992, one of 20 unnumbered cards.

¹⁹ Lawrence Weiner [untitled statement], in: *January 531*, 1969. Exhibition catalogue Seth Siegelaub, New York 1969, unpag.

²⁰ cf. Bruce Altshuler: *The Cage Class*, in: *Flux Attitudes*, eds. Cornelia Lauf and Susan Hapgood. Gent: Imschoot Uitgeves, 1991, pp. 17–23.

²¹ “*Dimensions of Sound*: (1) *Frequency* – pitch hilow [sic], (2) *Duration* – duration longshort, (3) *Amplitude* – volume, (4) *overtone structure* – timbre, (5) *morphology* – attack body – decay” (George Brecht, *Notebooks IIII* (1958/59), ed. Dieter Daniels [photomechanical reproduction of the handwriting]. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 1991, vol. 1, p. 3).

²² Dated summer 1959, published in George Brecht: *WaterYam* (book box in various editions).

²³ cf. Al Hansen: *A Primer of Happenings & Time/Space Art*. New York: Something Else Press, 1965: pp. 96-97 and Dick Higgins: *Postface [=Jefferson's Birthday]*. New York: Something Else Press, 1964, p. 53.

²⁴ This is a reconstruction of the score from descriptions of the piece by Hansen and Higgins.

²⁵ cf. Hansen, *Primer*, p. 97 and p. 102, also Thomas Dreher, *Performance Art nach 1945. Aktionstheater und Intermedia*. Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2001, p. 29.

²⁶ Reprinted in: *In the Spirit of Fluxus*, ed. Janet Jenkins. Exhibition catalogue, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minn. 1993, p. 158.

²⁷ Reprinted in: *The Fluxus Performance Workbook*, ed. Ken Friedman, special edition *El Djarida*, Trondheim 1990, p. 39.

²⁸ George Brecht: *Notebooks IIII*, vol. 3, pp. 111, 114-131.

²⁹ op. cit., p. 127.

²⁹ George Brecht: *Notebooks IIII*, vol. 3, pp. 111, 114-131.

²⁹ op. cit., p. 127.

³⁰ op. cit., p. 121.

³¹ op. cit., p. 111.

³² op. cit., p. 123.

³³ cf. George Brecht, From “Project in Multiple Dimensions”, in: Henry Martin, *An Introduction to George Brecht's Book of the Tumbler on Fire*. Bologna: Multhipla Edizioni, 1978, pp. 126-127.

³⁴ cf. George Brecht and Irmeline Lebeer, *An Interview with George Brecht* [1973], in: Henry Martin, *An Introduction*, pp. 83-89, here p. 83.

³⁵ George Brecht, *The Origin of Events* [1970], in: *Happening & Fluxus*, materials compiled by H. Sohm, catalogue Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, 1970, unpag., in the artist alphabet in the second part of the book.

³⁶ George Brecht, *Toward Events*, in: *Happening & Fluxus*, unpag. chronology 1959.

³⁷ Undated, published in George Brecht: *WaterYam*; reprinted with pictures of two realizations in: Gabriele Knapstein, *George Brecht: Events*. Berlin: Wiens Verlag 1999, app., fig. 21.c

Alex Ross: **The Rest is Noise**

Douglas C. Wadle

Alex Ross has written a curious book – curious in content and its position within (and position on) a broader social/historical context. It is, perhaps, best read as an attempt by Ross to vindicate the psychology of the fictional composer Adrian Leverkühn, the anti-hero of Thomas Mann's *Dr. Faustus*, as the real pathology of modernist composers (primarily personified by Arnold Schoenberg), and therefore to play out the perceived "crisis of modernism" as allegorically predicted in Mann's novel, which truly was an allegory of Germany's descent into moral depravity under Hitler. Intellectualism becomes akin to barbarism, both presumed to devalue humanity. The tone is consistently anti-intellectual throughout, but it is an anti-intellectualism masquerading as soft-hearted populism, which makes the task of reviewing a delicate one, particularly if one is, as I am, unashamedly intellectual and ambivalent on the question of populism.

In spite of the author's claim in the preface that, "Two distinct repertoires have formed, one intellectual and one popular. Here they are merged: no language is considered intrinsically more modern than any other," (xiii), Ross does not value these repertoires equally. He is attempting to redress a perceived bias in the scholarly sphere towards a notion of "progress," yet he does not attempt any kind of redress of the bias in the performance sphere towards works considered "popular." Either each possesses its own sphere, or they should be (if attempting an even-handed approach as he claims) treated equally in both spheres. If it were left here, things would, perhaps, not be so bad, but soon the attack on intellectualism begins with its mash-up of Thomas Mann, Modernism, and Nazism: "Since *Faustus* is also a book about the roots of Nazism, Leverkühn's 'bloodless intellectuality' becomes, in a cryptic way, the mirror image of Hitler's 'bloody barbarism.' The cultish fanaticism of modern art turns out to be not unrelated to the politics of fascism..." (34). Along the way, the uncritically accepted assumptions upon which Ross bases his book are revealed. These are that the sole purpose of music is to entertain or, more high-mindedly, to edify, through the presentation of beauty, here construed as almost synonymous with tonality (particularly major thirds, which occupy a weirdly prominent place in his analysis of composers), that there is a natural basis for beauty in music and that tonality is congruent with this basis (hence all those thirds), that music is about self-expression through a personal and emotional voice (an irritating assumption, but not as immediately troublesome as the others), and that the free market is the proper medium for the evaluation of music.

The first of these biases is evident in such remarks as: "In the end, Gershwin reunited two sides of a composer's job that should never have been separated to begin with," (150) by which he means the roles of "highbrow artist and lowbrow entertainer," (150). This is a position that does not follow the necessities of logic or history in considering the question of the purpose of music and the function of its creators in society. It also, infuriatingly and against Ross's own presentation of himself as a non-polemical writer, leaves no space for the works of composers that have a different conception of the possibilities for music's place in society. Historically, anyone conversant with Renaissance music, much Baroque music, and certainly the music of the Ancient Greeks knows that the idea of music as entertainment had to be introduced, that it could just as easily be considered a force for ethical instruction, philosophical contemplation on the nature of the cosmos, a glorification of God, etc. It was not necessary for all of these functions to be enjoyed by large numbers of individuals, let alone any audience at all. Further, Ross's cultural blinders prevent him from considering the very different conceptions of music beyond the Western European and Anglo-American cultural realms. I thought, upon reading Ross's comment on Gershwin, of the tradition of Chinese literati sitting alone in quiet contemplation, performing softly on the *qin* (a type of zither),

and from this absence it is clear that Ross does not possess a broad enough conception of music to properly understand, for instance, the work of John Cage. Logically, it does not follow that the systematic arrangement of (musical) sounds need only serve the narrow purpose of entertainment any more than that the systematic arrangement of symbols of an alphabet should only be used to produce documents that amuse.

To side-step such arguments, Ross introduces the cultural trope of the angst-ridden artist: “Yet Mann knew what he was doing when he put his composer in league with the Devil. Faust’s pact is a lurid version of the stories that artists tell themselves in order to justify their solitude,” (35), which presumes that the artist feels a need to justify his or her solitude and that any such justification is akin to selling one’s soul to the devil, tearing asunder those “two sides of a composer’s job.” What is one to say in the face of this? Ross ignores history, ignores the practices of other cultures, and ignores the logical considerations of the very questions that many composers of the 20th Century were asking themselves (considering the nature of music and the functions it might play within society), thereby pathologizing any rebuttal to his assertion of the properness of composer-as-entertainer.

To bolster his argument against musical modernism, Ross latches on to nature, to the overtone series in particular, as a means of supporting the assertion that audiences will only respond to the sounds of tonal music. Aside from the extreme cultural chauvinism of his presentation, Ross also misrepresents or misunderstands the facts surrounding the relation of tonality as a system, the perceptual categories of consonance and dissonance, and the realities of psychoacoustics. The tendency in Ross’s thought towards over-simplified binary oppositions is here apparent: he presents his case as though only two options are on the table: tonality or atonality (à la Schoenberg). To be sure, the opposition of tonality and atonality would appear to be a semantic tautology, but in reality these labels are applied to particular musical styles (or techniques). Tonality, in particular, has come to mean something other than what Ross makes it out to be. This misunderstanding of the reality of tonality is at the heart of Ross’s misreading of Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre* (to be discussed later) and Hermann Helmholtz’s *On the Sensations of Tone*, which, in Ross’s words, “...tries to explain why certain intervals attack the nerve endings while others have a calming effect. At the head of Helmholtz’s rogue’s gallery of intervals was the semitone, which is the space between two adjacent keys on a piano. Struck together, they create rapid ‘beats’ that distress the ear,” (56). Anyone who has read Helmholtz thoroughly will be shocked to read this, and yet it comes to form the basis of Ross’s attack against atonality, and his argument in favor of tonality -- and particularly major thirds, about which Ross waxes poetic in discussions of Messiaen, Terry Riley, Sibelius, and others. Had Ross clearly understood Helmholtz (who never constructed a “rogue’s gallery of intervals,” but who scientifically studied the physiological and psychological mechanism in the apprehension of pitch) he would have felt compelled, I am sure, to disclose that those major thirds he loves so well are egregiously out of tune with their corresponding overtone of the fundamental pitch⁴, creating just the kind of beating Ross offers as evidence of the natural inferiority of atonality: “Similar roughnesses [beatings] are created by the major seventh, slightly narrower than an octave, and by the minor ninth, slightly wider. These are precisely the intervals that Schoenberg emphasized in his atonal music,” (56).

The extent of Ross’s misunderstanding of the relationship between the harmonic spectrum, tonality, and consonance/dissonance is apparent in his discussion of Messiaen’s “chord of resonance”, “...in which eight distinct pitches from the natural harmonic series sound together (C, E, G, B-flat, D, F-sharp, G-sharp, B-natural). Strongly dissonant in effect, it still has the C-major triad at its base – a ‘natural’ foundation for an abstract form,” (447). First, C-major is, in fact, the abstract form in this discussion, though Ross portrays it as “natural.” He is correct that these pitches are derived from a harmonic series (the first eight odd-numbered partials of the fundamental, C), though he glosses over the fact that they are equal-tempered approximations that will differ from their corresponding overtone by as much as a quarter-tone. The dissonance of the collection is ensured by their being forced through the prism of equal temperament, that E included. C-major, a unit of meaning only in reference to tonality, is in no wise “natural,” nor is the temperament in which

the pitches are presented. The invocation of the “naturalness” of tonal triads and of those lower partials of the overtone series as support for the “naturalness” of tonality is a refrain, disturbing for its lack of understanding of the materials it invokes, that occurs again and again: Of Sibelius’s 7th Symphony: “...it is made up of the ‘natural’ building blocks, thirds and fifths and octaves,” (169) or of La Monte Young, “Young has never written anything resembling conventional tonal music. For some reason his ears have an aversion to the fifth partial of the overtone series, which is tied with the interval of the major third. Without the major third, triads are impossible,” (495). Aside from the fact that, as any beginning theory student should know, triads are possible without the major third (the diminished triad), Ross is confusing the tonal interval with its nearest corresponding natural phenomenon (in the overtone series). Western music may have developed by stopping its harmonic considerations at the fifth partial (approximately the major third) prior to the introduction of temperament, the tempered third thereafter standing in for the pure third, but there was no necessary condition requiring things to develop in this way, as was pointed out by Harry Partch who, in mid-century, based his own individual style on the first eleven partials.

The trajectory of tonality was, then, inextricably bound up with the development of systems of temperament and the eventual settling on equal temperament (in which only octaves are pure, perfect fifths and fourths are quite good and everything else is noticeably out of tune with its corresponding overtone). The advent of temperament and equal temperament, in particular, lead to an interest in modulation and the use of the ambiguity of function of a given pitch based on its new-found enharmonic equivalence to some other pitch (before equal temperament the pitches G-sharp and A-flat were different)². In doing so, the practitioners and patrons of tonal music developed a tolerance for the out-of-tune-ness of their equal temperament, accepting their thirds, sixths, and sevenths beating and all; and so the aesthetic evaluation of consonance was unmoored from any absolute correlation with the psychoacoustical phenomenon of beats *through cultural practice*. Indeed, in Java, and now in much microtonal music, beating has not been overlooked but rather aestheticized. Javanese gamelan orchestras are tuned in pairs, one slightly higher than the other so as to create beats. In reference to our equal-tempered system, once one has accepted the beating of equal-tempered thirds, there is no reason to presume that one will be incapable of accepting the beating of equal-tempered seconds (as is already the case in many tonal contexts), and so Ross’s persistent argumentation for the “natural” beauty of tonal music (rendered on equal-tempered instruments) as opposed to non-tonal music, fails.

Ross marries these assumptions regarding the “naturalness” of tonality and the proper function of a composer to two assumptions strongly rooted in the current American Zeitgeist: anti-intellectualism and an unwavering faith in the free market as the arbiter of all value. The anti-intellectualism plays out like American politics, with snippets taken out of context to sully the character of the utterer rather than providing a refutation or discussion concerning the ideas contained in the original context. This treatment is particularly leveled at Schoenberg and Theodor Adorno (and Pierre Boulez gets quite a drubbing, too). Ross represents Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre* as follows: “*Harmonielehre* turns out to be an autopsy of a system that has ceased to function... To dramatize this supposed decline, the composer augments his discourse with the vocabulary of social Darwinism and racial theory... Schoenberg applied the concept of degeneration to music,” (59). Ross goes on to list some of the shocking terms found in Schoenberg’s book – strong words, indeed, though not as shocking as Ross paints them when encountered in their original context, peppered throughout a few hundred pages of text. Ross misses the metaphoric implication of tonality as an organic system (here enters some of the biological terminology about life and death and inbreeding – for the record, none of the terms listed by Ross, nor any I subsequently found in a casual re-reading of Schoenberg’s text carry any racist overtone). What Ross does not do is address the content of Schoenberg’s text, explain why Schoenberg sees tonality as having “ceased to function.” Of course, to do so would require a firmer understanding of the relationship between equal temperament and tonality than Ross seems to have at his disposal, but it is just this relationship that is the core of Schoenberg’s critique of tonality. At any rate, Schoenberg hardly sounds as dogmatic as he is painted when he writes: “Let the pupil learn the laws and effects of tonality just as if they still prevailed, but let him know of the tendencies that are leading toward their annulment. Let him know that the

conditions leading to the dissolution of the system are inherent in the conditions upon which it is established,”³ – by which Schoenberg means equal temperament allowing enharmonic equivalence.

The shift from discussion of ideas to the discrediting of the thinker by means of implicating him (always him in this book, though Ruth Crawford does get a brief nod) in some fascistic hatemongering is the single most disturbing aspect of this book. Throughout the text, Ross highlights modernist, intellectual composers’ racist and fascist tendencies (sometimes alleged, sometimes well-established) while offering apologies for the behaviors of his composer-heroes who had very real involvement with the Nazis (Sibelius, Strauss, Shostakovich, Orff): “Although Schoenberg opposed the Nazis unstintingly, he was hardly free from authoritarian impulses... in the course of running the Society for Private Musical Performance in Vienna, he said, he had become ‘a kind of dictator,’ and on encountering internal opposition, he did something ‘which under other circumstances would be called illegal: I dissolved the whole society, built a new one, accepted only such members who were in perfect agreement with my artistic principles and excluded the entire opposition.’ This is precisely how Hitler took power in 1933,” (322). No matter how asinine Schoenberg may have been, this comparison of Schoenberg to Hitler is like comparing an apple (the leader of an organization for the presentation of music with no intention of preventing other such organizations from forming and operating freely) to an orange (the leader of a totalitarian government bent on world domination and genocide). Ross also writes that “The Faust metaphor honors the dread that Schoenberg’s juggernaut inspired in early listeners,” (35) as if Schoenberg’s music had the power to silence all others, which it certainly did not – these are the years that gave us Stravinsky’s early successes – and, “Schoenberg, in 1908 and 1909, would unleash fearsome sounds that placed him forever at odds with the vox populi. Hitler would seize power in 1933 and attempt the annihilation of a people,” (10). Of others of a modernist bent: “As so often in the modernist saga, revolutionary impulses went hand in hand with intolerance and resentment. Ruggles and Varese muttered between themselves about consumerism and vulgarity that were ruining American culture, for which they tended to blame the Jews and the Negroes,” (13). On Boulez: “...he actually welcomed the infusions of German culture that were administered by the Nazi authorities,” (361).

However, on the (more tonal) Sibelius, after informing us that “In a message to Nazi troops... he allegedly said: I wish with all my heart that you may enjoy a speedy victory,” Ross counters that, “Privately, Sibelius was tormented by the promulgation of race laws in Nazi Germany...” (175). We are made to feel sorry for Sibelius’s sense of paralysis, one that is equally attributed to Nazism and modernist attacks on his music and amplified by alcohol. On Carl Orff, “The man may have been politically duplicitous, but his passion for teaching was profound, and it probably touched more lives than any music described in this book,” (184). On Shostakovich in relation to *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*: “Seen from one angle, then, *Lady Macbeth* is nearly an opera in the service of genocide. In other ways, however, it is anything but a propaganda work,” (226). Furthermore, Ross writes that, in spite of his service as president of the Reich Music Chamber, “Strauss’s behavior was not always as contemptible as it seemed,” (324) “...questions have been posed about Richard Strauss’s murky, unheroic behavior in the Nazi period, but they are the wrong ones to ask,” (218). If they are not the correct questions to ask of Strauss, Shostakovich, Sibelius, and Orff -- whose actions took place within the very real framework of two distinct genocidal campaigns -- why are they the correct questions to ask in reference to Schoenberg (who fled the Nazis) and a couple of grumbling anti-Semites who, as far as I know, limited their actions based upon their prejudices to the (still despicable) attempt to keep Jews out of a particular music society? (Copland and some of his associates formed a competing society because of this.) I raise this issue, not to implicate one side or the other, nor to pass judgment upon any of these composers, for I fully believe that the realities of survival at that time were such that I certainly cannot comprehend them. I raise the point to implicate the author’s charity towards populist composers and parsimony towards the modernist ones – to point out his reluctance to treat composers of differing dispositions equally.

This leads neatly to that other assumption, faith in the free-market. “A gap had opened between the ideal of modernism as the antithesis of mass culture and the reality of America as a marketplace in which absolutely anything can be bought and sold,” (138). Ross does not remain the

neutral observer of this phenomenon – no surprise given his statements regarding Gershwin. He bemoans a situation in which “the majority [of composers] make a living by teaching composition, and their students usually become teachers themselves... sooner or later they realize that modern popular culture has no place for a composer hero...” (515-516) and “New music played a very limited role in the Cold War arts bonanza. All the same, many American composers found themselves in a relatively happy situation... Colleges that once had only one or two composers on their faculty now had four or five... The institution of tenure gave the American composer unaccustomed feelings of financial and psychological security,” (400-401). He continues, “Of the multifarious strands of American music, one in particular began to prosper in the university environment: composition informed by twelve-tone techniques,” (401). Ross goes on to discuss such composers as Elliott Carter and Milton Babbitt, the latter having “produced music so byzantine in construction that one practically needed a security clearance to understand it,” (401). Ross reveals some of his own bias in the repeated use of the term “Byzantine”. On Ruth Crawford: “This earnest, self-deprecating woman went on to write some of the most fabulously byzantine music of her time,” (271). Of Steve Reich’s recollections of his not-now-famous fellow students: “Steve Reich remembers attending composition classes where students showed off byzantine scores whose intellectual underpinnings could be discussed ad nauseum. Then he’d go hear Coltrane play with his quartet,” (478). Given the valorization of American minimalists (who do not make their living as professors) that has been a cornerstone of Ross’s career as critic and his proclivity for linking modernist intellectualism with totalitarianism, not to mention his linking of anti-Byzantine sentiment with the irreproachable cool of John Coltrane, one can have little doubt as to Ross’s position on the effect of university support on the musical output of American composers: it allowed the sustenance of an “anti-social” form of music that no longer seeks to be both highbrow art and lowbrow entertainment. “Moreover, only in a prosperous, liberal, art-infatuated society could such a determinedly anti-social class of artists survive, or find an audience. The bourgeois worship of art had planted in artists’ minds an attitude of infallibility, according to which the imagination made its own laws. That mentality made possible the extremes of modern art,” (38). Ross prefers his music sociable and accessible, its sociability and accessibility, let alone worth, to be derived from the market economy that has made of Reich, Glass, and Adams our most “successful” American composers. One cannot miss the glee in the authorial voice when, with the assessment of these American composers behind us, Ross offers this on the future of modernist music in Europe: “The European modern-music utopia will not last forever. In recent years, as welfare-state economies have struggled to stay afloat in the global free market, arts budgets have shrunk. European composers may soon be confronted with the interesting challenge, long familiar to American composers, of writing for a paying audience,” (524).

The narrowness of Ross’s conception of musical success is startling coming from someone (as music critic of the widely circulated weekly, *The New Yorker*) with the power to significantly influence popular perceptions of composers living and dead. One thinks that Ross might be reaching a moment of self-reflection as he discusses the role Olin Downes, music critic for *The New York Times* from 1924 to 1955, played in the positive reception of the works of Sibelius:

...Downes believed that classical music should appeal not just to elites but to common people, and from the bully pulpit of the *Times* he boldly condemned the obscurantism of modern music – in particular, the artificiality, capriciousness, and snobbery that he perceived in the music of Stravinsky. Sibelius was different; he was ‘the last of the heroes,’ ‘a new prophet,’ who would rescue music from cerebral modernism. At heart, Downes’s motives were good; he wished to celebrate the music of the present and saw in Sibelius a serious figure of mass appeal. But his attacks on Stravinsky were merely tendentious. It would have been more productive to show what the two composers had in common rather than using one as a stick to beat the other. (172).

This could read as an apology for Ross, himself, who uses the populist stick to beat the cerebral moderns, to designate one “the middlebrow ideal of popular modernism” (352) and the other a group of “anti-social” composers declaring “my time will come” (24). Any hope that Ross will

pick up on his own suggestion, that he will re-imagine the critic's role as one drawing connections and thereby educating its readership on the music, whatever music, under discussion without value judgment, is quickly dashed as he continues to place the blame for modernist music's (relative) failure in the free market solely on the shoulders of the composers, not acknowledging that the composer plays only one small part in bringing his or her product to the market and drawing attention to it. The media, in this present society, is where demand is created. The responsibility is shared. Much of it falls on people like Ross: if the media players use their position to advance their own personal tastes, then the market demand becomes skewed from the start.

But, then, this still rests on the assumption that the goal is market success, which, for a large number of artists, it is not. Ross completely misses this possibility and for this reason cannot begin to understand the cultural critiques of Theodor Adorno, whom he lampoons intermittently as a cantankerous elitist. It was Adorno's position (glossed over as "the politics of style" in this book, pages 356-35) that, particularly in the wake of the Holocaust, art needed to find a new way – a way that was not easily co-opted as propaganda or taken as a medicine to transcend the pain of the world so that we would not have to consider it⁴. Unwittingly, Ross supports Adorno's position as he tells of Coplandesque rip-offs used in support of Ronald Reagan's presidential campaigns or the eventual adoption of pre-existing music to the totalitarian causes of Stalin and Hitler: "Precisely because of its inarticulate nature, [music] is too easily imprinted with ideologies and deployed to political ends," (306), but of experimental music: "Experimentalism proved to have no propaganda value..." (219). This is precisely the point. Those musical expressions that are easily digestible, due to their establishment within the culture, and that have come to take on vague meanings such as "heroic," "martial," "pastoral," are taken for granted as means for the conveyance of aesthetic value judgments. Insofar as the content is not concrete (relative to language or images), language or images may be fitted to music associated with the vague meaning desired – even with the open American plains, a kind of Wild West pastoral. Also, these forms, as an outgrowth of the culture, are, in Adorno's analysis, imbued with the ideals of the culture. A broken culture will need new cultural forms to reconstitute itself in a healthier fashion. The older forms cannot disrupt one's expectations sufficiently enough to direct attention back onto the form, itself, to cause one to wonder what is going on – to think in new ways about what is at hand. This sentiment, even before Auschwitz, was widespread among modernists in all arts media in the wake of the tremendous human loss and political incomprehensibility of the First World War.

Taking his cue from *Dr. Faustus*, Ross treats World War I as a mere bump on the road to the greater atrocities to come, and so he cannot possibly give the psychological underpinnings of modernism their due. Rather than reckon with the content of Adorno's argument mentioned above, at least to frame the impulse of certain modernists as one reasonable reaction to the horror of World War I, Adorno is (mis)represented, as follows: "Theodor Adorno and Virgil Thomson, the same dyspeptic duo that tried to stomp out Sibelius, mocked the cult of Toscanini, Walter Damrosch's music-appreciation lectures for children, and other instances of classical hype in the thirties... 'It is highly doubtful,' Adorno sniffed, 'if the boy in the subway whistling the main theme of the finale of Brahms's First Symphony actually had been gripped by the music'..." (265). This, of course, shows Adorno in a bad light, as it is intended to do. If one were to go to the source of the quote, though, and discover its context, one would find that it comes towards the end of a long argument as to why the radio, at its point of technological development in the early 1940s, was woefully inadequate for the transmission of the timbral range necessary to make sense of orchestral music, as timbral differentiation is a significant component in the demarcation of the structure of an orchestral work⁵. Adorno's secondary objection was to the imagined listening situation of a radio listener at home, with its many distractions and interruptions – a fear that has come to pass, and has also been normalized in a culture pervaded with car radios, home stereos, iPods, etc. How often does one hear music over these media without some distraction intervening at some point? How often does one get in the car and turn on the radio right at the beginning of a piece (particularly of classical music) and get out of the car right at the end of a piece? The boy in Adorno's quote has not failed to "be gripped by the music" in the sense of being emotionally moved, as we would use the term today, but in the sense of having grasped the music, apprehended it in all its timbral and structural nuance. While

Adorno was not without his faults, Ross's misleading presentation and taking words out of context serves only as a dodge – an excuse for glossing over the very important thought of this “dyspeptic” intellectual. To my knowledge, incidentally, Adorno never wrote anything against music appreciation lectures for children and he absolutely did not believe that “common folk” just could not understand great music. He was, famously, opposed to mass mediated music for its inferior sound quality, for the encouragement of counterproductive listening strategies, and for his political convictions as a Marxist.

The overall tone of *The Rest is Noise* promotes suppression of intellectual discourse (through dubious means) in favor of a “‘middlebrow’ vision of American culture - the idea that democratic capitalism operating at full tilt could still accommodate high culture,” (261). Ross celebrates the composers he believes to have accomplished this, though he never articulates what this “high culture” is, precisely. When he states in the Epilogue that “Composers may never match their popular counterparts in instant impact, but in the freedom of their solitude, they can communicate experiences of singular intensity,” (543) it seems that he is contradicting his own critique of modernism. Isn't this solitude what those modernists were bracing themselves against with their anguished cries of “my time will come!” while those who avoided solitude and found an audience by writing “music of the present” were being lauded? Ross has introduced no criteria for the evaluation of music other than mass appeal determined according to market success, so what is it he believes (classical) composers can achieve that their counterparts in the areas of Pop, Rock, Hip Hop, R & B, etc. cannot? What are these “experiences of singular intensity,” and wouldn't the totally isolated (modernist) artist have more to offer in this way if solitude is the precondition to such experiences? In the absence of consistent criteria by which to support his judgments, I can only presume that Ross's concern is not with a reasoned presentation of information regarding the history of musical composition in the 20th Century but, rather, with an attempt to use whatever argument seems at that moment to justify his pre-existing position.

With all this said, I do feel that Ross is well-meaning, though his reach exceeds his grasp, and he is correct to address the historical circumstances of the development of the art of musical composition, even if his historical understanding seems to be limited to The New Deal, and World War II, with a slight bleed-over into the beginnings of the Cold War. These qualities cannot atone for the severe deficiencies of the book, yet they are all I can find to say in its favor. *The Rest is Noise* is very much a product of its time – one that, sadly, does more to vindicate Adorno's views on mass mediated culture than many articles that treat Adorno with some academic respect. To place Ross within his own context, then, we have anti-intellectualism, regular guy populism, and faith in the free market as the arbiter of value in all aspects of human endeavor – a mixture that places his ideological framework in accord with a broad segment of the populace of the United States, one that has been used by the Bush administration as its PR *modus operandi*. It is no wonder that Ross never gives the actual positions of modernists such as Schoenberg and Adorno a fair hearing. To do so would also require Ross to implicate his own assumptions and the ideological bases on which they rest. The result is inevitable: an individual's attempt to vindicate his own opinions against those of a specialist class to which he does not belong (without actually refuting the substance of their arguments) packaged as a much-needed remedy to a circumstance of which the majority of the audience would be unaware (how many classical music radio lovers have felt the “Schoenbergian juggernaut” bearing down on them through the lower end of the FM dial or the offerings of their local symphony orchestra?) but which they would be manipulated into believing was a rampant attack on all they hold dear musically after reading the book. For myself, as a composer of thorny intellectual works (from beyond the dichotomy of tonal/atonal), I can only hope that such fare is a passing fad – not because the non-specialist should not be allowed to speak or might not have something valuable to offer, but because the avenues for the presentation of such thoughts as might be thus expressed are presently dominated by this *Zeitgeist* at the expense of a critical look at their content (witness the voluminous praise that has been heaped on this book in the popular press). In his attempt to reach a non-specialist audience of classical music lovers, Ross exploits this spirit and aggravates the very divide he claims to be bridging while ignoring the actual role he could, as a highly visible music critic, play to bring the “two distinct repertoires” together.

NOTES

¹ The beating of equal-tempered major thirds distressed Helmholtz enough that he included a design for a keyboard that would allow pure thirds and fifths in order to eliminate this beating from standard tonal harmony in *On the Sensations of Tone* (see Appendix XVII, “Plan for Justly-Toned Instruments with a Single Manual”).

² As discussed at length in Arnold Schoenberg’s *Harmonielehre*, Ross’s treatment of which will be examined below.

³ Schoenberg, Arnold. 1978 [1911]. *Theory of Harmony [Harmonielehre]*. Roy E. Carter, trans. Berkeley: University of California Press, page 29.

⁴ Ross comes out in favor of the position that sometimes what we need is precisely this kind of medicine, so that we might find the strength to continue in our pain (445). Adorno sees any looking away from such cultural pain as an abdication of one’s moral duty. The point is debatable, and a debate would be interesting, but Ross chooses instead to attack Adorno’s character and ignore his ideas so that he does not have to look at his own assumptions critically. For more on Adorno’s argument, see the introduction to *Philosophy of Modern Music* (2003) [1948] New York: Continuum. Also available in other translations under the title *Philosophy of New Music*.

⁵ Adorno, Theodor W. 2002 [1941]. “The Radio Symphony” in *Essays on Music*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

the history you make...

(re: alex ross's *The Rest is Noise*)

elaine barkin

How peculiar and discomfiting to discover that the Sounds and Words of those persons with whom many had associated, from whom they'd benefited or might have made music or achieved community, and whose significance in their lives still has potency, have now been obscured or erased and silenced from Music History (after all, not every sonic nook, cranny, stripe or ribbon can be accounted for, choices have to be made)¹, and thus, as it turns out, a throng of First-Tier Major League Iconic Insider Headliners who loomed and still loom large in the big world seem now to loom even larger, their remarkably distinguished accomplishments, their overt and covert back-stories, agendas and programs, trysts and blemishes, all so abundantly, astutely, and agreeably elucidated and contextually documented (along with stories of a smidgen of second-tier outsiders and mavericks) in a language available to all connoisseurs and lovers of music² — since that's the way it was, or the way it now looks to have been to and for someone who certainly knows about, may have listened to or read, those many other others³ whose work and lives have now been appraised as having taken a skewed or devilishly unpopular — or not popular enough — turn, assessed as not worth listening to, dismissed as insignificant or non-existent, those many others who may have dangled off some fringe or edge, or hung out in the peripheries insofar as there is more than one periphery, and thus inferentially and implicatively defined by omission as "Noise" (some of whose names are compactly listed or dropped here and there,⁴ the work of many of those minor players surpassing the work of many of those major players), yet to get clued in to those many other others not in the spotlight — who might have lingered on the side-lines, at times by choice, at times perhaps not, some of whom still shine in their own mini-world, some in the outfield, often a not insignificant place to be — would entail a major undertaking of uncanny responsibility, almost archeological in nature, these other others, this "Rest" warranting re/dis/un-covery so as to tell the whole story⁵-history of just how the 20th century might be, and has been, comprehended, conceived, and listened to,⁶ the whole story⁷-history of how socio-cultural-economic-political event-occasions and interpersonal boons and mores, how suppression-revolution, experimentation, and generational links-gaps might have determined, affected, and shaped the composition of music and, just as pertinently, vice versa.

12/07 — 03/08

¹ (1000 names or more are listed in the index, the majority of whom are musicians, yet the author tells the reader, “much great music is left on the cutting-room floor”; to one reader, however, a 30-page chunk devoted to Benjamin Britten & “Peter Grimes” seemed unduly long — even with 5 pages given to Shostakovich — until the chapter’s subtext unfolded, namely, the ‘situation’ of 20th-century homosexual or bisexual composers et al, a bunch of whom are listed, “the art of composition [having] skewed gay” [in the twentieth century])

² (smoothly described throughout with occasional flashes of eloquence, with evocations of human-crafted & natural phenomena, with disclosures of obvious homage-like or of furtively sly citations of past music in newer music, with chitchat about indissoluble links of social-cultural-sexual-political milieus and creative crises)

³ (told from a decided, albeit eclectic, Point of View, particularly apparent in the decision to invoke (first epigraph and throughout) as murkily tinged ‘theme’, Thomas Mann’s “Doctor Faustus”’s composer-hero Adrian Leverkühn and his pact with the Devil [i.e., 12-tonality], and apparent as well in the author’s enigmatic second epigraph taken from near the end of Shakespeare’s “Hamlet”: “...The rest is silence. [[Dies.]]”, prior to which Hamlet speaks of not having time to ‘tell his story’; so, is the author ‘fessing up to the story he has not told (see ft 1) or what? Hard to say for sure insofar as the author’s estimations of Noise and Silence demand a more literal, a dug-into deeper, interpretation.)

⁴ (a few women are mentioned, albeit briefly; others appear in lists as in: “Composition has also ceased to be exclusively [?*x+#!] male; the preceding six composers are all women.” OK, so three of these women are among those fleetingly noticed, but the Voice of the Female is silent; e.g., Lou but not Laurie; and apart from the usual suspects, electronic-computer music pioneers are disregarded)

⁵ (a reader’s bonus has been to re-discover and re-listen to loads of S’s & M’s & B’s and several A’s & C’s etc. etc.; but oddly, in the Preface, the author writes: “In the twentieth century, however, musical life disintegrated into a teeming mass of cultures and subcultures, each with its own canon and jargon.” Perhaps, but why “disintegrated” with its strong negative connotation? Neither is it the case that at any time prior to 1900 “musical life” — anywhere — was smoothly and universally integrated and subculture-free; factions always thrived.)

⁶ (the tale, which begins with George Gershwin playing one of his songs for Alban Berg — who is reputed to have said: “Mr. Gershwin, music is music.” — meanders through the twentieth century to not-quite the present, the story underscored and flavored with Relativism, Cross-Multi-Culturalism, and Post-Modernism as it accounts for all modes of ‘artistic’ expression — musical, verbal, visual, theatrical, etc. — with similar ism-attributes in all media fully surfacing during the 1970s-1980s, these isms having lain low and in the margins for many decades, if not centuries, and much of what is created-produced today exemplifies these same isms many of which have ‘mass’ appeal, a criterion the author advocates)

⁷ (the telling of which would entail greater inclusion and recognition of the work of many non-Euro-American-centric cultures and the extent to which specific composers and specific traditions influenced, affected, and transformed the lives and creations of a multitude of 20th-century Euro-American musicians, artists, and other individuals)

A Memoir of Henry Brant (1913-2008)

Neely Bruce

When I was a senior at the University of Alabama (1964-65) somehow I read about Henry Brant. Of course I couldn't hear any of the music—performances were rare, and nowhere near Tuscaloosa. Our library didn't contain the few recordings there were at that time. But my imagination was aflame with the idea of spatial music. I had a small taste of it in some rudimentary attempts at aleatoric music that my classmates and I put on for fun, and I knew about *Gruppen* of Stockhausen and some other pieces that involved the spatial separation of musical elements. But Brant was proposing something altogether new and different—an oeuvre in which spatial separation was the most important parameter, the defining element.

The idea of spatial composition stuck with me, and in 1967, in graduate school at the University of Illinois, I wrote my first spatial piece, entitled *Fantasy for Ten Winds and Percussion* (it also had a two-channel tape; the music reached the listeners' ears from eight different directions, surrounding the audience). While director of music at St. John's Catholic Chapel (one of many ways I earned extra bucks in graduate school) I used the building as a sometime spatial music laboratory, dividing the choir up, putting soloists here and there, placing two oboists in two different stairwells, etc. My 1971 opera *The Trials of Psyche* placed subgroups of the orchestra in nine different locations about and above the large stage of the Festival Theatre at the Krannert Center. I wasn't the only Illinois composer interested in spatial music, of course—William Brooks took over an entire building and moved singers throughout the space by candlelight for the better part of an hour. And two giant spatial pieces of Cage were premiered at Illinois while I was there—*MusiCircus* and *HPSCHD*. I experienced these magnificent, life-altering events from the inside, as a performer.

I left Champaign in 1974 and took a position as the choral director at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut. Very soon, in consultation with my colleague Alvin Lucier, I began to commission new choral music by experimental composers. They were produced every year or so, beginning with *Wobbly Music* by Christian Wolff in 1975-76, and followed by works by Pauline Oliveros, Gerald Shapiro, James Fulkerson and William Duckworth. These were all substantial pieces, but I wanted to do something on an even bigger scale. I remembered Henry Brant. I learned that he lived in Bennington, Vermont and looked up his telephone number. I called and introduced myself. Henry was interested in the idea of a Wesleyan commission, and in the spring of 1978 I drove to Bennington to meet with him about it. This visit was the start of a thirty-year friendship that would expand my musical horizons in ways I could never have foreseen.

At the time Henry lived in a converted barn, large and very comfortable, with lots of room for musical instruments. From the first I was aware of the reverence in which he held the music and memory of Charles Ives. There were small paintings of flowers here and there—he explained these were by Carl Ruggles. He showed me the evening clothes—white tie and tails—he had inherited from Henry Cowell. He was most interested to hear some of my music, which he immediately tagged as “the compositional principles of

George Antheil applied to chamber music.” (At this point in my life I had heard not a note of Antheil’s music.) He had studied with Wallingford Riegger, and spoke of “Riegger’s rule” (every note in a score not placed under a slur should have its own articulation mark). Henry was vehemently opposed to serial music—he would say, “how could such a simple-minded idea have anything to do with such a complex thing as writing music?” He was equally dismissive of chance operations, composition with computers, academic symphonic works, and the “new romanticism.”

I quickly realized that Henry inhabited a parallel universe. The burning compositional issues that consumed so much time and energy for graduate students in the 1960s (and most of their professors) were just chaff in the wind for him. The real music of the twentieth century was American music by the very composers he mentioned in our first meeting—Ruggles, Cowell, Antheil, Riegger, and above all others, Ives. (Much later I was to hear his magnificent *Homage to Ives*, one of his most powerful pieces.) He was a direct link to this generation of American masters, and he had learned their lessons well.

He also knew just about everyone else. He was a contemporary and friend of Bernard Hermann, Vivian Fine and Jerome Morros, and he had studied informally with Aaron Copland, as well as Copland’s teacher Rubin Goldmark. Through his father, the violinist Saul Brant, he became acquainted with many of the leading chamber music players of the early twentieth century, who would rehearse in the Brant house in Montreal when they were on tour. As a staff arranger for CBS radio in his youth, he met all sorts of musicians, including the young Robert Shaw (Henry claimed to have introduced him to the music of Palestrina). Through his contacts in the radio business he moved into films, first composing and orchestrating for government documentaries and propaganda movies, then graduating to Hollywood features, where he worked as the orchestrator for the films of his friend Alex North. His abilities as an orchestrator became legendary, and he ghosted the orchestration of an indefinite number of major works in the 30s, 40s and 50s—I was still learning about some of these “secrets” shortly before his death. Virgil Thomson, a close friend of the entire Brant family, called Henry “the greatest orchestrator of the twentieth century”—he was probably right.

Henry was as opinionated about the composers of the past as he was about composers of the present. This was particularly evident in his opinions about orchestration. He had no use for the orchestral sound of Brahms, Dvorak, or any other late nineteenth century central European. Wagner and Mahler were barely acceptable, but they made too many “mistakes.” His ideal was the Russian sound—beginning with Tchaikovsky and moving through Rimsky-Korsakov, Stravinsky and Shostakovich (one of his culture heroes, almost on the same level as Ives). The clean, incisive, brilliant, original sound of Henry’s orchestra was learned and fine-tuned through years of studying the scores of those he admired and those he didn’t—at one time in his life he would prop up scores and study them while he shaved.

Henry Brant was a larger-than-life character, more famous during his lifetime for the way he dressed (matching sweat pants, sweat shirt and visor) than the music he wrote. (That needs to change.) Yes, for much of the mid-twentieth century spatial music was in the air, and other composers, big names and not-so-big names, did it. But Henry devoted two-thirds of his long life to it. He wrote more of it than anyone else, and he did it better.

He was very corporeal (as opposed to cerebral) and thought on his feet. I remember walking with him in a school playground in Santa Barbara, a place where he regularly thought about spatial music. He pointed to various places on the outdoor basketball court, describing where he had decided to place one group of instruments or another in his latest big piece. He came to Wesleyan shortly after we met in 1978, to see the hall where his piece was eventually to be premiered and meet some of my colleagues who would be involved in it. He was all over the place, checking out sightlines, how much room there was for this or that, and the precise dimensions of some alcoves along the sides of the hall. When he was working on *Swords and Plowshares*, which would be premiered in Carnegie Hall, he spoke from memory of the hall—in great detail, far more detail than most musicians would ever have noticed. He made a point of knowing first-hand the buildings where his premieres would take place. Concert halls and churches were not just platforms where one mounted performances. Rather, each building was a featured soloist, a major contributor to the music-making, one whose distinctive features would determine the entire course of action of the compositional narrative.

Henry made space more important to musical composition than anyone before him, and he was one of the best orchestrators who ever lived. But he had many more arrows in his quiver. He had a remarkable grasp of stylistic diversity. Sure, he could write avant garde music that sounded like nothing you ever heard. But he could write jazz arrangements and movie music that sounded like the real thing—because they were the real thing, written by someone who had done it to make a living. His harmony (when his music was harmonic—he didn't always pay a lot of attention to harmony) was sometimes gorgeous, sometimes rather odd, and always distinctive. His counterpoint was excellent, as anyone can see investigating his early, pre-spatial music. As his spatial compositions developed he used more and more what he called a "counterpoint of style," rather than a traditional counterpoint of lines. So one group might play a hard and fast jazz piece, another a Sousaesque march, another some abstract, aggressive, dissonant chords, and yet another group would be a steel drum ensemble, playing something like the music of outer space. Because of the physical separation of the groups, everything would be clear as a bell.

His music has a syntax like none other in my experience. Traditional rules of exposition and development, structural balance, repetition as a means of building form—none of these apply in his most characteristic, mature spatial work. How then, you might ask, does Brant's music sustain the listener's interest over coherent stretches of time, and long stretches of time at that? I would answer that a remarkable sense of musical narrative, supported by an acute ear for juxtaposition and a fearless ability to "let the chips fall where they may" is what makes it all work. Serious analysis of the Brant oeuvre is largely a project for the future. I have made a stab at it in my review of *Ice Field*, the piece that got Henry the Pulitzer Prize. *Ice Field* was commissioned by Other Minds and the San Francisco Symphony, and premiered under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas in December 2001. For my comments, which include musings about syntax in the spatial music of Henry Brant, see <http://www.otherminds.org/shtml/Bruce.shtml>.

But what about the Wesleyan commission? The piece became *Meteor Farm*, for the entire World Music Program at the university—orchestra, jazz band, two choruses, Javanese gamelan, West African drumming ensemble, three South Indian musicians, two soprano soloists and organ. It received its triumphant premiere before sold out crowds in 1981, the year of Wesleyan University's sesquicentennial. It was revived in 1984, first on

campus, then in New York City at Synod Hall, Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. In 1992 it was again presented at Wesleyan. After sixteen years it's certainly time for another performance, but you can hear the recording on Innova (Volume 4 of the Henry Brant Series). In Volume Five of *The Oxford History of Western Music* Richard Taruskin calls *Meteor Farm* Henry's masterpiece.

At this point I've heard so many of his pieces I could never single out one of them as the pick of the pack, but I have found, introducing this composer to my friends and students, that a good place to start is the recording of *Orbits* (originally on CRI and now available from New World Records). Written for an audacious ensemble of eighty trombones and organ, it is an almost irresistible combination of luscious sonority and bold harmonic invention. The homogeneity of texture makes the typical Brant syntax easy to follow (compared to the wildly diverse mixture of, say, *Meteor Farm*) and its frequently dark and foreboding tone makes it impossible not to take *Orbits* seriously.

Another good place to begin is his last non-spatial work—*A Concord Symphony*, his radical orchestration and, to some extent, respectful recomposition of the Second Piano Sonata of Charles Ives. The genesis of this work, over a period of about forty years, and the saga of bringing it before the public are a tale for another time. Suffice it to say that the live recording by Dennis Russell Davies and the Concertgebouw Orchestra will knock your socks off (Innova, Volume 7 of the Henry Brant Project). This is Brant, the great orchestrator and devotee of Ives, at his finest.

Henry's legacy is powerful and original. He was a prolific composer who could write music as fluently as most people can talk. Besides the handful of works mentioned here, there are dozens of other big pieces, delightful smaller ones from his youth, and hilarious parodies, not to mention his arrangements and all those film scores. In thirty years of friendship and collaboration I was privileged to hear live performances of many of his pieces. Not once in my experience did the audience fail to be delighted and moved by his music. (I could not make that statement about another living composer.) May future performances of his pieces flourish, large and small. May scholars and the musical public catch up with this brilliant musical innovator who has left us so much at which to marvel. And may his music continue to please and stimulate audiences for generations to come.

