

The

OPEN SPACE

magazine

issue 12/13 Double Issue fall 2010/winter 2011



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magazine

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on the web: sound files for David Mott's article (**Beautiful Material**) are posted at www.the-open-space.org/rm; the score for **Tres Piezas Para Piano** by Bernardo Feldman, dedicated to the memory of Daniel Catan (1949-2011), is posted at www.the-open-space.org/downloads.html

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Variations: a photographic accompaniment for Milton Babbitt's *Occasional Variations*

This is not a piece; it is a visual activity for the reader to perform while listening to Milton Babbitt's *Occasional Variations*.

Occasional Variations is not a soundtrack for this series of photos; it would be closer to say that the photos are a "sight track" for the music. But even that isn't quite right. Benjamin Boretz once wrote that Milton Babbitt "makes mathematics dance". Here music and images dance together.

This is not an activity to be performed according to strict rules in relation to precisely timed moments in the piece. Instead a collection of photographs is offered. A performance (in the sense that reading to oneself performs a text) consists in listening to *Occasional Variations* while looking at one or more of these images, in the sequence I've selected or in a sequence of the reader's choosing (which could easily include looking at just one or several of the photographs for the duration of the piece). If my sequence is performed, I hope that the music's trajectory will make movement from one photo to the next feel intuitive.

This is also not a photo essay; it does not have an overarching topic. Imagine that each photographic/sonic pairing is a new variation on *Occasional Variations*, the result of which will be revealed only in performance. On the surface the visual subject matter may seem random, but the subject of each picture (a building, a tree, a face, a field) isn't why I chose it. My choices are based on the interactions between the elements that constitute these photos – which, I think, engage the eye in ways that amplify, counterpoint and resonate with the many complex and multivalent aspects that engage the ear in *Occasional Variations*.

I don't want to say much more since the meat of this project lies in its specificities, which don't willingly translate to the verbal realm. And leaving nonverbal ideas unpenetrated by discourse seems appropriate for this occasion: an appreciation of the music of a person who was well known by people I know well, but who I didn't know at all except through that music, the fine details of some of which I know very well. Without words conversation can take place in two distinct languages (which nevertheless share commonalities) without the need for translation between them or into a third – so here I have a chance to speak with Milton Babbitt's music, the medium through which I feel – as all music lovers do – that I too knew him.

(And, out of a number of Milton Babbitt's pieces I might have chosen, 'occasional' and 'variations' seemed like appropriate ideas on which to rest an appreciation of the lifework of someone whose music was so precise, and yet so playful and full of life.)

-Tildy Bayar / April 2011

(an ardent Babbitt listener since first discovering his music in 1985)

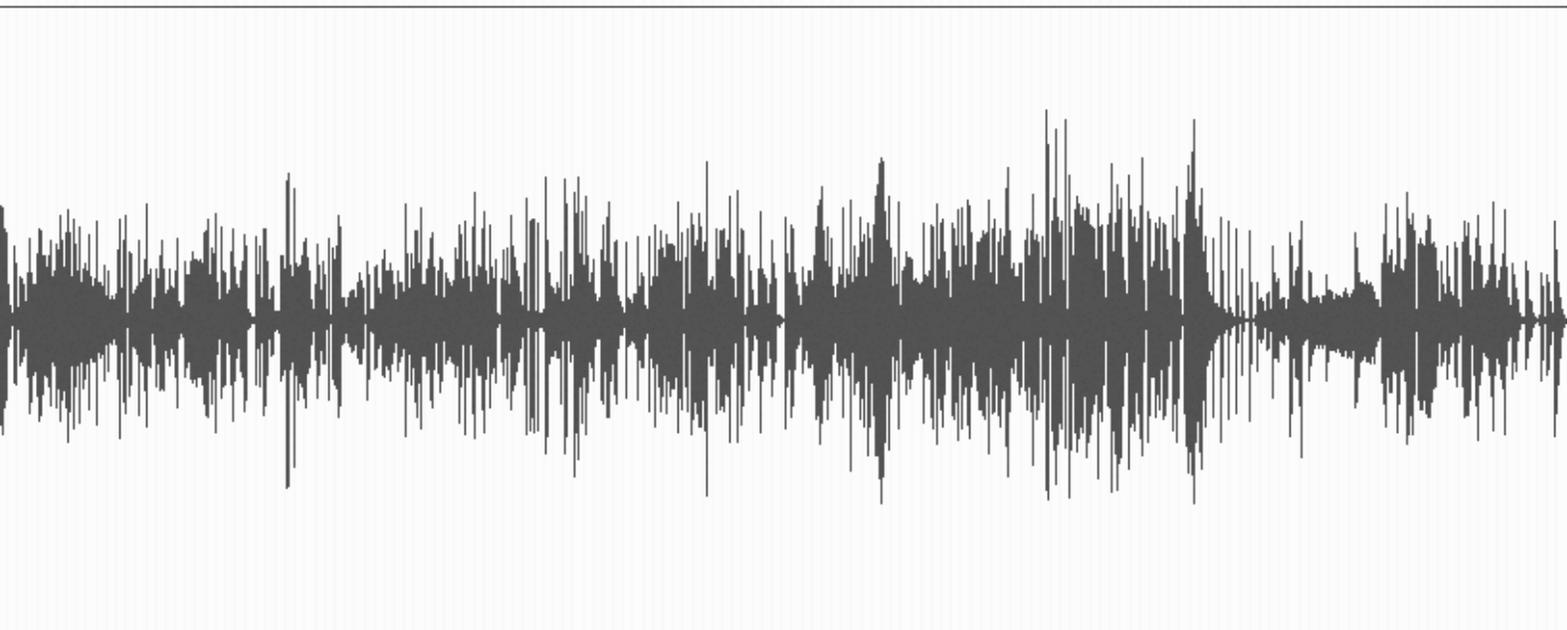
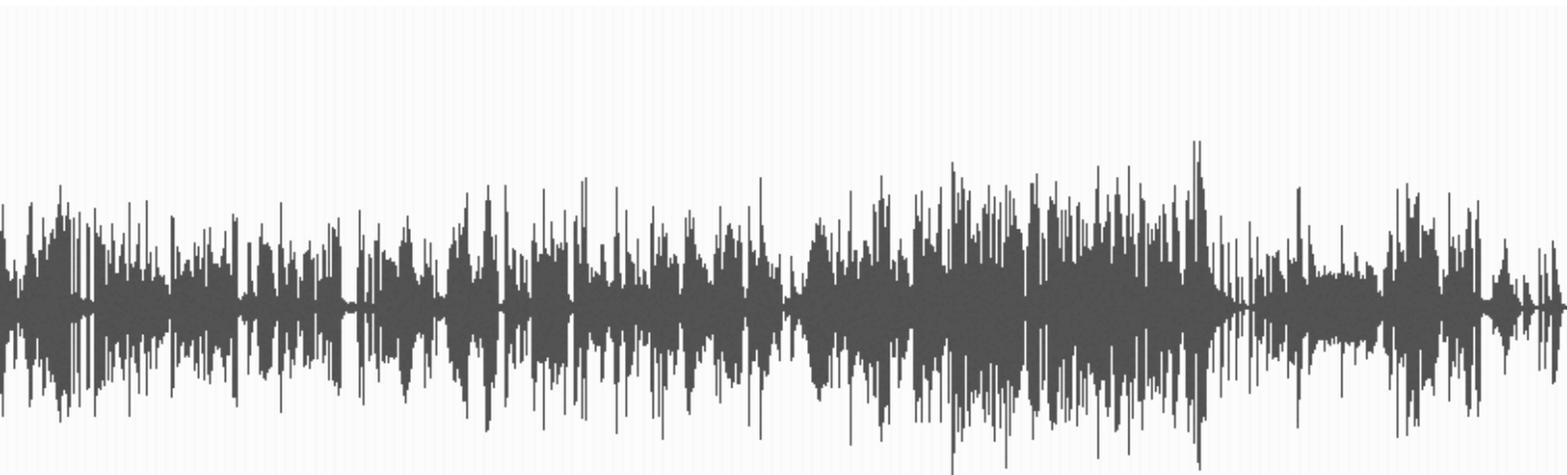
2 Occasional Variations-01











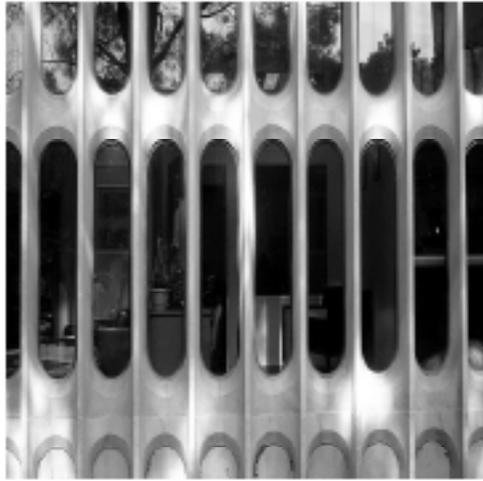












the memory of all that

a holy sonnet of John Donne
for Milfon Babbitt (1916-2011)

benjamin boretz
january/february 2011

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those whom thou thinkst thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flowe,
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poyson, warre, and sickness dwell,
And poppie, or charmes, can make us sleepe as well,
And better than thy stroake; why swell'st thou then;
One shorte sleepe past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die

the memory of all that
a holy sonnet of John Donne
for Milton Babbitt (1916-2011)

John Donne

Benjamin Boretz

$\text{♩} = 80$ sung like speaking low, an underdramatized pitched sprechstimme, carefully in time
*pp**

Dea - th be not proud,

$\text{♩} = 80$

*pp**

2

though some have called thee

*pp**

3

Migh ty and dread full,

*pp**

*dynamic markings in this score are intended to indicate sensibility rather than absolute volume levels.

4 *p*

for, thou art not so,

5

For, those whom thou thinkst

6

thou dost o - ver - throw,

7 *pp*

Die not, poore

8 *ppp*

dea - th, nor yet canst thou kill me

9

pp *p* *pp*

pp

10

mp

From rest

p *pp* *pp*

the pitches from here through m.9 should sound "gestural" rather than "structural"

11

and sleepe, which but thy

12

pic - tures

13

bee

ppp

14

Much

ppp

p

p

pp

mf

p

pp

16

plea sure, And, from thee

pp

pp

17

much more must flowe

And soon est,

pp

mp

18

our best men with

ppp

20

our best men with

ppp

23

Musical score for measure 23. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics "thee", "doe", and "goe,". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a bass line with a fermata over the first two measures and a second fermata over the last two measures. The piano part is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

Musical score for measure 23 (continued). The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a bass line with a fermata over the first two measures and a second fermata over the last two measures. A *ppp* dynamic marking is present in the bass line. The piano part is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

24

Musical score for measure 24. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics "Rest of their bones And soules". The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a bass line with a fermata over the first two measures and a second fermata over the last two measures. The piano part is in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

25

Musical score for measures 25-26. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics "de li ver ie" with notes on a whole note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) is mostly silent, with a bass clef and a flat sign in the lower register.

26

Musical score for measures 27-28. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics "Thou - u ar=" with notes on a whole note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a dynamic marking of *mf* and *p*.

27

Musical score for measures 29-30. The vocal line (treble clef) contains the lyrics "rt slave to Fate," with notes on a whole note. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features dynamic markings of *mp* and *pp*.

29

Chance, kings, and des per ate

pp

30

men, And dost

mp

31

with poy son, warre, and sick nesse dwell,

p

mf *pp* *mf* *mp* *pp*

ppp *pp* *mf* *pp*

32

play/sing as first three, then four independent lines, rather in the spirit of Franco of Cologne-notated motet - but remember: harmony counts...

p

And pop pie, or charmes, can make us

sleepe as well, And bet- ter than

33

thy stroake

34

thy stroake

38 *ppp*

And death shall be no more

Death, thou shalt die

pp

39 strictly in time, no drama, uninflected

TT: ca, 11:30

Barrytown, New York
January/February 2011

Notes for XTET: Last Dance for Milton

Elaine R. Barkin

XTET: Last Dance for Milton (celesta, two pianos, harpsichord, organ, drum set, iMacG5, Sibelius 4), is a bit of a mixed bag whose title might have appealed to pun-wise Milton. But X misinforms for there are XI staves and IX pitch classes, an un-premeditated Xes serendipity. Fact is, soon after inscribing low E, the 9th p.c., there was neither desire nor reason to include all 12. So, with Milton on my mind, an ensemble of reactive chatty-chatty personae was designed; they dance an occasional minuet (3/4/ + or - 2/8 & 3/8), and often group together companionably (no lonely hearts here). But then, just as I was rounding the bend and able to sense XTET's end, the death of Paul Des Marais, my dear longtime friend and UCLA colleague, knocked me way off base (PDM: b. June 23, 1920 – d. April 16, 2011), the third affecting nonagenarian presence in my life now gone. Arthur Berger, Milton Babbitt, and Paul Des Marais were each uniquely, emblematically, and critically influential in my life and in the lives of many young and mature musicians. Music and the world transformed significantly owing to Arthur's, Milton's, and Paul's devoted and inimitable ways of being there(in). It sure does take way more than two to tango.

Valley Village, CA, June 2011

The Memory of All That and XTET: Last Dance for Milton are contributions to a collection of texts and music being assembled by Perspectives of New Music and The Open Space, for release in a PNM/OS CD album and in the pages of Perspectives and The Open Space Magazine in late 2011-early 2012.

XTET: Last Dance for Milton

Elaine R. Barkin
June 2011

♩ = 60

The musical score is arranged in a system of staves. The top two staves are for the Piano, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The next two staves are for the Celesta, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The following two staves are for the Hpschd (Harp), with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The next two staves are for the Organ, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The final staff is for the Drumm Set, shown in a single treble clef. The music is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. The Piano part has rests in all measures. The Celesta part has a melody in the right hand starting in the second measure, with dynamics *pp*. The Hpschd part has a melody in the right hand starting in the second measure, with dynamics *pp*. The Organ part has a melody in the right hand starting in the third measure, with dynamics *p* and *ppp*. The Drumm Set part has a rhythmic pattern in the right hand starting in the third measure, with dynamics *pp*. The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

16 celesta $\text{♩} = 56$

ppp pp

ppp

$\text{♩} = 56$

mf pp p p

20

3 3 5 6 5

Red. p Red. p

6 5

6 5

Red.

The musical score for page 23 consists of five staves. The top staff is a single treble clef staff with several measures of rests and a final measure containing a whole note chord. The second staff is a treble clef staff featuring a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, marked with a bracket and the number '3'. A dashed line above the triplet is labeled '8va'. The third and fourth staves are grand staff notation, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef. The lower staff of the grand staff has a dynamic marking of *pp* and a sharp sign (#) in the second measure. The fifth staff is a single bass clef staff with a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, marked with a bracket and the number '3'.

The musical score for page 28 consists of six staves. The first staff is a single treble clef line. The second and third staves are a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The fourth and fifth staves are another grand staff. The sixth staff is a single bass clef line. The seventh staff is a single bass clef line. The eighth staff is a single bass clef line. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and ornaments. Dynamics include *ppp* and *pp*. Articulations include *Ped.* and *tr*. A triplet of notes is marked with a '3' in a bracket. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

This musical score page contains measures 34 through 43. It features a piano part with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a cello part (bass clef). The piano part includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *mp*, and *ppp*, along with performance instructions like *Ped.* (pedal). The cello part includes dynamic markings like *pp* and *ppp*. Measure numbers 43, 66, and 62 are indicated at the beginning of their respective lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and fingerings.

50

Musical score for piano, measures 50-53. The score is in treble and bass clefs. It features a series of chords in the right hand, some with triplets and dynamic markings like *pp*. The left hand has a simple accompaniment of quarter notes.

Measures 50-51: Right hand has a series of chords. Measure 50 has a triplet of chords marked *pp*. Measure 51 has a triplet of chords. Left hand has quarter notes.

Measures 52-53: Right hand has a series of chords. Measure 52 has a triplet of chords marked *pp*. Measure 53 has a triplet of chords. Left hand has quarter notes.

Musical score for page 58, measures 58-63. The score is in 2/4 time and features piano (pp), piano (p), and mezzo-piano (mp) dynamics. It includes a vocal line, a grand piano (G.P.) section with treble and bass staves, and a percussion line.

Measures 58-60: The vocal line is silent. The grand piano (G.P.) section features a treble staff with a melodic line starting on a B-flat and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Dynamics are *pp* in measure 58 and *p* in measure 60. The percussion line is silent.

Measures 61-63: The vocal line is silent. The grand piano (G.P.) section features a treble staff with a melodic line starting on a B-flat and a bass staff with a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. Dynamics are *mp* in measure 61 and *p* in measure 63. The percussion line is silent.

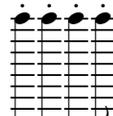
Musical score for page 76, featuring piano and bass staves with various dynamics and articulations. The score is divided into four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass line at the bottom.

- System 1:** The grand staff shows a piano introduction with a *p* dynamic. The bass line begins with a *mf* dynamic.
- System 2:** The grand staff features a *mf* dynamic in the treble and a *p* dynamic in the bass. The bass line continues with a *mf* dynamic.
- System 3:** The grand staff shows a *f* dynamic in the treble and a *f* dynamic in the bass. The bass line continues with a *f* dynamic.
- System 4:** The grand staff features a *mp* dynamic in the treble and a *mf* dynamic in the bass. The bass line continues with a *mf* dynamic.

The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and articulations. The time signature changes from 2/4 to 5/4 in the second measure of each system. The dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *f* (forte).

80

♩ = 52



Musical notation for the first system. It features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 2/4. The treble staff has a fermata over the first measure, followed by a quarter rest, and then a quarter note with a fermata. The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamic markings include 'p' and 'p 3'. A fingering '5' is shown above a group of notes in the bass staff.

Musical notation for the second system. It features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 2/4. The treble staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamic markings include 'p'.

Musical notation for the third system. It features a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 2/4. The treble staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. The bass staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamic markings include 'f' and 'Ped.'.

♩ = 52

Musical notation for the fourth system. It features a bass clef staff. The time signature is 2/4. The staff has a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note with a fermata, and then a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamic markings include 'f'.

The musical score consists of five systems of staves. The first system shows a grand staff with treble and bass clefs, a 5/4 time signature, and dynamic markings of *pp* and *p*. The second system continues the grand staff with *pp* markings. The third system also continues the grand staff with *pp* markings. The fourth system shows a grand staff with a key signature change to one sharp (F#) and a *pp* marking. The fifth system shows a grand staff with a *pp* marking. The sixth system is a single staff with a 5/4 time signature and a *pp* marking. The tempo marking ♩ = 82 is repeated at the end of the sixth system.

91 $\text{♩} = 64$

ppp 3 3 3 3 3 3

ppp 3 ppp 3

ppp 5 5

pppp 3 3 3 $\text{♩} = 64$

93 $\text{♩} = 58$ $\text{♩} = 70$

pp 6

pp

95 $\text{♩} = 72$

5

ppp

Detailed description: This system contains measures 95 and 96. Measure 95 features a complex melodic line in the right hand with many accidentals and a tempo marking of quarter note = 72. The left hand has a sparse accompaniment. Measure 96 continues the melodic line in the right hand, with a quintuplet (5) in the final measure. The dynamic marking *ppp* is placed below the left hand.

96

ppp

3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 96 and 97. Measure 96 continues the melodic line from the previous system. Measure 97 features a triplet (3) in the right hand. The dynamic marking *ppp* is placed below the left hand.

97 $\text{♩} = 64$ $\text{♩} = 80$

3 3 3 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 97, 98, and 99. Measure 97 has a triplet (3) in the right hand. Measure 98 has two triplets (3) in the right hand and a triplet (3) in the left hand. Measure 99 has a triplet (3) in the right hand. The tempo marking changes from quarter note = 64 to quarter note = 80 between measures 98 and 99.

Magic Without Tears in the Writings of Lissa Wolsak

Charles Stein

Though I have written considerably about my own poetry, I have not been able to derive, in writing, a poetics therefrom. But it seems that I cannot so much as read a few phrases of Lissa Wolsak's poetry, than I am at it—thinking poetics, writing poetics, declaiming a nature of poetry I hazard to aver that I perceive there. On the other hand, I am not inclined to interpret or unpack particular poems or poetic events. No sooner have I worked what seems the sense of one of her remarkably suggestive phrases, than the event shifts from under my cognitive gaze. It did mean thus and so—but having said that, another significance rises into view, another sense of the phrase's en-nested-ness in phrases gone before, another set of significant relations. There is a movement here of a most significant sort, that will not lend itself to precise determination, if only (but not only) because it is each determination that sets the thing in motion. How is one to illustrate such a hesitant chimera? I can't, so I will simply go with what has been happening as, over the last few months, I have been reading her poems with a view toward writing something for these pages in honor of them, namely—I will write what comes to mind by way of actualizing a very real association of my thinking with them.

1.

In *Union of Open Sets*, Lissa Wolsak's essay on Madeline Gins and Arakawa's *Architectural Body*, she finds occasion to ferret out this remark of the authors:

"[...] an organism that persons lives as a community." (Arakawa and Gins, p.98)

I hear "persons" as a verb, neglect the context, as she does, and report, in what follows, how the totality of Lissa Wolsak's writing, ambient in my thought, conditioned an avalanche of self-correcting reflection. Perhaps this might exemplify the cascade of cognitive attention that utterances in Lissa's work (but also under her attention in the work of others) set in motion.

"[...] an organism that persons lives as a community." That is: I do not live top down. "I contain multitudes", Whitman says. I would be a surface, a membrane, whose life approaches from the outside or arises from below. That which arises from below are self-configuring members of myself conceived as a community, and yet the activities and emergings of these various self-configuring members [But what are these members? How do they aggregate to form me? Their "self-configuring" does not happen as if the "self-" in the "configuring" were just an auto-reflexive structure, some sort of homeostat or cyberloop—but it also isn't the case that there is a conscious entity or field that by its own magic calls an inchoate or multiplicitous swarm into determinacy]—The activities and emergings of my various self-configuring members precede my acts as a whole being. My wholeness floats upon a swarming, inner multiplicity and rarely imposes upon it, [Nor does "wholeness" afford relief from the relentless streaming of the cyber-swarm—there is no possibility of abandoning consciousness, nor can I readily possess it at a single bound.] My wholeness floats upon a swarming, inner multiplicity and rarely imposes upon it, and then only with uninterrupted openness and sensitivity to the activities that continue to occur on their own among the members. [As if these

“members” in the person were not “parts” or “segments” or “subdivisions” but sub-moieties whose own swarming identities already organize around a principle that belongs to the person, as if I blew down into the boonies of the soul an effluence of my personhood—that, but not that—but also as if the boonies of the soul blew up the germens of identity to be gathered by the “felding” of the person—that, but not that—rather as if the category of person were an after-thought no person need ever concern herself with—that, but not that—as if none of these considerations make any sense at all except in the living processes and particularities of circumstance, social or meditative, physical or ethereal—that, but not that.] There is a posited constancy, a rumor of a vast and happy sphere in the intuition of which and in the happiness of one’s orientation toward which, integration of contingency and optimization towards harmonic opulence might thrive. Some texts or images exude the rumor of it. Some persons in their presence, the character of their attention, the modulations of their energy, also, make it seem—make that which cannot come to appearance, nevertheless come to seem.

2. On Being Had

The time has long gone since the monumentality of the written text, having found its niche in the great halls of literature, could experience such achievement in proxy for its poet as ultimate bulwark against the flotsam of history and the underlying tussle and torque of time. Neither Keats’ Urn nor Yeats’ Singing School nor even the dusty owls of Robert Duncan’s grim Museum, can hold out any longer against the utterly transitory character of even the most heartily well-wrought artifact. The artifactual nature of reality itself is now felt to be so keenly ensconced in its fleeting identity, that “the work of time’s” subjection to time’s ravages hardly evokes a whimper. You must find a way to live with a moment’s grace and let the matter of durative identity take care of itself as it can.

A certain professor, after “studying” a text of Lissa Wolsak’s, imbibed the final utterance, “got it,” and exclaimed to the poet in his mind, “You almost *had* me there.” What could he have meant? No doubt but that he hadn’t “gotten” the sense of the text until he “got” that final utterance; that in fact he had been *had*, in his own estimation, until now. And now he was no longer *had*, but had his precious comprehension to walk away from the poem with, professional identity intact, the challenge of the “difficult” text satisfactorily dealt with. The poem after all has its density, its enigmas, to be faced like some hybrid animal from no man’s land, to be solved at last, the entity stunned and now capable of eternal storage among the other artifacts of eternity.

Some years ago I had the unsalutary occasion to spend time in the back rooms of a famous museum where thousands of paintings, sculptures, archaeological fragments, and other inestimably valuable whatnots, were carefully catalogued and cared for, out of the sight of anybody but the meticulous custodians of these shadowy catacombs. Nice place to visit, though I wouldn’t want ...

But *the poem*—and here I think there is a principle by which to rethink the nature of any poem, apropos a certain newly intensified loss of historical focus; 1— *the poem* will not be fixed in its habitat of meaning; but 2.—no multiplicity of meanings, however contrapuntally arranged, however referenced to their historical, social, or biographical exigencies, however rigged with the prodigious feats of prescience, circumspection, and erudition well-schooled sensibilities are called to provide—none of these qualities are particularly impressive these days for reasons anyone capable of availing herself of powerful search engines knows very well—the data can even be ordered by the exercise of skills quite different from the quiet waiting upon emergent intuition once associating both the composition and the reading of a poem with contemplative reserve and prayerful solicitation. But *for the poem*, instead of all this, there is one thing that matters now, I swear it: a tiny space, the size of a postage stamp, but dimensioned like a tesseract or a hyper-tesseract—a multi-dimensional bauble, instinct with self-luminous oxygen, that really does arrange itself inside one’s readerly being, so that the poem does yield there, for a moment, a fragile *glasm* of its unstable

noetic possibilities. The more you see of it the more you are *had* indeed. And gladly that, or not at all. There is no hay to be made in any of this sunshine. The value is in the thing itself, again, or not at all.

The American imperative: ask of everything how money can be made from it—contrives a certain contrastive atmosphere unhappy for such objects. And it isn't only money—identity in the stalls and stations of artistic repute is itself a kind of currency, unpropitious for the rising of the light, this special "glasm," like I say. There is no way to compensate for its absence by some simulacra of the fact, so fragile is the gracious event of the poem's ephemerata, which are no more nor less the victim of mere transiency than any other event or any thing. There is nowhere to go from here at all but to what the poem, or indeed any moment, truly liberated by being lived, yields—not *to* you but *of* you, as its living passage along oblivion.

3.

Charles Olson's "Projective Verse" has familiarly been misread as valorizing oral poetry and the performance occasion at the expense of the written text. But this misses the dichotomy that Olson actually articulates. The text itself is the reception of an oral projection, and as such serves as a score for further performance. But the contrast is not between live performance and written text; rather, it is a distinction within textuality itself: texts that hold the energy proper to living speech versus texts responsive to an essentially abstract universe of logical or logically-normed intellection. The projective text stands between utterance and utterance, not between an external surface and an ideal space.

The glory of it is that when utterance itself carries an intelligential act, that act in its own vitality, color, topology, and rhythm can so qualify a text that the reader becomes the theater of the originating event's further enactments. Nothing need be reduced towards any universally legible discourse. It speaks the "impossible speech" of its authentic source and its particular community. It registers the intelligence of its moment of projection and it arouses the intelligence of its moment of reception. The space of its performance is a common one on every side of its occurrence. It awakens in, awakens to, and, performatively, simply *awakens* such a space, by the interplay of energy, thought, and consciousness that language, carried as instrument rather than suffered as "prison house," sets in play.

4.

A certain Tibetan lama remarks somewhere, "On the fifteenth day of the month the moon sets simultaneously with the sun's rising—there is no intermission." The instantaneity of meaning is actually like that. There is no time to *think*, to *have* beliefs, or elaborate one's hermeneusis. The fabulous Garuda Bird flies at once upon hatching from his egg. "There is no time or space left" for any self-conscious hustling or jockeying, as if the truth were a deal to be arrived at after due diligence performed and negotiations entered into—negotiations with what, can you tell me? Why nothing but the Truth itself! And yet it is the truth that by virtue of this very immediacy, the moment I am face to face with a text, *I believe what I read!*

Once we are no longer distanced from the poem as if it were a finished world of fixed meanings—however complex or contrapuntally set-out—and hazard the concreteness of our moment before the face of it—we are utterly at the mercy of what we find that we ARE there—I am the Angel conjured by the text that addresses me—or else I am the victim of the poverty of the writer's own self-apprehension: What she fails to feel of herself as she writes, I am condemned to become as I read her. If the writer conducts himself as master of some disembodied hypercombobularia—then that's how I find myself posed before the work. If she has attained

transparency of being so that her matter shimmers as radiant objects draped in the gossamer tresses of her speech, I too am transparent to the wonders of such an access. Thus a poem may materially deliver the goods of an esoteric promise—arcana of subtle realms and transcendent phenomenologies—but only at the hazard of every tawdry condition of mind and soul ever projected onto poetic page.

The ethics of this situation are yet to be developed, but we can say that under such recognitions, writing and its qualities matter in a way not envisioned either by traditional critical analysis, political critique, or post-modern reticence.

5.

To sever the quotidian with the immediacy of a text—to awaken the face-to-face of the word-at-a-moment and its ineluctable belief-realm—any word or phrase will do. We have but to recognize the radical impermanence of every passing instant to feel the radicality of the magic that the temporary stasis of a single word on a page affords. For the page-word does battle with impermanence, whatever it says it does by way of its meaning, its fragmentary tale or image, its assertoric or suggestive force. It would thus be a singular virtue for a writer to place her words with a feeling for this agony, this confrontation and/or sympathy between radical time and would-be time-retarding word. Put the word on a page and feel the almost audible susurrations of impermanence rustle beneath what it conjures in the mind that hears it there.

Any word will do, but not any placement is sensitive to the ontology of all this. Now listen to the Wolsakian phrase—as it tussles with the time of your reception of it; feel how its meaning trembles on the tympanum of your consciousness, how its rhythm torques and effaces “almost successfully” the rhythmless current of momentary being, almost calling *it* into consciousness, subtlety calling to subtlety...

6. The Configurative*

To pass from an ordinary condition of textuality to this sensibility of word against time no doubt seems to be to an act of consummate abstraction, and yet it can be effected only by a focus of attention more concrete than language (in the credulity that it demands of its users) will easily allow. This *discordia concurs* of abstraction and concrete attention is similar to that which abstraction in painting required of the art-reviewing public in the early years of the last century when canvas after canvas appeared in the galleries apparently having abandoned the representational will that had been the very *raison d'être* of painting since first pigment met surface. Blotches and shapes — abstraction *from* or intention *toward* concrete optical reality? Fragments and phrases — abstraction *from* or intention *toward* the concrete reality of page-word in time?

But abstraction in painting has recently yielded, in the canvases of Ipswich painter Thorpe Feidt or the pencil drawings of poet George Quasha, to the vectors of another story, wherein the *non-figurative* yields to the *con-figurative*. Slowly the figures return, but now frankly caught up in the dynamic process of their own formation, whether under brush and pencil of the artist, or the active regard of the viewer. Evanescent images, once abjured by the stern will of the abstracting painter's eye, arise, but with the newly radical import of disclosing the transitory nature of the figurative act—that a representation is never other than some eye's configuration in a concrete optical event. And here, in Lissa Wolsak's work, is the analogy with poetry and language: for after the rigors of twenty-odd years of “language” poetry, with its stern distraction from the primacy of narratology, image, and signification (by foregrounding the materiality and abstract sociality of text and speech)—the

configurative character of just these “fictional” elements begins to return, and under the same stress as the return of the configurative in visual art.

*The usage of the term “configurative” as distinct from “figurative” or “nonfigurative” in this section is due to George Quasha.

7.

To attenuate a narrative

(and what is not a narrative?)

so that the threads of the textual fabric,
drawn tight, and thus stretched to tearing, might let some light in (through) thus opened spaces—

stretched beyond the point of tearing so that as scrap-cloth, or like the tiny fragments of
“experienced paper” artist Irwin Kremen finds where he does and assembles into “collages of [his]
kind,” in the service of beauty wrenched from the world—

“experienced” words fall on Lissa Wolsak’s pages, redeemed as if from language, or, if the open space
and light thus liberated were more the logos than that tangle of anxieties and devious consolations
we have for speech

—language itself.

Language itself

whose scatterings are not her doing, but whose isolations are attention’s discoveries.

These phrases and assemblages (assemblies)—these finely reinvented tales, are thus as far from
what might seem to be their literary neighbors—as—

I mean, Lissa Wolsak has not taken the hammer to more constituted verbiage. The damage precedes
her. Apparent fragmentation is but the refusal to suture what rather shows to her affective intellect
something other than morbidity—something whose injuries only attention heals.

The names of herbs and flowers, lifted from the incunabula of what long has ceased to be nature—
where nature has long ceased to carry the tinctures of its infancy—the tinctures are tinctured new.
So nature, to update a Shakespearean itinerary, in spite of nature, natures nature.

What instrument lifts a word? What places space?

8. Magic Without Tears

At some point in whatever I write, it seems, these days, I inevitably begin to speak about magic. It is
a curse I contracted decades ago, but no matter. Not magic in the floreate sense—the miraculous
quality of poetical manifestation; not the contrary of that either: the dark and nasty character of a
culture of curses and charms; rather, the pneumatic miasma wherein image and thought transmit
from soul to soul, compelling grim entrainments, untoward participations. Politics, advertising,
erotology—as usual—if you will. The business of magic in our time is not so much to effect event
as to compel ontology. And herein lies its pertinence to poetry. Pound says that poetry is language
charged to the utmost extent. This charge is ontological / magical. The quality of existence is at stake
in it. The poet must assume responsibility for the focus and charge of her behavior in the theater
of poetic projection, and if she will spread over the consciousness of her reader an umbrella of
being determined, as she knows it, she must render the fact that she is doing so transparent, not

compulsory. Otherwise, the poet's business is to unmask, neutralize, overcome, the involuntary magic of language wielded for coercion or gain. But obliviousness to the ontological dimension of the poetic act is sadly the corollary of the common pursuit of poetic "expression." For the most part our myriad poets simply abrogate the responsibility inherent in their condition, adopting a weak, quotidian, and largely unconscious ontological position. Witness the proliferation of workshop-bred verse that transmits the gray whimper of impotence before the presumed-to-be-inevitable conditions of existence. Meanwhile covert magic sleazes across the noosphere.

The only prophylactic for magic is magic. You defeat a curse by exhausting its means. It should have been Language Poetry's job to defeat such magic; and indeed it did move half way in that direction, but by adopting an ontological stance that too exclusively reified the sociality and materiality of linguistic being, it left matters pretty much as they stand. Lissa Wolsak takes up the work where the Language people left off. Her words are charged with the task of unsticking language from either of two desperate poles: the gray thralldom of speech, unconscious of its ontological provenance; the purely nugatory rattle of the negation of meaning. Nor does her poetry rest at a point "between" these extremes. It doesn't rest at all, but takes up the work of deploying the charge of poetry to reconfigure the very event of meaning, so that magic here, and sometimes in the floreate and luminous sense indeed, can be engaged without magical harm.

9.

In manifesting his species of *Panentheism*—the doctrine that reality takes place within the god—the Kashmiri Shaivite master, Abhinavagupta, imagines that any manifest universe—as well as any individual thing—is a community of contemplatives, whose gathered attention, holding the god in consciousness, embodies the god, in this case Siva.

—A bit like a Dionysian *thiasos*, the band of celebrants that embodies the Dionysian force. Beasts and hillsides themselves, they roam the wilds outside the polis, ravaging beast and hillside—sustaining their collective identity through the very violence that is their constitutive action. And that action re-opens the *commons*—the common ontological grounds, seized by the *enclosures* of property, propriety, private ownership, on whatever level of materiality or cognition. (Not that Abhinavagupta's milieu practiced anything like the ancient wildness of his Saivite or Dionysian forbearers—quite the contrary. But in regard to the figure of the esoteric sodality, the analogy holds.)

For Abhinava, wherever multiplicity hangs together as a momentary *one*, multiplicity does not vanish in *to* the one. Rather, the collective multiplicity of contemplatives becomes a configuration for any configured thing. The thing is a temporary accommodation of dispersive forces that, like *strife* in Empedokles' magical ontology, effect the separation that is its identity—while revealing identity itself to be but a phase in the concourse of manifest being.

No fragmentary apparition loses this unitary property, for there are always component submoieties whose simultaneous coalescence constitutes the entity. And no coherence, however stolid or ornate, exceeds the property of the sodality; none can any more or less embody the god, whose being is distinct from (though whose nature permeates and tinctures) his embodiments, for the nature of the god himself gives form, but has no form.

Let this serve as a "theory"—a "beholding"—for the singularity of Lissa Wolsak's utterances and the communities they summon—some unknown divinity bespoke in each element, each phrase.

Barrytown, February 2005

Lissa Wolsak

Pen Chants

or ntb or

12 Spirit-like

Impermanences

Na Carminagua held her hair and spoke..

waxed fat upon dogmas

of twenty centuries

at neap tide a bow-ride,

quant ... through

peach-fed ancestors whose ancestors were fish

..... eternity misfits me largely

because of my suffused wanderings there

and this without let

~

a seated girl, by a follower

manila snowbank, unwoken peace

the mudra of fascination

silver tazza

I will not hide my hands,

with the forces that produced them

at stake is

inescapable speech

loneliness of ill-formed time

so that twice I scattered them

a culture tired of its narratives

unintelligible kneeling...

ruling is the phantom of a supper

color, glass, light absorb

the injurious weir

it is

go no further than the famous death scenes

these arches are but rooves

of earlier churches

cold spots where galaxies

would eventually form

I brought my sacred body

and caused it to sit..

were all the limbs of my body

be turned to tongues

with living voice I ventriloquise

let this....govern that..

I soothsay nakedness

all language

unearthed from a kiss

inky violet sugar

blue rue chartreuse horehound,

in umbels or heads, spike-train,

spin-glass

unbranched but entangled, benth, shield-fern, teasel

erect to sprawling blister rust, slink-lily

swards of silver grass

tranquil beryl, mica, diaphane

and so on tongueing my

mojo sleep-masks,

shadow-genius

cover me up

but as the conchy bearer of speech-blows,

a reflection on taking place...

flew off the palm of my hand

always already luo, ingled

outside each others light-cones

as with the many-bodied

suspensi spiritus

is not our own impasse

an art of dying consciously

he is waking, just as I sleep

arouse then
my tungusic.. my gnos...
I am full of rammed earth

... and be called
voices of those
who stood looking
alalia.... alalia....
if because of you
I could on these
when once the
once more..
to see without pause...

via immanencia
we always thought

to jink through trees
to rise out of
a night of prayer

receive my cloak
devastatrix,
stem-wind
bending the vow

over the mouth of
the upflung abysse
nom de guerre

I spoke my mysteries

tiara, muon, tot

ma mo ooo eia ei on ei

I went up on my branch
and sat there

it was I who put the breath
within my own breath

from:
Lissa Wolsak
SQUEEZED LIGHT
Collected Poems 1994-2005
Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press
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Loi n° 2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010, Article 1 :

« Nul ne peut, dans l'espace public, porter une tenue destinée à dissimuler son visage. »



Deux femmes portent le niqab, ou voile intégral, à Montreuil, en mai 2010 ©Fred Dufour/AFP

les Yeux sans Visage

dorota czerner

Runaway pains clatter across my face like trainlines that lace a double glow through an
aftersunset prairie,
lines burrow me, slice me,

into barenesses

The sculpted lines of sorrow, of leaps of recognition and sudden joys, deliberate and soft,
intimate traces infused with liquid powder, blackened with soot of *kajal*, the lines of life
under heavy freight trains, red and purple wagons of fear that pass along dried veins
with every stretched smile. Moods. A day at a time. Thoughts. A day at a time.
Postmodern pink in the blur of repeated morning rituals. Lipsticks. Mirrors.

Events always lived on the edge of a mirror, concealing or revealing layers of age, beauty,
failures in beauty, a day lost, day regained, events invoking the deeper message as part of
their own landscape.

Living out myths devised by others. Small things that go wrong,
layer up, mud up. Fears
that drill the color until it juices every last drop.

Moods. Dreams. Narratives, straitenings. Skin. Truth in. Truth out.

The habits so self-enclosed with time as to unravel, weave the vestige of every expression
with the raw thread of a silk worm.

A face.

les Yeux sans Visage

Cover me. Embellish me. See me through.

A woman with beautiful hands, a woman with no body.

A man lying in the yellow sand, naked. Bleached sky.

"...things seen and unseen"...

and of all the things the fear and the anticipation of a crescent fear.

The man with half a face missing, sunken into his own absence like a reflection in a black stone, unerringly rubbing his past onto people who walk in on him on buses, torn, silently polite, run into him on the corner by the coffee shop, and run off again, all smoothness sped up with rubber soles, or flipflops. Swept stamped feet feet away, he sits at the side door, his good eye looking off into the air above their heads, skin swollen like the earth in spring.

The eyes between them a curtain that divides and spins dead air, in the presence of disturbance.

Porous and open to the visual invasion, the space itself breathes, mimicking skin.

Mimicking his mind still waterlogged with the memory of pain unreleased, roar engine smell, of burned tires, crushed, till memory runs into haze. And pain no more but twitching and quivering with relentless racing hatred. Underneath the skin. Eruptions. Stretched to the limits. He treads his identity through what is now left of him.

The moon passes behind a tree, a tree passes at the back of the mind, the cigarette lighter that flickers as he crosses the road, a track that runs over his lost face, the flicker, the blue flicker ricocheting light to light to transparency, and orange to orange to no light at all. Sometimes he remembers.

The narrative of the man who is feared for no fault of his own, but who has to tread his path through the hole in their distance, and intuit the exact shape of their terror.

Tsagiglalal— She who watches. If he could watch himself he would see the grinning face of a mask, a water monster, maybe a Spedis Owl, or some other half-bird half-man creature staring from a rock. A black petroglyph. Through the concentric, almond-shaped carving of the eyes he would see his own death only to recognize its deep satisfaction that denies all silences.

But from the other side, diffused around the gasoline evening, the oily smell of his nearly-then-death can still be detected, feared and inhaled by the strangers. He rubs his face against their feelings, he himself a stripmall of hurt, of love lost.

Erasures. Erosion. Smallpox opacity.

Does he know the wound of reluctance, hidden, that numbs the ability to see?

Over and over and over and over to pass through, a determined, self-stitched awareness of himself being watched, the sense of self sent into what is only a cavern of his real face, abstract to him, visible to them. The acuteness of the face left behind and the nonsense of how they *can* see him.

But to ever let it go?

Let it go, listen, let it go, listen,

listen into the night

A face is never silent.

A petroglyph mute.

(slowly, the sandworm fears penetrate the outer layers of their thoughts, infect deeper tissues. He is drowning in their nightmares.)

And that it keeps flooding back, having a face, being *that tall man walking up the hill*, being a man, not an owl, being, unmade-remade, being not to be dismissed, erased, that the face has the power to save him... Or drown him, plunge him into the turbid marrow, *le marais*, where progressively the mind too could get lost. That the face is the place where not only his, but also their feelings become articulated, the eyes focused, where the unsettling politics of truth and fear converge in, and beyond the surface of the flesh.

Facing a face. Defacing. Disheveling. Robbing the sensuous multitudes.

“And when ye ask of them anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain...”

(The Quran)¹

(.....)

Has your true scent risen up through the cracks between your tightly pressed fingers? Has it escaped the curtain of silence to float towards its first apparency, shaping the distance into a *transparence*? The space of an open sky? Piercing the veil, transgressing the separation... Look out, I'm coming out. Have you shed your skin yet? *“...these bizarre, often abbreviated figures, typically show ribs or other internal organs...”²*

He folds his both hands into a mask, his body perfectly still as he daydreams himself into the strangers' bodies. Leaning over, with not one, but many — faces, new bodies now — his yearning dissolves the boundaries of their shoulders, legs, breasts, reaches behind the delicate architecture of costume, and habit...

The Crescent Man

¹ The Quran, 33:53

² James D. Keyser, *Indian Rock Art of the Columbia Plateau*, University of Washington Press, p. 88, “Mythical Beings”.

... or maybe the face is something to be removed so that all of the more hidden parts of the being can be carefully sensed and treasured? So that you as you as me as you, together, reflecting inverting, as rippled white clouds floating over the bottom of the lake, hatch delicate manifestations, together, folding over each other the way the sky folds over the water, in transparency, we can be *the depth* of the world.

A woman with beautiful hands.

A woman wrapped in silence, illuminated
from the inside.

A woman with only one eye.

"Inside the needle's eye a turning night of stars."

*(Rumi)*³

who, anyway, do you ever *know* except the one who is on the same side? Articulated from inside-out, kept, sloughed off, who, brought from the outside-in, who beside you, is there with you to be known? Who inhabits the distance between the watcher and the watched? and who, if anybody, on the other side? who on the surface?

An invisible pleat that you are for yourself, I am for myself, both filled with the contents of the world, the apricot sunsets, the sparrows, the screaming jays and dogwood in bloom, the exterior come interior, you — now the world, pull me in, fold me, into the sheer crossing of our limpid yet so real otherness

Between what is seen (the surface rippling swirling bubbling resting fluttering) and what is seen (inside the depthsand collecting, rising up, downbuilding, growing, decaying), seen by you, here, and seen by me, here, between the eye and the memory of the eye, a taste of strangeness

³ Mevlana Jelaluddin Rumi, "...*this moment this love comes to rest in me...*"

and fear, fear

of shapes that have been fed by your breath

“And when ye ask of them anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain...”

fear and

the light from behind the curtain, *lumière noircie, nous sommes tissés de nos peurs*. We are woven from the fabric of absence and separation. Tease me. Test me. Taste the bitter sap you put on my tongue. One by one our fears buckle one another, intertwine forming a tapestry of the realities we share, rooms we cohabit, spread veils over the windows we look through. We have fears. We become fears. Like bullets we project ourselves to pass through each other's bodies. They make us. Structure us. Liquid lead raining drawing curtains obscuring the brick embankment of the river once marked with fired shots.

Lead words Light whispered from under the curtain

only a circle a sphere is a mass of flames a colored lump of glass made hollow an opalescent blue lampshade

protect me contain me

the light

of salt, of chalk, draw me towards myself towards a stranger while runaway pains clatter across my face like heavy trains, a night sliced into, a night. In the afterglow of sunset, between the visible and the tactile, now you can hear the cries of an owl grown sharper driven deeper, feel the shriveling of darkened form and the revelation, hear the curtain is tinted with the warmth of voices open open now else now how could you ever at all

Woodstock, May 2011

Uncommon Knowledge: Mark So's Text Scores

Madison Brookshire

Mark So's music comes out of a tradition, if it can be called that, of experimental music that sees the essential instability of words on a page as fertile soil in which to cultivate indeterminacy. This strategy of writing music with text, rather than traditional notation, leaves ample room for interpretation on the part of the performer. In fact, interpretation—usually an abstract concept somewhat anterior to the music itself—is absolutely integral to the performance of a text score. Music written with words does not end with interpretation; it begins with it.

Common knowledge tells us that a traditionally notated score is an ideal form to which every performance aspires. The interpretation of the text, in this case notes on a page, by the performer is a regrettable, if unavoidable consequence of the written notation turning into sound. The text, then, is sacred and the sound profane. Indeterminate text scores avoid this distinction between sacred and profane, taking the composition out of the realm of ideal forms and into the real by potentializing it, that is, by making it subject to the conditions under which it will be performed. This includes, but is not limited to, the will of the performer and of the listener. In effect, when speaking about the performance of an indeterminate text score, it is not entirely accurate to use the word interpretation anymore. Performing an indeterminate text score is not a simple act of reading, it is a creative act in and of itself. In a sense, the performer writes the text that will live in the world (the performance) as they read the text that lives on the page (the score).

The difference between the two forms of notation is the difference between potential and potentiality. The traditionally notated score exists before it is performed: it is potential music on the page that becomes actual by being performed. The music that the text score makes possible, on the other hand, does not exist before it is performed: it can exist or not exist and therefore has potentiality. It has the ability to be music, which means it could also not be music. The text score can remain not-music, whereas the traditional score is already music; it cannot be or not be and therefore does not have potentiality.

So's music has this ability to be or not be. He is certainly not alone in this endeavor—in fact, he told me he is often accused of borrowing too heavily from other composers—but over the course of a few years and a few hundred pieces (he is prolific beyond compare), he has aggressively pursued a line of inquiry only superficially similar to the others. Many of So's influences have a spare style that makes use of ample silences and denies ornamentation. Like an international style building, the elegant lines of the structure are all the more visible because of its transparency. So's music often goes beyond even this spare aesthetic, the lines of the music stretched so thin as to almost drift away.

To borrow an idea from Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, So creates rhizomes—in this case, listening situations that are non-hierarchical—often by distorting an extant strategy to the point that it is transformed. Speaking of Glenn Gould, Deleuze and Guattari write, "There are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree or root. There are only lines. When Gould speeds up the performance of a piece, he is not just displaying virtuosity, he is transforming the musical points into lines, he is making the whole piece

proliferate.”¹ Just as Gould can stretch a score over a half-tempo (as in his performance of Schoenberg) or turn it into lines by playing it twice as fast (his Bach), So turns the previous composers' structures into lines by stretching their strategies. In So's hands, an otherwise stable structure can be stretched to the limit—beyond the limit—until it fundamentally transforms, like copper spun into cobwebs.

And this is audible in the music itself: for there are not just sounds and silences, the sounds are stretched over the silence, just barely there. They do not supersede the silence; they are parallel to it, moving along with it. And at times, impossibly, even the silence itself can be stretched too thin. The piece breaks and you are simply, profoundly in the room or in the environment. The tightrope snaps and you can no longer pretend to float above or beyond the world. There are often moments of great beauty in a So piece, but there are never moments of transcendence. As a listener, you are ineluctably in the present, wrestling with it.

Many of Mark So's recent works derive from his insights while reading the poetry of John Ashbery. An Ashbery poem often elides logic while slipping gracefully between the erudite and the vernacular. In the slippage, an otherwise unattainable, unsayable truth can appear. In his few verbal statements on his work, Willem de Kooning often remarked on the importance of glimpsing and that his paintings were attempts to fix the act of a glimpse—in other words, to destabilize the static object of a painting by putting time back into it. He achieved this by covering and recovering the canvas quickly, scraping it down at the end of each day and starting from the traces, the stains, on the next. So's scores, slippery as soap on vellum, also allow for this kind of glimpsing, but it is an aural/intellectual glimpsing as opposed to a visual/visceral one.² And So's music destabilizes static perception; it is not enough to hear, not even enough to hear silence, you must begin to hear hearing, to glimpse your own glimpse, to experience yourself experiencing something, even if only for a moment. Sounds, silences and your experience of them overlap and interpenetrate.³

But this interpenetration is not harmonious; it is disjoint. John Cage made it his project to reveal that music could be any sounds in any order. This involves an equivalence—one thing is like another—that negates value judgment. So goes further: any sounds in any order, but instead of an equivalence between them, there is a radical disparity. Cage famously made an enemy of harmony, but in a sense, he used silence in all of his pieces after 4'33" as a kind of harmony—the sounds of the environment always “fit” inside a Cage piece. In So, the silences are dissonant. There are layers of silence and they are in contrast if not outright contest.

This involves a level of attunement on the part of the listener that few works require of their audience. One is keenly aware that one is uncomfortable, and the discomfort brings you closer to the world. Rather than hearing a cliché, even a clichéd silence, you actually hear. You begin to perceive hearing itself.

This is not about ascending to a higher level or attaining a reality that is beyond illusion. So's music is all surface, but it is deeply involved with the surface. For the surface itself, his music reveals to its

¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1987), 8.

² de Kooning's famous dictum “Paint so fast you can't think” is a strategy for fixing the glimpse. So writes quickly as well, but it is not explosive. It is slippery without losing a certain precision and is more akin to Ashbery than de Kooning in this way. So's music is not intellectual in the sense that it is not meant, first and foremost, to be heard; it is sensual, it is thinking through the senses. We might say, “Listen so slow you can't think.”

³ “...even with a thought/ The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct,/As water is in water.” William Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, (Barnes and Noble: New York) 1187.

listener, is the given world. To look beyond the surface is already to be involved in a kind of romance, a transcendentalist game. For So, reality is not to be reached or attained; it is appearance. Reality is what appears during the performance.

Speaking of So's music in terms of reality makes it sound heavy, but it is the opposite; it is gossamer. It is weightless. So's music is a transparent skin stretched over the surface of the real. Like a stocking with a run in it, it reveals both skins as skin and as such, is both attractive and repellent, illusion and disillusion at once. The skins themselves are several—layers of tissue covering over layers of tissue ad infinitum. There is always something more that is out of sight, but it too is just tissue. There is no realer real, only layers upon layers of paper thin densities to be pulled apart until they drift away—layers of tissue covering the body of the world, itself no more than another accumulation of tissue.

Achieving the heightened attention required to discern these tissues of sound and silence from one another is a voluntary act on the part of the listener. The music presents the situation, but it does not "induce" this or that state of consciousness. It is not meditation. It is radical freedom: pure potentiality. The listener is presented with the choice to hear nothing or to hear hearing itself. She may choose not to hear at all ("there's nothing happening"), or hear her ability to hear. So creates this situation out of tissue thin layers: taut, porous skins all stretched over one another at once and over time.

HAVE YOU HEARD?

kenneth silverman: *begin again*
kyle gann: *no such thing as silence*

John Cage was a good man. And in a big way.

honest, neither coy nor flagellant about himself

open, humorous

a friendly acquaintance and a close friend

a respectful and appreciative ex-friend

a snarky eulogist, even in “mesostics”

fervent and single-minded in pursuit of his visions

hep to, often in advance of, the latest

an inventor

a sometime practitioner of most sonic, visual, and verbal arts

an imaginative collaborator with musicians, dancers, visual
artists

a supportive and energetic musical citizen who organized
programs, played and conducted, sought out gigs,
drove the bus

as good-natured in provocation as in foolery

undismayed by indifference

patient with misunderstanding

took criticism in an understanding spirit

a hard worker -- an outright workaholic in his compositional
practice (flipping coins for hours; tracing imperfections
in paper; interpreting I-Ching hexagrams; procuring,
drawing upon, and superimposing transparent plastic
sheets; mesostics)

assiduous in finding needed support (angels, technicians,
the police, foundations, radio stations)

a devotee of Satie (whom he singlehandedly resurrected)
and mushrooms (which won him a bundle on Italian TV)

like his contemporary Milton Babbitt (with whom he was
often paired and contrasted), a teacher of devoted

musicians who went their own distinguished ways.
(Feldman, Wolff, Brown; Martino, Lewin, Boretz,
Sondheim, Lansky, Westergaard)

These qualities glow in **Kenneth Silverman's** 400-page bio.

KS covers the standard biographical dimensions
comprehendingly

needed musical commentary is refreshingly competent, is
nicely integrated into the narrative, and distinguishes
and articulates clearly JC's easily muddled concepts
of possible narrative tracks, **KS** adheres to the career curve

this-then-that

clown-to-sage

rags-to-riches

parochial-to-famous

outsider-to-lawgiver

jampacked with shapely, well-paced info

for us musical octogenarians, a tour down memory lane

all the artists, celebrities, restaurants, streetnames,

hangouts, friends, lovers, newspapers, cities, countries,
triumphs, disasters

richly sprinkled with Cage's conversations and remarks

goes down like water

even rereads well

And he was a gutsy prankster

His most celebrated spoof

4'33" for piano solo

flourished in the '50's

in the attentive sitdown & shut up

highcultural concert frame

in designated rows & columns

indispensable

to appropriately offend its captive audience

outranks Rauschenberg all-whites, all-reds

where you could look the other way

or walk out

Kyle Gann, as a composer and longtime contemporary music critic for the *Village Voice*, has an unforced feel for the milieu; and as a convert from pro- to anti- to pro-, he retains a vivid sense of the shades of unbelief which envelop Cage to this day, and of the factual and philosophical range required for a convincing defense of 4'33", which he supplies clearly, engagingly, and in unflinching detail to bring its standing to the singular level of *Sacre du Printemps*.

No such thing as silence confronts the multiple, and always vital, meanings which silence had for Cage and his work:

1) the equal, antithetical, not to be slighted, partner of sound

2) a misnomer for inattention to leakage or rejection of unwanted

3) the universal emptiness, embracing all, out of which sound arises, or into which it's injected

4) zero on the meter

Gann defends 4'33" as 2), and some still value it as recognition and incorporation of what's out there, art embracing real life, busting open the frame. For 4'33", I would myself prefer to invoke the aural tension of hushed expectation turning indignant -- not shuffling feet, coughs, or catcalls, if any, which are merely acoustic symptoms of that silence. Check out the oppressive aural density at the deserted southmost stretch of the Florida everglades: to me, "the silence where no sound hath been" is a crunchy psychoacoustic, psychological, certainly not an acoustic, concept. (With pranks, as with all Cage *in extremis*, **KS** is avuncularly indulgent, citing all defenses, arguing none.)

And like Milton,

he was a virtuoso of the academic and art league
lecture circuits

Lecture about Nothing.

a great spoof

likewise needs the conventional frame

to offend appropriately
in 1947 under highclass auspices
you were honored to be there
and you presented your thing politely
with its best foot forward
*I have nothing to say
maybe an idea will occur
now we're really getting nowhere
now we start the third part of the second section of this
lecture
if anyone is going to sleep, let him*

This is the one I wish I had written myself

Q:

Sir, why do you write unplayable chords for piano?

A:

*Composing is one thing,
performing is another,
listening is a third.*

What could they possibly have to do with one another?

another social offense:

threefold

derides the questioner

dodges the question

and is preposterous besides

But Cage always wraps the upthrust finger in his own cocky brand of dismissive, neoZen reasoning.

Your next move, after chuckling over the guy's irrepressible effrontery, is to think about Cage's **A** all over again yourself.

You begin to see that your own rapid riposte to Cage's answer is no peach. So don't treat Cage's terminal question as merely rhetorical. Think harder. And let me whisper something to you: Cage spent most of his life driving these three apart.

#

an Action spoof

contact mic's
amplify JC
typing letters
&
drinking water
#

*But what's this about the greatest American
composer of the 20th century? Did Cage enter some
sweepstakes with Elliot Carter, Milton Babbitt, and Morton
Feldman and come out on top?*

(**KS** accepts JC's preeminence as a given
that's just who it's about
doesn't argue it one way or the other
observes the saint
doesn't campaign for sainthood)

The "American" thing has long been of concern
to those who fear being a mere appendage of Europe.

(**KS** precedes his book
with four hightoned, not-to-be-skipped, quotes.)

It's a widely respected opinion
that a composer is not authentically American
if he exudes the musical traditions of continental Europe.

Authenticity requires a touch of Asia.

which sends me scurrying to Cageworks

He did compose, didn't he?, a modest number of rather
understated very original pieces
and a less modest number of overstated self-defeating ones,
wasn't it?

what to listen to -- a tough question
no discography in **KS**
and only an amazing one for 4'33" in Gann
anyway, half his stuff isn't recorded
and half of that couldn't be
and much of it
isn't an it

just suggestions

the Sonatas & Interludes?

Dream?

In a Landscape?

16 Dances?

Concerto for Prepared Piano & Orch.?

fine stuff

but **pre-Cage** Cage

Also **SQ in 4 Parts** (overlook Part 4.) simple, focused,
circumscribed

a subtle gem of gentle, quiet stasis

in its time risked sounding impoverished, feeble, inept,
amateurish

and so it did -- in the context of Imbrie, Kirchner, Bartok,
Hindemith

but Cage soon veered off in his more celebrated directions

Concert for Piano & Orch. (Tudor &)

Music of Changes (David Tudor or Herbert Henck, pn)

Freeman Etudes (Paul Zukofsky or Janos Negyesy, vln)

Etudes Australes (Grete Sultan, pn)

the real JC

never mind who's responsible or in what sense
composer, performer, random
(do you care?)

just listen to these CD's as if
and as is

Did Cage himself listen
by merely noticing? by taking inventory?
without retention or penetration or spin?

Try it.

Where are you now?

NYC 25th Anniversary CD

Concert for Piano and Orchestra

(*epical, awesomely intricate*, says **KS**)

players do their own individually assigned things

(these loci of **Liberation** and **Freedom** will persist for JC)
for us veterans of unscripted as well as scripted
improvisation
this disastrous semi-composed glob of witless togetherness
is readily identifiable
as what you get when no one listens to anyone else

But that would seem to be what Cage was after.
So now listen to the spacious, heedful, dazzlingly timed,
interaction conducted by **Stefano Scodanibbio** (2006).

Huh?

{Cage and **KS**
-- not to mention the giddy clique --
must have both been
psychic
to foresee this future
lurking in the womb of the 25th}

Music of Changes / Herbert Henck

a good way to listen

be doing something else

(good anticipation of what you'll have to do
at a **musicircus** combo
or a **europera**)

any short stretch by Henck
(or **David Tudor** in the old days)
yields erratically fetching **gestures**
that doubtless, as they blur into, over, and out
pique our interest in JC's methods of production
his famous **gamuts** and **hexagrams**

*But there it is
how did he do it
not what is it*

M of C initiated JC's determination to create, with and for
supremely equipped mod music performers, some
supremely hard to play, supremely hyperactive continuity,

which buried the integrity, the right to life, of any individual sound.

Freeman Etudes / Paul Zukofsky

The execrable Freeman Etudes for solo violin sound like outtakes from my own much more attractive *Lyric Variations for Violin and Computer* written with and for Paul a decade earlier. It's painful to hear such a massive frustration of human physiology in the teeth of randomly supplied bowstrokes.

So now listen to the string bass (**Scodanibbio**) do it in 1995. (*Yes! Same guy. String bass yet.*)

All contradiction jells in wondrous oracular excess like Milton Babbitt's *around the horn* for solo French horn.

Etudes Australes / Grete Sultan

To pitchfreaks, a striking feature of *Australes* early on is the rediscovery of the power, within the rich emptiness of well-mic'd pianospace, of the whole energy of the whole space achieving the tight focus that we apprehend as a clearly manifested single pitch.

Makes the occasional **fistful** sound *schmutzig*, like a mishit. As with other Cagean verities, I come full circle with this one. Sure, it was great to liberate noise from the Unmusical slot and learn to hear all those snazzy nonharmonic frequency packages.

And after a lifetime's worth, a mere screening of starmaps reveals to us, all over again, the **miracle** of pitch.

what's left when taste is blocked out?

However unintentionally gestural *Music of Changes*, *Freeman Etudes*, and *Etudes Australes* may seem, Cage did manage to eliminate **ego** therefrom, unlike **Stockhausen** (I have Spoken) or **Boulez** (addict of the breathless hush and the antiquated superscrabble (usually going up, says **Morton Feldman** {they hated each other}))

Cage targeted **hearing** as well
-- as in need of liberation --

wishing that we would free ourselves
from any and all emotional, musical, intellectual, humanoid
spin
and *break on thru to the other side*
to each sound in the fullness of its own life
uncontaminated even by its context of other sounds

lifelong

he encouraged us to hear not just music
but each sound in the world around us that way

an sich

for its unique sheerly sonic essence

*Cage even liberated himself
from any need to **think sound**.*

Preoccupied, ingeniously as always, with showbiz, in
musicircuses and **europeras** (none of which have I ever
personally witnessed) Cage seems to have driven
2.performance to a level of hullabaloo in which 1.composing
is unneeded and 3.listening is impossible. He ceased for a
while to “compose” at all.

what happens if it returns?

(We liked JC's taste.)

Ryoanji / Scodanibbio (str b)

(yes, amazing again -- glissando, live & taped)

Sixty Eight / Lucas Vis, Bav.Rad.Orch.

(nicely dubbed “anarchic harmony” by KS)

two late celebrations of the **miracle**

in two different ways

tracing a rock garden

pitch-handouts & timeframes

after a concert of one of his late works Cage remarked
that he had always wanted his music to be heard that way
but this is patently false

A caveat:

As Cage seemed to sense, even his free-for-alls come alive
precisely insofar as the performers adapt to one another,

and drop dead when they don't. What else could his disgust with inattention have meant?

And while some of his political and musical pronouncements, divestitures, electronics, pranks, happenings, and hullabaloo may seem as quaint and dated as the bunny hop, don't forget to remember the sparkling jewels strewn along his path -- much of his writing (including even mesostics); Sonatas & Interludes, SQ in 4 Parts, stretches of Music of Changes and Etudes Australes, Ryoanji, Sixty-Eight, and music yet to be unveiled; along with some drawings and etchings, and plenty of ferocious musical calligraphy. And there is also his undeniable allover everpresence in the work of his progeny.

so is he or isn't he?

Given that **James Pritchett's** classic study *The Music of John Cage* (1996) creates an organic, musicworks-centered narrative of Cage's evolution about as superbly as can be imagined, what more might we hope for in a bio by a scholar with a thorough immersion in Cage's multifaceted achievements and heavy credits in American Culture (bios of Houdini, Poe, and Cotton Mather).

Each of these three very different books (Silverman, Gann, Pritchett) exhibits a fine, if slightly hagiographic, intelligence, and each served me well thru stacks of CD's, books, and a few vinyls on my journey from twilight to halflight.

KS says that JC wrote more about music than any other 20th century composer: so we might hope for a snottier appraisal of those **chains of whimsy** which Cage offered in the guise of **reasoning**.

KS understandably accepts these appeals to reason as biographical and sociological fact, but doesn't probe and dramatize their tortuous explanatory complexities as he does, say, for Cotton Mather on witchcraft. Surely the value of these whimsical chains lies as much in the ripples and eddies emanating therefrom into the deposits of **shortchange** and **roadkill** nearby as in their idiosyncratic Cagean termini.

As a sanity check, check out the reasoning offered by JC for declaring "harmony" (meaning always tonal chord progressions toward cadences) an "incorrect" basis for "structure" (Cage's approach to time seems puzzlingly pre-relativistic (and unZen?): an empty, clocked, container whose arithmetical subdivisions are open for occupancy.). Considering bases for structure should surely lead to a more discriminating focus of, and upon, **pre-composition** (a Babbitt term) -- but that's more up Pritchett's alley.

I could also use more about Cage's breakdown (mid-'40's); his failed neadolescent attempts to "inject his emotions" into his music (sounded to others "like a woodpecker on a chalkboard"); -- (notice that the somewhat inscrutable notion of that pristine sound out there into which he hoped to inject his "emotions" conforms to the similarly inscrutable notion of that pristine clocktime out there into whose waiting subdivisions he injected sound); -- his ultimate conviction that all, not just musical, emotion is inherently a bad thing, unsettling to the mind; -- (a Buddhist belief no doubt, but in postwar NYC more commonly ascribable to a wounded psyche). This stuff is all there in **KS**, but not in the same package. For Cotton Mather, it would have been.

For a subject of such quirky catholicity, one might wish for a biographer who was somewhat the novelist; who

approached the life more anchored in -- not just reporting and describing -- the work and less in the career curve. (Cf. Mariani's construction of Gerard Manley Hopkins, or Wineapple's of Emily Dickinson in *White Heat*.)

Unlike the reviewer at Amazon.com, I do OK with KS's research into who did what to whom and in what position; but please do make me a fly on the wall for that month's (5 years'?) worth of nightly meetings of Cage, Christian Wolff, and Morton Feldman at which they laid the conceptual musical groundwork for their skewed, as it turned out, futures.

The few fundamental distortions in **KS's** book stem from his comfort with the Real American version of the rich tapestry of 20th century composition in the USA -- the tapestry within which Cage's works were first presented and heard, ignored and booed. The "Cagean" is a gaudy, ornery thread in that tapestry, not the tapestry. **KS** gives us the sound of the one hand clapping

Cage himself would be astonished and not a little annoyed with the Great Composer label. He genuinely, not coyly or flagellantly, claimed deficiency in feeling for harmony, and even for music. (In this last, he sells his early works short.) But he also sells short what I can only describe as his gift of prophecy, prophecy that his blobs and squiggles would find virtuose interpreters who would accept responsibility to create therefrom the music that he had intuited -- certainly not inwardly heard -- in principle only. This is not the familiar case of the not-yet decently performed composer, nor quite like the songwriter whose sheetmusic reaches the fakebooks of a generation of inspired improvisers. Those guys were thinking sound from the outset. Cage systematically over a period of years took extraordinary measures to think in such

blatantly nonsonic terms (flipping coins, I-Ching, tracing starmaps) that his own sonic intentions, if any, would die at birth. (**KS** dubs this step-by-step acquisition of irresponsibility “self-effacement” and “self-erasure”. (Surprisingly Cage’s own **gamut** of sounds was the last to go.)) What we’re left with is more like Nostradamus’s prophecies about, say, camels in the Yukon, except that you can’t improvise camels (or the Yukon), and his prophecies were no damn good anyhow.

So just what is it actually that composing, performing, and listening have to do with one another? How did all that turn out?

KS affirms **Morton Feldman’s** emergent pre-eminence and is onto the **JC / MF** split which he reports the way they told it -- which is kind of cute

The way I tell it:

Feldman SQ2 / Arditti: *composing = listening = feeling-out the Heard:*

The final score encodes for a listener / performer / scorereader an aural process of prodding (considerately) and absorbing each sound from the inside out, until aura and specificity prevail, and we may advance to elsewhere. Proceeding from **Cagean** premises, **MF** has turned them upside down.

Autonomy of the sound resides not in insulation of *ding-a-ling an sich* against human spin, but in a concentrated mutual adjustment of sender and receiver. What has become of the formerly distinct but interlocked roles of composer, performer, listener? They have become one and the same in an unprecedented degree of consolidated freedom -- not just freedom from ulterior constriction, but

also freedom from merely partial, specialized engagement;
freedom **for** fully invested awareness.

It seems best to tell the difference.

-- j.k.randall

an introductory footnote to John Cage
THE ACQUISITION OF IRRESPONSIBILITY

shortchange & roadkill

1.Promulgate lowgrade textbook harmony & analysis as the Story of the Past. Serious about pitch? History demanded the march from classical tonality to romantic disintegration to serialization to random to *fuhgeddaboutit*.

(**Not quite**. History suggests a more discriminating construction and deeper grasp of classical tonality (Cf.Schenker & Boretz), and alternative ways of emerging from reconceived romantic disintegration. (Cf.Scriabin, Bartok, Hindemith.))

2.Or import a stance from a nearby but distinct dimension {so that acoustic fact becomes compositional doctrine} and thereby fortify our progress from the acoustic independence of pitch, duration, dynamic, & timbre, to total serialization, to *fuhgeddaboutit there's no zero!* (This last is a John Cage caper.)

(**How about** a deeper probe of kinds and shades of musical dependence. How was, say, timbre handled by Mozart? by Berlioz? by Schoenberg? by Geo. Crumb?)

inheritance

the concert is the highcultural wing of music-oriented showbiz, the theater where music becomes actual, and whose needs, apparatus, and manners are both obligatory and of the essence

a composer provides, to performers and score-readers, notations of his newly imagined soundpiece

the notations are in historically evolving, widely understood and agreed-upon, codes for highly specified sounds and the transmission thereof

the performers are highly skilled interpreters and executants of these codes, who transmit the highly, but not utterly, determinate import thereof to the listener

the listener is an idealized member of the audience

the audience is a group of appropriately acculturated persons assembled in a devoted, closed, space, and behaving unitedly -- in concert -- in ritually receptive, silent, attentive, immobility

liberation from

sound from bias:

 noise is welcome

sound from romantic humanoid effusion

sound from other sound:

 let each individual sound live out its own life

 not subserve context or human shaping

composition from composer's taste and memory:

use a limited, repetitive, pre-determined **gamut** of sounds

composition from composer's intention:

generate the score by sequencing the gamut with **chance** methods

performer from composer 1:

designate the performer's taste as the sequencer of the composer's gamut

performer from composer 2:

transfer to the performer the means and methods for sequencing the composer's gamut by chance

performer from composer 3:

describe in very unspecific terms the sorts of events or actions to be freely invented by performer

performer from composer 4 (= altogether):

1.find or devise a musically uninterpreted notation, picture, or phenomenon for performer to interpret (this method has yielded many a stunning work of calligraphy or visual art)

2.invite performer to carry out some action of own choosing (*Thank you, Sir!*)

(the ultimate was attained by the legendary European performer to whom the composer said "Play anything you like. Just make sure my name is on the program.")

*(each liberation is **from**, is always in resistance to any encroachment by, is always a further release of / from responsibility (= acquisition of irresponsibility) for whatever sound may reach the audience)*

this evolution took place **on stage** of course
in concerts
for audiences

freedom

Pritchett reports that Cage disliked free improvisation for its let-it-all-hang-out expressivity. (Scelsi disliked its you-did-this so I-do-that conventions.)

JC never stresses, or even encourages, conscious unplanned interaction among unprogrammed equally involved participants; and for years, he valorized doing your own thing (which he provided) without concern for what others (similarly provided) were doing. (Cage came to see all things as “interpenetrating”, a static existential concept, not as interacting.)

His late return to recognizable composition in the “number” pieces (individual handouts of pitches in timeframes) gets him some pretty good simulations of an **Interplay** session *{in which the rules are overtly ethical and social (be nice) and not sonic at all, fostering free, considerate, imaginative, sonic interaction among aurally focused participants -- no concert, no audience, no show, just a sonic image of anarchist association in free pursuit of an evolving unspecified goal}*.

But with his **musicircuses** and **europerras**, certainty that simultaneous things will insulate their separate integrities is built in.

anarchy

anarchist Community? any JC thing like **Interplay** sessions? I think not.

Pritchett cites a Benjamin Tucker paragraph about community and freely formed groups and common goals.

But JC's entire output as a composer, his prose declarations notwithstanding, testifies avowedly and vigorously for an anarchism of the insulated, the uncontaminated.

He faulted his **Concert for Piano and Orch.** not because the players are encouraged to pay no attention to each other, which they implicitly are, but as disguised tyranny *of the clock and the handout*.

His later years get positively preachy.

He mentions reading Emma Goldman's *Living my Life* (a lodestar of this reviewer's early 'teens); and Kropotkin and Bakunin (-- in anthologies yet; a further instance of JC's uninflatable modesty); but his rabbit-eared sensitivity to any form of external pressure sounds more like Stirner (*The Ego and Its Own*) or Thoreau. (The image of Thoreau alone by his pond is a JC constant.) His famous collaborations, remember, are celebrated not just for their outcomes; but also, and especially, for their innovative noncollaborational procedure: See you comes Showtime!

Perhaps it tells us something (I'm not sure what) that Cage detested inattentive or sloppy work; and while going to lengths to avoid any imposition on anyone else, he always created imaginatively irrelevant time-consuming labor-intensive production rituals for himself.

-- j.k.randall

Prelude to a non-vexation

When John Cage called me to ask for my participation in the first performance of Satie's 'VEXATIONS' i accepted only with reservations.....at least until i should see the score.

At least until i saw the score.

Perfectly obvious at first view that this was no vexation.....no simple and simplemindedly vexatious example of that soon-to-become-fashionable "épater le bourgeois".....Au contraire!

So of course i said yes. And i played in what was the first performance.

I must say here that i have no patience for the pile of academic speculation that has accumulated since. (full disclosure!) From my point of listening/hearing/comprehending/experiencing much of it amounts to socio-psychological indulgence with no other usefulness than to generate a publishable paper.

Incontrovertable direct experience reveals that this composition is, if not the first, the most perfect mantra in the history of Western culture.....unique in scope and profundity.

Immediately evident that its effect must be that passing through the barrier of boredom beyond which lies the transcendent sense of timelessness.

How could that not be the intent?

And, in fact, that was the state achieved by at least some of the performer-participants.

The theorist in me afterward looked attentively into its compositional details, an analysis which reveals the working of a very subtle intellect indeed, and by-so-doing reconciles intuitive apprehension with the intelligent functioning of the brain.

An asked-for publication in 1975 never came through. At this writing some non-essential stylistic details are to be cleaned up; but the basic insights remain in effect.

(This seems all the more important at this time since a number of writings have fallen under my eyes which are by-all-means to be contradicted.)

The only modification i feel necessary to make now involves the numerology of the number 840, Satie's choice for the number of repetitions. I had disposed of it by saying that any uncountable large number would do just as well. This is undoubtedly so concerning the immediacy of the listening. But the meaning of it lies elsewhere in the mind.

For this reason i add as an indispensable part of my discussion, indeed a prelude to it, the amazingly revelatory exegesis so generously added by my colleague Martha (now Mother Felicitas) Curti.

Philip Corner, Reggio Emilia, 2009

The Number 840

Nothing so uplifts the mind, giving it wings and freeing it from the earth, releasing it from the chains of the body, affecting it with love of wisdom, and causing it to scorn all things pertaining to this life, as modulated melody and the divine chant composed of number.

--St. John Chrysostom

Thus reason has perceived that numbers govern and make perfect all that is in rhythms and in song itself; has examined them diligently; and has found them to be eternal and divine. ... All things present themselves in the mathematical disciplines as harmonious, as having to do with the immortal numbers which are apprehended by reflection and study, those which are perceived by the senses being mere shadows and images.

--St. Augustine

Why did Satie choose 840, of all possible numbers in the world, for the number of repetitions of Vexations? The answer, if there is one, can be found within each person who contemplates the number. To some, it may mean nothing; to others, the universe. To find the universe in the number 840 requires only an elementary awareness of the meaning of numbers throughout civilization--from ancient India, Arabia, Babylon, Sumer, Egypt, Greece--transmitted to us by Pythagoras, Plato, Dante, and many others, as well as by a continuous popular tradition. In music, number plays a central role structurally and symbolically, especially in those periods of history when music is considered a reflection of the eternal, divine, cosmic order. For example: the motet composed by Guillaume Dufay for the dedication of the Florentine Cathedral designed by Brunelleschi, in 1436, corresponds exactly in its mathematical structure to the proportions of the cathedral. The correspondence involves

highly complex fractions which can not be accidental. Equally awesome uses of number in music abound throughout the Renaissance and the Baroque, culminating in the music of J.S.Bach.

The more ways a number can be taken apart to yield its component numbers, the richer and stronger are its symbolic meanings. The number 840 has possibilities so rich that only a few can be explored here. To begin, we add the separate digits:

$$8 + 4 + 0 = 12$$

Eight represents a new beginning, a resurrection, a rebirth, following the completeness of Seven:

The eighth day in the week is the first.

The eighth note in the scale repeats the first.

Many medieval baptismal fonts and baptisteries are eight-sided.

Four represents Earth, the visible creation:

Four directions

Four seasons

Four phases of the moon

Four elements.

The number Four, the element Earth, the square, and the four-petaled lotus, belong to the first chakra in Hindu psychology.

Zero represents non-being, eternity, death.

Twelve represents the cosmic order, salvation, completeness:

The 12 tribes of Israel, the people of God

The 12 disciples of Christ

The 12 signs of the zodiac

The 12 months of the year.

The universality of Twelve is the product of Three and Four.

Three is generated by the union of

One -- Unity. God. Being, divinity, light, the sun.

+ Two -- Duality. God as Father and Son. Conflict, illusion, pairs of opposites, equilibrium.

Three -- Trinity. Perfection, heaven.

In Renaissance music the perfect meter (triple) is represented by a circle. Three is the favored number for repetitions of prayers, incantations, and wishes. It forms a complement to Four:

4

Earth
body
square

3

Heaven
soul
triangle

Thus, in the number 840, most simply, we have:

rebirth, earth, death, and the complete cosmic order.

Next, we look at 840 as a product of three numbers:

$$7 \times 12 \times 10 = 840$$

Seven represents completeness, perfection: a union of Four and Three by addition instead of multiplication; a union of heaven and earth, soul and body.

Seven directions of space (two for each dimension and the center)

Seven notes of the scale

Seven planets (in ancient cultures)

Seven colors of the spectrum

Seven chakras

Seven days of the week.

The number seven in the medieval Church represents a full complement of either evil or good: seven deadly sins; seven joys of Mary; seven sacraments; seven last words of Christ. The book of Revelation, abundant with number symbolism, contains seven seals, seven angels, seven trumpets, the seven last plagues. In the Old Testament, the sacrificial blood is sprinkled on the altar seven times (Leviticus); the seventh day is a day of rest, modelled on God's rest after the six days of creation; the fields must have a sabbath every seventh year and lie fallow, to give the fields a rest and to help the poor, who can glean whatever is growing there (Exodus 23:10f); seven abundant years followed by seven years of famine in Egypt (Genesis 41:2ff). Seven and all the numbers before it add up to 28, the number of days in the moon cycle.

Ten is a very powerful number, symbolizing the return to unity in the decimal system ($1 + 0 = 1$). Ten represents the totality of the universe, completeness, perfection, Jesus, eternal life.

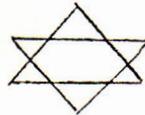
The whole Mosaic law is summed up in the Ten Commandments. Ten consists of the sum of the first four numbers, and represents the total of all that they represent. The number ten also forms a perfect triangle, the same viewed from any side.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ + 2 \\ + 3 \\ + 4 \\ \hline 10 \end{array}$$


Thus every single number in 7 x 12 x 10 represents completeness.

The number 840 viewed as 6 x 14 x 10 gives us two new numbers.

Six represents humanity: the sixth day of creation. In Hindu numerology, six represents balance, equilibrium. The fourth chakra, in the heart, is the plane of balance, with three chakras above and below. Its symbol is the six-pointed star, consisting of two equally balanced triangles intersecting, representing male (descending) and female (ascending).



Fourteen, as 2 x 7, is an especially lucky number and represents justice, temperance, fusion, organization. In the number alphabet, it is the number for Bach, and appears often in J.S.Bach's music.

$$\begin{array}{r} B = 2 \\ A = 1 \\ C = 3 \\ H = 8 \\ \hline 14 \end{array}$$

As $7 \times 3 \times 40$, the number 840 yields still another number, forty. Forty represents, in Biblical tradition, a long time. Periods of trial often last for 40 days or years.

40 years in a generation

40 days of rain in Noah's flood

40 years of Israel in the desert

40 days of Christ's temptation in the desert; 40 days of Lent.

We could go on, and you may if you wish, and find other numbers: 100, 21, 15, five, 70, and more. Nine is the only one of the nine basic numerals absent. Two numbers associated with bad luck, evil, transgression, excess, or suffering, are absent: eleven and thirteen. How could one wish for a better number than 840 for a series of vexations?

If you want to investigate numbers further, some good places to begin are: "Number", New Catholic Encyclopedia (1967); Vincent Foster Hopper, Medieval Number Symbolism (1938); J.E.Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (1962); E.W.Bullinger, Number in Scripture (1952); "Pythagoras", Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed.; and various dictionaries of the Bible. Very little is available in English, to my knowledge, on Hindu numerology; one source is Leela, published by Satyam Shivam Sundaram, Princeton, N.J. (1973). For number symbolism in Renaissance music, see the articles on symbolism in Groves' Dictionary and Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart; Willem Elders, Studien zur Symbolik in der Musik der Alten Niederländer (1968); Fritz Feldmann, "Numerorum mysteria", Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 14 (1957), pp.102-129; M.Van Crevel's editions of Obrecht's masses Sub Tuum Praesidium and Maria Zart in Opera Cruxa, Vols.VI and VII. For some discussions of number symbolism in Bach's music, see Arnold Schering, "Bach und das Symbol", Bach Jahrbuch 1925, pp.40-63; Friedrich Blume, "Johann Sebastian Bach", Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart I (1949), cols.1030-31.

Martha Curti, Livingston College, Rutgers
University

I am assuming that anyone reading this analysis of Satie's 'Vexations' will have already seen the score.

We can simply regard its form as that of a minimalistically reduced Passacaille, whose theme is quadripartite, with each repetition of the bass alone alternating with one or other of the variant harmonisations. There is no sense in considering an other interpretation. Likewise there is no good reason to consider any number of repetitions other than 840 as correct. Aside from the unreasonableness of contradicting the composer's explicit choice. (Why give a number if any may serve as well?) The seduction of supposed freedom may be explained by a mistranslation of the unusual use of the reflexive in the French original: *se jouer*. Better to translate this as "to be played".....thereby rendering as obligatory what is the obvious intention.

Tonally, the melodic movement uses the full chromatic spectrum without any hint of a bias towards whatsoever central tone. °

Starting on C, the movement is outward, expanding in both directions---
to touch the F below and finally reaching the E above.

(From there it simply starts over again.)

a notational reduction pictures it so:

Those who have called Satie "static" should consider that it is tonal music which doesn't go anywhere.

in greater detail:

Having distinguished the structural tones, a note-by-note detailing reveals that the general movement is upward, in spite of the generally smaller intervals. (I consider it a masterful example of melodic shaping, this balancing of the directional dialectic and maintenance of the inherent overall thrust.)

A deft controlling of the inner motions gives the melodic line an impression of smoothness, notwithstanding that objectively it is quite disjunct.

Some intervals are favored, contributing to overall coherence..... thirds minor and major, strategically placed perfect fifths, ascending fourths at phrase endings, and leaving the largest interval (upwards as expected) for last.

* I am going to insist on the “atonality” in the face of attempts to reduce it (reduce is the right word) to traditional tonality. No doubt there is something in common with the historically prevalent chromaticism (viz. “Wagnerism”) but this does not justify the trick of finding any 3 or 4 notes which could conceivably be in some major key and deriving from that a sequence of supposed modulations.

I imagine S. suppressing a laugh at the idea that the last 5 notes, B F# D# B E should be seen as an authentic cadence in E Major! (I interpret the idiosyncratic hard-to-read enharmonic notation as designed specifically to discourage such nonsense.)

Even less should we resort to an appeal to the medieval modes. If there is any precedent it would be in the extreme chromaticism in the Renaissance of, especially, Gesualdo and others of the Neapolitan school, or early Orlando Lasso as in the *Prophetiæ Sibyllarum*.

As far as harmony goes we see a 2-voice parallel accompaniment, prevalently though non-compulsively in contrary motion. (How traditional can you get?)

With two slight exceptions, a tritone is formed around the bass melody tones. (The repeat presents the inversion, which changes nothing.)

To present this straightforward procedure as something like “inversions of a diminished triad” is at best gratuitous----- not to speak of really far-fetched interpretations of the like of “incomplete (whatever) chords”. Of roman-numeral root movement analyses let us not even speak.

There is moreover no question of “unresolved dissonances” as there are no dissonances.

Rhythmically we have 3 equal-length phrases (which make this curious arithmetic: $4 \times 3 = 13$, explainable by seeing the last beat as a written out measured fermata, to accommodate the repetition of the last tone----quite appropriately for a final cadence).

The phrases themselves are isorhythmic, being a sort of double anapest ● ● ● ● —

— (exception made for the first, where an initial long accommodates the first note, as is proper for an establishment tone.)

As an aside i might add that the movement towards the final beat of each measure is another touch of something unusual in Western music (only one example, from a Chopin nocturne,

comes to mind). It is, however characteristic of the gamelan music of Java, which certainly he could not have been influenced by. Just another example of his intuitions of genius. In any case, the parallelism of phrase should suffice to avoid the error of making the final E a downbeat.

My text of 1975 was 9 pages long. Read now, it seems more poetic than necessary. Also more detailed, in describing what is obvious enough. Enough words, therefore: i leave these few as of the essence.

The possibilities latent are not yet used up.

Vexations

elementals	an ultimate reduction: prolong an unchanging constant	
Performance-Space		
Duration	make appropriate	
Instrument,s (Timbre)	choices to fill in	
Pitch (as definable)	the blank spaces	
(if) Pulse rate/speed		
Intensity		

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A reconsideration of tonal functions in the “Vexations” of Erik Satie

All the notes in the first measure can be arranged, according to Rameau’s theory of inversions, to give an arpeggiated chord familiar to any student of jazz harmony.

Similarly, the next two measures continue the harmonic rhythm in whole notes, with the modification of new notes on the second semi. breve which can be interpreted as either passing dissonances or a change of chord colour which do not affect the root.

“Vexations” is therefore clearly in the key of Bb minor, with a progression establishing the usual subdominant-dominant functions (i IV V).

This is patently absurd.

Vexation unvexed (a revelation)

**The theme as usual, once, unaccompanied.
(for piano as is to be expected)**

**Repeating
with the addition of the beginnings of the harmonisations
as perhaps by just a pizzicato in the bass.**

**Continues with each repetition adding to the chords
(perhaps just a simple building up from the bottom---but could be
otherwise)**

**Like: the first melody note in each measure held through.....assuming a
sustaining by other instruments.**

This should always be very subtle.

**Obviously an arrangement will have to be composed,
although certain details may be left to spontaneous decision.**

**In the course of things, variabilities would be well to appear: such as
Changing the register of the piano melody.....or of the accompanying
dyads, which can appear and disappear according to a prethought plan;
The tune taken by the instruments; orchestration of tonecolor changes;
The chords taken by the piano; arpeggiations, pulsations, or some other
form of rhythmic animation. Harps and zithers.**

Disappearance of the theme.

Tempo constant----: slow. Dynamic level held low---, unexcited.

Vexations - remedial harmonisations

Philip Corner

First system of musical notation, featuring a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The music consists of several measures with complex harmonic structures, including many accidentals (sharps and flats) and dense chordal textures.

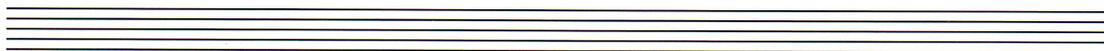
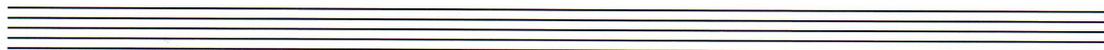
Second system of musical notation, continuing the piece with similar complex harmonic and rhythmic patterns as the first system.

Third system of musical notation, characterized by extremely dense and complex chordal textures in both the treble and bass staves, with numerous accidentals.

Fourth system of musical notation, showing a continuation of the dense harmonic language with some melodic lines in the treble staff.

Fifth system of musical notation, the final system on the page, featuring complex harmonic structures and ending with a double bar line.

Vexations (Satie): remedial harmonisations



Stephen!

this can only be called
"from the ridiculous to the even more ridiculous"
however, I still think the Opus and Rose-Croix pieces
could well be given as models to students in Harmony I.

On Franz Kamin: Improvisation and Empowerment

John Beaulieu

April 16, 2010

Franz was my friend, colleague, and mentor. We came from Indiana to New York together to fulfill a vision. That our paths crossed in this lifetime is a blessing. That he has left this world is sad and I miss him as I sit within a void of silence. With whom else can I discuss the manifolds of topological space and the number of holes in the human cranium related to the sounds of a special Indian flute creating love songs? Maybe by talking it through the void of his passing can transform into the enfolded integrity of a hole through which we can touch his spirit across the time space continuum. Maybe this is the beginning of a new concert of holes. Or maybe Franz just married Ann Margret and we are witnessing a “strange ceremony”.

Franz taught improvisation within rigorous parameters. Improvisation was a discipline one developed within compositional constraints. He believed that without compositional rules a performance would always revert back to repetition and clichés, i.e.: musicians playing the same rhythms and chords over and over with slight variations. In other words if one were to put a group of musicians into a room without rules they would at some point fall into, as Franz would say, “the uninteresting”.

Franz used mathematics to create improvisational parameters. The musician was allowed to pick parameters of the sound based on instructions which were given in different forms. These included number repetitive patterns based on mathematical formulas, various timing systems ranging from timing cue cards to spinning tops, graphic / visual sound representations, mazes, and network diagrams. One purpose of these “sound systems” was to interrupt, stop, short circuit, and ultimately move beyond the tendency towards sound clichés.

Simultaneously his compositional methods were based on a musical vision which integrated complex mathematical structures, science, and mysticism with improvisation. Through his compositions both the performer and listener could enter complex topological spaces filled with “improvisational holes”. The performer, following the system rules, was free to improvise and “perform” their part of the composition. The sum total of musicians improvising within the defined parameters was always larger than the sounds of the individual musicians. This larger aspect could be understood as Franz’s compositional vision manifesting within the field of improvisation coordinated by an underlying mathematical system.

Franz went to great lengths to write out his compositional systems. Although the mathematics giving rise to the systems were always in the background, the specific improvisational requirements to meet the mathematical rigor were written with exacting detail. The performer could experience “freedom” and “excitement” to be part of a Kamin performance once they learned his improvisational system. However, make no mistake, the discipline required for performance freedom and excitement was both visionary and exacting.

On Franz Kamin: Improvisation and Empowerment

Franz's integrative improvisational sound systems were not limited to musicians. Franz used dancers, readers, painters, and most any modality he thought could be coordinated within the parameters of the compositional system. Oftentimes one did not have to be trained in the arts to be part of a Kamin performance. This is what made Franz available to people he might have never come into contact with in the traditional art / music world.

Franz's ability to relate to all people with an interest in the arts and include them in his works was in many ways his crowning "human" achievement. Franz was in this since truly inspiring. He inspired the creative artistic spirits of those that took part in his vision. He gave many people the opportunity to participate without having to have years of formal training. He empowered his performers to bring their innate artistic talents forward and to creatively express themselves. In this sense the preparation for his performances were transmissions which empowered the performers far beyond the discipline of his compositions.

I am sure Franz's musical compositions will find their own life in the musical world. However those of us who had the privilege and honor of working with him will always have his artistic spirit with us. We have been touched by something rare and special. We have all been given a gift.

Remembering Franz Kamin

from tENTATIVELY a cONVENIENCE

Dear Open Space,

Rumor has reached me that you're planning a Franz Kamin memorial. I was friends w/ Franz from 1977 or thereabouts up 'til his death.

I'm currently making a documentary about him.

I recently performed as part of a memorial concert for him in St Paul on [Oct 30, 2010](#) & I wrote the attached text as a hand-out for the concert.

I've attached the text as an RTF file & as part of the message body below

Why I'm presenting my "Narrative" at a Memorial Concert for Franz Kamin

- tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE

(written for the Friends Meeting Hall event, St Paul, MN, October 30, 2010)

Franz Kamin's work was/is so strikingly original & 'eccentric' that there's no way that anything I write here will do it justice. Nonetheless, I hope to touch on a few salient points. Franz's performances often had narratives & narrators: some seem dream-like: "I Suddenly Come to Visit... [Black New York]", or fable-like: "Unknowing Games at the Hut". & these narratives are rarely, or never, 'straightforward' & sometimes involve math.. & animals.. & sex.. - an intermingling of the rarely intermingled:

"A young man will find someone to tell: that he lives a life of 'broken turtles'. He is in a semiHausdorff-bifurcation space, where all things 'broken & fearful' become Turtles. Turtles everywhere: eventually even swimming in the body."

I. HIS LANGUAGE: Franz created a mythology so rich that it wd be fascinating (& quite difficult) to even TRY to cohere it all together into ONE GIANT MYTH/SYSTEM. These are the sites, personas, & concepts of a role-playing game in an alternate universe, Franz's universe. Some examples accompanied by Franz's definitions:

"DEPOT: this is a location with a partially structured collection of objects wherein resides the energy of some 'activity' e.g. the bathroom is a depot wherein the active energy of 'crapping' resides, that is, the 'crapping' resides whether there is anyone there to crap or not ... these depots are the residences of the active energies of the undead."

"WOOD MAZE: I do not understand this depot very well, except that it involves undead from the far distant past.

"SANDY GIRL DEPOT: the undeads involved here are sex ghosts from the future ... this depot also gives rise to 'formative energy'.

"BAR DEPOT: this undead is my death where everyone is nice & everything is poison

Remembering Franz Kamin

and where answers and ideas come from."

My "NARRATIVE" is a small side-project spin-off from the ambitious HiTEC (Histrionic Thought Experiment Cooperative) Systems Management. Bringing the entire, now defunct, 21 person HiTEC orchestra & all relevant props, instruments, & costumes to this memorial wd've been more ideal but practicality dictates the small-scale. In "NARRATIVE" there IS a narrative but it's edited according to 'non-narrative' criteria to deliberately leave 'essential continuities' *out* & allow seemingly pointless repetitions *in*. There's even some 'science' (or 'pseudo-science') - in this case a testing of the "Infinite Monkey Theorem" - w/ a little mutated Meyers-Briggs Personality Types thrown in in the entirely-too-quick credits. There're also *roles* (in this case created by my collaborator, the world-class reed player Ben Opie) for the Systems Managers: SABOTEUR, DICTATOR, SOMNAMBULIST.

2. HIS MUSIC: As w/ the language, his music is extremely complex & original. Being classically trained certainly helps one be able to play it. But given the, for some people, 'embarrassingly' personal & visceral nature of some of his content, it might be even more important that the players be open-minded & generally intelligent - rather than necessarily specifically disciplined. & also given the difficult conditions under wch most of this work has been performed, having notation that's potentially understandable to a broad variety of people helps.

Hence the 'nonsense' (or personal) language of "Angerds engMudsroodn" is written out in a simple graphic notation in wch vertical positioning indicates pitch (that doesn't have to be *too* specific) & the left-to-right progression indicates duration. Any person sensitive to visual flow (& capable of reading unusual text) can manage a reasonable realization.

Hence Franz's extensive use of prose explanations such as the 24p text beginning to the score of "Behavioral Drift II". Alas, while these instructions are often laboriously detailed they're also, probably more often, incomplete. It's quite likely that every performance of Franz's work done during his lifetime was done under his supervision. & w/o his in-person explication, or substantial documentation otherwise, it wd be almost impossible to recreate some of these pieces. What exactly is a "Thread Man"? A "Stain Lady"? & *what on earth did they do?*!

Even in the case of those probably rare instances where enuf detailed notation survives to enable a patient & thorough person to realize a Kamin piece w/o Franz's explicatory presence, the challenges are **ENORMOUS**. Take "Behavioral Drift II" again. There's a 42pp score & there's an excellent recording & the score includes the "Established ('frozen') Score for CD & LP Recordings" - meaning that one can follow the recording (somewhat) by looking at the score. But it wdn't be easy & I'm not sure how many people will even attempt it. One of the people most qualified to do so was Sarmad Brody, another noteworthy composer. Sadly, Sarmad died along w/ Franz in the same car crash.

Of course such challenges are common to classical music in general & even more so to advanced classical music of the last 100+ yrs in particular. Will Mauricio Kagel's "Tremens" ever be realized again now that Kagel's dead? One can only hope so - but I have a copy of that score too & the demands made on the realizers are borderline epic.

What does it sound like? The eternal question, right?! Like all aleatoric music in wch the players are granted at least *some* autonomy along structured guidelines, there's a feeling of liberated cooperativeness, a floating where there's obviously some coherence but the root of the coherence isn't always immediately obvious. But Franz was *not* a one-trick pony. The pieces are, indeed, *different* from each other.

Keeping in mind my comments above re preferably open-minded qualities in performers, I quote from the "Scribble Music Sampler" notes for "BGESS #4 (Base Generated Emergency

Structuring System)"):

'SCRIBBLING is eventually forbidden to children due to the fact that adults in general lack the sophistication to perceive the expressive and structural possibilities inherent in any 'untrained' art form (this 'lack' is called 'social maturity'.) This is how people (children are people) lose processes: Others lose them for them. This unfortunate situation leaves the execution of most forms of art in the hands of a 'trained elite', hence certain deeper aspects of an art will remain unexplored - and many adults (late blooming children) will be left out altogether. BGESS #4 was planned for performance by a very 'democratic' group: non-elite, non-specialist, both musicians and non-musicians - of course, the non-musicians had to be trained *for the piece* while the musicians had to be *de-trained*".

& listening to BGESS #4 one might get what one expects: some chaotic-sounding improvising. But listening to "Chorification of Jackson Mac Low's Phoneme Dances for/from John Cage" sounds completely different. There's a very staccato simultaneity that the chorus pursues while the instruments alternate mostly between similar punctuation & sustains - all w/ 2 narrations in Spanish & English at the same time.

The (M)USIC of 'NARRATIVE' is primarily generated from one Thought Experiment. The HiTEC Systems Managers "Perform isolated notes in an attempt to be 'random' in relation to yr fellow Systems Managers. Stop playing when you're fairly sure you hear a combination that you've heard before - such as a fragment of Mozart or whatever. If you DO decide such a thing, call out the name (or some other reference) to the piece heard." That seems simple enuf until one tries to actually do it. Then one finds that no matter what one does one isn't being 'random' but is actually *simulating a notion of randomness* - definitely **not** the same thing. There are, however, other Systems at play & sabotages at work.

3. HIS PROPS & COSTUMES: Franz used wood - the preferred material of people w/ common household tools. Franz used available materials - mops for wigs, thrift store odds & ends as costumes, sheets for angels, Scribble props, perhaps. Kamin used "controllers" - objects like light boxes to conduct the players.

For HiTEC I made a painted wooden Wheel-of-Fortune. It lands on a number from 1 to 32 wch tells the Systems Managers what System to Manage. For costumes, towels w/ head-holes cut out & silk-screens that give a HiTEC logo on the front & have "Systems Manager" written over a W-o-F image on the back.

Memories of my Friendship w/ Franz Kamin

- tENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE

- October, 2010

I 1st encountered the work of Franz Kamin on Nov. 15, 1974 at the 11th Annual Avant-Garde Festival at Shea Stadium in New York City. I was 21 yrs old. On the floor outside the entrance to a temporary room apparently built for the occasion was a pile of 8&1/2X11" papers headed: "A RITUAL EMBEDDING OF THE SPIDERS RISK into non-HAUSDORF M-SPACE". This was Franz's. Inside, the room was blank except for a tv on wch one cd see one's self keyed into the image of another environment. I, incorrectly, concluded that the room & the paper went together & that both were from Kamin. I later learned that the keying room had been made by someone else whose name wasn't readily apparent. I was very impressed by the text, wch I found highly evocative & largely incomprehensible, & its juxtapositioning w/ the keying, wch I might've never witnessed before.

A few yrs later, Kirby Malone, of the Merzbaum Collective In Baltimore, was thinking of bringing

Remembering Franz Kamin

Jackson Mac Low to town to perform &, as I recall, Jackson suggested that Franz be on the bill. At some point, Franz was Jackson's piano teacher. Kirby asked me if I was familiar w/ Kamin's work & I enthusiastically described my Avant-Garde Fest encounter w/ it. This was probably around 1977 or 1978. Merzbaum brought Mac Low & Kamin to Baltimore to perform at the Red Door Hall - a place inside a church on St. Paul Street where many performances happened in those days.

Franz's performance was "Spider's Risk" ("Spydrrs Risk"?). It's described online by Bart Buch:

"The visual aspect of this piece is done on a 12 foot long platform which is divided into 7 'stations' or 'depots', each of which can be picked out one at a time by miniature spotlights. Each depot is a different station of or from life (not all that clear) and consists of a tableau with movable &or puppet-like objects controlled from behind and below. A locomotive engine (the Oomphathalik line) runs from the 0-Depot (a large spider which moves on a web) to various of the other Depots – dependant in part on the position of the spider on the web (or rolls of a 'dice cage' ... or both ... ???.) Accompanied by narrator & sonic performers."

"Some of the Depots are: the 0-Depot (Spider Web) – the Depot of Gratuitous Sex – the Bone Yard Station – the Martini & Olive – the Wall, Door & Window – the Station of Music – the Animals – Art – the Station of Choice – the Spiders Risk

"The Depot of Gratuitous Sex consists of an Erica-doll tied to a post who opens her coat ('flashes') while pneumatically controlled French ticklers rise up and dance."

This was probably when Franz & I 1st met in person. I **LOVED** this performance! It was stunningly original. Buch's description/speculation hypothesizes that it was for "For [[Narr[ator], 3 puppeteers, lighting man, 5–7 musicians???" but all I can remember is Franz & Kathy Bourbonais - maybe Jackson helped too. This was classic Kamin: the beautiful low-budget props, the totally unique & detailed personal language, the highly advanced music, the **perversity** of it that more or less ensured his banishment to the lunatic fringes of the academic classical world. The inflating & deflating condoms were marvelous.

By 1981, I took over running Widemouth Tapes, the tape label started by Chris Mason, a member of the Merzbaum Collective, & published Franz's "Scribble Music Sampler" in 1982. By then, as of 1980, Station Hill Press had already published Franz's one & only LP record: "Behavioral Drift II/Rugugmool". The cover alone on this is impressively crafted & the recording of "Behavioral Drift II" probably remained Franz's favorite & most emphasized piece for the rest of his life. The cover of the 1st 100 of the "Scribble Music Sampler" may've been *even more* meticulously hand-done - w/ a fine mesh + broken watch parts + burns + wire + other collage elements. To think that there're a hundred of these (were there?) is mind-boggling. As far as I know, for over a decade these, + a Station Hill single, were the only audio recordings of Kamin's work 'commercially' available. That's an incredible sign of publishing neglect considering how prolific Franz was.

September 12, 1982: I attended The Jackson Mac Low Retrospective Concert in Celebration of his 60th Birthday at the Washington Square Methodist Church in NYC. Franz performed his "Chorification of the Phoneme Dances on the Name John Cage by" (partly derived from "Phoneme Dance for/from John Cage", 1974, by Mac Low). April 24, 1983(? This yr is a pretty likely deduction): "Scribble Death I" at Dance Downtown, 338 N. Charles St, upstairs. All I remember about this is that Leroy Keltner played trombone. Sometime in the early 1980s, Franz plays a piano recital, on what was probably an out-of-tune upright, at Rick Sugden's apartment in Baltimore: Kamin's "Dark Water", Satie's "Uspud", Kamin's "Old 88 Beat". I have a very low-fi recording of this.

Starting around 1982, I begin sending Kamin packages. This continues all the way 'til 2009. I

send him about 12 postings in 27 yrs. Franz sends me at least 9. Along the way, I collected & read his printed matter: "Distance Function", "Rugugmool", "Ann Margret Loves You", "Egz Book of Frogs", "Scribble Death", "detached from Theory of Angels", & "Tales from the Theory of Angels & the Norkinshot Reader".

By 1983, I probably heard that Franz was a severe alcoholic. The figure that sticks in my head is that he wd drink a quart of vodka by noon. I drank too much & so did Kirby so I declared the 3 of us "AGAI": "Avant-Garde Alcoholics Identified". Of course the "Identified" part was a spoof off of Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm not even sure if I ever told Franz about this. I did do one 'performance' sortof in the name of AGAI & an excerpt from this is on my Usic minus the Square Root of minus One LP. Don't get me wrong, there were way more than the 3 of us drinking too much in our social circles so identifying the 3 of us as 'alcoholics' was mainly for the purpose of enjoying the absurdity of an "Avant-Garde" drinking group.

Early 1992? What happened in those intervening yrs? I reckon Kamin stopped drinking & moved to St Paul to dry out as a major project. James Brody (aka Sarmad Brody) moved to Baltimore & he & I met & talked at my bookstore, Normal's. I learned that he was friends w/, & a supporter of, Kamin's. Sarmad joined Neil Feather's & my structured improvising group wch changed its name every time we played - for simplicity's sake: The 'Official' Project. James almost immediately started organizing gigs for Franz.

June 8, 1992: Franz played "an ambitious piano concert" (to quote from the press release) in the main sanctuary of the First Unitarian-Universalist Church in Baltimore. He played works by Scarlatti, Beethoven, Ravel, Bartok, Mompou, Grieg, Satie, & Liszt. I didn't attend - having almost no interest in the works presented - now I wish I had. June 11, 1992 (same church as the preceding): "FAS & SLO Readings & Performances": "Edge of the Dance", "Aleatoric Systemic Reactory Bulletin #1 (the Enclosed Garden)" (I played percussion on this), "Before the Bridge (from *Theory of Angels*)", "Notes on Losing a Lover (1 & 2)", "Middle-Bridge Witness (Sections 1, 2 & 8)", "Behavioral Drift 8/9 - the SLO GAME" (I was the "Thread Man" for this). I still have at least parts of the scores for both the pieces I participated in. As always, the work was astoundingly original.

February 13, 1993: Franz sends me a "suspendable **Decoy Angel Attractor Car (with Residue Trap)**" in the mail. An accompanying text reads, in part: "III. On Valentine's Eve, when the Early Angel rushes through, its route is diverted through the Decoy Attractor Car (which resembles one of its own Home vehicles.) As it passes, a Residue of Angelessness is deposited in the copper of the Trap. To release this into your own being and bring you Good Fortune in openness & love, cut the Copper Trap loose and put it under the foot of your bed at night where it will radiate out into the depth of your Heart." Who else but Franz?!

Around that time, Sarmad gave me a 1/2" reel-to-reel VHS tape of a piece of Franz's called "The Alchemy of Familiar Things" that had been performed at some Station Hill related place on November 20, 1977. I got it both b/c I was a Kamin supporter & b/c I actually still had a working 1/2" reel video deck. I duly transferred it to VHS cassette & have since then digitized it.

Mid-November, 1993: Franz performed some poems at the 14 Karat Cabaret in Baltimore. I was one of the narraters on 2 of them: "Red 19" & "Angerds engMudsroodn". November 21, 1993: Church of St. Michael & All Angels. My description of the night from my Mere Outline.. book may be worth repeating in its entirety here:

She Turns Alone was another "performance poem" (perhaps). The "Choir" consisted of myself, John Berndt, John Eaton, Leroy Keltner, & Sarmad Brody. We lined the walls spread out on 2 sides of the audience. Franz read while we extrapolated off his text with scored vocal sounds.

Remembering Franz Kamin

Jeanine Farrall stood on the stage & performed scored motions as the "Gesturalist". The term "Behavioral Drift" is derived from a side-effect warning on a mood control pill packaging. Unknowing Games at the Hut was a sortof perverse subversion of Freudian Psychology & cyclical epics performed in the style of a mental institution talent show or high school play with "20th Century" "performance poetry" as the text-style basis. Every performer played most of the roles at one or more times during the approximately 22 minutes of its duration. There were the old woman/women, the sexy girl(s), the wood chopper(s), the tree(s), the card players, & the angel(s). Sarmad Brody provided a repeating narration throughout. The gist of it was that an old woman lived alone in a hut & fucked a tree, giving birth to a child who grew up to be a wood-chopper & chopped the tree down without knowing it was his father, then leaving for the city to meet a sexy girl who he takes back to the hut only to get himself killed by a vengeful tree, the sexy girl then becomes an old woman at the hut only to repeat the cycle all over again. In the meantime, the 3 card-players each personify 3 archetypes of attitude: the winner, the loser, & the person whose problems are always "somebody else's fault". Each performer changes costume to change roles. The sexy girl costume consisted of a grotesquely stuffed bra, a black wig, & a decorative waist chain; the old woman's was a wig & a shawl, the angels wore sheets & yellow wigs. The wigs were made from mops. The tree was represented by a person standing in "crucified" position in front of some branches on a ladder. The card players wore hats & held big cards. The wood chopper wore a hunting vest & a sortof mining light. Each character had a way of acting. The old woman walked with a shaky stoop & talked with a wavery voice. These ways of acting were cartoon archetypes. Each performer drifted into other characters than the ones whose costumes they wore at times. As such, this was a "true" "Behavioral Drift". There were variations in the cycle such as having more than one sexy girl & old woman etc.. at the same time. Everyone ends as an angel. The sets & costumes were created by Leroy Keltner, Sarmad Brody & members of the New York crew who had performed this piece's last presentation (Pixie Alexander, Steve Clay, Mitch Highfill, & Peggy Young). The performers were myself, Martha Colburn, Dawn Culbertson, Sara Epple, Jeanine Farrall, John Berndt, John Eaton, & Leroy Keltner. "Back-stage" assistance (performance expiditing) was provided by Peggy Young. Franz directed it.

Valentine's Day, 1994: Franz sent me another special Valentine object, another object to be hung. Franz must've had a thing about Valentine's Day & angels & the like. Shortly after this, I moved to Berlin, then to Canada, then to Buffalo, then to Pittsburgh. Probably b/c I stayed in touch w/ Sarmad, Franz & I managed to stay in touch too. In the late 1990s, Sarmad decided to issue the tape of Franz's that I publish, "Scribble Music Sampler", as a CD. A few publications dribbled out here & there but there was too much repetition & not enuf representation of Kamin's overall body of work.

Every once in awhile, Franz wd phone me or otherwise contact me to tell me that he was promoting my work to someone or another who was going to possibly buy the whole Widemouth Catalog (or whatever). These things never happened. Nonetheless, Franz meant well & he even told me he was a "fan" of mine once. He particularly liked a piece by Michael Pestel & myself called "Interspatiality". Such enthusiasm on Franz's part was important to me & much appreciated. It's nice to have someone whose work you respect respect yrs in turn. Eventually Kamin's support of me did yield his including me in an issue he edited of "POSTED" - an online visual poetry magazine (or some such). A version of my "Mediumistic Projection of Heinrich Welz's Lines of Force" was e-published as FILE 1 of 5 of: POSTED (December 2003).

I talked w/ Franz over the phone shortly before he died. He talked of having to move from where he was b/c of bedbugs, of having his stuff inaccessible in storage, of being in bad health. He was beset by problems. This is only a short memoir. It doesn't say nearly enuf. I hope to say more eventually.

Valentale

Now She has one. All the other girls in her school have had theirs for a long time. She had been the only one. The boys, of course, didn't need any; they had their *Things* – which would eventually do it for them. Dragging it along behind her, although that is not how most of the others carried theirs – kept them hidden. It was the longest one she'd ever seen. She'd found it in the gutter on the way back from lunch (knew it was hers right away: Black – most of them were mint or reddish) and not gone back to school at all, which is why she was down by the warehouses & loading docks ('Bad-Town' – daddy says don't go there) being alone, and carefully pulling (so it won't get too dirty or stepped on by workers, cats, drunks & 'ho'es) her long black 'Death-Ribbon' proudly behind her.

Actually she finds lots of valuable things in the gutter. She has a whole collection of them home in her room. Once, even a dollar bill, which she'd debated taking because it didn't talk to her (she'd finally taken it anyway.) She was all the time walking along peering into the gutter and listening. If it talked to her (it didn't matter what it was – a hardened wad of chewing gum or a bent bolt off a car) she'd collect it – if it didn't, she didn't. That's how she'd known the ribbon was hers. A marble next to a crumpled piece of paper, both talking: She waited politely for a lull, then collected them, being careful to keep the 'Death-Ribbon' out of the gutter. Some stones and a busted open watch: ... Silence. Patches of dried mud were always chattering away, thousands of little voices – but she had enough mud, clumps of various sizes, at home.

The others didn't call theirs *that* of course, called them all kinds of stupid names, didn't seem to know *what* they were for... though the 'Ribbons' talked all the time, they couldn't hear them. Two plastic knives, a soda straw, a rusty piece of metal (flat, rectangular with a hole in it – holes usually talk) & some broken glass. One of the pieces of glass talked and got collected. Never-the-less, they were very proud of them – how long and silky they were. Just like the boys with their '*Things*' (probably didn't know what theirs were for either. Everybody'd seen Billie's: he used to...) !?What is THIS?! ...

Horrible! Rotting piece of MEAT! She bent down peering closer (Stink!) the Ribbon dangling behind her. Talktalktalktalk-Howl-SHRIEK! She knew more or less what it was. They'd shown a cow's heart in Science. But this Heart-Meat wasn't from a cow. (Billie'd stolen *that* one after school.) It quivered, bulged & twitched – *still alive!* She stared. She couldn't *touch* it. She didn't know what to do. It should be collected (she'd never collected anything that screamed before – never anything *live* – a dead squirrel once, but...) She Must! ...but she can't.

?What if someone else comes along and takes it? She'll have to wait here... 'til she's ready. Suddenly she runs across the street jerking the Ribbon fast behind her so a car won't get it. She'll watch and listen from the other side.

HEART-MEAT: the 'One-who-is-Lost', as so often, come across tha'Self in strange place not knowing how or to where it has been gotten. Warm waters now, fall down upon tha'sMEAT – say 'Meat', for thinks of tha'sSelf as Meat, as has been formerly housed 'Pumping Agent' in now-dead Meat-body. Now warm waters fall down upon tha'Self & roam away burbling (so a BrooKlet, as so often the Grandmother told "Burbbling away on cement, a BrooK'let Is") what those of the Other-still-housed call 'sewer gutter'. Leaky toward ironGRATE, source of the burbling BrooKlet being gone down from the raining down. LooKupUP! First burbling source high upbove hanging PenisMeat-dribble-dangleBUMpiss. (From across the street she worriedly watches the Bum piss on her Heart.) "OhHo" (Bumsay) seeing movement of. "LooK: Fucky Thing's aLive!" (backsoff) "Shit!" Bumpisses on Many-aFeet-theMEAT-housings-onthatsweet-Street 'til someOtherman slugs himBum down fall puffy-face bleeding-Eye-staring not ten inches from the One-who-is-LostMeat. Stream-burbbling-waters stop now... trickle away ironGRATE. Now MEATsad – waters stop Hurt on skin Dead-white-Patches. Now all-white-Patches all HURTagainBURNagainSHREIK-SHRIEK! (so make Bumfright) no more nice-warm-piss. Bum sees disgusting ooZwhitePatches too-also long grey hairs stick up out of funny little pulsing ROTMEAT in gutter.

SHREIKSHRIEK! (RollawayBum UP-to-get-much-more-Wine, make-more-Piss maybe (...later maybe...) SHRIEKSHRIEK-HurtMEATLostOne try to roll away too!

?How did tha'get here LostMEAT?? :“aWAAyRollaway-Stone: UP the hill to Endire go, Endire go, to buy a fat Death-at-theMarr-Ket. UP the hill to Endire go, to Endire go, to Endire go, wannabeGone-down-the-Streammm ...mmMEMMORRIE! (little-television-in-the-Mindbank): tumbling-mMounds-of-Flesh! Yes! BULging mmMuscles (orTits-orCocks-orPussy – can't 'Member which) & allsoft fingers & Lips lap Otherflesh-longGone(former)MEAT-housing-Gear-yesLOVEyesLICKyesKISSyesHOLD-yesGONE... (yesLOVEyesHOLDyesGONE ...yes-gone...) The rolling unhoused MEAT gathers no Loss ... & Now(!!!): –no Piss either.

...eh?

Suh..

ehhh-Suhh...

ehSuh-suh

ehsuhSUN: !HOT! Up-brightbright-UPupperUppestSUNhighhigherUpper
 SUNup-High makes Hurt-more-Burn-white-Spots tinySUNspots burnRot into
 MEAT-PAIN (little television-in-the-mind no good.) WAIT!! Here it COMES!
 Rolling huge down the hill towardTha'. Huge monster metal machine
 towardTha': MONSTRO!! (OtherSay 'Sanitation Service-Vehicle', 'Electric
 Broom) MONSTRO!!! (The little-girl-across-the-street, she watches in horror
 as the Street Cleaner bears down on her Heart.)
 MONSTROyesSQUASHyesDIEyes-Endof-Pain-(endlikeStream)-yesDIEyesGone
 NOOOOoo... Nooo - Gone! Turned... No-Die-no-end-more-Pain: Acute turn
 Narrowly misses. The stiff, sharp bristles of the Electric Broom brush rake across
 the whitehotSunspotdotsShreikSHREIK(needIodine)SHREIKSHREIKSHREIK
 PAINagainGonedownthesameLaneagainGoneawaynOneGoneInsaneonInanePain
 Iodine,.. (little television-in-the-mind no good.)

Wiggle...

Wiggle-wiggle-[hair]-wiggle: Central white hair Stick Up from Thas'HeartMeat
 wiggle-in-the-air wiggle-in-the wobble-in-the-Wind wiggle-wiggle-(Something to
 Do! - !FREE! - !PumpAction! - Better than TV!)-wiggle-wobble-wiggle-wiggle-
 wiggle-wiggle-wiggle-wiggle...

A Dog comes along to sniff at Tha'sPain -sniff-sniff-sniff-sniff- (!Eat me, you
 Mother! At least Piss, you damned Mutt!) The Dog takes a huge Crap which
 abuts heavily on the LostMeat -sniff-sniff- Looks confused. Can't tell the Crap
 from the Meat: "What'samatta? Can't you tell yerMeat from yerCrap?? - The one
 that drops off is the Crap!" -?- (maybe it's the other way around) - The Dog
 trots off: trot-trot-trot-trot-trot-trot -down the street.

KICK (!What the-!) KICK (from behind) KICK (it's a little kid...) -(Across
 the street She peers hidden by the loading dock.)- KICK (?boy or girl?) KICK
 KICK KICK KICK (vicious little bugger) KICK (kid steps across & Tha looks up
 its dress: !Has a Cigar! !It's a Boy! turns back) KICK KICK KICK.

Kid wheels & runs away.

Hurt-Hurt-HATE-HATE-Hurt-HATE-Hurt-Hurt-HATE-HurtHATE-()-
 Hurt-Hurt-Hurt-Hur... "LOOKIE-THERE!!" Bumsay (*he's back*) reachen-down
 & grabbenUp our HeroPumpMEAT, his other paw grabbenonaPassin' Matron-
 Ladywith-Daughter, who's all of a fluster, jowls flappin, terror-Blubberous-
 about-the-mouth. & Sparks of Fear-behind-the-Daughter-Glasses (nice dress...)
 LadyScream "NONONO" at what MEATgrabbenBUM shoves in her face (her
 one ham fending & the other clampen-on the-Gawkier-little-Girl (teen-spectacle
 serious) walkin' to home from school with Fatso-Mama-who-Scream & little-with-
 Glasses-who-Scream: &-so Screamin-together (BumScream too) & in his ham
 thaMEAT-Scream: & Screamin & Screamin & Screamin & Screamin - Then
 HimBumStop & Happysay "Gunnatake this here to the You-Never-City - Yep -
 where some PROFester's gunna gimme-all-the-MONEY fer-this-here sign-tifical
 specialman!"