Postlude to the Work of Henri Chopin (1922-2008)

“Thus only the body saw itself invited in its ex/cesses with its feminine and masculine parameters where one was in accord with the voice/musics of the body.” [1]

sigh.

When I read that Henri Chopin had passed on, I sighed. This utterance was for me, in a single intake and release of breath, an exteriorization of futility, an attempt to wrest language from the grasp of something like emotion. By pulling in air, pausing, and letting that air go, sound-making *says* by means of an action before words. In the service of writing, *sighing* has a name: the word *sigh* in English, *un soupir* in French, *der Seufzer* in German, but no typographic inscription or onomatopoeic transliteration can render the sound-itself to text in a way that transfers the same quality of meaning. The word *sigh* must suffice, and in so doing becomes a notation for the *sound* of a sigh, perhaps rendering for each reader a vague allusion to our embodied experience of *sighing* so-called. For Henri Chopin, the *sound* of the un-language-able is the material at the center of his creative practice; words as such, spoken within nationalized systems of language, and the written forms these words take (as language inscribed via handwriting or print), do a fundamentally different kind of work. The *sigh* can be considered a bodily expression of or response to experience. Along with *the huff*, *the gasp*, *the pant*, and *the scream*, it is on the order of the pre-verbal: a manner of *sounding* one's corporeal state-of-affairs before language intervenes to qualify action.

The sound of the sigh, when captured via a microphone and tape-recorder and played back via a loudspeaker, becomes a gesture that is, in a way, legible. Through the immediacy of bodily utterance in this pre-verbal sense, there is a certain idiosyncratic structure to Chopin's sonic inscription; each piece builds a unique syntax from the phoneme/utterance, through grammar, to a comprehensive, homespun set of rhetorical devices. It is at this point where an affinity with music might resonate. Chopin's pre-verbal and non-verbal material shares a kinship with the open semantic space of (untexted) musical language, a semantic space defined more by context (both

local and historical) than by lexical definitivity. Unlike music, however, where any communicative power might rest in a code-base common to usage or practitioners, any *readable* semiotic content in Chopin's audio poems finds its code-base in *listening* as an act of a body in the world. It creates a fundamentally phenomenal space of *sound-as-sound* where sound-making is an affordance of the body (of the body as a sound factory, of the body as a machine). In addition to its rich potential as a sonic palette, an exploration of the sound of the body as a form or practice of language can provide a foothold for the listener, such that the question of the source – so fundamental to works where a recording functions as musical material – is clear at the start, and the experience of the interactions between the sound elements themselves might be experienced.

“[W]e are no more bound to our roots, our States, our mother tongues. All these are now to be found within the voice which, far from being a mere instrument of utterance, becomes a sonorous reality inscribing its intonations. One might say, the voice, in leaving the womb, rides itself from water in order to learn how to breath on the earth, the famous gasp that, with some help from our machines, sets us free in air.” [1]

Micro-pheme/Micro-phone

Micro: from the Greek meaning *small*.

Phone: *voice* or *sound*, from PHEME, the Greek meaning *talk*.

PHEME (Fama, Rumour) is figured in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* as a literary conceit for the power of listening and the agency of one who listens, both as a physiological process and a social practice. She lives in:

“...a place between
The lands and seas and regions of the sky,
The limits of the threefold universe,
Whence all things everywhere, however far,
Are scanned and watched, and every voice and word
Reaches its listening ears. Here Rumour dwells,
Her chosen home set on the highest peak,
Constructed with a thousand apertures

The Body is a Sound Factory

And countless entrances and never a door to close.

It's open night and day and built throughout

Of echoing bronze; it all reverberates,

Repeating voices, doubling what it hears.

Inside, no peace, no silence anywhere,

And yet no noise, but muted murmurings

Like waves one hears of some far-distant sea,

Or like a last late rumbling thunder-roll..."[2]

The microphone, like the ear (and perhaps the mind?) has 'no door to close.' It does a kind of capturing; it is, in that way, one part of the binary necessary to undertake inscription. It is an analog of the pen, with tape as its paper. In another way, it is an analog, in the medium of electricity, of the variations in air pressure that emit from a sound-making body and travel through the medium of the air. The microphone's capturing is no more a reproduction of the (?) reality of an acoustic event than writing is an explicit rendering of thought; rather, it is a listening. The microphone is a translation of a specific person's will to record (will-to-record, perhaps will to communicate?). As such, the microphone is never neutral; it is not simply a prosthetic extension of our ears. Practically speaking, that which the microphone captures varies based on the distance from the source, the type (pattern, technology), the sensitivity (frequency and dynamic response), as well as the orientation of (the direction in which one points) it. This affords only a capturing of a *specific listening* to an acoustic event, as mediated (often further) by the person who endeavors to capture it in the first place.

The voice that the microphone captures is not the voice alone but the voice within a space (*a space* and not *space* or *the space*). Chopin imparts a particular perception of his body through an *oscillation* made explicitly available by the technology of the microphone. With the microphone pressed against his lips or even inside the mouth, the sound of the body is in a way *cropped* (to borrow from photography) from the total acoustic scene — or in another formulation, the body is the space of its very production. Drawn away from the mouth, the microphone captures the sound of the body foregrounded against the reflection of those sounds within the room. Moving further

away, the voice is alone in *an acoustic space* that takes predominance. Like the parable of the three blind men who come in contact with an elephant, each touching a different part: in our individual *listenings* it is possible to construct a reality from the information that is given as well as that which is left out. In this way, within one work, a whole orchestra of points-of-listening frames the *sigh*: now close-up, saturating our gestalt, now far away, hiding within the gestalt as a single element not yet revealed.

“I had to use two microphones on my tape recorder, the mouth factory, reverberations and echoes, feedback effect, and especially, in the room emptied of all furniture, a sort of quick step with short or long spaces until arriving at two loudspeakers which I married in a sort of amorous ballet.” [1]

The tape-recorder is a memory the tape keeps

“I do not write any scores before assembling an audio-poem. It is just by heart and using only my memory that I conceive the expressions of my body. Basically through my mouth with its breathing etc., which become my only solid score. There, I discover a world without limits, from prattles to phonic lacerations.” [3]

In a pre-recording culture, the repeat sign in music was absolutely necessary for an understanding of the work. For a listener hearing a piano sonata for the first time, the repeat of the exposition is a useful aid to memory, ensuring musical material is (re)-heard more than once. The repeat familiarizes, the audience memorizes just a little, and the composer can then play with/against the elements of memory. A recording, however, elicits a fundamentally different kind of re-hearing, where any part of a performance is subject to being *re-played*. The ephemeral trace of the live performance becomes fixed. The whole recording (the recording as a whole) becomes fodder for memory, a performance that will never change, though each listening may be new with each subsequent playback.

What is at stake in memorizing the recording of an improvisation to use as a score? Scelsi did this: transcribing his recorded improvisations to create a score from which, for example, a string quartet might perform. In Chopin's work, the recorded improvisation may never be explicitly present in the final product. Perhaps, by memorizing his own non-language sounds, his body is brought into focus in yet another way. To extemporize prose, or a string of sounds, Chopin need only utter them. But by capturing a trace of the ephemeral, the tape acts like a memory of his physical actions

The Body is a Sound Factory

— not only as a trigger for sensorimotor experience but also as a kind of script for these actions. To re(-)produce, memorize, perform, and subsequently develop these sounds requires a detailed attention to the vocal means of production. If the microphone captures an analog of air in electricity, the tape-recorder captures an analog of electricity in magnetic particles on a physical tape. When tape is played back at a different speed than the original recording speed, the pitch changes (faster-higher, slower-lower) and the duration of the recorded sound is stretched or compressed. In this way, the tape offers an analog in time of what the microphone does in space. The mechanical construction of the open-reel tape deck is, in this way, integral to Chopin's work. The tape machine itself affords Chopin the ability to physically move the tape with his hands, offering a direct contact with the body unavailable to later cassette and digital formats. The shape of the *sigh* can be listened to at any speed, played backward, pushing breath out only to bring it in again.

"I prefer the sun, I'm fond of the night, I'm fond of my noises and of my sounds, I admire the immense complex factory of a body, I'm fond of my glances that touch, of my ears that see, of my eyes that receive.... But I do not have to have the benediction of the written idea. I do not have to have my life derived from the intelligible." [1]

Henri Chopin

Henri Chopin (1922-2008) was tireless in his support of the work of his colleagues, editing two influential periodicals (*Cinquième Saison* and *Revue OU*) spanning the sixteen years between 1958 and 1974, and curating numerous exhibitions. His publishing and concert production supported the work of the Lettristes and members of Fluxus, as well as those working outside the bounds of an(y) organized movement. In addition to introducing Raoul Hausmann's optophone (an early synaesthetic sound-to-image machine) and sound poetry experiments to a new generation of text-sound practitioners, he also championed the creation of new works by artists, musicians, and poets such as Charles Amirkhanian, Marc Battier, William S. Burroughs, Paul De Vree, François Dufrêne, Brion Gysin, Sten Hansen, and Bernard Heidsieck, among others. He wrote extensively on the subject of poetry, coining the terms *poésie sonore* and *dactylopoème* (type-writer poems), which are still in use today. [4]

Selected Discography

Henri Chopin, *Audiopoems*, Tangent lp TGS 106, London 1971

Henri Chopin, *Revue OU*, Alga Marghen cd ALGA 045CD with book, Milan, 2002

Henri Chopin, Le Peur and Co. (1958-1979), Records/Editions Hundertmark Q09, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2007

Henri Chopin, *la plaine des respire*s, tochnit aleph lp ta073, Germany, 2007

Henri Chopin, Various Audio Poems, UbuWeb Sound, <http://www.ubu.com/sound/chopin.html>

Notes

1. Chopin, H., *Revue OU*. 2002, Alga Marghen: Milan.
2. Ovid, A.D. Melville, and E.J. Kenney, *Metamorphoses*. 1998, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
3. IRCAM, *Musique: texte*. Cahiers de l'Ircam (Recherche et Musique). Vol. 6. 1994, Paris: Centre Georges-Pompidou.
4. Chopin, H., *Henri Chopin: [catalogue of an exhibition]*. 1972, Sunderland, Co. Durham: Ceolfrith Press.



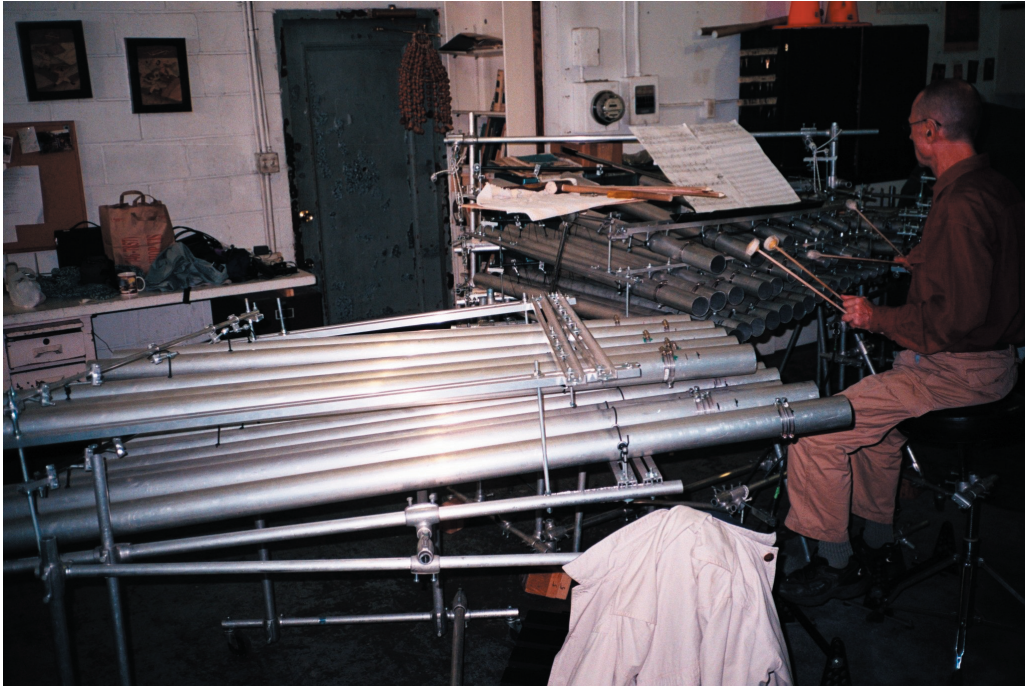
Ron George -- composer, percussionist, instrument-maker, teacher,
Microfester, tonsured ordained Soto Zen Buddhist priest --,
conceived, constructed, concocted, concatenated

Klangwelts & *Weltklänge* of nifty distinctiveness and potency
(Rube Goldberg would've marveled!)

in a downtown Los Angeles cavernous multi-leveled-super-studio,
two floors above an earsplitting electronics manufacturing shop,
its parking-lot chain-link fence studded with tire-wheeled-barbed wire,
urban bedlam transmuted into creative sanctuary.

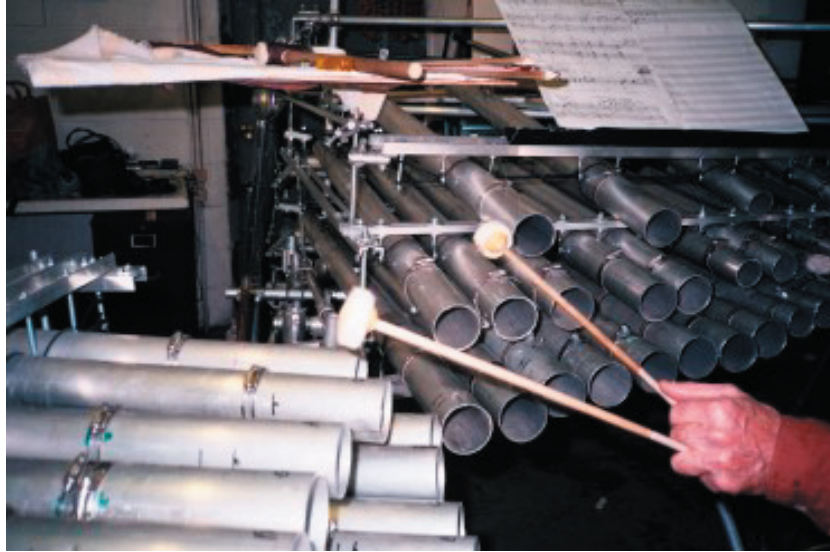
At first, once you're up in that high funky space,
you look around and think: disorder, disarray, chaos,
only to then detect orderliness, intention, correlations amid
bell plates, brake & drums, *objay treway*, pipes,
cymbals, gamelanish chime-gongs, bells,
nuts, bolts, welds, wires, pliers, hammers, clamps,
woodslabs, PVC, bamboo & aluminum tubing
of all lengths, widths, depths, shapes, and circumferences --
from Just & Unjust bass low C² to treble high C⁶,
readjust your preconceptions of see-look hear-sound,
prepare to spreadout your arms wide to encompass
octaves or non-octaves (a Ron fave)
of 5 or 12 or 17 or any "x" — you work out the cents,
all in betweeners reified resonantly as discrete entities,
corporeal reverberant chock-a-block vibrant haven,
tactile, aural, visual, & creative senses coalescing:
harried micro-sound paradoxically wanting perched macro-form) --

(Zen posters, wall-hangings, postcards, wooden beads,
door chains, locks, hot plate, refrigerator, clanking radiators,
tuning charts & tablature notation devised for each work,
portable floor heater, dinky toilet with sink, convoluted wiring,
cramped underfoot, watch your step, hold the rail,
mallets of every shape, size, texture,
single, double-headed, flippable, oddball,
soft, hard, rubber, felt, wood, round, oval, bowed),



-- eventually bound, twisted, coiled, bent, fused
into fabelhaft sound-mobiles of Brobdingnagian extent,
melding liberation and total control — calibrated, regulated, modular —,
demanding awareness of just where and with what to strike,
how many mallets to hold, whether to stretch, bend, swivel, or stand,
how much severity or gentleness or ambiguity or certainty,
whether to clobber, tap, whack, roll, poke, or stroke,
wet-sounds, dry-sounds fully gaugeable,
(he, perchance discreetly asking a composer to modify
in order to acknowledge timebound physical realities),
handmade, heartfelt, feet- & hands-on, all the way!

Ron George



A man of unbridled enthusiasm, perseverance, and compassion whose words, written on the occasion of the death of my brother, are quoted here:

“Death is a normal course of event of this Life on Earth.
An Energy that changes from one form to another,
that will continue in future life times,
that will never be lost and cannot be destroyed.
Neither spirit nor soul but simply that which is.
Death is a time of sorrow and a time to rejoice and to move on.”

Elaine R. Barkin



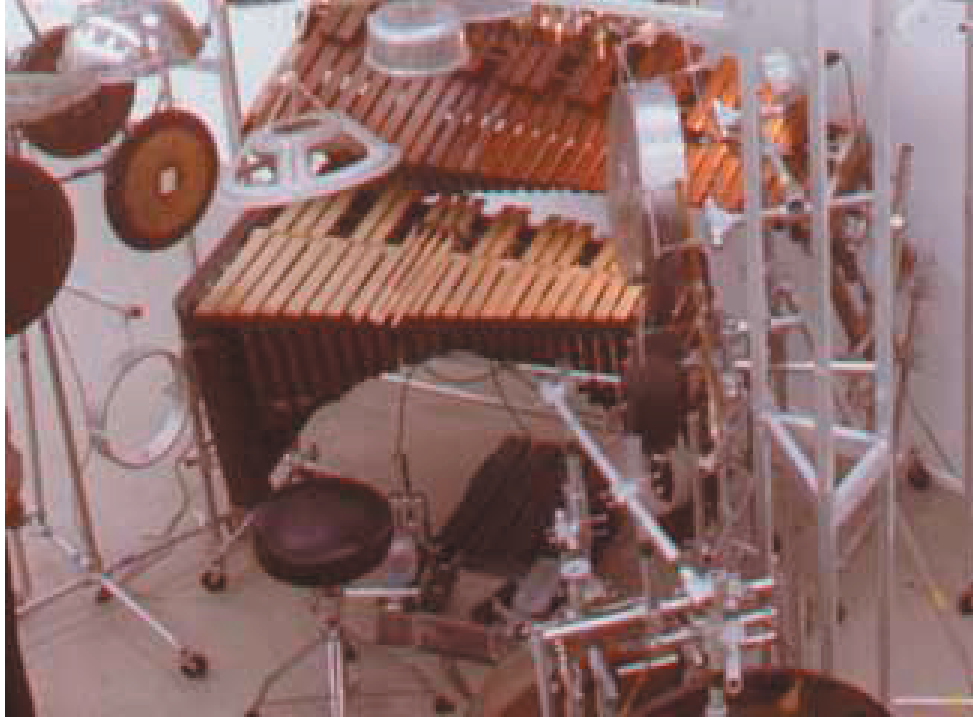
“Moving On”
For Ron M. George
April 22, 1937 – September 28, 2006

Elaine Barkin
October-November 2006

Photos taken April 2005.

The temple bell stops,
But the sound keeps coming out of the flowers.
-- Basho

Ron George



SuperVibe

FÜR KOMMENDE ZEITEN: farewell to the 20th Century

"My life is extremely one-sided: what counts are the works as scores, recordings, films, and books, That is my spirit formed into music and a sonic universe of moments of my soul."
(K. Stockhausen 25. Sept. 2007)

Michael Fowler

The last time I saw Karlheinz Stockhausen, at the 2007 Stockhausen-Kurse in his home town of Kürten, he seemed particularly moved by the activity of the participants and the uniformly high standard of playing. I first encountered Stockhausen in 2000, and had the opportunity to perform a number his works with him as sound projectionist, and on this last occasion I noted a particular mellowness about him. Giving the closing address, he seemed moved in a way that I had not witnessed before, remarking that this meeting of people had truly lived up to the theme of the Kurse that year: "learning with enthusiasm." Sadly, within 5 months Stockhausen departed from our world leaving behind a knowledge-base designed to serve the future directions of music.

Stockhausen had many faces and no doubt was capable of utter ruthlessness, though his motivations, from my experiences, were born out of an underlying generosity, a concern for the nurturing of creativity, and fondness for idealism. Returning in 2008 to the Stockhausen-Kurse, I found myself on a journey in which I discovered how much influence he still commands. The opening day concert of the interpreters' week-long celebration of Stockhausen's music was marked by a seeming absence of energy in the room. In the past, Stockhausen at the mixing console was both a large physical presence as well as an enveloping energy field. I couldn't help feeling the hole left by him at this first concert, and like many others was searching both the room and my subconscious for his presence. Unsurprisingly though, the week progressed like clockwork -- daily concerts, master classes, the Stockhausen-Verlag shop with all the scores available for study or purchase -- just like Stockhausen had wanted it. Things continued along a path that he had created many years previously. By the end of the week I came to realize that Stockhausen's legacy -- the knowledge base of performance-practice, technical and technological insights and approaches -- had already kicked into motion through those people entrusted with propagating his ideals into the future (the Stockhausen-Stiftung, Stockhausen-Verlag and Stockhausen-Archive); and, in fact, this system has been in place since the early '90s.

In a way, Stockhausen himself has also been a secondary part of the chain, and sometimes acted as if the musical ideas were not his. In a rehearsal with him of KONTAKTE in 2000 he kept saying "the score indicates this dynamic," or "the score requires sharper attacks here." I had heard him speak in such a manner during rehearsals with other musicians, and on these occasions I had the sense that Stockhausen was exploring the details of "his" compositions in the most detached terms.

Having come into contact, if only for a brief time, with a legend of 20th Century composition, I found how all-consuming his music can be. This comes not only from the musical demands he places on the performers, but the technical demands of the production of the work. Stockhausen was unwilling to compromise, and did so only on rare occasions. Perhaps "leading by example" was how he enlisted so many musicians and

collaborators over the course of his musical career. Many of those who sought to invest their lives within his "inner circle" (which meant giving up a normal life) did so at a great cost, though undoubtedly all will attest to the absolute dedication and support that Stockhausen gave back to those who sought to mirror his path. One of Stockhausen's great desires was to make the life of the artist -- the daily activities and processes -- become the work itself. He was able to achieve this from a very early stage, though through the composition of LICHT and the unfinished KLANG he truly embodied this notion.

There are many memories of Karlheinz Stockhausen that I will keep for many years, both insights into the mind of a genius, and insights into fanciful mythologies. What I learned from him, that goes beyond the mechanics of musicianship or performance practice, is the triumph of the human spirit in creating, and in celebrating creativity, and how through music we are able to explore and contemplate our incredibly small existence on earth with the hope of projecting out one day into the cosmos, perhaps encountering Stockhausen in the stars.

Hearing Speare Hearing Through Sounds Themselves

George Quasha

Here is someone who strings his love objects together according to a principle you can only know through your body. Sounds come in through the ears and spread out quicker than thought, leaving only traces of space.

When we ask what a certain art form is—sound? music?—we could be wondering, What do we know inside this art? And what's the preferred stance there: do we lie down and let it roll over us; do we sit straight and understand; or do we somehow get up and walk around inside? Jed Speare works within a lineage, from musique concrète to electroacoustic music and industrial culture, that does not promote answers to questions like these. Sound art like architecture surrounds, makes us round with unlimited edges. Getting oriented inside is what freshens the senses, the sense of getting situated anew.

Dare we even ask, “What’s the time?” “You mean now?” asks Yogi Berra, with a touch of genius. That’s *the* question. People thinking of time almost never mean *now*, really now and not that slide forward into the future that clenching time in the already known leans into. In Speare’s music there is only actual now. It promises nothing. No story, no anticipation, not much call for alibis without an elsewhere to be.

At the same time we do know something there inside the sound and find ways of knowing more. We hear things, familiar things: in an instant we think maybe we hear a freight train. Was it? If so it sets up an expectation that we’ll keep on knowing what we’re hearing. But we don’t. In fact, not knowing what we’re hearing, letting the attachment to familiarity go, can seem to produce a new hearing, where even the things we think we know transmogrify. Machines with singing humpback whale interiors.

Blake proposed seeing not *with* but *through* the eyes—not, that is, with the limits of the natural organ as habitual frame but through an open channel. Same with ears, the open channel, passing through “the doors of perception.” This stance is listening through sound to the core, as if the actual sound were a leak from another dimension asking to be tracked back to an original, which, however, never shows itself.

Wild black swan chase.

In Speare’s sound wilderness what we hear is primal engagement, where the acoustic is direct connection with matter. Newly raw sound matter, with surface, texture, curves and edges, holes, bumps, jumps and falling through, sometimes taking hold. We can listen *into* the sound, to the event horizon where the sound enfolds and becomes its own space, domain, or threshold. Concretions with openings. In a moving Klein Bottle of sound we hear ourselves coming the other way.

Uncategorizable sound proposes aberrant hypotheses, world-managing thought-strays: *industrial sound is nature*, according as it were to the piece *At the Falls*. It says you can be inside a waterworld with no actual water; it demonstrates that, while water is an *element*, water is also a *state of being*. The latter shows up forcefully in the absence of the former (element deprivation?). An improbable command:

let the water sense itself flow

Then not to know the water we know. This allows us to imagine real water, something truly new.

Even human sound comes to its own edge in the immersion—singular voices, for instance, recorded at the Mirecourt, France psychiatric hospital—liminal to what we know as language, yet with the passion, the urgency of speaking out. At times we think we're hearing things. Or things hear us listening and release the spirits trapped inside.

In any case the things heard are not their names, not the verbal tags that come to mind, and names are not the objects they long for. In the legacy of Cage we can know sound as silence itself, that is, when sound is allowed to contain itself at the level of its own energy.

At the edge, even the most known thing is a singularity: it says only itself. And things that truly say themselves seem to be the only things willing to say everything. From there is the fall into the uttered present—utter presence—where hearing is a further incarnation.

It seems sound is intrinsically political to the extent that it persists and yet belongs nowhere. At the heart of sound you know that nothing can own you.

Barrytown, NY

Alexandra Pierce

**Deepening Musical Performance through Movement:
The Theory and Practice of Embodied Interpretation.**

Indiana University Press
ISBN 978-0-253-34933-0

David Lidov

It is a treat and a gratification to have, finally, a Summa of Alexandra Pierce's practice for developing musical embodiment and her supporting theory.

What we had up to now was, for the musician, fragmentary. Somewhere, we have her big early compendium on piano playing. There (as I recall it, now at some distance) her most characteristic conception of music as human movement translated into sound is not yet sorted clear of other aspects of playing mechanics. She has explained some of her work in articles and numerous conference papers. Two short, valuable books with Roger Pierce are available, but these treat of movement with only passing focus on music. (His special art is drama, not music.) Many of us have seen her teach or encountered her compositions. No complaint that the compositions are fragmentary, but our appreciation of them can be enhanced by her theory, and it is only with this publication that we have the theory in a full-length exposition.

Pierce's holds that the expression of character and affect and form in music correspond to the expression of character and affect and form in human posture and movement and that a continuity between free and lively bodily movement and musical performance is the basis of musical vitality. She shows how sensibility for and fluency in affective expression can be cultivated through the exploration of body movement, a speciality she cultivated over many years of teaching, most of it at Redlands University in California. Her theoretical-aesthetic orientation is toward an organic naturalism deeply aligned with Schenker, but with a significant transposition. For where Schenker idealized the nature of tones, Pierce proposes to observe and release the nature of human movement.

Her theory is normative, and needing no lab coat of pretended objectivity, the author has been free as our Baroque theorists were to enliven her text with dialogues and personae (her fictionalized students and colleagues, of course). The dialogue need not be considered an extra. I think (my school memory here—A teacher told it to us half a century ago, and I haven't gotten around to tracking it down). Nietzsche argued that literary genres are cyclic, that philosophy emerges from drama (dialogue) and must return to drama (dialogue) when abstract system building reaches its limits. The return to dialogue in Pierce's exposition allows what abstract speculation restrains, the gentle articulation of a repertoire of phenomenological descriptions—What the melody feels like, what the beat feels like, what a living rest between phrases feels like. With dialogue, this repertoire emerges naturally in first person confessions. Is that scary? I don't mean confession like on Dr. Phil on TV. The process is disciplined.

The primary discipline is the exercises. The readers, or better, the readers and their students, are invited and instructed by a system of explicitly explained movement practices. Yes, you can try this at home. And in class. These are repeatable experiments. They do work for me though I feel I haven't done nearly enough. The other discipline is scholarship. A good bit of the scholarship is relegated to endnotes. I usually resent the cheap-o layout style that abolishes

footnotes in favour of endnotes, but here there is a bit of fun in having to look behind the curtain of pages that lies between the epistles which the fictionalized characters sometimes write to each other, already sufficiently elaborate, and the cross-references to Important Works at the back of the book which further enhance their letters. These faithfully devoted personages are not quite the stuff for a gripping novel, but they do leave Josephus and Simplicus way behind. Pierce's scholarship encompasses, beyond her native grounding in music theory (her doctoral dissertation at Brandeis was on rhythmic analysis in tonal harmony), literature on musical phenomenology (Zuckermandl is evoked often, others, too), the classic schools of movement education (work in the traditions of Ida P. Rolfe, M. Feldenkreis, and F. Matthis Alexander; also Dalcroze), and memoranda by musicians.

Pierce's pedagogical system comprises ten fundamental "elements", which are each regions of conjunction between kinaesthetic and musical categories. These are introduced in her first chapter and then developed more expansively one by one.

1. Cadence (harmonic) is matched with motion into "balanced, alert, and musicularly toned resting. . . ."
2. Melodic shape and continuity are mirrored in sustained, smooth arm movements.
3. Metrical ictus and span are addressed with the grounded shifting or throwing of weight.
4. "Coalescence into chords and middleground rhythmic vitality [are] explored in a restrained stepping . . . to articulate the durational pattern of . . . progressions."
5. The elastic curve of phrase, with motions on different harmonic-rhythmic levels is brought into correspondence with the "interaction between weighted, anchoring core movement (of the trunk and legs) and lithe peripheral movement (of hand or mouth)."
6. Climax. (See below).
7. Reverberation, kinaesthetically, the capacity to allow gesture "to flow through appropriately mobile joints" is, on its own, tied to a fluidity and motivated license in musical rhythm but also allows—
8. Juncture, the palpable modulation of energy in the stillness between completed bodily movements or musical phrases.
9. Gesture is paired with motive as a nexus of characterful or affective expression.
10. Modulations of tone of voice in speech (for speech, too, is an action of the whole body) are the key to a rhythmically persuasive Affektfarbenmelodie in performance (my hasty neologism, not hers.)

That would almost be the plan of her eleven chapters—Intro and ten topics—but it isn't quite. Five above and six, which I will say a bit about, share a chapter and the eleventh chapter, not anticipated in the list above, is "The Spirit of Play."

My reason to comment on her principle of "Climax" is circumstantial. It was for me the most surprising matter to learn when I went very briefly to work with Dr. Pierce in person in the summer of 1988. But what I want most to emphasize about Climax applies to all phases of her method: The task is not to make music from movement patterns you already know, but to learn patterns of movement you don't quite know, patterns which you subsequently recognise as "natural" (I think "natural" is a hard issue; I will come back to it) and which you will subsequently recognise as called up in music. The key exercise for exploring climax, in one version, is to open your hand to its fullest extent and let it close back again as you listen attentively to a single, performed (or later, imagined) musical phrase or section. Once or twice will not be enough. You must attain a sense of following the music, a sense that you allow the music to direct your hand without any intervention of conscious planning. The period during which your hand is maximally extended corresponds to the kinetic climax of the musical phrase. The surprise

for me was observing how long the climax turned out to be when heard and felt that way. No one had hinted this result to me before, as, alas, I do to you just now, and so it seemed a lovely surprise and firm confirmation to be told that most others had the same experience. What may be just a bit exceptional about this exercise is that my then somewhat lax and ignorant anatomy was adequate to the task. Some of the more complex exercises, like still relaxed standing, balanced walking or throwing your arm around, benefit from a bit of practice before the music starts, but worry not: All the tools and instructions needed for assembly come in the book. Although every chapter rewards the reader with interpretive insights about specific compositions (the piano solo repertoire predominates) chapter sub-headings typically focus on movement issues—"Stepping and stretching spontaneously," "Joint awareness." The pedagogy is thus always on a double track.

My summary so far is oriented to pedagogy, and I now turn to theory. My primary motivation to study Pierce's work derived from my own interests in musical structure and representation. Her work has been a resource for theorists of embodiment and metaphor in music. Robert Hatten, in his recent work on gesture, and Michael Shapiro, in *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, are among her debtors. Although less highlighted than the exercises, supporting them are distinct conceptions of human movement and (usually tonal) music and a mapping of these two models onto each other. The model of movement is essentially the one laid out in her first books with Roger Pierce, *Expressive Movement and Generous Movement*.

The Pierces' model regards movement as constituting a recursive hierarchy. The same categories can represent either large units or their parts. The natural unit of movement is a phrase. Smaller phrases combine to make larger phrases. The simplest motions are inflections; that is, they have shape but no sharp interior segmentation into parts. Nevertheless, the Pierces identify functional phases of the phrase: its "beginning," its "climax," and its "ending". The wide boundary between two phrases or where two successive phrases join is a "juncture". A phrase may occur over a background of "beats" to which it can be related in different ways. Beats are not numbered timepoints but rather dynamic shaping of time oriented by an ictus. Each of these units—beat, juncture, beginning, climax, ending, and again juncture—is a period of modulation of effort that concerns balance, support, intention, and attention.

The model for harmony and tonality is Schenkerian in the specific sense that it is sensitive to coordinated layers of movement at different rates (not in the sense that there are correlates of interruptions structures or specific prolongation techniques.) For rhythm other sources are prominent. In a formulation reminiscent of that of James Mursell's *Music Psychology* (1937), Pierce and Pierce construe the beat as a recurring cycle wherein intention is developed and attenuated.

From these perspectives, a unitary description of musical and movement phrasing emerges. An effort that disturbs balance releases a motion that restores balance. A phrase is a large scale imposition on balance. A phrase emerges from a palpable moment of stillness. The beginning of a phrase requires effort, which accumulates toward the climax. The climax sustains another balance different in quality from the equilibrium out of which the phrase had emerged and that typically appears, with practice, as an extended sensation of "throwing" or "overflowing." The ending of a phrase exhibits a decrease of effort but does not fully restore the equilibrium from which the phrase emerges; this balance is fully restored only in the period of juncture, which can include a "reverberation" involving the whole musculo-skeletal system in settling its ripples.

I have reasons very much my own to appreciate this synthesis. Reflecting on her model with regard to structure, I am pleased that Pierce's notion of "juncture" supports my conviction that continuity is a fundamental structural characteristic that makes music different from language. I believe that a full appreciation of this difference throws some cold water on currently popular models of musical hierarchy.¹

With regard to representation, my own thought and my writing belong to a tradition that I would trace back to Rousseau and Hanslick where the primary representational capacity of music is understood as its identification with movement. I understand this identity as established first of all with forms of movement as known to us by proprioception, not vision, although vision and proprioception intertwine. These movement forms express affect, a term I take to include both object oriented emotions (like grief or anger) to general states of well or ill being or mood.

The affinity of music and movement is obvious, and the mapping between sound shapes and body movement has an aspect of precision. We know of this from the role of gesture in conducting, from the role of musical style in determining dance style, and from observations of vocal inflection in speech. It is also clear that the mapping is not one-to-one. Once you have the right swing you can dance it with your hands or your feet, and you can play it on any chord or scale. Those aspects of the mapping are as a whole more arbitrary. Here we have topics for musical semiotics, the study of music as representation. Semiotics has been more central for me than for Pierce, but the difference is one of degree. She has become a frequent participant in semiotics meetings. Looking at the relation of movement to music in terms of representation raises lots of issues and questions. I will signal three.

Like the earlier books of Pierce and Pierce, her new solo book settles none of these issues and skirts some of my questions. They are my agenda, not hers. But beyond what it explicitly teaches, her book provides a sturdy standpoint for reflection and observations that exceed its immediate purposes, and that is another reason we need the book.

First, music, movement and dance. I think our conversations often confuse what intuitively we know pretty clearly: A. Using movement as a learning tool that represents music is not the same as dancing to it. B. Dance does not, as a primary focus, represent the music that motivates it, although it may re-represent what the music seems to the dancer to represent. C. The movements of dance do not—I paraphrase Gregory Bateson—necessarily represent what those same movements would represent if they were not danced. (E.g., a young woman who allowed me to carry her on my shoulder if we were dancing [AS IF I COULD, HA!] might not want me to if we weren't). What all this adds up to is: D. Forms of movement that music represents are, with respect to character and affect, relatively transparent, and it is these movements that Pierce is helping us to capture and wanting us to employ to reverse the representation. But the movements of dance can be more opaque. They are formalized, manipulated, played with, abstracted.

Second, then, play and abstraction. Pierce's final chapter, "The Spirit of Play" begins, as does Gregory Bateson's adventurous theoretical experiment ("A Theory of Play and Fantasy" in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*) with the observation of animal play. She does not take up his theme, reflected in my paraphrase above of his formula, that play cancels or transforms or re-frames representations. It is not always the case that this is so, and the dress of play which Pierce's last chapter encourages is a supplement which modifies the tone of the expressive investments established by her earlier chapters without cancelling them or cashing them out. But play can go much further and can replace expression. It is not impossible to compose bewitching music by abstract calculations. (Is that true of musical performance? Was there a place marked out for the excitement of mechanical playing which MIDI has now usurped? I don't know.) The tension between play and expression is a major issue for aesthetics. I think Pierce's pedagogy can address that tension but the book does not. The way artists position their work within that tension shifts the focus from nature to culture.

So third, movement cultural and natural—movement philosophy. Movement education, so far as I know it, assumes that our biologically given physiques establish best solutions for each of

us to the problems of posture, locomotion, and work. Anthropology (e.g., proxemics) broaches the question of cultural differences, but I don't think we have comprehensive results. Clearly we have individual styles of moving. Do we have national or ethnic or continental styles of moving? That was only for a warm-up. The question I arrive to is, In what ways is the relation between music and movement developed in Alexandra Pierce's practice natural and in what ways cultured or, as we used to say in the eighteenth century, "artificial" (or "artful")?

I have always had a gut feeling of some bias, not heavy, that was North American and even, though she did not start there and no longer lives there, *honi soit qui mal y pense*, West Coast. I can not say why. Maybe something in the way her system conceives and thematises relaxation? (Paul Goodman argued that standing around in baseball was the keynote to American art styles. Alert relaxation.) No, I can not say why. But retreating from this nerdy impasse, I would still want to flag an issue of style that reaches beyond the individuality of the author. The continuous, unbroken interface of possible kinesis (real and fantasy movement) with music seems to me an ideal of romanticism, parallel to realism in painting.²

Illusory real-ideal musical imagery of movement reaches an explosive climax in expressionism and fractures in neo-classicism, as had its visual counterpart in cubism. Ideal-realism comes into conflict with mechanism, awkwardness, repression, anxiety, and the free play of sensory material. For another take, another movement "philosophy" and a very profound one, consider—in conjunction with his newly released and musically astounding recording of the work (Bridge records, 9243)—David Holzman's essay on Ralph Shapey's 21 Variations ("Shaping Shapey").³ Holzman describes his way of assigning movement styles to his performative actions that will solicit the musical shapes and colors he demands. The polyphony of the music, which employs nearly incommensurate rates of simultaneous motions and styles leads him to fragment his body, to enter states of mind where the left arm does not know exactly what the right arm is doing. The specific colors and energies he brings into focus might be addressed as separated practices by Pierce and must be practiced separately by him, but their integration within one performance constructs an universe light years distant from any she surveys. Unlocking the free, natural, lyrical capacity for movement that is her central mission may present us with the purest golden ore of musicality, but its shaping can be subject to contradictory and opposite pressures reflecting very different aesthetic orientation.

In the context of these variables, I find it instructive to return to the author's own music, for she is, first and foremost, a composer. The function of theory in composition is both to guide and to be overpassed, sometimes reversed. Her theory fits her music well, but the energy, playfulness and whimsy of kinesis in what I do know of her music hold up a mirror to movement that the theory does not fully anticipate. I don't know as much of her work as I should, but I attach an excerpt which seems to me illustrative of her tendencies. It is rhythmically active music with, in this case a secure pulse, but with elements of pause and flexibility that might discourage toe tapping while welcoming a response in the torso—as listeners, we leave the beat making to the performer, our expectations too muted to be played against though sometimes played with. Downbeats serve more to guide the pianist than the listener, who will, I am sure attend more to phrasing than meter. The music never stops making pointed gestures. In classical music, forceful gestures are absorbed into the formalities of continuing accompaniments and conventionally cadenced phrases. In expressionist styles, the gestures stand bare, as they do here, but in expressionism the suspension of the framework of phrase grammar and accompaniment is understood as a condition of overriding passion or other extreme states of mind. There are no signs of uncontrollable passion here nor of an estranged transformation of consciousness. The music is civil and gracious. The melodic curves make designs; its gestures do themselves what more usually they might inspire us to do: they make their own dance. The

balance has shifted (not 100%) from the representation of movement as the transparent index of affect to the playful representation of movement as fascinating all by itself.⁴ I think it has been a career long fascination. That score page is recent. The earliest composition of hers I have is a meticulously worked out and notated work for vibraphone solo which includes some passages in graphic notation. Yes, a lingua franca of the 70's, but exceptional here for the attention that was devoted to providing a correspondence between visual, performative and acoustic motions. From this long absorption we receive these two gifts, related but neither predictable from the other, a compositional repertoire distinct in imaginative focus and a pedagogy with wide application to music making and full of implications for research.

¹ I take issue with the usefulness of "well-formed tree" models, such as we find in James Tenney's *Meta-Hodos* and Lehar Dahl and Jackendoff's formal grammar. My argument is republished in my *Is Language a Music?* (2004) and adumbrated in the context of a more general theory in my *Elements of Semiotics* (Chapter 13).

² This line is pursued in chapter 14, "The project of Abstraction and the Persistence of the Figure" in *Is Language a Music*.

³ http://www.battlemuse.com/essay_shaping_shapey.htm

⁴ With some adjustments, I would characterize her work as pianist in similar terms and also her performances with Roger Pierce in *Moving Voices*. See http://web.mac.com/arpierce1/Alexandra_Site/Home.html

Capriccio

Alexandra Pierce
2003

Allegretto grazioso
♩ = ca. 108

p

pedal freely, except where indicated

4

f

7

p

mf

10

f

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2

14

sub.
p

18

f

21

poco accel. . .

a tempo

24

rit.

accel. to Tempo I

mp

mf

p

mf

p

mf

29

cresc. . .

cresc. . .

34

mp *mf* *p* *mf* *f*

37

(♩ = 92)

p *mf* *f* easy and without hurry

40

f (LH) (RH)

43

p *f*

47

pp *mf* *f*

4

51 *8va* *p* *cresc.*

54 *f* *poco* *dolce* *poco* *sub. p*

57 *sub. p* *mf* *f* *p*

60 *(poco)* *f (poco)* *freely* *poco accel. e cresc.* *8va*

62 *p* *mp* *ca. 108*

65

mf *p* *mf* *f*

Measures 65-68. Treble clef. Key signature: one sharp (F#). Time signature: 4/4. Measure 65 starts with a piano introduction marked *mf*. Measure 66 has a piano marking *p*. Measure 67 has a piano marking *mf*. Measure 68 has a forte marking *f*. There are triplets in measures 66 and 67.

69

p *mf*

Measures 69-72. Treble clef. Key signature: one sharp (F#). Time signature: 4/4. Measure 69 has a piano marking *p*. Measure 70 has a piano marking *mf*. There are triplets in measures 69 and 70.

73

mp *mf* *rall.*

Measures 73-76. Treble clef. Key signature: one sharp (F#). Time signature: 4/4. Measure 73 has a mezzo-piano marking *mp*. Measure 74 has a mezzo-forte marking *mf*. Measure 75 has a *rall.* (rallentando) marking. Measure 76 has a mezzo-forte marking *mf*. There are triplets in measures 73 and 75.

77

sub. p *pp* *p*

Measures 77-80. Treble clef. Key signature: one sharp (F#). Time signature: 4/4. Measure 77 has a *sub. p* (subito piano) marking. Measure 78 has a pianissimo marking *pp*. Measure 79 has a piano marking *p*. Measure 80 has a piano marking *p*. There are triplets in measures 77 and 78.

nearing/hearing

Mark So

A scientist, a teacher and a scholar take an evening walk together, conversing about the nature of thinking. That in a nutshell is the premise of Martin Heidegger's "Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking," a text taken from an actual conversation written down in 1944-45 and subsequently published in *Discourse on Thinking* (1959). The text begins as the three minds meander around the issue of will, noting its centrality to the traditional understanding of thinking as re-presentation. They find this formulation inadequate and proceed to reconsider thinking in the context of non-willing. Suddenly, an idea flares:

Scientist: Am I right if I state the relation of the one sense of non-willing to the other as follows? You want a non-willing in the sense of a renouncing of willing, so that through this we may release, or at least prepare to release, ourselves to the sought-for essence of a thinking that is not a willing.

Teacher: You are not only right, but by the gods! as I would say if they had not flown from us, you have uncovered something essential.

Scientist: That I succeeded in this was not my doing but that of the night having set in, which without forcing compels concentration. Ever more openly, I am coming to trust in the inconspicuous guide who takes us by the hand – or better said, by the word – in this conversation.

Scholar: We need this guidance, because our conversation becomes ever more difficult.

Teacher: If by "difficult" you mean the unaccustomed task which consists in weaning ourselves from will. If only I possessed already the right releasement, then I would soon be freed of that task of weaning.

Scholar: To be sure I don't know yet what the word releasement means; but I seem to presage that releasement awakens when our nature is let-in so as to have dealings with that which is not a willing. Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind...

Teacher: ...which higher acting is yet no activity.

Scientist: Then releasement lies – if we may use the word lie – beyond the distinction between activity and passivity...

Scholar: ...because releasement does *not* belong to the domain of the will.

Scientist: The transition from willing into releasement is what seems difficult to me.