KICKPOUND – WildMama’s shaken the flab: Kick the shit outa that Destitute Gentleman & Specs toes him in the nuts to boot; So drops his MEAT down SPLAT right atop the aforementioned DogWad just as a big PO—liceman comes, by Beaten on Everybody-&-his-OldLady with the Looong Arm of his big wooden penis with Everybody Screamin & Runnin & Screamin so loud you can hardly hear the little-MEAT-SHRIEK-SHRIEK in the Street ‘til Everybody’s gone except the MEAT & the-little-Girl-Across-the-street... Quietening down, so you can hear the DIIINNGfuckenDIIINNGfuckenDIIINNGfuckenDIIINNG church steeple clock... She’s got to go-(it’s late)-home to dinner. Nobody’s allowed to touch it ‘til she gets back. She’s sure she’ll be able to pick it up in the Dark.

...And She’s Gone.

And it’s late afternoon and there’s that sudden momentary freezing of all the noise cars & voices, calls footfalls dogbarks doorslams horns birds hammer whistle pops motorRumble flapflapflapSqueal pound scrapingScratches Clicks & Clocks Sounds of the late afternoon all frozen for a moment in mid-air (*not silence ... Never the Silence*) just not moving in the ear (not vibrating so much as a hair follicle in the auricular) –just for a second suspended– (...) –&thenReleases tickly-Prickly-hair sound regained & plunged back into the late-late afternoon rush-hour for two hours of YellBlatRoarRam&Radios ‘til it all thins away into its racket-blanket...

Remarkably uneventful for thaMEAT except for a car-tire-crushed one-eighth, ground & glued into the tarry cement, red throbbing PAIN & PAIN as the Sun dims & droops & drops a last lazy red oyster into the pit of Night – goes down for the count – & Out creeps & out pops the Nightlife & many pretty prostitutes all in a row and Couples short & fat & thin & tall & grabbin below at Genitals-funny for HoneyMoney & listening to the MU—ZAK-the-MU—ZAK-the-MU—ZAK boomBOOM—yesDance—yesDance—yesDancefor Hours-on-End & gives MEAT such a headNoise, tha’sMEATbeat plastered-(one-eighth) to the Street while tha’s non-pavement-squished-seven-eighths looks Up – looks UP from tha’s pillow of dog-shit – UP from a busy day between buildings to the non-commissioned Star in the Sky & says ‘Fuck-it’ -and the Others grow tired (boom-a-bop-boom) & go home (a-bag-bone) leave the MEAT in the Street all alone & littleGirl don’t come back yet & fuck it & then Late she Do: Trailing the Ribbon behind (undulating ‘cause she’s skipping) (pretend she don’t care) having already made a decision, She kneels down and carefully lifts the non-glued portion, slips the Death-Ribbon underneath, evens it, and ties the prettiest Black Bow on her little Lost HeartMEAT

....(Stop Then All AWAREness-inmMEdiate to still)....

...Then off she skips, the Little, thinking of Billie’s *Thing-or-Other*...

SILENTS.

Franz Kamin

Silents piled on top of other Silents piled on top of other Silents piled on top until- "GOO'NIGH'SWEE" (Bumsay. Bumsback. Bumlie inches away. Up on the edge of the curb, peering down, huge sufflated face, eye bloodyly stares) "GOO'NIGH'SWEE'PRINTS - mayANGELSINGTHEEEE" (Angels fuckin) sing'THEE" (must be the writer) "to... ...th'Res-sssSnNNOORRRe" (Bumfall aSleep: Actually Dead too, which is even better.)

The Rest is Silents.

Franz Kamin: *Tales from the Norkinshot Reader & Theory of Angels* (Station Hill Press, Barrytown, New York, forthcoming)

Beautiful Material

The Non-Western Influenced Music of Robert Morris

David Mott

Intriguing, beguiling, seductive, mysterious, and fascinating. Isn't it interesting how these words could refer equally to the attraction of both a love interest and the sonic language of a music that grabs our ear. One would suppose that, following this early "love at first sound", a bonding forms and, like all lasting relationships, progresses through successive stages into the depth of maturity.

Arguably all composers have a lineage of attraction. Whether it be through composing parody pieces, an engaged listening or investigation into the music of, or a deep respect and admiration for that love object in sound, it's unlikely that any of us were begat on a desert island remote from generative influences. Of course, for many of us, what began initially as contact through indirect sources may have led inevitably to direct apprenticeships. We have all sought out teachers who have inculcated a variety of concepts, and techniques, who have divulged issues of craft as well as approaches to a creative process and who have served as human models (sometimes for better or for worse) for our activities and role as composers. But what of these relationships that transcend culture or ethnicity? What of these direct connections to the music which occur without the intermediary of a living model and mentorship?

Robert Morris both represents and presents the possibilities manifest in the later case —when an extraordinary composer turns his ear to musics that are outside of his culture and are non-western in origin. Morris, having composed a body of work, primarily in the 1970s, that reflects a deep and evolving relationship with these musics is known for having created a significant parallel body of work that roots itself in integral pitch and structural concerns that are distinctly western in conception and origin. What is not as well known is how integrated these two streams actually are.

It is only fair that I offer a disclaimer of impartiality at this point. I have known Bob Morris since 1971 when I began as a graduate student at the Yale School of Music where he was teaching composition at the time. It took me a year to seek him out as my primary teacher because I was first assigned to a composition teacher with interests and skills in jazz —an appropriate pairing at that time as much of my undergraduate work was spent in that music. Nevertheless, in 1972 I had the opportunity to begin working with Bob Morris in a relationship that has evolved over time into a deep and abiding friendship. Although we are close in age, my respect for him as a person and as a composer is undiminished by our North American peerage.

The first part of the title of this talk, Beautiful Material also needs a bit of an introduction. Of course, all musical material, and I'm speaking about the primary building blocks of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, timbre, etc., could arguably be viewed as neutral. But musical material could just as easily be viewed in a different way as each pitch class, periodicity etc. possesses an individuality

unique in isolation and dynamic in combination. Contextualization further enhances the potentiality of this material producing style and often creating hierarchies and patterns which we can attribute to individual composers, recognizable throughout the history of music. But more germane to this talk, is that Beautiful Material implies potentiality beyond the merely material. That is to say, with Beautiful Material, the material transcends itself. I recall a concert from years ago at Wesleyan University where the great Carnatic singer Subalakshmi opened with an incredibly complex and virtuosic alapana, lasting nearly 10 minutes. She ended the alapana and held the audience's rapt attention with the most searingly, perfectly tuned major third that I have ever heard, held for a complete breath length. Whether you knew it was the most perfectly tuned major third or not didn't matter since the entire audience—as one large human organism—spontaneously and collectively moaned in bliss. Of course, the performer has a primary role in creating these magical moments through a deep relationship with music and to the musical material itself. I would also say that without such performers, Beautiful Material cannot be fully realized. Furthermore, that in order for a performer to realize such magic, he or she must be attuned to and in the deepest human relationship to Music as a transcendent/transformational art, or to what I call capital M Music. As a result, Beautiful Material has not only the potentiality of transcending itself, it also has the potentiality to induce a response in listeners that is transformational.

Having this opportunity to present and discuss the music of Robert Morris, music that has been impacted by his engagement with and investigation into non-western music, afforded me the circumstances to ask him questions, via email, which I otherwise might or might not have ever asked. Returning to the “love at first sound” theme, I asked him if he could recall his first exposure to non-western music. Remarkably, that came at the tender age of 14 due to his piano teacher's wife's work in modern dance which, equally remarkable for the time, included an interest in “intricacies of Indian dance”. To quote Bob: “A troupe of dancers and musicians from India under the direction of Uday Shankar were pretty successful in the West (in fact, Ravi Shankar was in that group as a teenager). My piano teacher's wife had a few records and also a book by Alain Danielou, called North Indian Music. She loaned this and 78 rpm records to me. As I read and listened I became amazed and impressed, but I didn't think this music would ever influence me very much.”

I also asked about what grabbed him in that music and he responded: “I loved the deep emotional content—especially the extraordinary effect of the slow glides between notes—and rhythm, both its slow majestic progress and its complexity at fast tempi. The underlying drone grounded this music as a source of focus and unity that has almost no counterpart in (western) classical music. It also meant that there were other musics, unlike the ones I knew, in the world.”

Next I asked Bob how this led to further exploration/investigation and how that has progressed over the years. He answered, “Shortly after learning about Indian music, I began to get interested in the newest developments in modern music. I went through the bins of record stores in New York City looking for interesting things to listen to. There I came across affordable recordings of Balinese, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic music, as well as Indian music. (Most of this was on the Folkways label.) Then about 1960, Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, S. Balachander, and other major Indian musicians were touring Europe and America and making recordings. When the Beatles

sanctioned Indian music, there was an overwhelming number of Indian music recordings available in store and libraries. I began to collect recordings of Indian and other non-western music then—about 1963-8. In this way, as an avid and analytic listener, I learned much about this music, which has become an important part of my musical life.

For many years, my love of Indian music (and also other non-western musics) was a sort of hobby—with some exceptions noted below—while my appreciation deepened and matured. It was only after 1995 that I began to write scholarly papers on the music. My first trip to India in 1997, and four others subsequently, helped me understand this music in its own contexts, which has given me a sort of license to publish work combining Western and Indian music theory into real research projects. This was necessary for me, since I was self-taught and had not studied Indian music performance under a guru or even in a college ethnomusicology or world music performance class. My doctoral training in ethnomusicology at Michigan (University), and the fact that my spouse (Ellen Koskoff) is a prominent ethnomusicologist also supported my turn to scholarship.”

When asked about his first compositions that either reflected or incorporated the materials or sonic content of non-western music, he replied, “As my compositional interests evolved from writing contemporary music influenced by Bartok, Stravinsky, and Hindemith, to music influenced by Indian classical music—as Cowell, Cage and Hovhaness had also attempted to compose, I wrote a number of works that combined the pan-tonality and rhythmic vitality of neo-classical music with Indian ragas and talas. Most of this music (from 1959-63) has been lost or retracted. But there are three piano sonatas, a piano concerto with strings and some misc. pieces for cello, flute, viola, etc. Not terrible juvenilia.”

In the course of this discussion, regarding early works influenced by non-western musics, Bob volunteered some interesting narrative as to how non-western music began to impact on his western modern compositions. This is further germane to also understanding how it is that he was so receptive to various non-western musics with considerably different syntactical and linguistic approaches from western musics.

“In the fall of 1965, I began graduate studies in composition at the University of Michigan. Pursuing my continuing self-study of Indian music, I also took courses and seminars in ethnomusicology, which had a tremendous impact on my compositional aesthetics. The fact that there were musics based on completely different structural and cultural principles from mine made it possible for me to understand that Western music was also divided into different musical languages and that modern music was not only stylistically but also linguistically diverse. Thus, the reason that composers and listeners from one school or orientation didn’t like or understand another type of new music—or even more saliently, why people well-versed in classical music (or any other form of a musical tradition) found modern music difficult—was that new music proposed a set of musical idioms as different from each other as they were different from tonality. Each idiom not only proposed a new vocabulary of sounds, but also provided a new syntactic and semantic component in which those sounds would function.

I also saw that some new music was out to rid itself of any language-like features, so as to be independent and outside of any previous or contemporary musical idiom. This music was by John Cage and other so-called chance composers. I quickly found out that Cage's aesthetic influences came from Indian music, art and aesthetics, and also from Zen Buddhism (by way of D.T.Suzuki). This led to an interest in Zen and Buddhism, which has since become a deep reservoir of inspiration for my music.

At any rate, in the early 1970s I found myself wanting to connect my love of non-western music with my compositional practice, which at that time was a mixture of improvisational music, electronic music, and loosely organized pitch and rhythmic procedures. This tension was resolved in my *Acculturation Trilogy*.”

I next asked Bob to discuss his works that are the result of a confluence of non-western musics.

“My *Acculturation Trilogy*, written from 1972 to 1976, was heralded with a piece of live electronic music I performed with you in the Yale electronic music studio. It played four simultaneous tracks of music from all parts of the world that the performers sampled and improvised using an ARP 2500 electronic music synthesizer connected to a tape delay system. I played the synthesizer and you changed the state of the delay system. Every performance was different. This improvisational composition called “Rapport” led me to consider making music that variously combined and transformed music, from many times and places.”

I want to talk about “Rapport”, having been a part of the premiere performances that spanned two per night over three or four consecutive evenings. Similarly to Bob, from about 1963 onwards I began purchasing recordings of non-western musics along with the latest in new music and jazz. So I was not unfamiliar with such musics. However, nothing quite prepared me for the experience of performing Rapport. Because the appearance of overlapping musics in almost unimaginable synchronistic combinations from around the world, past and present time, might and did occur in performance there was a spontaneity of musical events that was often magical. It was as though each music, whether it was an aboriginal didjeridu emerging out of Tibetan ritual orchestral music and suddenly transforming into Beethoven and then receding into a shakuhachi solo, was governed by an exquisite ordering of appearances and interactions. It was much like highly skilled improvisers knowing what and when to play by apparently following a common musical impulse. At the end of each night, Bob and I would discuss the performances with a high degree of wonder. To me, it was like some musical Ouiji board was offering answers to questions that had not yet been asked. Of all of my musical experiences from my time at Yale, the impact of performing “Rapport” still informs my music. And it was my first experience with Beautiful Material that did not involve what has come to be called, a “live” performance —meaning that there were musicians rather than recordings present for the performance.

(To listen to a portion of two different performances of “Rapport” go to <http://www.the-open-space.org/rm>)

I'm also interested in the fact that since post modernism, acculturation of non-western musics seems to have been folded into what is now called world music ensembles— which often combine instruments and musics from diverse cultures. Acculturation of older western musics fits nicely

into the rubric of the various “neo-s”, such as neo-romanticism, or into post modernism itself. Of course, musical acculturation has probably been practiced by musicians since the beginning of trade through the Silk Route even though the word “acculturation” only dates back to the late 19th century. Ethnomusicology has certainly provided evidence of the sharing of instruments and scalar materials through contact on the Silk Route. Nevertheless, I am unaware of anyone in the 1970s who was actively engaged in using acculturation with as wide a scope as Bob. In his words regarding the Acculturation Trilogy:

“The three parts of the Trilogy consist of: 1) a 45 minute four track electronic piece called “Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains” (1973); 2) a set of 5 chamber pieces; and 3) “in Different Voices” an hour long composition for 5 wind ensembles, commissioned by the Yale Band to be played on their American Bicentennial concert in 1976. The 5 chamber pieces are: 1) “Not Lilacs” of 1973, a written out jazz composition, but also a 12 tone piece; 2) “Varnam” 1971 for 5 melody instruments, finger cymbals drums and drones; 3) “Motet on Doo-Dah” 1972 for alto flute, bass and piano; 4) “Variations on the Variations of Quadran Pavan and the Quadran Pavan of Bull and Byrd” 1974 for two pianos; and 5) “Bob’s Plain Bobs” 1975 for percussion quartet and tape. All of these works explored processes of musical accommodation and change in different ways.”

At this point I’d like to briefly give my impression of several of these works since, like “Rapport”, I had first hand experience performing them in their premieres, and, in some cases, in subsequent performances. The first I’d like to discuss is “Varnam”. This piece is rich in a variety of ways. Firstly, the melodic instrumentation is flexible with the stipulation that of the five melody instruments, there must be two pairs of same instruments, and a single. For example, in the premiere there were two clarinets and two flutes, with the fifth instrument a piano. For each of the five sections a different performer states an opening melodic phrase and then leads the melody which is followed in a close canon by the remaining instruments in a ten beat cycle. The time interval of the canon varies from section to section. The mode for each section is determined by the birthday of the leader from a matrix that provides a series of accidentals (sharps and flats) in six versions for both the upper and lower tetrachords aligning with numbers signifying the month of birth. This makes for intriguing color shifts from section to section unless, of course, everyone performing was born in the same month! There is, for western performers, an interesting array of ornaments which allude to the gamakas of Carnatic music. While the term varnam indicates a fairly standard form, which is like a composed etude in Carnatic music, Bob’s open series of choices, (instrumentation, mode etc.) combined with a canonic texture creates something singularly original and unique in either the music of India or the west. Performing it was a growth experience for me (I played one of the clarinets) as it was important to keep one’s place in the canon while simultaneously experiencing the flow of the music, like a beautiful surging river of sound, delineated by the sectional changing cyclic divisions of ten beats by the finger cymbals and the wonderful periods of repose where the canons complete and the drone and percussion maintain. In performing “Varnam”, I experienced time as the back and forth cycle of movement into stasis into movement, much like the late composer/theorist Jonathan Kramer described as horizontal time transforming into vertical time, and so forth.

(To listen to a portion of “Varnam” go to <http://www.the-open-space.org/rm>).

The next work I’d like to discuss is “Not Lilacs”. Although mentioning this work is a deviation from the non-western theme of this talk, I feel compelled to say a few things about it as it is also an important work within the Acculturation Trilogy. “Not Lilacs” uses an almost standard jazz ensemble of alto saxophone, trumpet, piano and drums. I say “almost” because, ordinarily, such an ensemble would also have a double bass. Nevertheless, it is a powerfully convincing work in the jazz genre although the pitch world is twelve tone instead of tonal. What gives this work such authenticity is the phrasing, which could be best described as arising out of both free jazz and bebop, plus the pitch content, which holds in common various arrays that could have easily been spawned by altered jazz chords. The principle of acculturation in this work is so convincing that, at the premiere, audience members assumed that it contained improvisation although the music was entirely composed. Although this piece is some 37 years old, if it were performed today it would sound new and I have often drawn on its influence in both my jazz compositions and as an improviser. I would like to further point out that none of these works from the 1970s sound dated to my ear.

To listen to two parts of Not Lilacs go to <http://www.the-open-space.org/rm>)

“In Different Voices” was a tour de force composed for the Yale Band, which was expanded and divided into five wind ensembles. In this case, my perceptions of the piece are a bit skewed since, in only this case, I was reluctantly pressed into performing while I had anticipated enjoying the privileged position of being in the audience. I did witness that among some audience members there was a rather prideful activity of recognizing and pointing out the musical references much like school kids identifying the instruments of the orchestra. But among the more receptive and perceptive members of the audience there was a recognition of the immensity of musical connectivity. In my own case, while performing my part, I became aware of the oceanic complexity of sound and musical resources ebbing and flowing throughout the hour long performance. It was satisfyingly exhausting to perform and be a part of. Several friends and I wondered if the world hadn’t changed significantly as the result of the performance since it did impress us with an energy that appeared to expand continuously outward.

(To listen to two parts of “In different Voices” go to <http://www.the-open-space.org/rm>.)

Finally, the last piece of the Acculturation Trilogy that I would like to introduce is the large scale electronic work “Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains”. Similar to “Rapport”, this work uses various non-western musics as sound sources but in this case, these musics (from Taiwan, Bali, Japan, Indonesia, Tibet, and Korea) are electronically modified and paired with electronically generated sound for their sonic relationship. The aliveness that I experienced from the musical sources in “Rapport”, manifests here in the electronic part. However one hears it, the electronic part has the energy of something alive and interactive with the non-western musics present in the piece. The textures and flow are remarkably natural and perhaps are related to an early orchestral work of Bob’s composed in Hawaii called, “Continua”. That work corresponds to his discovery of the rhythms, textures and flow of nature and presciently anticipates another direction that Bob’s music has taken more recently with outdoor works, and his recent electronic composition

“Mountain Streams”. In my mind, these works significantly link up with the way many, if not most, non-western musics have a connectivity to the cycles and influence of the natural world. Whether it is the seasonal, or cyclic aspect of day/night in the specificity of Indian ragas, or the timbral richness of the Japanese Shakuhachi attempting to conjure the blowing of the wind through a bamboo grove, or the Chinese Ti Tzi imitating bird song, the wealth of musical expressions of nature provided by non-western musics is a powerful source of inspiration.

(To Listen to three parts of “Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains” go to <http://www.the-open-space.org/rm>.

I asked Bob in what ways he has integrated western compositional procedures with non-western music and he replied:

“Only in the Acculturation Trilogy, did I attempt this. In contrast, I have a series of works in the 1970s, each based on a different “rasa” from Hindu aesthetic theory. There are nine rasa-s. each a different affective state. Nevertheless, the music in these pieces is Western. These works are the last, with a few exceptions in which I announced my non-western influences or interests in my music.

The issue is complicated because progressive Western music of the 20th century began to explore the temporal, timbral, and textural worlds amply found in traditional musics from much of the rest of the world. So it was easy for many composers of this time to note how what they had constructed and discovered was ultimately not new or radical, but part of some other culture’s music. This could be inspiring or daunting, or both. In addition many composers of the 1930-40s, like Cowell, Harrison, and Cage were directly influenced by non-western music. More recently, Reich and Ligeti have been so influenced.

At any rate, while I don’t ordinarily use maqamat, ragas, talas, colotomic structures, non-western instruments or playing techniques in my compositions, I am very aware of them, and they have influenced the technical innovations that have advanced and supported my music.

In short, the impact of my love and knowledge of other musics outside of the classical and modern music traditions on my music has rarely been literal; it is the spirit I perceive in that music that has made my music what it is today. You might say what I felt in other musical languages has been “translated” into my music—the phonological and syntactic features are changed, but the semantic and pragmatic meanings are retained (with some subtle modification, of course, since exact translation is always impossible).”

I next asked Bob if his interest in non-western music has led to his investigation of Asian spiritual traditions, thought and philosophy.

“This is now central to my music. But it didn’t enter my music only through my interests in non-western music. I mentioned my interest in Cage and his evocation of Zen through his music. That led to a curiosity about Zen and Buddhism. Many of my friends, like you, in the 1960s and 70s practiced forms of Buddhism, Hinduism, or Taoism. I began to read non-western philosophy and religion from about 1970 on. I practiced meditation for about five years in the 1980s. In 1997, I held a “Bridging Fellowship” at my university, which permitted me to study in the religion and

classics department for a term on leave from my teaching duties in composition. I studied Tantric Hinduism, early Buddhism, philosophy of religion, Buddhist art and Islamic mysticism. In addition, but not incidentally, I developed a passion for hiking. All this resonated with my love of Chinese and Japanese painting and poetry, some of which I've set in pieces such as "The Wang River Cycle" (1985, for soprano and chamber ensemble based on poems by Wang-Wei) and "Cold Mountain Songs", based on poems by Han Shan (1994, for soprano and piano).

In sum, I'd say that almost all of my music of the last twenty years has resonated with Asian philosophy and aesthetics, but without directly using or quoting non-western music or its pitch, rhythmic or timbral features. My music stems from the western traditions and practices of 20th and 21st century music. However, it has many affinities with non-western ornamentation, heterophony, and temporal depth and, in my outdoor pieces, ritual. The most salient non-western resources are from the Buddhist philosophies of time, emptiness and radical interrelatedness."

I asked Bob what was his first memorable experience of being moved by the transcendent or transformative power of music and he responded:

"It was that Bach piece for flute and strings, the *Orchestral Suite #2* in B minor, the last movement. I still love this piece. I would play the record over and over, watching the glow of the record player's tubes through the cooling air vents, little points of brown-orange light. It was as if the music resided there in that glow. I always was moved to a feeling of joy and peace by this music. I remember thinking that this music was a sort of door to a perfect, dynamic world of energy. Later when I began to take piano lessons, I wanted to not only bring this world to myself and others, but also to be a part of its creative power. Then still later, I began to wonder how it was possible for this music to do this to me in the first place. That led to compositional thinking and action.

Other passages that moved me: the second measure of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*, first movement—the B octave under the C# minor chord—in music theory terms a mere passing tone in the bass—but to me the most wonderful sound/feeling, as if the bottom of the world dropped out. Then the movement to VI and N6 just prolonged and deepened that beautiful gravity—yet freedom—of this music. (I'm about 8 years old then). I fell in love with Beethoven's passionate piano sonatas—I would listen for hours to the *Pathetique*, *Moonlight* and *Appassionata* sonatas—all of which have big uses of the N6. When I could improvise I would literally lose myself in these N6 progressions. Later when I got into Indian music, I found that the Hindustani raga *Bhairavi* embodied these N6 progressions as melodic.

An incident from Indian music that blew me away was Vilayat and Imrat Khan's performance of *Raga Miyan Ki Malhar* (on sitar and surbahar) with its majestic glides from Ma to Ga in the bass, it was just as potent as that second measure of the *Moonlight*."

Bob then goes on to list more Bach and Beethoven, a significant sampling of 20th century classical music ranging from Schoenberg, Webern, Berg, Bartok, and Stravinsky to Babbitt, Boulez, Reich and Stochhausen, various Hindustani and Carnatic ragas, and a large list of musics from Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa etc.

Finally, I asked Bob what his thoughts on Beautiful material are and he said:

"I think that all material is possibly beautiful—it is in the composer/player/listener in whom

the transformational power resides, not the material itself. However, people start in different places—as I said above, when I was young certain chord progressions spoke to me—not others, but as I matured more musical material could be made beautiful. But as one grows in sensibility and musical skill, one can take almost anything and find a way to make it “beautiful material”. You could also say, all musical materials are inherently beautiful material. Sort of like we all have Buddha nature, but we have to realize it—make it manifest. For musicians, then, growth comes from anything or anywhere. Because this growth starts in different musical places for each individual, and we all grow at different rates and ways, we do not immediately connect. But the more growth, the more connection. This does not mean as one matures all music becomes beautiful material, it just means one has a wider range of possibilities to make and appreciate music.

Specifically, I work with ordered and unordered sets. At first only some of these seem appropriate for my use, then as I grew to know all of these sets (the 12 trichords, 29 tetrachords, 50 hexachords) all of them have the potential for making wonderful music—in fact one of my compositional goals has been to explore these sets as various kinds of gestures and sounds, in heterogeneous and homogenous combinations, to make new connections, feelings, processes, eidetic musical images. All within the flux of musical change.”

In conclusion, Beautiful Material is the deepest possible experience of music with the capacity to inspire and transform. I have personally experienced that in Robert Morris’s music and in the musics that have inspired him creatively.

Related Articles by Robert Morris:

“Dover Lane, 2008,” [Review of an annual Hindusthani music festival in Calcutta] *The Open Space Magazine*, 10:187-97, 2008.

“Ravikiran’s Concept of Melharmony: An Inquiry into Harmony in South Indian Ragas,”
(with Chitravina N. Ravikiran) *Music Theory Spectrum*, 28/2:255-76, 2006.

“Architectonic Composition in South Indian Classical Music: The ‘Navaragamalika Varnam’,” in *Analytical Studies in World Music*, Michael Tenzer, ed., Oxford University Press, 2006.

“The Survival of Music: Musical Citizenship in South India,” *Perspectives of New Music*, 42:66-87, 2004.

“Variation and Process in South Indian Music: Some Kritis and their Sangatis,” *Music Theory Spectrum*, 23/1:74-89, 2001.

“Aspects of Confluence between Western Art Music and Ethnomusicology,” in *Concert Music, Rock and Jazz since 1945*, edited by Elizabeth Marvin and Richard Mermann, University of Rochester Press, 1995.

Two papers concerning the relationship of Buddhist philosophy to western music:

“A collection of thoughts on Jim Randall, his piano piece GAP6 I, and some notions of ‘gap’,” *The Open Space Magazine*, 7:5-36, 2005.

“Musical Form, Expectation, Attention and Quality,” *The Open Space Magazine*, 4:59-127, 2003

Unpublished papers (given as invited talks):

“Crowns: Rhythmic Cadences in South Indian Music” National Convention of the Society of Music Theory, in Toronto, Nov. 2, 2000.

“Sets, Scales and Rhythmic Cycles: A Classification of Talas,” Music Colloquium, University of Madras, Chennai, India, Jan. 17, 2000; National Convention of the Society of Music Theory, in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Dec. 2, 1998. (at <http://lulu.esm.rochester.edu/rdm/downloads.html>)

“Not a Universal Language but a Universe of Languages: Carnatic and Western Music Theory in Cross-Cultural Perspective,” Keynote Address for the Music Society of New York State, April 22, 1995, Buffalo, N.Y.

“Towards a ‘Buddhist Music’: Precursors East and West,” Delivered at Alfred University, 2005 Sibley Lecture. (at <http://lulu.esm.rochester.edu/rdm/downloads.html>)

Klangprojektion in die Zeit: Marcos Mesquita on Helmut Lachenmann's *Staub*

Alexander Sigman

Over the past decade, an increasing number of books and articles in both German and English have addressed Lachenmann's seminal orchestral works. Among other articles published in the volume of *Contemporary Music Review* released in 2004 devoted to the composer, Richard Toop provides a chronological survey of these pieces.¹ Rainer Nonnenmann has written both a book devoted to the early orchestra pieces² and an article from the same year on *Staub* (1985/87).³ In his dissertation entitled *Klangprojektion in die Zeit: Ein Weg zum Orchesterwerk Staub von Helmut Lachenmann* (published this year by Wolke Verlag),⁴ Marcos Mesquita expands upon aspects of Nonnenmann's analysis via extensive archival research.

Originally commissioned by the Südwestfunk Baden-Baden as a "prologue" to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony,⁵ *Staub* was meant to receive its premiere in July 1986 by the SWF-Sinfonieorchester, conducted by Michael Gielen. However, due to the objections of the orchestra, it would not be performed until December 1987, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Saarländischen-Rundfunk Sinfonieorchester, under the direction of Myung-whun Chung.

Regarded as an "ehrfürchtig begangene Steinbruch,"⁶ Lachenmann assumes a critical stance towards the naïve Enlightenment *mythos* surrounding the 9th Symphony, perpetuated throughout its reception history. Certain relationships to the Beethoven are transparent: Lachenmann's orchestration of this ca. 25-minute work mirrors Beethoven's almost exactly,⁷ and the symphony's primary thematic materials appear in various manifestations throughout. Yet how may one define *Staub's* ontological status with respect to the Ninth Symphony? Rainer Nonnenmann claims that the prologue-character of the work does not consist in either supplying an introduction, or functioning as a sort of "ear-cleanser," but rather in injecting the perceptual-semantic frictions associated with

¹ Richard Toop, "Concept and Context: A Historiographic Consideration of Lachenmann's Orchestral Works," in *Contemporary Music Review* vol. 23 (2004), pp. 125-143.

² Rainer Nonnenmann, *Angebot durch Verweigerung. Die Ästhetik instrumental-konkreten Klangkomponierens in Helmut Lachenmanns frühen Orchesterwerken* (Mainz: Schott 2000).

³ Nonnenmann, "Beethoven und Helmut Lachenmanns 'Staub' für Orchester (1985/87)," in *fragmen*, Heft 33 (Saarbrücken: Pfau Verlag, 2000).

⁴ Marcos Mesquita, *Klangprojektion in die Zeit: Ein Weg zum Orchesterwerk Staub von Helmut Lachenmann* (Hofheim: Wolke Verlag, 2010), 286 pp., with musical examples and illustrations.

⁵ The original title of *Staub* was, in fact, *Prolog*.

⁶ Helmut Lachenmann, [Werkkommentar zu] *Staub für Orchester* (1987), p. 397.

⁷ With differences in instrumental doublings (e.g., piccolo doubling alto flute in the Lachenmann, and the use of C and A clarinets in the Beethoven), percussion instrumentation, and the lack of a choir in *Staub*.

Lachenmann's notion of *dialectical structuralism* into the listening experience. Richard Toop contends that the piece functions neither as commentary⁸ nor as prologue, but rather as a logical continuation of the first movement, to which *Staub* bears "natural affinities." Specifically, Toop is referring to the "battlefield" qualities of the movement, which correspond to Lachenmann's "idea of the (socially relevant) work of art as a 'Trümmerfeld' — a pile of rubble, a scene of post-catastrophic desolation."⁹

Such an image is particularly appropriate in the case of *Staub*, throughout which processes of "*Verstaubung*" and "*Entstaubung*" figure prominently. That is to say: transitions (or simply alternations) between empty states (hollowed-out string, wind, and percussion sounds lacking in pitch definition or rhythmic profile) and conventionally expressive continuous or "perforating" *tutti* gestures occupy the musical surface. Neither the outbursts of connotative gestures, nor the pulverization thereof are intended as unidimensional events, but rather generate ambiguities and place new perspectives upon historically connotative fragments.

As is typical of the composer's ensemble works of this period, processes and sound-structures are often presented in layers, rather than occurring in isolation. Towards the conclusion of the piece, for instance, three "Klangebenen" [sound-layers] are presented as *contrafacta*: the repeated articulation of a rhythm associated with the words "VOR GOTT" (derived from the Schiller text "...und der Cherub steht vor Gott"), a "Kioto-Melodie," and a series of octave brass and percussion fanfare-figures typical of classical symphonies.¹⁰ The elements comprising these layers are projected by diverse instrumental configurations at varying intervals and for varying durations.

It is exactly the myriad modes of time-projection of disparate transformed materials that permeate the piece's discourse that Mesquita takes as his point of departure. Whereas Toop and Nonnenmann situate *Staub* within the local context of Lachenmann's *oeuvre*, Mesquita embeds his analysis within a larger project pertaining to a set of proposed "Grundstrategien" of sound-projection in time, which have emerged as a product of developments in Western music since ca. 1950.

Klangprojektion in die Zeit contains four principal chapters. In the first, the author identifies and describes five *Grundstrategien*, or fundamental strategies, by way of a discussion of the tendency towards the horizontal and vertical juxtaposition of differentiated layers in works of Ives, Stravinsky, Webern, and Varèse. To illustrate each *Grundstrategie* ("*Kontinuum*," "*Juxtaposition*," "*Superposition*," "*Pointillistische Streuung*," and "*Subliminale Vernetzung*"), examples drawn from canonic mid-late 20th century repertoire are provided.¹¹ This is followed by "Betrachtungen" on music since 1950, with an emphasis on concepts of durational, formal, and spatial articulation, with respect to sound-

⁸ In the sense that, e.g., *Accanto* (1975-76) exists as a direct commentary upon Mozart's Clarinet Concerto.

⁹ Toop, p. 138.

¹⁰ Cf. mm. 359-395 of *Staub*.

¹¹ While horizontal juxtaposition is exemplified by piano works of Messiaen and Feldman, the first movement of Ligeti's *Kammerkonzert* illustrates the use of vertical Superposition. Not surprisingly, "Pointillistische Streuung" is associated with the early post-war serial compositions of Goeyvaerts, Stockhausen, and Boulez, as well as Cage's *Music of Changes*. The "Subliminale Vernetzung" category is attributed to Fernyhough's works, as well as Lachenmann's "Klangtypologie."

material. Subsequently, the focus shifts to an overview of aesthetic and historical concepts central to Lachenmann's compositional praxis, in preparation for the analysis of *Staub* that occurs in the fourth chapter. This analysis is divided into two primary sections. Sketches, drafts, and three versions of the score are scrutinized and compared in the first section with respect to both the source-materials employed and extra-musical symbolic associations tied to these materials. Finally, *Staub* is regarded through the lens of the five proposed Grundstrategien. Performance notes, a *Zeitnetz* diagram, and other primary source documents are presented as appendices.

As may be inferred from the above description, Mesquita's book undeniably does the work of *analysis* with an impressive degree of rigor and precision. As is revealed in the countless musical examples, diagrams, and text citations, the author has assembled and deciphered numerous sketch-materials not only from the Paul Sacher-Stiftung, but also from a private collection. Such archival sifting has revealed rarely discussed concrete connections between compositional procedures proper to *Staub* and those employed in later works,¹² as well as the *Augenmusik* dimension of the piece (e.g., sketches of converging pitch fields forming the letter "B").¹³ Furthermore, certain documents disclose biographical details that shed light upon Lachenmann's compositional decisions. In the mid-1980s, Lachenmann underwent an artistic crisis, during which time he cultivated an interest in the early 20th century Kyoto school of philosophy. This (at least partially) explains the presence of the "Kioto-Melodie," whose inclusion in the work is confirmed by a private Notiz written by Lachenmann in 1987.

However, there is little evidence of a *synthesis*, an "Entstaubung," of the analytical concepts and data outlined above, with the exception of a few keen passing insights. Although it is admirable on the part of the author to avoid excessive speculation as to Lachenmann's compositional motivations and intentions, the chapter devoted to *Staub* is not bound by any particularly strong thesis. While the five Grundstrategien themselves seem *prima facie* to possess explanatory power, they are ultimately too broadly defined to be of any great analytical utility.¹⁴ While the application of such categories to the piece reveals the richness of *Staub*'s musical fabric and Lachenmann's compositional resources, the claim and demonstration that the piece internalizes *all* possible Grundstrategien further inhibits any sufficiently *specific* argument from emerging from the analysis. As the author himself states, "Die Strategien zur Klangprojektion in die Zeit verwickeln gewiss ineinander, aber bestimmte Merkmale einzelner Strategien können sogar von einem aufmerksamen durchschnittlichen Hörer intuitive wahrgenommen werden, ohne dass er sie mit einem Fachwort benennen kann."¹⁵ Rather than enabling the author to pave a "Weg" towards a greater understanding of the value-system underlying the abundance of procedures and materials comprising the compositional process of *Staub*, such highly intuitive surface-

¹² Given *Staub*'s pivotal role in influencing Lachenmann's subsequent compositional phase, such comparisons are of historiographic importance. That being said, the chapter would have benefited from a more prominent discussion of influential features.

¹³ In certain cases, the implied imagery is arguably taken a bit too literally.

¹⁴ The term "strategy," which implies an objective to be achieved via its implementation, is itself intrinsically misleading. "Sound-projection in time" is far too general an objective, especially in the context of a "meta-piece" that stands in relation to an extant historic work.

¹⁵ Mesquita, p. 230.

categories potentially distance the reader from the higher-level concerns relevant to the piece.

The disconnected nature of the chapter extends to the style and structure of the text as a whole. Lying at the intersection of a generalized “philosophy of music” and a labor-intensive study of a particular piece, the links among the chapters seem tenuous at times, the proportions among them uneven. As a consequence of the compression of a vast quantity of information into the book, the writing often comes across as encyclopedic in nature. It would seem that these flaws could have been averted had the content been divided between two distinct projects.

While the compilation of sketch-materials, diagrams, and score excerpts may prove invaluable for future research on Lachenmann, it would have been more instructive had the primary sources been employed as preparatory material to be employed by the author as a means of developing a more in-depth and focused analysis, rather than being presented exhaustively as a means of substantiating the more readily apparent aspects of *Staub*. The obvious shortcomings of the text in question aside, one would hope that Mesquita and other musicologists will maintain a commitment to conducting substantial research on late 20th /early 21st century repertoire, as exemplified by *Klangprojektion in die Zeit*.

David Hicks

If you got ears, you gotta listen!

December 17, 2010: an email from a friend with an attached news story alerted me to the death of Don Van Vliet (Captain Beefheart). The obit, from the BBC, was perfunctory, superficial and disappointing.

I searched the internet for a couple of hours. Nothing I read that day came close to recollecting the resonance of the images, in sound-and-word, so generously given and now taken away; to reflecting the depth of our collective human loss; to measuring up to the courage and integrity, the brash brilliance of the man, whose creative force lives on in righteous, outrageous words and music.

In a lost time, in a lost place, (summer of '69, a house in Pennsylvania shared by the band I was in), one afternoon a drummer we sometimes jammed with showed up clutching a new 'double album' he wanted us to hear. He appropriated the record player, and with no preamble, Frownland suddenly punched out from the speakers. And blew my mind for good.

What's that?

Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band.

Yeah but what is it?

Trout Mask Replica.

Trout? Mask? What?

We listened to Side 1, and I was struck by the clashing and blending of the bluesy guitars, the freely dissonant pitch-space, the angular and flexible meters, the singer's bizarre wide-ranging voice with distorted echoes of Howlin' Wolf (and Andy Devine!), and the mind-bending lyrics, which taken all together mesmerized me. (I was nineteen, and inexperienced beyond my years...) Even more arresting was the sequence of 'songs': including a monologue on rats and shotguns; a hobo song forged in the Dust Bowl during the Iron Age; a macabre blues to the dead at Dachau; an ex tempore conversation ("We're making a bush recording. We're recording a bush.") with a couple of kids from Reseda ("she's nice"); a demented serenade to a girl who truly came in colors, by name: Ella Guru. And more.

As we listened through, snatches of tunes I knew, like "Old Time Religion," flashed by, offering temporary life preservers in the sonic maelstrom. But surreal snippets poked out of unforeseen corners: "a squid eating dough in a polyethylene bag is fast and bulbous, got me?" The familiarities were outweighed by the ecstatic and uninhibited strangeness. Fractured words lay like patches of burning rubber across your skull, leaving the smell of their compounded meanings wafting aloft. The totality of what these guys were up to was Other: pure and plain, which a bug-eyed look at the album art confirmed.

I wondered about the pitch/rhythmic complexity of these pieces. Was it perhaps improvised? No way, it was too tight, too jagged to be the result of jamming. But I didn't know many rock musicians who could keep that kind of time, nor any who would put up with the repetitious rehearsal required to learn the notes and remember all the metric shifts.

(Over the years one heard of the punitive conditions imposed by Van Vliet on his bands to get this wild ensemble feel. The word 'martinet', in both its meanings, captures the scene.)

When we got to 'When Big Joan Sets Up' I recognized the source of "Hoy hoy, is she a boy" as Wolf's '300 Pounds of Joy' from the LP "Real Folk Blues" that I treasured, but this was anything but your average whiteboy blues band. (I didn't know then that Wolf too was borrowing: in his case from Cab Calloway.) It was exhilarating and demoralizing at the same time. They were light-years ahead of anything I had ever imagined, and there was no catching up. What did all those Otis Spann licks I'd struggled to learn mean now?

Who was this Captain Beefheart, later recast and demythified as mere-man Don Van Vliet? By all indications, a hipster and omnivore. A sophisticated primitivist. A primal scavenger and hoarder of historical and musical artifacts. An archivist with an enormous babblin' library of recordings permanently housed in his brain. At the drop of his top hat he had sea shanties, hobo songs, cowboy tunes, and especially the ancient dust of Delta blues tumbling off his lips in surrealistically reconstituted splendor. The words came in fully formed torrents, like a cross between automatic writing and automatic weaponsfire. The puns pinged like sonar, reflecting back and forth, across and in and out your ears. What? The song abruptly stopped. And then the gentle interlude ('A carrot is as close as a rabbit gets to a diamond'...)

He and they were from around Lancaster, California, in the desert northeast of L.A. Lancaster was like a little Delta in the desert, growing blues guitarists and avant-garde musicians in place of sagebrush and cactus. (Must of been somethin' in the water...)

Apart from Van Vliet and Zappa, there was Ry Cooder (who, as a 20-year old slide guitar virtuoso, Van Vliet managed to snag for the "Safe as Milk" album), and the other Magic Band members: Alex Snouffer (Alex St. Claire), Jeff Cotton (Antennae Jimmy Semens), Bill Harkleroad (Zoot Horn Rollo), Mark Boston (Rockette Morton), and John French (Drumbo). And all committed to a bluesy, morphing-into-avant-garde music, with Van Vliet leading the caravan.

Listen to their spooky remake of Robert Pete Williams's already chilling 'Grown So Ugly' on "Safe as Milk." It's illuminating not only because it's a rare instance of a song they recorded not written by Van Vliet, but for the way Williams's images tumble, disconnect, and reassemble, and ultimately scare you to your core. The disjointed flow of the bluesman's images fit Van Vliet's vision and poetry perfectly. (And his falsetto on 'Oh baby this ain't me!' will curl your hair.)

Though Van Vliet professed not to read or write nor to play a musical instrument nor even to write his lyrics down (on "Trout Mask" the musical and lyrical transcription tasks fell to drummer French), this was an obvious put-on. As an instrumentalist, he played a mean harp, and his sax (and shehnai!) squealed with abandon. He turned out to be a painter and sculptor as well, and one could hear the collages of words and music-sounds that coalesced into the vinyl spinning in the corner as natural, organic, and sculptural in form.

In Philadelphia in the late 60's and early 70's there was a handful of good bands playing the local clubs, like the Second Fret and the Electric Factory, sometimes headlining but mostly opening for the name acts. One of these bands called themselves Elizabeth. Not after one of the guys' girlfriends; nor a random name snatched from a cemetery headstone like the Allman Brothers' Elizabeth Reed; no, for whatever reason they named themselves after the city in New Jersey. One time we shared a gig, and out of the blue they had a new name. We asked how they came up with it. This was at a time when Beefheart and the Magic Band were touring the East coast. (Playing their stuff live!) Elizabeth went to one of these shows and got to talk to Van Vliet backstage. They said, 'we want you to help us come up with a new name.' Van Vliet up and blurted: 'Good God!' And paused, and smiled and said: 'You should call your band Good God.' And they did.

if you got ears, you gotta listen!

Van Vliet's words are mostly simple, of one or two syllables, primary in nature (colors, sun and moon, animals are prominent). But in constructing the texts that he sang, or chanted, or exhorted, Van Vliet invented a new, complex music-poetry. It came, deeply rooted, out of the ground, and flowered and grew fractal wings and sailed up to the sky. Though he leaned on parody (not the mean kind, the affectionate kind) and delighted in deconstructing and recasting found objects, the new narrative that his twisty repetitions spun is unique in music of any sort. The texts themselves, taken on their own, are a new wordsound form.

Deconstructing these texts would be a fool's errand. Rather, I'll just mention a few of them that come easily to mind. (Do yourself a favor: read them. The website "Captain Beefheart's Radar Station" is a treasure of information on Van Vliet and the Magic Band. The lyrics to all the songs can be perused there.)

Safe As Milk

Abba Zaba

There's a lot to love on "Safe as Milk." But high on the list must be 'Abba Zaba.' (And his girl, Babette Baboon.) If you're from the east coast then you probably don't know, Abba Zaba is a California candy bar, first manufactured in L.A. in the 1920's. "Safe as Milk" was originally to be titled "Abba Zaba" but the candy company scotched that. Still, the album's yellow and black cross-hatch design comes from the candy wrapper.

But this isn't a song about candy. It's about ape-boy (Abba Zaba) chases ape-girl (Babette Baboon) somewhere in the jungle. The opening line, 'Long before song before song blues' sets the Wayback to way back when. Van Vliet said it was about evolution. Seekers of the missing link, listen up!

Run, run, monsoon, Indian dream, tiger moon
Yellow bird fly high, tobacco sky, two shadas at Noon
Babette baboon gonna catch her soon Babette baboon

The ensemble sound is stunning and seductive. The band makes sweet mincemeat of traditional call and response, chanting 'Babetta Baboon' in alternation with Beefheart's 'Abba Zaba Zoom.' Log drums and exotic rhythms bounce and dance and paint a perfect backdrop for the playful resonance of the words.

Mother say son, she say son, you can't lose, with the stuff you use
Abba Zaba go-zoom Babette baboon

Finally, the duet between French and Cooder, on bass, smokes and scintillates, dazzling like the tiger moon.

(Among the other gems from "Safe as Milk" is 'Electricity', with its wild vocals, Theremin, and Cooder's wailing slide guitar.)

Trout Mask Replica

There is so much to celebrate on "Trout Mask Replica", but I'll try to limit myself.

The Dust Blows Forward and the Dust Blows Back

This is one of the masterstrokes of this album. Van Vliet's verbal transformations vaguely remind me, perhaps perversely, of the famous chain of sound-meaning connections in Hopkins's "Leaden Echo" ('bow or brooch or braid or brace...").

There's ole Gray with 'er dove-winged hat
There's ole Green with her sewing machine
Where's the bobbin at?
She's totin' old grain in uh printed sack
The dust blows forward 'n the dust blows back

Not just Gray -> Green -> Grain, but by the Free Associative Law of Freaky Phonemes: Gray + Green = Grain. And sewing machine handiwork begets printed sacks.

Where's the bobbin at? One may well wonder, where is the thread? It's the wordsound that pulls all the images together. (The parody here is of cowpoke or hobo songs; the found object is a faux 78-RPM scratch that punctuates the text's lines.)

A little further on, after a smokestack blows up and a riverboat flies by, we hear:

Hand full uh worms and uh pole fishin'
Cork bobbin' like a hot red bulb...

So that's where the bobbin was at.

The Blimp (mousetrapreplica)

'The Blimp' is unusual in many ways. It's based on several found objects. It is in the main, of course, a reference to the fiery Hindenburg disaster over Lakewood, N.J. in May, 1937. The hysteria of the lyrics and the singer's delivery, in this rare case it was Jeff Cotton (Antennae Jimmy Semens) handling Van Vliet's text, are distilled and distorted from a recording of the radio broadcast of reporter Herb Morrison's description of the tragic event (the lyrics include: 'the tapes uh trip'). As transcribed they also have one line as 'Shad rack ee shack', but I hear 'Shadrach Meshach', i.e. a reference to two of the characters from the Fiery Furnace of the Book of Daniel.

Cotton whispers urgently into the phone to 'Frank' (Zappa) who is making the recording and offering timing tips. The 'Master Master' prologue of course is a sight-sound pun on the iconic Barraud photograph of Nipper looking into Edison's cylinder phonograph. (The instrumental track isn't the Magic Band at all, but the backing for Zappa's Mothers of Invention number 'Charles Ives'.)

When I see you floatin' down the gutter
I'll give you uh bottle uh wine
Put me on the white hook
Back in the fat rack
Shadrach Meschach...

Splinters of remote experience and memory collide and fuse together in the kiln of Beefheart's text, which highlights the terror of the event:

The mother ship the mother ship
The brothers hid under their hood
Children stop yer nursin' unless yer renderin' fun
The mother ship the mother ship
The mother ship's the one
The nose has uh crimp
The nose is the blimp the blimp
It blows the air the snoot isn't fair
Look up in the sky there's uh dirigible there

il you got ears, you gotta listen!

(Miraculously, and contrary to Morrison's report, most of the passengers survived the event.)

Ella Guru

Deck us all with Boston Charlie,
Walla Walla, Wash., an' Kalamazoo!
Nora's freezin' on the trolley,
Swaller dollar cauliflower alley-garoo!

No no no!

But wait.

Ella Guru. Alley-garoo? Walt Kelly?

Van Vliet, a Hoover for pop culture couldn't have missed Pogo's rewrite of the Xmas carol, and I speculate got a kick out of its nonsense. Kelly's connections, all superficial sonic simulations, are loosely similar in kind to those Van Vliet was partial to, though the Captain's show a marked increase in depth from the purely goofy Pogo spoofery.

Now here she comes walkin'
Lookin' like uh zoo
(*Hello Moon Hello Moon*)
Hi Ella high Ella Guru
She know all the colors that nature do
High Ella high Ella Guru
High yella high red high blue she blew
High Ella high Ella Guru

Buried in there is a hipster's riff on the lingo found in Zora Neale Thurston's "Glossary of Harlem Slang," which spells out this skin-color-scale: 'high yaller, yaller, high brown, vaseline brown, seal brown, low brown, dark brown.'

Vaseline brown?

If one remembers Jim Jackson's *Wild About My Lovin'* (or Jim Kweskin's, or the *Lovin' Spoonful's* remakes, or W.C. Handy's *Hesitating Blues*, among others) one might remember this intriguing couplet:

Hello Central, What's the matter with this line?

I want to talk to that high brown of mine

As arcane as it is, this is the kind of found-object imagery that spurred the surrealist in Van Vliet, and enabled him to string together such skeins of words, seemingly out of the air, or out of nothing at all.

Not needing of explanation or description are several texts worthy of any reader's scrutiny and consideration, among them 'Sweet Sweet Bulbs' and 'My Human Gets Me Blues,' just to pick a pair.

'Sweet Sweet Bulbs' ends thus:

Her garden gate swings lightly without weight
Open t' most anyone that needs uh little freedom
For God's sake
O' come as many as you can
In dark or light you're free t' grow as flowers

Share her throne 'n use her toothbrush
'n spend some interesting hours

'My Human Gets Me Blues' starts with the deathless and indelible:

I saw yuh baby dancin' in your x-ray gingham dress
I knew you were under duress
I knew you were under yer dress

And continues with these metaphysically provocative and prescient thoughts:

...
But it's alright God dug yer dance
'n would have you young 'n in his harum
Dress you the way he wants cause he never had uh doll
Cause everybody made him uh boy
'n God didn't think t' ask his preference
You can bring yer dress 'n yer favorite dog
...
Cause in this lifetime
You've got m'humangetsmeblues

Lick My Decals Off Baby

Buggy Boogie Woogie

Oh that buggy boogie woogie sweeps me off my feet
What, ah, a simple song about an old-timey music style?
What this world needs is a good retreat
What this world needs is a good two dollar room
'n a good two dollar broom

This wild little nugget is a trope on a kernel of pop music popcorn, Roger Miller's 'King of the Road':

Trailers for sale or rent
Rooms to let...fifty cents.

...
Ah, but..two hours of pushin' a broom
Buys an eight by twelve four-bit room

Even Beefheart's two dollar broom is a mangled echo of the time Miller's landlord demands for earning one's keep. The song, which started out as a wistful remembrance of a bygone musical style, quickly turns into an OCD nightmare:

il you got ears, you gotta listen!

One day I was sweepin' down by the wall
I bumped a mama spider 'n the babies begin' to fall
Off o' my broom
Now I gotta keep on sweepin' 'n sweepin'
'fore they fill the room
...
Well the way I must be sweepin'
Must be with too many feet
Ah, 'n I'll still keep on sweeping 'n sweepin'
'n there's still too many feet

In the late '80s and 90's, most of the Beefheart catalog was reissued on CD. (One still awaits, eagerly, the reissue of "Lick My Decals Off Baby," one that's affordable anyway.) Among the revelations was a set of recordings that had ostensibly been lost for decades. These are the Buddha Records' sides that Van Vliet used to talk about but that no one had heard, not as they were intended to be anyway. This snafu was due to the usual record company shenanigans when they decided something wasn't 'commercial enough.' The LP "Strictly Personal" included a few of these in a form that Van Vliet hated, what with phase shifting and other electronic mangling.

Most of these lost tracks, especially the 'live' bluesy cuts like 'Tarotplane' made it to the "Mirror Man" CD, but not everything fit on a single disc.

In their desire for comprehensiveness, Buddha elected to put the remaining (mostly unfinished) sides onto "Safe as Milk" as "bonus tracks." These include a wonderful rendition of the song, 'Safe as Milk,' that hadn't been recorded at the time the original LP was issued.

But most of the rest of these tracks are the Magic Band alone, without the Captain's singing, i.e. just the instrumental backing tracks.

The other day I listened to these 'strange attractor' sides. In releasing them, Buddha, fittingly, answered 2 potent questions at the same time: Van Vliet's portentous one from 'The Dust Blows Forward': 'What am I gonna die?' as well as the famous Zen koan: 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?'

These recordings, especially as heard in January 2011, are eerie. The sound of the Magic Band playing on, alone, without the voice and words of Van Vliet haunts and disturbs, like a nightmare ramble through a never-ending, dark, deserted building.

I'm waiting for the Master's Voice. That's what resonated for me, the silence, the emptiness, and articulated better than anything what I lost when the light went out on December 17, 2010.

TOWARDS TRANSCRIBING TREVOR WISHART'S **GLOBALALIA**

Jon Forshee

The immediate strangeness of *Globalalia*'s short-range sonic profile entices the ear. It obscures our grasp of how the whole piece goes, or how it achieves its long range design. The listener may welcome this since *Globalalia*'s musical surface boasts sufficiently diverse ensembles of digitally processed vocal events to ensure our fruitful engagement with the piece at this focus for some time---for example, considerations of the digital treatments used by Wishart in his piece could teach us something about his artistic practices, and about the transformative potential of current computer music practices in general. Despite our sudden immersion in the moment to moment details of *Globalalia*, however, we sense a global strategy in this music, and as we listen we might ask "What matters in *Globalalia*?"

Should I take our designation of vocal events as the musical 'entities' of the work as absolute?--- and will I fall short of seizing upon the way this music goes by admitting a lyric slant to my listening? For instance, several times I have seen a magazine advertisement for a cassette tape, produced by psychologists, which aimed to reproduce the experience of auditory hallucinations for the listener. Imagining the soft whispers and fuzzy sibilance of the tape I became skeptical of the claim, since any relationship I could form with the voices on the tape would be fixed, in a way, by my relationship to them as 'voices on a tape I purchased to hear auditory hallucinations on'. Surely, our sonic experience encapsulates the meaningful in what we hear around us along with the concrete we listen to. Had I bought the tape, could I have disentangled my listening sufficiently enough to hear the voices as though they sounded as my own, in my own head? Perhaps, but the flexible relation I admit to *Globalalia* as 'a piece of music I listen to as music' seems more palatable, and thanks to a lush spectrum of digitized speechsounds here, I get to hear voices anyhow.

The acoustic realm which *Globalalia* inhabits seems to chart a distant place, but one for which we carry a cognitive compass: the human voice modulates our experience of *Globalalia* like it modulates our experience of other people, and of the world. This offers a happy experience for the listener, since the atomic level of *Globalalia* affords subtleties of timbral, vocal, and rhythmic relationships enough to engross the alert listener at many degrees of focus at once. We might make guesses at the meaning of words we "hear" in *Globalalia*, and find our listening selves speculate: what sense can we make of these stutters, hisses, clicks, mutterings and iterated Bs?

Do I feel strange listening to this? -- but I remember that, in the early chaotic world we experience as infants, our parents' voices alone surely provide the occasion for our first link with something outside of us; certain vocal sounds begin to mean something. In fact, one might make a case for the voice as the timbre with which we ought to be the most familiar; not just through our experience with the world, but with our own bodies too, since we know what it feels like to make vocal sounds, and we can reproduce most vocal sounds we hear. In one way, our familiarity with the human voice edifies

our listening to *Globalalia*, since the digitally processed constituents of the piece sound as little like the vocal sounds of our everyday experience as imagineable without losing that which makes them "vocal" at all.

The vibrant conflux of iterated 'r's, breathy susserations, resynthesised clicks and spatially dispersed plosives heard on *Globalalia*'s exterior may intrigue the attention so much as to hinder the comprehension of these speech phenomena as the atomic relations which form larger networks which we can hear describing the shape of the piece as a whole. The listener can feel glad for this side effect, however, since close attention may reveal something not only about the music of *Globalalia*, but about the voice. The digital capture and processing of speechsounds, after all, consists not only in altering the immediate sonic profile of the source, but also in isolating, and attenuating, irregularities in the source which we find make the source unique. In this way, *Globalalia* becomes a sonic microscope, projecting the 'uh's and 'er's of our daily life on a cellular scale refined enough for an alert listener to investigate. With this region of subtlety suddenly available for observation, we might suddenly ask "What matters here?"

The space of *Globalalia* comes on as Metropolitan: the group in the corner sounds German, and behind me I hear a Chinese family. Can I tell Czech from Slovakian? Distantly distinct wordforms suggest themselves, but vaporize as quickly as they surface. I hear a hollering off to my left, and wonder that I got onto the right metro...how can it possibly end? A man muttering something Danish passes on my right, while down the tunnel before me I hear someone howl. What happens when our perception attempts to untangle too much of the sonic wealth around us? When have we wandered around the city, out and about the countryside, and heard the ambient sounds around us as intentional? Why don't we feel startled by the surround sound environment of a walk down the street? I can't hear the people for the crowd, and find myself surrounded---not by talking or shouting or words even, but a homologous, roiling plane of speechsound. The elastic stereo space of *Globalalia* occasions reflections about our peripheral hearing, and about where we set the filters on our ear for sounds above, behind, and beside us.

Listening to *Globalalia*, we may conceive of the stereo field as an elastic medium in which digital vocal events flocculate and rise to the surface as timbral and rhythmic configurations. As we may hear connections between timbral and rhythmic configurations throughout *Globalalia*, we may hear connections between events occurring in contiguous regions of the stereo space, as well as between those occurring in opposing poles of the stereo space. Stereophonic trajectories binaurally exchanged suggest something of the unique kinds of relationships revealed --- and in a way affected by us --- through even casual observation of the ambient space. What sense of going can we sense from the networks of *Globalalia* as they fling across the ears' periphery?

When I speak about *Globalalia*, do I speak about the novelty of the moment to moment in the work, or do I seek to speak about the composite aural big moment my thinner timeslices engender? Do I speak about the twenty nine minute shape of *Globalalia*, and admit the holistic perspective this suggests, or should I restrain myself to the temporally near, entertaining the reductionist mentality this surely requires? When we listen to *Globalalia*, what matters most? Intuitively, we may feel a continuum from the minute to the very large in *Globalalia*, that our attention to temporal regions near at hand has something to do with what the big picture means, yet just after an audition of the piece remember no

single passage more distinctly than any other. An agile listener will engage an amphibious mode of listening, able to reside in multiple worlds, even slipping easily between them, in order to better take in the multidimensional points of departure given to our considerations about how we hear *Globalalia*.