At the moment this flourishing new concept of thinking emerges, disclosing a wholly new path forward, the trio is beset by an almost overwhelming sense of difficulty. "If only," the teacher laments, "I possessed already the right releasement"—the word not yet comprehended, but already, the certainty that what it names is *called for* in the new enterprise. It is as though the three have fortuitously come across an unknown trail whose head happens to be marked by a great boulder, which, by all appearances, stands in the way of all forward movement. And yet they have already begun to surmount this obstacle—they have already embarked upon the new course—merely in *letting themselves be led*, "by the

word,” out onto *terra incognita*. What they discover, the instant the familiar course of reason encounters its limit and begins to turn back on itself, is another function of discourse entirely. From the point of view of this other function, named “releasement,” nothing is more plain than the absolute enclosure of the terrain of the will, constrained in its capacity to understand—or literally, to *grasp*—by what it can take, by force, for its own. This constitutes the back yard of reason, the realm of acting (planting, cultivation) and passing (weeding, extermination), where only objects appear. Releasement, then, is perhaps the name for a break in the fence at a forgotten, untended segment of the property line, where trespass and escape no longer apply, at which margin a certain beyond, containing not the taxidermy of ruled Franken-things designated “own” and “invader” but *living things*, becomes imaginable. The undertaking of a thought past the limit and leading into this night-like beyond confronts Heidegger’s trio as a burdensome impasse. Gradually, however, it becomes clear that the real burden lies not in the unknownness/unownedness of the virgin terrain but in relinquishing the methods of will, whose rule, after all, this new-found course into a margin beyond its property absolutely undermines. As the scientist declares, “the transition from willing into releasement is what seems difficult to me”—undoing the master-ly habits of reason is the hard part; releasement and the capacity to be led by what one encounters (rather than appropriating it) are somehow the felicitous remainder. In place of the tedious labors of sophistication—into the very space of their relinquishment—falls a discipline which, like the night, “without forcing compels concentration.”

This special attentiveness, conceived by Heidegger as the basis for a new trajectory of thinking, also serves us well as listeners, and the correlation is not far-fetched. Listening, as with thinking, turns on its relation to will, in Heidegger’s broad sense. We (typically) learn to listen with communicative purpose—that is, with expectation and memory. We train ourselves to hear in terms that will make sense within the machinery of meaningful symbolic reference that governs our world, and this holds as much for our experience of language as music. Heidegger’s trio wants to initiate a thinking that ventures out of these confines, and what this venture ultimately entails is learning how to listen. Indeed, their adventure begins only when they move beyond merely accounting for the words of their discourse and start listening to them directly, hearing the utterances of thought that the words are literally *becoming*, right before their ears. Thus, we must realize that we are not really listening until we have opened our minds to hearing what is actually before us—a sound in itself; a musical organism of sounds—and the unforeseen ideas it may project and allow us to follow within the structure of a strictly contingent function.

It seems obvious that rigorous listening and thinking should involve careful attention to what is at hand, whether a sounding music, a philosophical discourse, or anything else. Yet, what does paying attention usually entail? Do we approach the subject of our attention as a chance to flex our knowledge, identifying what traits and terms appear familiar, inferring from them a categorical unity, and interpreting anything else through this prism (or dismissing it outright; basically, the same thing)? Or perhaps we take it apart, analytically, and conduct a statistics of its quantifiable components, sorting as much as possible, in the greatest possible detail. Or maybe we supplant it with a fanciful association or metaphor, that strange method by which we understand something by replacing it with an image of something else entirely. All of these approaches and more comprise the varied arsenal of a metaphysics of will, and they are always more pernicious than we think. For instance, we may well succeed in listening past the “symbolic” content of a music (style and genre, and the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic rhetoric which characterize them, etc.), only to settle upon

reading its phenomenological characteristics (pitch, timbre, duration, dynamic, etc.) through, and thereby subjecting them to, a comparative, relational accounting. We tend strongly, semi-automatically to fix and subordinate everything within a comprehensive sphere of reference, but as mentioned before, this constitutes a taxidermy of dead objects, terminally insensitive and closed to what unknown worlds sounds themselves may name for us to hear, and an altogether different pursuit from listening with releasement. We seek, along with Heidegger's trio, to be led *by the ear*, but much has first to be undone: we are well-equipped to be accountants, but this, it turns out, has not prepared us for listening. We therefore have the task of recognizing and suspending the procedures of will which customarily have comprised listening as we have known it, but which have actually *prevented* listening. By relinquishing the habitual imperative to hear only what makes sense *to us*, we prepare ourselves to hear what leads us by the ear to another kind of sense.

But what would it be, then, to engage in this listening that does not also constitute a willing? What is it to listen with releasement toward things? It does seem difficult to fathom at first, listening to unknown sounds as though in the dark of an alien wilderness, where all the accustomed tools of making sense don't apply. And yet: we have named the comportment that is called for—releasement; we have begun to carefully disentangle the functions of will from our efforts at listening. This primary work is by far the hardest, and while it will comprise an ongoing task as we acquire both an increasing sensitivity to the obstacles to listening and a deepening releasement toward things, the greatest labor is already past. What now, becoming thus unburdened of our metaphysical bulk, have we left to do? What assurance is there that we will hear something, and when will we hear it? There are no assurances—encounters must be *risked*; after all, the discovery of this new thinking that is also a listening was in no way assured to Heidegger's trio, nor is it for us. It happened, and it happens, only when, looking back, the project of the new thinking had already been silently and inconspicuously underway, and so it will be with any further insights—they will not be visible on the horizon of our window of appearances, but will only have led us, seemingly inadvertently, into their hearing. We have only *to wait*:

Teacher: Waiting, all right; but never awaiting, for awaiting already links itself with re-presenting and what is re-presented.

Scholar: Waiting, however, lets go of that; or rather I should say that waiting lets re-presenting entirely alone. It really has no object.

Teacher: In waiting we leave open what we are waiting for.

Scholar: Why?

Teacher: Because waiting releases itself into openness...

This waiting, to be sure, also bears with it some difficulty: we could be waiting for a long time, and a certain constant vigilance is also implied. It is hard to sustain waitfulness, hard not to fall back into old habits; we must consciously foster an open space for its unfolding, without imposing any mastering condition upon it, if it is to garner us anything at all, just as the trio had to *decide* to wend their way openly into the night, unconcerned with a time of return, nor pace of progress: there is abiding in their method a certain faith that whatever they will encounter will provide all that is needed.

Scientist: Then we can't really describe what we have named?

Teacher: No. Any description would reify it.

Scholar: Nevertheless it lets itself be named, and being named it can be thought about...

Teacher: ...only if thinking is no longer re-presenting.

Scientist: Then thinking would be coming-into-the-nearness of distance.

Scholar: That is a daring definition of its nature, which we have chanced upon.

Scientist: I only brought together that which we have named, but without re-presenting anything to myself. Or, really, waited for something without knowing for what.

Scholar: But how come you suddenly could wait?

Scientist: As I see more clearly just now, all during our conversation I have been waiting for the arrival of the nature of thinking. But waiting itself has become clearer to me now and therewith this too, that presumably *we all became more waitful along our path.*

Teacher: If I have it rightly, then, you tried to let yourself into releasement.

Scholar: We can hardly come to releasement more fittingly than through an occasion of letting ourselves in.

Teacher: Above all when the occasion is as *inconspicuous as the silent course of a conversation* that moves us. [Emphasis mine.]

Somehow, this radically patient waitfulness will by itself comprise the discipline needed to listen to what we have never heard before. This is difficult to both accept and accomplish. The difficulty resides, somewhat paradoxically, in the attainment of pure leisure. On the one hand, in order to remain waitful, we must not resign ourselves from the open attentiveness of listening—leisure is not merely a respite from the taxing involvements of our world, but more so, the chance to reengage with the life beyond our world. On the other hand, encounters do not occur on command, by force of will; they cannot be hurried along, but occur only in their own time—at leisure, we lose track of time. Therefore, we must take an open-ended vacation from the estate of reason and will, and stroll without itinerary out onto foreign shores. This goal-less wandering is not a drifting: with each step, progress is made, and our releasement deepens; we grow more waitful; we find that in going nowhere, we have already been going someplace, and this someplace that is also nowhere goes on forever, leading us along its course infinitely, or for as long as we can abide in going nowhere. This someplace/nowhere is not indefinite or generic; it is not just *anywhere*. To the will, it can only appear as a blank, a non-place designated by a placeholder. But to us, once there, this place—its expressive surface, the trajectory of its native idea—has the fullness and distinction of a being in itself, bearing the character of the proper name—it is the singular, self-defining Named.

Scientist: Whatever we designate has been nameless before; this is true as well of what we name releasement.

Teacher: But is it really settled that there is a nameless at all? There is much which we often cannot say, but only because the name it has does not occur to us.

Scholar: By virtue of what kind of designation would it have its name?

Teacher: Perhaps these names are not the result of designation. They are owed to a naming in which the nameable, the name and the named occur altogether.

We are open to hearing within the realm of this special naming only when we listen waitfully. What we then may hear is the Named making itself nameable in giving its name to be heard. When we listen with releasement to sounds or music, past the point where they cease to remind us of anything (even themselves), we begin hearing what is proper only under their names. Allowing ourselves to be led by the ear, we come progressively into the nearness of things in the distance of being as they are: the realm of sounds themselves. Thus, we may encounter a sound or a music as an entity pronouncing its own name, in its own voice. Such a radical but simple *nearing* is all that would be entailed in an art of “sounds heard,” yet it is

nearing / hearing

no less elusive nor less difficult to attain now, over a half-century after John Cage named the new course. But nor could we ever exhaust its infinite trajectory.

Scientist: It seems to me that this unbelievable night entices you both to exult.

Teacher: So it does, if you mean exulting in waiting, through which we become more waitful and more void.

Scholar: Apparently emptier, but richer in contingencies.

Becoming more waitful clears the path into the expansive wilderness, opening that opening infinitely, a becoming-void which makes place for infinitely more to come. Led by the ear down the difficult path, far from losing our bearings to the night, we become ever greater listeners. As we refine our capacity to hear what had been unnameable, we find our legs and our travel becomes joyful and light – we really *are* on vacation.

Scholar: 'Αρχιβασι'η

Scientist: What does it mean?

Scholar: The Greek word translates as “going toward.”

Scientist: Indeed, waiting is really almost a counter-movement to going toward.

Scholar: Translated literally it says “going near.”

Teacher: Perhaps we could think of it as “moving-into-nearness”?

Scholar: Then this word might be the name, and perhaps the best name, for what we have found.

Scholar: 'Αρχιβασι'η: “moving into nearness.” The word could rather, so it seems to me now, be the name for our walk today along the country path.

Teacher: Which guided us deep into the night...

Scientist: ...that gleams ever more splendidly...

Scholar: ...and overwhelms the stars...

Teacher: ...because it nears their distances in the heavens...

When we listen with releasement, our ears can name any unforeseen harmonies, any unexpected and unknown entities in sound as surely as our eyes name the heavenly constellations. In the end, *there is no difficulty*—

Teacher: Ever to the child in man, night neighbors the stars.

In Search of Silence

BARBARA WHITE

IN THE OVERABUNDANCE OF CERTAIN THINGS I FIND VULGARITY. THUS I OBJECT TO AN OVERCROWDING OF FURNITURE IN THE SITTING-ROOM, TO A WHOLE BUNCH OF WRITING-BRUSHES BESIDE THE INK-SLAB, TOO MANY IMAGES OF THE BUDDHA IN THE CHAPEL, TOO GREAT A PROFUSION OF STONES, TREES AND GRASS IN A GARDEN, TOO MANY CHILDREN IN A HOUSE, TOO MANY WORDS TO A FRIEND, TOO VERBOSE DEDICATIONS OF SACRED OFFERINGS. THINGS THAT I FEEL CAN NEVER BE OVERDONE ARE BOOKS IN THE BOOK RECEPTACLES AND RUBBISH IN THE RUBBISH HEAP!

—YOSHIDA KENRO, *THE HARVEST OF LEISURE*¹

DEAR BEN,

I HOPE THIS FINDS YOU WELL. MANY THANKS FOR YOUR EMAIL ENCOURAGING ME TO FINISH MY THIRD AND FINAL INSTALLMENT OF “I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP.” LIKE I MENTIONED, I THINK IT NEEDS TO MARINATE A BIT MORE, BUT IN THE MEANTIME, HERE ARE SOME THINGS I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT. GO AHEAD AND PUBLISH IT IF YOU LIKE.

YOU MENTIONED THAT YOU WERE SURE I WOULD WRITE SOMETHING “STIMULATING”—BUT, AS IT TURNS OUT, STIMULATION IS JUST WHAT I SEEK TO AVOID AT THE MOMENT. THERE IS SO MUCH THAT SEEMS TOO STIMULATING: TOO LOUD, OR TOO OVERWROUGHT, OR TOO LONG, OR SIMPLY TOO MUCH. I FEEL THE NEED TO KEEP STILL AND LISTEN FOR A WHILE, NOT TO MAKE SO MUCH NOISE. AFTER I FINISH THESE TWENTY-EIGHT MINUTES OF MUSIC TO ACCOMPANY ALISON’S FILMS, THAT IS. *THEN* I’LL BE QUIET.

I WAS UNCERTAIN HOW IT WOULD FEEL WORKING ON THE FILMS. THE DEADLINE IS A LITTLE TIGHTER THAN I WOULD LIKE. AND THE FILMS CONSIST OF REPETITIVE PERFORMANCES, LIKE PROCESSES. I HAVE NEVER REALLY RELATED TO PROCESS. THAT IS WHY I CHOSE THIS PROJECT, TO STEP AWAY FROM MY HABITS AND TRY SOMETHING UNFAMILIAR. SOMETIMES I REGRET IT, BUT THAT CAN BE INTERESTING.

I AM ENJOYING THE LABOR, THOUGH, OF SCORING TO THESE MOVING IMAGES, IN PART BECAUSE IT REQUIRES SO MUCH QUIET. I WATCH THE FILM, AND SILENTLY, IN MY IMAGINATION, I SOMETIMES HEAR A SOUND OR TWO. THAT IS NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM COMPOSING OTHER PIECES, BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE MATERIALITY AND FIXITY OF THE FILM THAT STILLS ME—MOMENTARILY AT LEAST.

AS USUAL, THIS IS MY FAVORITE PART, THE QUIET, DREAMING PART. POTENTIALITY WITHOUT PERMANENCE.

IT IS FUNNY ABOUT PROCESS, THOUGH. I WAS THINKING THAT MY RESISTANCE TO PROCESS STEMMED FROM FEELING *UNDER-STIMULATED*—THAT I MISSED THE MORE DIRECTIONAL, SOMETIMES MANIPULATIVE, QUALITIES OF NARRATIVE AND DRAMA. BUT THE REVERSE HAS TURNED OUT TO BE TRUE: WHEN I PLAY AND RE-PLAY ONE INSTANTIATION OVER AND OVER, EACH TIME ABSORBING MORE OF ITS FLAVOR AND NUANCE, ONLY GRADUALLY SHAPING THE SOUNDS AS NEEDED TO COMPLEMENT THE MOVING IMAGE, *THAT* FEELS RIGHT. IN OTHER WORDS, I LIKE IT WHEN I HAVE MORE OF LESS. ONE STAGE OF THE PROCESS—ONE REPETITION, ONE VARIATION—IS AT LEAST ENOUGH. (WHERE THAT LEAVES ME I DO NOT KNOW.

FOR EVERY SOUND I MAKE, I REALIZE THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE I AM EXCLUDING FROM MY EXPERIENCE. I PLAY MY QUINTO DRUM, WHICH WILL NOT MAKE IT INTO THE FINAL SCORE, AND WHEN I STOP I REALIZE I HAVE BEEN DROWNING OUT THE BIRDS' SONGS. I SPEND SOME TIME, NOT OFFERING MY OWN SOUNDS, BUT TAKING IN THEIRS INSTEAD. (LATER, JOHN POINTS OUT THAT I AM STILL MISSING SOMETHING BY CHOOSING THESE PARTICULAR BIRD SOUNDS. THAT'S RIGHT, I AM ALWAYS MISSING SOMETHING.)

SOMETIMES I PLAY MY CLARINET AND A BIRD COMES TO PERCH ON THE RAILING. I WONDER WHAT SHE HEARS, AND WHETHER SHE PREFERS ONE SOUND TO ANOTHER. PERHAPS I AM IN THE WAY, KEEPING HER FROM RECEIVING A MESSAGE FROM A FAMILY MEMBER. OR PERHAPS SHE PERCHED THERE BECAUSE SHE LIKES THE CLARINET. MAYBE MY THINKING IS TOO ANTHROPOCENTRIC. AND MAYBE MY ANTHROPOCENTRISM IS TOO DUALISTIC: AS IF "THEM" IS NATURE AND "US" IS NOT. AFTER ALL, "WE" ARE PART OF NATURE TOO. PERHAPS SHE SAYS TO HERSELF, "I SHOULD JUST STOP SINGING, QUIET DOWN, AND LISTEN TO THOSE HUMANS WHO CONTRIBUTE SUCH A DELIGHTFUL BACKGROUND SOUND TO MY ORNITHOCENTRIC ENVIRONMENT. I LOVE THOSE TRIANGLES AND LEAF BLOWERS! BRING ON THE U2!"

(A WEEK FROM NOW I WILL SEE THAT A BIRD HAS DIED, HER NECK TRAPPED IN THE IRON LEG OF MY PATIO TABLE. POOR THING. I WONDER WHAT SHE WAS TRYING TO ACCOMPLISH. AS I WRITE, THIS, I SEE THAT THE BUNNY IS BACK. I HAVE BEEN WATCHING HER GROW UP THIS SUMMER. SHE HAS A HABIT OF SITTING AS IF POSING, THOUGH I FIGURE SHE HAS SOME BETTER REASON FOR HOLDING HER HEAD SO HIGH, SO REGAL. IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE, BUT PERHAPS SHE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE BIRD'S DEMISE.)

IN THE "BOX DRILL," THE TWO SWORDS CREATE THE SHAPE OF A SQUARE, EASILY FALLING INTO A REGULAR FOUR-FOUR RHYTHM. WHEN I HEAR THAT REGULARITY, I REMIND MYSELF THAT I AM REPRODUCING A SET PATTERN RATHER THAN RESPONDING TO THE EXIGENCY OF THE MOMENT. IN MANY ACTIVITIES, THIS LACK OF SPONTANEITY IS LESS THAN IDEAL, AND IN FREE SWORD COMBAT, IT CAN BE DANGEROUS: ANY TIME I ANTICIPATE MY DUIFANG'S NEXT ACTION AND FALL INTO HABITUAL MOVEMENT, I RECOGNIZE A LOSS OF FOCUS ON THE PRESENT MOMENT.² AND IN FREE PLAY, WHENEVER I BECOME TOO INTERESTED IN PLANNING MY NEXT FANCY MOVE, I SEEM TO GET HIT. BUT OVERLY REGULAR OR NOT, I LOVE THE SOUND OF THE DARKEN SWORDS CLASHING INTO ONE ANOTHER AGAIN AND AGAIN, THE GENTLE FLOW OF THE SUMMER BREEZE, THE BIRDS AND BUNNIES AND KIDS IN THE PARK. I ASK GLENN, "WHY WOULD I NEED TO COMPOSE MUSIC WHEN I CAN LISTEN TO THIS?"

OR THIS:

I, WHO AM UNMELODIOUS AND HEAR NO MUSIC SAVE RUSTIC MUSIC WHEN A DOG BARKS, A BELL TINKLES, OR WHEELS CRUNCH UPON THE GRAVEL. I SING MY SONG BY THE FIRE LIKE AN OLD SHELL MURMURING ON THE BEACH.³

Barbara White

I COMPLETE *MY BARN HAVING BURNED TO THE GROUND, I CAN NOW SEE THE MOON*, COMPOSING BY MOONLIGHT AND NOTING THE PHASES. TED ASKS WHETHER IT'LL BE PERFORMED BY THE LIGHT OF THE MOON. OF COURSE, THE ANSWER IS NO: THE PREMIERE WILL TAKE PLACE INSIDE AT HARRIS HALL, WHICH IS NOT SO RUSTIC, AND IS HERMETICALLY SEALED OFF FROM THE OUTDOORS. I REALIZE HOW STRANGE IT IS THAT THIS DIVORCING OF CIRCUMSTANCES IS SO FAMILIAR, SO EXPECTED, THAT IT PASSES MOST OFTEN WITHOUT COMMENT OR EVEN NOTICE. I WOULD LIKE TO SAVOR THE MOMENT MORE, TO LINGER BEFORE LETTING IT GO, TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOUND AND CIRCUMSTANCE BEFORE RIPPING THEM AWAY FROM ONE ANOTHER. AS IT TURNS OUT, I FALL ILL RIGHT BEFORE THE PREMIERE, AND I AM UNABLE TO TRAVEL TO ATTEND THE REHEARSALS, THOUGH I DO MAKE IT TO THE PERFORMANCE. I FIND MYSELF GRATEFUL FOR NOTATION, POSTAL SERVICE, CONDUCTORS, PERFORMANCE PRACTICE—NOT TO MENTION OVERACHIEVING YOUNG INSTRUMENTALISTS. BUT STILL I AM DRAWN TO THE SPECIFICITY OF THE MOMENT. INTERESTINGLY, HEARING THE PIECE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE PERFORMANCE, ALONGSIDE THE AUDIENCE, MAKES EACH INSTANT MORE LIKE THE MOMENTS OF COMPOSITION—UNPREDICTABLE AND EPHEMERAL.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CAPTIVATED BY THE SHAKUHACHI. I USED TO LISTEN OVER AND OVER TO THAT ONE NONESUCH RECORDING; IT *WAS* THE SHAKUHACHI FOR ME. SO WHY HAVEN'T I LEARNED TO PLAY BEFORE NOW? I GUESS I HAVE BEEN BUSY WITH OTHER MATTERS, TEACHING SEMINARS ON EXOTICISM AND SO ON. I BEGIN TO BLOW A BIT, AND THIS HUMBLE, FIVE-HOLED STARTER FLUTE, MADE OF UNPREPOSSESSING PVC, DRAWS ME IN, NURTURES ME IN SOME MYSTERIOUS WAY I CANNOT QUITE EXPLAIN.

YET EVEN SHAKUHACHI MUSIC SOUNDS OVERSTIMULATING TO ME AT THE MOMENT. HONKYOKU, THE ZEN REPERTOIRE, IS NOT CONSIDERED MUSIC, BUT RATHER SOUND IN THE SERVICE OF MEDITATION; IT HAS MUCH SPACE AND STILLNESS, AND YET I FIND THE MOTIONS OF THE NOTES FROM ONE TO ANOTHER ARE STILL TOO SYNTACTICAL, TOO DIRECTIONAL FOR ME. THAT'S NOT A COMPLAINT, JUST A DEPICTION OF MY CURRENT STATE. (IT'S NOT YOU; IT'S ME.) SO, WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ME? I JUST WANT TO PAUSE ONE MOMENT, ONE SOUND, AND STAY THERE. SO WHEN I PLAY MY PLASTIC SHAKUHACHI, I JUST PLAY *RO*, THE LOWEST NOTE. THAT IS PLENTY. LAST WEEK I WENT OUT TO BARNEGAT LIGHT, AND I WAS PLEASED AND SOOTHED TO HEAR THE FOGHORN PLAYING MY SONG! I PLAYED ALONG: *RO, RO, RO*. IT SOOTHED MY INSOMNIA TOO.

(WHEN I RETURN TO BARNEGAT LIGHT, I MISS THE FOGHORN. IT IS, APPARENTLY, NOT NEEDED TODAY.)

SO, I COULD LEARN THE SHAKUHACHI. BUT I AM NOT SURE I WANT TO INCREASE MY SONIC FOOTPRINT—NOT EVEN WITH A MUSIC THAT VALUES THE SPACE BETWEEN THE NOTES SO HIGHLY, THAT ATTENDS TO THE INHALATION AS CAREFULLY AS THE EXHALATION. I MAKE ENOUGH NOISE AS IT IS. PLUS, I AM NOT SURE WHERE I WOULD FIND THE TIME TO NEGLECT A NEW INSTRUMENT, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT INVOLVES ZEN PRACTICE, SINCE NOT PRACTICING THE CLARINET TAKES UP A LOT OF MY ENERGY ALREADY.

SPEAKING OF FOOTPRINTS, ROBERT HILLIER HAS PROPOSED TO BUILD AN IMMENSE CONDOMINIUM PROJECT, COMBINING THREE OF THE EIGHT BUILDINGS ON MY ONE-BLOCK STREET INTO A LARGE COMPLEX. HE CALLS IT A GREEN BUILDING, SINCE IT HAS A SOD ROOF AND GRAY WATER. BUT THE DESIGN SPORTS AN UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE, WITH SPACE FOR EIGHTEEN VEHICLES, AND IT CRAMS TWICE AS MANY PEOPLE INTO THE COMBINED LOTS AS ALLOWED BY LAW. I ASK THE ZONING BOARD, "HOW IS THAT 'GREEN'?" SOME OF THEM SEEM TO HAVE THE SAME QUESTION. HILLIER'S APPLICATION IS DENIED. BUT HE'LL BE BACK.

WHAT WOULD "GREEN MUSIC" BE? YES, I KNOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE CONSIDERED THIS QUESTION AND OFFERED

In search of silence

POSSIBLE ANSWERS. GOOD FOR THEM! I AM GLAD SUCH INQUIRIES ARE PART OF THE LANDSCAPE. BUT I FIND MYSELF ASKING AGAIN, FROM MY OWN VANTAGE POINT.

JUNE 2, 2008, 2:18 A.M. ANOTHER INSOMNIAC NIGHT. NOT GOOD. IT IS HEAVILY QUIET IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD, UNTIL I HEAR A BASKETBALL BOUNCING. HOW UNUSUAL, AND HOW PERPLEXING. I IMAGINE THE DEPARTED WHO OCCUPY THE CEMETERY ACROSS THE WAY COMING OUT TO PLAY. THE BASKETBALL SUBSIDES, BUT I REMAIN ALERT. I COULD LISTEN TO MUSIC, BUT SOMEHOW I DO NOT WANT TO DISTURB THE QUIET.

AUGUST 8, 2008, 3:26 A.M. HERE I AM AGAIN. THE EMPTINESS IS LUSH, COMFORTING. I AM LESS ANNOYED THAN USUAL AT BEING AWAKE. PERHAPS MY INNER EAR WAKES ME UP DELIBERATELY SO I CAN HEAR THIS LUXURIOUS STILLNESS.

AS I PREPARED TO MOVE HERE, FRIENDS KEPT JOKING THAT THE CEMETERY ACROSS THE STREET WOULD GUARANTEE QUIET NEIGHBORS. BUT ON MY VERY FIRST MORNING, THREE YEARS AGO, I WAS AWAKENED BY A WEED WACKER. IT TAKES A LOT OF NOISE TO MAINTAIN THAT GRAVEYARD GREEN.

SOMETIMES WHEN I CANNOT SLEEP I CAN HEAR MY HEART BEATING VERY LOUDLY. IT MAY OR MAY NOT BE EXPLAINED BY THE MITRAL VALVE REGURGITATION I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH LAST YEAR. REGURGITATION, THAT IS INTERESTING. LINDSA ASKS, "WHAT IS IT THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO HOLD ON TO—THAT YOU WANT TO SPIT BACK OUT?"

THERE ARE MANY SOUNDS I WOULD LIKE TO REGURGITATE, BUT THEY SEEM TO STICK TO ME NEVERTHELESS. I DO NOT WANT TO ROMANTICIZE "THE ENVIRONMENT," TO MIS-REPRESENT IT AS ALL BIRDS AND BUNNIES AND BREEZES. SOMETIMES THE ENVIRONMENT OFFERS GIFTS I DO NOT WANT TO RECEIVE.

I AM IN THE POST OFFICE, AND THE TELEVISION IS PLAYING. I HAVE NOT ASKED TO HEAR ABOUT CHRISTIAN BALE'S ALLEGED ASSAULT OF HIS MOTHER AND SISTER, BUT HERE IT IS, REVEALING ITSELF TO ME, WHETHER I LIKE IT OR NOT.

THE NEXT DAY I AM ONLINE, AND BEFORE I KNOW WHAT I AM DOING, I READ THAT HE HAS ASKED THAT PEOPLE RESPECT HIS PRIVACY. I WOULD LOVE TO. USPS, HOW ABOUT YOU? ABC? CNN? VERIZON? YOUTUBE?

I COULD GO ON AND ON: THERE ARE ADVERTISEMENTS PLAYING, WITH SOUND, ON THE CASH REGISTER AT THE GROCERY STORE, AT THE GAS PUMP. I AM BOARDING A PLANE AND I FIND MYSELF NEEDING TO METABOLIZE *RHAPSODY IN BLUE*.

I DID NOT INVITE ANY OF THIS INTO MY EAR. BUT I THINK OF IT AS THE PRICE I PAY FOR CONSUMING. I PAY THE PRINCIPAL IN DOLLARS, AND THERE IS A TAX MEASURED IN SONIC REAL ESTATE. INDEED, THE COMPARISON WITH REAL ESTATE IS INTERESTING: IT SEEMS TOO EASY TO THINK THAT SOUNDS ARE IMMATERIAL, THAT THEY DO NOT TAKE UP ANY SPACE, THAT THEY CAN BE LAYERED ONE ATOP THE OTHER AD INFINITUM, WITHOUT ANY ILL EFFECTS.

SOMETIMES THIS IS WEIRD ENOUGH TO BE INTRIGUING, AS IN THE TAXI, WHERE ONE HEARS THE RADIO (FOR THE DRIVER) AS WELL AS THE TELEVISION (FOR THE PASSENGER).

I AM WAITING FOR MY CAR AT LAWRENCEVILLE FORD. HERE, TOO, I KNOW FROM PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE TO BE

Barbara White

PREPARED FOR BOTH THE TELEVISION AND THE RADIO AT ONCE. I SEE THAT THE ONLY OTHER CUSTOMER IS READING, SO I ASK HIS PERMISSION TO MUTE THE TELEVISION. HE AGREES, THOUGH IT TAKES A WHILE TO GET ACROSS THAT I WANT NO SOUND INSTEAD OF A DIFFERENT STATION. ANYWAY, HE KINDLY AGREES. A WHILE LATER, ANOTHER CUSTOMER ENTERS, RAISES THE VOLUME, AND PROCEEDS TO TALK ON HER CELL PHONE. THEN SHE STARTS TO TALK TO ME AND SOMEHOW EXPECTS TO GAIN MY ATTENTION THROUGH ALL THAT SONIC CLUTTER.

I AM IN THE WAITING ROOM AT THE BREAST HEALTH CENTER, WHICH PROUDLY ADVERTISES ITS "SPA-LIKE DECOR" (ARTIFICIAL WATERFALLS, GOWNS MADE OF REAL FABRIC, AND LOTS OF PINK EVERYWHERE). I AM ALONE AND MUTE THE TELEVISION. STAFF MEMBERS KEEP ENTERING THE ROOM AND TURNING THE VOLUME UP. I MUTE IT AGAIN, AND AGAIN.

I AM TALKING TO DEB ABOUT IPODS. WE BOTH PREFER TO HEAR THE SOUNDS AROUND US AS WE WALK, RATHER THAN INSERTING SOME DISASSOCIATED MATERIAL INTO THE EAR. SHE SAYS, "WHEN I WALK, I THINK MAYBE THERE IS SOMETHING I NEED TO HEAR." WHAT IF SHE COVERED THAT UP WITH SOMETHING ELSE? WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE HER?

(WHENEVER I SEE SOMEONE RIDING A BICYCLE WITH EARPHONES, WHICH HAPPENS FREQUENTLY, I THINK, "DANGER!")

I LOVE WALKING TO THE PARK, HEARING ALL THE SOUNDS AROUND ME, AND THEN PRACTICING TAI JI IN THE BREEZE. OFTEN I HAVE THE PLACE TO MYSELF, BUT SOMETIMES THERE ARE LITTLE KIDS PLAYING, OR SLIGHTLY BIGGER KIDS SMOOCHING, OR EVEN BIGGER KIDS TALKING OVER THEIR INVESTMENT DEALS. ALL THIS WEAVES TOGETHER WITH MY PRACTICE WITHOUT ANY EFFORT OR DIFFICULTY. ONE DAY THERE IS A BUNNY, AND SHE DOES HER THING WHILE GLENN AND I COMPLETE CHENG MAN-CH'ING'S THIRTY-SEVEN-PART FORM. GLENN TELLS ME THEY SAY THAT ONE SHOULD AIM TO PRACTICE SO AS NOT TO DISTURB THE ANIMALS. SO OUR SLOW TEMPO SLOWS DOWN EVEN MORE, AND THE BUNNY HOPS AROUND APPARENTLY UNDISTURBED BY OUR PRESENCE. UNTIL A CAT ARRIVES.

THERE IS A SIGN AT THE PARK ENTRANCE THAT LISTS PROHIBITIONS. IT SAYS, "NO ANIMALS." I AM NOT MAKING THIS UP. OOPS, WELL I DID EMEND IT A BIT, DUE TO A SLIP OF MEMORY: IT ACTUALLY SAYS, "NO DOGS OR CATS." SAY WHAT?

ONE DAY THERE IS A GROUP STRETCHING, IN PREPARATION FOR AN ACTIVITY THAT I NEVER GET TO SEE; THEY ARE LISTENING TO REGGAE ON A BOOM BOX WHILE THEY BEND AND REACH AND CHAT. IT IS NOT OVERLY LOUD, BUT STILL I WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE IT ENTER MY PRACTICE. THE SOUND OF MY BODY MOVING THROUGH THE THICK SUMMER AIR IS LOUD ENOUGH. I NOTE THAT THE FOOTPRINT OF A BOOMBOX IS MUCH LARGER THAN THAT OF THE UNAMPLIFIED SOUNDS. NO SURPRISE THERE.

I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT "SHARING" AMPLIFIED MUSIC SO BYSTANDERS CAN HEAR, WHETHER OR NOT THEY CHOOSE TO. I ALSO HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT BLOCKING OUT OUR SURROUNDINGS, RETREATING TO OUR PRIVATE PODS, CHOOSING TO ERASE WHAT LIES RIGHT HERE. THE INTERPLAY OF SELF AND OTHER, OF HERE AND THERE, OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC: NOT SO SIMPLE, AND NOT YET SORTED OUT.

WHEN I AM AT THE BEACH, I AM GRATEFUL FOR OTHERS' IPODS, SINCE I DO NOT HAVE TO HEAR THEIR SOUNDTRACKS. WOW, ONE PLACE HAS ACTUALLY GOTTEN *QUIETER* IN THE LAST THIRTY YEARS.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, I REALLY RESISTED GETTING A CELL PHONE, BUT I FINALLY GAVE IN. I STILL RESIST THEIR

OMNIPRESENCE, AND I FEAR THAT WE SOMETIMES SEEM TO BE GIVING OUR SOULS TO THEM. I HAD TO CHANGE MY RING, BECAUSE IT WOULD POP UP IN MY EAR, SILENTLY, AT INOPPORTUNE MOMENTS, AND MY EXPERIENCE WOULD BE PERMEATED BY RUBÉN BLADES OR THE CHEMICAL BROTHERS. AS MUCH AS I LIKE THOSE SOUNDS, THEY BEGAN TO STICK TO ME IN WAY I COULD NOT TOLERATE. (PLUS, THEY WOULD SQUEEZE OUT WHATEVER WAS PLAYING IN MY HEAD ALREADY, USUALLY THE RAVEL TRIO OR THE DUE SOUTH THEME SONG.) BUT HERE I AM ON A PROFESSIONAL TRIP, MORE THAN A LITTLE WORN OUT, AND I AM GLAD WHEN JOHN CALLS AND WE CAN TALK ABOUT THE WIDE VARIETY OF BANANA SPECIES FOUND IN ECUADOR. I AM GLAD TO SHARE A GLASS OF WINE WITH CARLA, EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T SEE HER GLASS, SINCE SHE IS ON THE EAST SIDE. (IT IS SIGNIFICANT, PERHAPS, THAT IN THESE INSTANCES I AM ALONE AND INDOORS. SO THESE ARE NOT REALLY CELLULAR-SPECIFIC MOMENTS, ARE THEY?) I LIKE TO HEAR WHAT IS HERE. OR, IF FEELING MORE RECEPTIVE AND FLEXIBLE, I MIGHT SAY, "HERE" MAY CHANGE, EXPAND, TRANSMUTE, AS I TALK ABOUT THE BANANAS OR DRINK MY WINE. (IT SEEMS THAT "HERE" OFTEN INVOLVES FOOD OF SOME SORT. MAYBE THAT IS PART OF THE APPEAL.)

STILL, WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE SO ILL-EQUIPPED TO TURN OFF THEIR CELL PHONES AS NEED BE? WHAT'S WITH THOSE FOLKS ON THE PLANE WHO HAVE TO POWER UP BEFORE BEING INVITED TO DO SO? (YOU KNOW THEM; THEY ARE THE SAME ONES WHO LISTEN TO THEIR IPODS, ONLY SOMEWHAT SURREPTITIOUSLY, DURING TAKEOFF AND LANDING. DON'T THEY KNOW THEY ARE PUTTING US IN JEOPARDY BY INTERFERING WITH THE AIRCRAFT'S COMMUNICATION AND NAVIGATION SYSTEMS??!!) IS THAT NOT WHAT CELL PHONES ARE FOR, TO BE SILENCED?—THAT IS, WHEN INTERRUPTIONS WOULD BE UNWELCOME, WHICH WOULD BE, WELL, MOST OF THE TIME, RIGHT?

IF WE CANNOT EVER SAY NO, THEN OUR YES CEASES TO BE A YES.

SHELL OIL HAS A FULL-PAGE AD ON THE BACK COVER OF *HARPER'S*: A BOY IS WRITING ON A BLACKBOARD, "SAY NO TO NO." IT GOES ON, "ISN'T IT HIGH TIME SOMEONE GOT NEGATIVE ABOUT NEGATIVITY?" (I AM JUST WONDERING HOW "NO" IS NECESSARILY "NEGATIVE"), AND LATER ASKS "WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO TURN NO INTO YES?" SOMEHOW THIS REMINDS ME OF BEING AT A TAKE BACK THE NIGHT MARCH, IN AROUND 1990. THE MARCHERS CHANTED, "YES MEANS YES! NO MEANS NO!" AND A GROUP OF HECKLERS ANSWERED WITH, "YES MEANS YES! NO MEANS YES!" OH BOY.

TOM INTRODUCES US TO THE PRACTICE OF "LOVE TALKING," AND I FIND MYSELF WRITING A POEM THAT HONORS BOTH WHAT I THINK OF (WRONGLY) AS UNADULTERATED NATURE AND WHAT I THINK OF (WRONGLY) AS OUR INTRUSIONS INTO IT. IT IS A RELIEF.

IT IS GOOD TO FEEL LESS DUALISTIC FOR A SPELL. BUT THESE ARE NOT EASY QUESTIONS, AND THESE ARE NOT SMALL MATTERS. AT LEAST NOT FOR ME. I SUPPOSE I AM ESPECIALLY STICKY, LIKE FLYPAPER. (I THINK WE ARE ALL CONSTRUCTED DIFFERENTLY. PERHAPS YOU CAN METABOLIZE AND RELEASE STIMULI MORE READILY? AND PERHAPS YOU CAN MORE EASILY OPT TO EXCLUDE THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE? I ENVY THAT.)

HERE AND THERE: I LOVE THAT TAI JI REQUIRES NO SPECIAL EQUIPMENT (OK, THERE ARE THE SWORDS, WHICH IN TURN REQUIRE GLOVES, HELMETS AND SO ON—NOT TO MENTION THE *DUIFANG*), THAT I CARRY IT IN MY MUSCLE MEMORY, THAT I CAN TAKE IT WITH ME ANYWHERE. I AM PRACTICING IN PRAEPRE PARK, FINISHING UP MY RESIDENCY IN ASPEN. THERE ARE DOGS. CARS GO BY. A GUY IS LYING ON A TOWEL A WAYS AWAY. AFTER A WHILE I REALIZE I AM INHALING SMOKE FROM HIS CIGARETTE. THIS IS SOMETHING MY BODY REALLY DOES NOT WANT. HEY, GUY, TURN THAT DOWN!

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THIS IS WHAT HUANCHU DAOREN HAS TO SAY:

WHEN YOU ARE CONSTANTLY HEARING OFFENSIVE WORDS AND ALWAYS HAVE SOME IRRITATING MATTER IN MIND,
ONLY THEN DO YOU HAVE A WHETSTONE FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT. IF YOU HEAR ONLY WHAT PLEASES YOU,
AND DEAL ONLY WITH WHAT THRILLS YOU, THEN YOU ARE BURYING YOUR LIFE IN DEADLY POISON.⁴

I LOVE THIS SWITCHEROO: PLEASURE AS POISON. EASY TO SAY WHEN YOU LIVE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY! DID HE
EVER HAVE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS OUTSIDE HIS HOME AT EIGHT IN THE MORNING, BLASTING OPIE AND ANTHONY?

IN ANSWER TO A QUERY REGARDING MY VERY LATE SUBMISSION ("I DON'T MEAN TO BE A NUISANCE"), BEN REPLIES,
"FEEL FREE TO BE A NUISANCE IF THAT WILL KEEP *OPEN SPACE* AND LIFE INTERESTING." NOTED!

SOMEHOW THESE DAYS I PREFER SOUNDS THAT ARE LESS MUSICAL THAN EVEN HONKYOKU. I SING MY BELL AS ONE
DOES A BOWL, AND IT MAKES ONE CONTINUOUS SOUND. AND MY DRUM: SAME THERE, JUST ONE SOUND, AGAIN
AND AGAIN. THOUGH WHEN I USE IT IN CIRCLE IT SOMETIMES STARTS TO WANT TO BE "MUSICAL." CUT IT OUT, I
SAY—THIS IS *SPIRITUAL* PRACTICE, NOT MUSICAL DISPLAY. BUT I AM NOT ALWAYS SURE OF THE DISTINCTION. WE ARE
IN TIMELESS TIME, AND THEN MY DRUM STARTS ARTICULATING, DIFFERENTIATING TIME. IT DRUMS ME, AND US, INTO
THE FUTURE, AND THAT SEEMS LIKE THE RIGHT THING FOR THE MOMENT.

I SEEM TO NEED LESS AND LESS. I RETURN TO BARNEGAT LIGHT, AND FOR A WEEK, EVEN MY DRUM, BELL AND
PVC FLUTE REMAIN SILENT. I WONDER WHAT IS TRULY NECESSARY.

WHEN I FIRST MET CHRIS, IN 1990, HE TALKED ABOUT A SOLO SHOW HE HAD DONE SOME TIME BEFORE. HE
WANTED EVERY SCULPTURE TO BE AT LEAST AS GOOD AS THE WHITE WALL IN THE GALLERY. IN RESPONSE, I WROTE
A PIECE CALLED "WHITE WALL." I WAS THINKING ABOUT THIS AGAIN JUST LAST WEEK, WHEN I WAS SCORING *GATHER*,
THE FIRST OF ALISON'S THREE FILMS. SHE REPEATS A SINGLE ACTION TWENTY-EIGHT TIMES, AND SHE WALKS OFF
AND THEN ON SCREEN IN BETWEEN EACH ITERATION. I HAD LONG BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO SCORING THE MOMENTS
WHERE SHE IS OUT OF THE FRAME, HAVING OBSERVED AGAIN AND AGAIN THAT SOUND CAN READ, PARADOXICALLY, AS
STILLNESS OR EVEN SILENCE WHEN COMBINED WITH MOVING IMAGES OR CHOREOGRAPHY. BUT IT IS INTERESTING (TO
ME, AT LEAST): I FIND THAT THE "EMPTY" FRAME—IT IS AN OUTDOOR SCENE, NOT TRULY EMPTY, BUT EMPTY OF
HUMAN PRESENCE—ASKS ME TO LEAVE IT ALONE. IT SEEMS THAT THE MUSIC ACCOMPANIES AND INSTANTIATES HUMAN
TIME, SOMETHING DIRECTED, IF REPETITIVE AND UNPREDICTABLE, WHILE THE MOMENTS WHERE SHE EXITS RETURN TO A
SORT OF "NATURAL TIME"—THERE IS NO LONGER A CREATOR THERE MAKING THINGS HAPPEN. (OR PERHAPS THERE IS,
BUT MUCH MORE SLOWLY.) SO I LISTEN AND LEAVE IT ALONE, EXCEPT SOMETIMES.

JOHN QUOTES HEINRICH NEUHAUS: "TONE MUST BE CLOTHED IN SILENCE; IT MUST BE ENSHRINED IN SILENCE LIKE A
JEWEL IN A VELVET CASE."⁵ AH, YES, AS THEY SAY, SILENCE IS . . . VELVET.

I JUST HEARD A PRESENTATION BY A YOUNG COMPOSER. HE IS TALENTED, ACCOMPLISHED, PRODUCTIVE, IMAGINATIVE:
AND SCORES OF PEOPLE WANT TO PLAY AND HEAR HIS MUSIC. HE MENTIONS THAT HE HAS BEEN SPENDING SOME TIME
NOT COMPOSING, INSTEAD THINKING MORE ABOUT WHAT HE WANTS TO DO. I THINK, "GOOD FOR YOU!" THAT MUST
TAKE GUTS, ESPECIALLY AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE.

RIMBAUD, EVEN YOUNGER, WRITES: "SEEN ENOUGH."⁶ AMEN. SOMETIMES IT SEEMS LIKE WE ARE EXHALING MUCH
MORE THAN INHALING, AND THAT OUR OUTPUT MUST BE UNDERNOURISHED AS A RESULT.

THERE'S THAT MOTTO FOR BURNING MAN: I COULD NOT FIND IT EXACTLY, BUT IT IS SOMETHING LIKE, "NO OBSERVERS, ONLY PARTICIPANTS." (I WROTE ABOUT ALLAN KAPROW ALREADY.⁷ I SEEM TO BE REPEATING MYSELF, CYCLING THROUGH THE SAME THOUGHTS OVER AND OVER. BUT PERHAPS IT IS JUST PART OF THE PROCESS.) IF WE FEEL WE MUST BE DOING, THEN IT BECOMES MORE LIKE A PERFORMANCE AND LESS LIKE REAL LIFE. OR DOES IT? SO, SHALL WE TRY THE REVERSE? "NO PARTICIPANTS, OBSERVERS ONLY." YES, AGAIN, I KNOW THERE ARE GROUPS THAT DO THIS TOO. SOME OF MY FAVORITE SITUATIONS ARE WHERE THE ROLES ARE FLUID, CHANGING—WHERE EVERYONE KNOWS WHETHER THEY ARE GIVING OR RECEIVING, EXCEPT WHEN THEY DON'T. THAT SORT OF MINDFULNESS TAKES A LOT OF WORK, BUT IT IS WORTH IT.