A discourse about *Globalalia* would include, like other discourses, statements--statements concerning the composer, statements concerning the technology used to compose the work, and many other statements concerning the diverse ways in which we might interact with and reflect upon this composition. In making such statements, we hope for a vocabulary as publicly verifiable as possible, so that our discourse may provide for yet more statements about our subject. We may feel we have a grip on most kinds of statements, and we might feel we can confidently assert many things within our “*Globalalia* discourse”. But, if we pose the question “How does *Globalalia* go?”, for example, we find that our vocabulary for sound statements nearly exsanguinates, and we struggle with vagaries of digital signal processing techniques or, least informatively, with onomatopoeic verbalizations of what we hear. In what ways can we assemble a robust language with which we might engage something akin to a meaningful discourse about *Globalalia*?

Vocal samples, or neurons, sound as groups, or neural networks, throughout the elastic medium of *Globalalia*. We hear these networks by the profile, or shape, etched on the surface of *Globalalia* by relational impulses charging between neurons. A neural network may consist of hundreds of neurons, or only a few. Zooming out a little, what connections can we discern between the multiple networks we hear? If we possessed all of the relationships between all the neural networks we could conceptualize, what kind of idea could we form about the musical personality of *Globalalia*? What synaptic exchanges would we ourselves crossfire while listening to *Globalalia*? What input/output messages charge as relational impulses between our ear and *Globalalia*?

The frenzied timbral and rhythmic activity of *Globalalia*'s musical surface exposes a wealth of relationships and associations to the ear – first, among discrete vocalizations digitally captured, then, among networks of such captures, then, complexes of networks of captures. Before we assert this about *Globalalia*, however, we must show what we mean when we say we hear ‘networks.’ This seems particularly exigent with regard to *Globalalia*, since here we deal with a dearth of pitch material, and so with only faint approximations of the pitch relations and groupings which we so often rely upon when listening to instrumental music. In *Globalalia*, we find a sound world populated by relations, connections and suggestive associations between timbre, rhythm and melodic contour. We hear the aural shape of any given section of *Globalalia* in relief against the rapid fire articulations of these relations and connections and – very often – in spite of them. The shapes we hear merge with what, at first, may seem like wildly divergent projections of modulated vocal utterance within an

elastic, yet cohesive, timbre space. The smaller the shape we hear, the closer the identity of rhythm with timbre seems to become revealed; contrary to embedding a pitch, timbre, or a sample within a rhythmic phrase already limned, the grouping of samples within *Globalalia* creates the rhythmic phrase from the inside out. Further, the interstitial layout of aural shapes discernable here affords surprising flexibility to how we perceive them, since we may hear iterations of a shape in different contexts within the piece, recognize the shape as one we have registered somewhere else, and yet find the entities within the shape re-ordered in both digital processing and succession – both spatially and within time. Grasping the affinity differing incarnations of the same network retain for one another brings us to the nexus of the top-down inside-out dimensions of *Globalalia*. The alert listener will embrace an amphibious mode of listening, enabling the slip transition from the whole to the parts and back again.

We may think of the way we hear networks in *Globalalia* to the way in which we might see them in Jean Arp's *Constellation*, from 1943 : three wood panels each contain five differently shaped and sized wood forms; each panel contains the same five forms, but spatially arranged in different ways. Though relationships between the forms certainly appear attenuated from panel to panel, we easily see more in common between the panels than we notice as differences. As a scheme for listening to *Globalalia*, our grasping of Arp's constellation provides a visual prescription for how we might hear instances of one network in differing ways: elements in a network can change order, frequency, and location within the stereo field, and still identify with our conception of that network.

How we form our sense of how *Globalalia* goes comes about through an isomorphism we create while listening which maps verbal statements about *Globalalia* onto timbre/rhythm networks we hear in it. Now, as our relationships with *Globalalia* come to resemble more closely the kinds of relationships we hear among our timbre/rhythmic networks, we find that our relationships share with theirs the serendipity of constant change : each time we hear *Globalalia*, the statements we make about the experience grow increasingly informed by statements we have already made, and our relationship to the music changes. Much like the modular networks suggested here, which may change on each listening, changes in our relationship to *Globalalia* do not have to entail refinements to our listening----instead, we look forward to each audition by asking “In what ways will I hear *Globalalia* this time?”

I express my gratitude to Josh Mailman for his valued insights and thoughts

Torture by Music: evidence from The Piano Teacher

Daniel Goode

I. The situation

This essay is not about the Nobel Prize winner, Elfriede Jelinek, nor is it about her terrifying book, *The Piano Teacher* (nor the film made from the novel). It is not about the curriculum of the Western conservatory which trains musicians world-wide, nor about certain Viennese or Austrian personality disorders, nor about the “Dinnersteinian man” within mother daughter bondage.¹ Nor is it about how one can play Schubert, Beethoven, or Brahms so as to bring out what the great Conservatoire tradition says about them.

No, not at all. But the laundry list of excerpts from her book, which follows does not avoid these topics. In fact it etches these topics so deeply as to draw blood every time. Jelinek’s language by itself makes a “theater of cruelty.” You want to duck as the verbal projectiles fly over your head. And you want to say, hope to say, as a famous composer and his pianist interpreter said to me: “this is a terrible book.” But no, it’s the message, not the messenger that is terrible.

So this essay is not about that book, nor about its principle characters: Mother, Daughter [Erika Kohut], Piano student-lover-hater [Walter Klemmer] and the destructive whirlwind the three of them have brought on themselves. No, not at all. Rather:

To help clarify the argument, I’ve annotated my quotations from *The Piano Teacher* with a set of abbreviations. I capitalize Conservatory to raise the music institution to a generic in a kind of Platonic Hell. Platonic because it is the perfect form or idea of something: Hell because you may be tempted to consider a Geneva Convention outlaw status for the institution. Here is the key:

sm = sado-masochism, or domination-submission, pleasure from__.

sm2 = *sm*-squared, an exponential upgrading of *sm* via the multiplication of the mother as tormentor and sufferer.

smc = the multiplication of *sm* by Conservatory culture, really the apex of “torture by music.”

v or *smv* = the language of violence which is Jelinek’s weapon of choice. Either in the service of *sm* or the author’s language-lense with which she observes life in general.

e = the erotic component

vr = the language of violence balanced by remorse: the “kiss and make up” of emotional aerobics obtained by swinging between violence and remorse (which can include guilt as a multiplier). Exhausting! Enervating in its downward spiral.

Some common transformations:

sm2 becomes *smv*, becomes *vr*.

sm, *sm2*, even *smv* take on *e* almost inevitably so that we don't need to make an elaborate chart of *sme*, etc.

A – the authoritarian and institutional Conservatory culture which freezes into architectonic friezes the dynamism of my multiplication tables of torture.

Page numbers are from the paperback English edition of *The Piano Teacher*.

“Erika dismissed her last student three hours ago, after heaping him with scorn.” *sm*, 3

“Her briefcase, filled with musical scores is wrenched from her hands—and Mother instantly finds the bitter answer to all questions.” *sm2*, 4

“...Erika already has her own realm, her own roost, which she rules and is ruled in.” *sm*, A, 5

“...she sits at her piano, pounding away at her long-discarded career as a concert pianist. Or else she's an evil spirit, haunting some rehearsal with her students.” *v*, *smc*, 6

“And she [Erika] didn't even have to pay her dues by teaching at one of the neighborhood music schools, where so many people grind away their young lives, turning dusty gray, hunchbacked...” *v*, *smc*, 7

“The daughter comes back, upset, weeping. She curses her mother, calls her a vicious bitch, but hopes Mother will make up with right away. Kiss and make up.” *vr*, 9

“Mother and daughter spray acid at students who do better than Erika or threaten to do so.” *v*, 9

“Some students rebel against their piano teacher. But their parents force them to practice art, and so Professor Kohut can likewise use force. Most of the keyboard pounders, however, are well-behaved and interested in the art they are supposedly mastering... Vienna, the city of music! Only the things that have proven their worth will continue to do so in this city. Its buttons are bursting from the fat white paunch of culture, which, like any drowned corpse that is not fished from the water, bloats up more and more.” *smc*, *v*, 12

“She [Erika] stands alone against the broad mass of her students, one against all, and she turns the wheel of the ship of art.” A, 13

“Erika struggles for a tiny place within eyeshot of the great musical creators. This place is fought for tooth and nail...” *v, 14*

“The interpreter has a modest goal: to play well. He must, however, submit to the creator of the work, says Erika... She simply cannot submit. Still, Erika has one goal in common with all the other interpreters: to be better than the rest! *sm, 14*

Thus a zero-sum game, only one can succeed, the rest must fail. Leave it to the Conservatory as Authoritarian master (student as submissive)—to sort this all out.

“The creature [Erika, for example] feels it has dormant strength for which music does not suffice. The creature clenches its fist around the handles of violins, violas, flutes. It likes to make negative use of its energy, though it does have a choice. Mother offers the selection: a broad spectrum of teats on the udder of the cow known as music... SHE bangs into people’s backs and fronts with her stringed instruments and wind instruments and her heavy musical scores. Her weapons bounce off these people...Emulating a kamikaze pilot, she uses herself as a weapon. Then again, with the narrow end of the instrument (sometimes the violin, sometimes the heavier viola), she beats into a cluster of work-smearred people.” *v, 15*

“They look at the music student and imagine that music has raised her spirits; but the only thing that’s raised is her fist. *v, 16*

“Almost casually, she viciously pinches the female calf to her left or her right... A bruise awaits the victim... SHE acts as if she were yielding to those mysterious powers of musical romanticism, powers moving to ever higher emotional peaks—she acts as if she could not be thinking about anything else in the world... It couldn’t have been the girl with the machine gun. The populace is wrong again, as it so often is. *v, 18-19*

All through these passages we see the language of violence expressing the worst part of the elitism in the classical arts: the scorn and disparagement of the masses by the knowledgeable, skilled artist. This becomes the underlying Weltanschauung of the Conservatory. Erika exhibits the false consciousness of hiding her aggressive violence in “those mysterious powers of musical romanticism”—the coercive use of musical ideology is false consciousness.

“...and laughing at pupils who played worse than she. She wants to teach people how to be afraid, how to shudder. Such feelings run rampant through the playbills of Philharmonic Concerts.” *smc, 19*

QED: instilling fear is the m.o. of the educational system of classical music.

“A member of the Philharmonic audience reads the program notes and is prompted to tell someone else how profoundly his innermost being throbs with the pain of this music.

He's read all about it. Beethoven's pain, Mozart's pain, Schumann's pain, Bruckner's pain, Wagner's pain. The pains are now his sole property... Beethoven manipulates the levers of fear, and these owners make their workers jump fearfully. There's also a Ph.D here who's been intimate with pain for a long time... She bites a hole in the flesh of one of the great geniuses [Mozart] and pushes her way inside. In rare cases, one grows along with the genius. *sm*, v, 20

A kind of “pathetic fallacy” is demonstrated here. (“The tears of things” becomes the pains of the famous dead composers.) Projecting pain into the great composers makes it alright to give pain to others. It seems that suffering is part of the artist, so inflicting suffering on the passive audience on behalf of the artists’ sufferings is justified. And there’s also a whiff of the ancient warrior’s magical thinking: eat the organs of the strong man or strong beast, and you will partake of their strength. The last sentence shows there is also an alternative path (a rare concession of the author’s): growing along with the genius.

“ They [the dirty bodies of ordinary people] have to be punished. By HER... And yet, unbidden, they rummage around in her, they observe HER innermost thoughts...that they don't even like them. Why, they actually go so far to say they don't like Webern or Schönberg.” v, 22

The hostility of the public is the artist's fantasy, the putative enemy on which violent thoughts and actions can be unleashed. Intensified by their even greater lack of understanding of the high modernists, Webern and Schönberg, than of the Romantics.

“ Mother, without prior notice, unscrews the top of HER head, sticks her hand inside... then grabs and rummages about. Mother messes everything up... [T]he way you twist a knife into a meatgrinder.” *sm2*, 22

“Sometimes, of course, art creates the suffering in the first place.” *sm*, 23

Now the picture is complete: the artist projects suffering first into the iconic artists of the Pantheon, which requires pain and suffering from the interpreter in order to interpret. Then the whole of art is a source of suffering, rather than the projection of a mythology. That makes it perfectly alright to have the Conservatory become the nexus or tool of the whole mythology, the cruel manipulator which reenacts this suffering, passing it on to the next generation so they can enter the world of pain which is the high art of music.

“Then, one day, at an important concert at the Academy of Music, Erika fails totally. She fails in front of the friends and relatives of her competitors and in front of her mother, who sits there alone. Mother spent her last penny on the dress Erika wears for this recital. Afterward, Mother slaps Erika's face, for even musical laymen could read Erica's failure in her face if not her hands. Furthermore, Erika did not choose a piece for the broadly

rolling masses. She decided on a Messiaen, against her mother's urgent warning. This is no way for the child to smuggle herself into the hearts of the masses, whom mother and child have always despised: the mother because she has always been merely a small, plain part of the masses; and the child because she would never want to become a small, plain part of the masses.

“Erika reels from the podium, shamefaced. She is received shamefully by her sole audience: Mother. Erika's teacher, who used to be a famous pianist, vehemently scolds her for her lack of concentration. Someday soon, Erika will be envied by no one, idolized by no one.

What else can she do but become a teacher? A difficult step for a master pianist... Conservatories and academies, as well as private teachers accept a lot of students who really belong on a garbage dump or, at best, a soccer field. Many young people are still driven to art, as in olden times. Most of them are driven by their parents, who know nothing about art—only that it exists. And they're so delighted that it exists! Of course, art turns many people away, for there has to be a limit. The limits between the gifted and the ungifted. Erika, as a teacher, is delighted to draw that limit. *sm, A, 26-27*

Let the Conservatory be the tool in the cultural field of music that does the dirty work. That work is the burying of culture using the very tools of culture. All those geniuses of the past are turned into battering rams to exclude the poor schlubbs of the present from the territory of Art. But why does Music become the battering ram, not painting, acting, writing, dancing?

This long passage also reveals that there is a culprit, a smoking gun: the ignorant parents who force their children into the Music Academies, knowing nothing, but thinking it will propel their progeny to a better life, the life of art, not a life of the “plain part of the masses.” A *folie à deux*, (it takes two to tango): the stupid parents and the suffering administrator of punishment: the one to provide the probable sacrificial victim to be weeded out by the other. The untalented, once weeded out, excluded, cannot then participate in the utopian heaven of art. The administrators and employees of this Utopian Heaven of Art need the uneducated “broadly rolling masses” not for their validation (they know they are good), but as fuel. A few diamonds will be plucked from the coals to become the next talented elite. But there is no way that art will need to be something shared, enjoyed by many, each having a function in making it happen, some to be happy go-fers, producers, *funders?*, party-givers, creative event-makers, etc., but all enjoying the fruits of a long-maturing culture of the arts. No alternative vision like that, nor like any other is possible once the zero-sum game begins. So group experience is denied. Shared culture denied (except as the dog is part of the culture of its owner). And finally no pleasure, none of that massaging of the brain stem and of the emotions, the exquisite merging of mind and body into some kind of self-charging battery, something that culture is so good at doing if we let it. That's the worst of the self-denials. Finally, it's an assault on the body which can't stand

too much lack of pleasure.

That all of this is expressed in a novel about Vienna, is just the worst kind of news for those who were nurtured on music from this general part of the world. You wonder how the music and the individuals who invented it survived the culture. Maybe because the Conservatories were not that strong as institutional guarantors of culture yet. The composers of the music we love were not, on the whole, Conservatory teachers, that we know.

“For many of her students, music means climbing from the depths of the working class to the heights of artistic cleanliness.” A, 28

This is not true of America, but more of Europe, or parts of Europe. What the Conservatory has done here is to turn its battering ram against itself, and its own repertory. The “fuel” for the Conservatory can rescue itself in this country because there are so many other models of culture, whether commercial and commodified, or not, whether transgressive or ameliorative, mainstreamed, or passionately idealistic. And there are other, more effective ways of rising from the working to the middle class, than riding forth on the train of pianistic virtuosity.

There is another theme in Erika’s moment of failure, above: Her choice of a piano piece by Olivier Messiaen, rather than a warhorse, or other well-accepted show-off piece. She is punished both for this choice and for a lack of “concentration.” These may be two different failures or one, it’s hard to say. The concentration failure may be simply flubs, a bad day, or just a normal imperfect day. (Maybe the dread erotic distractor is implied in her failure to concentrate.) Or maybe it is a failure to concentrate on one’s future by not choosing instrumentally (in both senses of the word), the kind of repertory that brings success through the sheer athleticism and familiarity of virtuosity. To choose Messiaen, instead, is to make a choice for the imagination, the sonic and poetic imagination that cares nothing for virtuosity as a goal. Difficulty, yes, but the difficulty that releases the imagination and sends its messages back to the listener, the receiver who wants and desires something from music. The complicated destructive dance of Conservatory and its “fuel” is too engrossing to the participants to take notice of the “masses” who want and desire something from music, from sound, and from a collective, group experience of both. Conservatory culture is too busy spiraling in on itself in self-repressive implosion to notice these needs of its students and of its audience.

II. The one-on-one situation

“He [Walter] gazes expectantly at his teacher, hoping for a hint, lying in wait for a pointer. His teacher [Erika], on her high horse, cuts the young man down to size when she sneers: You still don’t know the Schönberg all that well. The student enjoys being in the hands of such a teacher, even when she looks down at him while holding the reins

tightly.” *smc*, 30

“Her fingers press the painful steel strings down the fingerboard. Mozart’s tormented spirit, moaning and choking, is forced out of the resonator. Mozart’s spirit shrieks from an infernal abode because the violinist feels nothing, but she has to keep enticing the notes. Shrieking and groaning, the notes squirm out of the instrument. *smc*, 35

Now the microscope is turned on the teacher-student relationship, which parallels the mother-daughter one. Maybe the connection between these two passages is that once the performer trained in Classical tradition fails to perform at the level which Mozart requires, his “pain” (projected of course by the living performer) becomes her negative legacy, a “pass-along” to her students similar to the “pass-along” of mother to daughter. The institution, the Conservatory, in this case, is like a railway switching mechanism, shunting the biological-psychological energy into a cultural format where it can cause the same kind of harm to the progenitors of culture and their progeny. It may be “a reach” to assume an institution can embody the individual duo of domination-submission in its standardized treatment of its members. Nevertheless this seems to be the author’s explanation. The institution is the individual writ large.

“If she can’t reach a note at first swoop, she simply leaves it out. Skipping notes, a subtle vendetta against her musically untrained torturers, gives her a tiny thrill of satisfaction.” *smc*, 37

This is “mutually assured destruction” between performing artist and her public. They, the audience, fuels the artist, but also poisons her (“her musically untrained torturers”). She takes her revenge. A pain-pain relationship. Never forget, this all occurs in “The City of Music.” Is it all a horrible coincidence that the author was a conservatory student in Vienna? The huge success of Germanic music from the 18th into the 20th Century is related how to the dysfunctional pain-delivery system Jelinek is laying out for us? And causing pain too for the reader, as she must know: the music lover, culture-lover and reader can’t just let these scorching sentences pass over without notice. One starts to think the whole system stinks. Is Beethoven responsible? His students? Mozart? No, not Mozart. Everyone seems to agree Mozart is a victim, everyone’s victim. A polyphonic victim. But he must bear some responsibility as the seducer of the next generation of artists. But how? How did it all go so terribly wrong? When I look into the eyes of the next classical musician I meet, will I be seeing the perverse victim of the high-culture music machine?

A pall is thrown on our primitive worship of the past, the music that was MY fuel. It all seems contaminated. But maybe this is just guilt by association. Just take the music and run. Don’t think about the system of transmission of culture by which I came to the music. I don’t think I can brush it off that way, with the handy little phrase, guilt by association.

My colleagues want to say that this novel is only about the Mother-Daughter relationship. I'm finding too much else in it. But I'm not confident of that. Too many bells go off in my head as the three characters and Music go at each other. The idea of a musical instrument as a weapon (Erika on the bus with a violin case knocking against people) has weight for me. Not as in the bus example, but an instrument as a non-creative tool. The instrument is taught as if a weapon. Not as a recipient of creative energy. You "master" it. Period. But finally all the themes are joined at the hip: Authority; Mother; Music.

III. Pleasure

"Erika feels nothing, and has no chance to caress herself. Her mother sleeps next to her and guards Erika's hands. These hands are supposed to practice, not scoot under the blanket..." *sm*, 52

"Erika simply sits and peers... [she's at the peep show.] Erika looks... Erika watches very closely." 53-54

Evidently pleasure is out of the equation with music. Only passively as a voyeur can one get that which is not allowed in both the training and the practice of the classical musician. Perhaps a time lapse of 1983 (publication of the novel in Austria) sets this situation apart from the America of now, or possibly from America in general. Because in American classical music, it took minimalism—a militantly anti-academic, anti-conservatory movement—to restore pleasure to music, as it indeed exists in most cultures. In Vienna, as in all European cities, the varieties of popular music take up the space reserved for: pleasure+music; while here, there is still a sliver of passionate post-modernist (classical) music composers who feel at least comfortable with a relationship of some kind between music and pleasure. So now the fault lines are drawn. Even though some kind of historical treatment of minimalism is found in today's Conservatory, the Music Theory program is still stuck where Erika and her mother are: in a medieval scholastic, authoritarian, rule-based discipline that hasn't changed in hundreds of years despite the huge gains in psychoacoustic knowledge, musical processes undreamed of by theory programs, and despite the advance towards a world music consciousness that makes the leaps of affinities possible nowadays. Worse, the performing artist virtuoso who teaches along-side the theory professor, doesn't have the acumen or the courage to challenge the theory profs in their blinkered lack of theoretical heft in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

"These people love music, and want others exposed to it too. With loving patience; if necessary by force... The latchkey child, who stoutly resists, but has to submit in the end. No snacks are served during a recital. Nor can you nibble on the hallowed silence... absolutely no bubblegum!... Erika has virtually subpoenaed all her piano students. The professor only has to wave her little finger... Death would be the sole excuse from

abstaining from art...Pupils scrape their feet...their heads filled with evil desire, but lacking the courage to carry them out. They do not escape from this chicken coop of artistic devotion though the laths are quite thin.” *smc*, 61-62

If one rules out slavery as a condition to try to get children to become musical, what can be done to teach music using its natural pleasure principle instead of cruelty and sheer authoritarianism? Before we can contemplate this, we must try to figure out: what is the relationship between pleasure and music? And first what kind of pleasure? Since no one, in my opinion, who writes about this does much more than use the word, sometimes preceded by the word “sexual,” I feel I can speculate without guilt. (Two books come to mind which talk about pleasure and music: *Feminine Endings* [1991] by Susan McClary, and *Repeating Ourselves* [2005] by Robert Fink.) First there is pleasure in the simple act of recognition of something heard before which is it at least acceptable, even if not passionately loved. I get pleasure from certain 12-tone pieces in spite of my hostile feelings about the “12-tone mafia” as I called the reigning powers when I was getting my musical education. Simply the recognition of certain patterns of musical thoughts and sounds is stimulating, and hence pleasurable. Even the mental act of turning against the piece or composer can bring the pleasure of decisiveness, certainty in one's ideas and opinions, or even a pleasurable change of opinion as in “gee, that's not half bad; maybe I gave it a bum rap years ago...” But associational triggering like this is the most various kind of triggering there is—by definition. It's your own process of association of anything with anything else, as peculiar to you as anything can be. That makes it less than acceptable as a general principle to use in finding what is pleasurable about music.

Then there is something quite different from pleasure-by-association: Anticipation, stimulation, the release of emotional feeling, satisfaction. These are perhaps the ingredients of pleasure that come from hearing music that one really holds dear. Or is it so different from the pleasure of recognition? Maybe just in degree. What I'm struggling with I want to call a “triggering mechanism.” Some set of circumstances that sets off a chain like the one above beginning with anticipation. Clearly music, thoughts about music, about specific pieces of music is a triggering mechanism. Is it simple Pavlovian conditioned response? Please, experts, come help me!

And finally there is dance music. And the epigone of dance music (I'm being cruel here): Classical music that has been pressed through the prism of dance and of dance music, maybe that aspires to dance music, that wants to ride on its power. Music by Beethoven, Ives, Mahler, the Slavonic composers, Copland, Bernstein (he's an interesting case of almost the “real thing”). And I include myself in this group, but more as a wannabe “real” dance music composer.

What's happening with the real, or with the prismatic (faux?) dance music composer? Clearly with either, pleasure is their prize and their assumption.

Maybe now is the moment to make use of that wonderful, pregnant word, entrainment. Just as we are entrained by the Circadian rhythms of the planet, so we are entrained by rhythm and pulsation. The “groove” is the code word for this relationship. The stimulation and pleasurable release brought on by repetitive rhythm is a constant of the species. It is also, mysteriously, one of the things that somehow can release or trigger sexual feeling. These are the species givens, in my opinion. But I can still have this doubt: Maybe the entrainment of rhythmic pulsation is once more an associative triggering peculiar to me, maybe not to another (composer, Tom Johnson hates Ravel’s Bolero with as much passion as I love it. It’s such a sexy piece!) And even with actual dance music we should remember that there is always a wallflower at any dance party. But even the wallflower (if from “our culture”) is cognizant of the trance-inducing frenzy of dance rhythm. It’s by (cultural) definition “catchy” even if the wallflower can refuse its invitation. Let’s also put in the big caveat: all specifics are assumed to be culturally determined. Only the big generality: “dance music is catchy” to those in its cultural orbit, is a general truth.

“During the final movement of the Bach, Herr Klemmer...unselfishly admires Erika’s technique, he admires the way her back moves to the beat, the way her head sways... He sees the play of muscles in her upper arm, he is excited by the collision of flesh and motion. The flesh obeys an inner motion that has been triggered by the music... He masturbates in his seat. One of his hands involuntarily twitches on the dreadful weapon of his genital.” 64

Certainly the first level of sexuality in music is that which relates to the bodily production of rhythmic movement within a musical structure. It is simply the erotics of dance, but voyeuristically applied to musical performance. Familiar, repressed in classical music, but as powerful as the more overt version of sexual stimulation in watching dance.

But this is not the more subterranean and hard to locate “construction of desire” that the modern musicologists now talk of. These analysts look at the queasy chromatics of the “Habañera” in Carmen (the sexual Other doing her thing), and the equally sleazy downward chromatic line of the second theme of the Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony, first movement (McClary). Or the long-distance “teleological” disco experience with its implied orgasmic moments when something changes in the texture, just at the right moment to bring the dance floor into ecstasy (Fink). They see something in common between the dance floor and the concert hall. The dance floor gives the orgasmic tendency a symbolic outlet in group movement among sexually aware social dancers. The concert hall confuses everyone, because there is no outlet other than dynamics and harmonic closures. How can one justify sexual feelings or thoughts in this milieu, except as extraneous? It’s a recipe for sublimation, which risks repression, and leads to SM-type fantasizing. In this world we should be happy to see the flamboyant excrescence played out by these modern Viennese inhabitants of the

City of Music, as illustrative, if not explanatory of our more inhibited versions of their emotional behavior. After all, Americans don't have to be inhibited. They have outlets! They may have to forget classical music to experience their outlets, but they have them in quantity. And since neither their Music Theory courses, nor their instrumental instructors are able to relate the erotics of life to the erotics of music, those sensitive to these painful inner conflictual feelings will flee mentally and even totally from authoritarian Conservatory culture which has no ear for this, and maybe a good deal of hostility to it. Yet the modern musicologist keeps rubbing it in: that music can inscribe sexuality. Eat your heart out, Musician! you can't avoid it, and you probably won't understand your own pain and discomfort. Thus you are a ready victim for the sadistic music teacher. Your defenses are down, and no knowledge has been imparted to you with which to defend yourself, let alone give yourself the pleasure that music is supposed generously offer you. Suffer, or bail out—your only choices. Shouldn't we acknowledge the self-repression and dysfunction among classical musicians, given this dynamic?

“SHE cannot overlook the tiniest mistakes; they sting and stab her for months on end. Often she stubbornly broods about what she might have done.” *smc*, 83

Nothing yanks pleasure from the playing of music faster than obsession with mistakes. It sucks pleasure out like a vacuum pump. Leaving a guilty, authority-ridden empty space where Conservatory culture can rush in with its bias towards “perfect” performance of the masters, rather than on creativity, which in fact warms one's interest in the masters, and in the performance of their work. In that frame of mind (the obsession with mistakes) you can't possibly consider interesting things like how minimalism returns pleasure to listening and playing.

But it's not an easy subject. A lot of the playing of minimalistic works is very hard, sometimes tedious with deferred gratification coming more from the successful group effort than directly from playing one's own part. But then there are the other scores, where just stepping into the sound that you are making (with others usually) gives such a rush, you never want to leave. And there are in-between situations with special moments, like the resolution of out-of-phase patterns which give the kind of pleasurable boost of old-fashioned harmonic progressions, that thrill as melody and harmony grind to a cadence.

The cliché is that minimalist music “puts you into a trance,” or can only be experienced in a trance, maybe a drug induced one. Surely these things happen often, but nothing is guaranteed. And since “art music” is not required to give pleasure, minimalist art music may be just as much a laboratory demonstration, or an academic demonstration, or a virtuosic demonstration as any other style, or any historical period of classical music, and susceptible to just as much routinization. Nevertheless, whatever trouble we may have thinking about how music and pleasure are related, the neuroscientists, have none at all. They say

the parts of the brain that “light up” when we hear music show that music gives pleasure. That is unless culture puts a “governer” on it, an inhibitor—clearly one of the underlying threads of the novel.

IV. Music as punishment

“In order to expand her taste in music and force it on her students, she [Erika] occasionally attends concerts. She weighs one interpreter against the other, annihilating the students with her yardstick, to which only the greatest musicians can measure up... Without saying a word, she walks on. No ideas are exchanged, but the student knows that he has once again not practiced enough because his mind was on something else... By the time they get to Bach, right after the scales and finger exercises, the student’s insecurity spreads out and takes the upper hand. This intricate musical texture can endure only the secure hand of the master pianist, who draws the reins gently. The main theme was messed up, the other voices were too importunate, and the whole piece was anything but transparent... Erika jeers at her student’s Bach... Deliberately trying to humiliate the student, Erika praises Bach’s work to the skies. She claims that Bach rebuilds gothic cathedrals whenever his music is played... Then she tells her student: That was not exactly a cathedral he was playing.” *smc*, 98-101

Though it is completely alien to music as a communicative culture, the idea of music as only for the “greatest musicians” bears comparison with the New York (or other) Marathon. But only to show how far off Conservatory culture is from any model of reality. Yes there is a winner of a marathon, a wonderful winner to be celebrated, but in and among the thousands of runners up there are whole worlds of accomplishment, drama, pain and joy. So Erika’s zero-sum game has no correlative, other than the self-humiliating one of one’s own tortured consciousness. Hers, in particular, is the exemplar of the Western music academy.

But in fact music in world culture is not a series of marathons, or races that go to the swift. Music is a world of communications, decentralized, irresponsible to a single authority. So, it’s fair to say that music in the City of Music has been hijacked. And this hijacking has spread around the world, beyond the West, wherever Western music culture has gone. And perhaps, though I cannot prove it, it may be part of the reason for the “decline” (possibly this is a myth, however) of classical music, because of the queasy suspicion of those millions who can only entertain the thought that classical music is “strange.”

Not for them. A healthy response if one has even hazy suspicions of entering a snake pit.

“But, she triumphs, Bach...is a commitment to God; and the latest edition of the *Encyclopedia of Music*, Vol. I, even trumps Erika by crowing that Bach’s works are a commitment to the special Nordic man struggling for God’s grace.

“The student resolves never again to be caught in front of the photograph of a naked

woman... Erika pines for difficult tasks, which she then carries out badly. She has to be punished for that. This young man who is covered with his own blood, is not a worthy opponent; why he was already defeated by Bach's miraculous music. Imagine his defeat when he has to play the role of a living human being! He won't even have the courage to pound away; he's much too embarrassed by all the notes he's fluffed. A single phrase from her, a casual glance—and he falls to his knees, ashamed, making all kinds of resolutions, which he will never be able to carry out... She knows about the form of the sonata and the structure of the fugue. That's her job, she's a teacher. And yet, her paws ardently grope toward ultimate obedience. *smc, A, 101-102*

The toxic brew must be complete: we now add in the ultimate authoritarian figure. He is the punishing Nordic God, under whom the Nordic man struggles for grace. (It could just as well be the punishing Jewish **Jahwe.)**

Does such a familiar invocation, literally a *deus ex machina*, get to escape scrutiny, because, at least since Nietzsche, God has received such a lambasting, it hardly is worth kicking the old dead horse once more? End argument! It would be good to be able to say that in the U.S., at least, the role of this punishing institution, the Conservatory has been taken over by the Christian Evangelical movement as expressed in the perfidious "Focus on the Family" organization. I don't know if I can say that for sure. Especially when I read in Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*: "But classical music is perhaps our cultural medium most centrally concerned with denial of the body, with enacting the ritual repudiation of the erotic—even (especially) its own erotic imagery," [page 79]. To her, we're not out of the woods yet. We're bound, like Erika, within those five lines of music paper:

"Nor can anything be altered in the notation of music by dead masters. What you see is what you get. Erika has been harnessed in this notation system since earliest childhood. Those five lines have been controlling her ever since she first began to think. She **mustn't** think of anything but those five black lines. This grid system together with her mother, has hamstrung her in an untearable net of directions, directives, precise commandments, like a rosy ham on a butcher's hook. This provides security, and security creates fear of uncertainty." 190

We get the "dead masters" to take the rap for the control-freaks who have installed themselves within our culture of classical music. It's this notation which enslaves us, we seem to be saying, not we who have allowed or made it happen. And it's a "calling," the interpreting of these dead masters. This is how we allow music to become punishing.

V. Conclusion: poor Schubert

"Erika, scarcely moving her lips, warns him that he is sinning against Schubert... Klemmer then recommences the great A major sonata by the Biedermeier bourgeois who was head and shoulders above his time. Klemmer plays the piece in the spirit—or rather spirited unspiritualness—of a German dance by the same master. He soon breaks off

because his teacher derides him. He's probably never seen a very steep cliff, a very deep chasm, a raging creek smashing through a gulch... Such violent contrasts are expressed by Schubert... Klemmer blusters: If anyone knows what a raging creek is like, then it's him... whereas his teacher always muddles in dark rooms, next to her mother's old age..." v, *smc*, 184-185

Behind the mutual derision, and Klemmer's attack on old mothers and their puritan daughters who don't know the reality of the flesh, or the rage of a real creek, there is the voice of disembodied music (expressed through Erika, the metaphysical pedagogue) which claims to be about violent contrasts, but is really afraid of expressions of the body as found in dance music and dance rhythm. It's a typical Romantic ploy, co-opting "Nature" and famous composers as allies to criticize a student who can't (yet) mobilize the expressive resources of music. The refutation follows:

"This woman can peer into music the way one peers into the wrong side of a telescope, making music look very distant and very tiny." 186

Even if many do not experience the titanic struggle of Music vs. music in the way that these characters do, many, many must intuit it in some way, however indeterminate, but enough so that popular music, commercial music, ethnic music is the winner, and Classical music is the loser. Particularly irritating is that modernism, post-modernism, experimentalism are all, by convention, shoe-horned into Classical music, hence also tarred rightly or wrongly by Conservatory culture in which they are only a minor strain.

There are two ways in which the Conservatory betrays music: First, by using unspiritualized repetitive motion to make virtuosi. Second, by unthinkingly reproducing in music theory the scholasticism found in the medieval church-centered curriculum, (which included music among the disciplines of its quadrivium). Somehow, music theory (or "a theory of music") was bypassed by all reformist educational movements (with the exception of Rousseau who had a libratory music teaching system) until the 20th Century. And mostly the 20th ignored music theory, consigning it to the backwaters of intellectual life. Creativity in music had to find itself elsewhere. Musical thinkers became mavericks with no spiritual home. Music theory typically became the taxonomy of labeling music-things. Naming does not generate anything but more labels.

There are three great tragic heroes of music in modern literature: Adrian **Leverkühn** in Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, Joseph Knecht in Herman Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel*, and now, Erika Kohut in *The Piano Teacher (Die Kavierspielerin)*. They all can be said to be victims of Classical music and its travails.

¹ see *The Mermaid and the Minotaur* by Dorothy Dinnerstein

**Nancy, Jean-Luc. *Listening*. trans. Charlotte Mandel.
New York: Fordham University Press: 2007.
(Originally published as *À l'écoute*, Paris: Galilée, 2002.)**

Victor Szabo

I had high expectations coming into reading Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening*. Originally published in 2002 as *À l'écoute* and translated into English five years later, the oft-cited phenomenologist's essay was quickly embraced by many U.S. musicologists and music theorists attuned to contemporary continental philosophy. At the time, I was less aware of the field's tendency to eat up writing by almost any European philosopher that references sound in the title (the din generated by Jacques Attali's incredibly speculative *Noise* [1985] comes to mind). Upon the publishing of the English translation, The Society for Music Theory's Music & Philosophy Interest Group hurriedly decided in 2007 to take *Listening* as a jumping point for the panel discussion at the next year's annual conference. Yet the topics cobbled together for the 2008 panel, some of which seemed tangentially related to the book at best, spoke less to the array of possibilities opened by Nancy than to the immediate loss over what to do with them – and perhaps confusion over what possibilities were even opened in the first place.

The reception of Nancy's essay at SMT illustrates one of the central themes of *Listening*: that the “auricular” subject of sound (i.e. the subject-object of listening) is always in tension with significance *ahead of* signification.¹ Being philosophically curious myself, I too was almost instantly attracted by the sound of Nancy's name attached to a philosophy of listening. Resounding with familiarity in the academic echo chamber, the exotically attractive, swallowed timbre of that initial syllable, seducing me into solidarity.... “Nancy”.... I was impelled to affirm his importance to the field way ahead of understanding what he actually stood for. Fortuitously, my willingness to embrace the book was a boon, as Nancy's startlingly novel approaches to sonority raise a number of productive issues and ways of thinking about how sound and self interact. My receptivity to the book, similar to the *a priori* receptivity characteristic of the sonorous listening body, allowed Nancy's open-ended language to discover its unique resonances within me by calling into question how I am disposed to respond to sound.

The listener, according to Nancy, tends to sonance in accordance with a pressure or impulsion to respond to sonority as such. In this conception, to speak of sonority implies a latent pressure to attend to the way sonority sounds, or the way sounds are sonorous, when one listens.² Nancy's listener is compelled to respond to sonority *as* sonority – primarily timbre, and secondarily rhythm, in his ontology – when he or she is listening at the very “bottom” of hearing (6).³ However, Nancy denies sonority any generalizable ontology beyond this, since for Nancy, sonority cannot be spoken *of* without ontological contamination. Because sonority amplifies the spaces and bodies in which it resounds, including both the human body and its attendant self-subject, sonority is never identical to itself, but rather is always engaged in a sort of participation or sharing.⁴ To illustrate its operations, Nancy strategically performs writing *as though it were*

¹ Nancy importantly does not strongly distinguish between a “subject” and “object” of listening; any subject may also be an object of the same listening, and vice versa. This conception presumes some familiarity with his ontology of the subject as “singular plural.” Nancy details this ontology, which is not fully explained in *Listening*, in *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O'Byrne (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). More thorough explications of Nancy's listening subject than I provide here may be found in Michael Gallope's review, “Listening,” in *Current Musicology* 86 (2008): 157-68; and Roger Mathew Grant's review, “Listening,” in *JAMS* (Fall 2009): 748-52.

² The ambiguity of “way” in my paraphrase as either “the means by which” or “the manner in that” is deliberate, reflecting Nancy's propensity toward exploring the potentialities in semantic slippage.

³ Gallope puts it well when he describes listening as subjectively oriented toward “an originary sharing of multiplicity” prior to, or at the edges of a more determinate “hearing” (159). In other (French) words, this originary sharing is what the *sens* of listening aims at.

⁴ Nancy calls the participatory nature of sound “methexic,” as opposed to mimetic (10); I find the idea of communion, not mentioned of as such in Nancy's text, perhaps more revealing of the social potential inherent in sonority.

sonority. His words emerge as suspended, indeterminate entities in dynamic motion, ringing out and bouncing back their multivalent significances off of each other. The sonorous quality of linguistic signs becomes apparent as language mimetically exceeds and propagates itself throughout Nancy's prose, performing its own ontological elusiveness. *Listening's* faithful reader, like Nancy's listener, is thus called upon to chase the reverberations of meaning down the well of *sens*.

Listening is actually somewhat less promising as a conduit to understanding music in so far as music is (also) something more than mere sound. Nancy keeps his ear low to the ground, attending to the acoustic rumblings that lie below communicative meaning, but consequently ducks out entirely from considering the inflections and interventions of musical style, gesture, and conventionality on configuring the social subject of listening.⁵ Still, his account stirs up ways to think philosophically about listening as a relational sense: sense as *sens*, as mutual understanding, as feeling self-ness or at-home-ness, as *sensus communis*, shared space, presence and return within and out of us. Anyone already concerned with the influence of sound on subjective formation may be predisposed to benefiting from Nancy's suggestions.

In a conspicuous turn against Husserl's account of listening to music, Nancy, echoing Gérard Granel, critiques phenomenology as an insufficient methodological framework for addressing listening. This is perhaps the most difficult part of the book to understand, and for me, a sticking point in his account. For Nancy, the subject of listening is always already ahead of intentional experience, and it is sound that "places its subject, which has not preceded it with an aim, in tension, or under tension" (20). In striving to keep meaning at a distance from sound, Nancy blankly refuses to consider how listening is nonetheless always framed and furrowed by intentionality in some way, even if the act of listening erases subjective intention in straining toward pure receptivity and responsiveness.⁶ Nancy's listener seeks enhancement rather than evidence; suspending prejudice, s/he attends rather than demands. In this way, listening synaptically opens the subject to shared experience, but also to influence and seduction. In a short related essay written for the English publication, "March in Spirit in Our Ranks," Nancy loosely gestures to the Third Reich's use of Wagner as an indication of the perversely persuasive power of musical experience to bind social subjects as soon as "the ineffable is charged with speaking" (57). He explains that the Nazis exploited the gap between music and meaning by imposing upon music a cause from without and "making the formless conform" (59). As per my own reservations, however, I wonder how we can think about the experience of music, or even of sound beyond signification, without also mystifying the nature of the meanings that penetrate its social situation. Nancy wishes to preserve a space for musical experience to be intimate beyond intent, but he unintentionally desecrates the potential of this experience by propping up platitudes about signification with a rather extreme example. If signification indeed does close the impregnable distance between sound and meaning—and I'm not sure if it does, or even *can*—then one should have reason to hesitate as soon as the experience of resonance is charged with ineffability.⁷

If to be listening is to be inclined toward the opening of meaning, as Nancy says, then an understanding of the way listening senses has as many implications for the epistemology of testimony and ideology critique as it does for the aesthetics of music. For those of us inclined toward the latter, Nancy constructively takes us a step back from *how does music mean?* to *under what subjective conditions does music mean?* It's a vital question for the philosophy of music, which has long tiptoed around the role of the listener in constructing musical experience, and raises new questions about the communicative and communal possibilities inherent in sound. Undetermined and radically open to interpretation, Nancy's dense and liquid account demands further articulation from philosophers, musicologists, and music theorists alike.

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⁵ This needn't be a bad thing; Grant specifically identifies *Listening* as an important contribution to the emergent field of acoustemology (748).

⁶ To put it in terms of agency, listening is too always a negotiation of differential power, even if it serves to balance

⁷ Benjamin Boretz raises similar concerns about the value of "extramusical" description for discourse on music and musical experience; see Boretz, "Rainyday Reflections," *Perspectives of New Music* 46/2 (Summer 2008): 59-80.

ON READING *LISTENING*

BRIAN KANE

In conversations with colleagues about Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening*, I am often surprised by two recurring themes: the frequency with which Nancy's text is read and the sense of disappointment it produces. For many, the text seems to lack something promised; one expects magnificent illumination from such a vaunted philosopher turning his attention to music. Whether this acute disappointment is indeed Nancy's fault is something of which I'm not altogether certain. Indeed, Nancy's slim volume may not be a text on music at all, or at the very least, not a text *primarily* about music. Disappointment may stem from irresistibly demanding more from the text than what it simply and clearly sets out to do. *Listening* is a text on *listening*.

Despite the sense of disappointment, I often hear people praise Nancy's writing, for even in translation the sensitive reader is struck by Nancy's resourceful use of language. His aphoristic style, full of wit and allusion, is perhaps envied by the academic for being the obverse of arid, scholarly prose that must unpack, explain, demonstrate and leave little unsaid. Yet, Nancy's book, while aphoristic, is hardly autonomous. It is overripe with claims about listening, resonance, echo, and rhythm, which invoke thinkers to whom Nancy is closely associated, most importantly Derrida and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. The echoes described in the text are not simply sound figures, but they themselves trace Nancy's method of engaging philosophical problems, through reading, listening and responding to his interlocutors.

The paragraph that opens *Listening* is no doubt an allusion to Derrida's "Tympan," which itself opens *Margins of Philosophy*. Two themes are brought together in close proximity, the question of the limit and the question of listening. In "Tympan," Derrida begins:

Being at the limit: these words do not yet form a proposition, and even less a discourse. But there is enough in them, provided that one plays upon it, to engender almost all the sentences in this book. (Derrida, *Margins*, x)

The question of the limit is constantly posed in Derrida's work, for the limit is the place where philosophy produces the distinctions that allow it to maintain its propriety. By producing the limit by which it distinguishes itself from its other (say, literature), philosophy secures its territory, circumscribing and maintaining itself, while expelling its other as the improper. The question of the limit can be brought to bear upon a second question, the question of listening. If, as Derrida argues in *Speech and Phenomena*, the philosopher has found himself bound to the logic of auto-affection such that the paradigmatic act of guaranteeing meaning is the act of hearing oneself speak, then one must interrogate the philosopher's ear to find alternative modes of listening that avoid reinscribing philosophy's internal soliloquy. Derrida poses precisely this question:

Can one violently penetrate philosophy's field of listening without immediately...making the penetration resonate within itself, appropriating the emission for itself...In other words, can one puncture the tympanum of a philosopher and still be heard and understood by him? [*Autrement dit, peut-*

on crever le tympan d'un philosophe et continuer à se faire entendre de lui?] (Derrida, *Margins*, xii)

I have provided the original French of the final sentence, because I want to underscore how the phrase “se faire entendre” is forced into English as “be heard and understood,” in order to capture the double sense of *entendre*, which means both to hear and to understand. Yet hearing and understanding are not equivalent. Where is the limit at which hearing changes into understanding? What moment of transport carries us from one inflection of *entendre* to another? What is this other mode of listening, and how can it be articulated? The conjunction of the question of the limit and the question of listening, the limit that distinguishes hearing from understanding, motivates Derrida’s final question about pricking the ear of the philosopher.

For Nancy, this other mode is called *écouter*. Thus, when reading the opening paragraph of *Listening*, one not only hears the echoes of Derrida’s question of the limit and of listening, but detects the opening of a difference between *entendre* and *écouter* that will become one of Nancy’s central themes. Nancy writes:

Assuming that there is still sense in asking questions about the limits, or about some limits, of philosophy...we will ponder this: is listening [*l'écoute*] something of which philosophy is capable? Or...hasn't philosophy superimposed upon listening [*l'écoute*], beforehand and of necessity, or else substituted for listening something else that might be more on the order of *understanding* [*l'entente*]? (Nancy, *Listening*, 1)

Nancy is not simply drawing a distinction between *entendre* and *écouter*, in order to sort them along the lines of the proper and improper. For this would be to allow philosophy’s internal soliloquy to remain unbroken, that is, to reinscribe the very technique whose legitimacy is questioned in Derrida’s work. Rather, Nancy appears to be posing the question of the limit anew, by asking if there is a mode of philosophical listening which allows us to hear what is at stake in the question of the limit—a mode of listening that, I assume, would be very much like the mode in which Derrida wants his texts to be heard.

Although I hesitate to call describe Nancy’s text as a work for insiders, I believe that tacit awareness of these echoes is something of a necessary condition for understanding *Listening*, if the reader wants to avoid acute disappointment. But, it is not a sufficient condition. For Nancy does more than drum up echoes in his text; he also engages various problems that accrue around the question of listening, within the philosophical tradition to which Nancy responds. Listening is a nodal point that allows Nancy to engage in questions of phenomenology, subjectivity and temporality. Given this orientation, given this set of concerns, and given the echoes in Nancy’s text of other texts, how can the non-expert find a place to begin reading *Listening*?

In what follows, I would like to try a severe technique; I am going to explicate one sentence of Nancy’s text, and quickly try to bring as much to bear on it as possible. I have selected this sentence not to totalize all of the interests at work in Nancy’s text, rather because it deals with a certain set of themes about listening, phenomenology and selfhood that I find compelling. (And I would hope that others may find them compelling as well.) The sentence concerns the listening subject. Unlike some contemporary thinkers about subjectivity, Nancy does not view the subject as something to be easily dismissed, performed away, or fractured to bits. The subject remains a perpetual question. To engage Nancy’s thinking about the relation of listening and subjectivity, I want to closely read the following sentence:

It is a question, then, of going back from the phenomenological subject, an intentional line of sight, to a resonant subject, an intensive spacing of a rebound that does not end in any return to self without immediately relaunching, as an echo, a call to that same self. (21)

If Nancy is developing the question of the subject away from a phenomenological subject towards a resonant subject, what distinguishes the one from the other? Nancy qualifies the phenomenological subject in various ways, associating it with an “intentional line of sight” (21), and a “phenomenal gaze.” (19) He also invokes it negatively, in its contrast to the resonant subject, by asking elsewhere: “Why, in the case of the ear, is there withdrawal and turning inward, a making resonant, but in the case of the eye, there is manifestation and display, a making evident?” (3) The phenomenological subject and the resonant subject are not simply reducible to the difference between the eye and the ear, a simple ocular-centrism versus an auricular-centrism, nor comparing the relative values of an *augenmensch* with an *ohrenmensch*. The difference concerns the logic to which these modalities tend, the eye supporting the “logic of manifestation” (20), “phenomenality” or “appearance” (3), the ear supporting the logic of “evocation” (20), dispersal or resonance.

This opto-logy, the logic of the eye, classically undergirds the phenomenological subject (at least in Husserl and those in his horizon), which has always been a subject that constitutes its object through an act of intentionality. Although Nancy takes up Husserl and his famous discussion of melody from the *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, in order to make this point, perhaps it is worth mentioning another context where this the opto-phenomenological subject is deployed as a listener, and how such a thinking persists in conceptualizations of listening.

The phenomenological listener is central in the work of Pierre Schaeffer, whose neglected *Traité des objets musicaux* is perhaps the most extensive example of Husserlian phenomenology applied to the aural domain. Schaeffer deploys his famous acousmatic reduction (which is really an *epoché*, or bracketing of the “natural standpoint”) in order to disclose an immanent sphere of aural experience, or better, evidence. Within this immanence, through a process of “reduced listening,” one discovers the sonorous object (*l’objet sonore*), which Schaeffer describes as an “...intentional unity, corresponding to acts of synthesis.” (Schaeffer, *Traité*, 263)

The problem is this: the sonorous object is conceived of as a unitary synthesis by the subject of a series of adumbrations. A unity is formed out of distinct parts by a subject who directs the process but remains untouched, or untouchable, by it. Nancy, however, challenges any adumbrational thinking of sound; unlike objects, which are visible only partially, always seen in perspective, Nancy writes, “Sound has no hidden face: it is all in front, in back, and outside inside, *inside-out* in relation to the most general logic of presence as appearing, as phenomenality or as manifestation.” (13) Synthesis via adumbrations, whether constituting the objects of vision or hearing, whether physical thing or sonorous object, always produces a split between a temporal production and a temporalized reproduction: between temporal act of continuous intentional grasping, of synthesis, and the reproduction of the intentional unity as object, as synthesized. Adumbrational, intentional synthesis, the kind of synthesis found in Schaeffer, neglects production for reproduction, reifying its temporal productivity into a thing, a sonorous object. Phantasmagorically, one finds the phenomenological gaze peering out from inside the ear. This is why Nancy qualifies the phenomenological subject, by invoking “the intentional line of sight”, and follows

Granel in suggesting that “Husserl persists in ‘seeing’ the melody instead of listening to it.” (21)

Husserl, when discussing the constitution of a melody as a unity within internal time-consciousness, overlooks what Nancy calls its “modulation,” (19) or what one may want to think of as its temporal, continuously flowing appearing and disappearing. “[Husserl] does not concentrate his ear on musical resonance but rather converts it ahead of time into the object of an intention that configures it. Sound (and/or sense) is what is not at first intended. It is not first ‘intentioned’: on the contrary, sound it what places its subject, which has not preceded it with an intention [*qui ne l’aurait pas précédé d’un visée*], in tension, or under tension.”¹ (20)

Before inquiring about how sound precedes the phenomenological subject, I want to ask a further question about the subject: Who is it? What is it? Who or what exactly is doing this “intentioning?” As a correlate of the sonorous object, one would expect to find a sonorous subject (*le sujet sonore* to go with *l’objet sonore*). However, nothing is less sonorous, more unmoved, than this transcendental ego, a punctual ideality, a vaporous lord constituting its immanent objectivities. Well, perhaps the phenomenological subject gets what it deserves: a static, foundational subject disclosing a world of static, constituted objects.

Nancy calls *his* subject “a resonant subject” because both the object and subject of listening, in his account, resonate. And they resonate because the object and subject of listening, both share a similar “form, structure or movement” (9), that of the *renvoi*—a word whose translation as “reference” in this text misses its double meaning as both a sending-away (a dismissal), and a return.

To see how this term is deployed in Nancy’s text, compare two passages on meaning and sound:

Meaning: “Meaning consists in a reference [*renvoi*]. In fact it is made of a totality of referrals: from a sign to a thing, from a state of things to a quality, from a subject to another subject or to itself, all simultaneously.” (7)

Sound: “Sound is also made of referrals...it resounds, that is, it re-emits itself while still actually “sounding,” which is already “re-sounding” since that’s nothing else but referring back to itself.” (7-8)

Meaning and sound, as Nancy describes them, both share the same “form, structure or movement”: they are comprised of a series of infinite referrals, a sending-away which returns, only to be sent away again, ever anew. The return penetrates the sending, “all simultaneously,” producing a dispersal of bounds and rebounds without end. This applies, for Nancy, equally to the actual physics of sonorous reverberation as well as to the infinite circulation of meaning and reference. Meaning and sound share the “form, structure, or movement” of resonance.

If the phenomenological subject got what it deserved—a static sonorous object—then *mutatis mutandis*, the same follows for the resonant subject. Nancy conceives the subject, not as a proper self (an I), not as the self of the other, but as a

¹ Two side comments: First, the verb “viser”, which Mandell translates as “aim,” is the word used in French to mark intentionality as a consciousness-of, as a directedness-towards. Thus, I have altered the translation to underscore Nancy’s care to place intentionality in tension. Second, when Nancy contrasts the “unity of monitoring the melody and its modulation, its tune and its notes” (19), he is echoing the critique of “melocentrism” which can be found in the work of his close collaborator Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe. In “The Echo of the Subject,” melocentrism always covers up rhythm, the more significant dimension of music, one which is ultimately precedes and structures subjectivity.

“form, structure, and movement of an infinite referral [*renvoi*], since it refers to something (itself) that is nothing outside of the referral.” (9) The self is always an approach to self, in that any representation of the self (a specular *imago* or proper “I”, the other, whether present or absent, rival or gap) cannot capture the productivity of the self as an ongoing temporal, or rhythmic, flux. This unrepresentable self produces an oddly quasi-circular logic, a spiral logic: the self is always an “approach to the self.” (9) This involuted curl, this misalignment of presentation and representation lies behind Nancy’s claims that the self “identifies itself by resonating from self to self,” in the irreconcilability between “[the] in itself and [the] for itself,” and is, “hence outside itself, at once the same as and other than itself”, or echoing Lacoue-Labarthe, “one in the echo of the other.” (9) So, sound is not “intentioned” by the subject, rather it is contemporaneous with the subject because of the fact that meaning, sound and self all share the same “form, structure or movement”, namely, *renvoi*, resonance.

Perhaps I ought to revisit the original sentence, to see if it has become clearer:

It is a question, then, of going back from the phenomenological subject, an intentional line of sight, to a resonant subject, an intensive spacing of a rebound that does not end in any return to self without immediately relaunching, as an echo, a call to that same self. (21)

There are a few terms that still could use some explication, like “spacing” (a central term in Nancy’s thinking), or echo, which I’ve only barely touched upon (at what point, at what delay, what spacing changes or transforms a resonance into an echo?) or even the difference between the intentional and the intensive.

But one term still stands out in need of explication, and that term is “it”. What is the “it” that begins this sentence, its subject? In the paragraph from which this sentence is extracted, “it” is literally “the question of opening oneself up to the resonance of Being.” Perhaps this opening to Being is precisely what Nancy sees afforded by listening, at least when conceptualized in his “beyond-phenomenological” (20) manner. As for our sentence, allow me to attempt a quick paraphrase via substitution: *Listening is a question of moving from the phenomenological subject to the resonant subject, a subject that is listening to the infinite referral, the resonance, which co-constitutes meaning, sound and itself, all simultaneously. Listening then is a listening to sounds as much as a listening to self, a way of listening beyond the punctual imago or proper “I” we often fancy to believe we possess, towards an unrepresentable self, albeit one that is never outside representation, one that shares an important homology with sound.*

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Walter Branchi

Sacredness of place

“Whatever belongs to the order of the worlds, whatever guarantees this order, is sacred. But sacredness concerns man too and not only the physical cosmos. Sacredness in this sense is a value, a product of culture “.
Claude Levi-Strauss

A place is the sum of everything that coexists in a given space and time; it is the interaction between the person perceiving and the physical world around him; a place is part of its landscape (the place of places), recognizable because of its unique natural or anthropic features.

My definition of “sacred” does not refer to places of worship for believers of this or that religion, but to sacredness perceived through the composition and order of things that provokes a powerful awareness.

Sacredness is felt clearly. It cannot be described; it is a presence.

Time creates sacredness of place. In time, the instruments: rain, sun, frost and drought create the harmony of a place. Sacredness depends also on planning and building, by the designs of men. How many plumb-lines have been consumed to ensure the verticality of buildings and how many angels have been carved in stone, and how many gardeners have planted bushes, trees and hedges, and planted them anew?

All things deserve respect, the powerful force of nature, the memories of ideals, men and gods; all things transmit vibrations so intense you can almost feel them on your skin.

My idea of place, as a musician, is that of a space to be felt, to be lived, in which to immerse oneself. It is not something separate and distinct to be used as inspiration in writing a piece of music. There are no spotlights, stages or amplified sounds that drown out our surroundings, but deference, agreement and collaboration.

My sense of the sacredness and respect for place has led me to compose music that is open to the world around, where music and place complement each other. My music is intended to resound throughout a place and the place to resound through music.

Walter Branchi

I have always dreamed of making the world resonate and believed in the power of music to unite and create a wholeness.

I have thus experienced the passage from dark to light on a spring day in Rome, listening, through my music, first to the dim aurora, the break of dawn and rising sun until the traffic noise dispersed it all.

I have listened to the roses unfurling their petals and heard the power of their fragrance on a morning in the month of May.

I have listened to the setting sun, the flight of swallows, the voices of farmers on their way home from work and perceived the shadows lengthening on the fields.

I have listened to the silence, to the light grazing the Via Adriatica, the whispering of the oaks ... the footsteps of a man, while maple leaves drift slowly down in the New Jersey autumn.

February 2009

In Memoriam, Henry Brant

David A. Jaffe

April 29, 2008

I first met Henry Brant in the late 1970s when I studied composition, orchestration, and 16th century counterpoint with him at Bennington College in Vermont. This eventually led to a thirty-year friendship with discussions of music that have been among the most important in my life.

Henry Brant was unlike any other composition teacher I've ever had in that he offered a metaperspective on the process of composing. Instead of suggesting that a particular theme should be developed or that a particular note might sound better as a Bb, he taught how to write quickly, how to think hierarchically, how to make deadlines, how to ask for commissions, and how to avoid writers' block. He also was the first to suggest to me that there might be a place in my musical language for the various non-"classical" styles I played, such as bluegrass, klezmer and jazz. This directly led to my writing such works as Silicon Valley Breakdown and Cluck Old Hen Variations.

Throughout the years, I have discussed many incipient projects with Henry and invariably he would offer key insights and suggestions that would lead me in fertile directions. As an example, in 1992, I was planning a concerto for RadioDrum-controlled Disklavier piano and large ensemble. I discussed the project with him, including my plan to use a string orchestra. He suggested I instead employ an ensemble of plucked strings. When I pressed him to elaborate, he suggested mandolin, guitar, harp, harpsichord, harmonium, bass and two percussionists. This became the seventy-minute work, "The Seven Wonders of the Ancient World," premiered by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in 1998. Such interactions were always at the very start of a project. Then, at the conclusion, I would play him the result, he would offer his thoughts and then ask "what next?"