I AM VISITING A COLLEAGUE'S COMPOSITION SEMINAR. THE GENDER RATIO IS MORE EVEN THAN USUAL, WHICH MEANS THAT THERE ARE TWENTY-FIVE PER CENT WOMEN. I NOTICE THAT THERE ARE SEVERAL MEN WHO SPEAK READILY AND WITH MUCH CERTAINTY; THEY TOSS AROUND "ISMS" WITH APPARENT EASE, THEY JOUST OVER THE PROPER INTERPRETATIONS OF LITERARY REFERENCES, AND THEY ENUMERATE WHAT IS AND IS NOT APPROPRIATE SUBJECT AND SYNTAX FOR OUR CURRENT COMPOSITIONAL MOMENT.

I WONDER WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO HAVE SO MANY MORE ANSWERS THAN QUESTIONS. I THINK I WOULD FIND IT UNINTERESTING, BUT MAYBE NOT.

FOR THE MOST PART, THE WOMEN SIT QUIETLY. I NOTICE THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM IS WEARING SOMETHING FORM-FITTING AND/OR REVEALING. (SPEAKING OF REPEATING MYSELF, I WON'T GET INTO THE SHOES—VERBALLY OR OTHERWISE.⁸) NOT HAVING MUCH EXPERIENCE WITH THIS SORT OF SARTORIAL SELF-PRESENTATION MYSELF, I FIGURE THAT THIS SORT OF CLOTHING MUST BE VERY COMFORTABLE AND THEREFORE CONDUCIVE TO SITTING IN A SEMINAR FOR SEVERAL HOURS CONCENTRATING ON AESTHETIC AND INTELLECTUAL MATTERS. IF IT WEREN'T, THEY WOULD WEAR SOMETHING ELSE, RIGHT? I MEAN, THEY WOULD NOT SACRIFICE COMFORT AND WELL-BEING FOR—FOR, WELL, WHAT, EXACTLY?

IT IS EASY TO THINK THAT THE WOMEN—AND THE QUIETER MEN, FOR THAT MATTER—ARE *FAILING* TO SPEAK UP, THAT THEY ARE SHY OR INSECURE OR UNDERPREPARED. BUT MAYBE THEY ARE LEARNING A LOT FROM THIS. MAYBE THEY ARE JUST FOLLOWING THEIR OWN INTERNAL RHYTHMS, TAKING THINGS IN, DOING JUST WHAT THEY NEED TO DO. PERHAPS SPEAKING UP IS OVERRATED.

WHAT IF THERE WERE MORE OF THIS? I GUESS OUR SEMINARS WOULD RESEMBLE QUAKER MEETINGS. I AM NOT ADVOCATING IT, EXACTLY, BUT IT IS AN INTRIGUING IMAGE.

WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT FINDING ONE'S VOICE, BUT WE HEAR LESS ABOUT FIND A HARMONIOUS PLACE FOR IT TO RESOUND, ABOUT MODULATING IT WITH RESPECT TO ITS SURROUNDINGS, ABOUT STILLING ONESELF TO RESPECT THE OTHER'S VOICE. AND EVEN LESS ABOUT FINDING ONE'S SILENCE.

HAVING SAID THAT, I DO NOT WANT TO BECOME TOO ATTACHED TO QUIET. AGAIN, I DO NOT WANT TO FALL INTO DUALISM. ISN'T THE IDEA FOR YIN AND YANG TO FLOW FROM ONE TO THE OTHER IN SPONTANEOUS, INTEGRATED HARMONY—TO EMERGE AND RECEDE ACCORDING TO THE EXIGENCY OF THE MOMENT? PERHAPS THIS IS JUST A YIN PHASE, AND IT'LL PASS IN A WHILE. I SEEM TO REMEMBER SAYING THAT SAME THING, WELL, TWO YEARS AGO, AND AGAIN A FEW PARAGRAPHS BACK. THERE'S BEEN SOME YANG, TOO, IN THE MEANTIME. BUT STILL, I FIND MYSELF ARGUING FOR YIN, WHICH IS A LITTLE ODD, BUT NOT NEW. I THINK IF THERE WERE MORE YIN AROUND I WOULD FEEL

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LESS EXHAUSTED BY WHAT FEELS SO OFTEN LIKE THE OMNIPRESENCE OF YANG.

AND PERHAPS THERE IS A THIRD WAY. TOM TELLS THE STORY OF THE THREE HARPERS. ONE PLAYS THE MUSIC OF SORROW, ONE THE MUSIC OF JOY, AND ONE THE MUSIC OF SLEEP. THIS LAST IS NEITHER SORROWFUL NOR JOYFUL, BUT RATHER A RESTFUL MUSIC THAT ABSORBS AND DIFFUSES THE OTHER SENSATIONS. WHERE CAN I GET SOME OF THAT? I SAY A PRAYER ASKING FOR SOME NIGHTTIME PEACE, BUT IT REMAINS ELUSIVE. I SEEM TO HAVE MORE ACCESS TO THE MUSIC OF WAKEFULNESS, THE CLANGOR OF INSOMNIA.

AND SOMETIMES, INSTEAD OF DISSOLVING AND SUBMERGING, THEY SIMPLY COEXIST. HUANCHU DAOREN WRITES OF SIMULTANEITY:

WHEN THERE IS NO SOUND EVEN AS THE STREAM FLOWS, YOU ARE ABLE TO PERCEIVE THE MOOD OF QUIET IN THE MIDST OF CLAMOR. WHEN THE CLOUDS ARE UNOBSTRUCTED IN SPITE OF THE HEIGHT OF THE MOUNTAINS, YOU REALIZE THE WAY TO LEAVE BEING AND ENTER NONBEING.⁹

BUT HE CLEARLY PREFERS ONE OVER THE OTHER. WELL, PERHAPS PREFERENCES ARE NOT SO UNDESIRABLE AFTER ALL:

TO DELIGHT IN LISTENING TO THE CALL OF THE NIGHTINGALE, TO WEARY OF HEARING THE CROAKING OF FROGS, TO WANT TO CULTIVATE FLOWERS ON SEEING THEM, TO WISH TO REMOVE WEEDS ON FINDING THEM: THESE ARE HUMAN SENTIMENTS, AND THIS IS JUST ACTING ON FORM AND MOOD. IF YOU LOOK UPON BEINGS IN TERMS OF THE ESSENTIAL CREATIVE POWER IN THEM, ARE THEY NOT ALL SPONTANEOUSLY EXPRESSING THEIR NATURAL POTENTIAL AND SENSE OF ALIVENESS?¹⁰

AT THE "SHORE," AS I AM LEARNING TO SAY, THE WAVES, USUALLY GENTLE, ARE WILD. (THANKS, DOLLY.) I LIKE THAT; IT REMINDS ME OF THE BEACHES OF MY YOUTH. I FEEL THE DESIRE TO IMMERSE MYSELF. ACTUALLY, IS IT DESIRE, OR IS IT UNTHINKING HABIT? ANYWAY, I WONDER WHETHER IT IS NECESSARY. DOES THE OCEAN REALLY NEED ME TO PLUNGE INTO IT? MAYBE IT JUST WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS PRETTY EXPANSIVE; IT MIGHT NOT MIND ABSORBING ME. IT'S NOT NECESSARY, BUT IT DOES APPEAL. I JUMP IN AND GET MY BUTT KICKED. ONE MONSTER WAVE TURNS ME UPSIDE DOWN AND BLASTS ME INTO THE SAND, AND I SWALLOW A BIT OF WATER. LATER, IT'LL TAKE SOME TIME TO CLEAN THE GRIT OUT OF MY SUIT. IT IS HELPFUL TO BE REMINDED OF NATURE'S INDIFFERENCE. AN INDIFFERENCE I TASTED WHEN I NEARLY DROWNED AT THE AGE OF FOUR. THERE WAS A STRONG UNDERTOW, OR A SWIRLING EDDY, OR SOMETHING—SOMETHING WITH A MIND OF ITS OWN. A STRANGER PULLED ME OUT. WHERE MY PARENTS WERE, I DID NOT KNOW AND DID NOT THINK TO ASK. NOT UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.

SOMEHOW THAT DID NOT TURN ME OFF TO THE OCEAN THOUGH. ON THE CONTRARY, I FEEL NOURISHED WHEN I VISIT.

LESS AND LESS SEEMS TRULY NECESSARY. I AM GLAD TO HAVE THE OPTION TO DRESS MYSELF SO AS TO APPEAR RELATIVELY SYMMETRICAL. BUT MORE AND MORE OFTEN, THIS TOO SEEMS UNIMPORTANT, SO I REFRAIN FROM FILLING THE SPACE MY BREAST USED TO OCCUPY, LETTING THE FLAT SIDE BE AS IT IS, ALLOWING THE AIR TO CIRCULATE CLOSER TO MY CHEST. I FEEL SLEEK, STREAMLINED, UNENCUMBERED—IN THAT ONE REGION OF MY BODY, ANYWAY. FEW OF MY FELLOW BEACHGOERS SEEM TO NOTICE, BUT A TWELVE-YEAR OLD GIRL SEEMS TAKEN ABACK. I WANT TO SAY, SORRY, I AM NOT OUT TO UNNERVE YOU; IT'S JUST SIMPLER, EASIER THIS WAY, AND, WELL, MORE COMFORTABLE. WHY PRETEND OTHERWISE?

I AM HERE, AT THE SHORE, BECAUSE I AM CELEBRATING FINISHING THE DRAFT OF MY FILM SCORES. ON THE DRIVE

In search of silence

OUT I LISTENED TO NOTHING SAVE THE MANY SOUNDS OF THE ROAD. ON THE WAY BACK, A MERE THIRTY-SIX HOURS LATER, MY EARS ARE CLEAR, EMPTY, AND I TURN ON THE RADIO. *ROAD MOVIES*. (FUNNY COINCIDENCE. I WONDER WHAT PERCENTAGE OF LISTENING ACCOMPANIES DRIVING.) IT IS ENGAGING, LIVELY. I WONDER WHETHER I NEED TO HEAR IT EVER AGAIN, AND WHETHER I WILL. MAYBE. FUNNY THAT RECORDINGS AND OTHER MEDIA COULD PERMIT ME TO LISTEN MUCH MORE ATTENTIVELY, AND YET THAT TOO OFTEN THEY SEEM TO ENCOURAGE INSTEAD A SORT OF CASUAL, DISPOSABLE MENTALITY.

AVAILABILITY AND ABUNDANCE HAVE THEIR DOWNSIDES. MICHAEL POLLAN DESCRIBES HOW INDUSTRIAL EFFORTS TO MAKE FOOD MORE PORTABLE AND PLENTIFUL HAVE SIMULTANEOUSLY DECREASED NUTRITIONAL CONTENT. (WE HAVE MORE FOOD, BUT THERE IS LESS OF VALUE IN IT. SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I EAT MORE THAN ENOUGH MUSIC, AND THAT MUCH OF IT HAS LESS THAN ENOUGH NUTRITIONAL VALUE.¹¹

ANYWAY, I RESOLVE TO LISTEN TO ONE CD A WEEK AND REALLY ABSORB IT. I AM BEHIND ALREADY; I LISTENED TO TOO MUCH THIS WEEK.

SOMETIMES I LOOK AT A STACK OF CDS AND CALCULATE, ROUGHLY, HOW MUCH TIME THEY REPRESENT. IT CAN BE INTIMIDATING, EVEN BURDENSOME. A COUPLE OF TIMES LATELY I HAVE ATTENDED PRESENTATIONS, DESIGNED TO BE AN HOUR OR TWO LONG, WHERE THE PRESENTER ARRIVED WITH A DOZEN OR MORE CDS. IN ONE CASE WE LISTENED TO A COUPLE OF EXCERPTS, AND IN ANOTHER WE NEVER GOT TO ANY OF THEM. THEY SEEM TO REPRESENT SOMETHING: PERHAPS THEY ARE CONTAINERS FOR THE SOUNDS WE ARE NOT HEARING, BUT WE STILL KNOW THEY ARE THERE. DO THEY COMFORT US? THEY ARE POTENTIALITY, IN THEIR VERY SILENCE.

BUT PERHAPS THESE CONTAINERS REMAIN UNOPENED BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH ROOM FOR THEIR CONTENTS OUTSIDE.

THE *TÁO TÊ CHING* SAYS, "FILL YOUR BOWL TO THE BRIM AND IT WILL SPILL."¹²

HANG ON, OLD MAN: WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "YOU"?

INDEED, THERE SEEMS TO BE A LOT OF NOISE ABOUT SILENCE. FIRST THERE IS KEATS'S SWEET "UNHEARD MUSIC," WHICH WE HEAR ABOUT ALL THE TIME. AND CAMPION'S "SILENT MUSIC," WHICH PAUL SET TO MUSIC. I LOVE CHICK COREA'S "CRYSTAL SILENCE," BUT IT IS NOT SILENT AT ALL. THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL ALBUM FOR SHO AND ACCORDION, CALLED DEEP SILENCE. CRAIG DWORKIN HAS THAT INTRIGUING LIST OF SILENT PIECES.¹³

THERE ARE STATEMENTS, MANY OF THEM APPROPRIATELY PARADOXICAL, ABOUT "SILENT MUSIC." JOHN LUTHER ADAMS WRITES, "WHITE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF COLOR. IT IS THE FULLNESS OF LIGHT. SILENCE IS NOT THE ABSENCE OF SOUND. IT IS THE PRESENCE OF STILLNESS."¹⁴ THE ALLURE OF METAPHOR BEARS SOME MORE INVESTIGATION, DOES IT NOT?

AND PAUL HILLIER OBSERVES THAT "ARVO PART'S MUSIC ACCEPTS SILENCE AND DEATH, AND THUS REAFFIRMS THE BASIC TRUTH OF LIFE, ITS FRAILTY COMPASSIONATELY REALISED, ITS SACRED BEAUTY OBSERVED AND CELEBRATED."¹⁵ WOW, THAT'S AN EARFUL, AND A LOT TO ASK FROM SEVEN NOTES.

AND YOU-KNOW-WHO—WELL, IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT HE IS PRESENT IN HIS ABSENCE, HIS VOICE ECHOING THROUGH THE ANECHOIC CHAMBER, A PULSE, A HUM.

ALL THIS SPEAKING ABOUT SILENCE IS ODD. DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM TRUSTING SILENCE, SO WE NEED TO INVOKe IT WITH OUR VOICES, WRITTEN AND SPOKEN? WE KEEP NEEDING TO SAY HOW IMPORTANT SILENCE IS, THEREBY DISRUPTING THE SILENCE. IS IT AN ACT OF COLONIZATION, OR PROTECTION? LIKE LIVING IN A THICKLY SETTLED DISTRICT; IF WE FILL THINGS IN, WE KNOW WE DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE OPEN SPACE BEING EATEN UP BY A DEVELOPMENT. WHEREAS IF WE LEAVE THE SILENCE OPEN WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL WHAT FILLS IT. SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT DO SOMETHING WE DO NOT LIKE. BY SPEAKING ABOUT IT, WE DELIMIT IT, AND WE MAKE IT OURS. (THAT IS, UNTIL A SHIFTY DEVELOPER COMES ALONG AND WANTS TO REPLACE OUR SIMPLE, MODEST, SINGLE-FAMILY QUIET WITH GENTRIFIED, TECHNICOLOR, LUXURY-CONDO SILK AND SILVER *SIGH-LENZE*.¹⁵)

HANG ON—WHAT DO I MEAN, “WE”?

THERE ARE EVEN PARODIES. THE PRETENTIOUS INVOCATION OF SILENCE'S PROFUNDITY IS FAMILIAR ENOUGH TO BE LAMPOONED. LIKE *CHANTMANIA*, AN ALBUM BY THE BENZEDRINE MONKS OF SANTO DOMONICA. (YES, IT IS A PARODY OF *CHANT*, BY THE BENEDICTINE MONKS OF SANTO DOMINGO DE SILOS.) THE FINAL TRACK, “THE MONKS' VOW OF SILENCE,” IS, INDEED, SILENT. (THEY ALSO DO THE MONKEES THEME IN CHANT STYLE. IT SOUNDS PRETTY GOOD. MAYBE THIS WILL BE MY CD FOR THE WEEK.)

THIS IS NOT A PARODY: “CONFUCIUS SAID, ‘YOUR WILL MUST BE ONE. DO NOT LISTEN WITH YOUR EARS BUT WITH YOUR MIND. DO NOT LISTEN WITH YOUR MIND BUT WITH YOUR VITAL ENERGY. EARS CAN ONLY HEAR, MIND CAN ONLY THINK, BUT VITAL ENERGY IS EMPTY, RECEPTIVE TO ALL THINGS. TAO ABIDES IN EMPTINESS.”¹⁶

I AM INTERESTED IN THAT SUSPICION OF THE EARS. ARE THEY SO EASILY DECEIVED, SO UNTRUSTWORTHY? AND, AGAIN, THAT “YOU,” WHICH STARTS TO GRATE. WOW, THERE IS SOME JUDGMENT IN THIS OPENNESS, SOME ARROGANCE IN THIS HUMILITY, SOME NOISE IN THIS QUIET.

JOHN SENDS ANOTHER NEUHAUS NUGGET: “ONE OF MY FAVOURITE PIECES OF ADVICE IS THE FOLLOWING: PLAY A NOTE OR SEVERAL NOTES SIMULTANEOUSLY, WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF FORCE AND HOLD THEM UNTIL THE EAR CEASES TO DETECT EVEN THE SLIGHTEST VIBRATION OF THE STRINGS, IN OTHER WORDS UNTIL THE TONE HAS COMPLETELY DIED AWAY. ONLY THOSE WHO CLEARLY HEAR THE CONTINUITY OF THE PIANO'S TONE (THE VIBRATION OF THE STRINGS) WITH ALL THE CHANGES IN VOLUME, CAN, FIRST OF ALL, RECOGNIZE THE BEAUTY AND NOBILITY OF THE PIANO (SINCE THIS CONTINUITY IS IN PART, MUCH MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE ORIGINAL TONE WHEN STRUCK).”¹⁷

AH, SO THAT DISMANTLES THE WEST-EAST POLARITY, BUT THERE IS STILL THE BINARY IMPLIED BY “ONLY THOSE WHO”—AND WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE THE OTHERS? LIKE ME?

MORE ABOUT “THOSE WHO . . .”: LAO TZU SAYS, “THOSE WHO KNOW DON'T TALK.”¹⁸ FORTUNATELY, HE ALSO SAYS, “TRUE WORDS SEEM PARADOXICAL.”¹⁹

OK, NOW I HAVE EVEN HAD TOO MUCH SILENCE. I AM GLUTTED WITH NOTHINGNESS. MY EMPTY BOWL IS SPILLING, TORRENTIALLY.

HUANCHU DAOREN SAYS, “THOSE WHO DWELL IN FULLNESS ARE LIKE WATER ABOUT TO OVERFLOW; DON'T ADD ANOTHER DROP.”²⁰ YES, LET US PLEASE OBEY HIS WISHES. MY BOOKSHELVES ARE BUCKLING UNDER EMPTINESS. I CANNOT TAKE ANOTHER SILENT SPEECH.

In search of silence

I AM INTERESTED IN NO SOUND, AND IN LESS THAN NO SOUND. WHAT WOULD BE BEYOND SILENCE? WHAT IF WE LET SPILL ALL EMPTINESS FROM THE EMPTY BOWL? WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE US?²¹

IT MAKES THE MOST SENSE TO ME—AND, I GATHER, TO “THOSE WHO”—WHEN IT IS INTEGRATIVE, RATHER THAN DUALISTIC:

THOSE WHO ENJOY SILENCE UNDERSTAND MYSTERIES AS THEY WATCH WHITE CLOUDS AND RECONDITE ROCKS. THOSE WHO HEAD FOR GLORY FORGET WEARINESS WHEN THEY SEE FINE SINGING AND DANCING. ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE MASTERS OF THEMSELVES IS THERE NO NOISE OR SILENCE, NO FLOURISHING OR WITHERING, NOWHERE THAT IS NOT A SPONTANEOUSLY COMFORTABLE HEAVEN.²²

YES, IT’S REALLY ALL INDISTINGUISHABLE, ISN’T IT? “SINCE THERE IS NO SOUND, THERE IS NATURALLY NO EMPTINESS.”²³ YES, RIGHT ON: I’LL LEAVE DISCUSSION OF THIS FOR NEXT TIME.

OR, WHEN IT ACKNOWLEDGES THE INTERPLAY, THE FLOW: “EXPRESS YOURSELF COMPLETELY, THEN KEEP QUIET.”²⁴

OR, “FROM WU-CHI COMES T’AI-CHI. WHEN T’AI-CHI MOVES, IT CREATES YANG. WHEN MOVEMENT REACHES ITS EXTREME, STILLNESS EMERGES. IN STILLNESS, YIN IS BORN. THUS, MOVEMENT AND STILLNESS FOLLOW EACH OTHER.”²⁵

INDEED, THE EBB AND FLOW, THE WAX AND WANE, SEEMS IMPORTANT. EACH MOMENT GIVES WAY TO THE NEXT.

SETH POINTS ME TOWARD THIS TEXT:

YET SILENCE HAS PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN HUMAN HISTORY IN SUCH KEY AREAS OF ACTIVITY AS RELIGION AND THE ARTS, AND ITS LOSS WOULD SERIOUSLY IMPOVERISH OUR LIVES. THE ABILITY TO THINK, TO REFLECT AND CREATE ARE ALL TO A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE DEPENDENT ON OUR BEING ABLE TO ACCESS SILENCE AND QUIET ON A REGULAR, AND REASONABLY PREDICTABLE, BASIS, AS IS SLEEP, AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF EXISTENCE, WHICH THE TREND TOWARDS A 24/7 SOCIETY IS RENDERING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT FOR MANY OF THE POPULATIONS.²⁶

YES, SLEEP! ESSENTIAL BUT OH SO ELUSIVE. AND MORE GENERALLY, I WORRY ABOUT THE LACK OF SILENCE, THOUGH IT SEEMS ODD TO WRITE A POSITION PAPER DEFENDING IT.

KIND OF LIKE WRITING A BOOK TELLING PEOPLE THAT FOOD IS WORTH EATING:

THAT ANYONE SHOULD NEED TO WRITE A BOOK ADVISING PEOPLE TO ‘EAT FOOD’ COULD BE TAKEN AS A MEASURE OF OUR ALIENATION AND CONFUSION. OR WE CAN CHOOSE TO SEE IT IN A MORE POSITIVE LIGHT AND COUNT OURSELVES FORTUNATE INDEED THAT THERE IS ONCE AGAIN REAL FOOD FOR US TO EAT.²⁷

IS THERE REAL MUSICAL FOOD FOR US TO EAT? BACK AT THE SHORE A MONTH LATER, MY INNER EAR IS EMPTIER, MORE RECEPTIVE. I HAVE AN APPETITE. I LISTEN TO A LOT OF MUSIC. SOME OF IT IS EMPTY CALORIES. BUT NOT ALL.

ON THE BEACH, I TRY TO LISTEN TO TAKEMITSU’S *QUOTATION OF DREAM*. I CANNOT HEAR IT THROUGH THE

REAL-LIFE, IN-PERSON TUMBLE OF THE WAVES. THIS IS INTRIGUING, THE WAY THE SOUND OF THE OCEAN MAKES THE RECORDING FEEL ELUSIVE, INACCESSIBLE, AND THEREFORE EXTRA-ENTICING. PLUS, THE QUOTATIONS ARE FROM *LA MER*, AND BEYOND THE OBVIOUS COINCIDENCE, THERE IS SOMETHING COMPELLING AND MAGICAL IN THE WAY THE REFERENCES, ALREADY SMUDGED TO COMMINGLE WITH TAKEMITSU'S "OWN" MUSIC, END UP INCREASINGLY BLURRED AS THEY DISSOLVE BACK INTO THE SOUND OF THE SEA. PLUS, TAKEMITSU HIMSELF APPEARED TO HAVE CONSIDERED THE PASSAGES TAKEN FROM DEBUSSY AS A KIND OF FIGURE IN HIS OWN AURAL LANDSCAPE. IT FEELS THAT WAY, LIKE SOMETHING IN HIS VIEW, BUT A BIT FARTHER AWAY FROM HIS POSITION THAN THE MUSIC HE HIMSELF COMPOSED.²⁸ AND RIGHT NOW, RIGHT HERE, THE SEA ITSELF PREDOMINATES, LOUDER AND CLOSER THAN THE OTHERS.

IT IS HARD TO TELL WHAT IS NOURISHING WHEN ONE IS SO OFTEN FORCE-FED. I OFTEN THINK OF THAT SCENE IN *TOUCH OF EVIL*: HER HONEYMOON HAVING BEEN INTERRUPTED, SOME POLICE INTRIGUE HAVING TAKEN HER NEW HUSBAND AWAY, SUSIE VARGAS (JANET LEIGH) IS HIDING OUT IN A MOTEL. THERE IS A LOUDSPEAKER IN THE WALL, AND SHE CANNOT TURN OFF THE MUSIC. NOR, TRY AS SHE MIGHT, CAN SHE GET ANYONE AT THE MOTEL TO SILENCE IT. A NIGHTMARE, LIKE NOT BEING ABLE TO SHUT YOUR EYES.

SPEAKING OF WHICH, I LOVE THAT OLD CHEESY MOVIE, *X, THE MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES*, STARRING RAY MILLAND. I SAW IT ON CHANNEL 56 WHEN I WAS A KID. WHEN I FIRST MET STEVEN, HE REMEMBERED IT TOO. *THAT WAS* STIMULATING, AND FITTING. FUNNY THE WAY THINGS STICK WITH YOU, IMPRINT THEMSELVES FOREVER.

REMEMBER WHEN WE HAD TO WAIT FOR THINGS TO BE RE-SHOWN ON TELEVISION, ON UHF, SATURDAY AFTERNOON, OR LATE AT NIGHT? WHEN WE DID NOT HAVE SO MUCH AVAILABLE? THE VERY AVAILABILITY OF THIS FLICK ON DVD SEEMS TO ILLUSTRATE THE ANXIETIES EXPLORED IN THE FILM ITSELF. THERE IS TOO MUCH TO SEE, TO HEAR, TO TAKE IN. IT IS HARD TO SHUT IT OFF.

ANYWAY, THE PROTAGONIST SCHEMES TO CREATE X-RAY VISION, BUT THE PROBLEM IS, HE LOSES THE ABILITY TO NOT SEE—HIS EYELIDS NO LONGER FUNCTION, HE SEES THROUGH THEM, AND THROUGH EVERYTHING IN HIS WAY. (YESTERDAY, MY PUPILS HAVING BEEN DILATED AT THE EYE DOCTOR, I THOUGHT OF X AGAIN.) HE CANNOT FILTER, PAUSE, OR SAY NO.

CARIN TELLS ME THAT THAT IS HOW SNAKES ARE: LIDLESS. I FEEL THAT WAY SOMETIMES. IT IS BOTH AN ASSET AND A LIABILITY. LATELY IT IS VERY PAINFUL. I FEEL LIKE THE PRINCESS, EVER PERTURBED BY THE PRICKLY PEA.

(I ASK THE OPTICIAN FOR A DIFFERENT EYEGLASS CASE, BECAUSE THE ORANGE IS TOO BRIGHT AND UNSETTLING.)

WHEN WE PLAYED BADLY, MY HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER USED TO EXCLAIM, "MY EARS ARE BLEEDING!"

I HEAR ABOUT THE WHALES WHOSE EARS HAVE BEEN BLEEDING THANKS TO THE NAVY'S SONAR EXPERIMENTS.²⁹ OUCH.

CARIN SAYS, IT SEEMS AT SOME POINT THAT THERE WAS A THREAT THAT THE MUSIC WOULD BE SILENCED. A YEAR LATER, I TELL HER ABOUT ONE TIME WHEN I WAS PRACTICING MY CLARINET ON A WEEKEND AFTERNOON DURING HIGH SCHOOL. THE ONLY OTHER ONE IN THE HOUSE WAS MY FATHER, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING SPORTS—LOUDLY, RAGING AT THE PATRIOTS—IN THE LIVING ROOM. SUDDENLY HE WAS RIGHT THERE, BELLOWING ABOUT WHAT A BAD KID I WAS TO BE PLAYING THE CLARINET. (YES, REALLY.) HE GRABBED THE INSTRUMENT FROM MY HANDS AND BRANDISHED IT OVER MY HEAD, THREATENING TO SMASH IT—BUT HE DIDN'T. I DON'T REMEMBER WHETHER HE GAVE IT BACK, OR LET IT DROP, OR WHAT, BUT I DO REMEMBER THE WAY HE CACKLED. MY MEMORY OF THIS IS SILENT, THOUGH I CAN SEE

In search of silence

HIM CACKLING. I SEE HIS RED, PUFFY FACE, CONTORTED IN VIOLENCE, BUT I HEAR NOTHING. IT IS A METADIEGETIC SPLIT, A RUPTURE BETWEEN MY CONSCIOUSNESS AND MY SURROUNDINGS.

IS THAT WHEN IT WAS SILENCED?

MY MOTHER, ON THE OTHER HAND, SIMPLY WROTE A LETTER TO THE CONDUCTOR AT NEW ENGLAND CONSERVATORY, TELLING HIM THAT IF I WAS ADMITTED TO THE PREP DIVISION WIND ENSEMBLE, SHE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOT GOING TO DRIVE ME TO REHEARSALS. SHE DID NOT TALK TO ME ABOUT IT; SHE JUST ANNOUNCED THIS FACT AS I LEFT THE HOUSE, THRUST THE LETTER AT ME AND TOLD ME TO BRING IT TO MY AUDITION. CHAGRINED, I DELIVERED THIS WEIRD LETTER AND PLAYED MY AUDITION. SOMEHOW I GOT IN. ANOTHER KID'S MOM GOT ME THERE AND BACK. (MRS. CAPUTO, I AM NOT SURE I THANKED YOU PROPERLY AT THE TIME.)

IS THAT WHEN IT WAS SILENCED?

THESE ARE STRANGE STORIES, BUT NOT AS UNCOMMON AS I—WE?—WOULD LIKE TO THINK. I HESITATE TO COMMIT THEM TO PRINT, BUT I AM SADLY HEARTENED WHEN JULIA SAYS, THERE IS PROBABLY SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO WOULD GAIN SOMETHING FROM READING ABOUT IT. I HOPE NOT, BUT IF SO, HERE YOU GO.

DECADES LATER, I THINK HOW SAD IT IS THAT MY REFUGE FROM THEIR MISERY WAS INTRUDED UPON BY THAT SAME MISERY. AND I FEEL FOR THEM THAT THEY WERE IN THAT SORT OF PLACE. (YES, REALLY.)

DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, WHEN MY FATHER WOULD ASK HIS MOTHER WHAT WAS FOR DINNER, SHE WOULD REPLY, "AIR PUDDING WITH WIND SAUCE." I RECALL THIS WHEN I READ CHUANG TSU'S EVOCATION OF THE HOLY MAN: "HE EATS NONE OF THE FIVE GRAINS, BUT TAKES DEEP DRAUGHTS OF THE WIND AND DRINKS OF THE DEW."³⁰ I SUPPOSE AN EMPTY MEAL IS A LOT MORE APPEALING WHEN ONE HAS A CHOICE, OR WHEN IT IS HYPOTHETICAL.

MY FATHER LOST HIS FATHER WHEN HE WAS FOUR, IN 1927. NO ONE IN THE FAMILY TOLD HIM; HE HEARD IT FROM A NEIGHBOR. FORTY-EIGHT YEARS LATER, WHEN MY MOTHER WAS ABSENT, IN THE HOSPITAL FOR WEEKS WHEN I WAS TEN, NO ONE TOLD ME WHY; IT WAS A NEIGHBOR, A GIRL MY AGE, WHO REPORTED, MATTER-OF-FACTLY, "SHE HAD HER BREASTS REMOVED." I DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT THAT MEANT OR WHY SHE WOULD DO SUCH A THING.

EIGHTEEN YEARS AFTER THAT, WHEN MY SISTER WAS DIAGNOSED AT AGE THIRTY-SEVEN AND ASKED MY MOTHER TO TALK OVER TREATMENT OPTIONS, MY MOTHER REFUSED. HOW SAD IS THAT?

(MY FATHER, EVER FREE WITH INFORMATION, WAS VERY CHATTY ABOUT HIS OWN BREAST CANCER. I DOUBT HE CONSIDERED HIS POST-MASTECTOMY (YES, THAT'S RIGHT) BEACHWEAR AS CAREFULLY AS I HAVE.)

SCREAMING AND SILENCING, RAGE AND REPRESSION. IT ALL LEADS TO SILENCE, OVERWHELMING AND LOUD. THERE IS MORE SILENCE, AND MORE AND MORE, BUT I AM NOT AT LIBERTY TO TALK ABOUT IT. IT INVOLVES THE LIVING. I WISH THEM WELL.

BUT, MORE ON THE "BEAUTY AND NOBILITY" OF THE PIANO: WE HAD AN OLD UPRIGHT IN THE CELLAR. *VERY* OLD, AND *VERY* MOIST TOO. THE CELLAR FLOODED ROUTINELY, AND MY FATHER SWEEPED IT OUT, SISYPHUS-LIKE, WITH A BROOM, UPHILL, TO LITTLE AVAIL, EVERY TIME. THE PIANO—HOW THE HELL DID IT GET DOWN THERE?—WAS SEASONED BY THIS EXPERIENCE; THE ONLY WAY TO PLAY SOME OF THE LOWER BLACK KEYS WAS TO BANG ON THEM WITH MY

FIST. THE INTONATION, WAS, WELL, IDIOSYNCRATIC. THERE WAS NO BENCH, SO I FOUND AN OLD SUITCASE, ALSO MARINATED BY THE FLOW FROM THE SURROUNDING WETLANDS, AND TURNED IT ON ITS SIDE. I GUESS IT WAS SO LOUD UPSTAIRS THAT NO ONE HEARD ME DOWN THERE, SHIVERING AND LEARNING "CAROL OF THE BELLS," WHICH I PERFORMED WITH THE CHORUS IN MY GRADE SCHOOL CHRISTMAS CONCERT. MY FAMILY WERE AT THE CONCERT AND SAID, "WE DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD PLAY THE PIANO."

FOR SOME REASON THIS RECOLLECTION SEEMS THE CREEPIEST OF ALL, THE MOST UNNERVINGLY, AND PERHAPS UNWISELY, REVEALING. IS IT THE SOGGY, CHILLY ISOLATION? THE GOTHIC SUBTERRANEAN SETTING, THE UNSEEMLY CLASS IMPLICATIONS? YET IT STAYS WITH ME, STICKING EVEN AFTER BOTH PARENTS ARE DEAD AND THE PIANO IS HAULED AWAY. YEARS LATER I LEARN ABOUT ANNEA LOCKWOOD'S "PIANO DROWNING" AND I FEEL A SHUDDER OF RECOGNITION. THERE IS ALSO THE STORY OF BABE RUTH'S PIANO, WHICH IS SAID TO BE SUBMERGED IN A POND IN MASSACHUSETTS, ONLY MILES FROM WHERE I THUDDERED AWAY ON THIS DAMAGED, WOUNDED, NEGLECTED CARCASS OF A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. (I ALSO WONDER IF THAT IS WHY I AM DRAWN TO PLAYING THE PIANO WITH MY FISTS. THAT WAS A NECESSITY BACK THEN.)

JOHN TALKS ABOUT PIANOS WITH SUCH LOVE AND AFFECTION. I OFTEN HEAR MUSICIANS COMPLAIN ABOUT PIANOS, IN AN ENTITLED TONE, AS IF THE INSTRUMENT SHOULD BE UNFLAWED AND UNCHANGING. BUT WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH TUNING OR RESONANCE, JOHN SAYS, "WELL, IT IS AN ORGANIC BEING TOO. I TEND TO FEEL SYMPATHETIC TO IT RATHER THAN ANGRY THAT IT IS NOT PERFECT." BUT THEN HE ADDS, "I DO GET ANNOYED, THOUGH, AT THOSE WHO DID NOT TAKE CARE OF IT, OR DID SO INEPTLY—CERTAINLY NOT AT THE POOR PIANO ITSELF."

MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY INSTRUMENT, THOUGH, IS NOT ALWAYS SO LOVING. JUST THIS SUMMER, I WAS TRYING TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH THE CLARINET, AND ALSO TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF SPENDING A LOT LESS. IT FEELS LIKE PART OF MY BODY AND PSYCHE SOMEHOW, BUT MY BODY AND PSYCHE ARE NOT ALWAYS THE BEST PLACE TO BE. I STILL HAVEN'T DECIDED WHERE THAT LEAVES ME.

BUT I DID DO A "CLEANSING" RITUAL FOR MY CLARINET, TRYING TO RELEASE THOSE DEMONS THAT SOMETIMES HAUNT ME SUBTLY WHEN I PLAY. AND I SHALL KEEP QUIET ABOUT THE REST. (THANK YOU, CARIN.) IN A MOMENT, THAT IS.

IN THE QUIET, I THINK ABOUT SOMETHING I THINK ABOUT A LOT, WHICH SEEMS TO BEAR REPEATING, FOR ME AT LEAST: HOW SOMETHING PAINFUL, OR WORSE, CAN TURN OUT TO BE THE SEED OF SOMETHING BEAUTIFUL OR CONSOLING.³¹ BUT NOT ALWAYS. AND THAT IS NOT TO ENCOURAGE TAKING THAT SEED AS NOURISHMENT IN ITS OWN RIGHT, IN EXCUSING THE INEXCUSABLE, FOR SOMETIMES ALL IT BIRTHS IS MORE DAMAGE. AND I THINK, AGAIN, ABOUT THE DANGER OF RUSHING OR INTERRUPTING THE DELICATE AND UNPREDICTABLE PROCESS, WHATEVER IT IS—OF SILENCING AND FORCING INSTEAD OF WITNESSING AND LETTING FLOW. OR THE BITTER TASTE OF BANALITIES, LIKE, "MAKE LEMONS OUT OF LEMONADE! (INSERT SMILEY EMOTICON HERE.)" LATELY I THINK MORE ABOUT HOW HEALTH AND DISEASE CAN COEXIST, THE LATTER LIKE A RUNAWAY VINE CHOKING AN EXUBERANT PLANT, WITH THE PLANT PERSEVERING DESPITE ALL ODDS—EXCEPT WHEN IT DOESN'T. OR THE WAY THEY CAN ALTERNATE, UNPREDICTABLY, FLICKERING FROM ONE TO THE NEXT, SEEMINGLY WITHOUT WARNING OR REASON. I HAVE FELT A LOT OF THAT LAST RHYTHM LATELY, SO I AM APPRECIATING WHAT PEMA CHÖDRÖN WRITES ABOUT NOT PREFERRING SAMBARA OR NIRVANA.³² IT'S ALL PART OF THE FLOW.

INDEED, ALBERT TELLS ME THAT IT MAY BE A GOOD THING THAT I DON'T PLAY REGULARLY, ALL THE TIME. MY TWENTY-FIVE-YEAR-OLD CLARINET IS STILL IN GOOD CONDITION, AND ALL THE BEST WOOD FOR CLARINET

CONSTRUCTION IS GONE. SO IT FEELS VERY PRECIOUS TO ME TO PLAY THIS INSTRUMENT. PERHAPS I SHOULD RATION MY TIME WITH IT INSTEAD OF ALWAYS BERATING MYSELF FOR NOT PRACTICING MORE.

TOM TELLS THE STORY OF THE DAGDA'S HARP. THE FOMORIANS STEAL IT AND TRY TO PLAY, BUT IT WILL NOT SOUND FOR THEM. WHEN THE DAGDA CALLS OUT TO IT, IT NOT ONLY FLIES TO HIM, BUT WIPES OUT A COUPLE OF MALEVOLENT FOMORIANS ON ITS WAY. PERHAPS THAT IS A CAUTIONARY TALE ABOUT SONIC GREED, ABOUT OVERSTEPPING ONE'S FOOTPRINT, ABOUT APPROPRIATING A SOUND THAT IS NOT RIGHTFULLY ONE'S OWN. ABOUT PUTTING WHAT ONE CRAVES ABOVE WHAT IS NECESSARY. (WHICH, BY THE WAY, I DO, WITH ALARMING REGULARITY.)

DO YOU EVER HEAR SOMEONE SAY, "SOMETIMES LESS IS JUST LESS" (INSTEAD OF MORE)? WELL, YEAH! SOMETIMES LESS IS LESS, AND SOMETIMES THAT IS GOOD. WHAT IF WE ONLY ATE UNTIL OUR EARS WERE EIGHTY PER CENT FULL? WHERE WOULD THAT LEAVE US?³³

I AM ASKED TO EVALUATE A TEXT BY A YOUNGER COMPOSER-SCHOLAR. I THINK IT IS GREAT: IT'S A HOLISTIC EVOCATION OF MUSIC, CULTURE, AND THE WRITER'S PERSONAL EXPERIENCE, SELF-EXAMINATION AND DEVELOPMENT. ANOTHER EVALUATOR ASKS WHETHER IT IS ANALYTICAL ENOUGH, OR WHETHER IT IS "MERE BIOGRAPHY." I MIGHT HAVE RAISED THE SAME QUESTION A FEW YEARS BACK, AND PERHAPS I WILL AGAIN SOMEDAY, BUT AT THE MOMENT I SEE NO PROBLEM. I WONDER, IF WE HAD SOME MORE "MERE BIOGRAPHY," WOULD THERE BE LESS UNKINDNESS, LESS ALIENATION, LESS FUCKING WITH ONE ANOTHER? I SAY, MORE BIOGRAPHY; LESS PATHOLOGY! (MAYBE MORE NOISE OUTSIDE WOULD ALLOW FOR MORE QUIET WITHIN, AND BETWEEN TOO.

AND I MEAN BIOGRAPHY, NOT "STORIES." I AM SUSPICIOUS OF STORIES AT THE MOMENT, THE DAGDA AND HIS HARP NOTWITHSTANDING, FOR "TO DECORATE THEM WE MAKE UP THESE RIDICULOUS, FLAMBOYANT, BEAUTIFUL PHRASES. HOW TIRED I AM OF STORIES, HOW TIRED I AM OF PHRASES THAT COME DOWN BEAUTIFULLY WITH ALL THEIR FEET ON THE GROUND!"³⁴ GIVE ME THE REAL, UNMEDIATED STUFF—THE MUSIC OF WHAT IS HAPPENING OFFERS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO CHEW ON FOR A SPELL.³⁵ AND, PLEASE, LET'S MAKE SURE THERE IS ENOUGH SPACE SURROUNDING THAT MUSIC SO THE SOUNDS CAN BREATHE FREELY, SO WE CAN DIGEST AS NEEDED.

I'LL TAKE A HUMBLE, NOURISHING NATIVE PLANT; NEVER MIND THE OVERPRICED, EXOTIC HOTHOUSE FLOWER. PERHAPS IF WE STOPPED ELEVATING TREASURE ABOVE ALL ELSE, WE COULD TREASURE ONE ANOTHER A BIT BETTER. OF COURSE, IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT WE WOULD FAIL EVEN MORE MISERABLY WITHOUT OUR TRINKETS TO SUSTAIN US. IT NEEDN'T BE AN ALL-OR-NOTHING PROPOSITION; I'D JUST LIKE TO EXPERIMENT WITH TWEAKING THE BALANCE A BIT.

I AM NOT SURE IF I HAVE SAID ANYTHING AT ALL, BUT THESE SILENCES STILL PERPLEX ME, VEX ME, AND DEMAND MY ATTENTION. THERE IS THE ROARING SILENCE, PARADOXICAL AND LOGICAL AS THE PREGNANT PAUSE. THERE IS THE SCREAMING THAT GOES BLANK, THE EARSPLITTING REFUSAL TO RESPOND THAT RESOUNDS THROUGH THE DECADES. THE LACK OF SOUND CAN BE DEAFENING AND TERRIFYING AT ONE MOMENT, A SOOTHING RESPITE FROM OVERWHELM THE NEXT. SILENCE AS WEAPON, AS PRISON, AS WOUND, AS BARRIER, AS INSULT. AS PRODUCT, EVEN. AND YET FOR SOME REASON I CONTINUE TO CONCEIVE OF IT AS SANCTUARY. PERHAPS BECAUSE ITS NOT-NESS IS UNFAILINGLY MUTABLE, ETERNALLY POTENTIAL, WILLFULLY UNDECIDED. NOTHING STICKS TO IT. LIKE THE OCEAN, IT REMAINS VAST AND INDIFFERENT, ABSORBING ALL THAT COMES ITS WAY, YET REMAINING EVER UNFORMED, FLUID, AND THUS CAPABLE OF ANYTHING.

I REMAIN BEMUSED AT THE NEED TO MAKE SO MUCH NOISE ABOUT IT. BUT THE TRUTH REMAINS, I WANT TO BE QUIETER. AT LEAST FOR A WHILE. PERHAPS I'LL GIVE THAT A TRY, AFTER I FINISH THOSE FILM SCORES. AND,

Barbara White

AFTER MY PREMIERE NEXT WEEK. AND THEN THERE IS THAT ESSAY TO FINISH FOR FRED'S BOOK. . . .

Hmmm. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO WRITE THAT GONG PIECE FOR DOMINIC, VERY SIMPLE AND SPARE. AND QUIET. BUT EVEN THAT MAY BE TOO MUCH RIGHT NOW. IT IS HARD TO SAY NO, THOUGH, TO SUCH A THOUGHTFUL AND GENEROUS MUSICIAN. WELL, PERHAPS I CAN BOTH REMAIN SILENT AND COMPOSE A GONG PIECE. AH, THERE IS THE TRICK AGAIN, THE NEGATION AND PARADOX THAT DECEIVES ME INTO THINKING I CAN HAVE IT BOTH WAYS. KIND OF LIKE WRITING AN ESSAY ABOUT NOT WRITING AN ESSAY, IN ORDER TO HAVE IT AND EAT IT. OR LIKE THINKING THAT BY CALLING ATTENTION TO THAT MANEUVER, BY KNOWING ONE IS HAVING IT AND EATING IT, AND EXPOSING THAT KNOWLEDGE, ONE CAN LET ONESELF OFF THE HOOK. THESE ENDLESS DISPLAYS OF NOT-NESS, LIKE A HALL OF MIRRORS, CAN BECOME RATHER IRRITATING.

ANYWAY, I DON'T WANT OR NEED ANY CAKE. I THINK A DIET IS MORE IN ORDER, FOR NOW.

ED TALKS ABOUT THE TRADITION OF "WAITING FOR A SONG." I LIKE THIS; IT SOUNDS VERY TAOIST. NOT FORCING, LETTING THINGS REVEAL THEMSELVES IN THEIR OWN TIME. PERHAPS I'LL STAY STILL A WHILE AND SEE WHAT EMERGES. AND I MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE EVENTUALITY THAT THAT WILL BE . . . NOTHING AT ALL.

IN THE MEANTIME, THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH TO EAT, RIGHT HERE AND NOW, WITHOUT MAKING ANY SPECIAL EFFORT:

HOW MUCH BETTER IS SILENCE; THE COFFEE-CUP, THE TABLE. HOW MUCH BETTER TO SIT BY MYSELF LIKE THE SOLITARY SEA-BIRD THAT OPENS ITS WINGS ON THE STAKE. LET ME SIT HERE FOR EVER WITH BARE THINGS, THIS COFFEE-CUP, THIS KNIFE, THIS FORK, THINGS IN THEMSELVES, MYSELF BEING MYSELF. DO NOT COME AND WORRY ME WITH YOUR HINTS THAT IT IS TIME TO SHUT THE SHOP AND BE GONE. I WOULD WILLINGLY GIVE ALL MY MONEY THAT YOU SHOULD NOT DISTURB ME BUT LET ME SIT ON AND ON, SILENT, ALONE.³⁶

¹ Yoshida Kenko, *The Harvest of Leisure*, trans. Ryukichi Kurata (London, John Murray, 1931), 57-58. This volume is perhaps better known in Donald Keene's translation, *Essays in Idleness* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1967).

² As Scott M. Rodell observes, the term *duifang* "is most often translated as 'opponent,'" but the original Chinese term, which means something closer to "other direction," has a rather different sensibility. See Rodell, *Taiji Notebook for Martial Artists: Essays by a Yang Family Taijiquan Practitioner* (Annandale, Virginia: Seven Stars Books and Video, 1991), 39-40.

³ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (San Diego, New York and London: Harcourt, 1931), 171.

⁴ Huanchu Daoren, *Back to Beginnings: Reflections on the Tao*, trans. Thomas Cleary (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1990), 2.

⁵ Neuhaus, *The Art of Piano Playing*, trans. K.A. Leibovitch (Kahn & Averill, London, 1993), 81.

⁶ Arthur Rimbaud, "Départ," from *Les Illuminations*. In Rimbaud, *Complete Works, Selected Letters*, trans. Wallace Fowlie (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966).

⁷ See my "'I Am Not Making This Up!'—Part 2: 'No, thanks, I'll just listen,' Or, a Reception of Sorts (with a couple of lies, some—boundary—issues, and a little too much information)," *Open Space Magazine*, Issues 8–9 (Fall 2006/Spring 2007: 44-73), 56.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Huanchu Daoren, *Back to Beginnings*, 102.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹¹ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2008).

¹² *Tao Te Ching: A New English Version, with Foreword and Notes*, by Stephen Mitchell (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), chapter 9 (unpaged). This edition does not list Lao Tzu as author, which is not surprising given the mystery surrounding the writer's identity. As Ursula K. Le Guin writes in the introduction to her own adaptation, "The *Tao Te Ching* was probably written about twenty-five hundred years ago, perhaps by a man called Lao Tzu, who may have lived at about the same time as Confucius. Nothing about it is certain except that it's Chinese, and very old, and speaks to people everywhere as if it had been written yesterday." (Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching: A Book About the Way and the Power of the Way*, A New English Version by Ursula K. Le Guin [Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998], ix). Le Guin notes, too, that her own text is "a rendition, not a translation" (107). Throughout, I follow the spelling of the text in question; this results in certain inconsistencies.

¹³ http://www.ubu.com/papers/dworkin_unheard.html. Accessed August 5, 2008.

¹⁴ John Luther Adams, liner notes to *In the White Silence*, New World Records 80600-2, 2003, 9.

¹⁵ Paul Hillier, "Arvo Pärt: Magister Ludi," *The Musical Times* 130, no. 1753 (Mar. 1989): 134.

¹⁶ Chuang Tsu, *Inner Chapters*, trans. Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English (San Francisco: Amber Lotus, 2000), 68.

¹⁷ Neuhaus, *Art of Piano Playing*, 62-63.

¹⁸ *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Mitchell, ch. 56.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 78.

²⁰ Huanchu Daoren, *Back to Beginnings*, 79.

²¹ "The Heart Sutra says, 'Form is emptiness, emptiness is form'—what does it mean? The bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara said everything is empty. And we want to ask him, "Mr. Bodhisattva, you say that everything is empty, but I want to ask you, "empty of what?" Because empty is always empty of something" (Thich Nhat Hanh, *Buddha Mind, Buddha Body* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2007), 89.

²² Huanchu Daoren, *Back to Beginnings*, 101.

²³ Chang Po-Tuan, *Understanding Reality*. Commentary by Liu I-Ming, trans. Thomas Cleary. (This statement is from Liu's commentary.) In Cleary, *The Taoist Classics*, vol. 2 (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 164.

²⁴ *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Mitchell, ch. 23.

²⁵ *Cultivating Stillness: A Taoist Manual for Transforming Body and Mind*, with a commentary by Shui-ch'ing Tzu, trans. Eva Wong (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1992), xvii. This passage comes from Chu-hsi's revision of Chou Tuan-i's *T'ai-chi T'ao Shuo*.

²⁶ Stuart Sim, *Manifesto for Silence: Confronting the Politics and Culture of Noise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

²⁷ Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 15.

²⁸ "Toru used to jokingly describe the style of this piece to me as 'schizo-eclectic'—but he was genuinely concerned as to how his unique use of actual quotations would be understood, perhaps because his own manner is very much in Debussy's orbit anyway and, unlike most quotation-music, stylistic jolts were not intended. In a radio interview at the time of the premiere, Takemitsu made the point that some Japanese gardens include the landscape *outside* their borders as part of their aesthetic effect, and that, in *Quotation of Dream*, his music was the garden and *La Mer* glimpses of the surrounding hills or lakes" (Oliver Knussen, liner notes to *Takemitsu: Quotation of Dream* [Deutsche Grammophon 453 495-2, 1998).

²⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/breakfast/2168168.stm>. Accessed August 5, 2008.

³⁰ Chuang Tsu, *Inner Chapters*, 35.

³¹ I considered these matters, in somewhat different contexts, in "'I Am Not Making This Up!'—Part 1: A Gender Identity Remix in the Form of Some Appropriations, Avowals, Denials, and Inquiries (Or, On Second Thought, A Palimpsest or Two), *Open Space Magazine* 6 (Fall 2004), as well as in "'I Am Not Making This Up!'—Part 2."

³² Pema Chödrön, "Not Preferring Samsara or Nirvana," Chapter 14 of *the Wisdom of No Escape and the Path of Loving-Kindness* (Boston: Shambhala, 1991), 74-81.

³³ "The people of Okinawa, one of the longest-lived and healthiest populations in the world, practice a principle they call *hara hachi bu*: Eat until you are 80 percent full" (Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 185).

³⁴ Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, 238.

³⁵ See Tom Cowan, "The Finest Music in All the World," in *Yearning for the Wind: Celtic Reflections on Nature and the Soul* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2003), 159-162.

³⁶ Woolf, *The Waves*, 295.

Thoughts Around Terry Riley's *Chanting the Light of Foresight*

Jason Freeman

As a kid taking piano lessons, enharmonic pitch spellings could make me pretty angry. I saw an E sharp. I didn't believe it. I looked again. Shouldn't this just be an F? I stumbled at the keyboard, losing my place in the music. The E sharp looked back at me with an evil grin, content in having tortured yet another young piano student. By what possible reason could such a ridiculous accidental exist?

Later, once I understood some compelling reasons for their existence, enharmonic pitch spellings became more interesting. The same pitch, spelled differently, spiraled off in new musical directions. Enharmonic spellings were a secret window into the inner workings of Western harmony: the difference between an augmented fourth and a diminished fifth or between a sixth and seventh scale degree. Spelling was about more than readability; it was about structure and context. An E sharp and an F natural were the same. Yet somehow, they were not the same.

The highlight reel of my music education is dominated by similar discoveries. In an introductory computer music course, I found out that sounds could be decomposed into sine wave components, that audio could move between the time and frequency domains. But the digital transformation was imperfect, with a nod to Heisenberg; temporal precision caused spectral smearing, while higher frequency resolutions reduced temporal clarity. The sonogram and the waveform represented the same sound, but yet they were not exactly the same.

While studying Stockhausen, I learned that if the frequencies of sound waves were low enough, they entered the realm of the rhythmic; a sawtooth buzz turned into a steady pulse. But though hertz could quantify both, my ears experienced each differently.

And then, of course, there was the octave, the way that two pitches can be the same but yet not the same. In just about every class I teach, no matter how introductory or advanced, I excitedly project a slide of a pitch helix; it amazes me that something as seemingly straightforward as pitch can lead to such a rich, multi-dimensional structure.

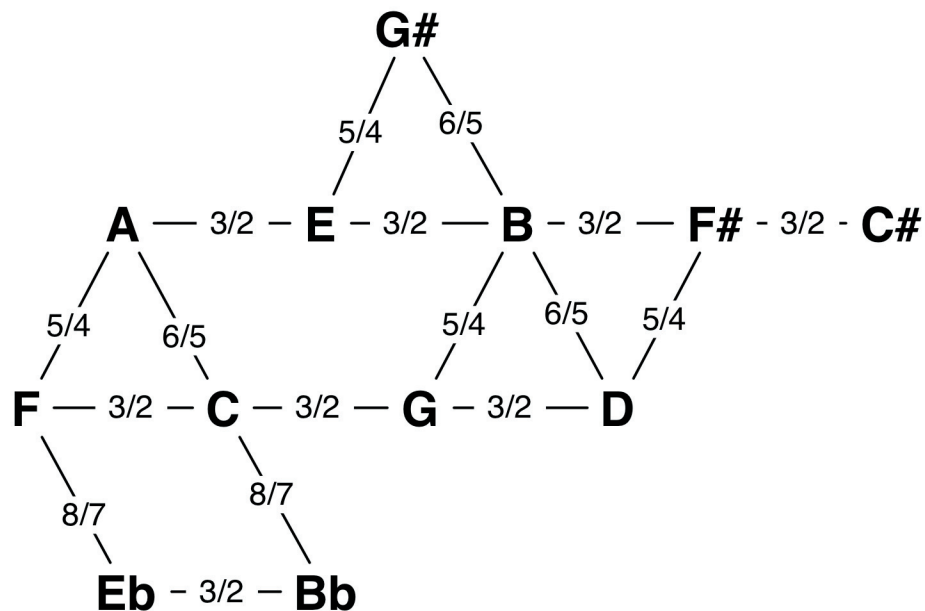
The same, yet not the same. I think these almost-equivalences in music fascinate me because they force me to move beyond the traditional categories into which I otherwise tend to segregate my musical thinking. The horizontal and vertical dimensions mingle. Local details hint at broad implications. Seemingly orthogonal features become interdependent.

Terry Riley's *Chanting the Light of Foresight* (1987), a mammoth work for saxophone quartet, precipitated another almost-equivalence epiphany for me. I admire this

composition, in part, because my realization came via the music itself, not through a book or a conversation or a thought experiment.

As a passionate teenage saxophonist, I used to regularly search through the “assorted instrumental” bins in the classical department of my local record store. Most of saxophone quartet albums I found there rehashed the same repertoire: turn-of-the-century French fare, Haydn string quartet movements, Bach fugues, and jazz standards. I loved these discs because I loved the sound world of the saxophone quartet, not because I wanted to hear yet another Broadway medley.

Chanting the Light of Foresight, which I discovered in said record-store bins, was unlike anything else I’d heard. It was not a piece that happened to be written for saxophone quartet; it was a piece about the sound of the saxophone quartet. The first movement, “The Tuning Path,” takes this sonic exploration to a logical extreme. The score, written in just intonation, consists of seventy chords spread across thirteen measures. The quartet moves slowly through the chords, locking each interval in tune before progressing. The process can take some time; the Rova Saxophone Quartet’s recording of the movement lasts over seventeen minutes.



[Figure 1: The tuning lattice for the first movement of Terry Riley’s *Chanting the Light of Foresight* (1987).]

In the score, Riley includes a tuning lattice (Figure 1) to show the interval relationships among the twelve pitch classes used in this movement. Ten of the pitch classes in the lattice are connected by 5-limit ratios, i.e. ratios built using the prime numbers 2, 3, and 5. The remaining two pitch classes — Eb and Bb — are connected to the other ten via 7-limit ratios. Riley could have just as easily related these via 5-limit intervals. So why use the 7-limit here? And why use it only in connection to these two pitch classes?

The image shows a musical score for Terry Riley's "The Tuning Path," specifically chords 36 through 46. The score is written for four voices: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Baritone (B). The notation is on four staves. Chords 36-43 are in the first system, and chords 44-46 are in the second. The notes are mostly half notes and whole notes. There are some rests and accidentals. The key signature is not explicitly shown, but the notes suggest a specific tonal center. The score illustrates a complex harmonic structure with various intervals and pitch classes.

[Figure 2: Chords 36-43 of the 70 chords in "The Tuning Path." Note that in Riley's original score, the alto sax is notated as an E, not an Eb, in chord 45. This seems to be an error and has typically been performed as an Eb.]

The music offers some clues. Riley begins with 5-limit intervals: first a bare perfect fifth, then gradually more pitch classes, then triads and tetrachords. He waits until mid-way through the movement — the 37th of the 70 chords — before introducing the first 7-limit interval (Figure 2). At that moment, the alto sax moves from a D4 up to an Eb4, and the ratio between them (28/27) is 37 cents smaller than an equal-tempered semitone. By chord 40, that ratio (28/27) turns from a melodic succession into a vertical simultaneity, as the soprano takes over the Eb4 and the alto returns to the D4. These intervals sound unusual to my ear — both within the context of the movement up to that point and within my broader musical experience — and they make a strong impression. Listening, I want to understand why they are there and how they fit in.

The answer comes in chord 43, when the Eb4 in the soprano is joined by an F2 in the baritone; that F2 remains for the next several chords. Riley's lattice tells me that the ratio between the F and Eb is 8/7, but when I invert the fraction (since the Eb is voiced above the F) and multiply by 4 (to reflect correct octave placement), the actual ratio between them is 7/2. Restated: for an F1 fundamental, the baritone's F2 would be the second partial and the soprano's Eb4 would be the seventh partial. The tenor's C4 would be the sixth partial. The alto's G3 would need to be shifted up an octave to G4 to become the ninth partial, and in fact, that is exactly where it (briefly) goes in chords 45 and 46.

The important point, for me, is that beginning with chord 43, this strange 7-limit Eb finds its place within the harmonic framework of the piece, and it no longer sounds unusual to my ears. It is not just an integer ratio; it is part of a harmonic series. Just intonation and spectra seem to merge in my mind and in my ear. They are the same. And yet they are not the same: the Eb only locks into place in my ear when the specific octave placements of pitch classes suggest the right series. So we come back to octave almost-equivalence after all.

Writing this now, it all seems so obvious that I am a bit embarrassed to be dwelling upon this passage at all. So let me emphasize what amazes me each time I hear it: that the subtle connections and differences between just intonation and spectral harmony, between frozen and movable octaves, can be exploited so elegantly to create tension and resolution, to create a climactic moment, and to open my ears to a new understanding of the sonic

potential of the saxophone quartet.

There is another fascinating almost-equivalence lurking in *Chanting the Light of Foresight*. The score and a performance of that score are both manifestations of the same composition. Yet they are not the same. Scores and performances are, of course, qualitatively different, but in this case, the differences are particularly interesting.

Terry Riley once said that “I’m no good at telling people what to do” (Strickland 1993), and that manifests itself in the score to this work. The first movement’s seventy whole-note chords are split across thirteen measures on three pages of notation. There are no dynamics, no articulations, no expression markings of any kind, and no indication of tempo or duration. The quartet not only makes these expressive decisions; they also determine how to progress from one chord to the next: when to move in unison, when to hold over common tones, when to have each player move separately, when to insert rests, and so on.

With such sweeping interpretive freedom, certain qualities of the score may be lost in performance. For example, the 43rd chord in “The Tuning Path,” where the F2 enters to provide harmonic context for the Eb, is almost exactly at the golden section for the movement — so long as each whole-note chord is equal in duration. But in a 1994 recording of the work by the Rova Saxophone Quartet, that chord comes proportionally later in the movement, well past the golden section point, because the quartet, using their discretion, does not progress through the chords at anything approaching a constant pace.

But while some aspects of the score may be lost in Rova’s recording, much is gained. Rova’s interpretation of chord 37, the first entry of the Eb4, provides for maximum drama. As they hold chord 36, they crescendo. Then silence. Then they repeat chord 36, with an accented *forte* attack, and the alto sax moves from D4 to Eb4 into chord 37. The soprano, surprisingly, sustains the D4 from chord 36 even as the alto moves to the Eb4. In the score, D4 and Eb4 do not appear as vertical simultaneities until chord 40: Riley first introduces the 28/27 interval horizontally, then only later vertically. But by freely interpreting the progression from one chord to the next to include that simultaneity, Rova makes the entry of the Eb in chord 37 stand out even more than it might otherwise. The score and the performance are manifestations of the same composition, but in this moment, they seem to be at odds with each other.

Yet the nature of Riley’s score, of course, encourages exactly such interpretations, and it follows in the tradition of music which adjusts the line between the end of composition and the beginning of performance: the open-form scores of Earle Brown, the game pieces of John Zorn, the meditations of Pauline Oliveros. It is inconceivable to imagine Riley complaining about Rova’s interpretation of this passage. Riley, in fact, was so interested in Rova’s ideas about *Chanting the Light of Foresight* that when they told him that the piece felt incomplete, he proposed that they compose the missing movement of battle music themselves. And they did.

So here is my predicament. I want to trust performers to take my ideas in directions I could not have imagined. I want each musician who reads my notation to develop an utterly unique interpretation of it. But at the same time, I am obsessed over details. I enjoy considering every possibility for every gesture, every note, every expressive marking. I like to endlessly tweak my music through iterative revision. I like to be precise.

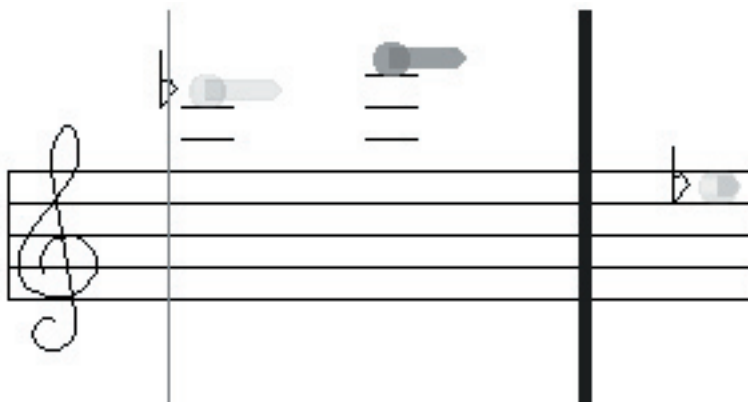
And throughout my development as a composer, notation has served a dual purpose. It is not only a way to communicate with performers; it is also a way to represent ideas to myself. Seeing my music on the printed page helps me to grasp its structure, to deliberate over its details, and to imagine how it will sound in performance. For me, notated detail is a reflection of, and perhaps an encouragement towards, detailed thought.

I even used to think such detail was a prerequisite to being a good composer. If my scores were vague or imprecise, then I would not be in control of my music in performance. And if I was not in control, what hope did I have to create compelling music?

I've long since moved beyond this flawed reasoning; the score for *Chanting the Light of Foresight* is just one of many counterexamples. I no longer want to sit in the concert hall, hear a performance of my music, and have it match my expectations exactly. But the contradiction remains: I want to give up control over my music (if it even is mine), yet creating precise, detailed scores remains a valuable part of my compositional process.

One productive approach, for me, has been to ask how a score might become more like a performance: spontaneous, surprising, and risky, no longer ink fixed on paper but rather a dynamic object which changes each time it is played. If I can separate the process of creating the score from the score itself, then I can deliberate over every detail of the process regardless of the level of detail encapsulated in the product.

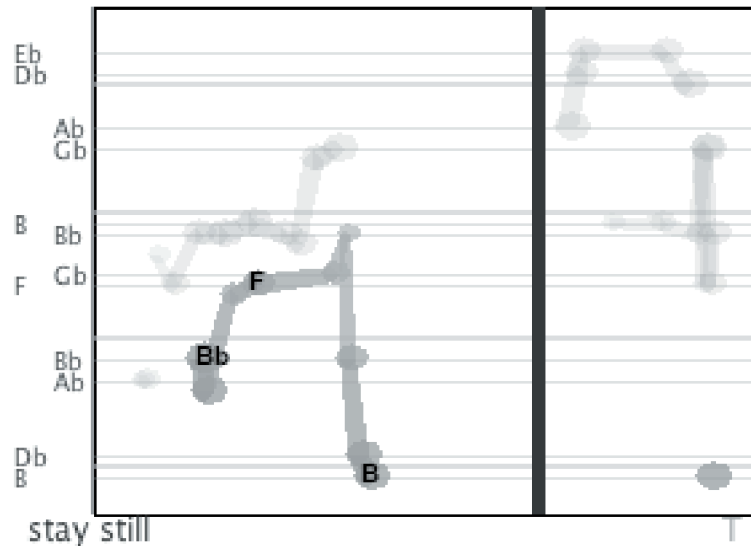
Flock (2007), my recent work for saxophone quartet, serves as an example of this approach. A full discussion of this hour-long work, which involves dancers, electroacoustic sound, audience participation, and video animation, is well beyond the scope of this article. Instead, I want to focus on the opening section of the piece, which involves only the saxophone quartet, the score, and the acoustic sound the musicians create.



[Figure 3. Staff-based notation in *Flock*. The dark line and notehead, drawn in green, represent the music for the musician to play. The lighter lines and noteheads, drawn in pink, represent the music played by the other members of the quartet. The thick vertical line scrolls to indicate measure position.]

In this opening section, the saxophonists move freely around the performance space as they play. Computer vision software uses footage from an overhead camera to track each musician's (x,y) position with respect to the floor. Additional software then takes that data and uses it to generate the music notation for each performer to play; the musicians view it on wireless displays mounted to their instruments using marching-band lyres (and a lot of Velcro). The notation is initially rendered on a standard five-line staff (Figure 3), with time and duration shown proportionally and pitch shown exactly. The

mapping of location to notation is simple: a player's position generates a single note in each measure, with his x coordinate affecting the note's position within the measure and his y coordinate controlling the pitch, quantized to the nearest note in the active pitch set.



[Figure 4: Graphical notation for *Flock*. The dark lines, drawn in green, represent the music for the musician to play. The lighter lines, drawn in pink, represent the music played by the other members of the quartet. The thick vertical line scrolls to indicate measure position.]

Gradually, the notation grows denser: each musician's movement over time, not just his current location, generates notes to play. Those notes are connected together into longer gestures. And the notation eventually switches to a graphical mode (Figure 4); the focus shifts to gesture, contour, register, and density, away from the exact pitches and rhythms to be played at each moment.

During the two years in which I composed *Flock*, my obsessive, detail-oriented side deliberated over every nuance of the process: the location tracking system, the mapping of location to notation, the rendering and display of that notation, and so on. My collaborators and I wrote over 20,000 lines of computer code by the time the work premiered.

But while I can obsess over the process by which the score is created, I am forced to leave the product — the actual notation — alone, since I do not even see it until each performance. I do have some minimal control during the show; I can tweak elements of the algorithm, pace the progression through the structural framework, and even type in short text messages for the musicians to read. But these are broad strokes, not small details. Those details are left to the musicians, through their physical movements that help to create the score, and through their personal interpretation of that score.

In an interview, Terry Riley once said:

I remember trying to write on the blackboards at Mills College and just giving up. It was a period when notation was not pleasant for me to think about, it was a great deal of effort...I didn't want to commit myself to any one direction. I thought, 'I could play this a hundred different ways, so why should I write it down one way?' (Smith and Smith 1993: 233).

I do not share Riley's discomfort with notation, but I do share his hesitation to commit to decisions. Maybe, in the end, that is why I obsess over the details in my scores: with so many enticing possibilities, it is indeed difficult to choose just one.

With works such as *Flock*, I've almost created two scores. The intricate computer code is my private score, describing a process and serving as a framework for my development of the work. The real-time notation is a public score, a product of that process, unique to the moment. I can make decisions about the former while remaining open to many possibilities for the latter. I can both compose music and collaborate with performers in ways that are meaningful to me. The public and private scores are two manifestations of the same musical work. And yet, somehow, they are very much not the same.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the composition faculty at Columbia University, and to Fred Lerdahl and the late Jonathan Kramer in particular, for encouraging me to analyze *Chanting the Light of Foresight* for part of my doctoral qualifying exams back in 2003. It was a wonderful impetus for me to delve into this work; this paper only presents a small amount of what I learned from that experience.

I am also grateful to the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts in Miami, Florida, and to its former artistic director Justin MacDonnell, for commissioning *Flock*. My principal collaborators, Mark Godfrey and Liubo Borissov were inspiring to work with, and Gustavo Matamoros at iSAW, the Miami Saxophone Quartet, and our dancers from New World School of the Arts brought tremendous energy and enthusiasm to the premiere performances. I also want to thank the Funding Arts Network, the Georgia Tech Foundation, and Georgia Tech's Gvu Center for additional financial support of the project.

And what better way to come full circle than this: I am grateful to the Rova Saxophone Quartet for their interest in performing *Flock*, and to Steve Dietz and the ZeroOne festival for providing the venue and support to make this performance happen. I can't wait to work with Rova and see where they take the piece.

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IT'S NOT HIS WORDS I'M AFRAID OF*

Leslie Kearney

“Like, at one of the trials, a lawyer asked me ‘How could you break the oath of *omertà*?’ I said, ‘There’s a hundred rules. We broke ninety-nine of them. This was the last rule.’”¹ When Salvatore (Sammy the Bull) Gravano broke this last rule, the vow of silence, he put the heretofore elusive John Gotti in prison for life and himself, at least temporarily, into a witness protection program, altogether a speech-act considerably more powerful than the norm. Small wonder a member of organized crime breaks silence only as a last resort. One may chip away at the other ninety-nine rules, but when one breaks the rule of silence, one destroys the essence of the entity, corrupts it—if the word may be used in such a context—beyond endurance. Of the many interesting things about Francis Ford Coppola’s *Godfather* trilogy, perhaps the most interesting is how an artist tells the story of an organization whose essence is non-communication, how he talks about “our thing” with no name, *cosa nostra*.

One way Coppola goes about this task is to let music do the talking at many significant points, too many to enumerate, especially when the subject matter exceeds that which words can express. Of course the instance of music taking over on a grand scale is the performance of parts of Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*, in which the trilogy culminates. Coppola seems to have conceived of this one-act opera as an underpinning for the *Godfather* trilogy from its inception. The newly composed music, by both Nino Rota and Francis’ father, Carmine Coppola, constantly evokes music of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, so that when the opera finally occurs the listener has the sense that he has been hearing these sounds all along. Most notably the haunting C minor “Godfather” waltz rises nearly to the status of monotheme in these films, accompanying every significant act and event. This music, also present at the moments of greatest personal connection for both Vito and Michael Corleone as they waltz with the women they love, melts into and out of the F major waltz in Mascagni’s *Intermezzo sinfonico* (R48+22)² seamlessly.

The narrative capabilities of music provide popular grist for the discussion mill, a discussion that seems to circle around a vehement desire for music to mean something. Anthony Newcomb differentiates between an “expressive” function (“music having clear elements of narration and agency”) and “decorative” function (music that “simply swirls or dreams or chugs along”),³ a clear dichotomizing of content, consisting of narrative and agency, with “mere” process (chugging along). A similar idea inheres in Edward Cone’s famous explication of the process of perceiving temporal art, which explicitly separates comprehension of the meaning of the work from the temporal experience of the work.⁴ Fred Maus makes clear what most writers on this subject at the very least imply: that there exists a “well-entrenched dichotomy between ‘structure’ and ‘affect’ or ‘expression’”⁵ in our interpretation of music, in other words, how music goes

versus what music means. These conclusions suggest discomfort with the idea of music having no knowable or articulable meaning, or alternatively, with music keeping its meaning to itself, shall we say. Consider, moreover, Sergei Eisenstein's observations on the role of sound in film: "every adhesion of sound to a visual montage piece increases its inertia as a montage piece, and increases the independence of its meaning... Only a contrapuntal use of sound in relation to the visual montage piece will afford a new potentiality of montage development and perfection. The first experimental work with sound must be directed along the line of its distinct non-synchronization with the visual images."⁶ A year later he writes, "We cannot reduce aural and visual perceptions to a common denominator. They are values of different dimensions. But the visual overtone and the sound overtone are values of a singly measured substance,... a totally physiological sensation.... For the musical overtone it is not strictly fitting to say: 'I hear.' Nor for the visual overtone: 'I see.' For both, a new uniform formula must enter our vocabulary: 'I feel.'"⁷ In other words, sound granted autonomy creates an impoverishment of the totality. Independent meaning perceived in *any* part jeopardizes the whole. And here (in the Soviet Union of 1928 and 1929) Eisenstein is talking about not just music in film but sound in general—including language. Not only is the perception of music as a carrier of meaning perilous for the integrity of the film, so, ironically, is the perception of language as a carrier of meaning—at least meaning that can be pinned down or contained.

Eisenstein's theory offers a fascinating vantage point from which to consider the *Godfather* films. Rather than exploring the narrative capabilities of music, if anything Coppola focuses on the *non-narrative* attributes of language. Coppola's genius lies in part in his ability to realize the alter-ego of language as sound separable from meaning, in his powerful characterization of people who discuss their business in "basically unintelligible, fragmented sentences punctuated with hand signals."⁸ Coppola turns this combination of decontextualized sound, gesture, body language, and facial expression, created to defeat Federal eavesdropping devices, into artistic material that speaks louder than words.

The Inarticulate

There was only one dramatic example in Sicilian history where the island's impoverished, embittered population was able to organize a successful national revolt against their oppressors, who in this instance were the French. The cause of the revolt occurred on Easter Monday in 1282, when a French soldier raped a Palermo maiden on her wedding day. Suddenly a band of Sicilians retaliated by butchering a French troop, and as word of this reached other Sicilians, more French soldiers were killed in town after town—a frenzied spree of xenophobia quickly spread through the island as gangs of men wildly attacked and murdered every Frenchman in sight. Thousands of Frenchmen were murdered in a few days, and it was claimed by some local historians that the Mafia was begun at this point, taking its name from the anguished cry of the girl's mother running through the streets shouting *ma fia, ma fia*, my daughter, my daughter.⁹

Coppola begins his own tale in the same place as this piece of apocrypha, with a parent's cry of vengeance for a daughter's attempted rape. Of the long line of suitors coming to Vito Corleone on his daughter's wedding day, the undertaker Bonasera seeking redress for his abused child holds center stage. Opening the epic in this manner brings the audience into the midst of an unfolding saga, hearkening back to the ancient Sicilian tale just as it points toward the eventual culmination of the film trilogy in Palermo, on Easter, with another anguished parent's cry over the violation of his daughter.

Immediately focusing the viewer's attention on the crime of rape is extremely significant. In

Honor Thy Father, Gay Talese questions the veracity of this anecdote about the beginnings of the Mafia, but its factuality is immaterial. Rooting both the organization, enshrouded in silence, and the film-tale about it in the act of rape has a certain cosmic inevitability. From its inception rape has been the unspeakable crime, the shame and disgrace of which renders its victims literally or figuratively mute. Legally, rape is a drastically underreported crime. In a time and place very close to late thirteenth century Sicily, “From 1314 to 1399 [in France], an eighty-five year period, we find twelve rape and attempted rape cases. The figure is low, doubtless because in the Middle Ages, as in our own day, many rapes go unreported.”¹⁰ In just one of many examples starting from prehistory, the 1333 trial of Jacqueline La Cyrière for rape, “The scribe vividly relates how Jacqueline and the soldier forced the child to drink a ‘vile green potion’ intended to render her mute and threatened her life if ever she told what had happened.”¹¹ Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* establishes the seminal image, terrifying and powerful. After Tereus’ rape of Philomela, he cuts out her tongue so she cannot accuse him. Instead she weaves her silent indictment into a tapestry, what Sophocles calls “the voice of the shuttle.”¹² An alternative image represents Philomela as a nightingale, a creature who can vocalize, but the meaning of whose song can never be known. The 21st century American legal system still understands the silence of rape victims to be so profound as to recognize the import of *any* admission of rape. Testimony of the first person who receives a declaration of rape, the outcry witness, is considered crucial even if they were told nothing more than “I was raped.”

Coppola sets the cycle of violence and silence in motion from the first seconds of *Godfather I* and pursues it to the bitter end. He does not cut out the tongue of the nearly-raped girl, but offers a less gruesome equivalent. The undertaker informs us that, while his daughter did fend off sexual violation, her attackers beat her so badly that her nose was broken. “Her jaw was shut, held together by wire. She couldn’t even weep because of the pain” (I, 0:1:50).¹³ This will only be the first of many instances of silence, enforced or chosen, or unintelligible speech we encounter in this epic. The rape imagery comes full circle, concluding the trilogy as it began with a parent grieving over a violated daughter. A necessary point of symmetry is that neither woman is actually raped. The undertaker’s daughter fights off her attackers, while Michael’s daughter cannot be raped within the symbolic world of the film—she is Mary the Immaculate and cannot be so entered—but she is penetrated by a bullet. Even Michael’s scream is rendered silent, more surreal and horrifying than sound, as if enacting the Italian proverb, *i grandi dolori sono muti* (great griefs are mute). In silence we see the stunned reaction of the other mourners. With them we realize that we are witnessing anguish inexpressible and unreachable even by primal articulations.

Coppola does not merely show the audience the workings of the inarticulate, but makes them participate in it. The listener/viewer must constantly struggle to hear dialogue murmured, mumbled, whispered, drowned out by ambient noise, spoken from the other side of a wall or closed door, or in an unknown language. We strain to hear Kay’s admission to Michael of her abortion, ironically through the shouts of her playing children. The encounter epitomizes their relationship: as Michael persistently fails or refuses to understand the import of her words (he actually says, “I don’t want to hear about it”), she informs him, “Michael, you haven’t heard me” (II, 2:38:00). The aged, deaf Don Ciccio cannot hear Vito Corleone murmur “My father’s name was Antonio Andolini,” moments before he stabs him to death (II, 2:48:00). Most sinister, during the federal hearings aimed at Michael Corleone, we see Frankie Pentangeli, would be government witness, silenced by the mere presence of his completely silent brother, Vincenzo, who looks like a befuddled old man. Vincenzo, we are informed, speaks no English, and thus cannot even be sworn much less testify. He is merely there for the “moral support” of his brother. (II, 2:35:00) The audience never knows what, if anything, Frankie’s brother knows or even if he knows why he

is there. He is whisked back to Sicily as quickly—and as silently—as he came. Coppola inflicts upon the audience the ultimate power of silence, including them in the wonderment, and even, unaccountably, fear of this incomprehensible unspeaking character.

One of the most famous features of *Godfather* I, Marlon Brando's husky croak constitutes the perfect voice for a character dedicated to *omertà*. The assassination attempt on Vito puts a bullet—where else?—in his throat, making him thereafter even more difficult to hear and understand. In a moment of macabre levity that quickly turns serious, we see the aged Vito playing with Michael's son in the garden, teaching little Tony how to spray pesticide (I, 2:30:00). Vito entertains his grandson by stuffing an orange wedge in his mouth to hide his teeth. He mumbles and grunts through the orange rind, making a monster face that ultimately scares the little boy. Tony responds with somewhat heavy-handed symbolism, spraying Vito with pesticide, as the two chase each other around the garden. The exertion of this horseplay evidently precipitates Vito's fatal heart attack, which he suffers while still trying to gasp for air through the impeding orange wedge. As a demise for a Mafia boss it could not be more ironic; artistically and symbolically it could not be more fitting.

Vito's inarticulate death provides symmetry for his unlikely start in life. After Don Ciccio has Vito's father and brother murdered in their Sicilian home of Corleone, Vito's mother hopes to save the life of her younger son by making an appeal to the Don. "He's only nine and dumb-witted," she informs us. "He never speaks." (II, 0:4:17) "It's not his words I'm afraid of," replies Don Ciccio, as his bodyguards shoot her in front of her son. Indeed, the first time Vito is known to make verbal articulation, it is not speech at all. Sitting alone in a room at Ellis Island, gazing at the Statue of Liberty, Vito sings a song (II, 0:10:22). This image, sweet and poetic to be sure, still reveals something more sinister. It is not that Vito is incapable of speech; he simply does not trust it for purposes of communication, a chilling realization, but one supported by the already hair-raising experiences of his young life. Even as a young man, Vito does not speak for a while, at least long enough to allow us to wonder if he can. Once he does start speaking, he remains a man of few words and those mostly in (subtitled) Italian. Vito lapses into English for certain phrases of reassurance to his friends: "I'll take care of everything" (II, 1:52:00) and the single most famous line of the ever-quotable screenplay, "I'll make him an offer he don't/can't refuse" (II, 1:55:00), as he goes off to commit the incredibly well-planned assassination of Don Fanucci. These words on their face do not mean much, nor does Vito much care whether his Italian friends understand the language. These phrases function as sonic signals for the fact that, if the other party does not do what is expected of him, he will pay a heavy price, probably with his life.

Vito has truly become the self-fulfilling prophecy. Don Ciccio had good instincts. It is not Vito's words one need fear. Like his song at Ellis Island, Vito's words require neither comprehension nor even a listener to hear them. Indeed, this may be one reason the script is so eminently quotable. Like song lyrics, the words seem strangely impersonal, proverbs repeated rather than formulated by the speaker, suitable for a wide variety of occasions, like Shakespeare or the Bible. "A man who doesn't spend time with his family isn't a real man" (I, 0:23:58). "Best of luck to you as long as your interests don't conflict with mine" (I, 0:38:10). "Leave the gun, take the cannollis" (I, 0:57:40). "... [W]on't see him no more" (I, 0:59:20). "In Sicily, women are more dangerous than shotguns" (I, 1:39:19). "When did I ever refuse an accommodation?" (I, 2:06:00). "Don't ever take sides with anyone against the family" (I, 2:25:15). "I like to drink wine more than I used to. Anyway, I'm drinking more" (I, 2:26:50). "He's got me waiting in the lobby" (II, 20:50). "Keep your friends close but your enemies closer" (II, 1:07:56). "This is the business we've chosen" (II, 1:32:30). "The rent stays like before" (II, 2:26:00). "I'm smart, not like everybody says" (II, 2:27:20). "Never hate your enemies, it affects your judgment" (III, 0:56:00). "Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in" (III, 1:06:00). "When they come, they'll come at what you love"

(III, 1:23:00). “Give me the order” (III, 1:59:00). In fact, this explains the humor of Luca Brasi’s laboriously rehearsed wedding wish for Vito’s daughter. The oafish and naturally inarticulate Brasi tries with all his might, on this momentous occasion, to fit his words into this aphoristic style, but the best he can manage is, “may their first child be a masculine child” (I, 0:14:35). This strange proverbial style of speech is, as a matter of fact, like music—a melody that sounds rather than signifies. These phrases mean more (or less) or, in some cases, something entirely different, than do the mere words; they truly signify only with the overlay of association, interpretation, external reference. Vito (like the others who inhabit this world) has metamorphosed into a weird twist on the Philomelan nightingale, rendering himself mute in self-protection, but expressing himself in alternative forms of speech and speech-acts of devastating consequence.

Vito’s childhood muteness would seem to suggest that he is a natural, born to this life, as does his impressive criminal debut, the murder of Don Fanucci (II, 1:50:00-2:05:00 approximately). On the other hand, his son Michael distinguishes himself from his family and resists going down this path every step of the way. Michael enters the world of *omertà* in a very different manner from his father, with the murder of Sollozzo and the police captain MacCluskey. Michael’s entrée into this new life is an act beyond the pale, even by criminal standards.¹⁴ The other family members warn Michael that none of them has ever killed a police officer and doing so will make the Corleones outcasts. (I, 1:12:14) Clemenza tells Michael, “we was all proud of you being a hero and all, your father too” (I, 1:17:10), as if something is coming to an end. Michael’s older brother Sonny assures Michael that he will get word to “that girlfriend” as to why Michael has to disappear for at least a year (I, 1:20:39). Clearly Michael is crossing a line usually taboo even in the circles of organized crime and, in so doing, entering another world. The meeting between Michael, Sollozzo and MacCluskey is conducted mostly in Italian. It is extremely significant that this is one of only two instances in the films where Coppola presents Italian without subtitles, leaving the audience out of the dialogue for a considerably longer time than usual. He underscores the point that communication is not taking place, indeed this is about anything but communication. MacCluskey of course does not understand the conversation at all. Michael converses with Sollozzo fairly fluently but sometimes has to revert to English. We get the sense that, while he understands with some degree of difficulty, he certainly would not care to express critical or nuanced matters in that tongue. When he returns from the bathroom with the gun, Sollozzo resumes speaking entirely in Italian, but Michael is no longer listening or even present. His eyes glaze over, the music becomes eerie and eventually obliterates the stream of Italian. The sound of a passing subway train provides some degree of cover for the three gunshots, which usher Michael into the world of *omertà*. (I, 1:20:00-1:29:00 approximately).

Clearly language, at least for purposes of meaningful communication, constitutes a problematic proposition in the world Coppola is crafting. So it is hardly surprising that in matters of love, the arena where language has to be especially sensitive and profound, it is simply altogether absent. When Michael first sees the real love of his life, Apollonia, he proceeds to the local cafe where one of his bodyguards describes her delectable physical attributes to the innkeeper (who, awkwardly, turns out to be her father), while the other bodyguard repeats them and acts them out in a lascivious pantomime, turning the whole thing into a vaudevillian farce (I,1:40:00). Michael and Apollonia connect with their eyes and bodies, unmistakably and wordlessly, from opposite ends of a long table, separated by her entire solicitous—and garrulous—extended family. The family’s animated conversation is the only other instance in which Coppola presents Italian without subtitles. Its placement, in close temporal proximity to Michael’s conversation with his victim Sollozzo, cannot help but suggest comparison. In the one situation communication is impossible in any language; in the other, communication needs no language. We see but do not hear the serious conversations between Michael and Apollonia, their courtship, declarations

of love and commitment. It is no accident that the one conversation we do hear between them consists of Michael trying to teach her to drive, a skill with which she struggles. Michael jokes, "It's safer to teach you English." Apollonia protests that she knows English and proceeds to butcher the days of the week. Moments later a car bomb meant for Michael explodes, killing Apollonia. (I, 2:02:50-2:04:35) There are obvious reasons why being close to Michael Corleone is dangerous. But of all the dialogue that could have preceded this tragic event, Coppola directs our focus precisely to the matter of communication. At least one implication of this sequence is the swift and sure punishment for trying to share a language, trying to talk with someone he loves.

Michael does not need to learn this lesson twice. From that point on he seems to insulate himself from anything that threatens to comprise loving communication. Even early in their courtship, it is interesting that Michael does not actually tell Kay he loves her. At the time this would seem the natural thing to do, instead he sends her away to her parents in New Hampshire, while the phonograph plays the words, "Just the right to take care of you all of my life,... all my love, with all my heart, all of my life" (I, 0:59:50). We hear him talk to Kay, but one senses that his feelings for her never exceed his natural ambivalence. He waits more than a year after his return to America to see her and then delivers a marriage proposal that is no better than robotic (I, 2:19:00). He now speaks in platitudes, devoid of affect, like an automaton. While his whispered conversations with Apollonia take place on strolls through the Sicilian hills, chaperoned by her female relatives, the walk on which he proposes to Kay is chaperoned by an associate, as indeed the marriage to her has the flavor of a business deal. Affectless, he informs her, "It's important that we have a life together, that we have children" (I, 2:19:10). When he has laid out his terms, he summons his driver and ushers Kay into the car without giving her a chance to respond, the successful conclusion of a business transaction.¹⁵

Michael's young son Anthony learns the lesson early; when he draws a picture of his father in a car as a Christmas gift, he does not present it in person but leaves it on Michael's pillow with a note, "Do you like it? yes/no" (II, 0:34:46), almost more chilling than the bloodshed. Even in the face of all the violence of these films, arguably the moment that most powerfully shows Michael's loss of humanity occurs when Kay asks him if he ordered the murder of Carlo, his sister Connie's husband. Infuriated, Michael tells Kay this is the sole occasion on which she may ask him about his business, proceeds to lie to her, then closes the door on her (I, 2:48:28-2:51:55). This is only the first step in shutting her out of his life, which will be completed with the directly parallel act of slamming a door in her face at the end of the second part of the trilogy, as he separates her from her children (II, 3:00:00).

In her discussion of Henry James' *The Bostonians*, Claire Kahane makes some penetrating observations that could be transplanted wholesale to Coppola's use of speech and language. "Obliterating the words as signifiers, Basil persistently hears only the music of [Verena's] voice, the erotics of the voice, the voice of the nightingale. She can sing but not signify; she can give pleasure but not 'mean.' Thinking that 'she speechifies as a bird sings' (216), 'I don't listen to your ideas,' he tells her. 'I listen to your voice' (316). Like Philomela, Verena will also be silenced in the presence of Basil, will be abducted by him in a climax that resonates both etymologically and psychologically as a rape...."¹⁶ Sweeping the inadequacies of language out of the way can be a prelude to intimate human connection of the highest order, as Coppola shows between Michael and Apollonia just long enough to acknowledge that the possibility exists and present a contrast. More often, however, hearing the voice while shutting out the ideas can be a compelling step toward dehumanization, making it that much easier to commit the threshold act of violation, be it rape, murder, or simply rendering a person a nonentity, as Michael does to Kay.