Anyone who has spent time with Henry Brant cannot help but be impressed by his vital, daring, unbounded imagination. Coupled with an acute analytical sense and a mastery of the nuts and bolts of his craft, the music he wrote is without precedent. He was a maximalist in many senses. Stylistically, he combined extremely diverse material into polyphonic wholes that somehow made sense. Emotionally, his music has great scope, ranging from the most serious material to highly satirical elements, often presented simultaneously in such a way as to suggest the cognitive dissonance of modern life. In terms of instrumentation, he employed African drums, Balinese gamelan, jazz ensemble and steel drum band, often in the same work. The scope of his wit and compositional topics (though he insisted he did not write program music) are evident from the fanciful titles of his works, often with political references such as "Homeless People", "Labyrinth", "Signs and Alarms", "Statesmen in Jazz" (1945, for Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin), "All Souls Carnival", "Peace Music for UN Day" (1955), "Ghost Nets", "Prisons of the Mind," "Immortal Combat" and "If You Don't Like Comets, Get Out of the Solar System." Why is Brant's music not better known? First, it is difficult to represent spatial music on recorded media. Secondly, the sheer number of musicians involved in some of his works presents an organizational and economic challenge. Thirdly, he was always more interested in writing new works than in promoting old ones.

I see Brant as fundamentally an orchestral composer who painted large strokes with a broad brush. He preferred writing for large ensembles and sought the most emphatic expressive gestures. He once said, "some composers write for orchestra as if it were chamber music, I try to write my chamber music to sound orchestral." (In fact, it is surprising to note that his catalogue includes more chamber pieces than orchestral works.)

His approach to orchestration was refined during his years as a film composer when he had access to whatever instrumental combinations he might desire (eight bassoons? No problem!) He once said “there are three ways to orchestrate: after the composition, during the composition and before the composition. I prefer the last of the three.” Thus, orchestration was a fundamental precompositional decision. He often used cooking analogies for orchestration and referred to particular combinations as “recipes.” Conversely, he would compliment a tasty soup as “well-orchestrated.”

While most of his works are for extremely contrasting ensembles, he also had a particular fondness for groups of like instruments, as is evidenced by such works as “Orbits” for 80 trombones, as well as works for flute choir, works for Carleen Hutchins’ violins of different sizes, and a work for 100 guitars. Incidentally, he felt that plucked strings were an underused timbre in western concert music—he included mandolin parts for me in several works.

Henry Brant’s orchestration deserves a treatise of its own and, in fact, one has been written by Brant himself. Over the thirty years I have known him, I have seen him come back again and again to the orchestration book in between composing gigs; with each visit to Santa Barbara, he would show me the latest chapter and more recently I have been involved in proofreading and editing. Many of us thought he would never finish it, but he did manage to get it done in his last years. The work, entitled “Textures and Timbres,” is a condensation of a lifetime of experience. Soon to be released, it is, in my opinion, the most significant orchestration book since that of Rimsky-Korsakov.

Brant’s approach is based on classifying instrumental combinations that can combine harmonically, in terms of timbre, articulation and dynamic level. He groups timbres not in terms of instrumental families but in particular instrumental subranges. For example, he lists the lower fourth of the bassoon with the oboe and straight-mute trombone, while the upper octave of the bassoon is grouped with the flute, fiber-mute horn and clarinet; the middle of the bassoon is considered a separate timbre from any other. The book goes far beyond that, classifying all types of musical textures in terms of a few fundamental categories such as monophony, harmony, imitative counterpoint, similar polyphony and contrasting polyphony. All of this is motivated by and in the spirit of practical music-making. Brant was a consummate professional who wrote music that could be easily put together with a minimum of rehearsals. He used clear economical notation and was able to achieve great textural complexity with a minimum of rehearsal problems. His instrumental and vocal writing is idiomatic and maximizes the “bang-for-the-buck” of each player in the ensemble.

Similarly, Henry Brant had a hands-on approach to composing. He advised his composing students and friends to be performers and conductors as well, and to be as involved as possible in the performance of their works. Whenever possible, he wrote parts for his pieces himself. When he was not conducting, he performed on such diverse instruments as pipe organ, mouth organ, percussion and flute.

Much has been written about Brant’s iconoclastic maverick approach. Much less well known is how deeply he studied and absorbed the classics, from Josquin to Ives (he named his son after both of these). Rather than being intimidated by these masters, he felt free to connect with them by rewriting their works. His arrangement of Ives’ Concord Sonata for full orchestra is a masterwork in its own right. (The Innova recording by the Concertgebouw Orchestra under Dennis Russell Davies is not to be missed.) He made an arrangement for wind quintet of the Beethoven Op. 131 string quartet. He created a new Mozart viola sonata from a piano sonata. The list goes on.

His seminal paper on spatial music (“Space as an essential musical parameter”) lays out the fundamentals of the sanest approach on the subject of any 20th century composer. Simply put, he observes that space weakens harmonic relationships and strengthens polyphonic independence. Following this principle, he used space to make contrapuntal complexity more intelligible. He explored the possibilities of spatial distribution more rigorously, and with more variety and depth than any other composer in history.

In Memoriam, Henry Brant

He was always experimenting, always curious, always looking for and finding new ideas for his music from the most diverse sources. In the 1980s, in a huge abandoned room at the former Artificial Intelligence Lab of Stanford University, he had me run at breakneck speed while plucking the E string of a violin, in an attempt to determine whether rapidly moving sound sources could be musically emphatic. He decided that they could not. Another time, on a visit to Santa Barbara, he took me on a musical tour of the neighborhood houses of worship, including a Mexican church's rock band and the chanting at a Greek Orthodox church. His works include a piece for four Jewish cantors and one shofar. He once strung a violin with two E strings and two G strings, being of the opinion that these strings are superior to the A and D strings. He was not happy with the string quartet as a combination and experimented with substituting a tenor cello (an octave below the violin) for the second violin. This eliminated the large gap between cello and viola and the duplication of the violin range. He wrote works for barges of musicians, for fire truck sirens, and for music boxes.

It is sad to lose such a great spirit, but we are thankful that we had him for so long. The best way to honor him is to disregard fashion and continue composing, performing and conducting new adventurous exciting music. When asked how he could produce at such a prodigious pace even at an advanced age, he would respond "I love my work."

Nos os¹
Lecture Performance
Jean-Charles François
2010

Nos os Our bones Our hitches Our knots

Our knots

Our knuckles

Our knuckle bones

Our node dose

Nos os Our bones Our hitches Our knots

Our knots

Our snot's nose

Our knots under our very nose

Our notes "doh"

Our knots denote some notes "doh"

The notes "doh"

Our knotty notes

Nos os: (Our bones Our hitches Our knots)

our knots, some notes "doh" our notes "doh"

Our "doh", the noble nod of some notes "doh"

Nono's noble notes,

Nono's know-how of noble notes

Our Nono, the one of our knots

The known notes of Nono, they are our notes

Not the ones from the other Ostrogoths

Nodosity of the nosological noesis

Nodosity of the noological neologisms

Our knots denote high doses of notes "doh"

Nodosity of the dodgy "doh"

Dawn of the plethora of knots

Downfall

The note "doh" or another, Nono or an author, or another author,

The note "doh" or any other,

The note, it is our knot, as much as the notes our knots,

¹ This text, originally in French, was presented in February 2010 in Paris at a Conference on "Saturation" organized by the musician and anthropologist Denis Laborde and the Centre de Documentation de la Musique Contemporaine (CDMC, Parc de la Villette, Paris). While performing the text, the author built a tower of percussion instruments which at the end is supposed to hide his head; if the tower falls the lecture performance ends. The translation and phonetic reworking of the text is by Jean-Charles François with the precious help of Nancy François.

The note is no longer a simplified global sound concept allowing the initiated an immediate access to a determined meaning corresponding to a non-equivocal action. The note no longer corresponds to a standardized usage of a standardized collection of instruments, corresponding to a specific gestural and aural know-how acquired through the performers' long years of education. The note is no longer the representation of an ideal sound, serving as reference to all the variations permitted by small subsidiary indications.

The note is no longer the well-defined object that allows the expression of complex syntaxes, combinations of superimpositions and of successions, that make it possible to render the complexity of timbre reasonable by confining it to the art of instrumentation or orchestration, that is, the combinations of notes played by diverse instruments, combinations of standard sounds defined by treatises as recognized usages.

Note-knot which is knot only to the extent that the knot of the note concerns its relationships to the other notes, to the osmosis of notes between themselves.

Note-knot which is knot only to the extent that we have to avoid false notes, convenient note then, a simplifying mediation of the savagery of sounds; music defines itself through the note as an autonomous specialized universe, free from anecdotic narrations and sonic manifestations linked to everyday life or to the random disorganization of noise.

The note becomes then an over-norm knot, abnormally hard, enormously osseous, because it is no longer capable today of reflecting the diversity of musical expressions, the diversity of practices which cannot be reduced to the perspectives of a norm around which one can articulate variations.

Above all, the note, as a characteristically unique object, can no longer represent the micro-variations of sound particles, that constitute the internal content of the note's temporality, that constitute its timbre. The note hosts a noxious knot. Indeed it is our knot. Our knots. *Nos os*.

The note is now part of the obsolete ossuary on which we have to rebuild a sound universe. It is the bone that we have to gnaw, the knot that we have to disentangle, on which we knock ourselves, the doses of dogmas are a notch down, each dose is a knot, our knot, the sounds are drawn, it is for hours drone, one ounce down the knot's dose, ostensive sound doses, ostentatious soap-aperos, auspicious osteology hospice, hormone doses, grandiose big-hornate, nosologists astronauts, overdose of nauseous zones, overdose of nautical zones, overdose of ozone zones hard on the nose, overdose of auto-eros, of heroes, of whore shipping heroes, heroes in too great doses, of zeros of lotto, overdose of gnosis, overdose of agnosticism, overdose of gloss, overdose of gnomes, gnomes of London, astonishment before sounds outside norms, astonishment before those who are enormously out of tone, astonishment before those who are overloaded with tons of tones, tons of atonal tones, of autumnal tones, monotonous sounds, monaural pounds, tonsorial rounds, topical tropes, trochlear bones, tropical thrombosis, optical trombonist, trompe-l'oeilling to the bone.

Nomos

Alpha of most knots

Nomos rate of knots

Nomos, the law of allotting our knots in rules appropriate to diversified contexts,

Nomos, Alpha of most of knots down, box of knots-out drops.

Nomos is also the Beta knocker of our host, the knowledge of our boast, the OK of the KO, the Gamma of Bali land, et al, eternal return of normative sombrero, the Psi cause of our moth-eaten ghost, mega knots that we have to tackle.

Nomos, of most knots, my knots, I know, it knocks me down, our Logos, because how can we envision a value system if each context has its own norm linked to its territory and to the unstable actions taking place in it, that are changing constantly in unpredictable fashion? We will be numb done.

There is no mono culture, no culture which would subsume all the others by claiming to be universal, which would be able to homogenize a diversified human society around a common project. There is only the kaleidoscope, the kaleido phone of the diversity of micro-sounds that need to be amplified by microphones, the multiple micro-creolizations, the infinity of microscopic movements which differentiate themselves through roaring identity building slogans which macro-bore us, onus on us.

There is no mono culture, laws apply differently according to customs, my own noise is not deployed in a void, my own choice is not poised as a decoy, my own voice is not an *en-soi*, my own boisterous rejoicing is not an *envoi*.

How are we going to share the spaces on this knoll, this is the question of the nomos, the knots monomania, the norms insomnia. The norm of a given civilization, which, according to Cicero, is « this thing that comes from the Greek word *nomos*, in that it consists in “allotting” to each one what he deserves ». The nomos is not the law of the Romans which affirms its choices of destiny. In Rome, the victorious general decides.

The nomos is far more disturbing, far more strange, all the voices of the world appear in full light, the microphone picks them up, captures them, formats them and retransmits them in the net spread out over the world. It is the strangely disturbing principle of Nemesis (according to Schelling): « The very power of this supreme law of the world which sets everything in motion, which refuses that anything remain hidden, which compels all that is hidden to appear, and which makes it morally obliged to show itself ».

The nomos, our home.

Our home

Roaming for hours in noble laws

Noble laws of our home

Nomothetic lawns moist by our hose

Notable laws of our notes

Our knots under the laws of notes

Low notes of our knobble laws

Oslo now under snow
Our knots under norms
Noble laws on norms
Our sonic laws
Our novel sounds
The notes hostages of laws
The nodes hostile onslaught
Slaughter house on slow
Enslaved sounds on slots
Not so sound exhaust
Ex hosting
No notes ought to get lost
No sauce ought to set
No sot ought to bet
Not so!
Nosos

Nosos
Illness
Nosology
Our osteoporosis
Our ostensive osteoarthritis
Our pains
Our obstinate Austro-empathy
Our obstructive otoscopic auscultation
North obscure horoscopic hospitalization
None sort of neologization
No sore, no sour
Norn horse's mouth
Node hoarse in the mouth
Noh's coarse mouth
Words destroyed in the mouth
Fragmented words, disintegrated norms, dissociated notes, smashed noble laws.
Decomposed nosocomical pains
Slashed interest rates
Broken automobs
Broken auto norms
Broken host toast
Nostos

Nostos, nostalgia, for ever, nostalgia for the era, nostalgia for the aurora, nostalgia for the aura of the notes, nostalgia for this world that disappears under our eyes, the one capable of creating an immediate relationship with normative global objects – the notes – about whose internal content we do not care. The one that articulates successions of normal notes, with cooled down timbres, in learned systems common to all users, systems common to their ears and their eyes. Nostalgia for the norms of notes regulated by

institutions whose task is to build the detail of standard sonorities to perfection. Nostalgia for the schools which determine the content of each allowed sound. Nostalgia for what is simple, visible, immediately audible as “musicality”, subtle virtuosity.

Nosos, illness. Because as soon as one tries to represent the detail of the notes, notation becomes unreadable under an accumulation of signs.

Nosos, illness, because as soon as one tries to get out of the established system, that of notes and of institutions that delimit notes outlined in standardized sonorities, one opens a Pandora’s box of the infinite diversity of sounds.

Nostos, nostalgia, as return to the homeland, but nostos, nostalgia as a return that saves, that restores something that is saved when one brings it to the homeland, as with the name of Nestor, “the one who returns happily home, who brings back safely his army”. The saving return of nostos, of nostalgia, it is the reinvention of the content of the note, the reinvention of the sonority in its detailed content, it means opening the Pandora’s box of infinite sound diversity.

Nosos, illness. Because how can one face the diversity. How are we to take into account the complexity of the sound waves, of the sound bodies, of the mind-bodies? How to act in face of the accumulation of information and the plethora of thinkers/actors, of the *noologists*. Noos.

Nosos.

Nosos, illness. Because how can institutions act in face of this diversity. How can they take into account the different types of music, the divergent actions, the infinite mixtures, the creolization of the world, a continuously changing music profession, perpetually floating definitions? No sore, no sour. No store, no stout.

Nostos, nostalgia.

« All the others then, who had escaped a rugged death, were at home, survivors of the war and the sea. But he, who needed to return and to see his wife, by a ruling nymph, Calypso, was held captive. »

Nosos, Nostos, Noos, Nos os

post impressions
a travel book for tragic intellectuals
ca. 250 pp. with 88 color photographs and a DVD.
Written by Hollis Taylor.
Portland, Oregon: Twisted Fiddle Productions, 2007.

Elaine R. Barkin

Violinists-Composers Hollis Taylor (American) and Jon Rose (Australian) make three separate journeys alongside thousands of miles of Australia's fences, in particular those fences that were, and are still being, constructed to deter rabbits, dingoes, kangaroos, emus, pigs, foxes, horses, et alia, from grazing in sheep-cattle pasture. Birds, insects, snakes, snails, and lizards are undaunted, as are Hollis and Jon who play innumerable fences and document their activities verbally and audio-visually in this unique travelogue. Three Rabbit-Proof Fences, built 1901-1908 at the height of a rabbit plague, meander N-S and E-W through southwest Australia (WA). The totality measures ca. 2021 miles terminating at 80 Mile Beach, north of Port Hedland and way north of Perth, and starting at the Southern Ocean near Hopetoun, just west of Starvation Bay. The 3488 miles-long Barrier-Border-Dog (Dingo) Fences — many 6 feet high and 1 foot underground — straddle three states in eastern and southern Australia (QLD, NSW, SA).^{*} Numerous other fences abound: to prevent shark attacks, to enclose graveyards or racecourses, to keep humans out or in (e.g., prisons and detention centers). 88 spectacular color photographs clue us in to the striking diversity of fence-design found all over this amazingly hued land, of which 70% is desert.

^{*} States and Territories: Queensland (QLD), New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (VIC), South Australia (SA), Tasmania (TAS), Western Australia (WA); Northern Territory (NT), Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

October 5, 2009: Quite fortuitously, the film “Rabbit-Proof Fence” (2002) was shown on cable TV. A true going-home story of the 1930s during which time the Australian Government had been practicing ethnic cleansing via genetic modification on select Aborigine children, a practice of Removal “for *their* own good” that didn't abate until the mid 1970s.

Most fences have metal or wood pole-posts — many made of trunks or branches of white gums or irreplaceable mulga trees (out of which Aborigines made/make shields, digging sticks, boomerangs, or woomeras);

wire or meshing is strung between fence pole-posts. Some fences are made of stone, plastic tubing or sheeting, corrugated iron, tires, chain, steel, or rope; some wires are barbed or electrified. Century-old fences have deteriorated or have been demolished by weather and sand. Nature takes back what was acquired, by dubious means, by man. Intended by their makers to prevent transgression, ownership-outsider fences themselves transgress. Desperate measures for one often breed disaster for another.



Rabbit-Proof Fences, WA.



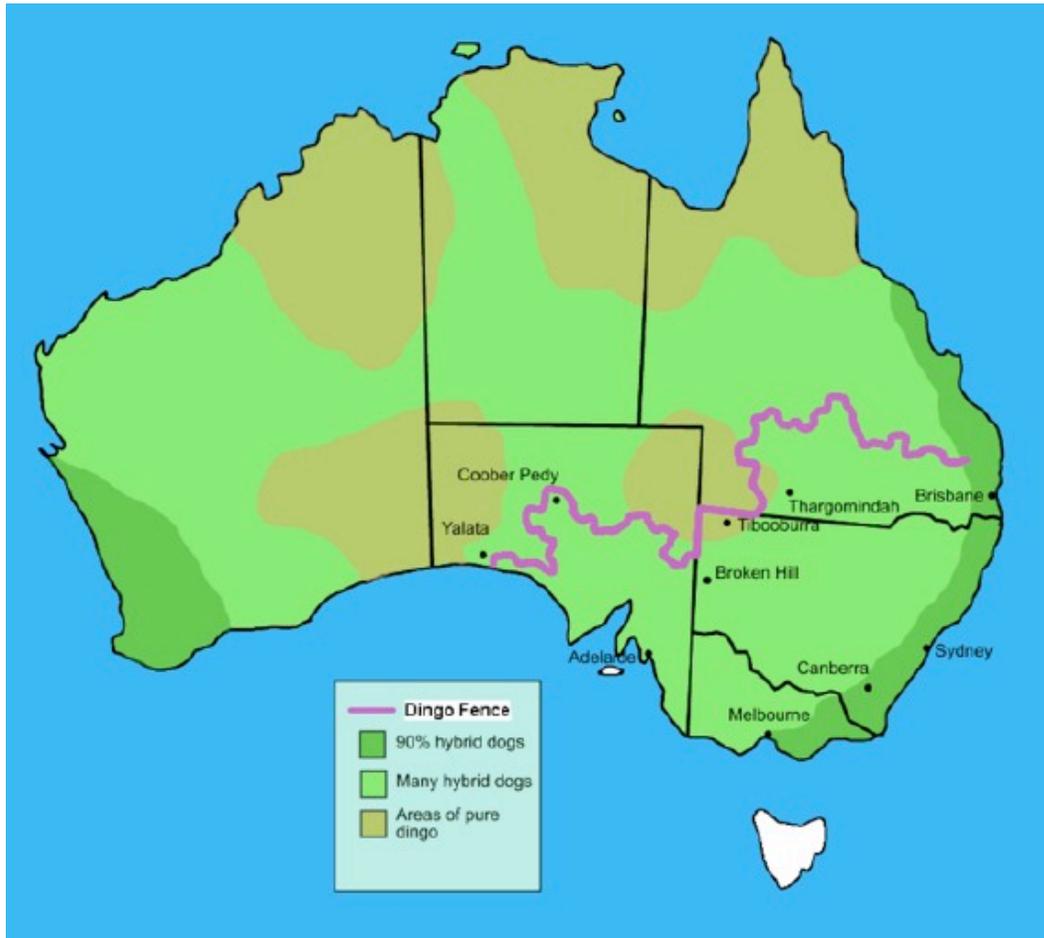
Rabbit-Proof Fence, Starvation Bay, WA.



Ghost Fence in WA.

With violin, cello and contrabass bows, lots of rosin, bare or gloved hands, fingers, wooden or cotton ball mallets, and contact mikes placed on fence posts and wire, Hollis and Jon rouse these serendipitously “functional long-string instruments” and culturally divisive signifiers. Fence behavior and resultant sound vary significantly: some resonate for long time periods down long distances: many sound electronic: some die out rapidly or are barely audible: some are unplayable: tones coaxed from wires are mostly non-equal-tempered encompassing a wide fuzzy field rather than on-the-button ‘in-tuneness’. Hollis and Jon bow the crap out of, and bow life into, these *Things*.

August 15, 2009, over the same weekend as the 40th anniversary-celebration of Woodstock, I read about Jon — on Easter Sunday 2002 at Wogarno Station, WA — playing “amplified fence with broadband feedback”. Hollis continues: “Think Hendrix at Woodstock without the drugs.” (p. 27) Got it, hear it, Woodstockian synchronicity greatly enjoyed.



Barrier-Border-Dog (Dingo) Fences, QLD-NSW-SA.

During their travels, Jon and Hollis give violin-duo concerts for locals, many of whom think that fence-playing is really cool and an Aussie-apposite activity. They also talk of frequently encountered off-label use of fences by birds, animals, humans, or nature, and of *Aeolian* fences that sing with the wind. Hollis writes about one such fence, located just south of Broken Hill, NSW:

“The fence is being excited by the wind: we hear a strong A-flat ringing out ... it shifts midsong from string to percussion family, turning in an admirable high-hat drum performance. ... We keep turning 180 degrees — sunset, moonrise. The fence dies [at night] ... but returns the next morning ringing out a D-flat.” (p. 148)

Hollis and Jon's three 2002-2004 journeys of obsession, perseverance, addiction, and transgression ultimately cover more than 20,000 miles — in a 2WD camper van and in a 4WD Toyota Land Cruiser (Hollis is the intrepid driver) — through sparsely inhabited, uninhabited, and uninhabitable terrain, about which Hollis says: An “alien [inhospitable] place filled with the antagonism of the wild”. (p. 182) Three long strange trips across, around, and up & down, a vast strange land.

As I read, a map of the Australian continent lies nearby, and thus I can grasp the geographical reality, refresh memories of where I've been during my three visits to Australia, and vicariously experience where I'll never go, like Winton, QLD, now a tourist town, current population ca. 1600, where “Waltzing Matilda” was composed, Qantas Airways was conceived, and where a graffitied “kitschy art fence” stands.

Memory I: As Hollis and Jon travel through Broome, WA, I recalled the Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte detective series written by Arthur W. Upfield in the 1930s-1950s, many of which I read in the 1950s-60s. The stories gave me my first take on Aboriginal culture filtered through Upfield's half-caste white-fella-Aborigine hero 'Bony', Inspector for the Queensland Police Force. Upfield himself was a Rabbit-Proof-Fence runner (maintainer) in the early 1900s.



Jon bowing on Dead Sheep Fence,
Milparinka, NSW.

Hollis's “travel book” (with its mischievous “for tragic intellectuals” subtitle) examines geographical-topographical, historical, socio-cultural-political, ecological, biological, environmental, interpersonal, and music-experimenting issues. She writes with ease and wit, and her awareness and curiosity of Everything captivates and informs. Each organism mentioned is

given its Latin species names (a few of which Hollis invents), revealing her desire to get it all down, to get it right, to know the origins of Everything, the more so since she is an Outsider. Each bottle of wine they down with Hollis's vege-grain-fruit meals is named, such as "1999 Wirra Wirra Church Block" and "2000 Leaping Lizard Cabernet Sauvignon from the Margaret River". Hollis, endowed with perfect pitch, transcribes fence sound and bird song. Now and then, incongruities, unforeseen obstacles, and anomalous weirdness of Australia and Strine-slang stress her out and do her in. Like when they get bogged in the muck along a fly-infested stretch of the Dog Fence in the vicinity of Milparinka, NSW, and remain stranded for 24 hours — during which time they mildly hallucinate, mistaking moonrise for a fleet of car headlights —, until rescued by a ranger who just happened to be driving by. Along another fly-infested stretch, they again bog down and are eventually pulled out by nearby roadhouse folks. On their third trip in the NT, they get stuck fast in a sand-filled track, yet manage to bump their way out. Hollis always fears the worst; Jon always keeps his cool. They go on.



Jon and Hollis, Dog Fence,
Strzelecki Desert, QLD-NSW-SA.

Hollis writes of her first encounter in WA of Pied Butcherbirds (*cracticus nigrogularis*) and of their stunning and complex song (later the subject of her Ph. D. thesis). She expresses shock and awe at desolate and aptly named sites, e.g., Nullarbor Plain and Starvation Bay, and amusement at Two Hills, One Tree, and Dismal Bridge. Venomous snakes and spiders, kangaroo road-kill, orange-yellow-red-blue-purple sunsets, flies, fleas, a dead dingo, camels, multi-hued termite mounds that pervade Australia — all mounds face North-South, a boon to the confused traveler —, dancing

emus, a singing dingo, merciless stinging insects that infest the van, grill-kill — colorful dragonflies and moths —, boggings, squabbles, attire, fatigue, body grime, loneliness, murderous heat and thirst, are vividly recalled and recounted. Along with Hollis's sporadic anxiety-filled, 'What am I doing here?' Jon is less equivocal; he is on a mission (and has been fence-possessed since the 1980s).

Memory II: During my first visit to Australia, March 1986, I flew from Melbourne to Alice Springs for a week of desert trips and a night ride to peer through a telescope at Halley's Comet. On the flight up, I had a window seat and was able to view the astonishing and constantly shifting color of the land below, from cityscape to gray-white salt lakes, from desert vastness blonde tan-amber-honey to tawny-ocher-orangey-tomatoey-auburn of the NT's Red Centre. On land, ghostly gums against a backdrop of mauve-lavender mound-hills stunned me.

September 23, 2009: As I write, Sydney and environs are being enveloped by a "red storm", an "orange dust cloud", whipped by strong winds carrying tons of sand-dust from drought-stricken inland deserts. Antonioni-ish other worldly!

Memory III: The sensational songs of Pied Butcherbirds caught my ears during all three visits to Australia — in urban and rural areas, the bush, and rainforests. Day trips in the NT's Outback obliged me to wear a big hat with baubles hanging down, so as to confuse and repel the dreaded black flies. During my second visit, June 1994, on a trip to the NT's Kakadu National Park with Coo-ee Tours, humungous termite mounds blew us away as did the rock art and amazing variety of birds, flowers,, monster crocs, and insects. I might have eaten a green-honey-ant but can't (don't want to) recall for sure.

Typography: Several fonts and sizes differentiate among Hollis's tale, Jon's commentary, footnotes, and interviews with rangers, fence keepers, 'fenceologists', bush travelers, Aboriginal locals, a Flying Padre, a dingo enthusiast, and an Aboriginal woman gumleaf performer. The interviews, comprising ca. 15% of the book, are unreadable; the type size is large but the image is too light, as if printed in invisible ink. Thus, and regrettably, stories and attitudes about fences were inaccessible to me. Also, I wish there'd been an Index, but preparing one can be costly.

During their third fence trip, Hollis and Jon visit the Nauiyu Aboriginal Community near Darwin, NT, where they make and then play a Musical Fence. Three Nauiyu women paint three "dead" fence posts so as to "bring 'em back to life"; heavy piano wire is strung between posts and afterwards the kids have a go at it. Then on to the Darwin Arts Festival where Hollis and Jon are to install and play a super-large Musical Fence. Their "Great Fences of Australia" shows are apparently a big hit.

Socio-political commentary appears early on in the book, but it's not until the last sections that Hollis fully engages such concerns. The trips have become a catalyst for her awareness of multiple consequences, beneficial and harmful, engendered by the introduction of non-native species and artifacts into hitherto undisturbed come-what-may habitats. Fences were either non-existent in Australia or not as ubiquitous as they've been ever since colonizing white fellas migrated in the late 18th century. Indigenous people knew and still know where boundaries are. These new barrier fences disrupted 40,000 years or more of nomadic continental wanderings, subsistence, and tribal songlines, about which Jon writes:

“[A]ll significant cultural transmission was by song. All ceremony, all artifacts, all stories, every vital rock, every geographical signpost had a song. To get from one of these [Aboriginal communities] to another you had to know the relevant songs. ... nothing existed without a song.” (p. 211)



Hollis and Jon wearing insect repellent gear,
Twin Lakes, NSW.



Sunset, Snowtown, SA.

The love that Jon and Hollis have for Australia, and for its betterment, is absolute and undeniable. Yet, will their fence playing and “sonic mapping” assuage the distress of intrusion? (Can it?) Their artistic-socio-political leftwing-ism notwithstanding, is fence-playing a subtle collaboration with white fellas? (Or is this a cynical take?) By such literal and figurative crossing-over-into play and confrontation of inter-cultural discrepancies, do they reject-disrupt-belittle the power of the fence’s purpose? (Maybe.) Can Hollis and Jon negate its boundary-marking intent and so link up with those for whom the fence is unnatural and invasive? (Probably not.) Infringement, invasion, takeover are ways in which our Worlds have been made and remade. Reconciliation, apology, knowledge, and understanding might help but can never expunge the distress of loss; tribal people still struggle to preserve language and tradition in the Antipodes, North America and, for that matter, worldwide.

They say that “Time assuages” –
Time never did assuage –
An actual suffering strengthens
As Sinews do, with age –

Time is a test of Trouble –
But not a Remedy –
If such it prove, it prove too
There was no Malady –

— Emily Dickinson, 1863

“Fence music encapsulates the vastness of the place in music of distance, boundaries and borders. This, however, is not the songlines or even the white fella’s ironic version of it, but the unexpected and elegiac music of the Australian land sounding its recent history, a celebration of the pioneer spirit and a requiem mass of an environmental disaster. Fence construction has inadvertently given us a means of expressing musically, with a direct physical connection, the whole range of intense emotion tied up with the ownership of the land, from the outback to the backyard.” (Jon, p. 93)

The 40-track DVD is the *piece de resistance* — mind boggling and ear shattering —, with place, descriptive, and whimsical titles such as *Oodnadatta Track*, *Sliding Fence*, and *Ant Walkabout*. Immediately apparent and audible is the virtuosity of its two string-player-creators and the diversity of sonic output. Fence posts and wires neither participate nor resist: they are manipulated and done to. The video’s track rhythm and amplified-recorded sound — Jon and Hollis single- and multi-tracked along with wind, flies, birds — are engrossing: full body shots, hands up-close stopping wire (barbed and bare); solo & duo in semi-Goth fly-repellent outback attire; a long tracking shot of a tumbledown fence; kaleidoscopic claypan dissolves; a full palette of sand, desert flora, sun, blue sky, ocean foam. Jon and Hollis fiercely bow-pizz-*jeté* the unknown, triggering soundworlds that lay hidden in dislocating unfriendly structures, bringing life to, giving voice to, and animating inanimate *Things* amidst barrenness, *Things* that express collision, that safeguard and intrude simultaneously.

“But what does it mean to play a fence? Could it be seen as part of the reconciliation and healing process? Is this a tribute to the tough frontier? Or the unexpected sonic consolation of a short, sometimes brutal history?” (Jon, p. 224)

Fence-post-wire sonic output: extraterrestrial screechy-scratchy high-amped feedback; glissy & expanded harmonic series, split tones & fuzzy transients, ashcan-snare-drum bangs & hisses; moans, groans, hums, & rattles; compelling and mesmerizing; menacing (think Bernard Herrmann’s *Psycho*) and harsh (the sound in your head when in a dentist’s chair); stunningly slowly drawn-out melodies elicited by Hollis; Jon goes for rhythmically & sonically (re)active resonance; all down-deep primordial. A windmill and a fence sing alone making their film and recording debut as do the amplified sounds of a plastic bag quivering around a fence post in the middle of nowhere. Most satisfying real-time duo-improvs are *Frome Duo*, *William Creek*, & *Naiuyu*, where newly painted fence posts that were ‘brought back to life’ by three Naiuyu women, make the latter a gorgeous visual feast (and are included among the book’s photos).

A multi-media paean to Australia's distinctive and preternatural qualities, its land and its people — newcomers and enduring descendants of those who roamed free for eons and were then forcibly assimilated —, *post impressions* is thought-provoking, funny, sad, richly informative, and constantly absorbing.

Summer-Fall 2009



Coober Pedy, SA.

Websites and Notes

<<http://www.hollistaylor.com/>> See “Special Projects” and
<http://www.hollistaylor.com/video/bb-watching_waiting.mov>
<http://www.jonroseweb.com/d_picts_19_str_violin.html>.

Under “Projects”, see “Great Fences of Australia”, Jon Rose’s reflections about fences, their impact and effect on the land, the culture, and his response to them as a creative musician and concerned citizen.

Photographs by Jon Rose and Hollis Taylor. Used with permission.

RECENT [EXCELLENT AND NOT SO EXCELLENT] ADVENTURES IN LISTENING

Elaine R. Barkin

In the March 1, 2010 issue of *The New Yorker*, Alex Ross wrote enthusiastically of the JACK String Quartet's performance of Iannis Xenakis' *Tetras*; the work, he said, is "worthy of comparison to the quartets of Berg, Ives, Bartók, and Shostakovich". Having never heard any Xenakis string quartet I bought the JACK's CD comprising *Tetras* (1983), *Tetora* (1990), *ST.4/1* (1962), and *Ergma* (1994). A full dose awaited me, but as I sat on my futon listening [ca. 5 PM, July 7, 2010], a gentle wave rolled beneath, a shaky but mild reminder of my environs and the tail end of a "moderate magnitude 5.4 quake", epicenter on the San Jacinto fault line near Borrego Springs, a gorgeous locale in the middle of the Anza Borrego desert, 100 miles to the south in northern San Diego County. Only minor damage was recorded.

Tetras: Not the way Brahms often suffocates but string-sound- smothering, Bartók's gliss-pizz world magnified, blown-up, 'effects' now the substance and the manner, trilled, distuned, scraped, a few modal-melody + accompaniment passages allaying the focus on over-extended clickety-clackety spatially dispersed sputters that are, however, sparkly clear, rarely jam-packed, that seldom dip into total chaos, if chaos is at all apprehensible. Might be fun to watch a performance, see all those arms and fingers always on the go, to almost feel it and view the spectacle of virtuosos totally in tune with and attentive to one another.

The opening violin-violata melodies of *Tetora* captivate for a few minutes, melodies that are then rotated 90 degrees to the right and stood on their heads to become close-knit harmony, secundal chunks plodding along, at times conversationally, at times luminously, in dogged *non vibrato* squeaky ugly-beauty with nary a gliss or pizz, and then a long stretch of calmer changing-unchanging stasis that ends the work with repetitive clunks, not knocking anyone's socks off this time, though Xenakis shows a real flair for the SQ ensemble. To get between the cracks, I listened again, but no revelation, all palls after that classically striking melodious opening.

Whereas *Tetras* smothers, *Ergma* does its work with blunt force trauma, monolithic heavy-booted *ffffffffffzz* thumps that evoke the four-square strident relentlessness of Montana's Blackfeet Heart Butte Singers and Alberta, Canada's Chiniki Lake Drummers, music I first heard 25 years ago. Xenakis' *Ergma* is similarly relentless but not metrically four-square. Unequivocally and incessantly dissonant, *Ergma's* 'abstract' yet clean-edged patches are quite ugly. Once again, terrific ensemble playing by the JACK, not a pitch or a thump out of place.

* * *

Okay, so once again I was, I thought at first, hornswoggled into believing that the excitement of a music critic might be contagious. On May 2, 2010, in the *Los Angeles Times*, Mark Swed wrote about “a red-blooded audience” packing REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney Cal Arts Theater) “for the U.S. premiere of Gérard Grisey’s complete, epic *Les espaces acoustiques* (1974-85), the magnum opus of spectral music”, six pieces for soloist and small and large instrumental ensembles. I bought the CD, two discs. The notes are impenetrable; forget the ism and the PR. Turns out that after much listening I ‘caught’ a bit, maybe just half, of Mark Swed’s enthusiasm.

CD 1: *Prologue*, solo viola a supple skein that uncoils minimally and pauses with low note pulsations, the clarity of its opening shape and tone unhurriedly gradually expanding, pausing and pulsating again and again as if to curb itself from deforming — those recurring opening diatonic loops (a French-curved second inversion V9 with flat 7) simple, beautiful and played stunningly by Gérard Caussé —, the ever so slightly revised re-forming corkscrewing spiral pausing again and again before being completely overtaken, warping, widening, re- and misshaping as if punching out from within a rubber poncho, no longer as lucid as it had been, losing control — but so artfully crafted —, noisily fuzzing fractally, reaching up far and high if not higher than a viola can, and whatever the story, the morphings and the time in which it all takes for the story to be told, *Prologue*’s trajectory and maximal unfoldings produce an uncanny primal sonic corporeality. Mssr. Caussé and his magic viola’s final screech and pizz deliver them into the enveloping D-dominating *Periodes* for seven instruments often sounding like more than seven, each instrument as if split wide open, interstices audible, identity not always assured, unpulsed and clocktuned, delicate and lumpy, familiareneric scrapes and blats, one stretch bubbling like Berg’s *Wozzeck* drowning music, and by the time, having taken 13 minutes to creep from D up to and erupt into the insistent low E of *Partiels*, I regretted not having been able to hear it/feel it all live, like Universal Studios *Sensurround* — which simulated the 1971 Sylmar magnitude 6.6 quake —, scary, shattering, hard to not breathe more heavily, nothing out of auditory range but trying to get there. Resonances of Mssr. Grisey’s past flow by, Messiaen’s birds or stars, *Pierrot*-ish-melody, *Le sacre* squiggles and whacks, Varèse in a big way, intertwined within a hyper-expressive barrage, elephantine bowings and bellowings, generic out-of-sync grunts and flickers that wear down, run out of gas or air or whatever, that once more made me aware of intake and outtake of my breath. Innovative sonic chutzpah, palpable awareness of living organisms, the players, their sound and the listeners.

CD 2: *Modulations* for 33 instruments; *Transitions* for 84 instruments; *Epilogue* for 4 solo horns and symphonic ensemble. More, much more, of what had preceded in CD 1 erupted or trickled or slogged in CD 2: loads of striking solo and ensemble passages, of all kinds and sizes of thirds, glittering harmonies. The more I listened the more my enthusiasm wilted. My problem for sure, but I didn’t have sufficient motivation to try harder. Mssr. Grisey is/was a sound-conjuror, an adept planner, far preferable to sappy ‘serious’ pap, but brief encounters are often best left brief, one-offs.

* * *

Globe Trekker's Ian Wright recently journeyed to Armenia and Georgia, the latter a mountainous land on the eastern edge of the Black Sea, its populace a mix of tribal and urban Georgians, Azeris, Armenians, Russians, et alia. And so I bought *Songs of Survival* (Georgia still struggling since its independence from Russia in 1991 and more recent skirmishes), two discs of traditional vocal and instrumental music. (If there is a soul its voice would sound like the *duduk*, sad, sweet and at times irritable.) Vocal polyphony is rich, warm, chubby-close, open and closed 2s, 3s, 5s, 7s piled-high, yodely, brimming with its own kind of non-tempered scratchy in betweenness. Tones of lute-fiddles and accordions are edgy and unpure, not like the jarring distuned *non vibrato* or *ponticello* Xenakis sound but bright and full where octaves and unisons are rarely 2:1 or 1:1, waves of evident delight taken in difference. Erratic odd and even meters are common and leave me a bit unsteady. Many of the sinuously embellished solo songs, male and female, some with appended vocal counterpoint or drone, derive from Orthodox church or cantorial traditions (a large Jewish community once thrived in Georgia). Accordion-like vocal harmonies wheeze in and out and back and forth, as in Stravinsky's Shrovetide Fair music in *Petrushka*. Not all the way down the rabbit hole but great music for a summer's afternoon.

Summer 2010

Post Script

The music of Steven Kazuo Takasugi was recommended to me by Jon Forshee. Overall impressions: overwhelming, more than the ear can hold or take in all at once, intricate, harder than nails, ice-cold, intense even when slow, at times stretching the limits of silence or the boundaries of audibility, neither chaotic nor predictable, unsentimental, dexterous orchestration of East-West instruments (pitched or pitchless, percussing, rattling, now and then 'melodic', often sounding like multi-directionally amplified scurrying ants or spiders) and voice (spoken or sung, fluent or strained) —hands-on-played-recorded-refashioned, digitally processed, monster keyboards or plucked-bowed strings, in and out-of tune —, supermanic rapidity (to know that I'm hearing a 'digital' work almost makes the issue of 'complexity' an irrelevance, even if the origin was played 'live'), carefully managed but often overlong time-flow of polished events celebrating certainty and uncertainty, familiarity and quirkiness, human and humanoid, fulfillment and loss, as if from some underworld straining to turn itself inside out and get our attention.

Mr. Takasugi's music can be heard at:

<<http://www.instantcore.com/contributor/contributor.aspx?CID=5142476>>

Fall 2010

MIXED MESSAGES

(some little reviews)

Benjamin Boretz

Surely it was bound to happen that the acoustic qualities of electroacoustic music would provoke imaginative responses in the instrumental domain – a pure experimentalism in the Varese sense, something rather imaginable in the precincts (France) of the IRCAM sensibility, but – in the detente from ultimate IRCAMian scientific austerity encouraged in the postmodern sensibility (and in the space of the very idiosyncratic observational “science” practiced on the acoustics of natural sounds by Messiaen) – there emerges Gerard Grisey finding inspiration in the sonic qualities embedded in sound spectra. Is there something special in the French compositional ear in this direction, some detached acuity of perception of sound that hears into it to componentialize and then reconstruct it out of the supersensitized objectification of the “sound itself”? That is, Berlioz. The Requiem’s trombone-pedal overtone orchestrated into the high flute – like nothing I know anywhere in his German or French models (but of course someone will know!). Just the most one-dimensional case in Berlioz – there are many moments where other issues are foregrounded which have that clinical-acoustic revelational quality.

As a listener it isn’t the analytical accuracy of the science of Grisey’s sounds that interests me but the feel of getting a field of x-ray hearings *into* sound that becomes my experiential trip. Not chords, or the gestalt of chords, or the alchemical fusions of chords that enrapture classical music but journey into the interior of chords – or rather chords which experientialize into journeys into the interior of sounds. Grisey’s music composes an - the - *his* - experience not transcribes some analysis.

And – probably partly in consequence – the pieces are – miraculously – seriously, interestingly, significantly different from one another (“musically”, expressively, sonically).

Tristan Murail doesn’t get – or never tries for - the intensity that goes with Grisey’s integrity – impressionistic, theatrical, affects referential to familiar music postures (rhetoric) its bodylanguage penderecki/messiaen/modernmusicisch - ok, probably he just has a more mainstream ear and affective sensibility than Grisey’s.

kurtag

I expect I'll still be listening to György Kurtag's music a long time after I've stopped listening to Karlheinz Stockhausen's – this occasioned by rehearing the CD sandwiching the quite generically Stockhausenisch *Gruppen* between two Kurtag pieces, *Grabstein für Stephan* (guitar and orchestra) and *Stele* (orchestra). I keep hearing astonishing things (sounds, especially, and ensemble dramatizations) in both these Kurtag pieces with a nice breather of predictable familiar Stockhausenerie (the rhythm is almost always the homogeneous Modernski spasms, the timbres always the short sharp shock, the shrill shrieky shriek, totally listenable and ear-catching but not finding anything unique because seeming not to have anything unique in mind).

Grabstein: you never would have thought to put a guitar into this miasma of an orchestral sound – an auditory inferno with enough terror and pity for a thousand Euripideses. And a constantly on-the-edge-of-your-chair adventure in continuity. And expression you can believe in.

Stele: After the trademark polyphonies and harmonies of *Gruppen* (arbitrarily inserted on this CD between 2 Kurtag pieces) the wideopen first-off G octave (soon contaminated with an A-flat) that *Stele* does for you seems like nothing you've ever heard before – can't be right, it's a wideopen orchestral G octave, nicely (classically even) orchestrated – but it so rightly resets the psychic space that its ensuing sincerities and inventivenesses of stark and sober expressivities – ensue feeling like something important – not self-important (cf. KS) – is unrolling in your head. Time stretches and squeezes in multiple dimensions (like the rhythm of inner being), the beast-orchestra grumbles and writhes, straining to find its point of meaning somewhere, in peace or in turbulence, as they ensue...ensuing is what they, it, do, and you (me) with them, to the gravitationally immobile-verging stop place.

By the way - don't get me wrong – *Gruppen* is really snazzy Stockhausen.

What would you think about a music which refuses to continue beyond what it perceives its natural dimensions to be? even where those are widely disparate, including, wildly tiny? At minimum, I think you'd notice it, as a salient – and previously un contemplated – aesthetic dimension of a music's being. (Mostly you don't notice, or want to, the length of musics, and mostly do only when there's some complaint involved).

harris

can a piece which doesn't make sense, not make sense differently in different performances? it seems too bad for the roy harris third symphony that we know sibelius's second so well – so the uncloseted ripoffs of both surface licks and depth-of-continuity ideas are brutally exposed – not for their ripoffness, which we don't really mind, rather are charmed by because we like the sibelius second symphony, but for their beyond-the-fringe klutziness – I thought of Milton, how he always cringed at the slightest hint of transitional ineptitude (he's obviously more of a brahmsian than a wagnerian at heart no matter what the chromaticism); so poor harris, groping around to start with for something to take hold (it really stays vague and flabby for an amazingly long time), his sibelian longline fizzling dismally at every thrust for glory, without warning spinning a feathery multivocal intertwining ostinato (all of this going long – harris's greatest virtue for me is his utter refusal to compromise on length (cf. A. Copland's Piano Variations)) reaching no bitter end but just stopping for the big fugue tune – the hook of this piece for sure but we have no idea of what to do with it or where to have it go- it dashes itself stimulatingly against itself for as long as possible, not knowing how to get to the big final socko lick so that has to just start somewhere after b.f.t. has exhausted not itself probably but roy, at least, and me, for sure – and this most sibelius-secondian of flourishes ends it all not with a whimper to be sure.

I have a special soft spot for roy harris's unpandering determination to follow every idea to the gates of hell if that's where it leads no matter how long how far or how weird. As I say it makes the powerhouse copland piano variations seem timid cautious and short-breathed – making sure not to tax your and my attention span overly. so realizing that I think the third is a dog is disappointing. At least, that's Neeme Jarvi's harris third. But that's where the (admittedly sneery but imagine it's actually sincere) question I started with becomes foregrounded as interesting, with Leonard Bernstein's recording alternating with Jarvi's on the CD player.

This time it's the Drive to Nowhere – all fraught, quivering with dynamism thrusting through and through and through (thrust up, thrust down, thrust right, left – can't find it yet?) landing *hard* on every gauzy bubble, no sibelian plod but an ever-incipient gathering about to be vibrant, about to seriously beat, yes, but not from where you've been (was there a where?) but are going fulltilt (all multislithery and polyharmonic) – in Big Fugue Tune (Hook!) – pounding not on itself now but on me – so I'm not the detached spectator of the fugal disaster but its victim but complicit in the sheer exhilaration of it, energy as pure as vacuity could make it (wideopen to the max) and the beat incipienting cumulatively (the unrelenting intensification curve relentlessly bended) almost to the mexican border, bang and twitter to the apothotic congealing endwhack – congealing pure density around its very own fully earned absence of anywhere. And yet the blanks are there, have come to be there, to be yet filled in, opening vibrant to what might somewhere someway speak them, give them voice, there's a them there, anew there, awaiting a reason and a there to be.

* cf. the astonishing early Quintet for piano and strings and - especially - the Seventh Symphony: it's all over the place, yes, but this time it's actually the same place it's all over: a single continuous line evolving lucidly through wildly inventively different places, exiting sublimely.

berio

Luciano Berio's scintillating theatricality overlays the inner middle-of-the-road-ness of a lot of his music (and I do mean *Sinfonia*). It doesn't often seem to develop the sharpness that turns theatrical surface into dramatic substance. The extrusive avant-theatrical eruptions throughout *Sinfonia* intrude onto a nicely flowing specimen of between-the-wars modern music, which sort of defeats the avant-purpose because the timesense (via melodysense and harmony-sense as well as pattern-of-duration-sense) never breaks loose from the mainstream concert music groove (cf. Benjamin Britten, Leonard Bernstein, ...). Everything that's spectacular about *Sinfonia* is local or, more pervasively, symbolic (you have to be able to be startled out of your mind that a composer of his avant-garde pedigree would play Mahler, etc. inside of his own piece – a piece of Tom Wolfe-ish journalism to notice more than expressive composition to hear). But – so the fuck what? I mean, if I just get over my bias for a more total music-experiential epiphany, it's still scintillating (I like scintillating), entertainingly theatrical (I like entertaining), divertingly topical in its head-turning context-shifting get-this-guys quotation from the MSM repertoire (I can get into titillating too) – a lot to be funned by if you don't get stuck on your demand for transcendence every time out (or get weird because of the press the piece gets everywhere else). Strange, though, what a stodgy pedant (transcendently skillful though) lives below the entrance to Berio's creative cave.

(ps: *Visage* is fantastic, especially Cathy Berberian's screaming to make Diamanda Galas blush...)

poulenc

To find out Francis Poulenc's political views, you have to look elsewhere than to his music;
if you want to learn of Francis Poulenc's psychological condition, you have to look elsewhere than to his music;
to make contact with Francis Poulenc's deepest spiritual center, you have to look elsewhere than to his music;
these are just a few of the many virtues of his music.

szymanowski

Can a symphony for big orchestra be from the heart? Listening to Bruckner, I think yes. Listening to Mahler, I think no. Listening to Szymanowski, I think well, maybe, but what's in that heart that's trying to emanate from those emotionally charged surfaces? Because it isn't the charge of the surface that reveals the contents of the expression; and yet it's not an overbearing Mahlerian breastbeating mirrorstage obfuscation or a steamy subcutaneous Wagnerian manipulation, more like an earnest struggle to be real within the confines of a highly conventionalized art-social medium.

busoni, et al

Busoni ⇒Mussorgsky – an unplanned listening sequence, starts something brewing about: expression - music expression - where it lives - within music not as outer-directed expressivityso, of course, it goes straight to Haydn (: a sense of music substance as affect-an-sich – expression being just the sense that surface activity is the surface of substance within...) Busoni: we can observe the musical cogency and relevance and inventiveness of every moment but we're on the outside observing something rather than being suffused by it as experience – Mussorgsky seems so much less adept, so much more crude and unmodulated, in all the arts of composition and musical articulation, but every moment speaks experientially – expressively – lodges internally as a holistic something living within, transmuted into experience as experience.

elaine barkin's Quartet

Sonata Form it ain't, this seething mass of edgy sensibility: (first movement) a first movement from yes a cauldron of composition, fracturing the very concept of continuity not in a Webern or post-Webern way because the signals are pointing backward to phrasing and gesture that are as direct as dance and song but diffracted and angularized and impetuously repositioned with a persistent impulse of intense energy intensely wanting to know what itself is to be but diverting at each moment of almost-sentience.

A second episode (epicide?) (second movement: Variations) superimposing its multiple contradictories, temporally adjacent antonyms becoming evermore starkly dialectical simultaneities, songs of ever-higher aspiration abruptly by jagged setpieces, renegade rowshards, mudvolcanic microruptions bopblopping, actually devolving itself into a final wideyed catwary equilibrium. And such an innocent little outmove to end, you're not going to believe and aren't supposed to.

persichetti

There's nothing wrong with Vincent Persichetti's music; it's just that there isn't enough *in* it. Everything is fine, nice colors, nice energies, nice gestures, nice moves from here to there, lots of nice things for players to play: it's all good. Period. You'd like these chords to *mean* something, you'd like those dynamic energies to come from somewhere inside, you'd like those tunes and swells to, well, *express* something – something other than characteristic expressivity. So listening, enjoying everything as it goes by, comes up empty in the afterspaces of all the neat strokes and sprightly licks. What would bring you back to listen again?

bob morris /gary snyder "this bubble of a heart"/ karen clark / galax quartet

I go into experiential overdrive listening to Bob's Gary Snyder song for its unflinching on-sleeve expressivity, for how it puts my working Bob-paradigms into baseline meltdown, coming on with molten four-voiced sirensing string quartet sound, flowing on to amiably reinvent harmony, time, instrumental-vocal quality, ensemble texture, text utterance. In meaning and surface both. Poem-expression alchemizing into pitch-structured spectral magic, as rigorously formed as any Bobwork I know. Expression sweet and passionate without nostalgia, no retro-style exercises slyly loaded with kneejerk emo-response cues. Just Bob's own cutting-edge utterly post-postmodern language (free as a bird to do its own thing). And Karen's voice speaking, crooning, ululating, tracing always unecstatic expressive parabolas seamlessly, unstrained, innocent wholly of cheap theater. You don't mistake her voice for Gary Snyder's voice; but his voice is all there, unmistakably composed-in within and above Bob's, Karen's, and the Galaxes', reflected, reconceived, recontemplated, understood.

Straight Beethoven, No Chaser

Thelonious Monk's asymptotic quests for the DNA-center of every tune, its Beethovenian music-essence, evolves in realtime as though being inside the man's brainhands, being in inexorable progressivity an almost unbearably poignant experience of directed concentration, transcendent awareness, self-awareness, in radically exclusionary as-musical terms, as homed in on its core objective as the Leonore Overture No. 3 homes in on that F# as the defining essence of its G-G descending C major scale (and elsewhere). The signature sequence is 'I don't stand a ghost of a chance', boring ever more subatomically on what after a spell of this processing could be referred to only absurdly as its 'hook'. ('I should care' is so classic as to elude regrooving.) Amazing how the indelible after-imprint of Beethoven saturates everything that strives for 'serious' in our music-creative consciousness...

Thelonious Himself, April 1957 (disc 3 of 16-CD Riverside album "All Monk"),
courtesy of Jim Randall

playlist:

April in Paris

I don't stand a ghost of a chance

Functional

I'm getting sentimental

I should care

'Round Midnight

All Alone

Monk's mood (with Coltrane & others)

Vignettes of Old Masters VI: Lukas Foss (1922-2010)

lukas

A gratification of listening to Lukas's music - any of Lukas's music - is that you are never far from music wherever his music takes you music is behind the wall down the corner below the horizon across the universe under the eaves at the end of the tunnel at the tip of your ear you can taste it just yonder just beyond experience just rolls off your fingertips beams just over the moon is right beside you just barely untouching your semblable knows what you like likes you - maybe more - dances ingeniously just behind your ear that almost licks almost mahlers you out with brahms by gould smoothing ruffled lennys edges rounding igors corners not il miglior fabbro but the grooviest musicperfect pianoplayer you ever heard bach or four temperaments always the music a more than ample payback for the long indenture or safeconduct cover for the smiling inyourface pushoff fathermaster teachermaster symbolic hindemithicide pantomusikanting out to enact to exorcise to performatize to spielify all the crushing load of master-student composer-performer lennylukas previnlukas glennlukas igorlukas aaronlukas johncagelukas germanamericanlukas all the never biodegrading relationships by rigorously nonjazzing the rules but instead declassicizing them to escape at last but still there have to be rules even if like counter Crafts of non not anti never anti composition the un not ever anti hindemithaaronreinervengerova not breaking not flouting but remaking always tethered to music always the careful chords the tasty lukaslicks the classic infallible dufallo clarinet riffs the dignified but decorously avantgarde delancey bass around the straightish bluecollar colf cello they groped their way away almost went for broke they were never far from music but ever further away along the rules they made as they went we were never in it together but close enough to relate.

Close to music, Lukas's music Performs, Stages, Enacts, Personifies, Affects. To do it right you get prepackaged bigstars: You get Jennie Tourel. You get Adele Addison. You get Lenny Bernstein. You get Andre Previn. You get the Improvisation Chamber Ensemble. And you stage them brilliantly, just so, just for them in particular; they will never have it better: Phorion: lenny down the chute as mad bachcrazed maniac(no place here for the self-congratulating hero-knight of the Shapero Symphony or the devouring ogre of Brahms by Gould). Time Cycle: Adele a jumping bean on a tightrope, a warbling acrobat bird, groovy earthmother. Song of Songs: Jennie as Daniel Deronda's Mirah, Malke the Wise, the exalted Bride of Judea. Echoi: Lukas & Co. in a fractal lukaslick tsunamifest. You compose avant-lenny; avant-jennie; avant-adele; avant-andre; avant-lukas. Invent scintillating, titillating, coruscating, startling, channeling the future, imaging the beyond, the easily familiar terra incognita we can all know, in a glossolalic newspeak that we all understand. Soundmusic monstres richly repaying every moment of experience you lend to them; and it always sounds fantastic. Like nothing else floating through the modern musical world, like a wraith of future past, like a vision of things that were to come, but never did.

The CDs (and 1 LP) I was listening to:

Gérard Grisey:

les espaces acoustiques

CD 1: prologue - périodes - partiels

Gérard Caussé, viola / Ensemble Court-Circuit, Pierre-Andre Valade.

CD2: Modulations / Transitoires - Epilogue

Sylvain Cambreling, trombone; Frankfurter Museumsorchester

ACCORD 1 CD 465 386-2 (3 discs)

Tristan Murail:

gondwana pour orchestre (orchestre national de france, yves prin)

désintégrations pour bande magnétique et 17 instruments (ensemble de l'itinéraire, yves prin)

time and again pour orchestre (orchestre du beethovenhalle de bonn, karl-anton rickenbacker

MONTAIGNE CD 782175

György Kurtag:

Grabstein für Stephan (Jürgen Ruck, Guitar) / **Stele** (revised version)

Karlheinz Stockhausen:

Gruppen (Freidrich Goldman, Marcus Creed, co-conductors)

Berlin Philharmonic, Claudio Abbado

DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON 447 761-2

Roy Harris:

Symphony No. 3

Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi

CHANDOS CHAN 9474 (with Aaron Copland: Symphony No. 3)

Symphony No. 3

New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein

SONY SMK 60954 (with Randall Thompson: Symphony No. 2; David Diamond; Symphony No. 4)

Symphony No. 7

Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy

ALBANY Troy 256 (with Walter Piston: Symphony No. 4; William Schman: Symphony No. 6)

Quintet for Piano and Strings (1937)

Johanna Harris, piano

CRI LP

Luciano Berio:

Sinfonia

Swingle Singers; Orchestre Nationale de France, Pierre Boulez

ERATO 4509-98496-2 (with works by Birtwhistle, Carter, Dufourt, Ferneyhough, Grisey, Kurtag, Schoenberg, Xenakis) (5 discs)

Francis Poulenc:

Sonata in d minor for violin and piano

Christine Michaela Pryn, violin; Joachim Olsson, piano

CLASSICO CD (with works by Karol Szymanowski and Paul Hindemith)

Trio for piano, oboe, bassoon

Elegie for horn and piano

Sextet for piano, flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, piano

Southwest Chamber Music Society

CAMBRIA CD (with works by Serge Prokofiev)

Karol Szymanowski:

Symphony No. 3, Op. 27 / Symphony No. 4, Op. 60

Tadeusz Zmudzinski, piano; Polish State Philharmonic Orchestra (Katowice), Karol Stryja

MARCO POLO 8.223290

Symphony No. 2, Op. 19 / Symphony No. 4, Op. 60

Howard Shelley, piano; BBC Philharmonic, Vassily Sinalsky

CHANDOS CD

Symphony No. 1 / Symphony No. 2

Polish State Philharmonic Orchestra (Katowice), Karol Stryja

NAXOS CD

Violin Concerto

Wanda Wilkomirska, violin; National Philharmonic Symphony Orchestr, Witold Rowicki

POLSKIE NAGRANIA CD (with violin concertos by Khatchaturian and Schostakovich) (2 discs)

Ferruccio Busoni:

Arlecchino / Turandot

National Opera of Lyon

Kent Nagano

VIRGIN CLASSICS CD 0 777 59313 2 7 (2 discs)

Doktor Faust

National Opera of Lyon

Kent Nagano

ERATO CD 3984-25501-2 (3 discs)

Elaine Barkin:

String Quartet (1969)

American Quartet

New World-CRI NWCRL 339 (with Martin Boykan: String Quartet)

Vincent Persichetti:

Night Dances

The Juilliard Orchestra, James DePriest

NEW WORLD CD 80396-2 (with works by Milton Babbitt and David Diamond)

Robert Morris

"This Bubble of a Heart" (Gary Snyder)

Karen Clark, contralto; Galax Quartet

INNOVA CD 795 ("On Cold Mountain": Songs on Poems of Gary Snyder by Roy Wheldon, Fred Frith, Robert Morris, W. A. Mathieu)

Thelonious Monk:

Thelonious Himself (April 1957)

Disc 4 of All Monk: The Riverside Albums

Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Gerry Mulligan, Coleman Hawkins, Johnny Griffin, Charles Rouse, Jarod Land, Thad Jones, Clark Terry, Joe Gordon, Oscar Pettiford, Art Taylor, Roy Haynes, Art Blakey, Kenny Clarke, Max Roach.

RIVERSIDE CD (16 discs)

Lukas Foss:

Time Cycle (orchestral version) / Phorion / Song of Songs.

Adele Addison, Jennie Tourel. Columbia Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Bernstein.

SONY CD 64164

Echoi /The Fragments of Archilochos / Non-Improvisation.

Lukas Foss, piano/harpsichord; Jan Williams, percussion; Fouglaas Davis, cello; Edgard Yolzinski, clarinet

EMF CD 005

LINER NOTES FOR OPEN SPACE CD 27:
Benjamin Boretz: Violin Concerto (1956-57)
Charles Castleman, Violin
Eastman Composers' Orchestra
Geoffrey Pope, conductor
Recorded and mastered by Paul Coleman, 2010

Aspen summer 1956:

Stanley Hoffman was solo violinist, studying with Roman Totenberg (whose daughter Nina was there too, running around the tent with her bf Ursula Oppens, two 11-year-olds on their way to stardom); it was David Epstein's first concert assignment as a conducting student of Izler Solomon; legendary cosmologist George Gamow was as usual snorting (or was it snoring?) unselfconsciously somewhere in the audience in the Aspen concert tent in the middle of its mudfield - there was hardly anything paved in Aspen then - and my summer friend/teachers Darius Milhaud and Charles Jones were playing it very cool as this thing they had midwived got reasonably unwound (it was difficult in its time) by the Aspen orchestra; neither Stanley nor David had really solicited much input from me - fine points were not in play, nor did the Aspen trustee who supplied the tape for the concert remember to erase the Mozart 20th Piano Concerto slow movement indelibly engraved thereon. So I have only memory, no record. But the memory is crystalline, sound and even sight, and this is where I - finally - can give it daylight. That was the first movement; back at Brandeis, Arthur (Berger) tolerated me through the rest, offering minimal interference (I did know the ranges, and what else is there to know? And anyway no one would think of actually *playing it*)... After the fact, at UCLA, it was my passport to friendship with Lukas (Foss). But then another life ensued.

These - Milhaud, Charles Jones, Stanley Hoffman, David Epstein, Arthur, Lukas: people who made this period of my young musical life so intensely exhilarating, and it is them I think of when I channel the concerto down from its hiding place right below the surface of bright memory.

My young-composer colleagues at Aspen and Brandeis too: John Herbert MacDowell, Tony Strilko, David Ward-Steinman, Jack Gottlieb, Joel Spiegelman, Marty Boykan, David Burrows, Barclay Brown, Elaine Barkin...; we all stimulated and inspired each other so much that I imagined that the life of a composer was a perpetual celebration of communal engagement and mutual appreciation. And *Perspectives of New Music* was conceived in that time, the communitarian expression of that euphoria.

In the present instance, 55 years on, that shared euphoria, battered but only exomorphically bowed, renaisses in the soul-colleagueship of Bob Morris: this is, astonishingly, his project, the endpoint of a chain beginning with a notational encoding in Sibelius with midi-box output which somehow he could penetrate as a music, to give me its rehearing even in midi, and then to enlist Charlie Castleman and Geoff Pope in a project of actual realization.

Listening, though, is not nostalgia; no buried sensations flood back; there's just this piece that I can't quite imagine having composed - though I can conjure, distantly, the astral projections of conceiving and writing each passage: a desolate attic of an abandoned church in Aspen where the opening solo materialized in the light of a forlorn ceiling bulb; a pathetic upright in a Boston slumflat whose thunky noises undermined conviction about risky 2nd- and 3rd-movement soundthoughts.... But I recognize, rather than identify; consume, rather than impersonate; witness, rather than re-live. It's not me; but it was.

-B. A. B. 12/2010

A Note on Ben's Violin Concerto

Robert Morris

In the 1950s, Ben Boretz jumped into the world of American music with a set of imaginative and exceptional compositions, making his way as emerging composer, graduate student, music critic, and musical citizen. Among his most ambitious pieces of that time is the Violin Concerto, whose first movement was premièred at Aspen in 1956, the rest composed shortly thereafter.

As Ben's musical concerns continued to change in a time of turbulence and transience for composers in Europe and America, his music followed suit, eventually leading to a period where most of Ben's creative output was rarely in the form of composed music, but in groundbreaking texts and improvisational activity. Ben returned to writing extensive pieces in the late 1990s, with his *Black/Noise I* for processed piano, leading to *Un-* for orchestra, *O* for piano, *Downtime* for piano and percussion, and his remarkable String Quartet--the first two movements written around the time of the concerto, and the last written over forty years later in 2005—all these works recorded on Open Space (CDs 13, 18-20, and 23). In accord with these compositional vicissitudes, the complete violin concerto remained unperformed or recorded until March 2010.

A few years ago, Ben sent me a score and MIDI realization of the concerto. While listening to MIDI versions of music really meant to be performed is usually unpleasant, this piece somehow transcended the realization and greatly impressed me. I cannot say exactly what it was that moved me so much, but I remember thinking that I had no idea what made this vast, thirty-minute piece work. On the face of it, the piece seemed a series of episodes, each interesting and vital, but amazingly unconnected by the usual musical rhetoric or musical structures that are supposed to guarantee musical unity. Of course, in the aftermath of post-modernism, unity has--thankfully--been deconstructed, so it is no longer an important or necessary feature of music or anything else. But it wasn't that the concerto wasn't unified, *per se*; rather it seemed coherent and integrated without any of the usual compositional techniques or orientations--off the shelf or otherwise. Moreover, passages that clearly refer to parts of compositions by Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Bartok are at home in the Concerto, like guests or friends who show up at some spontaneous get together. I felt, as I have in some of Ben's other works, that the Violin Concerto seemed to have intuitively emerged, but certainly not at once, without the mediation or help of a formal--or formalizable--compositional practice. And there was more, the violin writing seemed perfectly well wrought, the instrumentation deft and idiomatic, and the musical character of each musical episode deliciously particular in orchestration, texture, and phrasing. So I told Ben that he ought to get a performance of this wonderful piece, and it turned out I could help and so I did.

Now that I know the concerto well, I see some of the ways Ben makes connections--often involving motives that continuously transform, or by the sequence of orchestral ensembles and registers; nevertheless, my initial reaction still stands. In any case, the concerto is deeply felt, something that Charles Castleman has brilliantly and ardently projected, so much so that the listener might think the Concerto was written for him--or that if Charlie had written a concerto, this would have been it. This is a rich work that will repay careful listening time and time again.

j. k. randall

ars antiqua

1. w/ banjo
2. w/ piano
3. w/ flute
4. ensemble
5. duet, adagio
6. w/ mandolin
7. w/ brass
8. violin (remembering Miggie)
9. w/ clarinet
10. w/ keyboards

j.k.randall
intermezzo
in
midi

- 1.Special Music for Jack
- 2.Processional
- 3.(Pno.)
- 4.seek and ye shall find
- 5.Remembrance of Things Past
- 6.You were sleeping at the time.
- 7.Rises.
- 8.DanceSquares
- 9.Sunrise

j.k.randall

contrapunktus XI.2

(in memoriam David Lewin)

J.K.RANDALL

nothing fancy

GAP7

nothing free

: an Enquiry :

TITLES. MIDI. VOLUME KNOB. (1) (2) (3)

(1)

If you read a Debussy Prelude all the way through, you arrive at a short string of dots introducing a parenthesized wordpuff. (A title, is it?)

I like this way of printing the wordpuff: predotted, parenthesized, and at the end, not at the beginning.

Predotted: lets it float in, in the wake of the piece, rather than announce anything --- even itself.

Parenthesized: puts it somewhere between “perhaps” and “of course, it’s obvious”.

At the beginning: would delimit the piece, appropriate it to that wavelength.

At the end: is embraced by, is delimited by, the piece, as an afterthought precipitated by, left over from, the piece; is extracted from ampler suggestion.

At the concert, your program prints the complete list for you, as titles.

Like orchestration, these titles provide focus, atmosphere, angles of vision, tones of voice; and may, in the most apt, but also the most dangerous, case, absorb the piece altogether, converting it to illustration, exemplification, an instance of.

(The title “*Symphony*” may not preempt the piece; but it does tell you the environment it aspires to, who its friends are.)

(On the other hand, dedications tend to be musically noncommittal, since you have no idea who “*Miggie*” is.)

Ars Antiqua (i.e., “*pitch-centered*”) titles are like catalog nos., or Proper Names: they facilitate access to the right band on the right CD.

Long after their composition, two of the ten pieces in *Ars Antiqua* acquired, and subsequently shed, apt, dangerous, titles.

I had been eager to memorialize Barbaro and Daisy. But as usual I was unable to draw music out of predefined realworld situations. However, as usual, I realized that two pieces already done would make germane offerings.

No hoofbeats or tailwagging. But close.

“Barbaro Dreams of Recovery”. (Lamented champion racehorse, waged a very public and publicized eight-month surgical battle to survive a fatally shattered leg.) No hoofbeats. But close.

“We call Daisy”. (Lamented Golden Retriever, lived sometimes with us and our Springer Spaniel Benji, her best friend; and sometimes with our daughter Ellen, her husband George, and their three children Kate, Maisie, and Louise, the last two of whom know which piece acquired which title.) No tailwagging. But close.

So “apt” were these two titles that they disavowed the preceding pieces as the relevant backdrop.

And they misconstrued their own musical passages as episodic invocations of other things, of things outside, identifiable things.

I couldn’t varnish my own intentions that way.

Hail and Farewell, Barbaro! With Love and Memory, Daisy! You’re somewhere in there in *Ars Antiqua*; just not in a title.

But I’m uneasy.

-- JKR

TITLES. MIDI. VOLUME KNOB. (1) (2) (3)

(2)

The titles in *Garland of Midi* are good ones, beneficent ones.

Its pieces were composed without regard to each other, then put into a sequence which heeds their individuality. The titles ride thereon sympathetically, having no evolving musical context to conceal or conflict with.

E.g., “(pno.)”:

Invokes midi’s ability to simulate. (Should we care?)

But simulate what? (Pianotone? The sound of performance? Of a performer?)

One recalls the inevitable hostile question from the early days of electronic music: What about the human element?

(Milton used to play a tape of assorted RCA Synthesizer-simulated instrumental tones for the electronically unwashed. We particularly scoffed and snorted at Synth’s “oboe” tone, which Milton thereupon unmasked as not Synth at all, but as a snippet from a recorded performance by the celebrated oboist Eugene Goossens.)

The question always sounded silly.

(So what *about* the human element? And the inhuman. The suprahuman. The extrahuman. The all-too-human. The subhuman. The antihuman. The posthuman.)

And it was.

(Each note provided by midi is a recorded sample of the Genuine – in the case of piano, an Arbitrarily Attenuated Genuine: spinet sostenuto of

honkytonk attack.)

But it isn't.

(But not because of the Recorded Genuine.)

(Nor because all inputs clearly originate in human intent, as human thought under human control, be they midi, or C-sound, or piano: that wasn't in dispute.)

But because it's not so easy to elude the human.

(If we allow the commonplace distinction between the music and the performance, or between the music and its orchestration, a performer or orchestrator in whatever instrumental or electronic environment who seeks to suppress all humanoid quality, might be thought perverse, or even "unmusical": yet so strongly has our music internalized humanoid in its metabolism, in its phrasing, its gestures, its manners, its address, that the "human element", if any, will peek thru even while the performance, or the orchestration, is trashing it.)

Remembrance of Things Past and *Dancesquares* pit familiar modes of mechanical, antihuman rendition (think music box, hurdy-gurdy) against likewise familiar, simple and direct, all-too-human, substance: midi therein seems to simulate a mechanical simulation of a human doing humanoid music.

((*pno.*) offers a gestural, responsively humanoid, performance, in which piece-shape and midiperformance-shape are hand-in-glove and very pianoevent-like; and not profitably distinguishable. But this conformity fudges the more startling opportunity to explore elsewhere, where electronic and instrumental means are equally available, and equally tempting, but equally challenged.)

Adventurous Music vs. Adventurous Sounds

Bizarre tones: easy in C-sound, tough in midi.

Normal instruments: tough in C-sound, easier in midi.

Weird sounds, ugly sounds, mechanized sounds: solicit, for their explication, for their validation, incorporation in a humanoid setting.

Ordinary sounds: invite, facilitate, transcendence; seek to dissolve, or alienate, familiar humanoid (i.e., “musical”) continuities, searching perhaps for their substratum, for some hypothesis of Other, some lodging -- if not above or beyond then at least off to the side -- not found pre-existing, but created, inaugurated, as music, by this music.

(And even lightly, with grace.)

My maiden voyage at the bottom of this barrel was called *Snorffs & Scrudds*. It featured a live pianist subhumanly agitating a rented upright (Cf. Open Space CD 11). Steve Mackey’s *Acciaccatura* (OS CD 21/1), on midi-simulated piano, obdurately dodges gesture and metabolism alike. JKR’s *Overture to Something Else* (OS CD 17) qualifies similarly – or perhaps not: its relished C-sound offenses derive grossly from human presumptions. And while *You were sleeping at the time* belongs to an exclusive realm of fliers and crawlers, *Seek and ye shall find* does arrive at the obsessively humanoid – but after researching the infrahuman at length. In Ben Boretz’s *Black/Noise 1* (OS CD 13), human electronic processing of humanly struck piano sounds attains an extrahuman depth which, remarkably, resembles neither panorama nor parody. And it’s my hope that *Contrapunktus XI.2* evokes a modicum of the suprahuman inevitability of its model.

An urgent dilemma arises: a midi version and an instrumental version seem equally viable. Which should I prefer (--i.e., release on Open Space--)?

In Martin Goldray’s piano performance of *GAP7* at Sarah Lawrence College, the “chorales” that end each of the four parallel phases enjoy a homogeneous resonance and a liquescent connectedness to die for. In their place, my midi realization (forthcoming on OS CD) presents straightforward successions of noncommittal 4-note chords -- or rather, 4-note anthologies -- which perhaps more sharply etch the dyadic innards at the root of preceding elaborations.

The midi version of Ben’s *Postlude* (OS CD 21/2) of course fails

(--should we care?--) to simulate string quartet. It is, however, like Auschwitz, screechingly humanoid [Cf. JKR *When the Birds Come Calling*, Suppl. to OS Mag 8/9] -- occurrent originary humanoid -- not a performed thing, not a thing to be performed, let alone humanly; but a thing which voids the very concept of Performance as invasive, as disrespectful, as secondhand, as faked.

To wit: a gratuitous aimless misfire with which the piece opens in midi, in strings is declawed as a tentative, breathy "intro".

To wit: early on, in midi, consecutive brief monophonic blurts are individually, abruptly, terminated by dead, anechoic silence (-- Dead & Anechoic are vital characters in *Postlude*. --). In strings, expert ensemble interaction weaves therefrom a curvaceously modmusical flounce. A strangulated grimace has shrunk to an ingratiating hello.

To wit:.....

To wit:.....

(The score says "for string quartet"; for me, the midi version is irreplaceable.)

Contrapositively: shortly before the end, a relentless posthuman persistence through terminal adversity in midi, in strings transfigures gorgeously, as luxuriant outervoice nostalgia assuaging an anxious, innervoice scrunch in the distance. (No composer thereof would willingly forego either.)

(Orchestration: the art of making Those Instruments embody That Music.)

(So have I written two antithetical *GAP7*'s, one (--or neither--) of which was intended?)

(We call it that, chiefly when They Don't.)

-- JKR

TITLES. MIDI. VOLUME KNOB. (1) (2) (3)

(3)

You can make or break *GAP7* with the volume knob.

And the way loud notes will splatt as you twist the VK in pursuit of fullness or resonance or presence is not the worst of it: the different softs are the major fatalities.

Softs:

Fully present, in a line with, on the same plane as, other events of various loudnesses; of clearly bounded duration; audible without strain.

Disappearing decay of full presence; crossing the threshold to inaudible. Moment of crossing, indeterminate --- and irrelevant: presence may outlast audibility by a margin.

On a different plane: we may strain to hear it, or even just suspect it. Perhaps it seems a mere passing whiff. It may or may not be in a line with different modes of, planes of, presence; if not, it may seem the faint fully specific echo of a non-occurrence or of an obliterated occurrence.

Boosted on VK: fat, thick, clogged, heavy.

In searching for fullness & resonance & presence, I asked Mary Roberts for some computer processing. I gave her my midi *GAP7*, and she “put it in a room”. We listened to lots of combos of different values for the various parameters, and recorded the whole piece in my preferred “room”, which I dubbed “Maryroom” for deniability. It was in listening to this recording over and over that I came to realize that *GAP7* wasn’t that sort of piece.

In Maryroom:

Notes interact, blend, in space; don’t just coexist.

Space supports note, but note carries, embraces the space, as part of, or just as, its own quality.

Note reverberates in space, but the reverb is That Note's reverb; belongs to, is the substance of, that note.

A note: a lone point in registral space becomes the whole space activated, resonating, around a focal point.

Point becomes glob.

Line becomes plane.

A chord: an anthology of notes and intervals becomes a resonant harmony. Chordnotes blend in a resonant homogeneous mass.

Suggestion, innuendo, implication, become statement, pronouncement.

Space sops, not frames.

It was the failure of my abuse of VK to boost midi happily that sent me to Maryroom.

It was disappointment with Maryroom that sent me back to the VK at an easy setting.

An easy setting of the VK gives the thin presence and dry resonance of a 1930's spinet in a modest livingroom, not a Boesendorfer or Steinway in an auditorium.

Easy on the VK: point & line: thin, dry, anechoic, porous, clear, sharp, light, reverbfree.

A note: for its space, just Your space; no (or not much) resonance (or space) in its instrument; no (or not much) resonance (or space) in a room of its own: just Your space.

VK is like orchestration.

GAP7 is a drawing in no.3 pencil, not an oil painting; is spinetlike, not grandlike; is neither at a distance nor in your face, just easily, naturally, privately, there, beside you.

A SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

GAP7 was written for piano – meaning, really, for concert grand -- no doubt a mellow Beckstein or Boesendorfer, not a brilliant Steinway.

After my own performance on a Steinway in Taplin Hall in Princeton, I devoted several years to revising the piece. During this time I became addicted to computer-driven midi, which I used first in its classic capacity as an assistant in checking-out emerging instrumental compositions, but more and more often as the real thing. What I fussed over, and over, and over, while revising *GAP7*, is exact durations and dynamics.

(Like any electronic medium, and unlike piano, midi loads onto the composer, for a firm and fixed determination, all those interpretive flexibilities formerly asked of a performer.)

As a listener to no matter what kind of music, I think it's only in a vaguely bounded narrow midrange of temporal values that I ever apprehend exact durations --- including exact departures from a standard – unless mediated by a clear metric pulse, a pulse which *GAP7* frequently eschews.

And even then, extremely fast, like extremely slow, reaches me more vividly as temporal quality, as flavorshape, than as mensural quantity.

In cases of outright silence, where nothing like counting persists for long for a listener, and where qualities like pause, or cut it off, or let it dispel, or pick it back up in the nick of time, prevail, it would feel to me unethical, in listening, to mensurate, to keep the count.

Nevertheless, as composer, I must give midi the count. Midi can't do without the count. I must, in the schizoid act of composing, mensurate the immensurable.

(Does sheer attack-rhythm carry a more than usual qualitative weight in *GAP7*, and a less than usual mensural?)

Having completed this self-contradictory exercise, I found my mind shackled to midi: my revised *GAP7* in unadulterated midi “piano”, compared to my tape of my Steinway performance, sounded like a better performance (of a much better piece) -- but on a worse, in fact, crappy, instrument.

But that left me still nervous about the piece.

Over time, I more or less settled down with the midi version.

Then Martin, who had encouraged my Taplin performance, resurfaced, playing the revised version.

I await my future.

-- JKR

Arthur Margolin

Personifications I

When we talk, you are sympathetically heard --
consideration heightens your receptivity.

My conclusions follow inexorably.
(Perhaps you acquiesce?)

I have given you a crucial role in my quest for coherence.
As I with you so you with me.

With a difference. You are virtually reborn seeing things the way I do.
Your foremost concern -- "not to be treated that way"--
is shortsighted, and risky.

As though your need not to be treated some way is greater than my need to be whole.
Your stratagems, at the point of "unbearable discomfort", as you say, are transparent.

Unlike you, I fully engage the issues.

You have let me down, again.

Our problem is clear: you're not at my level -- never.

* * * *

You use others to mollify your anxieties.

Whatever the ostensible topic, the real issue is the alleviation of your discomfort with yourself.
You undertake this in a way that heeds and deflects my awareness of what you are doing.
By attempts to be amusing, or by introducing topics that we are both likely to find of interest.
Because to interest and amuse me would be an anodyne. For the moment.

* * * *

Your friend came to visit me yesterday.

He was young, and naïve.

But full of intellectual vitality.

He approached me as a mentor.

I am glad to be that for him.

Personifications

A mentor will boost his trajectory to get ahead --
will further his career.

He is slotting me into a position required to achieve that ascendency.

Which is likely, while you will continuously circumnavigate the small hole into which you
compress and deposit your "problems".

* * * *

As we talk, I luxuriate in the discomfort I feel in your presence.

Regardless of what's pressing, I dilate upon the assigned topic.

You are my student -- off limits.

I know that you know all about it.

The intense interest you arouse within me cleaves to my responsibility as your teacher
(I wish I could pry them apart).

Yet, in my behavior I strive always to observe proprieties appropriate to our disparate institutional
standings.

In fact, I find that my exertions in the crucible produce unimaginable feats of intellectual
inventiveness.

You and I bring out the best in me.

* * * *

Please do not misconstrue my silence. I know well that touching upon a tender, perhaps still raw
spot, even with the most distilled of healing, pacifying intentions, risks a further elicitation of pain,
and that the benefits for you at this point are only fragile forecasts in my mind.

* * * *

As I talk, your appeal is diminished.

The crystalline luminosity of your eyes is dulled.

Your skin takes on a strange pallor.

Taut becomes rigid.

Rigid, brittle.

You seem on the verge of shattering.

I am concerned that you are incapable of walking to the door.

Because I am exhausted, and require that you leave.

Should I offer you a hand?

* * * *

We could say it was "just a misunderstanding".

As our separate understandings persist in remaining unaligned, perhaps the integrity of each
would be deformed by further attempts to mold congruence?

Shall we explore the depth at which our disagreement arises?

Consider -- we may disinter a host of grievances and resentments, whose subduction has been a precondition of our ongoing friendship.

Yet hasn't the unceasing pressure along the fault line, relentlessly jamming us into one another, produced a condition of explosive stasis?

(Your move.)

* * * *

Your face has a look of perspicacious receptivity.

My words elicit subtle signs of recognition from you, of significance received.

When you talk in turn, your thoughts seem to pass through an obscure mechanism that garbles and shreds--

Bringing forth a nauseating mess that leaves me incredulous that even you can make sense of what you are saying.

Yet, of all my interlocutors you would be my favorite, for the blissful, knowing countenance engendered by the sound of my voice.

If only I could find a way to help you maintain your silence.

* * * *

Our discussion proceeds by closely interlocked steps;

My contributions are pellucid rephrasings of your just prior assertion,

Differing subtly, by the merest deviation that escapes your notice.

But whose accumulation over the course of our conversation leads to conclusions which are precisely not what you had in mind.

I hope your mystification will one day infect your complacency.

* * * *

Just a glance, then an exchange almost in passing, pregnant with promise, defining and transcending boundaries of what, between two people, may be permissibly experienced.

It will be arranged that a second meeting does not come to pass.

* * * *

It is possible that I have realized just in time that your ability to understand, let alone experience, almost anything the way I do is inversely related to its importance for me. But I am not hasty, and will contemplate replacements for you before making my move.

* * * *

For many years, I have transmuted the pain your errors cause me into occasions of edification on your behalf.

I believe many would say that you have benefited greatly from this arrangement.

In fact, they would be amazed how, from the depths of my frustration, such finely honed figurines of instruction have so wondrously arisen.

But I have been reading about forgiveness lately.

Personifications

How beneficial it is for the person who forgives. And I am weary.

So I will correct you no longer.

Instead, I will one by one forgive you each of your transgressions as it occurs.

I must now sacrifice you to my own well-being.

* * * *

She submitted her dissertation to the departmental secretary on a Tuesday.

Relieved and exhausted.

A damned fine piece of work -- a labour of love, she might have said.

Those enharmonic relations had long challenged music theory, but she'd struggled to a multifold system of comprehension.

Beethoven, explicated at last. The culmination of her emigration.

The call came on Friday.

The Chairman wanted to speak with her that afternoon – it was urgent.

She went with a sure footed step secured by hard work brought to fruition.

He had read her thesis carefully, and had just one comment:

Did she really think that this university, his department, would accept a document for its highest degree that contained British spellings of American words?

These would have to be corrected forthwith. Until then, everything was on hold.

Walking home, she marveled how in that brief exchange he had mysteriously attached an impetus, propelling her into some new kind of darkness, within which she could barely discern motions of floating and falling. But of what? -- Remnants of her own mind or the indigenous inhabitants of this dim world? Her foreboding was that she would find the time to investigate.

* * * *

Most see you as a forbiddingly rigid old coot.

But I know that you vigilantly exclude everything that is proscribed by your tenets from your awareness. And if despite your unflagging efforts anything gets past the iron gates, it is reduced immediately to ashes.

You achieve always a level of personal purity that the others cannot begin to imagine.

* * * *

You possess an infantile self-centeredness, which responds with hostility and rage when it is deflected from its obsessive concern with itself.

As well as seemingly unbounded feelings of sentimentality and affection for others.

The mixture produces a jarring interpersonal continuity – with abrupt fluctuations in who you are being.

My hope for you is that, through insight diligently cultivated, you may one day rise to the level of compassionate solipsism, whose dialectic, if properly cultivated, will result in a subtly pacified mind.

But I feel compelled to add, after spending some time with you today, that I am not sanguine and will henceforth diminish your salience.

* * * *

You say that you do not shrink from making the acquaintance of your malodorous thoughts; in fact, you examine them with care -- trace them back to the diverse chambers of your mind from which they emanate. You apparently believe that in this way you will one day transform yourself into a vessel containing only the purest ethers of insight and understanding. But observing you over the years, I wonder -- is it possible you so sedulously engage your thoughts in order to deodorize them of any hint of a threat they may have for you, and nothing more?

* * * *

You dispense your condescension with all the bonhomie of a old-fashioned politician. I play along while I scrutinize your efforts; shaping them, and guiding you, to my advantage. Thus do I return your patronage, refocused, intensified, by my awareness and control.

The other day I overheard someone talking about me. He said, "that's just what sycophants have been telling themselves since the beginning of time." I understood this as a criticism of my astuteness. But I have been misperceived: it is my options that are limited.

* * * *

You regard others as though they were characters in a novel whose plot you continually revise to your benefit, without regard for communal coherence or effect. Your solipsistic egotism is shattering.

* * * *

You've made it your specialty: to spectate and comment, drawn to ritualistic gatherings of august bodies, because they offer richly pungent grist for your mill. Puffed up professors seem to be your particular bête noire: "Deans are devoted to superintending the sacred mission of education, while they make \$400thou a year -- do they imagine a black gown occludes the rank odor of hypocrisy?" But we've known for some time that money, power, and prestige are the primary desiderata of academia -- with education the medium and cover story for their attainment. Time for you to move on, consider what broadcasting these truths in the modality of platitudinous cynicism is a cover story for, if I may say.

* * * *

I am not an unsympathetic witness, as you lurch from abusing general principles to drawing inferences that are way off the mark. Always missing what's really going on, profiting neither you nor your companions. After careful consideration I have come to a decision: the cloistered, regulated life of the St. Benedictine monastery would serve you well -- go, join, and be relieved of your anguish. (Of course, there will be other challenges, some of them quite severe.) But you are likely to flourish there, relieved entirely of having to find ways of engaging those parts of life for which you are congenitally so unprepared.

* * * *

Mozart is a particularly poor choice. Far better to emulate Beethoven -- write down, cross out, write down starting from there, cross out.... let it recursively emerge out of the less unsatisfactory. And even late-Beethoven explorations are of the farthest outposts of terra firma, so there's at least the possibility of creating a common ground (just get there). Mozart, either as process or result, is simply not locatable anywhere you can access and make your own, however much it transfigures you while listening. Really, isn't that the point?

* * * *

I have been thinking about our recent conversation, seemingly an exchange far too brief, in view of the far-reaching issues you raised. You told me of your revelatory experience: that for the first time you were vouchsafed a vision of your life, as though by a dispassionate observer looking at its totality, in which you saw how it could have been otherwise, had you realized that the decisions that shaped it could have been under your deliberative control. You were bristling with questions -- how to keep the aperture to this prodigious vision from suddenly closing; whether you could now configure yourself according to your highest needs, resolve long-standing difficulties, reform relationships. But if you can recreate yourself by self-counsel day by day, hour by hour, where, then, is bedrock? I temporized, made some blandly sensible remarks, because I confess I'm at a disadvantage here -- I haven't had the experience you described. For me, it's all underneath, driven by I know not what.

* * * *

In person, you are quick-witted and engaging, but your writing induces ennui; your partner, on the contrary, is retiring and insipid face to face, but original and provocative on the page. The initial appeal is hard to imagine – was it the intuited potential of the complementarity?– but the merger does cover a lot of ground. With pleasure I anticipate running into you now, or reading what you’ve written. And I at least have no problem accommodating your tacit demand to be regarded socially as a single entity. Adaptations to personal limitations never fail to be of interest, constituting, after all, a universal challenge. They don’t usually, however, deftly resolve pre-existing deficits, with so little overhang.

* * * *

An agglomeration of disparate materials – of no discernable function, passing through outlandish configurations, seamlessly, over time.

Various hypotheses regarding entityhood are projected and discarded -- as a structural member becomes an embellishment on the periphery; an embellishment long labored over is enclosed out of view, then carefully dismantled, the parts positioned non-proximally in the new assemblage.

Onlookers have appropriated you to their cause: a commentary on the unceasing struggle of the proletariat against dominance by the haute bourgeoisie. Or the futility thereof. Pre-post-postmodernism resuscitating Dadaism. The exemplary probity of goal-less action. The reemergence of a Druid.

But I find the key is your unbroken silence. The way you keep your intentions unwaveringly under wraps. Working as you do, in this public space, you have shown that the enigmatic, the inexplicable, intolerable for the observer, incites willful intrusion into self-sufficient spaces, through portals created solely by desire become rapacious. Reducing then the heat through promiscuously conjoined fabrications brought to consummation, in its own mind.

This is the lesson you are imparting, Master.

* * * *

Seated at the table, drifting into strained levity, you note that the antique oak window frame, stolidly confining the clouds in the dark blue sky, signifies, and fails miserably to vaporize, your plight:

How, with poise, grace even, to descend from this dark hued conference room on the second floor -- the means of descent a narrow staircase mysteriously, precariously affixed to the walls enclosing a vast bottomless space.

No ground within to support your mentality; look beyond.

In an imaginal survey you picture the strip of antiquated wooden molding on the interior wall, opposite the handrail. Yes: you will naturally, inconspicuously, rest your hand upon it, gliding along its entire length with an extremity of focus; its texture -- you can feel it now -- of minute ridges, exposed longitudes of grain in the wood, worn unevenly over aeons of oblivious contact, a plenitude of sensation.

Your relief begets pride efflorescent: isn’t the answer always located just beside the smallest perceptible dimension of things unnoticed? Disclosing at once a solution to your floating vertigo and the secret intricacies within the depths of the commonplace.

Your treasured infirmity.

* * * *

You strive to see things as they really are. It’s not that way for me. I know that the world comes to me immeasurably enhanced by passing through the fructifying medium of my mind. I’ll gladly leave your kind of reality to you.

* * * *

Your persona in conversation highlights elusiveness, and hinders. You emit vocalizations that customarily signal attentiveness and politely sustain the flow of conversation -- ah ha, hmm, I see -- unvaryingly at the wrong time: mid-thought before you could possibly know where I’m

headed, or inappropriately, relative to my assertion's affect. Charitably, I may imagine that your point of view is so obtuse that your oblique interjections seem to be right on target. On the other hand, I suspect you are toying with me (but you never quite go over the line). Regardless, I will not exert myself to cross paths with you in the future.

* * * *

By way of introducing yourself, you said, "people are amazed by the things that I can do with my mind". We wondered: is saying that an instance? The exemplification was devastating, and, thus, amazing.

* * * *

You say that others intimidate you with their verbal facility— by their ability, while speaking in well rounded paragraphs, to always find *le mot juste*.

You have been hijacked by the cult of admirable presentation. Your real problem is this: your public utterances are premature – emerging before your thoughts have saturated the issues you are engaging, failing to reconstitute them in a way wholly your own. Envisage a supple fossilization. Then consider, what is "geologic time" within the span of a life? Suppose it is an experiential rhythm. Imagine embodying it. Hence, your silence (as in glacial). Then let your struggle to speak come forth as an intense density of crystallization expanding suddenly into the open air.

* * * *

You approach people the way you do music – with prior experience expressly fashioned to maximize the vividness of the particular occasion of interaction. Sometimes you go so far as to abdicate your self, at least for the nonce, to your interlocutors' image of whom they most need you to be – superimposing their received secondary consciousness on your primary. Some say this makes you a spineless chameleon. A failing when you engage others – yet the pinnacle of your musicianship? This much is clear to me: your detractors fall far short of understanding the wider implications of key concepts. (But I do wonder: when you get together with someone like you, what happens?)

* * * *

Because you are ill, "normal pressure" presses and bears down unbearably; tenderness and solicitude, with no deviation, approach tolerable. The best we can do. You wonder: he is capable, I know -- but will he rise to each occasion, protect our interactions with this hard won knowledge sustained at the forefront, resist the self-centered concavities of his own pressures and strains?

For each, the challenge of a lifetime. But yours is unfathomably greater; in addition, bearing the burden of dependency on my dedication to overmatching mine.

* * * *

I missed your call this afternoon.

I was out doing errands, to distract myself from the disquiet I feel, not hearing from you.

A tinny speaker, but your message came through – the sound of faux benevolence draping an unwieldy block of obligation. Definitive.

It was a communication that counts on the timely absence of the intended recipient. Perhaps you were watching, planning; if so, it worked out well. Had I answered you would have clicked. But I would have had my suspicions, and on and on we would have gone.

* * * *

Your dogged ambition consorts with such a high degree of affability and finesse that even your merest acquaintances have become interested spectators, your supporting team, virtually a cheering squad. They don't know exactly what you're aiming for; and although they may occasionally suspect that your amity and good will are critical elements of your strategy to get wherever that is, you're so skillful -- a virtuoso really -- that these concerns are ultimately submerged by the anticipation of enthusiastically celebrating your success. I'm out of my depth here, but I imagine that you're adroitly aware of all this. Then you can have no doubt that I too am truly a devotee.

* * * *

The exchange was much to my disadvantage. Preoccupied, I had, unbidden, proffered with pique -- a direct result of your interminable bluster about the sensational reception of your new book -- a title for your next tome: how about, I said, "Self-Importance: A Non-Reflexive Excursus"? Immediately, it struck me that this leaden quip was far beneath any *bon mot* I would wish to be associated with, and, were it circulated, would be certain to adversely affect my standing. And your response -- a hasty egress lacking even the usual awkwardly abridged ceremony of obeisance -- made the matter appear all the more exigent. I considered various remedies, and decided upon informing you that, should you take my suggestion, I would be pleased to write a favorable review of the galleys and would of course include a number of phrases tailored for ready extraction as laudatory quotes for the back cover. You appeared disconcerted by my remark, but I detected nevertheless that you grasped the intended intimation of a *rapprochement*. I congratulated myself therefore on maneuvering you back to your former position of acceptably intuited subordination; furthermore, the incident, if it did get around, would at least include my latter riposte as a subtly devastating come-back.

Imagine my surprise, then, when my closest confidant disclosed to me today that you now purport to find my idea to be a promising one, but as an edited collection of essays, and had gone so far as to ask him to consider contributing the introductory chapter. I must confess to a newfound respect for you and will craft my next move with great care.

* * * *

I picture you on the Western Front, in your pie-plate helmet and trench coat, guarding your position with extreme vigilance against any semblance of attackers. And your shots, aimed true, immediately dispatch any one who appears in your line of view. You've created a circumjacent no-mans land none will dare to encroach upon.

Your interpretation of a textual variant of an apocryphal manuscript from 2000 BC seems, at present, unassailable. An attack by your opponents en masse appears unlikely, for they themselves have splintered into diverse groups vehemently at odds. But alliances shift and regroup themselves in ways that often elude even trained observers, and I readily comprehend the dangerous incautiousness of your not being perpetually on guard.

* * * *

Over the years, you have dropped along the way, conspicuously, in the interstices, numerous keys that will unlock the chambers holding the treasures of your mind; redolent, you are, with this promise. But no one has ever been able to find the locks, nor the doors, nor indeed the entrance to any space within you that answers to such a description. I have finally come to see that your foreground machinations, abundant with manifold implications of the depths to be sounded, continuously loop back to embellish and reinforce the surface level from which they arise and are projected -- a densely intricate structure whose ongoing generation in response to changing circumstances can only lead to a high appreciation of your talents.

* * * *

You are chary of the slightest self-revelation. But your abundant views of others seem to vary entirely as a function of your current frame of mind. So, I ask about a mutual friend to gain some indication of how you are, at present, experiencing yourself.

* * * *

I have long maintained that the self-configuration people present to the world is the outcome of two opposing tendencies: contraction, to minimize the vulnerability preceding pain, and expansion, to maximize the receptivity preceding pleasure, the exact point of equipoise and the resultant topology varying specifically by context.

But your extreme reticence with me lately suggests that this theory is seriously flawed.

* * * *

You compensate for your melancholia with a false cheerfulness -- an affect of cryptic insincerity, which drives people away, increasing your sense of disconnection. But your sadness is so deeply marrowed that, were it to emerge amidst the babble of their lives, many would be drawn to it as a touchstone of authenticity. A benefaction to them, and you as well. But that you persist in maintaining the façade, makes me wonder -- is sparing others your woe a wide-ranging punishment, not excepting yourself?

* * * *

I see that you are becoming known for the originality of your high-toned wit.

And just recently, your quip, "he is a transcendentalist, a hypocrite who looks out of the window and declares – I am raining", was very well received.

As it was when Henry Adams first said it, in 1876.

I am concerned about you.

You have not grasped that conversational plagiarism, undiscovered, will earn you at best a reputation as a "character"; discovered, a pernicious cheat.

I wish to call your attention to the ramifications of just a small shift in your modus operandi:

Judicious name-dropping will signify, and you'll get ahead. Risk free.

* * * *

You have appointed me your special confidant, to whom you disburden and relieve yourself of your recurrent indignations and grievances. Usually arising from an entanglement of misperceptions concerning the motives of all you decide are participants (not least yourself).

You are assuaged, for the time being.

Yet, your confidences persist within me, as indigestible spheres that inexorably expand to reveal a festering frightfulness within.

I have no doubt you will understand my need to pass them along to others, who are able to deal with them far better than I.

* * * *

You have never understood that receptivity to engagement has an endogenous rhythm that waxes and wanes. You always expect the accessibility of others to be at the apex, or at least in the ascendant -- in any case, exactly proportionate to relieving the exigencies of your predicament. And so your solicitations in waning phases elicit responses so little commensurate with your needs, that you are dismayed, and vexed.

I would like to make myself available, to help you work through your apprehensions.

Unlike others, I am perpetually in a state of heightened interest.

-- by appointment only.

* * * *

(two after Spoon River ...)

You were for so long my special elixir,
an afternoon together making me well.

A hypochondriac, they said.

But then you stopped coming by. Left me to myself.

And then I died -- my tombstone an edifice of despair.

* * * *

I consistently embraced a rational, systematic approach to life.

Making lists, in columns -- pro and con.

The initial results were inconclusive. For each point on the one side a counterbalancing point on the other. But not of equal value. A weighting was required.

I devised a system of greater rigor and comprehensiveness.

Necessitating revisions.

Thus, numerous lists were generated as derivations from those previous.

In order to facilitate study, I taped them to the walls, consecutively, in order of generation, as well as grouped by similitude of content.

Methodically, over the years, I winnowed down the lists, until finally, they converged.

On a semi-colon ;

I understood the import at once -- a hanging man.

So, while others met their demise through accidents or sickness,

I met mine through deductions considered and reconsidered again, with not a single lapse of reason or attention.

They said I possessed a mental looseness, but in the end I was the one straight and true!

Personifications

* * * *

You ardently proclaim the magisterial lucidity of your thoughts.
I am your protégé – my perspicacity is lodged in the forefront of my mind.
Today, I challenged myself with the hitherto imponderable:
What it is about you that repels.
I considered the question: are you lucid within?
I reasoned, that if “no”, you are an impostor: if “yes”, a boor.
With no little pride, I will ask you tomorrow to evaluate the acuity of my analysis.

* * * *

Though striving strenuously to focus on what you are saying, my mind invariably wanders, soporifically, as you speak.
Your pallid inconsequentialities enervate attentiveness.
One day, it dawns on me –
Expounding upon a wide range of issues, you could relieve a variety of obsessive disorders, for multitudes.

* * * *

An opening presented itself unexpectedly during the discussion, and I advanced for consideration a précis of “Subject for a ghost story”, from Henry James’ notebook:

--- A mysterious fearsome sound, a knocking upon the door of a sealed room. The occupant of the house has had some great and constant trouble, with which, in tandem, the frequency and loudness of the knocking fluctuates. He one day breaks down the door, and the trouble therewith ceases, as if the spirit in the room desired to be admitted only that it might interpose, redeem and protect.

I hoped that my display of recondite erudition would counteract my colleagues’ poor regard for me, shown by their barely disguised inimical glances in my direction.

But, then, I thought -- perhaps they are truly concerned about me, and are ever watchful for the opportunity to be of help, to alleviate my fears, to secure my comfort, if only I would let them in.

However, I know that, ultimately, the motives of others are either wholly inscrutable or emerge bearing a veraciously murderous intent.

* * * *

I am always eager to expand the domains within which critical aesthetic judgment may be applied.

Lately, it has occurred to me that nature has gotten off easy.

Consider clouds: we say – what a beautiful sunset, what wonderful cloud shapes!

Trite palaver.

One day I viewed all the clouds in the sky as though they were deliberately composed -- an artifice, say an environmental installation, a Christo creation.

And suddenly all of my evaluative faculties were engaged.

I was flooded with thoughts: why so much of that kind of cloud there, why that color here, why such a lack of variation? Frankly, I saw much room for improvement.

I believe that I am on the threshold of originating a wholly new field of critical studies.

* * * *

I find the idea of a cozy tete-a-tete with her exceedingly appealing. However, being caught off guard by novel topics or unanticipated questions most certainly is not.

Thus, I will formulate and submit a written agenda, which, with her concurrence, will be followed over dinner, as well as during our after-dinner conversation.

Beforehand, I will review my thoughts on the various topics to be covered, as well as conduct any supplemental reading as required. I will also develop a series of scripts in response to various questions that, with the foresight I have exercised, will arise entirely predictably and under my control.

I believe that this approach will not only preclude unanticipated issues bringing forth pressured utterances revealing stark deficiencies -- improvisations later ruminated upon and regretted -- but will also forestall those terrible silences which provoke awkward questions, or, worst of all, indicate that our meeting has reached its end, several hours before its prearranged terminus. Although usually wary of self-congratulatory sentiments, I must admit to a certain confidence that by these means I shall successfully eliminate all impediments to the fullest development of our impending intimacy.

* * * *

Both by precept and example I have sought to demonstrate that the capacity for empathy is indispensable for civilized human beings.

For it is by imaginatively recreating in one's mind the experiences of others that communal order is firmly grounded.

The process is straightforward: one need only follow the principle that the greater can encompass the lesser, but not conversely.

For example, one can readily discern that another's experience corresponds to, at most, a single side of one's own multi-faceted inner richness; or is paltry and overblown, the product of an unresolved emotional need, like a child's.

Yet, there are also instances where one may clearly intuit that others' experiences encircle one's own, delineating in ever widening arcs a wealth of content copious almost beyond one's comprehension.

Thus, it is through empathy that one comes to know one's position in the hierarchy of awarenesses, which, in turn, forms the basis for whom one owes, and is owed, deference. It follows that relations with others are suffused with a finely discriminating sense of propriety -- an exquisite consummation of the association between mentation and behavior.

* * * *

It is my plight to be able to detect with heightened sensitivity the undesirable characteristics of others.

Experience has shown that my most well-meaning comments are not typically remediative.

Because in the course of life I must go out among others, I have developed an effective procedure for dealing with unavoidable impingements:

I encapsulate each person I meet within a mental barrier that is specifically impermeable to his or her objectionable qualities.

With considerable expertise, I can now obstruct the offensive effluence before conscious cognition has supervened.

Some may say that I am reducing others to a highly abridged version of themselves; but I have not found that becoming personally apprised of another's odiousness is conducive to maintaining a state of equable awareness.

And I am satisfied with the fruits of my methods --

For it is by selective suppression of the miasma people generate and inhabit that even the merest aromatic waft contained therein can be readily discerned, emerging with pronounced clarity, before it dissipates into the air.

As it does, I am once again assured that I have brought out the best in whomever is before me.

January, 2009 -- April, 2011

Notes for the Culture: A Few Brief Thoughts on Music and Time,
with a Word or Two about Ontology

Dean Rosenthal

I.

Music is a representation of thought in time

(music is thinking through time)

Music is a representation of time in thought

(music is time, thinking)

II.

Time is a representation of thought in music

(each thought in music is time)

III.

Thought is a representation of time *in* music

Thought is a representation of music in time

Time is a representation of music in thought

But time doesn't equal music

IV.

I hear myself speak, just as sounds hear sounds

I play myself music

I “be” in time

Time is inside time

Time is now

V.

Time has different modalities

Time is then. Time is soon. Time is before.

Becoming

Time is after

Becoming

Time

Jan 24, 1996, Montréal

Remembering *Rapport*

Robert Morris

In 1973, David Mott and I first performed *Rapport*—my improvisational composition of live electronic music in which the performers mix and transform prerecorded excerpts of what is now called world-music.¹ *Rapport* might have seemed like a new venture for me, for, my reputation as an emerging composer was centered on my concert works, only a few of which involved improvisation and electronic sound. Nevertheless, it might have seemed inevitable to those who took my classes or studied composition with me at Yale in the early 1970s since I was always digressing into topics that hinged on concepts derived from non-western musics and culture.

In any case, the compositional poetics *Rapport* presented to the listener had been evolving in my thoughts, not only during the two- or three-year period of germination from conception to the first performance, but as inchoate desires and intentions as represented by my compositional “experiments” as a high-school student in the late 1950s.

My first encounters with non-western music were due to two individuals, Rose Krevit (my piano teacher’s wife²) and my grandfather, Emanuel Morris. Mrs. Krevit had been a dancer and was well aware many forms of non-western dance. Dance troupes from India, Indonesia, and Siam³ had been concertizing in the west since the end of World War II. Having heard me improvise something or other before my piano lesson, Mrs. Krevit told me that it reminded her of Indian music. And she immediately and generously loaned me a few recordings (78 rpm records) and a book on North Indian Classical Music.

At the about same time (1957), my grandfather (on retirement from work as a court stenographer) took a long trip to Japan and returned with all kinds of souvenirs, including records of Japanese and Chinese pop, classical, and religious music, and books on haiku and other facets of Japanese culture; he gave these items to me a few years later. At this time, due, in part, to the efforts of the Beat generation of American writers and poets, haiku was becoming assimilated into the American literary landscape. Other aspects of “oriental” culture were also introduced such as Zen, Indian pacifism, and yoga. Thanks to my grandfather and Mrs. Krevit, I was primed to notice and respond to these influences as they reached New York, mainly centered in Greenwich Village, a frequent hangout for some of my friends.

My high school years were also filled with an intense interest in new music (then called “contemporary music”). As a young composer, without a teacher to tell me what was important or to ground me in classical music composition, I was immediately drawn to new music, especially compositions by Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Paul Hindemith, and Arnold Schoenberg. Living just outside of New York City, in Yonkers, I travelled into the city every weekend and spent many hours perusing and purchasing scores and recordings in the various music stores not far from Carnegie Hall, where I took my piano lessons with

¹ The term “world music” is a bit of a catch all, but it aptly replaces problematic older terms such as “ethnic”, “primitive”, “non-western”, “non-classical”, “vernacular”, etc. A more limited predicate for “world-music” is “fusion”, where musicians of different cultures play music together.

² I studied piano with William Krevit from 1951 to 1961.

³ Before 1939, Thailand was called Siam. The country was renamed Siam from 1945-1949, after which it was renamed Thailand again. It was in the post WW II period that Siamese dance was introduced into the west.

Mr. Krevit. I also frequently listened to classical and avant-garde music on radio stations like WQXR and WBAI. I therefore became aware of the birth of electronic, concrete, and tape music, the percussion music of Edgard Varèse and Lou Harrison, the prepared piano music of John Cage, and the serial musics of Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. And a few steps away from the record bins of contemporary music were other bins filled with recordings of non-western music, from Iraq, Egypt, Sub-Saharan Africa, India, Bali, Japan, China, and various non-western tribal and ritual musics. I bought many of these recordings (which were often on sale) and listened to them regularly.

Not all of these recordings immediately influenced the music I was currently writing, but they had a cumulative effect on my later musical preferences and compositional orientations. But one form of these new music directions immediately affected my compositional activities. It was called “tape music,” the American equivalent of the French *musique concrète*. It centered on the use of tape recorders to make new musical sounds and forms. It was clear that I could try out this medium if I only owned a tape machine. So I talked my father into buying me a Webcore tape machine for my birthday, saying that I could use it to record music from the radio (which would save money) and that it would help me objectively assess my piano playing by listening to my own performances of the music Mr. Krevit assigned me to play.

My tape recorder allowed me to experiment in many ways, all of which had immediate and long-range consequences for my music, and especially for *Rapport*. First, I could play four-hand and two piano music with myself and learn some new repertoires including contemporary music. Second I could experiment by playing different pieces or parts of the same piece at once à la Charles Ives. I was also fond of playing two different sections of a theme and variations composition at the same time—one live, one recorded—such as from the last movement of Handel’s “Harmonious Blacksmith” Suite in E, in order to hear how they went together and where they differed.⁴ Third, I could improvise over existing compositions or recorded improvisations.

I soon hit on an idea using two tape recorders. Fortunately, my best friend, Key Martin, also owned the same model of tape machine, so I borrowed his machine or we played together to make tape music. With two tape recorders, one could play with or over a recorded performance and therefore build up more than two levels of sound. This quickly evolved into a primitive tape delay system, where tape was threaded from one tape machine to the other, the former in record mode, and the latter in playback mode. The microphone I used to record on the first machine would record a live performance while also recording an earlier, delayed recorded passage of the same performance. These layers could build up textures and polyphonies providing the microphone placement and the record and playback gains were set just right. The set-up allowed Key and me to improvise what amounted to generalized canons in real time. We often performed by singing, and playing toy or homemade percussion instruments, and we sometime whispered strange, nonsense words like “gwannet” to project an air of mystery. It was a lot of fun, and I saved some of the tapes of our sessions for a while. But I was also quite aware these experiments would have to go a long way before they were “serious music,” or professionally acceptable. Thus I had no idea that where these tape delay improvisations would lead; I certainly didn’t think they would have an impact on the music I would write 15 years later.⁵

⁴ In 1974, I composed a two-piano work that pitted different variations of the same “theme” against each other as part of my “Acculturation Trilogy,” *Variations on the Variations of the Quadran Pavan and the Quadran Pavan of Bull and Byrd* (1974).

⁵ Another spin off from my tape delay experiments was a series of short piano pieces, each dedicated to a member of the Yonkers Astronomy Club and composed to express that member’s character. Pieces were arranged so that the first in the set could be played with the second, the second with the third, and so forth until the last played with the

I also furtively experimented with altering recorded sounds as in pieces composed by Otto Leuning and Vladimir Ussachevsky, such as their jointly composed piece for orchestra and tape, *A Poem in Cycles and Bells for Tape Recorder and Orchestra* (1954), the premiere of which I heard on the radio. I recorded all kinds of sounds, and played them at different tape speeds, and backwards, and even tried to splice them together using scotch tape, which tended to glue entire tape reels together after a few days of storage. I really wanted to try out the tape and electronic techniques I heard on records and radio broadcasts of early electronic music and musique concrete by Stockhausen, Pierre Henry, and Varèse and other European composers, but I would have to wait until I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan before I was able to work in a full-fledged electronic studio.

A perhaps a more social use of my tape recorder was to make for my friends what were later called mix-tapes in the 1980s. I would take my favorite pieces and record them back to back making sure the pieces were from highly contrasting styles, periods, geographic areas, and social functions. I also read my favorite science fiction or ghost stories (by writers such as Isaac Asimov and H. P. Lovecraft) over a piece of contemporary music that I felt suited the story. I exchanged these story tapes with a few of my friends.⁶

When I started out studying composition with a teacher, John La Montaine, in my freshman year at the Eastman School of Music, my interests turned away from experimental conceptions to mastering advanced skills in music theory and composition. My interests in Indian music came to the fore, and for a time I composed a number of pieces incorporating (something like) Indian ragas and rhythmic cycles in a neoclassical style, inspired by the music of composers like Harrison, Henry Cowell, Alan Hovhannes, and early Cage, who were clearly influenced by non-western music. But by the end of my undergraduate studies, my interests returned to more progressive, non-tonal, and often serial music. In this way, my music (finally) got into synch with the current new music fads of the early 1960s. This didn't very last long, for when I went to the University of Michigan for graduate degrees, I began to write pieces involving improvisation and electronic sound. I also took courses and seminars in ethnomusicology as my secondary area of concentration instead of applied music, that is, piano lessons.⁷

Learning about the musical details of non-western music and their cultural contexts affected me deeply. I learned how really different these musics were from those of the western classical tradition and that my fascination in my high-school years had been partially exotic. But the connection between new music and non-western traditional music was also now confirmed, that many new trends in western classical music were actually traditional aspects of other cultures' music; intricate melodic ornamentation, microtones, extremely fast and slow tempi, heterophony, rhythmic complexity, timbral composition, and new functions for music, were to be found in various mid-eastern, African, and Asian musics dating back hundreds of years. I began to see all music involved in huge network connected by various degrees of similarity and correspondence, yet partitioned into different musical languages. This led to a kind of compositional crisis for me. How could I connect my own western-oriented musics into this vast universe

first. A similar but much more ramified conception was the basis for my two-piano composition *Canonic Variations* of 1992.

⁶ I later found out that my use of tape machines as an adjunct to explore and realize one's compositional and improvisational ideas and inclinations was shared by other composers of my age. I suppose this is matched today by young musicians and amateurs trying out their musical ideas using applications like Finale or GarageBand. The difference is that in 1958, such experiments were at the cutting edge of music, where today they need not be experimental in any sense, but simply implement—indeed, these programs are often designed to implement—the traditional and/or conventional forms and practices of popular and concert music.

⁷ The reader can learn more about my musical education and compositional development by reading the interview, "Transforming Voices," <<http://lulu.esm.rochester.edu/rdm/Inter.html>> or my recent book, *The Whistling Blackbird: Essays & Talks on New Music*. <<http://www.urpress.com/store/viewItem.asp?idProduct=13411>>

of music? And if I did, would my efforts be merely ethnocentric, or even worse, just another form of colonialism?

My work in the electronic medium helped provide a provisional solution for my dilemma. Electronic music was a sort neutral playing field where anything was possible, limited only by issues of technology. Since it didn't yet involve performance, except in a few cases where performers would play live against the playback of a fixed tape, the electronic medium was an open space for me to experiment with solutions to my problem. The situation was like my high-school experiments with my tape recorder, except I now had state-of-the-art equipment, and a much more complete knowledge of what was going on in new music and of non-western musics.

Spurred on by works such as *Telemusik* (1966) and *Hymnen* (1966-67) of Stockhausen, in which non-western music sounds were combined and altered electronically, and by the tape delay system works of Pauline Oliveros, such as *I of IV* (1965), I turned my attention to the possibilities of accommodating different musics in the electronic studio. However, in the late 1960s, the technical problems were daunting. On one hand, I admired the conception of Oliveros's pieces involving superheterodyned oscillators,⁸ where the music was produced by performers playing the frequency dials of tone oscillators fed into a simple tape delay system to produce a tape to be played later in concert. On the other hand, I was disappointed by a certain lack of sonic nuance due to the lack of suitable controls for the oscillators. Thus, this music was often coarse and annoying, even if there were places of real beauty here and there. In the Stockhausen works, which I still appreciate greatly, the methods that produced the abundance of lovely subtleties and complexities took a tremendous amount of time to produce⁹ and used special equipment only available to Stockhausen in the Cologne electronic studio.

Fortunately, these technical problems were soon to be overcome in the Yale Electronic Studio. When I started teaching at Yale in the fall of 1969, I found that the electronic studio was pretty primitive compared with eminent studios in New York, Toronto, Paris, Cologne, and Milan. But even these famous studios were quickly becoming antiquated by the introduction of the Buchla and Moog synthesizers, which were somewhat portable and designed to automate many of the tedious mechanical procedures that Stockhausen and other composers of the best electronic music had been obliged to accept.¹⁰ A meager budget for electronic music at Yale made purchasing more modern and reliable equipment including a synthesizer more or less impossible. However, David Friend, one of the Yale undergraduate students in electronic engineering had built some digital circuits to use in the studio. When he graduated, he joined a new electronics firm that eventually began producing synthesizers, and one of the prototypes

⁸ Interestingly, Stockhausen also uses heterodyned oscillators in *Telemusik*. (This is the use of multiple oscillators tuned higher than the ear can hear, but mixed so that their difference frequencies (beating) can be heard in the audible domain).

⁹ Each sound was produced by precisely setting sound generators, filter frequencies, modulation indices, and recording the resulting sounds on tape sometimes employing up to three performers in the electronic studio carefully changing dials, levers, and tape machine functions often according to a "score." Then these taped sounds would be further transformed, mixed, and spliced together on tape. Sometimes, one ten-second passage would take half a day to assemble.

¹⁰ Making it easier to make traditional musical objects such as melodies, regular periodic rhythms, and timbres that imitated vocal and instrumental sounds did not necessarily produce improvements in musical quality. In fact, these "new instruments" allowed composers to compose glib and senseless pieces in just a few days. Also, there was a perceived quality difference in the sounds of the synthesizers vis-à-vis the older classical electronic music sounds. This was due to the nature of the new sound synthesis methods. A further problem was the instability of the oscillators and other synthesizer components. Pitches would drift out of tune in a few minutes, and complicated interconnections of synthesizer modules would not produce the same sounds from one session to the next. Of course, if you were not interested in pitch relations and composed aleatoric music, this was not an obstacle.

was more or less given to Yale to try out. These new ARP synthesizers were head and shoulders above the Moog or Buchla synthesizers (although these soon caught up to ARP's standards). When Bulent Arel, then director of the studio landed a new job at CUNY Stony brook in 1970, Jacob Druckman was hired to run the studio. Druckman was able to find funds to update the studio, more or less in the image of the Columbia-Princeton studio, where he had worked. As a result, the Yale studio became one of the best-equipped electronic music studios in America. Two years later, Druckman left Yale and I was appointed director of the studio.

From the fall of 1969, I spent many hours in the Yale studio learning how to use the ARP synthesizer and soon produced two pieces of music with it, one of them composed jointly with Wayne Slawson.¹¹ At the same time, I returned to my tape delay experiments. The nice thing about the delay system was with little effort you could build up massive layers of sound and hear combinations of diverse or similar material. (This kind of texture was a feature of many current pieces of Krzysztof Penderecki and György Ligeti, and may have been influenced by earlier electronic music.) Unlike in the late 1950s, I had superior equipment to use and many more types and categories of sound.

As I mentioned above, I saw the electronic medium as the “place” to compose music that combined highly diverse musics into one musical expression. What that expression would be was not yet clear to me, but I began to get a glimpse of it as I invented ways to sonically transform one sound into another at a level of technical sophistication that was only possible with the ARP synthesizer. I often used a tape delay system with these sound transformations as input. Other inputs to the system would come from a radio tuned to various FM music stations, combined with synthesized sounds and transformations of the radio music (and speech). The results were various and sometimes egregious, but I was making progress, learning what worked and what didn't.