Coppola finds a brilliant way to convey not merely the brutality and violence of this world of

cosa nostra, but what is possibly the even worse aspect of it, the necessity for silence. From the moment one crosses this threshold (which is the point of the lengthy family counseling of Michael before his first murders), one enters a world where communication will never be quite the same, if indeed it is possible at all, where everything is oblique, unspoken, a world of impoverished human connection. Returning to the Philomela tale, Kahane observes that, “The excision of the woman’s tongue is meant to destroy the female voice as logos, as meaning.” She goes on to point out: “Psychoanalytically speaking, cutting out the tongue is a trope of castration, in particular, an excision of the power of speech. [... In one of Boccaccio’s stories], a woman is holding a nightingale that suddenly is transformed into a penis. Making a similar point, [Kaja] Silverman writes that ‘the female voice provides the acoustic equivalent of an ejaculation’ (1988, 68).”¹⁷ This interesting metaphor vividly depicts an all too familiar situation, the violent silencing of women by men. What is even more interesting, not to mention utterly unexpected, is the spectacle of seemingly powerful men turning this weapon on themselves, transgressing the boundary, violating the taboo that plunges them forever into enforced silence. Self-castration is the last thing one would expect of the power-hungry romanticized bullies who supposedly populate organized crime, a persona that has so captured the imagination of the American public. If Philomela’s tragedy lies in being robbed of the ability to tell her story, choosing a life-occupation of first-degree murder imposes that punishment upon oneself in the most effective way conceivable. Indeed, in the course of the three films we see Michael tell barefaced lies to everyone he cares about most, his mother, his wife, his sister, his son, and his beloved daughter. Michael, on whom the role of godfather never rested easily, constantly tries to “legitimize” himself, to make himself whole again. He attempts to portray himself as a man of reason. His estranged wife Kay, so terribly punished in the course of this epic, ultimately gets back her own. She taunts him, “That’s your big thing, Michael. Reason backed up by murder” (III, 0:17:00). Reason and logic require language; they cannot exist in its absence. The harsh reminder from one who knows him best that he cannot “get his way” without violence and deceit, that he dwells outside the boundaries of society, of communication and human connection, is perhaps the cruelest blow of all.

The Sacramental

Another way in which Coppola diminishes language as a method of communication, related to the “quotability factor” already observed, is to make it highly and obviously stylized. Nowhere can one find more stylized language than in religious ritual. Catholic ceremony saturates the *Godfather* films thoroughly and at critical moments. Coppola opens each of the films with a major religious event (marriage, confirmation, holy orders), takes care of family business at the end of *Godfather I* in counterpoint to a baptism, places the assassination attempts against both Vito and Michael amidst a profusion of Christmas decorations, culminates the action at Easter—and these are only the most obvious examples. Working out crime family business against the backdrop of religious ritual suggests many things. The idea that Sicilian culture is inextricable from the Catholic church, and the sheer hypocrisy of the criminal lifestyle in the face of ostentatiously professed Christian beliefs are simple ironies that come readily to mind. But these omnipresent rituals, ceremonies, festivals, holidays, and occasions, providing constant counterpoint to every action in these films, also play a more subtle and more significant role. Once again Sammy the Bull Gravano provides a rare glimpse behind the veil of secrecy. His description of his induction into *Cosa Nostra* is extraordinary. He is first informed that “There is no return from this.” He then must prick his trigger finger and put the blood “on a picture of a saint.... We are going to burn this saint.... [I]f I divulged the secrets of our life in any way, shape or form, my soul should burn in hell like the saint burning in my hands.... Paul [Castellano] said one or two things in Italian—still,

today, I don't know what he said.... Paul said, 'You are born as of today.....' He also said that there is no God.... Our Thing, — 'this thing of ours,' he said — is first, the only thing in your life above everything.... 'I'm the father of the family. *I am your God.*'"¹⁸ Once one gets past the incredibly juvenile "secret handshake" feel of this, the similarities to religious ceremony are unmistakable — the blind faith and obedience demanded, the ritualized nature of the activity and the language, which is not always understood, the well established hierarchy, invoking the protection of the saints, even the language of rebirth and baptism, the peculiar credo, but a credo nonetheless. It is not exactly news that, to its members, the Mob itself is a religion. But Coppola clearly sees more in this phenomenon than its obvious perversity. Like a good Catholic, he sees even in this misplaced devotion a kind of sacramentality.

The Catholic church recognizes seven sacraments and Coppola shows them all. The degree of detail and explicitness may vary, but the comprehensive coverage cannot be accidental. Moreover, the very pomp and circumstance with which he sometimes showcases these sacraments may obscure the myriad fleeting moments and gestures in which they also reside. The seven Catholic sacraments include baptism, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, penance (confession), anointing of the sick (formerly the last rites or extreme unction), and the eucharist. The sacraments of course mark major occasions in Christian life, but equally serve as socio-cultural milestones, marking significant life experiences, birth, coming of age, death and others. In fact three of the sacraments, baptism, confirmation and the eucharist, are known as rites of initiation, which might roughly be described as the entry into human life, entry into adult life, and entry into spiritual life. The sinister corollary in the films is again clear, as both Vito Corleone and Vinnie enter Mafia life — "make their bones" — during street festivals marking saint's days, in the presence of the eucharist. Rooted in an ancient time of illiteracy, limited travel and communication possibilities, these rites also serve a "publication" function, a way of notifying the community of admittance through baptism, the attainment of adult responsibilities through confirmation, the ever important question of marital status and thus legitimacy of subsequent offspring, even keeping peace between neighbors by means of confession and expiation, etc. It is only one of the many ingenuities of the presence of so much religion in the *Godfather* films, that these sacred rites of publication are often used as a smokescreen to the far more profane and secret activities of the Corleones.

The language of religious ritual, like the aphoristic sayings mentioned earlier, is impersonal, words recited or repeated rather than chosen by the speaker. Indeed, in this instance the priest often speaks as a representative of God, distancing himself even further from the words, creating a layer not only of impersonality but a responsibility. This type of language is not meant for communication purposes; in fact, in many of these rituals the congregant-listener knows the words as well as the priest-speaker. There is no issue of give and take or even of comprehension¹⁹; arguably the words do not have to be uttered audibly, or even at all. Signs and gestures can substitute, kneeling and head-bowing can stand in for verbal confession, absolution can be received in a language one does not understand, a symbolic act may take the place of marriage vows. Indeed, the sacrament of marriage can be validly received without knowing it, believing in it, and even while rejecting it.²⁰ Conversely, when sacramental words are articulated, they function less as language than as verbal — or even more accurately, sonic — formulae that either trigger or stand in for certain acts. It would not be quite accurate to say the language is symbolic, but rather that the words themselves are symbols, representing not other words but actions, changes and transformations of body, mind, life or spirit. In other words, the formulations "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse" and "This is my body" mean different things, trigger different actions, but function in substantially the same way. To convey this clearly it is all the more important that the religious rituals shown in the *Godfather* films employ Latin, creating

a language barrier that eliminates the temptation to believe that, because we understand the words, we know what they mean. The point is once again to hear the melody but not the idea, to understand the import without understanding the individual words. This also explains why Vito's sacramental words are "I'll make him an offer he can't refuse," in a language he imperfectly understands; and likewise why Michael's equivalent sacrament of initiation takes place amid a flow of Italian.

In the *Godfather* films the sacraments of marriage, baptism and confirmation figure so prominently as to require no discussion. The eucharist is administered in the context of these other sacraments, as well as during the street festivals. The sacrament of Holy Orders is covered in various ways. The third film opens with the ostentatious bestowing of the Insignia of St. Sebastian upon Michael Corleone, the "highest lay order in the Catholic church" (III,0:8:00), as we are informed. Michael makes a point of telling us that the late Tom Hagen's son has become a priest, and Michael attended his ordination. Most spectacularly, the Corleone family business manages to involve itself in the election of a new Pope. The remaining two sacraments, penance and the last rites, raise the most interesting and complex issues in Godfatherland.

Coppola presents penance in two contexts, which he treats with elegant symmetry, one the symbolic and almost accidental confession of Fredo, the other Michael's tortuous confession about the murder of Fredo. Penance or confession is understandably the most difficult of the sacraments. Unlike baptism and confirmation, received as an infant or youngish child, and marriage, rather less doctrinally rigorous, confession involves a baring of one's soul and, even more intimidating, true sorrow and an intention to reform that can be paralyzing to Catholics who have far less on their conscience than does the likes of Michael Corleone. Like the other sacraments, penance fulfills a societal as well as personal function. Penance re-establishes the connection to family and community as well as with God. The penitent may accomplish expiation by "prayer, by self-denial, and especially by service of neighbor and works of mercy through which the social aspect of sin and its forgiveness may be expressed."²¹ One common assignment by priest to penitent for atonement is to recite a certain number of Hail Marys and Our Fathers. Fredo's "confession" contains the most poignant moment of the three films. Fredo occupies a special position in his family. We meet him when Michael introduces him to Kay at Connie's wedding. Fredo immediately snuggles up to Kay in an oddly inappropriate way, lacking boundaries like a disturbed child. This is immediately contrasted with the spectacle of Sonny, the oldest Corleone brother, rutting with some woman up against a bathroom wall, presumably creating the ill-conceived Vinnie; and then a rare moment of Vito raising his voice, hollering contemptuously at Johnny Fontane not to "cry like a woman." Immediately thereafter we hear the first operatic moment of the films, Cherubino's aria from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, "Non so più cosa son, cosa faccio" (I, 0:22:00-0:23:20). The other characters persistently treat Fredo solicitously, infantilizing him, showing him affection, creating little tasks for him, but keeping him insulated from serious family business. He alone of Vito's sons sheds tears at the assassination attempt on his father, but he is conspicuously excluded from the discussion on how to redress this *infamia*. Fredo is painfully aware of his special status in the family, an awareness that leads to his fatal attempt to prove that he "can handle things, I'm smart, not like everybody says. I'm not dumb, I'm smart and I want respect." (II, 2:29:00) His fatal flaw is all the more pathetic inasmuch as it is caused precisely by the foolishness of which his family is acutely cognizant; they protect him from his own stupidity all his life—right up until they kill him for it. I do not know if the reference to Cherubino, a male character played by a woman, was Coppola's intention or mere coincidence, but all things taken together, the fact remains. Fredo is kind of a girl.²²

We catch a rare glimpse of genuine personal connection, as Fredo tries to teach his nephew,

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Michael's son Anthony, how to fish. Fredo, proud of his skill with the fishing rod, wants to share the secret of his success with young Anthony: as a boy, every time Fredo put a line in the water, he said a Hail Mary, and each time he caught a fish (II, 2:58:50). We hear Fredo reciting the Hail Mary, "pray for us sinners," when he is shot (II, 3:09:00). The gunshot interrupts his words right before he would say "[pray for us sinners] now and in the hour of our death." Even the fact that Fredo dies in a boat contributes to the penitential aura of this moment. Physically the boat is small, confined, even a bit claustrophobic, like a confessional in a church. Symbolically, the boat represents Mary's protection. Marian symbolism offers perhaps the richest palette in Catholic art. Historically artists have found the Virgin Mother in literally every object known to man. For obvious reasons, she is easily understood to represent virtually any container with any relevance to Christianity, including the Church itself, the ark of the covenant, the walled garden —and the barque of Saint Peter. She is the moon and stars, guide of seafarers in medieval and renaissance times (*Ave maris stella*²³) and still for T. S. Eliot ("Sister, mother/And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea"²⁴). When, as here, confession takes place near death, it becomes a continuous sacrament, followed by the anointing of the sick (last rites), and the eucharist, now called "viaticum," helping one on his way. Coppola presents Fredo's death in sequence with that of the murder of Hyman Roth (a Jew) and the suicide of Frank Pentangeli (a mortal sin). On every level, Coppola hammers home the notion that Fredo, perhaps alone of any male character populating this film trilogy, dies in a state of grace, with the Hail Mary on his lips, enclosed in her protecting presence.

In contrast, Michael's far more recognizable, *pro forma* confession, is precisely what one would expect, and hence, anticlimactic (III, 1:38:50-1:41:00). Michael offers a great deal of emotion and evidence of inner torment (in fact he suffers a diabetic attack while trying to bring himself to speak), but not necessarily remorse for anything but the death of Fredo. Most importantly, he states from the outset that he does not repent. The Cardinal hits the nail on the head: "Your life could be redeemed but I know that you don't believe that. You will not change." Yet still assures him, "Ego te absolvo...." The content, affect, and end result of Michael's attempt at confession are all utterly predictable, and thus utterly flat, completely devoid of the depth, texture, and poignance of Fredo's last moments.

Andrew Greeley posits a particular Catholic way of experiencing life, inhabiting "an enchanted world, a world of statues and holy water.... [These paraphernalia] are mere hints of a deeper and more pervasive religious sensibility which inclines Catholics to see the Holy lurking in creation. [...] This special Catholic imagination can appropriately be called sacramental. It sees created reality as a 'sacrament,' that is, a revelation of the presence of God."²⁵ In other words, just as in the Middle Ages, Catholics still see in every earthly object and experience the revelation of holiness. He cites Andrew Dubus' example, powerful in its very mundanity, that one can discern sacramentality in something as humble as a sandwich, "if someone makes it for you and gives it to you with love,... with love's direction and concern, love's again and again wavering distorted focus on goodness, then God's love too is in the sandwich."²⁶

Why are these sacraments constantly present in the world Coppola portrays? Because they show, albeit in a twisted way, precisely the world dominated by the Catholic imagination that Greeley posits. This layered meaning resides everywhere, in everything. As the opening moments of the film trilogy contain the implication of muteness, they also show the first example of sacramentality. The very opening words of the film, “I believe in America,” with its unspoken corollary “but I believe in *Cosa Nostra* more,” introduce the language of faith. This pseudo-creed is balanced, at the end of the first film, with Michael’s recitation of the real Credo, contained in the service of baptism, interspersed with the bloodbath he ordered. While the undertaker’s face and words dominate our attention, we catch our first glimpse of Vito Corleone in the form of a hand gesture, a mute order which bestows a drink, and simultaneously a benediction, on the undertaker. The eloquent gesture, followed by the drink, constitutes the eucharist in this world.²⁷ This is the first of many sacraments to be enacted in the film trilogy, or rather pseudo-sacrament for it is not freely given. It will exact payment in kind. Demonstrating what a very human bargain it is, Vito is forced to turn to the undertaker in heartbreaking symmetry, for help with his own violated child, the murdered Santino (“Look how they massacred my boy” (I, 2:02:36).

Vito, Michael and Vinnie all enter Mob life in sacramental ways, right down to the background of incomprehensible language. As Michael is a more subtle and complex character, whose relationship with this lifestyle is altogether more ambivalent than either Vito’s or Vinnie’s, Michael’s sacrament is ambivalent too, more like the last rites, the conscious acknowledgment of passing over into another life, and the viaticum, the family sending him on his way. He does not embrace this life transformation, any more than he could embrace the redeeming change of penance. Vito’s and Vinnie’s passage into their new life contain very obvious parallels, most notably the accompanying presence of the street festival. But Vinnie’s passage is, if anything, a parody, or even more accurately, a travesty of Vito’s. Where Vito can be seen to act almost heroically and altruistically, Vinnie unnecessarily kills a punk. Where Vito’s assassination of Don Fanucci, behind which we hear the words of the eucharist (II, 2:02:20), exudes brilliant planning and efficient execution, Vinnie’s is a slapstick screw-up, characterized by low level adolescent vandalism, like scratching an expensive car with a key, hollering crude juvenilia (“Up your ass, Joey”), and knocking the statue of the Virgin and Child to the ground, a clear desecration. Most significantly, while Vito hardly ever speaks, and when he does can scarcely be heard, Vinnie is a brash loudmouth, whom Michael is constantly admonishing to keep quiet and get himself under control. Obviously the Corleone crime dynasty is running out of talent, nearing the end of its reign. But what is identical for all three, Vito, Michael, and Vinnie, is the sacramentality of their entry into a new life. This is the purpose of the sacraments and sacramental language, the ritualized repetition of words learned from birth, atavistic reminders of the teachings, beliefs, and customs that form the fabric of one’s life. In other words, they learn to be bad in the same ways they were once taught to be good, a phenomenon far more interesting than simply turning one’s back on received morality. The men of this crime family recreate the most important things their culture has taught them, albeit in ways never contemplated at their mother’s or priest’s knee. The ideal intent of a sacrament, a sacrament truly received in one’s soul, is a transforming change, *metanoia*. Vito, Michael, and Vinnie, in varying degrees, all unmistakably undergo this change. Depending on one’s point of view, they change from a regular guy to a criminal, or from a regular guy to a hero, or from a victim to the neighborhood savior, or from a person who could have had a healthy relationship to a person who cannot—or any of many other ways this change can be perceived. But in any case, each constitutes a profound thoroughgoing transformative change, a point of no return. Having changed in this way, it is only fitting that Michael attempts to change back the same way, via the sacraments—unsuccessfully, but he does try.

If sacramentality means perceiving the holy in everything, what goes on in Godfatherland can

be seen as the exact inverse of that, a world in which everything is imbued with the sinister, with evil, in short, with the unholy. Kay understands this. Kay, who always sensed her feelings for Michael outweighed his for her, once asked him if he would find her more attractive if she were a nun, like Ingrid Bergman in *The Bells of St. Mary's* (I, 0:45:55). At the end of their relationship she tells Michael, "It wasn't a miscarriage, it was an abortion—just like our marriage, something that's unholy and evil" (II, 2:41:00). The circumstance under which Michael attempts human connection is not merely unsuccessful but corrupt at its core. This gives new meaning to his oft-quoted statement, "Just when I thought I was out, they keep pulling me back." (III, 1:06:00) The world Michael inhabits literally has no "out" to go to, a world that cannot sustain the existence of holiness, where the toxin of the anti-sacrament permeates everything. No amount of guilt money paid to the church can buy his way out of it. No number of real or imagined enemies he slaughters will make him feel safe.

Cavalleria Rusticana

The grand dénouement of this film epic takes place within a performance of Mascagni's one-act opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Long before the opera, however, Coppola persistently blurs, indeed obliterates the line between the Corleones' lives and a stage play. Little by little, Coppola dehumanizes these characters, bringing them ever closer to their true identities as stock characters, even caricatures in an already scripted play. The many plays-within-a-play enacted throughout these three films actually function very much like the Catholic sacraments in what they illuminate about this world. We see things we recognize but they do not seem "right," their meaning somehow satirized, distorted, perverted. In the most graphic way possible, in fact, Coppola reveals himself as a true Shklovskii. Viktor Shklovskii, creator of the Russian term *ostranenie* ("making strange"), points out, "The aim of art is to give a palpability to a thing, as a vision, not as a recognition; the device of art is a device of making things 'strange' and of a difficult form, which increases the difficulty and time of perception...; art is a means to experience the making of a thing...."²⁸ With intense deliberation, Coppola does just that, positing a world where things seem real and recognizable, then proceeding one step at a time to reveal not just the perversion but the fabrication of this world.

For example, we see the touching image of little Vito singing while gazing out the window at the Statue of Liberty; seconds later we see the now adult Vito get his first glimpse of the head of organized crime in his neighborhood, at the Italian Theater, where the set features a large, rather clumsy and obviously cardboard Statute of Liberty. This juxtaposition might suggest that the actual monument seemed no more real than this cardboard cutout to the disoriented nine-year-old Vito; or that the life upon which he now embarks is tinged with this same surreality. Moments before Vito kills the incredibly violent Don Fanucci during the street procession, the Don has been watching a marionette show with knights jousting, from which he walks away with the sardonic remark, "Too violent for me" (II, 2:00:40). Near the end of his life Vito says he has "danced on strings" to take care of his family (I, 2:28:30), having hoped it would be different for Michael, that his youngest son would be the one pulling the strings of the Senate, Congress, or even the White House. Even the teenaged Mary asks Michael, with an uncanny choice of words, if she is just a puppet on a string for the Corleone Foundation (III, 0:45:50). The marionette is, of course, the famous signature image of this long complex drama. But it is in fact not the marionette itself, but the hand of the puppeteer that appears on the cover of the originating book by Mario Puzo and on the title screen of all three films, an important distinction.

The image occurs for the last time in *Godfather* III when Michael spends the day with Kay in Sicily. After telling Kay he will not allow Mary to marry Vinnie, her first cousin,²⁹ they come

across a puppet show in which the marionette-daughter is stabbed in the heart for committing this precise infraction. This little morality play is so congruent to the “real” action as to seem inept, overly obvious, and redundant. In fact this parallel dramatization, very near the end of the epic, is *so* transparent as to force it upon the audience’s awareness, to remind in retrospect of all the many parallel dramas, including the drama of the Mass, that have been enacted in the alternate universe the Corleones inhabit. Coppola forces our attention back to the sacraments with their counterpart anti-sacraments, the life dramas with counterpart cardboard dramas, populated by wooden people hanging from strings. If the people with whom the audience has become so involved by now, even the most powerful of them—if they are the puppets, who, one wonders, is the puppeteer?

This puppet show not only functions retroactively, but also points forward to the last and most impressive morality play of all, the staging of the seminal parallel drama, *Cavalleria Rusticana*. Coppola uses the circumstance of the opera itself to merge film-reality with action on the operatic stage. On the simplest level we have the coalescence of life and art; the opera takes place on Easter Sunday, in the film it is performed on Easter Sunday. The opera may also have provided the inspiration for the films’ use of religious ritual. At one time married Sicilian men observed Good Friday by leaving home to spend the end of the penitential Lenten season in contemplation and atonement, returning on Easter Sunday for celebration. The single men and wives left at home quickly saw in this custom a golden opportunity for sexual indiscretion, not only perverting the holiest season of the Christian year but ultimately making Easter a day for cuckolded men to fight duels. Santuzza hits the nail on the head when she wishes Turiddu, “A te la mala Pasqua” (R42+3), evil Easter, the holiday turned on its head, as are so many other things in the world Coppola creates. Santuzza informs Alfio of Lola’s infidelity during the Easter service, whereupon he swears vengeance in counterpoint to the sound of the Mass, as every piece of significant Corleone business takes place during a religious ceremony.

As one of the early and influential examples of Italian verismo, *Cavalleria Rusticana* features characters who experience little or no development, who evince little in the way of reasoning process or psychological depth. Although the libretto rhymes, the poetry is simple, the language direct. Action and reaction replace discussion, negotiation, or analysis. Some of the operatic characters have names that suggest their dramatic function, a simple conceit that Coppola uses as well. The prima donna, Santuzza, sometimes called Santa—holy—is ironically the only character in the opera who is excommunicated. She spends a lot of time in the course of the opera looking for Turiddu, the Sicilian form of the name Salvatore, literally seeking salvation. Turiddu’s rival for the affection of Lola is Alfio, another form of Alfredo, for which Fredo would seem to be a nickname. Some symbolic names in the *Godfather* films include Vito, life, the source of the Corleone family, both genetically and as a crime dynasty; his first born son, Santino, another form of the holy one; his youngest son and *de facto* heir, Michael, the gift from God. Even the comparatively minor character of the undertaker is aptly named Bonasera, “good evening.” Naming characters in this way imparts to the work the quality of myth or fable, the simplest way to convey the moral of the story. Coppola underscores this in the third film, naming Michael’s beloved daughter Mary, of obvious import. In case anyone misses the point, early in the film Coppola has Connie call out, “Would somebody please hail Mary?” (III, 0:9:20), a piece of dialogue that sticks out of the general texture by its sheer corniness. Immediately thereafter Coppola shows Mary’s clear function in this drama. One of the oldest Catholic jokes, if Jesus will not admit you to heaven by the front door, Mary will let you in the back.³⁰ The gentlest of intercessors, she exemplifies mother love, the closest thing to a female deity Catholicism allows. Here she acts as the “innocent,” the conspicuously respectable front for the Vito Corleone Foundation built on the \$100 million donation that bought Michael his Insignia of St. Sebastian, an obvious modern paying of indulgences. Throughout the opera, we see shot after shot of Mary

with contemplative demeanor, eyes heavenward, surrounded by a veil of dark hair, with elaborate filigree gold earrings, an iconic image of the Madonna in a gilt frame. After the opera, Coppola has Tony place the cap he wore as Turiddu on his sister Mary's head, underscoring yet more that she is Turiddu now, she is salvation. The last moments of the film employ one of the clearest borrowings from *Cavalleria Rusticana* and one of the clearest dramatic messages. At the end of the opera, a voice shouting "*Hanno ammazzatto compare Turiddu!*" (They have killed Turiddu) cuts across the musical texture. Mascagni's stage directions indicate "*tutti gettano un grido*" (everyone screams), then the curtain falls swiftly (*precipitosamente*). From here, having literally killed salvation on Easter, of all days, the opera moves swiftly and inexorably to its conclusion. Coppola uses three iterations of this cry. On the most rudimentary level, this signifies one for each of the Corleone assassinations (Keinszig, Lucchesi, and the Archbishop), but more than that, reminds how the Corleones have in essence "killed salvation" over and over and over. A few moments later, now on the steps outside the opera house, the same voice calls out "*Hanno ammazzatto compare Maria*" (they have killed Mary). Once Mary dies, the pace of the film mirrors that of the opera; we witness Michael's scream, which ultimately becomes so inarticulate it cannot even sustain sound (III, 2:38:45), and within moments we see his lonely death. Once Michael told his daughter, "I would burn in hell to keep you safe" (III, 0:45:50). The barren landscape where Michael dies, attended only by a scruffy dog, looks like he is there already. Mary, the Virgin Mother, held out his last hope for any kind of redemption at all, the intercessor of last resort. Without her, Michael's story is over.

The Godfather persona pursues a fairly straight-line continuum, from Vito, a multi-faceted character endowed with remnants of humanity, to Vinnie, a blustering blowhard and, one senses, the only true sociopath of the three, and thus unidimensional. In fact, only Vinnie has to do something as crude—and obvious—as the biting of Joey Zasa's ear, representing the customary Sicilian way to throw down the gauntlet. The ear-bite is, significantly, a direct borrowing from the opera, reflecting Vinnie's own status as a complete caricature. Once again Michael occupies some ambivalent middle-ground, gradually turning into an individual who brooks no insult, real or imagined, without responding with deadly force. It is profoundly significant that by far the biggest problem Michael struggles with is the murder of his brother Fredo, an act of personal vengeance to which Michael feels driven, while lacking any insight whatsoever about the possible ramifications this act will have for his own psyche. As a true verismo character, whenever Michael tries to grow, he is thwarted. "Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in" (III, 1:06:00). Michael is at least sufficiently developed to have a fatal flaw, his inability to transform, to engage in the work of *metanoia*, either through the sacraments, through intellect, through money, even through violence. From his first appearance in the film trilogy, he has tried to disclaim the criminal life ("That's my family, Kay, it's not me." I, 0:19:25). But the fact of the matter is, instead of "legitimizing" himself, he ultimately capitulates, retreating ever more deeply into surreality. Shortly before seeing the final marionette show in *Godfather III*, Michael, with an appalling lack of taste, holds a knife to his own throat and quips with Kay, "Give me the order," another one of those quaint mob euphemisms meaning "say the word and I'll kill." When Kay takes issue with this awful joke, Michael lays bare the device, once and for all: "We're in Sicily, it's opera" (III, 1:58:40).³¹

Musically, the film uses *Cavalleria Rusticana* in an interesting way. The music of the opera is first presented almost in the order in which Mascagni presents it, with the exception that Turiddu's song, embedded in the middle of the orchestral introduction, moves to the end, right before the curtain opens, a less adventurous placement. The Coppolas make large cuts in the music, eliminating the spring song, a lot of plot-specific dialogue, Lola's *stornello*, and for now, the Easter procession, Alfio's swearing revenge, and the *Intermezzo sinfonico*. The music that is there,

however, goes in the composed order. The Coppolas spend a long time on Turiddu's (Anthony's) farewell to his mother and departure for his own watershed moment, fighting Alfio, extremely evocative of the same process over which his father Michael agonized. This music is rather repetitve, emphasized by an ostinato, creating the impression of constantly circling back to a single moment—or momentous event—as happens in the films themselves. The lengthy farewell is interrupted with an orchestral interlude composed by Carmine Coppola, but not Mascagni's *Intermezzo sinfonico*, which will come later. The Coppolas arrange the music so that the “real” acts of vengeance get underway aligned with the opera's Easter service, including a dramatic street procession featuring people attired in death masks. This action is introduced by the text “Tonight the Corleone family settles its accounts” (III, 2:27:00). In one of the most distorted moments of the films, Coppola shows the grisly slaughters alongside the text:

Regina Coeli, laetare— Alleluja!	Queen of Heaven, rejoice—
Quia, quem meruisti portare—	He, whom you bore in purity—
Resurrexit sicut dixit—	is resurrected, as is said—
Inneggiamo, il signor non è morto...	Let us praise, the Lord is not dead...
Ora pro nobis Deum— Alleluja!	Pray for us to God.
Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria—	Happy and joyous, Virgin Mary,
Quia surrexit Dominus vere—	The Lord is truly risen.

This is the Marian anthem for the Easter season, used by Mascagni in the opera (R22+25). This passage, of course, focuses principally on the “Queen of Heaven,” including the imprecation “ora pro nobis” (pray for us), a phrase directly from the Hail Mary; and accentuates Mary's role as intercessor, the “pure container” of the Lord. Easter is an occasion with plenty of theological density, making this emphasis on Mary an interesting choice. Moreover the frequent iterations of “*non è morto*” while watching grisly, calculated murder is perverse and unsettling.

This final housecleaning of the Corleone dynasty is introduced by a phrase that seems to be derived from Lola's line “*Ahimè! che mai sarà!*” (Ah, what will happen! R60+7). The vocal line outlines a diminished seventh sonority, with a possible resolution to B minor, over an ostinato pitch, E-flat; on the two most heavily accented syllables, the voice forms a minor ninth against the ostinato. The newly composed orchestral interlude emphasizes augmented seconds/minor thirds on the small scale, while outlining a tritone on the larger scale, both ingredients of the diminished seventh chord; this likewise takes place over an ostinato, now the pitch B taken from the bassoon line of Turiddu's farewell to his mother (R64+9), over which hangs a pungent C natural, again focusing attention on the sound of the minor ninth. Both Mascagni and Coppola use ostinati as linkage, a repetitive, forbidding sound, arguably the sound of obsession, that ultimately does not line up with the dramatic action, a graphic illustration of precisely the nonsynchronization Eisenstein recommends.

Coppola uses a considerable amount of this short opera—nowhere near all of it but certainly enough to be recognizable. He presents it in order up to a point, then interrupts the chronological presentation, circles back and focuses on an earlier moment of the opera, then picks up where he left off, and follows the music to its conclusion, finally presenting the *Intermezzo sinfonico*, a set piece, at the end of the film. Newly composed music, which gives the impression of being rooted in the music of the opera, flows between and around the operatic passages, with greater and lesser degrees of seamlessness. Clearly, as seen above, Carmine Coppola is capable of creating smooth, skillful junctures with the existing music. Sometimes, however, the transition is

jarring, uncomfortable. One purpose of the reordering of Mascagni's music is obviously to suit the Corleone drama that is acting itself out behind the scenes. Another purpose could be to create precisely the misalignment Eisenstein advises, the sense of the music used as mosaic pieces, broken apart and rejoined in a manner not originally intended; in the process, an interpretation is forced upon this music that goes well beyond the opera's straightforward and simple plot. Francis Ford Coppola graphically accomplishes here what musicological interpretation often attempts to do, imputing—in this case, literally by violence—content to music that far exceeds its original existence. But while this is interesting it does not really do anything to enhance understanding of the music, nor of course is this Coppola's aim. In fact, one of the great achievements of these films is to do something that is next to impossible, to make music lie. Mascagni's short opera is nothing if not beautifully integrated, concise, economical, each character sensitively, if not deeply, explicated. One of the sweetest things about the opera is the sheer honesty of its characters. In the operatic universe, a place of literally endless intrigue, even a short work in which scarcely any character tells a lie is virtually unheard of. But *Cavalleria Rusticana* is such a work. For a dramatic situation in which nearly every character accuses every other character of acting deceitfully, only one even arguably speaks deceitfully.³² Even when confronted by Alfio about his adultery, Turiddu's answer surprises more than any righteous indignation, denial or self-justification ever could: "*lo so che il torto è mio*," "I know that I am wrong."

This music exists in these films in the same manner as do the sacraments, creating evidence of a parallel universe where things are somehow familiar, but not quite right, recognizable but ultimately not knowable. It is no accident that the Corleones' last criminal coup targets the very nerve center of Catholicism. Killing the treacherous Altobello with poisoned cannoli, made by nuns who took a vow of silence, is almost whimsical in the midst of the final carnage. But Altobello's painless and relatively non-violent death reminds of both the consequence of breaking *omertà* and the world of sacrilege to which we draw ever closer. Settling the Corleones' accounts involves murdering Keinszig, "God's banker," and throwing a rosary on his body, a manifest desecration of a blessed object. They murder an archbishop. They murder Lucchesi, the one man, we are told, who can move between the secular world of international finance and the highest workings of the Catholic Church, the link between these parallel universes. The Corleones cannot of course really destroy Catholicism but they do the next closest thing. The Pope himself, having endorsed Michael Corleone, ends up dead. Jose Ortega y Gasset describes a dehumanized aesthetic wherein, "The question is not to paint something altogether different from... a house,.. but to paint... a house that preserves of a house exactly what is needed to reveal the metamorphosis.... [The artist] has to drive home the victory by presenting... the strangled victim."³³ It would be difficult to imagine an artwork that accomplishes this goal more dramatically or, for that matter, more literally. Ultimately the Catholic Church is reduced to a large scale business subverted to self-serving aims, and generally exposed as riddled with thorough and blatant corruption. The world itself is no more than a cardboard stage populated by ineffectual puppets on strings. By the end of the trilogy, the Corleones have subsumed everything, including the Catholic church into their own credo of crime and greed, truly a global inversion. Anti-sacramentality now resides everywhere and permeates everything.

One of the most interesting things Mascagni does in *Cavalleria Rusticana* is to reverse the roles of texted and non-texted music, at least briefly. The famous interjection of the siciliana within the prelude bespeaks Turiddu's passion, as if he cannot even wait until the overture ends to extol the glories of his beloved Lola, on whose doorstep he would gladly die. Anthony wants to prepare his father for his identity as Turiddu, telling him he will be making his operatic debut in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. In an inspired moment, Coppola has Michael (who speaks Italian and now lives in Italy), give the opera's name the characteristic American mispronunciation, which Anthony

has to correct (III, 1:29:00), as if this world is so foreign to Michael it renders him incapable of speaking a language he knows well. Anthony then sings a song for Michael, which he describes as “an old Sicilian song,” accompanying himself on the guitar. In fact, this song is the so-called love theme (“Speak Softly, Love”) composed for *The Godfather* by Nino Rota. In spite of the fact that this tune has run throughout the three films, in this context it takes a moment to recognize it. Without having any terribly distinctive points of similarity, this song strongly evokes Turiddu’s opening siciliana. The guitar recalls the harp accompaniment of the aria; while Rota does not use the 6/8 meter of the siciliana, the running eighth notes create a similarly relaxed flow of text and supple vocal line. Mascagni’s aria is in F minor, while Rota’s is in C minor. Very near the end of both songs, however, both composers present a vocally conspicuous D natural, as part of a half-diminished seventh chord with F, A-flat and C (Rota) or to create a kind of plagal cadence to F minor (Mascagni, mm. 42, 44 of the siciliana). During this song we observe one of the few moments of alleviation of Michael’s inner torment, as he reviews the best times of his life, his wedding to the beautiful Apollonia, his brief respite of happiness with her in Sicily. Near the end of the opera, Mascagni suspends the opera’s dramatic action with an orchestral interlude. Santuzza’s and Alfio’s vow of retribution dissolves into the *Intermezzo sinfonico*, as if the sublime wordless music could somehow diffuse the rage or bloodlust or imminent tragedy. Coppola similarly uses this music to accompany the now aged Michael’s memories of the three people he has loved most in his life, Apollonia, Kay and Mary. The displaced musical passages, which grow out of Mary’s murder and Michael’s scream, seem to allow Michael into oases of serenity. But the tranquil moments are fleeting and the oases are indeed mirage. As in the parent opera, this music can hold the violence at bay for a while, but cannot defeat it in the end. It is the ultimate irony that the last audible, comprehensible words we hear Michael utter, in admiration of his son’s operatic debut, are “When they hear the name Corleone, they’re going to think of a voice” (III, 2:31:25). This music grows out of a voiceless culture where all the men are silenced by death (I, 1:36:30), their names written on the city wall in mute testimony to their violent way of life. This is music borne of the dedication to vengeance that, however lovely, cannot risk words, the music of *omertà*.

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¹Peter Maas, *Underboss: Sammy the Bull Gravano’s Story of Life in the Mafia*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), 88.

²All references to the opera are taken from Pietro Mascagni, *Cavalleria Rusticana in Full Score*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1993). The *Intermezzo sinfonico* is found on pages 135-137.

³Anthony Newcomb, “Act and Agency in Mahler’s Ninth Symphony, Second Movement,” in *Music and Meaning*, Jenefer Robinson, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 152-53.

⁴Edward T. Cone, “Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—Or a Brahms Intermezzo,” in *Music: A View from Delft*, Robert P. Morgan, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 1989), 77-93. An interesting aspect of this article is the manner in which Cone retells Conan Doyle’s story of “The Speckled Band,” from which emerges the fact that, removing the *original* temporality from the mystery story (for Cone’s version, of course, also has temporality) also removes the mystery, which poses the question, what is actually understood by this process? A similar question might be posed regarding what of the musical work is understood, once its elements have been rearranged or removed from their temporal context?

⁵Fred Everett Maus, “Music as Drama,” in *Music and Meaning*, 105-06.

⁶Sergei Eisenstein, “A Statement,” 1928, in *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, Jan Leyda, trans. and ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc. 1949), 258.

⁷Eisenstein, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” 1929, in *Film Form*, 70-71.

⁸Maas, 165.

⁹Gay Talese, *Honor Thy Father*, (New York: World Publishing Company, 1971), 175.

¹⁰Kathryn Gravdal, “Poetics of Rape Law in Medieval France,” in *Rape and Representation*, Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 212.

¹¹Gravdal, 220.

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¹²see an interesting discussion of this tale in Patricia Klindienst Joplin, "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," in *Rape and Representation*, 35-66.

¹³For every quotation from the films, I have indicated by roman numeral whether it comes from *Godfather*, Part I, II or III, and the hour, minute, and second when the dialogue occurs, as near as I could manage.

¹⁴According to Salvatore Gravano, "In Cosa Nostra, it's an unwritten rule. You don't kill newpeople and you don't kill cops." Maas, 73.

¹⁵Even near the end of the trilogy, in the kindest, most forthcoming conversation we ever hear Michael have with Kay, he arguably is still lying to her. He tells Kay that "Every night here in Sicily, I dream about my wife and my children, and how I lost them" (III, 2:00:00). Inasmuch as this follows directly after a fairly lengthy scene showing Michael reminiscing about Apollonia and even telling his children, Anthony and Mary, about Apollonia, who was clearly the love of his life, it is more than plausible that when he says "I dream about my wife," he means Apollonia. He does not, after all, say to Kay, "I dream about *you* and *our* children," which would surely be the more natural formulation.

¹⁶Claire Kahane, *Passions of the Voice: Hysteria, Narrative, and the Figure of the Speaking Woman, 1850-1915* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 76; quotes from Henry James, *The Bostonians*, ed. Alfred Habegger (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976).

¹⁷Kahane, *Passions of the Voice*, 52 and 162, note 24, quoting Kaja Silverman, *The AcousticMirror* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

¹⁸Maas, 86-88.

¹⁹Admittedly, sometimes comprehension is required; for example, the eucharist is not supposed to be bestowed upon a communicant who cannot comprehend its significance. But there are many instances where Catholics are called upon to profess faith and belief in "mysteries" acknowledged to be unknowable, inaccessible to human intellect, such as immaculate conception, the concept of the Trinity, life after death, and others.

²⁰John J. Dietzen, *Catholic Q&A: Answers to the Most Common Questions about Catholicism*, (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997), 231. Presumably this is the case because marriage involves a promise and responsibility to another adult individual, in essence, a contractual obligation to which the party is still bound even if he or she does not accept the sacramental nature of the act.

²¹Rite of Penance, paragraph 18.

²²It is interesting that Coppola seems to go out of his way to suggest that Michael's children have exchanged gender roles. Mary is interested and involved in her father's activities, while Anthony not only wants out of the family business but needs to have his mother do the talking for him on this score. Most pointedly, when Anthony sings his ballad, as if breaking it to his father that he is an artist and musician, we see his sister Mary playing poker with a group of men in a comfortable and authoritative manner. (III, 1:29:00). Coppola hints at a similar gender reversal taking place between Michael, becoming ever more squeamish about his lifestyle and ultimately relinquishing his role in the family, as the formerly flakey Connie turns ever more ghoulish, bloodthirsty, excited by violence. In fact, in *Godfather III*, Connie expresses the desire that Michael inspire more fear, to which he replies, "Maybe they should fear you." (III, 0:37:00)

²³For the tip of the iceberg on this subject, see: William Prizer, "Music and Ceremonial in the Low Countries: Philip the Fair and the Order of the Golden Fleece," in *Early Music History*, vol. 5, 113-153; Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (New York, 1983); Carol Purtle, *The Marian Paintings of Jan van Eyck* (Princeton, 1982); Virginia Woods Callahan, "'Ut Phoebe radiis': The Riddle of the Text Resolved," in *Josquin des Prez*, E. Lowinsky, ed. (London, 1976), 560-63; Hugo Rahner, "The Christian Mystery of Sun and Moon" in *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* (London, 1963), 89-175.

²⁴T. S. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday."

²⁵Andrew Greeley, *The Catholic Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 1.

²⁶Andre Dubus, *Meditations from a Moving Chair*, quoted in Greeley, 2.

²⁷Dietzen, 172. One of the more trivial, but evidently popularly held beliefs of Catholicism involves precisely the notion that "the priest's hands, and his right thumb and forefinger, were especially blessed for handling the body of Christ and dispensing Communion." Father Dietzen corrects this misconception, saying the priest's "entire person is consecrated and dedicated to an exalted position as a member of the family of Christ," but concedes that many Catholics have learned this special veneration for the hands and fingers.

²⁸Viktor Shklovskii, "Isskustvo kak priem" [Art as device], *O teorii prozy* [On the theory of prose]. (Moscow: Federatzia, 1929), 104-05.

²⁹which incidentally also would violate Catholic canon law regarding marital relationships, Dietzen, 221.

³⁰Greeley, 90.

³¹Common wisdom has it that the first two *Godfather* films are works of genius (both won Academy awards for Best Picture), while the third is markedly inferior. At least part of the reason for this perception may be precisely this phenomenon; in *Godfather III*, the hero is replaced with an anti-hero; circumstances become ever more surreal, slapstick, disconnected; characters who are supposed to be strong lose control; three-dimensional characters become flat, caricatures of themselves. I believe this is deliberate on Coppola's part, but these features understandably seem to lack the craft so evident in the first two films.

³²Turiddu tells his mother that he is going to Francofonte to buy wine for the holiday, but is seen by Santuzza and Alfio in town, presumably using the Francofonte story to cover time he spends with Lola in Alfio's absence. But even this is conveyed almost exclusively by implication and innuendo; it is not absolutely definite that Turiddu lied about his whereabouts.

³³Jose Ortega y Gasset, "The Dehumanization of Art," *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings on Art and Culture*, (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1956), 21.

THE GODFATHER DÉNOUEMENT

<i>time</i>	<i>score page</i>	<i>music</i>	<i>film action</i>
2:13	1-5 13-14	overture	Altobello “ <i>E tu, Vincenzo</i> ”; Connie presents cannoli (nuns’ vow of silence)\; Pope endorses Corleone, in danger; bodyguard goes backstage with Tony, Vinnie, & Mary:”love someone else”
2:15			
2:16		[applause]	
2:18	6-8	Siciliana: “Your threshold is spattered with blood, I’d gladly die there .”	AssasSin enters; train carrying Neri to murder Archbishop
[delete	part of	overture, spring song Alfio’s song	and dialogue Lucia/Santuzza]
2:19	46 162	ostinato	Altobello sings along; Connie watches; AssasSin & Vinnie go backstage

The Godfather

[delete dialogue Lucia/Alfio; “*tacete*” by Santuzza; skip Easter procession; delete Santuzza’s telling Lucia of Turiddu’s betrayal; dialogue Santuzza/Turiddu, Easter curse; Lola’s stornello; dialogue Santuzza/Alfio swearing vengeance; skip *Intermezzo sinfonico*]

2:21	145-59	Turiddu greets Lola; end of drinking song [applause]	Carlo arrives at Lucchesi’s house; murder of guard backstage; assassin assembles gun; weapon search at Lucchesi’s house
2:23	162	Turiddu throws wine at Alfio; Lola’s line: “ahimè! he mai sarà?”	Twins muttering backstage; Neri opens box of cookies revealing gun
2:24	163	Turiddu bites ear. Alfio: “We understand each other”	Vinnie’s reaction; gun aimed at Michael, interrupted
2:25:30	165-67	Tur: “abbandonata povera Santa” Intermission: Godfather Ostinato	One twin killed; assassin stages his own drama; other twin killed “Tonight the Corleone family settles its accounts.” Keinszig counting money; another weapon search at Lucchesi’s house.
2:29	Gf/ 65	Easter procession plus “Godfather ostinato”	Cup of tea for Pope; Archbishop seated; Keinszig smothered with pillow “from Vincenzo Corleone”; Michael called away; Hagen’s son sits down; Michael unformed of plot against Pope
2:30	Gf/ 77-79	Procession continues; Crucifix elevated; Nuns; death heads	Nun finds Pope dead; Mary icon-like; Michael returns; Altobello dies; Connie watches
2:33	Gf/ 173	Tur. <i>addio</i> for mother “...your blessing like when a soldier ...” Ostinato; <i>Three-fold</i> “ <i>Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu!</i> ”	Interview with Lucchesi; Archbishop shot by Neri; Carlo stabs Lucchesi with his own glasses Archbishop falling down stairwell; Keinszig hanging from noose; Lucchesi with glasses in throat
2:34:30	176	Santuzza veils self	Ovation; discovery of Altobello dead; Tony and Vinnie embrace; Tony gives Mary his hat [she’s Turiddu now]; Vinnie sends Mary to her family; twins are dead, get family to cars
2:35			assassin looms; Mary tries to talk to Michael; Michael shot in shoulder, Mary in chest; Kay screams
2:38		Woman’s voice screams twice Intermezzo, m.m. 1-19	“ <i>Hanno ammazzato compare Maria!</i> ” Michael’s silent scream, everyone watches in horror; Connie veils herself
2:39		Intermezzo, m.m. 20-35, 43-48	Michael remembers; waltzes with Mary, Apollonia, Kay; dies alone with dogs
	135		
2:40	146-37		

[Page numbers from Pietro Mascagni, *Cavalleria Rusticana in Full Score*; New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1993]

Morton Feldman Says (Hyphen-Princeton Architectural, 303 pp., \$50.00)

Richard Kostelanetz:

Morton Feldman Says (Hyphen-Princeton Architectural, 303 pp., \$50.00) is the third collection of the American composer's words to appear in print. Valuable though it is, this book suffers from the same general omission as its predecessors. It fails to reproduce Feldman's monumental aggressive jokes. The strongest one in my head recalls his having dinner with the over-inflated German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen on 57th Street. When Stockhausen suggests that "Germans and Jews are very much alike," Feldman replies, "Yes, there's nothing I'd rather do more than put three million Germans in concentration camps."