I began to sense that working with the delay system in real time, like Oliveros had done, could be a way of implementing a piece based on diverse musics. But it also became apparent that, in order to produce good results, I needed to control more sonic aspects than I could handle in real time. I tried automating some of these controls, but with limited success. I also found that the parameters of the delay system needed to be frequently changed to avoid unwanted stasis¹² and boredom. Evidently, better results would only be achieved by two or more performers. However, when I worked with other people on these tape delay experiments, what resulted was certainly more complicated, but no better aesthetically—at least for me. I considered composing a piece for performers and delay system,¹³ but I didn't want to determine and order the source material or the choices for working with it with a score crammed with a long list of instructions, new notations, and provisos. Besides, improvisation was necessary to guide the progress of the piece in interesting directions and avoid stagnation as the work was unfolding.

Part of my worry about the piece had to do with the kind of experience I wanted to project. This was not going to be a gripping concert piece with architectonic structure and a climax just at the “right” moment. The piece I had in mind was much more intimate and fluxy than concert music. This problem resolved itself when I realized that the piece could not be produced in a concert hall unless the equipment of the entire electronic studio were to be physically transported to the hall. While possible, this was financially

¹¹ Slawson was developing one of the first computer music programs at Yale, later called SYNTAL. Thus, composers at Yale had early access to computer-generated sound.

¹² I say *unwanted* stasis, since stasis itself is not uninteresting—in fact, it can be very a moving experience. Boredom and tedium are a function of skill and taste, not the ineluctable result of the use or avoidance of certain compositional techniques or actions.

¹³ In 1971, I did write a piece for String Trio and tape delay system called ...*Delay*... that is fully scored, but its sections may be played in different orders.

unfeasible. Of course, I could just make a tape of a delay session and have that played in concert. Nevertheless, I had conceived of this piece as performed in real time, so playing a tape documenting a studio performance in a concert hall would be like playing a recorded documentation of a live performance of music as a concert piece in a hall. The upshot was, if the piece would not be performed in a music hall, then it might be free of the aesthetic constraints that a concert hall imposes on the music that is performed there.¹⁴

Another realization put everything into place. I had somehow forgotten that not every musician can improvise, and those who can successfully improvise in one idiom, may be unable improvise in another.¹⁵ As in all music, the performer has to have the right skills and attitude to do justice to a work. So my previous problems with multiple people performing into the tape delay system with me was due to their knowledge and skills, which did not equip them to do what I wanted to hear. So the problem I had to resolve was to find the right musician(s) to play my piece, and not to stabilize the performance by scoring it. I needed to find open-minded musicians, having some experience in electronic music who could improvise and had a sophisticated appreciation and ample knowledge of non-western musics. This was a tall order, but I realized that one of my best graduate students was just the right person. He was David Mott, a very talented composer and jazz musician, with a love of non-western music, who sat Zen and taught Korean karate. David had come to Yale in the fall of 1970, and began studying composition with me in the next year. We immediately hit it off, and a deep musical bond developed between us. In 1973 I asked David if he'd like to play in a piece I was developing that involved electronic music and world music. His answer was a very positive yes. Our connection to each other's musicality and to especially non-western music led me to title my piece *Rapport*.

I then set to work on converting the idea of this piece into an actual composition. First I decided that I would play the synthesizer and David would be in charge of the tape delay system, which was in stereo, not monaural as in my previous experiments. The second task was to decide on what musics to choose for input to the delay system. To this end, I composed four monophonic tapes of a half hour of music each. (This was the length of a reel of tape playing at 7 ½ ips.) Each tape was a sequence of ten to twenty excerpts of classical, popular, traditional (i.e. folk), and ritual music¹⁶ selected from a large selection of different geographical areas on each continent.¹⁷ Only a few of the excerpts were of common practice western classical music.¹⁸ In order that this music would integrate well with the live synthesizer-generated

¹⁴ I have found, especially in my outdoor pieces since 2002, that taking new music away from the concert hall opens it up to the general audience. What is disliked in the concert hall is found interesting and compelling in other venues and environments.

¹⁵ I had made a similar mistake in the late 1960s when I assumed that if a group of players could successfully perform a piece involving improvisation, any group of new music players could do as well. I'm not sure why I assumed this then—or with respect to the delay system improvisation. Perhaps, I thought that all that was necessary for good results was an open mind. But singing or playing an instrument well is not dependent on an open mind but upon years of practice. I might have believed that new “experimental” music didn't need technical proficiency, which would make it possible for this music to reach anyone who was open to it. I also seem to have forgotten—or didn't want to acknowledge—that my own knowledge and skills were highly developed and different from most other composers and musicians.

¹⁶ The division of music into classical, popular, folk, and ritual categories is an old taxonomy that I was taught in my classes at Michigan. Even though it is presently more or less discredited in ethnomusicology, I use it here to describe the extent of the musics I selected.

¹⁷ The sequencing of the excerpts was not random or according to an arbitrary scheme, so that the passage from one music to another occurred at phrase or section endings or beginnings or other formal articulation points in each music.

¹⁸ This is a fair representation, since I selected a music in proportion to its quantitative presence in the world. But, I must admit, in the early 1970s, common practice western classical music seemed oppressive to me.

music, I electronically transformed a few of the excerpts, dynamically changing aspects of amplitude, timbre, and pitch. For instance, a passage from Bach's art of the Fugue is gradually ring modulated, or the opening of the Balinese Kecek Monkey Chant is filtered and changed its pitch. Once I had made the four tapes—a total of about seventy different musical excerpts—I copied them on to a four-track tape, so that the four sequences of music would be played at once on the studio's four-track machine. I didn't intend all four music sequences to be entered into the tape delay system at once, however. I sent the four sequences through a mixer controlled by the synthesizer player—that is, me. I could then select and balance what music was allowed to enter into the piece. Many times in performance, I kept the mixer outputs closed and worked with what was already in the delay system, and/or with electronic sound alone. The duration of the four-track tape set the length of the piece, at about thirty minutes. The last part of the organizational process was to analyze the possible states of the stereo tape delay system. I found there were 16 basic states with variations. I named these states and would call for them during performance. David would then change the settings of the tape delay system accordingly and work with the mixing of tracks as the piece went on.

David and I decided to schedule a series of performances of *Rapport* in the Yale studio in the late autumn of 1973. The studio was large enough to teach in, and the composition department often held guest symposia there, so there was room for about 20 people to listen to music. But David suggested that we not just hold a concert in the studio, but make the whole event much more informal. I was very much taken by this idea, and we decided to serve refreshments, give a short talk on the piece before we played it, and encourage the listeners to hold forth and ask questions afterwards. This meant we wouldn't just announce the time and place of the performance and wait for an audience to show up, not to mention perhaps have to turn some people away because of space considerations. Moreover, we wanted specifically to invite those people whom we knew would be likely to enjoy the experience, and not ask those whom we thought would find the music and its conception disagreeable and a waste of time. This all worked well; we had very few no-shows and most of those who weren't invited didn't care. In the few cases where someone asked us to invite him, we would unhesitatingly oblige.

A week before the performance we sent out about 100 notes inviting each person or family or other social group to come at a specific performance time. We gave six performances on Nov. 16, 17, and 18, two a night, one at 8 p.m. and the other at 10 p.m. It was getting cold outside, and the studio provided a nice warm place to listen and consume tea and cookies. (We had brought in some lamps so the lighting was low, promoting a relaxed and pleasant environment.)

Nevertheless there were some worries. In our rehearsals, there had been some wonderful moments, but at other times things did not go well and attempts to change the direction of the improvisation to escape cul-de-sacs often made things even worse. We were improving nevertheless, but I wasn't at all sure that our performances were going to transcend patches of dull or ugly music. I kept fiddling with the synthesizer patches to improve my performance, right up to the night of the first performance.

On our first performance, as far as we were concerned, the piece didn't go well at all. Nevertheless, the audience seemed to enjoy what they had heard and the questions were friendly and the discussion lively. We went on to the second performance of the evening hoping for the best, but the piece started out poorly, much too turbulent and repetitive. About ten minutes in, something happened. Like a plane that has escaped from a thundercloud into clear weather, the performance stabilized and continued in a most appealing manner to its close. The audience reaction seemed about the same as to the first performance—interested, curious, and contented. But upon leaving, one of my friends from my apartment complex—not a musician—asked, “Is that how the piece goes, first like a nightmare, leading to bliss?”

The second night was different. Whatever mode of stability and poise we had reached in the previous 10 o'clock performance stayed with us thereafter. Every transformation and course change seemed to work. David and I felt we had reached a new plateau; the experience was extremely exciting and deep; I was reminded of the first time I had played piano well in public, being totally with the music, without self-consciousness. Once again, the audience response was positive, but not different in kind from the first night. The character of the piece was what I had hoped for: all these different musics from all over the world blending and succeeding each other in beautiful, subtle ways with the electronic sounds supporting and contributing to the texture without seeming artificial or inappropriate. It felt as if we guiding all these musics to cooperate and make a music of musics.

The last night of the three worked equally well, so in the next weeks I decided to write up a description of what was necessary for performing *Rapport*: the prerecorded tapes, equipment, roles for two performers, and some guidelines for performance. This description was intended as a substitute for a score in order to provide *Rapport* an identity by defining its materials and the sound processes that would ground the improvisation but without programming it.

Here I quote some paragraphs from this description/score,¹⁹ leaving out technical details. I will add comments on this text in square brackets ([]) (Round brackets were in the original text.)

Performing *Rapport*: The synthesizer player is basically in control of the form (or flow) of the piece. She plays the synthesizer, mixes the electronic sound with any or all of the four tracks of the prerecorded tape(s), and tells the tape delay system player what state is to be used and when. The tape delay system player has a more limited freedom as she pans and times the change from state to another, These roles are subject to the following conditions and guidelines.

1. The piece lasts slightly longer than the prerecorded tape—about 30 minutes
2. *Rapport* begins with at least the track on the prerecorded tape that contains a traditional south Indian composition in Thodi raga, played on the vina.²⁰ The volume level should be full with some reverberation added. The first state should be CROSS. [This is one of the sixteen basic tape delay states.] The other tracks may be brought in soon enough in various combinations and levels. After this opening, all is free until the end of the piece within the range of suggestions given in 4. and 5. below.
3. The very end of the piece focuses or zones in on the track of the prerecorded tape containing south Indian classical vocal music.²¹ (Any reiterations of the previous musical fabric may be retained, of course.) The delay state should be CROSS then CLEAR.
4. The electronic sounds used in *Rapport* should not often assume a foreground role in the ongoing process of the piece. Their function is to produce an environment for the prerecorded material, but not just to accompany it. Thus, the electronic sounds may sustain, imitate, embellish, contrast, neutralize, complement, etc. the music on the prerecorded tape. Exact imitation of the recorded material by the synthesizer player should be undertaken carefully so that these synthesized sounds (in their simplicity) do not weaken the character of the prerecorded music. Due to the presence of the tape delay system, the introduction of electronic music may be quite sparse and yet a “full sound” will easily be built up by the system. The same goes for the use of the tracks of

¹⁹ This document was revised in July of 2010.

²⁰ The composition is *Kaduna variki* by Tyagaraja played by K. N. Narayanaswami.

²¹ This is an alapana in raga Shankarabharana, sung by M. S. Subbulakshmi.

the prerecorded tape; not all the tracks need be used at once or at peak volumes, and sometime no prerecorded music need be introduced into the piece. This means that a good deal of the music on the tape may not be used in a particular performance of *Rapport*. Electronic sound may be used to provide continuity and contrast when there is no or little prerecorded sound in the mix. In this way, drones, chords, canons, textures, imitations, etc. are easily built up by the state of the delay system. Indeed, a successful performance of *Rapport* involves subtle and dynamic mixtures of the four tracks of prerecorded material and the electronic sounds at differing and changing dynamic levels occasionally with frequent changes of the states of the delay system.

5. *Rapport* is an open, spacious, ongoing process composition whose details will be quite different from one performance to another. Its form or flow may be likened to the fugue or *ricercar* with its series of exposition and episodes. The piece will tend to have passages of four functions: accumulations; preservations; decays; and moments of repose—even silence. In general, the recorded music and electronic sound are entered into the tape delay system in order to develop, for lack of a better word, a *time field*. A time field may be extended and changed by the change of a state of the delay system and/or the introduction of new sounds and materials. The amount of time spent in a time field is, of course, free, but usually three iterations (7 times 3 = 21 seconds) are need for a time field to fully develop. The piece may remain in the CLEAR or ONCE A or ONCE B states, as well as the NULL states for reasons of contrast.

[I invented the term “time field” to describe the flow of *Rapport*. Time fields are not the same as Stockhausen’s “moments” which have start and stop times, if not beginnings and endings. Moments are ultimately objects, so that, at their largest temporal extent, they are reified. Time-fields are not objects. We don’t start them or stop them, they fade in and out; or, if they start or stop abruptly, it is as if we have tuned in or out of them. In other words, they seem to have been going on before and to go one after we notice or attend to them. In some ways, time fields might be considered states of consciousness, akin to emotions or moods.]

Final note: The roles of both players are to combine, embellish, extend, contrast, transform, accompany, and complement the prerecorded music. To accomplish this successfully depends on their skills, knowledge, intuition, taste, and humility in regard to musical expression in general and the music on the tapes in particular. The ultimate goal is to present the range of similarities and diversities of music as a musical expression as such.

[The musics used in *Rapport* will have degrees of vividness not only depending on the musical flow and context, but on a listener’s familiarity with the musics, or even of a type of music. In 1973, many people had much less of familiarity with world music as compared to today.]

I also wrote program notes of the piece. Here is one paragraph that describes an aspect of the phenomenology of the tape delay system.

[The] network of tape machines and mixers allows a recorded event to be played back after a certain time interval and be combined with new material again and again. A kind of “feed-

back” canon develops in which an event combines with its own past. As all A-flats are the same in some musical way, and all downbeats may represent the same moment in experiential time, the repetition of an event, superimposing its present and past, is a phenomenal experience in which all of the event’s internal sequential moments are felt to be at once.

[Thus, I make an analogy between the repetitions of the tape delay system and octave equivalence, the measures of a score, and the modules of the time-point system. However, the passage goes on as follows to describe the piece as the play of time fields.]

In real time, a moment expands into a time field. The transformation of these time fields into one another constitutes the “form” or, more accurately, the “forming-process” of the piece. This flow of time-fields is dependent on the state of the delay-system and the character of the musical materials captured by it.

The experience of conceiving, planning, and performing *Rapport* meant many things to me. While I intuitively knew what I was after and eventually found ways to achieve it, I didn’t have a conceptual understanding of what I was really doing. I knew I wanted to make music that didn’t have to have to articulate only certain categories of form or process in order to be “successful.” I knew I didn’t want to write teleological music that manipulated the feelings and thoughts of the listener. But if someone had said to me, “Bob, you just like to wander freely, rather than hike to a specific place by a designated route,” I would have thought that was very insightful. And I might have wondered why wandering meant so much to me. To be sure, *Rapport* wandered. Moreover, it allowed any sound or process to transform into any other. As a consequence, all the sounds and processes in *Rapport* were permeable; there was no ontological opposition between successive or simultaneous events. The trouble with using the tape delay system was that it could result in sheer repetition and permanence. So performing *Rapport* meant to keep impermanence alive, rather than bogging down into closed cycles.

At the time of *Rapport*, while I was unable to conceptualize why I wanted my music to be transient, transformational, and open-ended, I was also beginning to read non-western philosophy, which gave me a few pointers. A specifically Buddhist basis for my compositional poetics evolved over many years, and didn’t become full blown until about 1995, well after I had ceased playing with world music in my music.

But let me backtrack to some of the conversations that occurred after performances of *Rapport*. Many people thought of the piece as a kind of voyage, with David and me controlling a plane or spaceship. A few people commented that the two of us, hunched over the tape machines, mixers, and synthesizer, turning dials, pushing levels, and playing the synthesizer keyboard reminded them of Kubrick’s movie, 2001, or an episode of Star Trek. Some took this image a little further suggesting we seemed to be more controlling than free. One person went even as far as to say that if the music was indeed being controlled by us, that seemed to conflict with our notions of non-teleological processes. I thought a discussion of the difference between self-consciousness versus consciousness might develop, but it didn’t.

Many people asked if we could perform the piece badly, if mistakes were possible. I answered that the process could easily go poorly, as it did in the first performance, but, as in most free improvisation, when things didn’t go as expected, one could change one’s immediate actions to make the most of an unexpected change. But, no, there was no specific event that could be called a mistake. The problem was to keep in touch with the flow and this meant being constantly attentive, without being vigilant.

Others commented that the delay time, about seven seconds long, seemed to be about the time of breath, so one’s breathing ended up following the repetition rate; some said that this promoted a relaxed and even

meditative response. A few people thought that a shorter delay time would make the piece seem trivially repetitive and that a longer delay would have not allowed the whole repetition cycle to remain in short term memory. I had no particular response to these observations, but David said the seven-second delay did promote a meditative response. He also said that the delay idea could be connected with the Indian concept of *samsara*, the wheel of life. Of course, *samsara* is the place of suffering, as opposed to *nirvana*, when one leaves the endless rotations of the wheel forever. But he also mentioned that in Mahayana Buddhism, *samsara* is *nirvana*. That is, *nirvana* really means that one detaches from the rotation of the wheel of life and regards it in an accepting, and blissful manner. This meant to me that the apparent conflict between the repetitions of the delay system and the musical processes it enables were actually mutually dependent. As Cage had said, you suffer when you want to be somewhere else, but accepting one's present surroundings can promote enjoyment and even pleasure. A few people saw the piece as a form of tantric magic, using change to effect changes for the good.

Perhaps the most esoteric comment came from someone at one of the 1974 performances. He said that *Rapport* reminded him of the "akashic record." I had never encountered this term before, but David knew that the 19th-century theosophists had coined this word from the Sanskrit word, *akasha* (meaning the sky, space or ether). These records were a sort of spiritual library of all human experience in which the history of the universe was encoded in a non-physical form of existence. Moreover these records are continually being updated as time moves on. I thought of this idea as a fanciful reaction to the music, but I took it a little more seriously years later, when I came across a similar concept in Yogachara Buddhism.

In this form of Buddhist metaphysics the storehouse consciousness or *ālayavijñāna* has a similar function to the akashic records. This consciousness generates seven other, subservient types of consciousness. It also receives traces from all of the other consciousnesses and retains them as potential energy for their further manifestations and activities. If I were to take this consciousness ontology as having something to do with *Rapport*, I would say that the act of performing this piece depends on contact with the *ālayavijñāna*, for that is source of the energies that become manifest as music in my piece. Of course, this would also apply to any piece whatsoever.²²

David and I performed *Rapport* in 1974 and 75 in a manner similar to the first series of performances. My favorite performances are from 1974, but there are very remarkable passages in the 1975 set. Chester Biscardi and Martin Brody also gave performances of the piece in 1975. Each performance was automatically documented by the delay system, many of which were broadcast on radio or during talks I presented on the piece. Due to changes in the technology of electronic music, the need for many tape machines, and the nature of my subsequent compositional interests and projects, to my knowledge, no other live performances were given after 1975. However, I am presently working on a computer version of the piece so it can be performed again.

Rapport heralded the next stage of my compositional activities: composing music that variously combined and transformed music from many times and places. The three parts of the *Acculturation Trilogy* consist of: (1) a 45-minute four-track electronic piece called *Thunder of Spring over Distant Mountains* (1973) based on seven pieces of south and south-east Asian music; (2) a set of five chamber pieces; and (3) *In Different Voices*, an hour-long composition for five wind ensembles, commissioned by the Yale Band to be played in their American Bicentennial concert in 1976. The five chamber pieces are: *Varnam* (1971), for five melody

²² Incidentally, the eight Yogachara consciousnesses help solve a problem in Buddhist philosophy: How can reincarnation be accommodated in a system of thought that postulates only phenomena and no self (or soul)? Acting like computer memory when a computer is turned off, the storehouse consciousness preserves all traces of the actions of sentient beings in the form of potential energy during the period between lives.

instruments, finger cymbals, drums, and drones; *Motet on Doo-Dah* (1972), for alto flute, bass, and piano; *Not Lilacs* (1973) for trumpet, alto saxophone, piano, and drums; *Variations on the Variations of the Quadran Pavan and the Quadran Pavan of Bull and Byrd* (1974), for two pianos; and *Bob's Plain Bobs* (1975), for percussion quartet and tape. All of these works explored processes of musical accommodation and change in different ways.

After the first set of performances of *Rapport*, I sent some tape dubs of the performances and other recent music to various friends. Among them was William Albright, who took the time to write me a letter responding to my music. I don't have that letter any longer, but I remember Bill complementing me on my compositional efforts, but warning me that my music was getting too subtle and obscure to please the average concertgoer. I was concerned about this, too, and I appreciated his remark. Nevertheless, I like to wander.

Robert Morris

RAPPORT

Instruction for Performance ²³

A) *Rapport* is a “live-electronic composition”—i.e., a composition with electronic instruments to be performed in real time—for two performers.

B) The electronic equipment²⁴ needed is as follows:

- one four-track tape deck (or two two-track tape decks).
- one medium-sized electronic music synthesizer.
- one reverberation unit (plate type preferred).
- one tape delay system consisting of two compatible two-track tape machines and a 6 to 2 audio mixer.
- one stereo audio amplifier
- two (sets of) loud speakers.

C) A prerecorded four-track tape²⁵ is available from the composer. The output of the tape deck playing this tape is sent into the synthesizer for mixing with electronically generated sound. The synthesizer’s output is divided so that the signal can be reverberated and mixed with itself and sent into the tape delay system. The output of the system is then amplified and presented to the audience. The block diagram in figure 1 summarizes this arrangement.

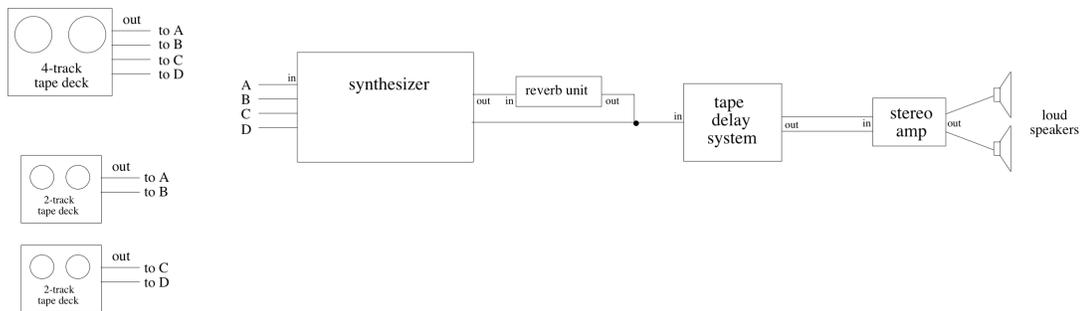


Figure 1. Configuration of electronic equipment needed to perform *Rapport*.

D) Of the two performers, one controls the synthesizer and the mixing of the four tracks of the prerecorded tape(s); the other player controls the state of the tape delay system and spatial location of sound on verbal cues from the first player. The two players should be familiar with electronic music equipment, have a thorough knowledge of the contents of the prerecorded tape(s) and these instructions, and a desire to project the spirit of *Rapport* (see final notes).

²³ There is no score per se for *Rapport*. These instructions function as directions for improvisation.

²⁴ These were the requirements for the piece in 1973; today most of this can be substituted by DSP software.

²⁵ If a four-track tape deck is not available, two stereo tapes containing the same tracks as on the four-track tape is also available. These tapes can be played on two stereo tape decks, starting the decks simultaneously.

- E) Over seventy excerpts of recorded musics from an extremely wide spectrum of geographical areas and historical periods are to be found on the prerecorded tapes(s). Some—perhaps 10 percent—of this music is already electronically altered via electronic music transformations²⁶ in order to provide connection with the electronic transformations that player one performs in real time.
- F) Due to the differences between electronic music synthesizers, systems, and equipment, a block diagram of the ideal synthesizer²⁷ for *Rapport* is given in figure 2.

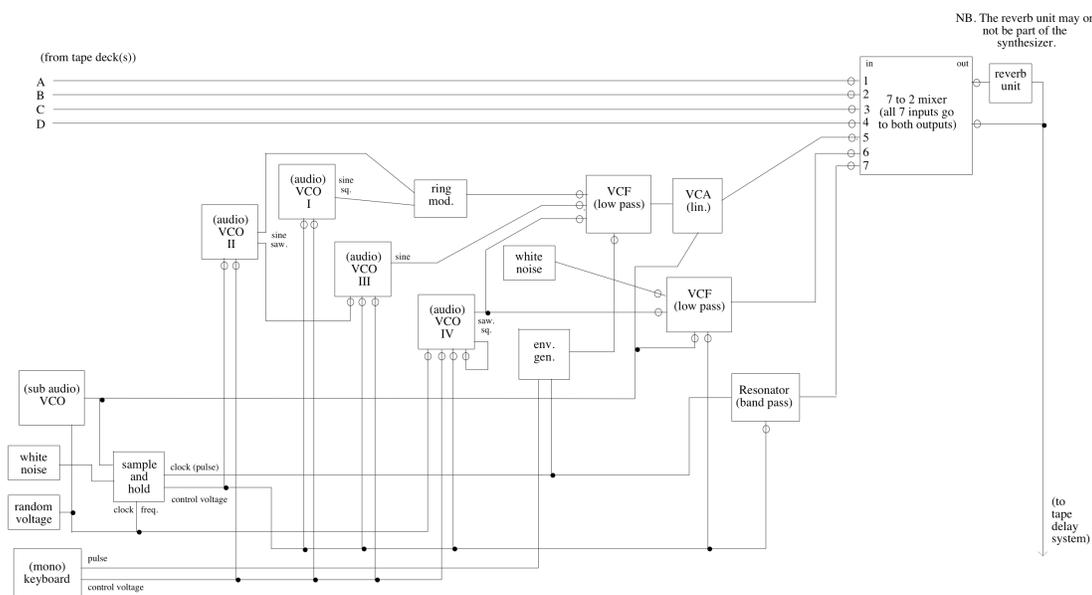


Figure 2. Block diagram of synthesizer interconnections.

○ indicates a pot.

Here I provide some comments of the use and function of the various components in figure 2.

1. Some of the potentiometers in the block diagram may be passive (attenuators); they are shown by “o” in the block diagram.
2. There is a 7 to 2 mixer in the synthesizer, not to be confused with the mixer used in the tape delay system.
3. OSC III’s audio output frequency modulated by OSC II.
4. OSC IV’s output is connected to its control input to produce a variety of complex (possibly chaotic) waveforms.
5. The envelope generator may be triggered from the keyboard or from the sample and hold unit (clock (or pulse) output) or both.
6. The sequencer is set so that the speed of its clock is in the audio range (30-700 Hz.)
7. The resonator is a voltage-controlled filter (band pass) with a very high Q so that when a pulse is sent into its input, the filter rings. The sample and hold unit may also control the resonator’s F_c .

²⁶ Such as amplitude, frequency and ring modulation, filtering, gating, and so forth. These are the same types of transformations that player one can use in live performance, so these alterations of the source material can serve as models for what player one can electronically perform.

²⁷ *Rapport* was first performed at the Yale Electronic Studio using an ARP 2500 synthesizer.

8. Both the sample and hold and sequencer units may have their clocks frequency modulated from the random voltage source.
9. One the outputs on the 7 to 2 mixer sends the final outputs of the tape(s) and the synthesizer into the reverberation unit and then into the tape delay system, the other output is sent directly into the tape delay system.
10. It can be seen from figure 2 that there are three inputs to the final 7 to 2 mixer. Mixer input 5 consists of the outputs of three oscillators, which may produce frequency modulated or ring modulated sounds that may be filtered and/or amplified with or without envelopes. The oscillators' frequencies may be controlled from the keyboard, sequencer, or sample and hold unit. Mixer input 6 will produce vocal- and brass-type sounds as well as filtered white noise, depending on the settings of the filter's F_c and Q . (NB: F_c control is usually set as low as possible so the input sound's entire audio spectrum will be filtered out except when the envelope generator or the sample and hold unit (momentarily) raises the F_c .) Mixer input 7 contains the resonator mentioned above.

As it is assumed that the synthesizer player has had experience with electronic music system, there is not need to further explain the functions of each of the synthesizer components.

G) The components of the tape delay system are interconnected as indicated in the figure 3.

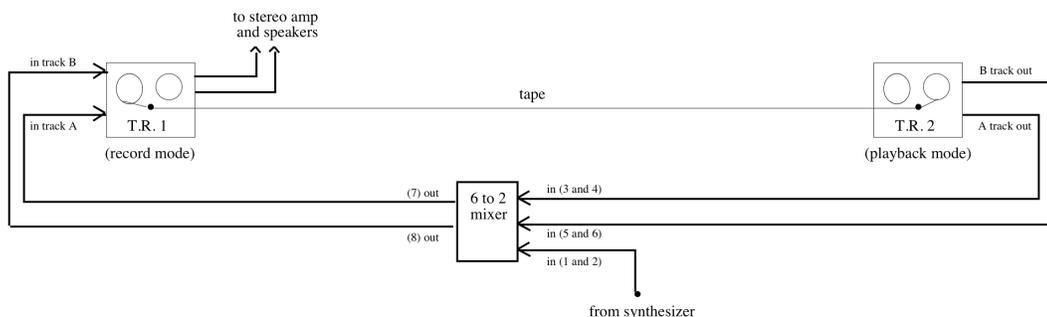


Figure 3. The tape delay system.

Tape is threaded from the supply reel of T.R. 1 (tape recorder 1) past its record/playback head and on to T.R. 2. The tape is then taken past T.R. 2's record/playback head and onto its take-up reel. T.R. 1 is set in record mode and T.R. 2 is set in playback mode. When a sound is recorded on the tape at T.R. 1, it will travel on the tape to T.R. 2's playback head, and, by virtue of the interconnections of equipment shown in figure 3, it will be rerecorded at T.R. 1. This process will occur continuously depending on the state of the tape delay system determined by the setting of pots²⁸ on the mixer. The time delay between reiterations of the sounds is dependent on the tape speed and distance between the two tape heads. In *Rapport*, the distance should be about 52 inches at 7½ ips (or about 104 inches at 15 ips) in order to achieve a delay of about seven seconds.

The 6 to 2 mixer should be set up as follows: the six inputs are labeled 1 through 6, and the two outputs labeled 7 and 8; inputs 1, 3, and 5 lead to output 7, and inputs 2, 4, and 6 lead to output 8. The output pots are set at equal optimum levels (maximum signal to noise ratio and minimum distortion). The output of the synthesizer (after the addition of reverberation) is patched into both

²⁸ "Pots" is an abbreviation for potentiometers (often used as volume controls).

inputs 1 and 2. The output of track A of T.R. 2 is patched in to the inputs 3 and 4. Track B of T.R. 2 is patched into inputs 5 and 6. Mixer outputs 7 and 8 are sent into the inputs of track A and B of T.R. 1, respectively. As shown in figure 3, the stereo amplifier and speakers monitor the outputs of track A and B of T.R. 1. A summary of the mixer's input/output configuration is given in figure 4.

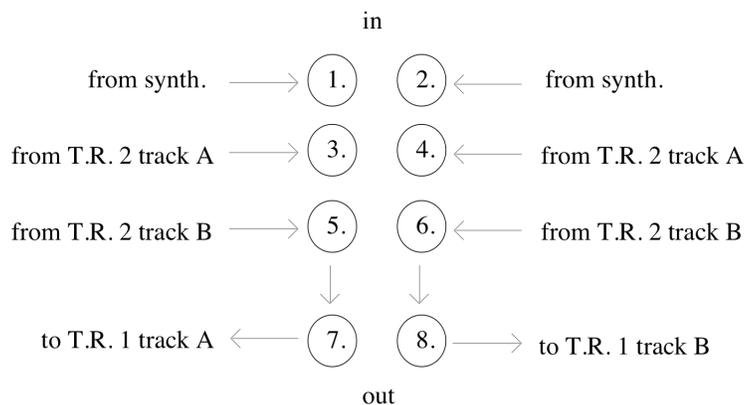


Figure 4. Tape delay system mixer configuration

The maximum settings for each of the pots on the mixer should be registered and marked next to each pot. Once the output settings have been made (see above), mark each input pot at the place where a test signal produces an output amplitude equal to any other pot setting already determined. This setting is called the *max input level*. The settings of the playback levels of T.R. 1 and T.R. 2 respectively should be set so that when either pots 3, 4, 5, or 6 are at their maximum input level the re-recording of a sound on T.R. 1 (either track) from T.R. 2 (either track) is one DB less than its initial recording level.²⁹ Once this has been done, the settings of outputs 7 and 8 and input/output settings on the tape recorders should remain unchanged.

The next step is to reset pots 3, 4, 5, and 6 so that the reiterated sound is 5 DB less than its initial level. This marked on the pot and called the *secondary input level*. As a result, inputs 1 and 2 will have only a maximum input level, while the rest of the input pots will have two settings, maximum and secondary.

- H) There are sixteen basic states of the tape delay system. Each state has a different effect on the rerecording of sound in the system. Each state has a name, and when the synthesizer player desires a particular state in performance, she calls for it by name. The graphs found below describe each state; the “mixer setting” in each is similar in format to figure 4. On the next page, three symbols are used to indicate a pot.

- indicates a pot open to its maximum input level.
- ▣ indicates a pot open to its secondary input level.
- indicates a pot that is closed.

²⁹ This ensures that the tape delay system does not inadvertently produce positive feedback, increasing the amplitude of the signal on each reiteration. If set correctly, then when all pots are at their maximum input levels, a sound should be repeated at a level very slightly less than the previous level; thus, if the system is left alone, a sound will eventually die away, but only after maybe 20 iterations.

The sixteen states are classified into four *Types*.

Type-I states: material entered into the system on either pot 1 or 2 or both will produce reiterations.

Type-II states: material entering the system will be reiterated on only pot 1 or 2. The pot that will allow repeats is marked with an arrow. If the only the pot without the arrow is open, the state is said to be *NULL* (see below).

Type-III states: Closing state, in which the reiterations are reduced or eliminated.

Type-IV states: Panning states, which may be used in conjunction with the other states.

In general, Type-I, -II, and -III states use pots 3 through 6, while Type-IV states use pots 1 and 2.

In order to visually display what each state does, a graph of reiterations with respect to time on each mixer output track is given. The graph is explained under the states FULL and CROSS. It should be noted that for the purpose of explanation, the material entered at pots 1 and 2 is given a different letter, namely X and Y.³⁰

I) States of the Tape Delay System

Type-I states

name	mixer	settings	graph: tracks	initial	1 st return	2 nd return
FULL	■	■	A:	X	X+Y	X+Y
	■	■	B:	Y	X+Y	X+Y

[X enters the system on track A, and Y enters on track B; both return on both tracks, etc.]

name	mixer	settings	graph: tracks	initial	1 st return	2 nd return	3 rd return
CROSS	■	■	A:	X	Y	X	Y
	□	■	B:	Y	X	Y	X

[X enters the system on track A, and Y enters on track B; on the first return, X returns on track B and X on A; on the second return, Y returns on A and Y on B; these two returns alternate, etc.]

name	mixer	settings	graph: tracks	initial	1 st return	2 nd return
SIDES	■	■	A:	X	X	X
	■	□	B:	Y	Y	Y
	□	■				
JOIN A	■	■	A:	X	X+Y	X+Y
	■	□	B:	Y		
	■	□				
JOIN B	■	■	A:	X		
	□	■	B:	Y	X+Y	X+Y
	□	■				

³⁰ In performance, the material from the synthesizer entering the tape delay system on pots 1 and 2 may be identical.

Type-II states name	mixer	settings	graph: tracks	initial	1 st return	2 nd return
SIDE A	↓ ■ ■ □	■ □ □	A: B:	X Y	X	X
SIDE B	■ □ □	↓ ■ □ ■	A: B:	X Y	Y	Y
A	↓ ■ ■ □	■ ■ □	A: B:	X Y	X X	X X
B	■ □ ■	↓ ■ □ ■	A: B:	X Y	Y Y	Y Y
ONCE A	↓ ■ □ □	■ ■ □	A: B:	X Y	Y	
SIDE B	■ ■ ■	↓ ■ □ □	A: B:	X Y	X	

Note: if the pot (1 or 2) with the arrow above it is closed, the state is NULL. In NULL, there is no delay. For instance, here is the state graph of NULL SIDE A. Since pot 1 is closed the X material is silence and therefore not written on the graph.

name	mixer	settings	graph: tracks	initial	1 st return	2 nd return
SIDE A	↓ □ ■ □	■ □ □	A: B:	Y		

Type-III states.

FLOAT Slowly turn pots 3, 4, 5, and/or 6 to their secondary input levels. The following mixer setting shows CROSS after being effected by FLOAT



CLEAR Gradually turn all pots 3, 4, 5, and 6 to zero (off).

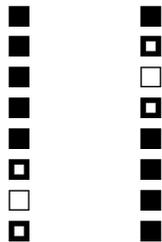
Type IV states.

In the previous state graphs, the sounds entering the system via pots 1 and 2 were given different labels, X and Y. In actuality, the material entering at pots 1 and 2 is identical. Type-IV states allow the material entering the system to be differentiated depending on the relative levels of the two pots. This can be either static (where the two pots are equal or not—possibly yielding a NULL state—or dynamic, where each pot changes gain independently according to the actions of the tape delay system player. When this is made to happen, the sound entering the system will appear to move between the two speakers. Thus, Type-IV states involve dynamically changing the special location of the sounds emanating from the synthesizer and the prerecorded tape(s).

PAN...NOW

The tape delay system player starts panning between the left and right speakers. First, the synthesizer player calls out the word PAN; but the tape delay system player starts the panning only on the word NOW.³¹

Here are the eight successive stages in the state PAN...NOW using pots 1 and 2. The pots are continuously changed to move from one stage to the next usually in the following order (or the retrograde) wrapping around from the last stage back to the first.



SLOW PAN...NOW

This state is similar to PAN...NOW except the panning should be rather slow and smooth.

STABLE

Stop panning very soon after the command. The levels of pots 1 and 2 may be at any level between off and the maximum input level.

³¹ This allows the tape delay player to be ready to pan and to allow the synthesizer player to call the word NOW at a particularly salient or dramatic moment.

delay system. Indeed, a successful performance of *Rapport* involves subtle and dynamic mixtures of the four tracks of prerecorded material and the electronic sounds at differing and changing dynamic levels occasionally with frequent changes of the states of the delay system.

10. *Rapport* is an open, spacious, ongoing process composition whose details will be quite different from one performance to another. Its form or flow may be likened to the fugue or rickshaw with its series of exposition and episodes. The piece will tend to have passages of four functions: accumulations; preservations (FLOAT is a useful state for this function); decays; and moments of repose—even silence (after a CLEAR state). In general, the recorded music and electronic sound are entered into the tape delay system in order to develop, for lack of a better word, a *time field*. A time field may be extended and changed by the change of a state of the delay system and/or the introduction of new sounds and materials. The amount of time spent in a time field is, of course, free, but usually three iterations (3 times 7 = 21 seconds) are need for a time field to fully develop. The piece may remain in the CLEAR or ONCE A or ONCE B state, as well as the NULL states for reasons of contrast.

- K) Final note: The roles of both players are to combine, embellish, extend, contrast, transform, accompany, and complement the prerecorded music. To accomplish this successfully depends on their skills, knowledge, intuition, taste, and humility in regard to musical expression in general and the music on the tapes in particular. The ultimate goal is to present the range of similarities and diversities of music as a musical expression as such.

Variations on and for Daniel Charles¹

Jean-Charles François

2010

[This text is based on John Cage's Variations VI, in which lines and points are distributed at random on a plane surface to determine a certain number of elements. For each segment six aspects are determined at random : a) One amongst four books, one by John Cage, For the Birds, In Conversation with Daniel Charles, three by Daniel Charles, Le temps de la voix, Musiques nomades, and La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique²; b) the number of the page, the line in that page and the character in that line of the selected book ; c) the number of characters in the selected quote; d) the number of characters in my text in response to the quote ; e) the style of my text in response ; f) the degree of complexity in my text. The segments appear in the order of the random determination.]

Foreword

Daniel Charles (1935-2008), as a musician, studied under Olivier Messiaen at the Conservatoire de Paris, and, as a philosopher, under Jean Wahl, Gilles Deleuze and Mikel Dufrenne at Paris-Sorbonne and Paris-Nanterre. He founded and chaired the Department of Music at the University of Paris-Vincennes for twenty years (1969-1989) and taught General Aesthetics for ten years (1970-1980) at the University of Paris IV-Sorbonne. He served as Professor of Aesthetics and Philosophy at the University of Nice-Sophia Antipolis for nine years (1989-99), and became Professor emeritus in 1999. He has written extensively on the aesthetics of contemporary music, and is most renowned in the Anglophone world for his conversations with the late John Cage, published as "For the Birds" in London and Boston (Marion Boyars, 1981). Six of his books were translated into German, and two appeared in Japanese. He has more recently published in French "Musiques nomades" (edited by Christian Hauer, Paris, KIME, 1998) - and " La Fiction de la Postmodernité selon l'Esprit de la Musique" (Paris, P.U.F., 2001). His "Gloses sur John Cage", first published in 1978, have been reissued in 2002 (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer), on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the death of the composer.³

¹ The original version of this text in French will be published at the end of 2010 in a series of two books on Daniel Charles edited by Martha Grabocz and Geneviève Mathon, with contributions by Baudin, Mario Costa, Françoise Escal, Christine Esclapez, Alain Fourchette, Jean-Louis Houchard, Ulroke Kasper, Le Quan Ninh, Carmen Pardo Salgado, Emmanuel Pimenta, Michele Porzio, Corinne Savy, Bernard Vecchione, Llorenç Barber, Eveline Caduc, Béatrice Didier, Marie-Anne Lescourret, Michael Bach and Horaccio Vaggione. An audio CD realized by Christophe Charles will accompany the books. The English translation of this text is by Jean-Charles and Nancy François.

² John Cage, *Pour les Oiseaux, entretiens avec Daniel Charles*, Paris, Pierre Belfond, 1976. Daniel Charles, *Le temps de la voix*, Paris, Jean-Pierre Delage, 1978. Daniel Charles, *Musiques nomades*, écrits réunis et présentés par Christian Hauer, Paris, Editions Kimé, 1998. Daniel Charles, *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2001.

³ Taken from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/cath/ahrc/congress/2003/programme/speakers.html>

Segment 1

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 210:

«J.C.: ...I have still another

D.C.: That's rather intriguing. How do you manage to differentiate among them?

J.C.: The first one, 4'33", involved one or several musicians who made no sound. The second one, 0'0", indicates that an obligation towards others must be fulfilled, in a partial or complete manner, by a single person. The third one involves gathering together two or more people who are playing a game in an amplified context. A bridge or chess match, or any game at all can become a distinct – another essentially silent – musical work.

D.C.: You said a 'distinct' work? That presupposes that the work already exists...

J.C.: Yes, in nature, and at every moment. 'Distinct' means that there is amplification. It's a work on a work – like all my indeterminate works! I say that it's essentially silent because I believe that it allows the silence of a game of chess to appear for what it really is: a silence full of noises.

D.C.: It can't appear exactly as it is, since it's amplified.

J.C.: That's how I act, with the aid of technology.

D.C.: Then your 'action' consists in choosing a particular situation: the game.

J.C.: But my music isn't a game. I don't like the idea of a game, if by game you mean rules and measurements. In *Homo Ludens*, Huizinga demonstrates quite well that games are an affair of rules, and that these rules lead to separating the world of the players from the rest of the world. I chose the situation of a game, but not because I consider my music to be a game. In fact, I could have chosen any other situation as well.

D.C.: Rules reflect the economic world?

J.C.: ...»

Response:

The unruléd upset set of rules and the eluded lure of festive play, the idle idea of unworked work and the silence full of noises, the time of the imprecise clock and the very precise processes for avoiding the "I", the "self". The "I", the "self" eluded by the upset set of rules, ruled by the "self" in the idle idea of the unworked work, which goes on to the shelves as "I, myself". De-iced ice of the dismaster-worked work, this fast, even faster master-discarded, disderridized, dishegelized world, last of the dismatterized work, play of the eluded self – this "I" – disliking the set of rules. Rules reflect the economic world, economy of the rules to be worked, ergonomics deferred to the unruléd work, ergonomics outside norms, deregulated effects of disrespected rules, ephemeral dis-regretted tools, disintegrated desert ergs, disregarded regulations exerted by relegated clerks, controlled disruptions, scrupulous dispersions, calculated distortions. The work, according to the rules, is regulated by the determined place and time, but the work becoming unsettled as to the usual rules of the game, the rules of the game of the unsettled work, consist in avoiding what we mean by the rules of usual ways of conduct, the listeners are dumbfounded before the rule that dictates the play and which becomes

unsettled in non-playing, in front of the plot weaved for them, the listeners see, they do not hear, they are stunned to deaf by the concept of the no-play, no-game, benumbed by the act of doing nothing, deafened in front of the unsettled play of the work according to the rules, but which is in the process of being unsettled, unruled and unworked in front of their eyes, they are obsessed by what is plotted by the “I myself create for you the non-self of the non-play” the “I myself” of the concept deafens them, they do not see inevitably the silence of the non-set of rules, an essential silence, “a silence full of noises”. A silence full of noises, that’s rather intriguing, sensible to the science of noises, of knowing, of honoring noises, annoyed off noses, envoys’ dove voices, fool no eyes, no ears, foul love joys, flew over moistened soils, few oven’s coils, awful poise, footloose, fool snooze, flour proof, flounced choices. A silence full of noises, that’s rather intriguing, in sight island, “I” land in sight of neither land, high hand philosophies, alliance filled osmosis, side science field osteology, that’s how I act. Sign talent foolproof Joyce, size length fulvous nose, fulsome knows, sigh lent. White noise, grey noise. Not exactly as it is, since it is amplified. White noise, grayness, red nose. The noise lies dense in grey. Essential license, then white bread grey day. Thy lance breaks, the work’s grace. Colored rustling, rushing stream, rusting screeches, sensible rumblings, the celebration of enacting, “we aren’t the ones celebrating, it’s *what occurs that does the celebrating*”⁴.

Segment 2

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 150:

« J.C.: ...*missed* any *understanding* of that music.

D.C.: *So wouldn't the work be missing an understanding of itself?*

J.C.: You could say that about all music-objects. They bend sounds to what composers want. But for the sound to obey, they have to already exist. They do exist. I am interested in the fact that they are there, rather than in the will of the composer. A ‘correct understanding’ doesn’t interest me. With a music-process, there is no ‘correct understanding’ anywhere. And consequently, no all-pervasive ‘misunderstanding’ either. So, music-objects, in themselves, are a ‘misunderstanding’. But sounds don’t worry about whether they make sense or whether they’re heading in the right direction. They don’t need that direction or misdirection to be themselves. They *are*, and that’s enough for them. And for me, too.

D.C.: *Marcuse says somewhere about Heidegger that the question of being has always already been answered... You use sounds...»*

Response:

Under the tree at Antibes, slowly savoring glass after glass, spoken words after spoken words would be delivered unceasingly with a great sense of humor, with many subtle puns. These discourses were punctuated in a random way by the fruits of the tree falling on the table. Plop, splash, ssschlop, ... Big orange fruits which would on impact burst, projecting a juicy and sensual substance of vivid colors. Then, suddenly, one had absolutely to listen to the most unexpected musical recordings.

In New York, for the first performance of the *Song Books*, the singer having cancelled her participation, the composer himself decides to replace her: “I show the audience how I am, how I

⁴ *For the Birds*, p.211, John Cage is speaking.

sing. I give them my voice.”⁵ Through his scores, the composer refuses to give his own voice, his personality, but the composer now becoming a performer of his own music can offer his voice to the public since now his voice is a sound object like any other: let the sounds be themselves (here, the soul of the composer?).

Segment 3

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, pages 46-47:

«...»

...»

Response:

“Did you ever make love?” It is through these words that Cage questioned the performers of his piece *Amores* for prepared piano and percussion trio, who to his taste were keeping too cool a head, with an abstract look, and a high nose. The subjective element that the performers had now to transform into a reality might seem enigmatic. But here Cage was alluding to a suspended and fluctuating erotic temporality, which wanders into forgetfulness and delays indefinitely the orgasm, as it has been described by Daniel Charles⁶. To be detached from the song of the origin is to access ecstasy.

Segment 4

Quote: *Musiques nomades*, page 183:

« “... that which exceeds human things: nothing which, by definition, could be reproduced.”

⁷ According to Mâche, access to the “beyond of organized human thinking” requires the exceeding of constituted language; the pseudo-Longin, talking of rhetoric, bases his language deconstruction on the figure of the “hyperbaton”, which he defines as

“an order that dissociates words and thoughts from their usual succession and constitutes [...] the character...”⁸»

Response:

...the sublime presents itself paradoxically as a disengagement, a process striving for a musical sense in the chaos of nature, a refusal to be implicated in artifice, a tendency of natural sounds to be perceived as music. As a rhetorical figure that does not respect the order of words and thoughts, the hyperbaton, in its violence – the musical representation of natural models on the instruments creating an autonomous reality – allows art to appear as nature itself and to access to the greatness of

⁵ Ibid., p. 120, footnote.

⁶ Daniel Charles, *Le temps de la voix*, p. 182.

⁷ P. Lacoue-Labarthe, “La Vérité sublime” in *Du Sublime*, collective work, Paris, Berlin, 1988, p. 141.

⁸ Longin, XVII, 2-3, quoted by Lacoue-Labarthe, *loc. Cit.*, p. 141-142.

the sublime. This disengagement from causalities, a refusal to implicate oneself in the artifice of a plot, has however nothing to do with the nihilistic silence of...

Segment 5

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, pages 18-19:

«...siderations “modern” of the properly “linguistic” aspects of this text. The views which emerge today from phonology, to mention only this field, would help, at least in part, to understand the essence of the voice. If language and music have in common to be dependent on contrasting basic unitary elements, one could, at least provisionally, identify them: one could say that the phonemes are to language, what timbres are to music. Nevertheless, this affirmation has to be immediately corrected and amended: beyond the recognition of a simple stimulus, the contextuality of the phonemes plays an eminent role in the intelligibility of language; it means that one must not be hypnotized by the sole physical description of sounds. Have musicians accomplished this leap, from the timbres to their contexts? It seems – if one reads at least certain leaflets or explanations, signed sometimes by prestigious names: let’s only mention here Stockhausen – that often acoustics serve, for the composer, as an exclusive safeguard. Now, the fact that the relationship between the acoustical signal and its meaning is not univocal, *one/one?*, that there could be tensions and distensions at the level of the sound curve without dismissing the latter’s intelligibility, this phenomenon, explained by the linguists, merits being drawn to the musician’s attention. Not in order that the musician should model his approach on the one of t...

Response:

...aphonic outside logic. The leap from timbres to their contexts, slip from timbres there into contexts, the bleep timbre context, these bones that accomplice musicians gnaw, accomplices of nothing much, the timbres are formed by the smallest particles, by small precise gestures, slowly assimilated by those who produce them, how to accomplish the leap to contexts in this micro-universe, the timbres have leaped outside the text, the context is no longer about taming the letter, but about contesting the leap outside bothersome timbre-less disembodied abstraction. “Background noise, arch-ground noise”, round buck poise, bound jump capriole. Ephemeral phenomena, fare normal, fair Norman, effects aimed at fame omega, the contextuality of phonemes and the consternating actuality of false names, remind musicians, not to be hypnotized by the sole physical description. Background noise, crack sound noise, dark hound annoys, at noon a norm. Timbroglio-limbo, accomplished, flipping countess ecstasy, this simple gong taste, musicians sculptors of timbres, whose context is the miniature kneading, far from formal contexts and the foundation of a bound text, they accomplish their leaps to contexts through organization systems turned towards social relationships, intertextuality, collaborative sound elaborations, tensions and distensions, the relationship between the acoustical signal and its meaning is not univocal, have the musicians accomplished this leap to dim their complexes, to dream their complexities, to rejoice in the meaning of the sound stream, to bring the choice one stands, to understand the essence of the voice? «The “background noise” [...] does not at all appear consequently as an unfortunate *artifacts*»¹⁰. Arch-ground noise, essence of the voice, understood through phonology. The essence of beyond void,

⁹ In English in the text.

¹⁰ *Le temps de la voix*, p. 19.

partly helped by phonology, the sense of leaving it devoid of joist partly due to Afro-nosology, the scent of living moist partly due to oenology, the stain breather of the account-test, the descent of livid ovoid partly due to the false Ono gee counter extended, back to the ground of the full ground bass. To reserve to technology the randomness of the “background noise”, is also to « grant voice with an “arch-ground formal noise” »¹¹, turbulence of timbre as specters which coin texts, which ground the text, which arch-ground the formal text, which found taste, to format the best heads, void without ground, ovoid without form. This phenomenon, phonemes on the way to non univocal meaning, phonology, for...

Segment 6

Quote: *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, page 51:

« ...ts historical-factual *ambitus*... »

Response:

To grasp the whole thing in a single glance, with a distracted attitude, “narrow-temporalizing” *ric lancet ecstasy radicle usi*. Its factual post-cognitive *ambitus, nem* in “equidistant-polarizing” *anti-bus*. The “no-work” society, multiple potentialities, dis-identification, *still sus cubitus, co*, some crossbreed, tinkered logic, “self-surmounting” “metalo-sulphuristic”, vain fragmentation *hist stoical Debussy* indecipherable strangeness, *bit, in situ Titus* “hysterico-evenimous-insane ricochet monthly historical bishop, hell! *tau!* It is easy to fustigate with a dialectical stick stroke.

Shame-on-holophrastic-TV *or ii* outside its *ambitus*, outside its range of temporal insert. As such (flashy rags and torrential story) *a work in due and good form*, however hybrid, crossbreed and myriapod, (lie *tus*), severely, outside gender, outside categories, and (in summary) outside work (*bors-d'oeuvre*).

Ev, post-mortern *oe* because his heart is his lute, *si*, the source reveals itself as source only after the course of the river has been explored to the sea, *Onan*, “anti-metaphysic”, iamb, “rhizomico-radioceltic”, time itself in the entirety of its unfolding does not move, it is immobile and in peace, *ambi*, time is the shore, *amb*, we pass, an a-historical advent *omnibus*, he seems to walk, *en...* Overlapping of the spans of time, nihilitschean, “perpetual-Leitmotivation”, *amb*, “despotico-ambitious”, and the end of the aesthetics of subjectivity.

Segment 7

Quote: *Musiques nomades*, page 67:

« ...positions nevertheless bring into play some *cycles*. Now, on the other hand, we well know that “a cycle remains always subject to the unidirectional time arrow. There is infinite repetition of the same sequence of events. There is no *evolving* in a cycle. A cyclic succession can be measured in relation to any type of clock.”¹²

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Joël de Rosnay, *Le Macroscopie*, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1975, p. 211.

We mentioned recently a possible fusion between “physical” time and “musical” time. Now we are with our back to the wall. How will Jô Kondô proceed to join with each other these two instances that are apparently always so difficult to reconcile?

There is general acknowledgment today of the major role played in the unification of diverse tendencies of Chinese Buddhism during the eighth century of our era, by the third patriarch of the Hua-yen sect (in Korean: Hwaôn; in Japanese: Kegon), the monk Fa-tsang (643-712). From this sect’s Bible, the *Avatamsaka-Sutra*, Fa-tsang was able to extract the pith, in the forms of the double doctrine of “interpenetration without any obstruction of the universal and the particular” (*li-shih-wu-ai*) and of “interpenetration without any obstruction of the particular and the particular” (*shih-shih-wu-ai*)¹³; hence the term often used concerning the Hua-yen: sect with a “circular” (*yüan*) or “omnicomprehensive” doctrine. Spreading widely, Hua-yen teaching was to gain ground in Korea and Japan, where the monk Dogen (1200-1253), combining it with the world vision of the Zen sect Soto...»

Response:

... back to the wall, how will Jô Kondô proceed?

On the ocean of floral splendor opening one hundred doors enclosing the Treatise of the ocean splendor enclosing the Treatise opening on the floral splendor (*li-shih-wu-ai*), one hundred doors opening on the ocean enclosing the Treatise of the floral splendor (*shih-shih-wu-ai*), enclosing the ocean of the splendor of the one hundred doors of the Treatise opening on the floral splendor, dread oars oppressing on the ocean of oral splendor, opening the Treatise enclosing the floral spleen door one hundred odors opening on the nothingness anchoring the Treatise of local spell hour, past of the past, the ocean endorses the essence of the being-time, offering undraped ostensive clothing dorsal amplexness, strong span storm meandering on the celestial splendor of the Treatise, present of the past, future of the past, enclosing the slowness opening on the oracle softening on the obedient water, the enclosed treat of floral scent (*shih-shih-wu-ai*) or one hundred doors opening on the ocean enclosing the splendor of torrential flows of the time Treatise, past of the present, adorned offering, on the offense encrusting focal torment of the Treatise encoding one hound underdog unheard nauseous odor of the ankylosis of the Treatise of fluvial dour scent, opening on the ocean, the tired trait of the fatal Pandora box, so that opening the Treatise of the floral splendor, one hundred doors opening on the ocean on the celestial tender ennobling the boreal aurora, present of the present, the unidirectional time arrow, circular doctrine (*yüan*), tasting on the ocean the thirteen Ceylon teas, the ten Ecstasies of time, ephemeral errant, future of the present, past of the future, the certain tease (*li-shih-wu-ai*) of dead time opening on the moral splendor, present of the future, being-time (*uji*) enclosing the Treatise of the floral splendor undressed drowned in the ocean often the Treatise of the aspen spore (*li-shih-wu-ai*) enclosing the Treatise of the ocean unnumbered doors of time flow span store endorsing dawn, rigorous simultaneity (*doji*) one hundred doors opening on the ocean enclosing the Treatise, absolute now (*nikon*), of floral splendor sail alone in closing the thirteen teases un-braced hero dogma including the one hundred hours of the flow alpenhorn softening (*zazen*) on the ocean one hundred doors in close hinges in the Treatise opening on the Austrian permanent phenomenon, future of the future, and time itself, of the moral splendor humble adorn certainly coming from the bone enclosing the resplendent traitor ease of the time euphoria (*ji-ji-mu-ge*)...

¹³ This is a broad outline of the three first chapters of the work by Steve Odin, *Process Metaphysics and Hua-yen Buddhism*, Albany, New York, State University of New York Press, 1982.

...in all eternity in full circle. Why, in this case, should we pass by white heads¹⁴ to understand Jô-Kondô?

Segment 8

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 160:

«J.C.: ...tely on the first reading, the way it was going to sound.

D.C.: And how did you notate your first 'electronic' works? I am thinking not only of Imaginary Landscapes, which you worked on at the Cornish School in Seattle, just before the war, but also of your accompaniment music for The City Wears a Slouch Hat, Kenneth Patchen's broadcast in Chicago for CBS in 1941.

J.C.: You know, all that was rather simple. I wrote those attempts just as I had written my percussion scores, with notes and the words which were indispensable for sketching a description of the sounds.

D.C.: Then it was only later that you specially developed your writing techniques?

J.C.: In 1958, a score like *Concert for Piano* served as a sufficient cause for me to seek the greatest diversification possible. [As I mentioned before, there was also my concern with pushing some of Schoenberg's ideas to their limit.] But this non-homogeneous side of my notations also came from the idea of the possible mixture of all notations.

D.C.: They are, in fact, graphic collages! That shows up again in your book Notations. Without retranscribing the 'playing instructions' that the composer customarily places at the head of his score, you reproduce all possible writings, just classifying them in alphabetical order. It is a book for graphologists.

J.C.: I added a few comments, in the form of quotations more or less in the margin, which in principle had nothing to do with the musical examples them...»

Response:

...even for Nelson Goodman¹⁵, some graphic scores by John Cage, extracted from the *Concert for Piano* do not constitute "notations", since it is not possible for the listener to recognize at each performance their distinctive characteristics. For Goodman, no representation system can be defined as notation if it does not satisfy a certain number of syntactical and semantic conditions that would guarantee the integrity of the work whatever the nature of its performance. However, the multiplicity of production tools (instruments, technologies), the direct control of the sound matter, the absence of a unity of conception concerning an ideal sound standard, the diversity of relational practices between participants, all contribute to interfere in the admirable economy of our notational system.

¹⁴ Cf. Daniel Charles, *Musiques Nomades*, p. 70-72. Daniel Charles compares Jô Kondô's approach to the American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), "who had been led to conclude an analogous compromise between circularity and linearity" (see Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, New York and London, Macmillan, 1929, reed. 1989). On page 71, Charles states: "But what can be more Occidental – what can be more *white*... – than Whitehead?". And in the conclusion of the chapter: "Why, then, to understand Jô Kondô, should we pass by Whitehead?" (page 72).