This wisecrack, original to my ears, has not appeared in print before, to my knowledge. I think I heard it around 1980 from my fellow composer Charles Dodge, who was seeing Feldman frequently at the time. Indeed, every time I saw Dodge around then he had another Feldman joke to retell. Everybody hearing his classic wisecracks passed them on. More recently I heard of him responding to a heckler who screamed he was "full of shit." "What are you full of," Feldman responded, pausing. "Ideas?" (May I suspect that I'm not alone in wishing I'd thought of that.) Even in the highly articulate world of contemporary composition, Feldman was very much king of the landmined hill.

When the editor of an earlier Feldman writings book told me of his intention, I suggested that he, roughly the same age as Feldman and his colleague in the 1950s and 1960s, would do this late friend the greater favor if he collected these jokes in addition to reprinting writings and interviews. He didn't, short-changing their friendship and his own love for Feldman's wit. Nor did the current editor, who lives in England and apparently didn't know Feldman. In nearly 300 pages, double-columned with small print, the only quotable quip holds that "one of the tragedies of music education is that it doesn't produce composers" (which was incidentally almost totally true of his own tenure, no Roger Sessions was he). Perhaps Feldman's biographer will reprint some of them, but he or she had better hurry, because the informants are disappearing. (The worse fate would be a biographer like Anthony Tommasini whose putatively "definitive" *Virgil Thomson* (1997) misses his subject's monumental wit,

samples of which can incidentally be found in biographies and memoirs of Thomson's friends.)

Though Feldman and Cage are commonly lumped together in histories of contemporary music, I must repeat that they were fundamentally quite different. Whereas Cage aimed for invention in composition, impersonality in execution, and trust in performance, Feldman's music depends upon his claims to superior taste and precision in performance. Whereas the very best Cage is maximal, Feldman is minimal. Also, once Feldman became a professor in his forties, he began to compose impossibly long pieces, such as a string quartet lasting six uninterrupted hours, that no one other than students, preferably graduate students, would initially perform. I don't much like them, though I know people who do.

One problem with Feldman the funnyman was that though he made jokes, he didn't accept jokes made to him. When I solicited his permission to reprint John Cage's replies to their classic 1966 dialogues (in my *Conversing with Cage*, 1988; revised ed, 2001), he responded only if I used his words as well. Since my book included questions only insofar as they prompted Cage's replies, I suggested to Feldman that if I made an exception for him readers might think me his lover or drug dealer, which I thought at least amusing. I never got a reply, alas.

This past summer, the Seattle avant-garde poet Nico Vassilakis did two New York performances of *Mort*, as he called it (not "Morty"), with himself as the composer. Dark-haired, bespectacled, broadly built, and hulking, he certainly filled the silhouette far more memorably than he spoke lines drawn from Feldman texts, eschewing his model's classic Brooklyn accent. My sense was that, brilliant though his performance is, Vassilakis too could have made a stronger selection from Feldman's words.

[RICHARD KOSTELANETZ has edited many books of writings of and about John Cage and other contemporary composers.]

A Mannerist Maximalist

Some Notes on Brickle's *The Creation*, A Towneley Mystery Play

William Anderson

The Cygnus Ensemble presented Frank Brickle's The Creation, A Towneley Mystery Play on March 8, 2008 at Weill Recital Hall at 8:30. Details on the Cygnus website <http://www.cygnusensemble.com>

I am grateful to Ben Boretz and Open Space for this opportunity to discuss some pressing musical issues of the day, and how they relate to what Cygnus is doing in its quest to promote the work of living American composers.

When the minimalists turned to opera the results were either un-operatic, or a mannered minimalism. *Einstein on the Beach* is special for being so un-operatic. Opera is mannerist by nature, but minimalism is such a triumph of the power of transparent process, offering distance from merely personal expression, that to use minimalist techniques as a vehicle for characters to emote on stage offers a wonderfully rich incongruity. While it seems Glass avoids this tension in *Einstein*, I find David Lang's *Modern Painters* and John Adams' operatic works tapping into this richness.

The power of the best minimalist music does not come about through the composer's effective expression of his personal emotions and feelings, but through the power of transparent processes. I am amazed by the supply-sided nature of high minimalist music—I never knew I craved to hear pentatonic scales on the piano in 16th notes periodically going out of phase in a blaze of polyrhythmic brilliance that culminates in an instant of perfect 32nd notes--until Reich showed me just how much this is so.

After the rise of minimalism Milton Babbitt started to call himself a maximalist. A maximalist wants the power of a work to arise from transparent process, but the maximalist wants to get many transparent processes unfolding at the same time. Problems arise when the composer tries to do so much. Even some fans of maximalist music say that there is no way to hear the processes in maximalist music. And so there are fans of maximalist music who believe we should listen to it the way we listen to free improvisation. I don't see it this way. I have found that with time, and particularly by improvisation, and we don't have to *name* the processes to *hear* them. I won't spend much time arguing the point here, but I will say that Babbitt's music became much more transparent in the last ten years. *Swan Song No. 1* is a new world altogether. Even college undergrads have told me that it's clear in the first hearing.

The opening of *Swan Song No. 1* pulls us in with alluring diatonic hexachords. The diatonic bliss doesn't last long, but the way these hexachords proceed in the first 6 bars, until the cello entrance, has much in common with what Frank Brickley had been doing since the late '80's.¹ He does that kind of thing on a large scale. He adds further instrumental layers, providing Schubertian or Brahmsian instrumental richness.

I call Brickley a mannerist maximalist and he is going along with that, at least for the moment.

Postmodernism got its kicks by being rebellious. It chose similarly rebellious heroes—Lacan's adoption of Heine, for example. I consider the "postmodern" phase a brave and important step, even if some of the products of the postmodern rebellion were merely reactionary.

Brickley's move into a mannerist phase of the maximalist mode is a ripening of that mode. It is respectful, not resentful of its antecedents; and yet I think I see Brickley accepting a nudge from the postmodernists in two ways. He may very likely share some postmodern angles on stylistic issues; and I think postmodern thinking about historical narratives may have influenced Brickley, although he always deals with contending narratives pragmatically (in the William James sense).

The maximalists had their mannerisms. Big intervals; arpeggiations of big intervals; a correct density. When Brickley started sitting on diatonic collections for long periods of time it felt like a wonderfully taboo thing to do for someone within his particular pack. Phillip Glass talks about breaking modernist taboos. Brickley shows that modernist taboos can be broken without discarding modernist techniques.

Babbitt deserves a lot of credit for moving beyond many of the mannerisms of his middle period. The opening of *Swan Song* shows how timbrally delineated aggregates unfolding in counterpoint can yield arpeggiations over very friendly collections. Brickley takes this much further than Babbitt would ever want to.

The postmodernists lean on discontinuity and resisting authority. This in itself suggests its opposite. Brickley elected continuity. A composer can elect to think in terms of what might logically come next, mindful that the idea of what to do next is the composer's mini narrative, not a historical necessity; knowing that not everything can be seen as a linear progression, but that there are opportunities to seek results by following through on specific lines of musical development.

James Levine had a public conversation with Babbitt on his 90th birthday at Weill Recital Hall. Levine said that Schoenberg is in the musical mainstream, and Babbitt his successor. (I wish I could remember his exact words.) Babbitt seemed uncomfortable and said he did not think we can speak in those terms. Levine, Babbitt & Brickley's examples suggest that we can and do act on convictions about how music might proceed. We can act on our assessment of what the mainstream is. Certainly, alliances form around such decisions. Powerful alliances formed around Glass' breaking of taboos. The mainstream is still up for grabs, however. Practice over the long run will make a case for or against Levine's contention.

Brickle's rebellion is in his breaking the taboo of his modernist circle by offering prolonged periods of consonance; yet his structural unit remains the aggregate, and he organizes his aggregates with superarrays. He is exploring the vast uncharted territory of timbrally delineated arrays. Much as Babbitt used to talk about the wealth of compositional possibilities suggested in *Moses und Aron*; Brickle finds timbrally delineated arrays a vast and rich terrain.

Many composers are thinking in terms of a stylistic broadening within the realm of set theory. This is a great thing, and much fabulous work is coming from this group. Yet it is clear that most composers today keep their distance from the idea of aggregates and the idea that a collection implies its complement. This has to do with a fairly universal desire to get away from the single-aggregate density that we can associate with 12-tone music. Along with Babbitt and Brickle, I share that desire. This large contingent that runs screaming from anything to do with aggregates is still not hip to the way multiple, timbrally delineated aggregates unfolding in counterpoint can, locally, sound like absolutely *anything*, as Brickle is showing.

The mannerist aspect of Brickle's practice comes in part from loosening his grip on features that distinguish 12-tone music from other music. He loosens his grip on the distinction between a hexachordal region and a tonal region; a set class and a chord. It also comes from a desire to bridge the gap between Babbitt and Sondheim. Brickle acknowledges that American musical theater was his mainstay as he was growing up.

I also know that Brickle was influenced by Morton Feldman, Harry Budd, J.K. Randall, Scott Johnson, Paul Lansky, and Ben Boretz. I'm sure I'm forgetting some important names. I think Brickle occupies an interesting position in relation to the two Princetons. He was educated in the first and he kept up with the second in his own way.

On the other end of this issue (hexachordal region vs. tonal region) is Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony No. 1, where tunes derived from all the interval cycles converge on a diatonic hexachord arranged in 4ths. What has been striking me lately about op. 9 is that the interval-cycle-derived tunes all have modal implications. (If they also have hexachordal implications in some early form of the 12-tone sense of the hexachord, then I'm not savvy enough to distinguish that from the modal aspect.) Likewise in Brickle there are moments where we think of modes. The Lydian mode in the good angel section of *The Creation* is an example. I'd say it's safe to take this as a gag about Hollywood film scoring where anything impish is Lydian.² Hexachordal regions are not tainted by modal associations, except for Brickle's.

Furthermore—remembering the opening of *Swan Song*, where the tritone related diatonic hexachords of the first aggregate are immediately obscured in the second aggregate, shifting the primary hexachordal region from E to C by clever counterpoint of instrumental aggregates whose primary hexachordal regions are E (in the guitar) and G (mandolin). Take this further – blow it up, expand it through superarrays, and by the profusion of arrays in play at any one time – and you will see that we begin to deal with moves that can be locally indistinguishable from what other composers are doing—the

composers who continue to think in terms of set theory, but avoid anything to do with aggregates.

I asked Brickle if there's anything to this and he replied:

"It always comes back to the same issue: having the greatest possible flexibility at prolongation. In other words, having the power to make a structural point of a given weight last a single beat or a half hour. You can't do that without exercising a lot of censorship over how many pitches are in circulation at a given time.

"The other way of saying that is, certain pitch classes will get displaced over a given time span, and some won't. Where it gets tricky is that a particular pitch class doesn't need to be *sounding* to be present and *persistent* -- that's the "tonalitness" of the sound.

"Also, and this is particularly the superarray quality, the sound is not of a single pitch class or collection -- it's the sound of a particular pitch class or collection *moving to* another. It can happen once, it can happen over and over again, but it's the fundamental sound of a passage, i.e., not the chords, but the changes -- how they follow one another."

This led me to this question:

Anderson:

"Your comments about prolongation bring me to the fact that your prolongation techniques are naturally and natively 12-tone in nature, and also, more directly connected to array stuff than I imagined; and so resemblance to set-theory people who ran away from 12-tone ideas is very superficial-----yes or no?"

Brickle:

"Yes."

Anderson:

"And the distance to travel from set-theory to aggregate is closer than I thought; not such a huge leap, if one takes it upon herself to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of complements."

Brickle:

"Also yes. But it's a pretty huge topic. One way to look at it --consider the generators of all-combinatorial hexachords and therefore also aggregates. Take an arbitrary collection. How are any of the generators embedded in it?"

It is common enough that Brickle answers my queries in ways that make no sense to me until months or years later. For the moment I am happy to leave the matter with a vague sense that there is more to aggregates than pleasing Babbitt or Schoenberg or merely redeeming the 20th century. I have to sympathize with the skeptics since these questions seem not to have easy answers. On the other hand, it's clear to me that what I like about what Brickle's doing lately is that he has a convincing approach to large scale form that is distinguished from almost anything else being done now by practices that are derived directly from high modernist technique, while sounding nothing like high-

modernist dodecaphony.

I can finish with a little example of something that stands out to me, as a mere musician, not a theorist, of how Brickle makes a case for aggregates.

There is a gesture that Brickle makes in the first part of his *Creation, A Towneley Mystery Play* that honors the aggregate as a musical force. The first “master aggregate” of the piece relates its completion with the appearance of F to a secondary diatonic region—C. (The piece starts “in E”, as it were.) The hole left for this F is deliberately understated. There is no dance around that void.

In *The Creation*, as God creates the world Brickle recreates music through stylized references to older music. By the end of the 4th Day, Brickle *does* dance around a void that will, this time, have a more dramatic completion. The F will again complete an aggregate and fill this hole. He saves the completion as a musical power for the 4th day. He does much more. He relates the F locally to the [0,3,4] trichord, but that local reference also connects with his third harmonic region (hexachordal region, if you like)—Db.

I go through this with mp3 examples on the Cygnus website’s advanced creation tour: www.cygnusensemble.com

I have to make sure everyone understands that Brickle’s Pre-Raphaelite mode in *The Creation*—all those references to past music—is a creative mask that he’s assumed for the moment, as he works on the Towneley play. Other recent works are mannerist in the more general sense I describe above, deliberately taunting us with the momentary impression that 12-tone issues are not at play; withholding or otherwise obfuscating the powers that come specifically from 12-tone practice, but with no stylistic borrowings.

¹After the clear presentation of E and Bb diatonic hexachords in the opening phrase, the second big aggregate in the piece deftly carries us to another diatonic region. The guitar part gives us another Bb hexachord followed by another E hexachord, but the Eb and Bb come late, after the E hexachord enters in another register. The mandolin enters with a G hexachord. The way the two parts work together creates a master aggregate comprised of the C hexachord and the Gb Hexachord. The muddy waters at the beginning of measure 5 is a [0,1,2,7] tetrachord, the tetrachord that ends the piece. From measure 7 onward the piece is about trichords, which Babbitt shows to have great propulsive power. The individual strands all converge on trichords. The piece remains inviting because Babbitt’s sense of fair play is such that he does not discriminate against

the more familiar and friendly trichords and tetrachords. In fact, he allows some of the friendliest harmonies to fall into the most expansive rhythmic moments--the quarter note triplet figures, which are an island of stability in a sea of syncopation.

Brickle, on the other hand, has been developing the kind of treatment of the diatonic hexachords that we see in the opening 6 bars of the *Swan Song*. Brickle is even more concerned with obscuring tritone transpositions. He creates “faux complements” in his “master aggregates” by rendering notes in various instrumental aggregates merely decorative or bluesy. Various partitions of the master aggregate can eliminate the tritone transposition. Start with an E hexachord and suspend the G# and C# into the complementary hexachord, then make the Db hexachord focal by rendering the C natural and D natural as merely decorative.

²I’ve taken this to even more outlandish extremes. A Renaissance lute solo where the Ionian mode is colored by a 7-6 suspension, and therefore the [0,2,5] trichord; the Aeolian mode is associated with a 4-3 suspension and therefore with the [0,2,7] trichord. Can set-class thinking taint our ears to hear pre-19th C. music differently? The idea that specific non-chord tones can paint a mode is a notion that I’d like to explore further.

Other Minds 13: Beautiful Collisions and Subtle Resonances

Eric Myers

Lucky or unlucky, the thirteenth annual Other Minds Festival of New Music took place at the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco, March 6-8. Mired by the absence of two prominent figures, but no less spectacular, the show went on. Veteran Darmstadt school of music composer Dieter Schnebel was unable to attend due to illness. Also, disappointing for an enthused audience, much-acclaimed Frances Marie Uitti suffered a back injury and could not perform her famed and highly-developed double-bow technique. In spite of these unfortunate circumstances, festival turnout was high, the programs were varied and the performances lively.

Concert 1: Thursday, March 6th, 2008

Mit diesen Händen by German composer Dieter Schnebel is based on Heinrich Boll's texts and performed by cellist Michael Bach using his curved bows, specially designed to enable the cellist to play up to four strings simultaneously. The texts on which the piece is based, reflects, in Schnebel's words, "the experiences of war and its horror". The performance of the instrumental introduction to *Mit*, for solo cello, which opened the festival on Thursday night, starts out feeling a bit cold and then warms up about a third of the way through. The fascination the audience shares witnessing the execution of Bach's technique using the curved bowed contributes a kind of intensity to the atmosphere. The work is in several short movements, beginning with long, sustained block chords showcasing the ability of the curved bow to play four notes at once. The sound of four cello strings has a suspended quality and especially so with the harmonies peppered by seconds and fourths. The suspension suddenly gives way to sharp, jagged rhythms, where a kind of "cello-speak" is produced. In fact, as the Schnebel indicates in the program notes, "the text should be embedded in the music", and that it is "transformed quite literally by the cellist's gestures". Towards the end of the piece, Bach having switched back and forth between a larger bow with a greater degree of curve and a smaller bow with less curvature, we feel the performer much more inside the piece and it becomes clear that the piece is more of a dramatic narrative, with characters and plot development. We're left with a sense that if an instrument could speak, this is what it would say; and what it has to say isn't "pretty" but cutting and fearless. The "intensity" mentioned earlier, can also be seen on Bach's face throughout. Later in the program, when Bach returns to the stage to perform, of all things, the Suite No.6 in D Major by Johann Sebastian, we come to know the performer better and his style

seems to resonate more fully with the audience. He uses the curved bow to perform the Bach and the question I find myself asking after his generous performance, is: why doesn't every string player use a curved bow? The tone tends to be a bit softer, with less of an attack, and you get the feeling he has to work a little harder to produce a fortissimo than with the conventional apparatus. Furthermore, the sustained notes sound richer. He also performs Paganini's *Capriccio 1828* transcribed for cello with curved bow. We are once again treated to solid four-note harmonies on the cello.

La Vie Mécanique is a prerecorded piece by Swedish electronic and computer music artist fantastique Åke Parmerud. Based on the prevalence of man-made sounds in our Western society, the piece begins without indication. At first, I'm not sure if I am hearing unintended noises from backstage or sound from the four large speakers sitting in the four corners of the hall. When I realize that I am hearing the first part of the piece, it is already off and running. The metallic clanging, mechanical churning and pulsating--all carefully rhythmic--sound as if we are all on a conveyor belt, headed to our doom. Then spaces open up and we are confronted with scattered hissing sounds and rolling bass. I close my eyes and am immediately transported to a factory or some sort of giant industrial grid-like structure operating on automatic, like a relentless machine that has taken over our very existence, the triumph of the "system" over democracy. It seems the only "natural" or biological sound is that of a faint heartbeat at one point. This is quickly eaten up by the man-made sounds once again, and drums begin to beat as we prepare to go to war, the thumping and bumping becoming ever louder and more jarring. Then, as the piece draws to a close, there's once again a sense of hope, as textures are smoothed out and "normalcy" is restored. However, as a listener, I'm left with an impression: that my fragile Western psychology has been violated or, at least, tampered with--and that must be a good thing.

Purple Prelude and *Tast-En*, by Uzbekistan-born composer Elena Kats-Chernin follow. The two solo piano pieces performed by Lisa Moore round out the evening with a somewhat more conventional presentation, although the content of the music is anything but. *Purple* begins and ends with a dark repeated melody in octaves, described by the composer as "distinctly Russian". Grandiose and boisterous with a touch of mystery is how I would describe my overall impression, which may, for some, call to mind images of the former Republic. Big, crashing octaves, although transparent, and large leaping intervals keep the pianist busy. The melody becomes familiar as it is repeated in different keys and contexts, but the composer keeps things interesting by toying with the rhythm: syncopated left-hand accents and off-beat right-hand trills. In *Tast-En*, the performer has a real chance to shine with quick darting staccato note phrases covering the entire range of the keyboard. Moore rises to the occasion brilliantly with a fiery flare. Underneath all those fast notes, at certain points, there's a series of hymn-like chordal phrases. Kats-Chernin, having described them as chorale-like, presents this part using the technique of holding one set of keys while playing another. The resulting echo effect is quite striking. It's as if she's holding up a veil and lurking somewhere underneath is a romantic sonata. The piece ends grandly and triumphantly and the audience is exceedingly grateful for the work and such a vivacious performance.

The evening ended with Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith's new work, *Taif: Prayer in the Garden of The Hijaz*, featuring Del Sol String Quartet, Anthony Brown on percussion and Leo Smith himself on trumpet. The piece is an event and carries with it a sense of struggle between opposing forces. On one side of the stage stands the Quartet—with the exception of the cellist, who is seated but elevated on a platform. On the other, Leo Smith stands next to Brown, who is seated at the trap set. The position on stage of the performers has a direct effect on the music. As an observer, you can't help but feel a tension between the two sides, a musical tug-of-war. Big bursts of bright red trumpet (for which Leo Smith is famous) and ripple-waves of percussion (Elvin Jones style) fill the hall. The strings cut through with long, sustained, yet sharp and piercing notes, divided by periods of silence. This is the type of piece, where, as a composer, I would love to see the score. I suspect that improvisation is included as part of the recipe¹. Witnessing the grand event unfold you get the feeling that Leo Smith is rallying everyone else on stage to join him and they're all struggling to catch up—not so much in terms of tempo, but more in energy and intent. In spite of these seeming tensions—and they only contribute to the effectiveness of the piece—Del Sol members hold up nicely and do a fine job blending, as much as is possible with such an instrumentation. Interestingly, Leo Smith lets the strings have the final say as they close out one by one, with their sustained vibrato notes.

Concert 3: Saturday, March 8th, 2008²

Resonance Alloy, for percussion, by composer Keeril Makan, kicks off the final evening. *Resonance* involves a medium-sized Chinese gong, suspended cymbal and at least three cymbals sitting freely upside-down on medium-sized floor toms and snare drum. Percussionist David Shively succeeds in creating the right space for the work. Hard sticks striking the edge of the gong repeatedly begin the piece. The point of contact changes while the rhythm remains constant, so that the result is a subtle shifting in tone and timbre with some nice overtones. It gets more interesting when the percussionist starts in on the upside-down cymbals, which, of course, gets the drums resonating in kind and we get some really nice textures and soft shimmering waves. Eventually he switches from hard sticks to soft yarn mallets and we get a sudden, but welcome, color change. The piece was very interesting, although at times we felt we were witnessing a scientific study more than a musical work. Also, the length being left up to the performer, the piece goes on perhaps a bit too long. Nevertheless, afterwards, my molecules are humming and I feel as though I have emerged from a deep, enlightening meditation.

By contrast, Makan's other work of the evening, *Static Rising*, is more exciting. It features the Del Sol String Quartet and the same percussionist. In Makan's words, the piece explores "the raw physicality of the instruments themselves". This is evident, especially at the outset, where the scratching of the edge of the bow on violin and cello strings is matched with the long upward pull of a bass fiddle bow on the edge of a suspended cymbal. This very textural and surfacy sound dominates the first portion. As things heat up, there are back and forth gestural phrases between string players as well as between strings and percussion. A sort of follow-the-leader dynamic is prevalent throughout when a violin articulates a phrase, the other strings follow suit, and it's as if a rhythmic "catch phrase" has taken over the discourse. This is definitely one of the more engaging performances of the evening even though very

few conventional “notes” are produced by the strings.

Elena Kats-Chernin makes her second appearance at the festival with *Russian Rag*, for piano and string quartet featuring the composer herself and, once again, the Del Sol quartet. The piece is just what the name implies with syncopated rhythms and a cut-time feel. It is perhaps a little darker than Joplin, but that’s more in keeping with Kats-Chernin’s style. As a pianist she blends beautifully with the quartet and the piece is delightfully rhythmic with jazz harmonies. This is followed by another piece for piano and quartet, *Fast Blue Village*, one of the highlights of the evening. Yes, it’s fast and the strings have a lot of notes to play. With repeated but beautiful chord changes and intoxicating syncopated rhythms, it’s a hell of a lot of fun to listen to and watch and the performers look like they’re having a blast on stage. I would love to hear the version she wrote for four clarinets entitled *Urban Village 4*. The composer’s last piece in the festival is a short work for piano solo, *Eliza Aria*. She plays the piece with the effortlessness of gentle waves lapping the shore. Originally composed for the ballet *Wild Swans*, choreographed by Meryl Tankard, she gives a soulful performance. Short, lovely and charming, we’re taken by the hand, as in a fairy tale, on a little journey, and we think we’d like to stay there. Her matter-of-fact performing style and romantic compositions are a refreshing change from the sometimes overbearing “soundscape” side of new music concerts.

Dan Becker’s *Revolution* for pianist and prepared Disklavier, is a statement on rhythm and time. Pianist Kathleen Supové, dressed in a strikingly colorful outfit, gives a riveting performance working with, on top of and against the beat and the relentless churning of the Disklavier. As Becker describes in the program notes, it’s “woman vs. machine”. With portions of a Martin Luther King, Jr. speech that espouses on the idea of revolution intermittently audible, there’s an urgency and anxious quality throughout. Layer upon layer of piano notes are heaped up in polyrhythmic fashion. As an audience member, I feel I’m trying to keep up with what’s happening, rhythmically and conceptually, and I’m left behind more than once. While effective on its own, Supové’s performing style makes this an even more exciting piece. The prepared piano sounds add a new dimension, complete with a clock-like tick-tock emanating furiously now and again.

The final piece of the festival is *The Other Piano*, by old school electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick. As he indicates in his program notes, the title is “a tribute to the memory of Morty Feldman”, the composer having been present at the premiere of Feldman’s work, *piano*. Scored for solo piano with real-time sound processing, Supové takes the stage once again. The piece is in four sections: Within, Lullaby, Alone and Rocking. The first section starts out with ghostly lowest-register piano keys played one at a time very slowly. The attack of the piano note seems to be untouched by the processing while the tail of each note is manipulated but only subtly wherein the beauty of the piece lies. Subotnick himself sits in the front row of the audience with a mixer and a laptop computer, like a mystical architect, making small and large real-time adjustments. He manipulates the complex timbre of the piano to create a cloudy, wildly sustaining resonance. The overall effect is a soft unearthliness. The “Lullaby” section is, according to Subotnick, a slowed-down lullaby. The slowness creates a space where every note is presented on its own, as an individual event. The attack of every note is certain, and the decay of every note

Eric Myers

is a question mark. As the work unfolds, we know where it's been, but we haven't got a clue where it's going. This sense of mystery only keeps us wanting more. "Alone" and "Rocking" become busier, with the latter enjoying wonderfully colorful runs, and hand-over-hand chromatic phrases. Combined with the DSP, the effect is a technicolored, circulating wash of sound. I love the under-played but beautiful sonority of the piece, and, while on the long side, I feel I've been let in on a secret: it is possible to merge the digital and acoustic in a seamless yet imaginative and stimulating way.

NOTES

¹ As a student at Mills I got to play piano on a Leo Smith score and improvisation was key.

² I was unable to attend Friday night's program which featured works by Åke Permerud, Michael Bach Bachtischa, Dieter Schebel, Ishmael Wadada Leo Smith and Dan Becker.

Listening to the Raga Yaman played by Zia Mohiuddin Dagar *

Walter Branchi

Did it ever occur to you that music, as well as water, food, the atmosphere is being subjected to pollution by human-created noise, chemical elements, light, dirty electricity? I'm not referring simply to the quantity and quality of man-made sounds and noise and their deafening loudness and intensity but rather to a much more subtle and dangerous type of contamination caused by Western music with regards to other musical traditions, due to the diffusion everywhere of instruments created specifically for the West.

Since the 1980s there has been a boom in the production of musical instruments in the West, as well as in Japan and China. The world has been flooded with guitars, pianos, electronic keyboards, synthesizers, wind instruments, etc. and finding a guitar or a synthesizer even among the most remote tribes in Africa is not all that unusual.

At this time with the proliferation of Western musical instruments, the term world music was coined specifically as a marketing device. These two phenomena are interdependent and the latter, in a way, "culturally" justifies the commercial business of the former.

World music was meant to be the music that reflected the unity of cultures, but even under this new banner the dynamic West (or those cultures that imitate this type of aggressive succession of historical phases) continued its relentless crusade to conquer the entire world market of music. All musical expressions with which it came into contact have been subjected to the laws of commercialism, transforming their innermost essence, from music to the instruments and even the quality of the musical rite.

From a purely technical point of view, the musical instruments the West spreads throughout the world are the expression of our Western musical system. This means that they correspond to the system known as "equal temperament"**, a system that however has nothing to do with Indian, Arabian or Chinese music.

Throughout the centuries every culture developed its own system with the relative musical instruments that are the expression thereof and the music they make is unique to that system, to that geographic area and to a specific culture. In other words, Indian or Chinese music sounds different from our music because basically their musical systems (and consequently the instruments) are not like ours.

The only instruments that could work with any musical system are the human voice, string instruments (violin, cello, etc.) and all those instruments that can conform to a system that is not tempered.

In view then of the fact that every musical instrument is the direct expression of its underlying

system, the great diffusion of our instruments is imposing a system that does not belong to the cultures of the countries where they are being sold. This creates a profound technical-musical contradiction: the instruments do not correspond to the system and vice versa. World music is based on this same contradiction.

But what is even more serious is that the crossover or contamination brought about by our instruments is transforming century-old musical cultures and traditions, turning them into an endangered species. In greatest danger for now are those of the countries closest to Europe and North America, but North Africa and the Middle East are also being threatened.

The phenomenon of "contamination" from the West has branched out in all directions: North, South, East and West. Radio, television, internet and fashions all contribute to its spread to the point where in an increasingly "globalized" society there is also a "backlash" from the rest of the world to the West. The Orientals play their music on our instruments, we adapt the raga to the piano, in Africa young people have their ears glued to their portable radios, with music transmitted from the local stations on a Euro-American model. The score for the shakuhachi (Japanese bamboo flute), written vertically, is being transposed into Western (European) 5-line staff notation.

Personally I am not aware of the existence of an international organization (such as UNESCO) working to protect musical cultures threatened with extinction.

My second observation is of a moral nature. We are exporting and spreading, for purely commercial reasons, a musical system that has been in a critical phase for almost a hundred years. We are imposing on the world a musical model whose validity is on the wane, a system that has disintegrated as its inherent possibilities have approached depletion. This contamination therefore contraposes the music of our culture, currently in a critical phase, with that of other cultures that are not musically in a critical phase. But – paradoxically – we are aware that to overcome the impasse in which our music and system finds itself today, we must necessarily return to the same basic laws of harmonics that underlie the Indian, Arab or Chinese (to name only a few) musical systems, which, of all things, are precisely the ones we are contaminating and nullifying!!

It cannot be denied that for more than three centuries the equal temperament system has stood in good stead to the West, as demonstrated by the vast classic-romantic tradition.

In writing these few lines I have no ethnomusicological or even anthropological pretensions, nor am I passing judgment on world music– it would be senseless – but simply because I believe that others should be made aware of things rarely talked about and that the contamination being perpetrated by our musical industry, to the detriment of other cultures in the world, is jeopardizing their existence and bringing them to the verge of extinction.

...Japanese music is above all a music of reticence, of atmosphere. When recorded, or amplified by a loudspeaker, the greater part of its charm is lost. In conversation, too, we prefer the soft voice, the understatement. Most important of all are the pauses. Yet

Raga Yaman

the phonograph and radio render these moments of silence utterly lifeless. And so we distort the arts themselves to curry favor for them with the machines. These machines are the inventions of Westerners, and are, as we might expect, well suited to the western arts. But precisely on this account they put our own arts at a great disadvantage.

Junichiro Tanizaki***

* The Rudra Veena is one of the string instruments played in Indian music (Hindustani tradition) that is in risk of extinction. There may be groups of fans of this instrument in California or in Italy who play it and know the technique, but listening to it in its original context is by now extremely rare.

** The Equal Temperament is a musical system in which all the intervals are “adjusted”, tempered, to obtain a division of the octave in twelve equal parts.

*** Junichiro Tanizaki. In Praise of Shadow. 1977, Leete’s Island Books, Inc. Stony Creek, CT. 06405

CONCH SHELL SUITE

by Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy

Ethno-musique **concrete!** experiment (1965)

<http://apsara-media.com/>

A LECTURE, A NARRATIVE, & A COMPOSITION

CD with intro, backstory, discovery, description, research, realization, contexts, story-telling, performance technique, photo, compositional modus operandi, renowned North Indian musicians singing-playing, commentary.

Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy's Anglo-Indian-inflected cool-calm, intermittently droll, narrative takes the listener to a basement in Middlesex-London-England (1965), to Conch Shells masterplayer Antarjyami Muni in Bhuvaneswar-Orissa-India (1964), to at-home in Valley Glen-LA-California (1999). Nazir's savvy story-telling conjures up meetings, surprises, improvisations, encounters, processes, programmatic imaginings, skirmishes, supremacies, doings and goings on.

Antarjyami Muni's extended passage of conch expertise-mastery – twin conch shells, neither large nor small, a semitone or so apart, blown separately, played whirring-beating together via circular breathing, buzzing each other, never quite “on” yet forever “it”, mildly abrasive, freely flowing, metrically danced with, scream-scrape-vibrate, fall back into, hometonedrone almost always there, behind, upfront, alone, together – conveys a creating-hanging in there, a making-up-on-the-spot with-it-ness. Not your usual soothing comfort. *

Way back then, more than forty years ago, in that London suburb basement, an inspired researcher manipulated, multi-tracked, and re-conceived Antarjyami Muni's extra-ordinary twin-conch passage – movement one, reel-to-reeled echoey electrified all-conch; movement two, Nazir improvising on a uniquely tuned surmandal (box zither) over-dubbed with transformed conch. Nazir intuitively reshaped, played with, and reharmonized Antarjyami Muni's improvisation so as to roomfully resonate, its source now (almost) irrelevant to an experience of listening. Ultimately, the Conch Shell Suite and its history are totally separable yet each can inform the other with eloquence and élan.

Elaine R. Barkin

early 2000; late 2007.

* bringing back a memory of hearing conchs played in a dark cavelike Siva temple during an evening ritual in Khajuraho, India, 1998. Spooky stuff.

Dover Lane, 2008

Robert Morris

In the winter of 2008 I traveled to India to attend the Dover Lane Music Conference¹ in Kolkata (Calcutta). This annual event presents concerts starting at 8:30 p.m. and lasting until 6 a.m. the next morning. Being on US time helps. Each concert consists of four or five “recitals” by top draw Hindustani (north Indian) musicians. The venue used to be on Dover Lane, but has moved to a 3000-seat hall also used for various community events.

Kolkata has a similar feel to many other south Asian cities—busy, horns blasting, full of people of all stripes walking about, but nevertheless, safe. I stayed at the guesthouse of the American Institute for Indian Studies, which seemed not much of an official or august place until I got inside, after a wild taxi ride at 2 a.m. through some Islamic festivals.

The Institute was state of the art in the 1960s but has fallen on harder times, which seems the state of affairs for almost everything in India that is not current or globalized. The Institute houses guests working on aspects of Indian culture, etc. as well as hosts Indian language courses and student tours. My room was comfortable and spacious on the third floor. Guests get served meals when wanted, both in western and Indian styles. There were three scholars here—a historian working on studies of Bengali political history in relation to the boom of big business in India in the 1930s, a cultural studies person who has worked on Rabindrinath Tagore’s ideas on education in Victorian times, and me. Music was a mystery for both of the others but a westerner studying classical Hindustani music fascinated them.

In the following I’ll describe my musical experiences at the festival based on four long emails I sent to friends the day after each all-night concert. I’ve edited the emails so that the Indian music terms are defined and my number notations of notes and rhythms are expressed in various western musical notations.²

Night I

The first concert of the conference started (early) at 7 pm with 1 and 1/2 hours of speeches and awards to administrators, musicians and prize-winning students. To the latter, large cups and dioramas of gods and goddesses in the supernatural habitat all in silver (but probably plastic) were dispensed—all in Bengali, of course.

At last the first “recital” of four started up with Hariprasad Chaurasia (the top flute player in India today) playing raga Durga—C D F G A C A G F D³—named after the goddess, who often manifests in wrathful form, like Kali, the main goddess in this region. The famous 19th cent saint Ramakrishna—aka Paramahansa—was active in this region and his disciple Vivekananda was the person who came to the Chicago conference of world religions of

1897 to popularize Hinduism—mainly Vedanta—in the early 20th century. The tabla player was so accomplished that he could make his left-hand drum imitate the pitches of the flute lines more or less accurately. Then followed raga Jog: alap, jor and gat in Jhaptal (a ten beat tala). The gat was so well liked he had to stop for the applause, and decided to change ragas midstream. So he played raga Hamsadwani, the southern Ganesh raga, and used Dikshitar's composition "Vatapi" as the gat theme. Few in the audience realized this quotation of Carnatic music.⁴ This entire recital lasted about 2 hours, followed by a break to set up the next.

Next was Padma Talwalker, a singer known for her renditions of lighter classical music, but this evening she sang two khyals⁵ in very closely related ragas; these were Chayanat and Gaur Malhar, two that can easily stray into each other or into another, Kedar. This was, I'm sure, a kind of virtuosity appreciated by Indians, keeping two related worlds distinct—noting the similarity but not allowing one to enter the other. Both performances were very good (the highlight for me of the entire night). Then she sang a Maharathi bhajan (using the same kind of tone materials as the preceding rags, major with f-sharp and Bb). The ending was a thumri with a curious "scale" of C Eb E F-sharp G A B and some other tones—a sort of octatonic segment. Padma's voice was very low and rich and made me think of the piece I just completed for contralto and string quartet.

Another long break with me a bit tired. A young western looking, sarod player, Amaan Ali Khan, came on stage with an older but slightly hippy-looking tabla player resembling John Lennon. They started out with Malkauns (a midnight raga, here played about 1 am) c e-flat f a-flat b-flat, then played an alap, jor, and gat lasting over an hour. The player was obviously influenced by rock guitar playing like that of Van Halen, but his performance stayed completely within the bounds of the raga and tala, which was Rupak—7 beats in the north, but 6 as in the south—his melodic playing was extremely direct without the lovely meandering ornamentation of Padma, yet very solid and full of bhava (deep emotion). The gat was amazing rhythmically, involving all kinds of time splitting and tehaïs (three-fold cadence formulae), something I've never heard in Hindustani playing even by tala masters like Ravi Shankar—I think some of it left many audience members in the dust. The end of the performance was, as you might expect, extremely pyrotechnical yet somehow rose above mere display. At the end his main string broke and the result was polytonal, but so rash as to be acceptable, as if the music had broken its bounds. (As I watched him, I thought his haircut was just a little like Elvis Presley's.) In general, there were wrong notes and a few infelicities in Amaan's performance and he kept on testing the tuning of his main string on the fifth (not in the ragal) here and there. His second act was up to the first, but shorter on raga Ahri Bhairavi in Rupak and Teental (16-beat tala) also ending with a broken string—which was not so "effective" this time. The audience response was mixed, probably because his performance was too innovative. But if he continues on this course and refines his playing, Amaan may become Hindustan's first S. Balachander.

The last recital was by Jasraj and party, three singers (disciples, of course) plus the usual percussion and tampura/electronic drone mix. Jasraj is among the most famous of Indian singers and is sort of a character, mixing a big ego with a guru-like demeanor. He often starts his concerts with a mantra. I stayed only for two pieces, for his performance was very disappointing. He started with an early morning raga called Nata Bhairav; this amounted to short phrases sung over and over by the backup group—as in Qwali⁶ or a religious

practice in Hinduism called japa. Jasraj would improvise “ecstatic” phrases over this riff with little originality or perhaps only to remind us he has a four-octave range. The second raga was Bhairav; same deal. So I left (with many other people) and walked the mile to AIS at about 5 am in the nearly deserted streets of Kolkata.

Night II

The second night was decidedly better than the first with some absolutely astounding performances. However things got off to a disappointing start with a khyal performance by Samrat Dasgupta who has a nice bass voice, but the ability of an elephant to use it in fast passages—just a blur of noise, something like flutter tongue on the trombone. So I began to fret that this musical pilgrimage was going to be a drag, even though the night before there were points of brilliance within the “recitals.”

The second recital was a violin duet, actually a kind of Hindustani/Carnatic fusion group of violins, tabla and mridangam. (Jyoti and Dev Shankar, violins, S. Sekhar, mridangam, and Subhen Chatterjee, tabla.)⁷ When the tabla played, the mridangam player would show the Hindustani angas (time divisions) of the sixteen-beat tala Teental (as they practiced in the north) and the tabla player would perform the different Carnatic gestures of the eight-beat tala Adi (at half-speed) for the mridangist.

The rhythmic alignment of the two talas was:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 = Teental beat count
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 = Adi beat count

The raga they played was invented—I didn’t catch the name, but like many Hindustani players (these violinists were from Kolkata) they borrow Carnatic ragas and play them in the Hindustani style (like Hamsadwani in the first night). The new raga was ascending: Bb (D) C D F# G A C; descending: C Bb A G F# E D C this is very near to the Carnatic raga Saraswati; C D F# G A C—C Bb A G F# D C (no E). The result was very colorful with phrases such as C D F# E or Bb A F# D C Bb C, both violinists in overlapped call and response sometimes resulting in heterophony. The main piece after the alap/alapana had as its main phrase (or gat/pallavi theme) [using both Carnatic and Hindustani terms] the following:



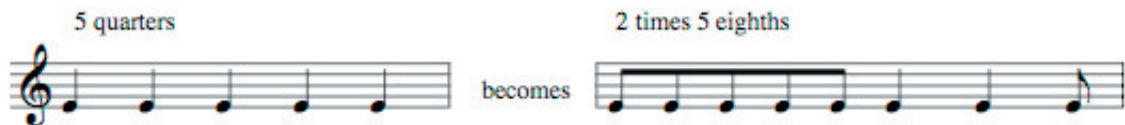
What’s the tala? It would seem to be (starting at the barline in the example) 3 4 4 5, but not one found in either tradition. But after hearing it a few times, I took it as a syncopation of either Adi or Teental since $3+4+4+5 = 16$. (This was supported by the tala counting of the drummers I mentioned above.)

Then I saw the traditional logic underling the theme. In Hindustani plucked string music there is a formula for a gat called a sitarkhani gat that has this rhythmic form in teental:



The theme spans from beat 12 to the sam (beat 1) over about one and a quarter tala cycles. (In the south, the part from beat 13 to 1 would comprise the eduppu phrase) So the basic form of the sitarkhani gat scheme is 5 + 11 + 5. That is, 1+4 from the last five beats of the previous cycle of Teental (beats 12-16), and the first 11 beats (4+4+3) of teental (beats 1-11), and the last 5 beats of Teental again.

Taking the 3 first in the 4+4+3 = 11 beat segment, gets you 5 | 3 4 4 5 |, which is the structure of the violinists' theme. There is one more, very Carnatic wrinkle, instead of the 5, put in a "hemiola" of twice 5 eighths for 5 quarters.



So the theme was a really elegant mix of Carnatic and Hindustani constructive principles. And the result something new rather than just borrowed with alteration.

The performance was exciting, but the fast violin riffs were a little square so the music sounded a wee bit like blue grass here and there. Still, an admirable example of fusion that works aesthetically. The two percussionists were very deft and were able to complement each other rather than having the tabla win (which it can because it's an instrument that can play faster and with more panache).

Next was Veena Saharabuddhe, female singer accompanied by voice, drones, tabla, and harmonium. She and the harmonium player were the only women on the platform. They often encouraged each other; so that when one of them improvised a nice passage the other would smile. She sang raga Nand (either denoting Shiva's mount Nandi, the bull, or a contraction of Ananda (bliss)—probably both). The performance was beautifully formed gradually leading higher but always extremely smoothly to quite intricate passages. Due to the structure of the raga, the whole thing seemed a constant ongoing development of a cycle of tones always ending with the note sequence D C E. Veena's singing was very clear, none of the tans (very quick vocal notes) ever disappeared into texture—a feature some gharanas⁸ sponsor—so that the character of the raga was never lost in a musical fuzz.

The next raga name I didn't get, but I asked the woman sitting behind me and she said it was Saraswati Kanra, a raga I never heard of. But what I heard was a little like Miya ki Malhar. The end of the phrases, leading to sam, was D/Bb\G (the slanted lines are glissandi). Again a wonderful performance of classical khyal, in the same league as Padma Talwalker's khyal of the first night, but more graceful, probably because Veena's voice was lighter and higher. The next performance was raga Sohoni, but with a little ornament that is usually found in raga Purvi. Sohoni is very chromatic; C Db E F# A B C and down the same way—the ornament was E/F/F#F#E. I asked the woman about this and she said the raga had not been announced, but she thought it was Sohoni; she hadn't really noticed

the deviation until I pointed it out to her.

I went out to get a veggie fritter at a stall outside the hall at about 2 am and returned just in time to see Budhaditya Mukherjee, sitarist, start playing raga Ragashree. I'm not that keen on this raga, although I've heard some nice performances of it. Nevertheless, what this player made out of it was just sensational and very deep. Like some sitar and sarod players, he doesn't play with a drone accompaniment, but uses the drone strings on the instrument for that function. The result is a very intimate sound so you can hear the notes trail off into silence, rather than into the drone notes. (To me, the former is Buddhist—dissolving into shunyata [emptiness], while the latter is Hindu, merging with the “one” Brahman.)

So he starts off the alap⁹ with some muttering passages that suggest uncertainty and doubt. This is of course not an traditional alap-like gesture, which is usually long, meditative and serene. Then he began to introduce clear notes of the raga, each attacked separately with minute microtonal inflections in a great many ways, the muttering going on here and there. Eventually the music moved on to greater stability, but with passages of deep pathos in which I heard something like anguish and doubt. (The experience was a little like the mood of my Nine Piano pieces, such as Had and Rising Early.) In any case, there was a narrative going on unlike the standard smooth increase in activity, range, and ornamentation in an ordinary alap. I thought that he plays “nir-guna” whereas most Indian music is “sa-guna.” This is the distinction popularized by Kabir—between the world and god as without (nir) form and with (sa) form. (Guna means, among other things, a property or form.) Saguna and nirguna are complementary and each leads to the other. (I often refer to musical form as formula versus forming.)

In any case, this performance was forming itself as it went on—the audience full of words and sounds of appreciation to which I also inadvertently added here and there. The jor was rhythmic as expected, but with starts and stops and ending with some very deliberate scraping gestures (like those in Flamingo) bringing for me the tension of the doubt and anguish to a head. When he got to the end of this, without accompaniment, I realized he'd been playing for 45 minutes and without any repeats of previous material—that is, to use a Western term, continual developmental variation. Along the way were all the fancy tone color things sitar players can do (harmonics in glissando, various hits and punches on attacks, etc.), but all of them were completely musically integrated—no effects.

The tabla player was a big burly, robust guy differing quite a bit from Budhaditya, who was modestly dressed, slight, and looked a little like an Indian version of Samuel Beckett—who never performed any flashy physical actions. So it was surprising that this tabla player turned out to be the exactly right musical match for Budhaditya; he could make the most amazing sounds on his drums with great degrees of differentiation—all manner of pops, clicks, pings, and even gong-like tones. He could produce harmonics on the open sounds at the fifth and second octave. The entrance of the tabla resolved the inner turmoil of the alap and jor, putting the music to work in the certainty of rhythm and forward motion. They often played for long periods of time as if they were two horses having a great time just galloping together. And it was only then that Budhaditya showed a lovely gentle smile.

When it was over, there was lot of applause and Budhaditya took up the mike said. “Thanks for your patience [I think he realized he had played a lot longer than he expected.] I will

repay your favor with a gat in Mishra Kafi.” This raga is actually a freer use of Kafi (Dorian scale with occasional #7) and is associated with the rasa (affect) called srīngara connoting romance and love. His performance was a long and loving musical poem on intimacy, longing, and sad resignation at parting, ending each section with the haunting phrase D Eb F G—as if with a question, “Can this feeling continue?” Very touching. (Those who know me must think I’ve fallen into Romantic hell, but I cannot tell you how wonderful it was to hear these sentiments made into sound—I got a taste of it when I saw young couples at a nearby lake the previous day.) The tabla joined in completely appropriately, no flashy stuff—and two of them played as if they had been friends for years.

After this simply amazing performance, the audience rose spontaneously, not like the obligatory Carnatic gesture at the end of a concert. Budhaditya stood there a little overwhelmed, I think, and said in a clear voice, “Thank you so much.” He continued to walk about getting his things off the stage in a dazed manner, with a very surprised smile on his face.

Nevertheless, I listened analytically, too, and saw how he conceived of Ragashree. The raga does not emphasize the fifth at all and the drone is tuned to the tonic and the fourth—in this performance the drone strings were tuned to C F and A, thus accompanying the music with a 6/4 sonority. The raga’s basic shape is simple: a descent from scale degrees 4 to 6 (F E D C Bb A). So the top and bottom notes F and A enclose the tonal movement. But Budhaditya often played the raga with the F and A in the middle outwards: F going down to E and C, and A going up to Bb and D. This is an exact inversion (T_2I) and the two segments are members of set-class 3-4 (540 and 9A2 respectively). Thus there are three major thirds: F-A, C-E, and Bb-D. In turn this makes a chain of C D FA Bb D (INT=41414) , utilized to great effect in the performance. Incidentally, the chain could be generated by one of David Lewin’s Reimannian Systems. (NB: the original descent F E D C Bb A is not such a chain (INT=BAAAB) so the performer had transformed the raga’s overt structure to a more hidden one with greater unifying possibilities!)

Incidentally, a white cat emerged on stage during Budhaditya’s performance. It just walked across the stage and later appeared on one side, off and on, for the next 30 minutes. Budhaditya did finally see the cat, and seemed to enjoy it.

Somewhat worn out by the intensity of the sitar music and the hour, I thought I might go, if the next and last recital was not interesting as Jasraj’s was the past night. The set up was similar, a well-known older singer, Ulhas Kashalkar and five of his students forming a sort of chorus behind him, two of the students with mikes, plus the tabla and drones. He used two huge tampus, which took a long time to tune. The notes in these drones were C F G and Bb (scale degrees 1, 4, 5, 7 of the raga Kaushi Kanada), in asynchronous patterns producing a lovely web of sound for the performance. Kaushi Kanada is among my favorites, so I hoped things would be well. To my delight, the performance was wonderful, starting out with a very slow and majestic feeling that continually built in intensity and gravity. Kashalkar was very sensitive to intonation, and there were niceties that topped anything earlier in the evening. The students got to do a phrase or two, sometimes a whole tala cycle, but as soon as Kashalkar heard something that would not lead the “right” way, he’d interrupt and sing things right. This was very instructive to me, showing where and when passages have to branch in just the right way amid their possible futures to make the performance work (for this performer). I assume the students were learning

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such things as well while in the hot seat where it counts. The last fast section was really quite exuberant, with six men belting out the fast tune together with the soloist doing all manner of vocal explosions and roulades.

The second and last piece was in raga Lalit, (C Db E F F# A B C) a raga associated with Kali, and thus a fitting end to this Bengali program. Also inspiring to remember on the walk home, with magpie-like birds very loudly cackling just before dawn.

Incidentally, in the newspaper two days later, there was a letter from the violin duet complaining that the paper had labeled their concert as fusion, when they were playing in traditional Indian style and performing compositions of their guru. Thus I found out the name of the raga I talked about before: Saraswati Kalyan, the name of which shows I was right about its origins. But their letter didn't point out that their music was highly connected to Carnatic music including the use of the mridangam and the Carnatic beat counting.

Night III

There were five recitals on the third Dover Lane night.

Sandipan Samajpati was first. This was a khyal performance by a singer with a deep bass voice who sang raga Purya Dhayanshri and others. The music was competent, but uninspiring and routine.

Partho Sarathy, a well-known sarod player, was not at the top of his form. He chose to play raga Kausi Kanada, which had been beautifully rendered the night before by Kashalkar and party. Moreover, I have an old recording of it also on sarod by Sharan Rani (of the same gharana), and that is a great and concise performance that would be difficult to match. (I've used it with transcription in my Indian music classes to demonstrate the performance practice of gat.) Sarathy's performance was much too long, consisting of an alap and jor, and the gat, and while (of course) flashy, kept repeating the same licks, so I was not very interested by the end.

The greatly renowned Gundecha Brothers, exponents of Drupad, performed raga Darbari Kanada, a basic raga similar in scope, scale, and tone to Kausi Kanada. One of the brothers has a huge bass voice that goes down to the depths of basso profundo and Tibetan chant. The tala was Dhamar tala, 5 2 3 4 = 14. With the khali anga on the third anga. The singers actually used timing gestures in performance, so it was a bit like Carnatic performance practice (and there are other connections between Drupad and the southern performance practice called Ragam-Tanam-Pallavi). Despite the fact that one of them had a cold, they gave a great, majestic performance, which got stand-up response. They went on to do mixed ragas, used in singing Sanskrit metered texts in 5 beat talas.

Kushal Das, is a sitar player unfamiliar to me, but a great one. I was greatly impressed by his command of timing and pacing. He performed in the Beenkar style, adapting to the sitar the old North Indian vina (or bin) playing with long, slow, languorous glissandi, associated with Drupad. Since this playing style is employed in Ravi Shankar's gharana I assumed Das was from that parampara (tradition), and other details of his playing support this.

The performance was deep, exhibited excellent continuity, impressive imagination, but

Robert Morris

always traditional, quite different from Budhaditya. The ensemble had lots of drones and there was a second sitar that only supported Das. The raga was a mix of Chandra Kauns mixed with Malkauns. These two scales are: Chandra Kauns = C Eb F Ab B C; Malkauns = C Eb F Ab Bb C. The combination = C Eb F Ab B C Bb Ab F Eb (D) C.

(Malkauns was played on the first night by Amaan Ali Khan on sarod and had rock guitar overtones. The same raga would be played on night IV on sitar.) The performance was without tabla: alap, jor, jhala. Then for the gat, the raga was changed to Lalit, which was also performed before. (I wondered if Das had done this intentionally.) It's another raga associated with Kali.

Parween Sultana was the last performer. She is probably the most famous of Hindustani female singers today, also a star of film and pop music. She would be akin to Pavarotti in the west. Her stage demeanor was not at all pompous or deva-like and made the point of introducing all the performers on stage (which the general announcements in English and Bengali had not). She chose to sing a rather stark raga, Gujari Todi (C Db Eb F# Ab B C) that allows only the tonic to be sustained by the drone (since it has no perfect 4th or 5th). B is an important tone and when sustained over the C, a strong major seventh is prolonged. The various Todi ragas are associated with death and the fear of death. Once she got started and the audience didn't display much enthusiasm (and she might have expected a lot from her pop/film music performances), she put down the tampura (drone lute) she was strumming and started to display big gestures to encourage us to get involved. Actually, North Indian singers frequently use performance gestures, but Sultana's were very large, maybe too large. Part of the problem may have been the hour, 5 am. I left after her second piece, a light-classical rendition.

I found myself again not being that impressed with the really big names. And I think the rasikas (connoisseurs) in the hall—mainly in the front rows—felt similarly.

Night IV

There was a huge turnout on the last night of the conference, filling all of the scant seats that hadn't been occupied on the other nights. This is probably because it was Friday night, although Indian people seem to work on all days. It had been raining hard all day, and the hall was crammed like the economy class section of a plane. There was lots of audience noise and talking, late people trying to get to their assigned seats with little room to do so. So the beginning of each "recital" was often marred by people shuffling in, often disputing that their seat had been taken—which sometimes was so, since people who had seats further back had moved up. In one case, a middle aged lady, made herself very obnoxious as she found her place and then persisted to talk on and on to no one in particular. I finally leaned over and shushed her, which worked. I hope I did not embarrass her too much, though.

This night as on the previous one, there were radio/TV style, pop, upbeat announcements. Such bathos as: "You have just heard the scintillating melodies of maestro so and so" or "one of great stars of Hindustani music, Shri Pandit X began study at the tender age of [n <= 6], and came to the attention of the great stalwart..."

The first performer was brilliant. Kaushiki Desiken Chakraborty is only 28, but a smart, fast witted singer with imagination galore. She could do all manner of singing very well:

singing and improvising with text, without words (akar), with svara syllables and with tans. With svaras she was able to sing in sixteenth notes at MM $q = 144$ with ease, making up new, exciting patterns all the while. Her tans were very clear. I saw a review of her performance in a recent concert in the paper, and she is regarded as one of top young people in classical music. (Again I was reminded how much more detailed and responsive Indian journalist music criticism is compared with the pap and pabulum we get in the States.)

Kaushiki sang Shayam Kalyan, a major/Lydian raga with hard edge, with two sets of fifths a semitone apart as the tonal focus (B-F# and C-G). It was very inspiring. Then she sang a set of songs (I think) in the raga Pilu, which has many varieties and local accidentals: here's one ascending-descending scale: B C D F G A Bb C C Bb A G Ab G F E F Eb D C B C. Pilu resembles raga Kapi in the south. The harmonium player added harmony tones to some of it I, IV, iv, V, v here and there, a practice from popular film and devotional music. This was obviously a light number, but beautifully done.

Shahid Parvez is one of the best sitarists in India. He has a great ear, and intonation is immaculate like in Drupad. He was accompanied by his son, who seemed to be about 18 years old. Parvez is sort of ruddy, about 50 and reminds me of an Italian gangster with a fetching haircut. His son looked like one of those artists' renditions of Siva as a handsome youth, but holding a sitar versus a trident. I found it interesting that Parvez let his son play a good bit, and develop the direction of raga progression. He doesn't apparently implicitly correct the advanced student as in the Kashalkar performance of the second night. He rather follows up the son's ideas, or played them with even more force and sonority; he often looked like a pretty proud father; and after the recital they left the stage joking with each other. I wonder what it would be like to have a son or daughter who followed so closely in my footsteps.

Parvez and son played Malkauns (no external drones aside from the sitars). This was the raga that Amaan Ali Khan played in that rockish manner. (I wondered if this raga was chosen deliberately since Amman of night 1 is the son of the last player on this concert, Amjad Ali Khan.) Malkauns was played very well—it is serious raga and the son admirably projected this mood. After the jhala they changed the raga to Chandra Kauns. (Again bear in mind that Kushal Das had played a raga that combined both Malkauns and Chandra Kauns the night before.) They ended with a delightful mishra Kafi (or Pilu) like Budhaditya had played. I am struck that all the ragas chosen had been performed at Dover by other string players, in perhaps rival gharanas.

Rashid Khan, a singer, was next. He has a big name, and it turned out he deserves it. But I had encountered some jealous comments about how Rashid was not the brightest bulb by two older gents I met in the AIIIS office who exchanged/imposed their musical views. Perhaps this is because Rashid received this year's Dover Lane's award (called "Felicitation"). Rashid was accompanied by two other singers, with harmonium, sarangi and swara mandala (or santoor), which he strummed on his lap. It was great to hear a sarangi, which is the rightful instrument to accompany khyal—the harmonium doesn't have the continuous pitch modulation that is necessary for Indian music. (In fact, many Indians wonder why the harmonium is used in classical music at all. There are social and cultural reasons—one of which is that the harmonium is Western (and therefore has prestige) whereas the sarangi is a lower cast instrument and the best players often move up to

become singers.) In any case, the sarangi added a wonderful touch to this performance—I wish other singers had used it also.

Rashid did not rush his performance, and often let the sarangi or harmonium have a cycle or two. This helped him not to tax his voice as well as continually renew his return into the musical texture. The raga was Bageshri, similar to Ragashri (played by Budhadetya), with a flat third degree instead of a major third. This makes all the difference in the world as that changed note has a lovely and sad falling ornament on it. The performance was very warm with the two large tampuras droning away. It was another high spot on the concert. During this performance, I got so into the music, I felt as if I were hallucinating; perhaps I was just very tired.

The second raga was unknown to me and still is. I asked at least 20 people what the raga was and no one knew or cared much, as Rashid was the real reason they had come. Any way, the notes are C Eb F A B C. I noted that F A B C is one of the all-interval tetrachords and B C Eb F is the other.

Amjad Ali Khan was the last performer. He played Shobani (a raga I never have heard of, perhaps he had composed it—there is a Carnatic look-alike, however). Then we heard the very pleasant Dorian raga Shahana. (I fell asleep or lost consciousness in the middle of Shobani and woke up to Shahana—a little weird.) Miya ki Todi was next. It is halfway so to speak between (Shudh) Todi and Gujari Todi that Sultana sang the previous night. Shudh Todi = C Db Eb F# G Ab B C up and down; Miya ki Todi = C Db Eb F# Ab B C B Ab G F# Eb Db C; Gujari Todi C Db Eb F# Ab B C up and down. All the Todi ragas are death ragas and Amjad announced he was playing the raga to remember musicians who had died this year. He had trouble continually having to retune and even broke a string—like his son had done on the first Dover Lane concert. He ended with the obligatory Bhairavi raga that is used to end concerts and in this case, the series of concerts.

Having attended all the concerts, I must admit it was sometimes arduous, and rain on the last night made things, if not grim, then muddy. Those music-interested Indians at AIS said that they couldn't last even one night and implied that I wouldn't do much better, especially at my age. And I did leave—but for musical reasons—during the last performances on three nights. I survived sometimes by falling into a strange sort of half-sleep/half-listening mode. I found getting up and taking a walk around the food and CD stalls helped keep me going. But every time the music got good, my attention and enjoyment seemed to come back renewed.

NOTES

¹ <http://www.thedoverlanemusicconference.org/>

² Just in case the reader does not know what a raga and tala are: a raga is a melodic mode employing from five to as many as twelve different notes, and a tala is a time cycle of from 3 to 108 beats.

³ I shall use western note names to describe the pitch structure of the various ragas I heard at the conference. In all cases, C is the tonic note of the raga, and is usually sounded continuously as a drone (often with the upper fifth (or fourth) and octave). Two instruments are used for this function, the tanpura (a long-necked lute), and the (western) harmonium. Recently, electronic instruments have been introduced to sustain the drone tones.

⁴ Carnatic or Karnatak music is practiced in south India. Muthusvami Dikshitar is among the most renowned Carnatic composers.

⁵ Khyal is a popular classical vocal music genre accompanied by tabla consisting of two sections both in the same raga, the first slow or in medium speed, the last quick in different talas. The singer sings somewhat independently of the rhythmic accompaniment in a rondo-like format where a theme from another vocal composition is alternated with improvisation.

⁶ Qwali is Sufi religious music

⁷ For over a century the Western violin has been adapted for use in both north and south Indian music, but the tabla is a northern drum while the mridangam is used in the south—except in the case of an older form of northern classical music called drupad where the mridangam is used but often called pavaahaj.

⁸ A gharana is a lineage of musicians that adheres to a particular performance practice.

⁹ Instrumental performances of Hindustani music usually start out without tala and drum accompaniment. There are three stages: alap, slow meditative passages exploring the raga eventually exploring all ranges of the instrument; jor, a similar exploration but with a definite pulse, producing a type non-cyclic additive rhythm; jhala, a brilliant rhythmic climax leading from the jor to a set of melodic cadences that end the unaccompanied performance. Usually the gat is next, a performance based on a phrase or motive from a traditional composition in a tala with drum accompaniment.

Two Theatre Evenings in Bratislava, Slovakia

Barbara Rose Lange

Spring 2007

Bratislava's Stare Mesto, its old city section, is a tiny maze of cobblestone streets that curve to connect a number of squares and then run up against a hillside. On top are the old city castle and a massive white parliament building from the Communist era. Seventeenth-century churches, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century row-mansions, and city cultural institutions are all linked together in the Stare Mesto with most storefronts serving as restaurants or souvenir shops. Back on some of the narrow streets and into intimate courtyards are other stores, restaurants, theatre spaces, and restaurants. Theatre GUnaGU is a converted wine cellar; I enter through a tiny doorway and go down some steps below street level. The domed ceiling and the walls are now painted black, and there are risers and chairs for about forty people almost knocking against the ceiling. At the other end of this room is a small stage floor with an even smaller dais at the back. *Osamelá*, The Lonely Woman, is tonight's performance.

On the back dais, dressed in gold robes, are a male guitarist and a female singer/bass player with long straight hair. This duo, Longital, is named for a hill on the western edge of Bratislava with a sloping descent into the city. Dano Salontay, the guitarist, strums or bows chords with some fuzziness and then lets them echo electronically. On a Mac placed between the two musicians at waist level, Dano has mixed metallic-sounding clashes with wooden xylophone, djembe, and darabuka sounds into groupings of five or eight beats, occasionally quoting belly dance rhythms. Some of the songs are at a slow tempo and others are slightly faster than what you would hear on the dance floor early in the evening. Shina, the singer, uses mostly the mid- to low range of her voice and a fairly soft, but straight, vocal tone. Shina's texts are irregular mixtures of short and long—a true parlando. Shina sings most phrases on the interval of a second, and then leaps at the end. She pronounces the soft consonants, elided vowels and occasional diphthongs of Slovak very clearly, syllabically, with just a bit of breathiness for effect sometimes.

There are about seven characters in *Osamelá* -- several humans and a number of machines. The young woman of the title is shy and drinks too much. She tries unsuccessfully to find a mate and friends on line, and her laptop and kitchen machines talk to her. Then the tattooed figure on her arm, a golden seahorse comes to life in a gold body suit with a padded spine, and they start a romance. A few of Longital's musical numbers set the mood, and other songs repeat the actors' texts. Even the silver color of Longital's Mac fits into the plot. The author of the play, Viliam Klimáček, is playing the refrigerator. He gives a monologue lecture about the hippocampus. Just one problem with the human-sized seahorse— he can make wry expressions, he can stroke the lonely woman, but he can't talk. Every time the woman drinks, the seahorse shrinks back like he's been stabbed or burned, and finally he leaves her.

A week later, I am at the A4 theatre. This is a large building, and the offices and archives of NOC, the Slovak government organization to stimulate village development, are on the upper floors. But the ground floor was once a Communist culture house and in the 1960s the bar area of this floor was a jazz-rock club. A huge coat-check area stands vacant next to the lobby floor of cracked, grayish tile squares that reaches to the back of the building, where there is a small bar, a couch, and six or seven sets of tables and chairs. Wide pillars and huge art-deco sconces, lit dimly, support the low ceiling. A small black-box theatre space opens off this lobby, with risers seating about 50 and a medium-sized stage floor. I am here to see *Vivaldisco*. The music director is Marek Piacek, a young composer who, besides writing concert pieces, has worked with theatre groups since his teens. The dancers are part of an experimental dance theatre circle around the A4- Zero Space organization.

Tonight at the left edge of the stage-floor is a table with several little plants in pots, none more than eight inches tall and most more like four inches. I see a cactus. The plants have contact mics attached to them; the tiny two-inch cactus has at least two, clipped to the spines and nearly slipping off them. Also on the table are dried seed-pods and sticks, a box with more dried fall leaves and pods, some maracas, and a drumstick. A contact mic is attached to the table itself. At the back center of the stage floor is a drum set, at the very back of the stage is an upright piano, and at the right front edge a computer terminal, keyboard, and flute. The dancers bring out glass bowls, broomsticks, and a ukulele and put them on the edge of the drummer's dais. The lighting technician has to move a ladder between the spotlights to insert color gels and adjust the angle of each spot. Ten minutes before the performance, the dancers and musicians disappear backstage, calling for one of the dancers to join their meeting. The odor of freshly pressed garlic drifts up from under the seats.

Then Piacek, the young male drummer, and the young man sitting next to the plants play an arrangement of Cage's *Branches*. Scraping one of the sticks against the cactus spines produces a tremolo-style sound that starts somewhat fuzzily, low in pitch, but then adds high frequencies and ends sharply. Besides using something like the toothpick specified in the score, the plant player scrapes the branches of the plants with seed pods. He has to do this very gently and with short strokes in order not to break the pod. So he ends up providing some rhythmic variety, of long and short scrapes. He does not have the Mexican seed-pod specified in the *Branches* score. I realize that a cactus is an exotic plant here. The drummer is playing fairly ordinary beats, bass and snare, not much cymbal, and he brushes a seed pod against his snare. Piacek is processing dry clanking sounds.

Then disco hits segue over the speakers, with full vocals, not just the rhythm tracks. The drummer adds some live beats and the solid-object player adds sounds, which Piacek processes and loops as the disco hits are playing. The dancers, a group of five, enter one by one. Everyone has opaque sunglasses. The men are dressed in white shirts and pants (just one disco reference – the shirts are open to the waist), the women in leotards, skirts and tights of mixed colors. In a line the dancers do disco moves, but they don't coordinate arms and legs in the long disco angles. Instead they make jerky motions with straight arms and legs; one of the dancers picks up the ukulele and strums wildly along to one of the disco hits. Then the composer and conductor Marián Lejava comes on

stage, sits at the piano and begins to play the tutti part of "Winter" from the *Four Seasons*. Piacek plays the solo part on flute. Piacek switches octaves during some of the trills and adds some jazzy glissandi. During his twenties, Piacek composed a lot of minimalist miniatures, and it's amazing how this arrangement of "Winter" corresponds.

Then the dancers bring out strawberries. They pass one plate to the audience, and everyone tastes: ripe, soft, and flavorful. The dancers put the rest into the glass bowls. They place the bowls on the ground, step into the bowls, and begin to balance, rocking side to side as they press the strawberries into pulp with their bare feet. Piacek processes the drum and solid-object sounds and adds some bits of a Thomas Moore melody, one of the triple-meter songs that I remember from my own beginner violin books. These phrase fragments do not have the timbre or articulation of any known instrument, although they're in violin range; Piacek has added a grating flutter. The dancers pick up the bowls and dance with them and one of them drinks the strawberry pulp. Then they bring out Chinese cabbages, impaling them on the broomsticks. They dance with the broomsticks, stroking the cabbages affectionately, and some dancers tear the cabbage leaves off the heads one by one. The cabbages disintegrate and several of the dancers lie on the floor, putting their cheeks close to the cabbage fragments as though these were people they love.

The dancers exit. Piacek switches to flute and the three musicians do a free improvisation, with many drum sounds. After about ten minutes, the sound of clinking wineglasses comes from the foyer. The audience leaves for the foyer and the two percussionists continue to improvise. In the lobby, the dancers have become the waiters and bartenders. Piacek offers me canapés of camembert and goat cheese on bread.

Discography:

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<http://www.marekpiacek.sk>
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inside in, outside out

1.

Why do I think some phenomenon of music “has a structure”? Because I can attribute certain metricized properties to its denotable tokens, symbolize these parameters, attribute certain relative quantities to them, assert certain connecting relational logics among these quantities, claim that these are asserted in at least a potentially perceivable way by the music phenomenon under examination, finally attach all of these to a covering metaphor into whose retro-componentialized parts these property-quantities can be fitted, considering the totality of this process “the structure of the music”? Because, ideally, filtering the sonic data back through the mental network created by such a mental exercise can seem to produce either a highly intensified form of the raw experience of the music, or a significant transformation of it into a different music of possibly a different degree, or at least kind, of music-being? Do I have a lucid grasp of exactly how and where such a “structure” filter is placed psychically (whether by intuition or by intention) so as for acoustic signals to filter themselves through it? If my engagement in the mental exertions of structure-attributing is followed by some very vividly determinate transformation of the music-being of some music I hear do I know that this was an effect of those exertions? Do I know in what way, by what means those exertions acted upon any or all of the invariant attributes of the music-transacting configuration to produce exactly this effect, if I do suppose the effect to have happened? From what psychic-mental location can I make the observations and think the analytic thoughts that would enable me to know what I think about these questions?

Question 1: So I derived this “structure” allegedly with rigorous and acute reference to this piece; so where do I put it now – how do I attach it to my listening apparatus, or do I just consider it an exercise in accounting for what I’ve already experienced? Is there some mental operation that counts as plugging in some mental thing into some mental other thing? Is there some way that inside my head I can enter my brain mentally from the outside? Metaphorically?

Question 2: Or do I claim it reports what I’ve already heard — Is the attribution of “structure” ever (ostensively or believably) an introspected account of experience in terms consonant with the terms in which experience was experienced unmediated by a prior “structural” (or otherwise intervenient) metatext?

Chris Hume had us eat different cheeses at designated moments during a listening to *Jeux*. This was the exclusive form of his analysis. No descriptives or quantifications or metaphors or images. Spectacular experiential phenomena reported as having happened during the enactment of Chris’s scenario. There was reported vivid musical reality of a farout character. Do we know where in the transaction this happened, whether it was a

collective experience of the group as a whole or of each single person separately – and do we know whether anything other than our actual experiences happened at all, and if it did, whether it had to do with Chris’s imposed stimuli, his instructions, our awareness that something weird and different was afoot, or none of the above?

What if, with a different music-intellectual mindset, I think that some phenomenon of music “has a story”? Is “having a story” just a type of “having a structure”? Is a “story” just, really, a “structure” with attitude? Say, some “Fibonacci Series” story — attributes attitude, maybe, but without particular affect, right? Certainly exudes attitude — can’t imagine what its charm would be bereft of the air of having uncorked some special esoteric number-combination emanations scoring it some big-meaningful-idea cred, which gets built in on just the grounds of logging in as a Fibonacci story. Or a tuning story or an exotic-scale or a ritual-mode story; got to have the exterior story or how would the sound get to register correctly for the unpreinformed? And, let’s see: if a story is a blow-by-blow account of something in terms of something else, correlating a sequence of music things with their private logics to a sequence of other things’ otherwise-logic as if either they were the same logic or that the skewness of the logics to one another is somehow super-illuminating or at least entertaining, for the benefit of the musiclogic; isn’t that just “having a structure” except with the affect and/or attitude framing and driving the structure-logic logic?

Like JKR’s Tchaikovsky story or BAB’s JKR or Parsifal or Adagietto stories?

But maybe not like Adrienne Rich’s Beethoven pseudostory or JKR’s assorted Boretz pseudostories. Pseudostories like that have plenty of affect and attitude but no logic, like just about any judgmental music review you ever read (not excluding plenty of Boretz in his NATION animadversions); you find out about the affect and attitude of the writer, but what musicstory interface do they plug into? How do they ever get out from being stuck onto the persons of their originators to becoming interactive (metaphorically) with music? Even though they sure are interactive with their readers. So how does story-free attitude or affect transfer (metaphorically or affectively) onto a particular music? Just by conditioning the attitude and affect of the reader within the psychic atmosphere of listening — implanting the image of the attitude and affect of the commentator as an incorrigible authority, a unimpeded transference from one psyche to another with a music-text juxtaposition as its symbolic vehicle? Even where there’s real, even deep, musical thinking underneath, it remains exclusively in the possession and to the benefit of the perpetrator. Something you might call “political” ahead of calling it “musical”? Isn’t the presence or at least the implication of “we”, the authoritative universalizing “we” (even when it’s inscribed as “I”) rather than the confessional self-circumscribing literal “I” an infallible symptom of the political — lurking somewhere in the mix at least?

[And is “metaphorical” itself not just an ontological copout? Can I actually distinguish a metaphorical quality from a “real” one? Doesn’t it just existentialize a quality as living in the space of its (verbal/symbolic) conceptualization rather than in the space of its aesthetic reception, however you analyze its experiential output?]

Or can you put music into “the metaphorical relation” to other music? Can, and probably do, most of the time. But not without having a story, or at least, a structure. So what happens when the music’s story is about its reflection of some other music? On purpose or not, as commentary or resemblance? Music qualities identified genetically, nominally, authorially, mimetically, ideologically, culturally, socially, ethnically, historically — how does any of that go into what is heard? Hearing something in something else, hearing something as something else, hearing something as it manifests being in some other universe, sustaining the doubleness or *n*-multiplicitiness as a simultaneity of reception. But also entails the simultaneity of consciousness, simultaneously holding within consciousness, all the defining referential metatexts — so there are at least two metatexts, in at least two distinct metalanguages, running in the listening psyche simultaneous with the supposed music-being-listened-to text. Sounds absurd, but I (we?) do it all the time. Knowing “what” I’m listening to seems indispensable to having a psychic node through which it can enter and put itself together as a specific-experienced-music phenomenon. But — as in other receptual stories — can I determine how and in what form such unmistakable interinfluencing of experiencing-ontology happens? The point is, that though I seem obviously able to make some very confident empirical claims, do I have the remotest conviction that I can also make even a minimal theoretical claim? Doesn’t it seem that all these input processes which I’ve decommissioned by stripping them “metaphorical” are not in any determinable way distinguishable in that respect from any input process which has been allowed at least by implication to be striped — whatever the complement of “metaphorical” may be? (If I can’t think of what that “other” is, does that make it one of those differences without a distinction, like metaphysical universals, or grue?) But is there a psychologically substantive distinction among types of “direct” music-knowing? Things that you know in a way less heavily mediated by “metaphorical” things? Such things as, maybe, the happening of “music”, or even of something like “Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony”, or some other haecceitical phenomenon? Without prejudice to the layers of epistemic logic at which finally all such distinctions disappear — you can always get to those ultimate reductions, but logic and ultimate reducibility to tautology does not explicate the distinctions you know by experiencing them. So the precise conceptual-scheme layer at which it’s relevant to address an experiential question is determined exclusively from the experiential perspective itself; the logic-side on its own draws a blank.

2.

Does it seem, then, that an almost self-inscrutable singular “I” looms as the natural citizen of a musical world whose only determinacy is the feel of experience? Does it get down to subjectivity? Or to solipsism, for those who really dislike the implications? Musical universes, perforce, of one inhabitant each? Or perhaps not perforce, perhaps it’s a choice, perhaps there are possible multi-inhabitant musical worlds you can inhabit: you could go outside out to exclose just what you feel might be reliably interfaced with other people. You know from experience that every sociomusical occasion creates a collective group experience, seemingly coercive upon everyone present, and distinct from every

other such occasion-experience (your own piece doesn't sound to you like any other way it ever did before). But that singular collective experience is exactly as nontransferable as any single-personal one -- just by virtue of its singularity; and its character as a "group experience" lodges entirely as an artifact within the consciousness of one person (at a time). Perhaps, even, determinate within every single person present, but not determinately specifiable between any two of them. So doesn't its very unique-occasion-particularity entail ultimate nongeneralizability? You "read" a peopled room you enter; but the 'essence' of that reading is a flavor of consciousness rather than an articulate structure — rather than a 'score' — through whose specifications that 'essence' could be recapitulated. You can make scores that tell people what to do; you can even make scores that tell people what they're supposed to experience when/after they do it; but you can't enforce a match between the output of one and that of the other.

But what does depend on a match between explicit action and specific experience? Science, obviously. But normal, ordinary language, too: in pragmatic verbal language it's clearly the semantic grounding on which functionality depends. But what about poetry? Doesn't it seem that poetry reconstitutes the semantics of ordinary language in a way that ambiguates definitive signification, that seems to take such ambiguation as an ontological given, as – even possibly – an ontological property essential to its aesthetic character? Isn't the sense that poems reinvent language as much an index of the aesthetic location of reception as it is a theory of composition? And isn't the indefinitive quality of poetry-reading something that transfers the social identity of poems from the realm of solitary or collective experience to the realm of socially negotiable discourse? From the experience-transactional occasion to the discursive-interpretive moment? Isn't the ambiguity, the indeterminacy, of the relation of action to outcome as intrinsic to the transactions of poetry as the strenuous disambiguation of that relation is to the needs of the scientific? And isn't the intuition of the "openness" of the poetic text a key to the galvanizing poignancy sometimes experienced and always yearned for in encounters ontologized as "aesthetic"?

You compose. You perform. Your own music. Other music. You hear it. You think it. You imagine its being heard by receiving others. What others hear is indisputably the outcome of what you do – but what is your relation to their experience? Is it to imagine what it will be? To desire it to be a certain way? To enforce what it is? In different episodes, don't you yourself as receiver register your own output differently? Sometimes as cognition, as a syntactical/structural "understanding"; sometimes as perception, a semantic identification; sometimes as a determinate feel to which no abstract signifier applies: experience as itself, an indivisible, internally absolute but externally indefinitive holistic ontological blob? In which ontological register do you as composer or performer theorize yourself as acting? (In which do you theorize a predetermined outcome?) When you think: the "sound" of some music (its music-ontological "sound", not the acoustic-signal sound associated with it), are you thinking comprehension? recognition? sensation?

Scores which are processed as stimuli don't necessarily regiment behavior, at either the performing or the receiving end, and don't encode a single-valued intentionalized

outcome. And people's descriptions of aesthetic surfaces are – to cut through to the nerve – descriptions of *perception* rather than experience. It is, of course, perception which can be generalized; and generality, rather than specificity, which is enforceable – that is, communicable in a reliably interpersonally definitive way. And it seems possible that generalized models of perception can – in some sense – regiment experience as well. But music-experiential generalities, in the guise of 'empirical' theories, don't originate in any actual real single episodes of experience; they seem more plausibly like hypothetical fantasies of collective consciousness leveraged out of – at best – some collection of second or third hand *reports* of possibly actual experiences; so their hypotheses are essentially self-fulfilling prophecies, predicting what is already known, and perhaps capable of inducing generic uniformities of reception in persons subjected to such conditioning. Whatever the content of such receptions, they're not too likely to resemble your wildest expressive fantasies of what music might do to you. So it can't be a desire to maximize musical expressivity which motivates the drive to socialize music within the bounds of the reliable, verifiable, retrodictable, 'clean', self-knowing – and therefore regimentable – receiving space. From the perspective of music as expressive utterance, the drive for aesthetic, theoretical, pedagogical authority seems strangely self-annulling, repelled from penetration into music's depth by music's own deep opacity to extramusical specification.

A determinate feel may be the unmistakable outcome of a music-making action (a notation, a sounding); it may be co-opted to realize an anterior or posterior sense-making trajectory; but, as itself, a determinate feel is inexorably unspecifiable: you may in effect be composing them, but you can't compose *with* them (a score doesn't even specify sound, let alone "sound"; but even a sounding score doesn't specify how it "sounds" in any actual hearing); so there's a fundamental ambiguity in the action-input/experience-output relationship. As a composer, therefore, or as a performer, you are inescapably immersed in this experiential ambiguity. No however raging powermad cannibalistic desire or ferocious predatory breastbeating tearjerking energy or cool superior aristocratic attitude copping will guarantee your enforcing control of another person's (or, I think, even your very own) determinate-feel experience. Our most fervent desire to be subjugated by you will always have to be the consequence of our own exertions; the power of yours remains ambiguated behind the barrier of experiential indeterminacy; we are, despite ourselves, and perhaps even to our annoyance or discomfort, congenital determinate-feel anarchists. A problem, perhaps, for anyone to whom the specification or the determination of the entire music-making/music-receiving transaction needs to be under someone's control. Or anyone whose worldview including music invariates a drive toward maximum disambiguation and authority on the normative-science-model.

But ambiguity, specifically the ambiguities of outcomes as between stimuli and responses, between actions and experiences, seem ontologically contained within the very being of the experiential. And while every experiential outcome is internally absolute, holistic, and determinate, the ambiguities ensure the indeterminacy of any one outcome relative to any other; and the ontological ambiguity issuing from the awareness that any construal of experience, any individual instance of experience, is ultimately indefinite

relative to any other either between or within individual persons – such ambiguity inscribes the aura of unlimited new-revelatory possibility that pervades the psychic territory of the experiential. [For everything in experience is determined *within* each span of receptual-event-time, and everything experiential is absolutely indeterminate *prior* to a receiving event, unsusceptible to anterior prediction. That means that I can't ever mentalize the *specificity* of an experiential music-event because its only specificity is itself: its determinate feel; that is, that in this case, mentalizing the music and mentalizing the experience of the music cannot be discerned or practiced as distinct different mentalizing acts.]

No one music experience is definitive, relative to any other. No one's music experience, is definitive with respect to anyone else's. Yet each music experience, in its own span of happening and resonating thereafter, is absolute, definitive, and replete – a perfect but strangely relativistic platonic form subsisting exactly, exclusively, universally within its own boundaries, but instantly dissolving at its own ontological endpoint. And no description of a music experience, in the form of a theory, an analysis, a discourse, an expressive image, is externally definitive either, either epistemically or as an active input into anyone's experience of music or of a particular music. Even insofar as it references and reflects a particular image of experience, of some experience or of someone's experience, there is no context of music as musical experience where that particularity is music-relevantly definitive, or, even, determinate for any other or anyone else's experience. However much music and metamusical models might thrive on scientific-type precision, clarity, rigor, and critical self-examination – senses in which music might imaginably be as “scientific” as any other speculative thought -- they don't thereby acquire any relevant relation to or investment in scientific authority.

So is the sociality of a music occasion just an illusion? Or is there an intertransparency of cotemporal individual experiences? Or is sociality the residue of separate intuitions of collective manyness being simultaneously sustained by multiple onenesses? Could it be that everyone's literal opacity to the interior reality of otherness actually liberates collectivity to become multiplicity rather than an elusive and probably (socially and expressively) hazardous unity? Isn't such an intuited unity the output of the separate universalism of each person's self-projection onto the world? You can imagine that kind of intuition amplified into an extreme affect of some remarkable specimens of musical composition – consider the strange spiritual continuity between the excrescent giganticisms and the hyperbaric minimalisms of German music of almost the same time, each internalizing equally the same outlandish opinion of the cosmic social meaning of the act of musical self-assertion.

Dmitri Tymoczko read a paper at the SMT conference contesting David Lewin's use of group theory for music models. A lot of people found his contentions disputable on theoretical grounds. But no one at the meeting questioned what I thought had to be a fundamental justification for the pitch of his critique – not just offering another model for consideration but dissing one on offer. So afterward I asked him. “What are the musical consequences of being wrong?” (And, I might have asked, equally, what

might the musical benefits of being right be?). If you're trying to assert authority what musical purpose are you pursuing -- and if you could succeed in asserting authority what musical purpose would that accomplish? Do I get any musical payoff for you being right -- as against what I get from your offering an imaginative listening model based on an imaginative idea which might have an interesting transformative effect on my experience of some music -- even if the particular transformative effect it has is beyond your control? My *Tristan* proposal in *Meta-Variations* was output and input for an epiphanic new experience (ontology) of the music of *Tristan* -- not really an explanation of anything (for if the logic was plausible, it could only be so insofar as it made musical sense in the sense that it made a determinate (after, not prior to, the fact) difference in what music you ended up hearing if you filtered your *Tristan*- through it) but a mindset for hearing, not definitive or authoritative in any designable way but effective in producing an ontologically distinct "new" music. -- though what that new music would precisely be for any given listener, or whether any other listener but me would experience something so vividly particular is not determinable by virtue of my experience or by virtue of any coercive power of my listening model. "Empirical", in the context of this and any other musical proposal I've offered, just means something to try yourself and experience the effects -- as always, in one hearing at a time. Retrospectively, I think that if my musical ethos had been "commonality" rather than this vision of singular creative possibility -- or had it been "empirical" in the sense of science rather than "experiential" in the sense of a single person's immediate experience -- I might not have thought to propose musical models like these. So -- retrospectively -- I can see that the proposal I made in 1975 for how to mentalize "musical syntax" ("Mirage" -- see the appendix to this text), and my follow-on request for listener-readers to ontologize the opening chord of Beethoven's Op. 2 #3 as not a "chord of nature" but a polyrhythm-generating superposition of a C-6/4 over a C 5/3, consonating and dissonating back and forth as C 6/4 "resolves" itself into G 5/3 but in so doing dissonates even more sharply against the residual C -- I can see that proposals like these have always been predicated on a fundamental intuition that any ontology-creating musical idea is free-standing and nondefinitive.

But every action is determinate, when it happens. And every experience is determinate, as it happens. And yet the connection between action and experience is as ambiguous as the connection between intention and perception. It seems that experiential transactions are plagued with ambiguity and indefinitiveness at every level, seem to have ambiguity and indefinitiveness written into the very core of their being. Which is to say, they are precisely what marks the aesthetic, what gives the aesthetic its edge of epiphanic content, what keeps an aesthetic phenomenon in play within our psychic universe. Not problems, that is, but distinguishing features; not to be overcome with devices enabling claims of greater objective authority but to be cultivated as treasured properties of the imaginative life of music.

Benjamin Boretz
April/July 2008

Appendix:

MIRAGE

(from notebook entries, 1974-1976)

...does a musical image incandesce because it flashes forth by a twinkle of surface the full depth of the pool of reference on which it floats? Floats: the twinkle is the depth's edge, ultimately depthlimiting. twinkle at poolbottom, and there will be only flat bottom perceived; but twinkle at top, and there is a pool to float over felt, surface, depth, bottom, all together. So the experience of riches of musical depth comes by way of the acuity not the complexity of the musical surface; all is conveyed by the explicit sparkle of that twinkle: high atop a deep or boiling or tranquil or shoalfilled current; or just a map of the bottom of something or other. Still waters evaporate, vanish in sands, leave perception high and dry; to keep buoyant the flashes must flicker evernew dimensional senses (not another pool over there, but another depth, an unpremeditated cove, an elusive channel, connected within a timespan of spacesense: the pool reshaped as twinkles unveil newfolds, eddies, islands, inlets, changes over time become part of what it is: roiled, glossy, ripply, sparkly, gloomy, gleaming, reflected invert blueskybowl: time, shaped over time; space, shaped over time; (leafflutter: a still image that only a movie camera can record).) And if the texture datasaturates, repletes unto itself, color neutralizes, drains: demorphizes. If the reference is the surface, then the incandescence never glows.

Appendix 2:

Experience

Experience: the origin site of every determinate feel. Trivially. The psychic substratum — a site of relatively prearticulate determinate feels — out of which every determinate feel is ontologized. But where is determinate-feel ontology located? What is a determinate feel the determinate feel *of*? Not clearly experience as such: without a volitional act of determinate-feel-making doesn't experience run just as unarticulated continuum hardly even experienceable as content of consciousness? Aren't determinate feels just the nascent being of the contents of consciousness? Aren't they the primal form in which consciousness is conscient, and aren't determinate feels so conscient? Consciented, that is, not as experience itself nor even as a finite flowtime of passing experience but as *experiences*, or rather as *an experience* at every conscioustime moment, which is to say, as a singular created particular *sense* of a particular quantum of experienced experience. Fusions of noun and verb, both acts and effects of reification both to make and to be an episode of experience, a phenomenon, an entity, an event, making and being what might retrospectively be so ontologized. So what lingers on as the residue of experience, what persists as the contents of ongoing consciousness, is not experience itself ontologized as itself but what is materialized in the determinate-feel making/being: the passages of life in which our attention dwells, and to which we eventually feel impelled to give names.

So description is not necessarily restricted to description of perception, not necessarily just narrating perceptions of perceptions; imaginably its narratives might constitute perceptions of the qualities materialized within determinate-feel episodes, within episodes of reception, perceptions not just of post-receptual perceptions but of the qualities of received phenomena themselves, in the determinate-feel-making acts of being received.

(Needn't, not mustn't: the value of every mode of discourse, actual or possible, is not in question. But the second mode of description seems to invite a different species of text; not just JKR's recent Tchaikovsky, Troubadour, Bruckner, Haydn, Ravel stories, or, in an even more interesting speculative way, his "soundscroll" texts, but even further back, to an earlier mode of phenomenalist writing about music, which, reading with perverse inverted historicism could be registered as "neo-Toveyan.")

[A conversation with Jim Randall about "inside in, outside out" raised awareness about a possibly impenetrable opacity at a critical node of my expressive fantasy.]

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