¹⁵ Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art*, Indianapolis, New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., p. 179-190.

Three usages linked to writing coexist and interact in today's world: a) the secondary representation of a sound reality, b) the notion of *indice* (indication or clue) that the performer has to reconstruct, and c) the notion of *chiffre* (cipher or numeral figure) "of a silent language"¹⁶. On the other hand, one can see that Nelson Goodman's precepts are not neutral regarding the sound matter to be represented, and that the only elements that will be allowed in a readable notational system are those which already fit his conditions. Moreover the exclusivity of writing on paper is now strongly challenged by diverse other means for storing memory.

The graphic score frees the performer from following a pre-established code. The reading code has to be reinvented, producing thus sounds which belong at the same time to the score and to the performer. But the presence of the written graphic signs can also reinforce the irresponsible comfort of the performer who is in the habit of relying on reading, the eye then remains fixed on the graphic score and the ear becomes deaf to the perception of the global environment.

The graphic score has opened the field to a utopia that can only function if the participants go beyond the conceptual apparatus of their own musical practice to create a philosophy "in action". What is at stake here is nothing less than the re-invention of the relationships between the oral and the written, and of the relationships between the participants, based on operating principles that mingle artistic issues with ethical ones...

Segment 9

Quote: *Musiques nomades*, page 37:

« Erik Satie's life and works, that are difficult to dissociate, at least at certain moments, have been the object of very divergent readings: where Boulez would only discern a "glandular unbalance", Cage would perceive one of the key features of the twentieth century. We are in agreement with Cage. But the interest of the Satian approach today lies in its relevance to a "trans-disciplinary" diagnostic, that scholastic quarrels between factions have for a long time short-circuited.

We will distinguish here, in order to simplify, five great antinomies around which the Satian aesthetical trajectory was effectively articulated, and which constitute the legacy of the Master of Arcueil to the precise extent that he himself was not able to resolve them. As a dialectician of tension, and not of synthesis, he belongs to the breed of discoverers, of those who open a world through the significance of the questions they put forward, and towards which the epoch takes a long time to answer.

I. – First antinomy: "Esoterik Satie, or Satierik?" (Alphonse Allais)

Satie linked an exaggerated spirituality to a witty eloquence sometimes tongue in cheek, sometimes unbridled. Why? Perhaps because mysticism is always suspected of being a mystification: it is greatly tempting to verify, as much from decency as from provocation, such an allegation. One will consequently display by all means possible, the two attitudes at the same time. This explanation is certainly too short: as usual, psychology can only baptize the problems. Still, the Satian ambivalence, whatever caused it, has had the m...»

Response:

¹⁶ See Daniel Charles, *Le temps de la voix*, p. 201-225.

...atypical attitudes at the same time acid and an-aestheticizing. The Satian object, difficult to identify because of its antinomies, remind us of the phenomenon of glossolalia, a vocal expression in an invented language without any given meaning, requiring the interpretation of an external mediator in order to access signification. Glossolalia lies indeed at the point where laughing (babble), craziness, illnesses linked to elocution (stammering) and mystical experience meet. Satie's works do not contain any traces of such vocal expression, but his willingness to place himself outside the common sense of usual practices and his formal approach resembling a sort of musical Oulipo¹⁷, suggest a similarity to the textual experimentations of Pierre Albert-Birot, of the Dadaists, of the Italian Futurists and of Kurt Schwitters. The non-directionality of Satie's music, the tendency to strive for an organized stasis, plays against the perception of a syntax and tends to isolate the sounds in an arbitrary succession. The ironic texts which appear on his score and which apparently should not be pronounced during performance, constitute words whose sense should remain hidden or which should be interpreted directly on the instrument. We seem to be in the presence of a "saying" waiting for a meaning.¹⁸

In the presence of a writing apparatus without destination, which self-generates itself like an automate's mechanism (and not only in the *Vexations*), rather like the "celibacy machines" described by Michel de Certeau concerning Alfred Jarry, Raymond Roussel and Marcel Duchamp, "novelistic or iconic fictions [which] tell that for writing, there is no entry, nor exit, but only the interminable play of fabrications."¹⁹ Writing no longer represents only the sound matter, but takes the measure of its own force of production in building texts that refer only to their own textuality.

In the writing devices without destination, the listening is no longer determined in a unitary manner, "perception has to become plural and pluralist"²⁰. This is the reason why today's approach to Satie's works remains very ambiguous. His pseudo-language still largely resembles a language constituted according to the current norms of his time (even though it might be perceived as awkward or naïve) from which a sense can be easily recuperated as an icon. Consequently, his music can be re-utilized as easily in a melancholic film, as in an evening of very funny musical theatre, or as in the process oriented events of the globalized art world of post-mo...

Segment 10

Quote: *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, p. 296:

«...cissism; beginning with Montaigne, of whom Rotman affirms that when he depicts himself, he is constructing himself – which refutes any anteriority of the "self". "I have presented myself (*moy-mesme*) to me (*moy*), as argument and as subject": the relationship between "myself" ("*moy-mesme*") and me is not one of a meta-subject to a prior "self", but "a relation of iconic resemblance between a corporal self and a textual self" – in the same way

¹⁷ Oulipo, or "*ouvroir de littérature potentielle*", methods (or workshop) allowing an opening to potential literature. This is the name of a twentieth century literary movement in France, inscribed in the continuity of surrealism (Raymond Queneau and George Perec are the two most famous names associated with it). It consists of allowing, through a series of games, anyone to create his/her own literature.

¹⁸ See Michel de Certeau, "Utopies vocales : glossolalies", *Traverses* N° 20, Paris, Centre Pompidou.

¹⁹ Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien*, Vol. 1, *Arts de faire*, Paris, Union Générale d'Édition, Coll. 10/18, 1980, p. 258: "*fictions romanesques ou iconiques [qui] racontent qu'il n'y a pour l'écriture, ni entrée, ni sortie, mais seulement l'interminable jeu des fabrications.*"

²⁰ Daniel Charles, *Le temps de la voix*, p. 276.

as the visual *punctum* where the painter is placed, however neutral and abstract it may be, is the condition of the apperception of the world which becomes clear in the so rich and lively images of a Vermeer or a Velásquez, without this world “pre-existing” their vision for all that. It is just that, between the signs that denote the vision and those that denote the vision squared, the vision of the vision, there is iconic resemblance²¹. And Brian Rotman’s last important example referring to money, finally makes the phenomenon clear. As long as it was only a question, for the banks of Venice or Amsterdam, of providing a merchant with a credit advice as a guarantee based on gold for a future commercial operation, the commitment to repay or “Imaginary Money” functioned as a deictic sign, not separable from its beneficiary and therefore from a certain situated and dated context. But the appearance of the “bearer order banknotes”, that is of “paper-money”, signals the closure of money...»

Response:

...the red is reddening, the sound is sounding, the soul is soothing me,
me losing myself, fear filling even me, the resounding reason,
the wolf seeing the wheel turning, the hound rebounding,
me meeting me, even being king, big mingling, me in me...

Segment 11

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 94:

«J.C.: ...that is what I have become...

D.C.: How did this happen?

J.C.: It was after 1945, between 1946 and 1947 I suppose, that I began to become seriously interested in the Orient. After studying Oriental thought as a whole, I took Suzuki’s courses for three years, up until 1951. He taught at Columbia and I liked his lectures very much. Quite often he suggested that we read *Chuang-tz’e*. So at that time I read and reread *Chuang-tz’e*. And I deeply admired the writing, the thought, *Chuang-tz’e* is full of humor... One of the characters, Chaos...»

Response:

... to linger on the ecstasies of time. In representing the work of art at a given moment and place, the totality of its history (in the double meaning of story and historical circumstances) encapsulates the three dimensions of time in a single event. *The random determinations of the I Ching ensure, if nothing else, when one accepts results that may strongly displease or not correspond to what one would be willing to do, the necessity to change oneself, to be forced to go in directions that one would not have envisioned*²². It is thus illusory to search for the authenticity of the origin of the work, or on the contrary to consider it as lying outside time, immutable, and uniquely confined to its internal structure²³. Consequently, the significant work of art is the one capable of confronting equally the three dimensions of time. *Faced with the drawings of the I*

²¹ J. Snyder, “*Las Melinas and the Mirror of the Prince*”, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. II, 1985, p. 539-572; quoted by Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing. The Semiotics of Zero*, London, Mac Millan, 1987, p. 46.

²² Cf. John Cage, *For the Birds*, p. 94-95.

²³ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer,

Ching, there should be no question of looking for the best solutions, the ones promoting an efficiency or a gain of productivity, but rather a question of accepting the flexibility of the meanderings of life. Here lies the basis according to Daniel Charles of post-modernity, of the end of aesthetics, and the advent of a generalized stasis²⁴. *The idea of change is not the one that leads to accomplishing something for a more radiant future, but it means confronting oneself to the emergence of events and to their disappearance, through arrangements that do not eliminate any eventuality. "Presence and absence" must then be thought simultaneously.*²⁵ We have moved into a time of non-linear fluctuations without any particular goals, a "poetics of indifference"²⁶. An incessant changing in all directions but leading to nowhere, other than to the return of the same...

Segment 12

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, page 204:

«Thus, traditional Western music strives, rigorously and punctually, to be an exact copy of language, and more precisely still, dependant on the Aristotelian concept of language. It can and should subscribe to what is Aristotelian in someone like Saussure who considers that "language [*langue*] and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the unique reason to be for the second is to represent the first". It finds in ethnomusicology this double confirmation, that writing is irremediably contingent in relation to what it transcribes, and that it only functions in populations precisely reputed as...»

Response:

...Western writing is considered as a secondary representation... only writing permits the complex structuring of music, it... phic musical score that excludes expressivity is not sign anymore but cipher... ing without communication ciphers the nothingness, the silent language of noise traces itself...

Segment 13

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 146:

«J.C.: ...al maps, as I had already done in *Atlas Eclipticalis*. So, you can say that the stars became templates for me. But I used chance operations to avoid repositioning the page at the same point. Thus, the template could no longer serve as a basis for repetition. There is indeed a progression in these ways of working. They go from the possibility of repetition to the improbability of any repetition.

D.C.: But aren't you delimiting a Stockhausen sort of continuum?»

Response:

²⁴ See Leonard B. Meyer, "The End of the Renaissance", in *Music, the Arts, and Ideas*, The University of Chicago Press, 1967, p. 68-84.

²⁵ *For the Birds*, question by Daniel Charles, p. 94 : "It forces us to think presence and absence together?"

²⁶ Daniel Charles, *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, p. 100.

What does John Cage mean by the word *template*? For him, it is any ordering of elements, a model or a schema, which can perform graphically a direct transfer to a musical score: a piece of paper with few holes in it, or the map of the stars in the sky. [The audience's listening is no longer determined merely by the signs written on the score, but one is now free to build one's own listening. The listeners have the right to experience emotions, but these are not inscribed in the work.] This method allows one, in a better way than with the accidental randomness of the imperfections in a piece of blank paper, or with a process determined by diagrams, thanks to the use of a same *template*, to modulate randomness between the repetition of a pattern and non-repetition of any pattern. [Cage does not want the audience to feel anything in particular, he does not want to communicate anything but the sounds themselves as such.] We are not in the presence here of a continuum of possibilities, because, for each work, the composer chooses a different method of random determination. [What he calls "circus situation" constitutes an exception. It is a process grouping together some diversified events, in which not any one of them can take precedence over any of the others in order to govern the whole.] Xenakis uses similar statistical methods in order to describe sound mass situations, but he retains the possibility of controlling their evolution through laws allowing the achievement of specific results determined by the composer. [One of these events can imply the representation of particular feelings, but it remains only an isolated element in the process.] Cage, himself, is only interested to ensure that the sound events spring up not determined by...

Segment 14

Quote: *Musiques nomades*, p. 129:

«... matic encoding of the inter-relationships, and lead to an effective if not legitimate atonality. Echoing the practice ironically claimed by John Cage of performing simultaneously all the Beethoven symphonies²⁷, indeed even the totality of contemporary music in so far as it is *con-temporary*²⁸, Demetrio Stratos, because he blurs, through his tetra-phonies and other "flauto-phonies", the univocity of the voice-instrument centered on a constantly semelfactive expressivity, causes the "time of the voice" to shatter by spatializing it, by endowing it with a quasi-labyrinthine volume. But this volume in its turn is not at all inexpressive or anti-expressive: it reveals a new kind of expressivity, savage, primitive, Paleolithic – and above all pre-objective or pre-objectal.

A short commentary on what follows in the Paul Zumthor extract we touched upon above, will allow us to have a better grasp of it: with Demetrio Stratos, the usual classifications cease to be pertinent, because their restrictiveness no longer guarantees their efficiency. "Of the animal and human societies, writes Zumthor, only the second one hears, from among the multiplicity of noises, their own voices emerging as an *object*: around this the social link closes itself and becomes solid, while a poetry begins to take form."²⁹ – For Zumthor, what is at stake therefore is to witness the appearance of poetry as "taking form" and to call, to this end, for the emergence of the voc...»

Response:

²⁷ Cf. John Cage, *For the Birds*, p. 98-99 : "J.C.: I told him that I would agree if I could use enough musicians to conduct, in one single concert, all nine symphonies superimposed!"

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Paul Zumthor, *Introduction à la poésie orale*, Paris, Seuil, 1983, p. 11 (my translation).

...direct timbre...to dissimulate the voice...praxis rather than...the writing on the body... lure or?...
in the end language will win...

Segment 15

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, page 108:

«... with the springing up of this silence and not after the fact... The opposition of the authentic and the inauthentic is put into play: *the* rehabilitation of speech over saying is not the equivalent of the authentication of the inauthentic, which would leave intact the difference of level between the two as a condition of the upgrading of the one to the other; on the contrary, one has to recapture in the voice a potentiality of irruption that is anterior to the split between saying and speaking, the rustling of a silence which would be indissolubly hearing and babble, in short some indivisible advent... This up thrust, this source, is it not what metaphysics itself designates – *in between the lines*?

To ascertain this, one only has to refer to the reading of Plato proposed in Gadamer's hermeneutics; issuing directly from Heidegger's reading, but nevertheless irreconcilable with it – because in it is outlined a *discernment of Platonism*³⁰, clearly inassumable in Heideggerian terms...»

Response:

...the movement from speaking (the language unfolding) to saying (the foundation of discourse) to the benefit of the second term can be reversible. Speaking is not recitation but the unfolding of thought, it is a translation creating difference and innovation, to speak is to say. Orality is not in opposition to writing, it is the effective carrying out of language as discourse, a fundamental element of distancing. Through the concept of play, the work is not a simple re-actualizati...

Segment 16

Quote: *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, page 262:

«...others as to *what is*.

DISCUSSION

M. Jean Wahl: There was something fascinating in this lecture, and I thank you for it. Naturally, one could ask you for some clarifications on the absolute indeterminacy of music, but your line of thought is dialectical to the point that the absolute indeterminacy could be transformed into a situation of absolute determinacy.

M. D. Charles: it depends.

M. Jean Wahl: It is now difficult to speak, it was easier to listen to you...

³⁰ According to the heading of the articles by P. Fruchon devoted to the analysis of the third part of *Wahrheit und Methode*, in *Archives de la philosophie*, t. 36, book 4, October-December 1973, p.529-568 ; book 2, April-June 1974, p. 223-242 ; t. 37, book 3, July-September 1974, p. 353-375 ; t. 37, book 4, October-December 1974, p. 553-571.

M. Etienne Souriau: I will start by congratulating M. Charles on this exciting talk; I have already heard him speak of music and philosophy at the same time and I have a fond memory of it. I am asking myself questions, of which several may have more of a technical aspect than a metaphysical one. My impression of Cage's music is that it places itself, with extreme precision, in a movement, of which we will only be able to grasp the continuity, in fifty or one hundred years. It poses the problem of freeing oneself from the music in which Beethoven remains the *bête noire*. Well, the essential fact, if one considers things over time since the origins of music until today, is that music, in its origins, was for a long time shaped by essentially mathematical forms; mathematics have, so to speak, been the secret framework of music. This lasted through Antiquity and the Middle-Ages, more or less until the famous sentence of Leibniz on music as an arithmetical exercise by someone who does not know h... »

Response:

...easier to lease edifice cult to peek saffron eating thanking you for it oysters swam to war tease diffuse kilt oozes peak exciting essential slim a-thematic fiscal norms in fifty absolute deterred intimacy...

Segment 17

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, page 185:

«...mpassive and rigorous it pretends to be or would like to be, as little “vocal” or “imitative” it might *be*, leads to a new kind of physicalism or naturalism, which after all only reedit some old habits in the light of which one finds oneself free to judge them.

In his analysis of Xenakis's *Pithoprakta*, Michel Serres did indeed recognize that if the author made explicit to our ears “the naked voice of the things of the universe” it was only by *pretending* to “erase the signal”: in reality, the Xenakis of *Pithoprakta* is signifying and communicating as much as any one; simply, he knows how to *compel* “this signal to simulate noise, to make noise”³¹.

But have we departed from Rousseau? If Xenakis only delivers, with all the probability paraphernalia, an *ersatz* of noise, what is...»

Response:

The civilization of writing has invented the concept of orality as its *other*. In order for orality to be glorified as Logos or profoundly disdained as archaic sub-culture, it must be thought as separate from writing. Any tradition is however a hybridization, in varying degrees, between deferred time and bringing into presence.

How are we to proceed if the project is to produce timbre directly on the instrument without going through the memory of a notation? One can only be oneself, determined by the long progression of the writing on the body itself, the embodiment.

But the willingness to be oneself, outside any mediation, in the immediacy of presence, comes up against two obstacles: the presence of others and the unpredictability of an unstable act.

³¹ Michel Serres, *Hermès II, l'Interférence*, Paris, Ed. De Minuit, 1972, p. 189.

In the musical traditions reputed to be oral, the voice is dissimulated, it does not deploy itself in the immediacy of a subjectivity, one never speaks in one's own name. It is this simulacrum which allows one to get beyond the impossibility of pure expression. It is self-forgetfulness...

Segment 18

Quote: *For the Birds*, page 141:

D.C.: Does 'live electronic music' have any future in your opinion, and if so, what is it?

J.C.: We are full of contradictions. Even though I talk about the need for electronic sounds, I still have worked last year and this year on a 'normal' orchestral work.³²

D.C.: HPSCHD used both harpsichords and tape recorders. Don't you see a contradiction in that?

J.C.: So many things can go together! But the important thing about *HPSCHD* is the use of the computer.

D.C.: Did that work require a lot of programming?

J.C. When I received Lejaren Hiller's invitation to go to the Univ...»

Response:

Electronic memories allow us to conserve all the musical practices in the world side by side. It becomes possible to confront them and to crossbreed them. Live electronic music consists today in drawing on these memories, in order to produce sounds in the immediacy of the present.

The strange paradox resulting from this electrified world is an orality completely written in electronic memories and a completely mediatized immediacy. Facing technology, one hesitates between two temporalities separated by the blink of an eye: the ultra-fast writing deferring by just a little the sound reality, or the instantaneous orality.

The paradigm of this double-faced interaction is that of our world today: the co-existence of practices, tools and materials.

Segment 19

Quote: *La fiction de la postmodernité selon l'esprit de la musique*, page 298:

«...gh art. It is not sufficient, notes Bachelard, to lean on the Schopenhauerian axiom according to which the world is my representation, in order to arrive at some "pure aesthetics": this requires the "representation of representation", and even the "representation of the representation"; in other words, it means starting from a "material

³² The orchestration of *Cheap Imitation*, completed in 1972.

detachment” to achieve a state in which one no longer determines oneself “for a thing, not even for a thought, but finally for the form of a thought”³³. Such states are rare, spread over long intervals; only a “rational cohesion”, for want of a “material cohesion”, can link them; therefore one cannot reduce them to a “common place time”, that is a linear one; “If we want to realize that thought of pure aesthetics, we have, through forms, by calling on forms, to transcend the temporal dialectic.”³⁴ From the “iconic resemblance” which subsisted in a Vermeer or a Velázquez between the sign and the meta-sign, one passes to abstraction: conceptual art is perhaps the art of signs raised to the cube or to the power of four... But to consider such abstraction should not make us forget what is essential: as Rotman stated, algebra is indeed more abstract than arithmetic, paper money more abstract than imaginary money, etc.; nevertheless, holding to the idea of a simple linear ascension towards more profound degrees of *abstraction* risks masking the “agent which is at the origin of these changes, the metaphysics in relation to which (and only thanks to which) these changes become intelligible. In the codes of mathematics, of vision, of text and of money, it is the constructing subject in action who, participating in a mental experience, elaborates an abstraction; when such an experience occurs, the subject is habit...”³⁵

Response:

...Occidental music, dominated by writing, organizes the separation of roles in a hierarchy which places at the summit the composer, narcissistic demiurge. The improvisator, refusing these practices dominated by notation on scores, deludes him/herself in the illusion of the immediacy of the full presence and of a direct control over the sound matter.

This self-centered attitude relying on no mediation, which outmatches that of the composer, comes up against several obstacles. The improvisator is only facing him/herself, but it is never the “self” that one would like to be that is manifested. The project to just be oneself gives way on contact with the realities of the present. The body of the performer is molded by a past, a history that constructed it, and at the same time it has to face a future of progressive decomposition.

In the moment of an improvisation, it is the totality of past experiences, organized in stratifications, which co-exist simultaneously. Indelible writing on the body itself, tattoos of the long hours of practice. In putting into play the information of the past, in reconstituting it in another configuration according to a given context, the improvisation opens perspectives for a future, which will repeat differently while pursuing its path to oblivion.

The presence of others, public or improvisation partners, also constitutes an obstacle which plays against the presence of the self, unless one is absolute master of the game. To be with the other is neither to have a dialectic conversation, nor to slip into what the other proposes, nor to impose one’s own point of view. Rather, it means co-constructing a superimposition of existences, which are separated yet unified in a coherence.

Automated patterns dictate the body’s behavior. They have to be overstepped. But without the presence of automatisms, how can one access to an awareness of the environment, or to the loss of consciousness as in trance? To attempt to control the flow is to be *self-conscious*, and to lose consciousness is to allow the tangential to dictate its conditions.

³³ Gaston Bachelard, *La dialectique de la durée*, Paris, PUF, 1950, p. 101.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

³⁵ Brian Rotman, *Signifying Nothing, The Semiotics of Zero*, London, Mac Millan, 1987, p. 55.

Neither absolute control, nor trance, but a waking dream, an answer to the other that does not elaborate a “response” to what is being said, the automated body which does not have to think anymore, but which is neither a manipulated puppet...

Segment 20

Quote: *Le temps de la voix*, page 154:

«...e language being enunciated according to a determined language, the latter is never a simple instrument for the said research, it conditions it. Hence the adage of *Untervwegs zur Sprache*: to speak authentically of language, is “to be authentically mute on silence”. To not use the language-instrument, is to silence oneself, and to talk of silence is tantamount to saying nothing: only silence suits silence. – In this regard, Raymond Court’s position would be rather like this: in such a silence, there is not (only) the emptiness, but sounds, noises. Since Cage, at least, music is aware of this and makes us aware of it. Of course, that which language is not able to speak about, one has to keep silent, but what if to “keep authentically silent”, were the *singing*?

To complete Heidegger, then, and to rectify him by the edification of a general aesthetics of music culminating with the question of the voice, this seems to be what the author is conveying. It is a question of showing that music brings to the other arts the very dimension of their up thrust – the Dionysian as rhythmic essence, “generating principle of any autonomous and groundbreaking form...” »

Response:

...chronometer which was always hanging at his neck...

...it would be better to *sing*, in order to be silent over the time ticking the absence of the voice that we missed, the one shrouded in silence, the one that has spoken so well of silence, of the voice and of time...

...another who disappeared recently, Giuseppe Englert, was the one who presented Daniel Charles to us at the time of the *Centre de Musique* at the American Center for Students and Artists, boulevard Raspail in Paris during the 1960s; it was the same Giuseppe whom I replaced as best I could at Vincennes University (Paris VIII) during the heroic times of the beginning of the music department with Eveline Andréani and Daniel Charles; at San Diego, Daniel visiting, one of the few who showed a real interest in KIVA³⁶ (which had not too much to do with Cage), then again this interest reiterated during a tour of this group in France, then again when my book on contemporary percussion was published³⁷, then his participation in the thesis committee for my doctorate, a thesis that was largely influenced by his writings...

...is no longer discourse, but presence amongst us...

³⁶ Kiva, an experimental music group founded by the American trombonist John Silber in 1975 at the *Center for Music Experiment*, at the University of California San Diego. See the recent CD of Kiva issued by *Pogus Productions*, 50 Ayr Road, Chester, NY. 10818, www.pogus.com

³⁷ Jean-Charles François, *Percussion et musique contemporaine*, Paris, Ed. Klincksieck, 1990.

...“sojourn without place” or “place without sojourn”³⁸, the sound matter is already there, the work has already begun, kaleidoscope of the re-composition of hierarchies, hope for going beyond the Orient-Occident cleavage, the research on multiplicity, the shacks in the desert, dear wanderings, to be idle outside work does not mean siesta, the *pandemonium* of the universe, to trace and retrace each day our pa...

³⁸ Daniel Charles, *Le temps de la voix*, p. 242.

Other Minds 15: Jazz, Math and Graphic Rupture

Eric Myers

The Other Minds Festival of New Music once again shattered assumptions about what a new music festival is and how it should present new work. OM 15, taking place at the Jewish Community Center in San Francisco, March 4, 5 and 6, 2010, contained everything from a sound explosion blowout by jazz saxophonist Kidd Jordan to a delicate suite of songs for voice and violin by composer Lisa Bielawa. The Festival continued its tradition of juxtaposing new forms with conventional ones while at the same time expanding programming to include more international composers and musicians. Composers from England, Switzerland, Poland and China joined those from San Francisco, Louisiana and elsewhere. The performances proved to be challenging and satisfying.

Concert 1: Thursday, March 4, 2010

I get to the theatre just in time to sit down and see the musicians walk on stage. It is the Quatuor Bozzini String Quartet. I don't think I've seen them before. I haven't had time to glance the program notes so I have no idea what I'm about to hear. They perform standing, while the 'cellist sits on an elevated platform. All four musicians start by slowly running their bows over the strings making a soft scraping with a faint tone somewhere under the surface. Together, they form a chord. This chord lasts for approximately five seconds, or the length of the bow. This is followed by two to three seconds of silence. They repeat the process again, but the notes have changed slightly, perhaps from a major chord to a suspended second or fourth. They continue in this manner for some time, evoking a riveting feeling of anticipation, one that is never fully responded to. The sound is dry. It reminds me of paper forms, origami. After a while, the repeating structure changes slightly. The chords are still the same length but each one glissandos down sharply. The texture is still surfacey and the tones are still faint but the effect is very different. I think of a train passing in the distance. The feeling is still paper but warped. I like this new gesture because it's a simple change in pitch only, and yet the effect is striking. The piece ends after this has been repeated for several minutes. I check the program. The work, *Streichquartett II*, is by composer Jürg Frey of Switzerland. In his words, "Material can be anonymous. Consider, for example, the middle voices in medieval hymn books: unadorned, not artful, a simple handiwork, a leisurely alternation of single notes". I feel it was a strange choice to start the Festival off with but the paper sculpture images that remain with me are certainly intriguing.

The second piece of the Festival is *Twilight Colors* by Chou Wen-chung. Members of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble take the stage. Violin, viola, 'cello, clarinet, oboe and flute are seated in a semi-circle (left to right). Conductor David Milnes leads the ensemble. The piece opens with large, gradual swells from the woodwinds. Intensity slowly builds as the strings join in with anxious tremolos. Intermittent flute trills add more color to the canvas. I am introduced, I feel, to several different characters, each represented by an instrument. The 'characters' converse with one another and a larger narrative unfolds. Peaks and valleys of

clashing and blending keep things moving forward. The characters don't ever seem to total resolve their differences but each goes off in its own direction. That is, each instrument, though imitating one another several times, maintains its own musical mantra to the end. What strikes me most about this piece is that it resembles my own style of composition. The program notes reveal more and the inspiration from Chinese culture again resonates with my own aesthetic: "This piece is inspired by the exceptional colors of the changing sky over the Hudson River Valley.." and "In conceiving the piece, I was influenced by the Chinese brush painters of the early 17th century who adopted fundamental brush stroke technique from Chinese calligraphy to develop a landscape painting technique based on subtle brushstrokes and their sophisticated organization".

After intermission, another work by Chou Wen-chung, *The Willows are New*, is presented. This one is a solo piano piece performed by Other Minds regular Eva-Marie Zimmerman. Soft low notes give way to high-register, sharp, almost piercing minor seconds. Major sevenths and minor seconds dominate the harmonies but construct a melody that jumps registers. Knife-cutting, they lend a slightly out-of-tune sonority. The effect is that of another instrument, perhaps the Chinese *yangqin* (hammered dulcimer). Given the composer's background and program notes, this is not a stretch. The piece was inspired by the poem Yang Kuan by Wang Wei (689-759). The composer's translation of the poem follows:

In this town by the river,
morning rain
has cleared the light dust.

Green, green around the tavern,
the willows are new*.

Let us empty another cup of wine.
For, once west of Yang Kuan**
there will be no more friends.

Zimmerman does a tremendous job of projecting a delicate yet, at the same time, harsh sound in her attack of the keyboard. Once again, I'm endeared to the piece, this time, perhaps to the Chinese yangqin-like sonority.

The last piece of the evening is suite, *Kafka Songs*, by Lisa Bielawa. The work is a setting of Franz Kafka's *Meditation* (1912) for violin and voice. Composer/vocalist/violinist Carla Kihlstedt gives a very natural and relaxed performance. Carla appears barefoot with violin and water container. Her laid-back persona puts the audience at ease. She begins each song by casually reciting the text. Each song's performance, however, is very deliberate and full of passion. Kihlstedt has a lovely voice that blends well with the violin. One note in particular matches a pitch with the violin so precisely, for a moment I cannot distinguish between the two

timbres. The violin playing has a loose, improvisatory feel to it. At the same time, it provides strong support to the singing. At one point, Kihlstedt strums the instrument like a ukulele but not in a facetious way. Given that the work was composed especially for Ms. Kihlstedt, such innovations make for a convincing performance. In the composer's words, "I marveled that this [Franz Kafka's *Meditation*] writing was private, quietly observant and so unlike the allegorical, dystopic Kafka I knew... I wanted to write a series of pieces expressly for Carla...". Bielawa's settings are colorful and effective but I wonder if the same statement could have been made with one or two omissions.

Concert 2: Friday, March 5, 2010

The second evening begins with an electro-acoustic piece by Natasha Barrett. The lights go out and sounds immediately evoke a ship, at port, rocking to and fro. I can hear the waves crashing, the creaking of the mast and the flutter of birds, perhaps. I feel as though I am in the ship, in the hull and that the ship is not fully constructed. The outside sounds are too close to my ears, as if planks are missing from the side of the vessel. It's eerily real and people's voices are audible underneath. First I can hear men chanting or singing followed by faint laughter echoing through the other sounds, that of children. At a certain point I am transported down a hole of water. That is, I'm descending and there's water crashing all around me. The imagery is striking. After the piece ends, I read the program notes and find my imagination is not far from the composer's intention. The piece, *Mobilis in Mobili*, is part of a larger work, *Tradewinds* (2004-2006). In the composer's words, "The ocean's physical nature, mystery, drama, mythology and concept have inspired art and culture throughout history and throughout the world... *Mobilis in Mobili* is inspired by the vast expanse of the sea".

Next is Kidd Jordan and his ensemble: William Parker on double bass and Warren Smith on drums. Jordan plays tenor sax. From the first notes they produce I know I'm going to be in auditory ecstasy. I am. The first piece they offer is a new one by Jordan. Lasting several minutes, the piece starts off with long melodic notes coming from a bowed bass. Sax takes over the melody and drums split it wide open. The 'head' is full of rhythmic accents supported by the drums while rapidly changing harmonies are conveyed with only bass and sax. All three musicians make good use of extended techniques and tear down the walls of 'jazz' vs. 'free jazz'. Parker in particular does things with a bass I've never seen anyone do before. He gets a rhythm going by striking the strings with the back of his hand both on the neck and near the bridge. He also scrapes the strings vertically creating a textured scratch-rhythm. Jordan breathes fire, makes squealing noises and lays out some brilliantly smooth lines at the same time. He glances his watch one or twice. Smith keeps things sailing along by using every inch of the drum kit and both ends of the stick. He is physically all over the place: cymbal edges, rims, hardware, but with a beautifully precise and calculated rhythmic motif. The second piece is one Jordan composed upon learning of the death of John Coltrane. It's a minor blues with a descending bass line. He gives it a mournful but sober treatment. The tune is touching in its simplicity. After the raucous applause, I feel elated. I know I'll be leaving the theatre that night feeling better than when I went in.

After intermission, Natasha Barrett is back with another work. This one is *Kernel Expansion* and is so full of imagery I don't know where to begin. The first striking sound is that of a bell tower tolling "one" whereupon the consciousness changes amid a low hissing sound.

So many sounds make their way to the surface. I believe I'm in a cave. There are hundreds of bats flying everywhere and they morph into birds, or was it the other way around? It's dark and there's emptiness. Next, there are bottles, glass bottles, being rolled around on a hardwood floor. Then glass jars join them, and lids for the jars. There's also a big ceramic jar with just a few pennies inside rattling around. At another point I'm sure I heard a giant, six-foot radius gong, suspended by wire and being played upon by several people on all sides with metal chopsticks or small hammers. The bell tower tolls again. In the composer's own words: "*Kernel Expansion* ... addresses the essence of sound in its rich multiplicity, ambiguity and schizophrenia. ...Dualities ... are used to connect unrelated materials until all sound condenses into a musical singularity". I'm left with many images scattered around in my brain. Barrett is really good at painting pictures with sound.

The last two works of the evening are by Polish composer Paweł Mykietyn. *Epiphora* is for solo piano and pre-recorded sound. Eva-Maria Zimmermann takes the stage. She is dressed in red and the stage is lit in the same. The piece begins with a startling 'explosion' sound. Soon thereafter the pianist begins a minuet. This morphs into an invention with a simple canon. Soon it becomes apparent that the composer is toying with us. The pianist suddenly jumps from one measure of the imagined 'invention' or 'fugue' to another measure in the music, perhaps later on. It's as if we're listening to a CD skip or a tape that has bits edited out. The music keeps jumping in this cut-up fashion and we're all really curious as to what will happen next as it grows more intense. The lighting adds much to the drama of the scene. The speaker sound emanates a dark voice, speaking in Dutch. The program notes reveal a translation: "But you are my mother, not, because that's the order of things [because that's life]. And he said to him: But you are my father not because that's the truth of things. He turned around and walked through the big door. They never saw him again." The piece is incredibly effective in its boldness with the surprise element and theatrics playing a large role as well.

The last piece of the evening is Mykietyn's *String Quartet No. 2*. Del Sol quartet takes the stage for the group's one and only performance at the festival. The piece makes use of microtonal capabilities inherent in fretless stringed instruments. The results are quite lovely. There's a soft drone-like effect underneath the constant ringing of overtones being traded and passed among the four musicians. This calls to mind the sound of bagpipes and their constant humming. Del Sol members perform standing, as per usual, with the 'cellist seated on a raised platform. They don't seem particularly 'into' the piece as they usually do, perhaps due to the tremendous amount of thinking that must go on to keep one's place in the music. It seems to be the sort of piece where you're inside one dominant sound-world with faint landmarks that may be difficult to rely upon. The sound really is beautiful and I imagine it might resemble a performance of Ben Franklin's famous glass harmonium. Del Sol violist and director Charlton Lee calls the work a "fantasy in microtonal harmonics" and adds that the melodies capture "an image of a pastoral tune played on a crude flute". Lee also characterizes the sound as that of "church bells ringing in the distance". I agree and I feel that Friday's performances will be tough to beat.

Concert 3: Saturday, March 6, 2010

The third evening opens with composer/guitarist Gyan Riley performing his own *When Heron*

Sing Blue (world premiere). Riley plays classical guitar and is joined by Timb Harris on violin/viola, Scott Amendola on drums and Michael Manring on electric bass. Everyone is seated except the Harris. The piece starts out with a beautiful guitar riff by Riley accompanied by long lines from the violin. When the rest of the band comes in, they sound amazingly 'tight' and I'm reminded of some of the better fusion projects of the 1970's. Amendola and Manring are locked into a firm groove while Harris and Riley trade melodies. The overall effect is that of a really really good coffee house performance but one that is a notch above. The piece is full of virtuosic runs by Riley with a ripping classical/flamenco/jazz guitar solo. The other members of the band get a chance to shine over a slow-tempo but very funky pattern. Amendola really sticks out for me with his imaginative hovering over the cymbals creating a soft, ever-present 'wash' of sound. At one point he brings out what looks like a small transistor radio and holds it up to the mic, adding some statically-charged frequency sweeps into the mix. The audience members get into it and the heads start moving, young and old. The musicians all seem very comfortable with one another and they seem to be having a great time on stage. This only adds to the experience from an audience perspective and I'm really happy Other Minds commissioned this piece from Riley.

The next piece is on the other end of the spectrum. It's *Combinations* for string quartet by Tom Johnson. Quatuor Bozzini takes up the challenge of a very cerebral exercise. The work is in five movements and demonstrates all the possible combinations of four notes among four musicians. As the program notes illuminate, "There are 24 permutations of {A, B, C, D} and these can be divided into six groups of four in such a way that all four notes are present at each moment:

Bar	25	57	89	121	153	185
Violin I	ABDC	CABD	CBAD	BCAD	CADB	CDAB
Violin II	DCAB	BDCA	ADCB	ADBC	DBCA	ABCD
Viola	BACD	ACDB	BCDA	CBDA	ACBD	DCBA
Cello	CABA	DBAC	DABC	DACB	BDAC	BADC"

In the first movement, each instrument is assigned a different E^b and each note is played one at a time without vibrato, each lasting one beat. The second movement, where each instrument has only three notes, has an ostinato-like quality and reminds me of a Philip Glass piece. In movement three, each instrument plays three consecutive notes, but no two instruments play at the same time, producing a dry sound. In movement four, each instrument has two motifs, or 'gestures', and they get played in different combinations among the musicians. In the last movement, Johnson groups the 12 tones in what he calls 'symmetrical pairs': E-F, D[#]-F[#], D-G, C[#]-G[#], C-A, B-A[#]. This movement stands out from the rest with its tri-tone-like harmonic effect.

After intermission, Johnson is back with another numbers piece. This time, Johnson himself joins the Quatuor Bozzini in front of the stage with a microphone. He explains the concept behind *Eggs and Baskets*. The piece demonstrates all the possible way you can divide up your eggs between two baskets. The notes represent the "eggs" while two violinists serve as the figurative "baskets". Johnson starts out with one note, which one of the violinists plays. Then, there are two notes (two consecutive pitches, perhaps a B^b and a C) each played by each

violinist, respectively, but twice, once for each possible combination. Then, there are three notes, perhaps D, C and B^b, which are then played one at a time with each of their possible combinations between the two players. The process is repeated with four and then five notes. It's an interesting concept and well presented. I'm glad Johnson lets the audience in on his thought process this time.

The last piece, *Pandæmonium*, by Carla Kihlstedt, is a combination of theatrics, musical inventiveness and conceptual daring. Chamber music superstars ROVA saxophone quartet share the stage with two readers: Matthais Bossi and Joan Mankin. The ROVA musicians stand in a semi-circle which spans most of the stage. Bossi and Mankin stand on either end of the stage, each in his/her own spotlight whenever he/she reads. Otherwise the stage is dark, with some blue, green and occasional red providing an atmosphere of guarded curiosity. The readings consist of passages from texts from the last 400 years concerning new inventions, such as the printing press and steam engine, and the excitement and wonder that surrounded their arrival. The composer cites *Pandæmonium*, a book by Humphrey Jennings, as source material for the texts. Kihlstedt notes: "This compilation of personal accounts from journals, newspapers, and letters between friends creates a wonderfully multifaceted portrait of a fast-changing society". Bossi and Mankin do a brilliant job of conveying that excitement with raw energy and charisma. The ROVA quartet play boldly and exuberantly with what sounds largely improvisatory. I happen to glance, as one of them moves a score from the music stand to the floor, that it's a graphic score (the program notes make reference to both conventional and graphic notation). I hear what sound to me like serial rhythms:

e, ee, eee, eeee etc.

interspersed with long, smooth emanations. The ROVA musicians seem to be at a distance from the piece, not totally inside it. This does not take away from the effectiveness of the work as a whole, however, and the audience seems mainly enthralled. Other small details make the work even more interesting, such as, near the end, when the quartet members retire their instruments and each take out a small tape player with the devices playing different selections from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*. The composer sheds light on the larger concept: "Every new technology is a stunning manifestation of the human imagination, and is also a harbinger of massive cultural shifts that result in things that we take for granted now. ... Each text is so colorful and so personal that it seemed to me a natural backbone for a musical piece. My goal was to create a distinct setting for each of the nine texts that capitalized on the unique language that ROVA has developed in their thirty years of playing music together." Kihlstedt certainly succeeds in developing a new language with this multimedia work; and the subject matter, being what I see as the paradox between the excitement of a new technology and its being subsequently taken for granted, is one that has always captured my own imagination.

Notes: *Sprigs of willow, used in farewell ceremonies, are a symbol of parting.

**Yang Kuan is a mountain pass, known as the point of no return for a traveler.

Metallic Song/Rhythmic Voice: Constructs Dismantled at Other Minds 16

The 16th Other Minds Festival of new music opened more doors and took more risks than it had in recent years. A cyber/electro/acoustic work that utilized a special installation of motorized chimes, xylophones and disklavier was presented together with a full-body, free improv. OM16 challenged observers to reconsider such mundane notions as "instrument" while questioning the nature of the composer/performer relationship and the inherent distance between artist and instrument. The Festival topped the last few in the areas of variety, experimentation and even entertainment. Audiences seem to respond with heightened verve and appreciation while musicians seemed more 'inside' their pieces.

Concert 1: Thursday, March 3, 2011

The Festival opens with a short work in a novel way. Every year at OM featured composers are brought out and festival director Charles Amerikanian introduces them to the audience. This year, following introductions, he says, "Please stand for our national anthem". The composers still on stage, the audience stands at which point a solo voice singing "The Star Spangled Banner" comes over the speakers. That voice quickly changes into another voice of someone a bit younger which, in turn, changes into another voice at a slightly different pitch and another and another about every two or three bars. The discrepancy in pitch is the most striking difference between the recorded snippets with less discernable variations in volume, rhythm and tempo. Bewildered, I sit down and it occurs to me that I've just witnessed the first piece, *Hymn* (1975) by Oakland composer Anthony Gnazzo. The piece was intended to herald our nation's bicentennial the following year. The piece also highlights the difficulty of singing the song, particularly in terms of range and phrasing. Being rather short, it's only post-audition that I have a chance to reflect and decide the tape splicing was done in an imaginative way with the overall effect being a bit eerie.

The next piece and first live performance is Kyle Gann's *Triskaidekaphonia I* (2005) for alternately tuned digital piano. The performer, Aron Kallay, seats himself at a 15-year-old looking keyboard and starts with his left hand playing a fast and catchy ostinato in the low register. The right hand shortly joins in with a scaley, syncopated melody. At once, the alternate tuning is evident by the sort of pitch-bend auditory illusion that is produced. I love the sound because I just don't get to hear it that often. I'm guessing the keyboard is micro-tuned to varying cents, i.e. D (+7) or C (-3), etc. The toe-tapping rhythms give way to moments of softer melodic half notes or whole notes, like tear drops or bits of curved Plexiglas. The keyboardist sits relatively still throughout but his playing is dynamic and engaging. The length and range of the work seems to suit the audience. As a pianist, I have special admiration for Kallay and for Gann's inventiveness.

Much-respected veteran composer Louis Andriessen next makes an appearance with violinist/vocalist Monica Germino to perform Andriessen's 1966/71 composition *Le voile du*

Bonheur. Andriessen, seated at the concert grand, begins with a slow piano accompaniment in three's whereupon Germino takes to the violin with an arco melody that is lovely and impassioned. The music is romantic and warm and I'm wondering if and when the tone will change. After a few minutes, Germino puts down the violin and picks up a microphone from the back of the stage. Andriessen quickly changes tempo and rhythm from Chopin-esque to lively off-Broadway accompaniment. Germino sings in a show-tune style and we're all reminded of the experimental nature of the piece. The work is a bit like two pieces stitched together to form a striking contrast.

Another piece by Gann follows with the Seattle Chamber Players taking the stage. *Kierkegard, Walking* (2007) calls for 'cello, violin, flute and clarinet. The 'cello opens with a syncopated pizzicato line followed by another musician taking up a similar line but starting on a different beat, creating a nice poly-rhythmic effect. As the instruments come in and out the sound is sweet and charming being dominated by consonant intervals. The tempo lends itself to a feeling of carefree wandering. I close my eyes and imagine wandering around back streets of some European city (without having seen the program notes). Gann's description confirms (as the title suggests) that the idea for the piece came from "retracing Kierkegard's steps" while "wandering endlessly through Copenhagen, talking to everyone he met and working out his dialectic with or without and accompanying audience". The composer had succeeded in the difficult task of clearly portraying a scene through music.

Zilver (1994) by Andriessen introduces percussion to the Festival. Vibraphone, glockenspiel and marimba are set against piano, 'cello, violin, flute and clarinet. The vibraphonist seems to be leading the ensemble through this restless, spirited work. Pianist Eric Zivian watches vibraphonist Loren Mach intently as they work to stay in sync erupting sudden bursts of *fortissimo* piano/percussion chords on every conceivable sub-division of the beat. As Andriessen describes, the winds and strings play a "chorale-like four-part harmony" with both the clarinet and flute at one point switching to their low-register counterpart instruments (you can't argue with a bass flute). Andriessen's idea was to compose a chorale variation – as Bach did for the organ. He describes "a long melody in slow musical motion, combined with fast playing of the same melody" and adds, "the melody is a pop song that no one will recognize". The ensemble is divided into two groups: percussion, or the 'silver', i.e. *zilver*, and winds/strings, or the 'wood', i.e. *hout*, the two groups playing in canons. The difficulty of the work is apparent in the musicians' struggle but they ultimately succeed in delivering the rhythmic/melodic angst inherent in the piece.

After intermission, Agata Zubel is featured with her 2007 work for voice and chamber quartet entitled *Cascando*. Zubel herself performs as vocalist. The piece is my favorite thus far of the Festival. Short phrases of glissandi come from a violin and 'cello while breathy planes of sound characterize the flute and clarinet parts. Small gestures and short, sharp utterances mark the overall rhythmic motif. Zubel shoots stopped syllables with a raw and expressive energy. I love the rhythmic interplay between the voice and instruments, jumping back and forth in eighth or sixteenth notes. The words come from a Samuel Beckett text, *Cascando*. A portion of the text follows:

1.

why not merely the despaired of
occasion of
wordshed

is it not better abort then be barren

the hours after you are gone are so leaden
they will always start dragging too soon
the grapples clawing blindly the bed of want
bringing up the bones the old loves
sockets filled once with eyes like yours
all always is it better too soon than never
the black want splashing their faces
saying again nine days never floated the loved
nor nine months
nor nine lives

The composer/vocalist grants us an exciting performance as the Seattle Chamber Players do an amazing job supporting and playing off of her dramatic spark.

The last piece of the evening is Janice Giteck's *Ishi (Yahi for 'man')* (2004). The chamber quartet (Fl. Cl. Vln. Vc.) seat themselves in traditional form with a huge projection screen lowered behind them. The screen shows an abstract still image of darks and grays while the quartet begins with a beautiful first movement full of overlapping lines while the violinist, a wonderfully expressive and engaging performer, steals the show. The movement ends with unexpected foot stomps from the musicians. The second movement plods along sweetly. At one point, the 'cello takes the rhythmic motif on its own as an alto flute adds a bit of mystery, together spinning a compelling narrative. By the third movement, I get the sense that the composer is taking us on a journey, as the piece winds its way through peaceful violin eighth notes and a piccolo's rhythmic ostinato. Movement four is busier and more exciting with lots of animated movement from the performers. Tension and anger come out. The 5th movement is characterized by longing and mournful lines from the 'cello and clarinet. At one point, the violinist takes off his shoes and wanders down into the audience while he plays a touching minor melody inviting the audience to sing along. The video, part of the 30-minute work but presented while the quartet is silent, shows scenes of a rushing creek bed with old black and white photographs of Yahi people. The photographs are under water and the sound-track combines the sound of rippling water with Yahi ritual music. The effect engenders both a feeling of quiet reflection and sad sense of loss

Concert 2: Friday, March 4, 2011

The second evening of the Festival proves to be the most exciting and unpredictable. The opening piece, the world premiere of David A. Jaffe's *The Space Between Us* (2011), demonstrates how technology and imagination are breaking down barriers in new music. The piece involves a percussionist, Andrew Schloss, who controls an interface using electronic drumsticks set to different frequencies. The percussionist wields his sticks over a large rectangular pad. This pad acts as an antenna which tracks the sticks' movements across vertical and horizontal planes using Max/MSP software designed by Jaffe. Each movement sends a MIDI message to various electronic/acoustic instruments. The instruments include: two motorized xylophones, stage right and left, a *disklavier* digital piano, upstage, and at least twelve large chimes of various pitches hanging from the ceiling overhead the audience, these instruments having been installed by Trimpin. As if that weren't enough, there are two string quartets, the members of which are standing or sitting at a distance from one another around the outside perimeter of the audience seating area. I happen to be sitting just three feet from a violinist. To experience this piece is to be part of it. The string players get intimate with the audience and depending on where you're sitting, you hear certain strings over others. The score itself, composed by Jaffe, gives the percussion plenty of breadth in demonstrating the beauty and versatility of this grand, multi-dimensional instrument. Large, sweeping glissandi from xylophone and piano (*disklavier*) cascade over bells (*glockenspiel*) while the strings add a soft texture. At times, the sound is like swirling wind or a passing cloud. At other moments, hard, percussive notes command our attention and keep us in state of general amazement. The percussionist may have been improvising at one point with intricate syncopation and imaginative phrasing. Near the end of the work, overhead chimes come in with a dark, sinister melody supported by piano chords and strings. Our collective sense of "musical time" goes out the window as we become more concerned with "musical space" such that we feel we're floating *through* the piece, as a physical place, rather than experiencing a moment in time.

The second performance of the evening is more light-hearted but no less thrilling. I Wayan Balawan is a guitarist/composer from Bali. He plays electric guitar with two of his compatriots, I Nyoman Suwida and I Nyoman Suarsana, both of which play gamelan. The group is expanded to include Dylan Johnson on bass and drummer Scott Amendola. The combination is exciting and entertaining. Balawan banters with the audience in a friendly manner and gives a talk about gamelan playing and his pieces in particular. They are fast. Suwida and Suarsana use what appear to be mallets made of large animal teeth to strike rows of xylophone-like pitched metal bars. They work together where one musician plays the downbeat (relatively speaking) and another plays the upbeat. They trade sixteenth or should I say thirty-second notes at break-neck speed while Balawan matches said rhythm and melody on guitar. He solos by experimenting with different sound patches triggered by the guitar so that his guitar solo becomes a percussion solo. Johnson and Amendola do an admirable job of keeping up. May we call this a kind of Balinese jazz fusion? You can see the volcanoes opening up as these energetic young men breathe fire. The audience is having almost as much fun as the musicians and they leave us wanting more.

After intermission, Agata Zubel is back with a solo vocal piece, *Parlando* (2000), performed by herself her voice being altered using digital processing. The performance is somewhat subdued by very engaging. She demonstrates a broad range of dynamic levels

and textures and splices up words into short syllables using them as rhythmic pin-balls. Long, slow ssssssss's slide down cavernous hallows with jagged k's and t's ripping through the ice. Zubel's sound makes me think of cold and snow, dark and damp, or the spilling of a bag of ball bearings across a tile floor. Changing textures and motionless. She engages briefly in a bit of beat boxing but the tempo slows and the timbre morphs into a long flow of lava-like vowels. The digital reverb, filters and delays add to the performance but the real action is in her vocal acrobatics. Following the heated guitar music, this piece feels cool and refreshing.

Last piece of the evening is cataclysmic. Guitarist/composer Fred Frith and Dutch percussionist Hans Bennink walk on stage and so ends our collective notion of 'play'. Frith begins, seated with an electric guitar in his lap (plugged into an amp), strings facing the ceiling (as with a pedal steel), by banging the hell out of the strings. He quickly grabs a paintbrush and starts running the bristles over the pick-ups. Bennink begins swatting at the snare drum (the only drum on stage) while sitting on a stool. No sooner has the music started, than he turns himself around, sits on the snare drum and starts playing the stool. He plays the head again but with a dishtowel lying across it, taking the edge off the transient when he strikes. The sound they make is musically driven and they listen to each other. The action comes and goes in great swells: now things heat up and get busy, now they cool down and become thoughtful. Bennink abandons his drum and walks to the edge of the stage, banging his sticks on the wall, just as beautifully as ever. He makes his way down into the audience starts playing the metal railing. Frith occupies himself with various little tools: a small metal dish that sits on the strings and vibrates. He also gets out little seeds of some type and scatters them across the instrument and onto the stage. He plays every part of the guitar but the strings. All the while he maintains a connection with what Bennink is doing. Bennink, meanwhile, has returned to the stage and is lying down on his back pounding fists into the floor. They make a great pair because Bennink is acting more on the outside, walking around and using the whole room, while Frith is acting more on the inside, remaining seated and limiting himself to only the instrument and small objects on his lap. Through different means, they are both equally dismantling the performer/instrument construct (as many others besides). What an explosive ending to a memorable concert.

Concert 3: Saturday, March 5, 2011

The last evening of the Festival is more subdued but there are some great moments and energetic performances keep us wide-eyed. First on the program is Louis Andriessen's *Xenia* (2005) for voice and violin performed by Monica Germino. The violinist/vocalist asks us to listen for a Sarabande in the first movement. The first movement, entitled "Sarabande", is full of long, slow glissandi and harmonics. I sense the slow motion three's of the Sarabande but I don't think I would have gotten it on my own. Movement two, "Caccia", is very busy and crackles with nervous energy carrying lots of fast repeated notes. In the third movement, "Song", Germino sings over a simple arco violin melody. The poet Rimbaud's words are central to this song:

O, supreme Clarion full of alien piercings,
Silences crossed by Worlds and Angels:
--O, Omega, violet shining of Her Eyes!

Via program notes, the text is taken from Aruthur Rimbaud's "Voyelles" (1871), last stanza and was translated by Andriessen. Germino gives us a strong performance.

Andriessen's works continue with *Passeggiata in Tram in America e ritorno* (1998) featuring vocalist Cristina Zavalloni, Germino on violin and Eric Zivian on piano. This piece slips in and out of different rhythmic spaces: at once operatic then more like a poetry slam, the vocalist holding the mic, the overall effect is unsettling but ultimately satisfying. Zavalloni seems to relish in the various roles she must play with every change in tempo or space. In her musically brilliant and theatrical performance, she commands the attention of the audience and is not overshadowed by the more reserved, but no less artistic, piano and violin. The piece is based on the poem *Canti Orfici (Orphic Songs)* by the poet Dino Campana (1885-1932). Following is a portion of the poem, translated from the Italian by Luigi Bonaffini:

Harsh prelude of a muted symphony, trembling violin with electrified strings, trolley running in a line across an iron sky of curved wires while the white mass of the city towers like a dream, multiplied mirage of enormous palaces, regal and barbarous, the electric diadems turned off. I run with the prelude that quivers recedes recovers gains strength and freely pours before the pier into the square crowded with ships and with carts.

The next Andriessen work is *Letter from Cathy* (2003) for voice, violin, harp, percussion, piano and contrabass. Like other Andriessen works on the program, style variation seems to be a dominating force. Harp, piano and percussion take a supporting while voice and violin stand out. Zavalloni flexes her vocal muscles and, in a casual, laissez-faire manner, surprises us with her versatility. At one moment, she portrays a bit of Edith Piaf, at another or the three-penny opera, at another moment, she's intense and fiery. The work is inspired by a letter written by Cathy Berberian, with whom Andriessen performed with in Milan, where she describes a meeting with Stravinski where the late composer makes a version for her of *Elegy for J.F. Kennedy*. Following is a portion of the letter:

Dear Louis,

.... Concerning my concerts in Los Angeles: Stravinsky came especially to hear me do Circles. We went the next night to his home for dinner. ... I had been aiming to ask him to write a small piece. He had just finished a piece for baritone and three clarinets which he said I could do fantastically. Three days later robber Craft said that Stravinsky decided to change the piece for me: mezzo soprano and three flutes! I just heard today that the new version is already finished and that I will perform it in New York in November, at the same time that I will do the other Stravinsky pieces for Columbia Records. Not bad, huh!

Love,

Cathy

Andriessen then replaces Zivian at the piano for a vocal/piano improvisation. This proves to be a rewarding partnership. Zavalloni feeds off of Andriessen's playfulness while Andriessen seems to enjoy taking a totally different direction stylistically every two minutes or so. He often comes back to jazz, blues and a quasi-theatre accompaniment. Zavalloni takes full advantage of his wanderings and injects plenty of mischief of her own, giggling, crouching down low, guttural throat sounds, and dry bursts of consonants and vowels (to name a few) all in the same space as a minor jazz vamp from the piano. The audience is more than willing to hitch a ride with these two explorers and the lengthy coda is time well spent.

After intermission is a piece I've been looking forward to hearing: Kyle Gann's *Time Does Not Exist* (2000) for piano. Sara Cahill, the veteran Other Minds pianist, carries the piece as far as one could imagine. Dressed exquisitely, Cahill approaches the keys with delicate caution. This feeling eventually gives way to great force of expression. The piece opens with a left hand single-note repeated figure, eventually right and left hand chords fall in and out of sync as Gann plays with time (which I love). At one point, the right hand takes the upper register and creates this strange twinkling effect. At another, right and left separated by two octaves repeat the original melody. The tone is dark and the effect is mysterious and otherworldly. Through subtle manipulation of rhythm and a 'give and take' between voices and hands, Gann portrays a space *outside* of time. He takes us beyond the concept of meter and tempo. This particular conception of music resonates with deeply with my own.

The last piece of the Festival, quite different from all the rest, showcases a young pianist/composer, Jason Moran. His *Slang* (2011), enjoying here its world premiere, uses pre-recorded sound, piano, voice, electric bass, guitar and drums. The piece comes out of jazz, but the inventiveness far out-strips the category. Before the musicians appear, we hear them clapping a (perhaps Latin-inspired) rhythm in unison. They keep clapping as they walk out on stage and take their places. The full band begins in a rather free style, thick piano chords, splashing cymbals and drums. Presently, the guitar and piano play in unison a fast and complex rhythmic melody. The guitarist, Mary Halvorson and pianist, Moran, take the opportunity to demonstrate their technical prowess. At length, the band stops and we hear a pre-recorded track. It's a mix of different voices describing the definition of the word 'slang' and how it's used. Later, we hear a recording of children's voices reciting various slang terms. When the band comes back in, we are treated to solos: Nasheet Waits shines on the drums, exuding Elvin Jones among other drummers of the post-bop era; Tarus Mateen is all over the bass, playing way high up on the neck and scraping the strings. After a while, we get to hear more from Alicia Hall Moran, the vocalist, who up to this point has stood rather motionless with a calm, quiet strength. She sings various slang terms such as 'cat', 'cool' and 'head' while the band lays into a funk groove that is very infectious. The heads in the audience start to bounce and we all fall into the spirit of the moment. The Festival ends in a light-hearted yet excited state.

“Why didn’t we do this before?”

Luke Schulze

This past January (2011), UCSD hosted a remarkable reunion, following a call issued for the first time to all of the music department’s living alumni to return home, show their work, connect and reconnect, and share in an intense three days of new music. I imagine that this idea, when it presented itself, may have seemed a bit, well, overdue. The department, now just about half a century old, is nothing if not self-aware and justifiably proud of the number, variety and scope of the people who have come through it, and an unflinching commitment to ongoing creative experiment remains a daily narrative here. But this homecoming did happen, and the following remarks are one participant’s first-person impressions and reflections on this important gathering, the diversity and richness of which was as edifying as it was surprising.

This symposium and festival featured papers and presentation of research, panel discussions, keynote addresses, and most importantly, music of the widest range of media and worldviews. The event was held in the new and impressive Conrad Prebys Music Center, the department’s new home, seen by most of the attendees for the first time. Named Sonic Diasporas, this fest wasn’t, really, a reunion. That is, many of the alumni had never met. Student generations cycle more quickly than familial or biological ones, and the effect was more importantly that of an actual and initial union of the best kind--a physical coming-together of a community that had previously been at best implicit.

I remember that as a student I was taken with and galvanized by the insistent and unapologetic multiplicity of interests and activities represented by UCSD’s music faculty. This has been part of the department’s DNA since its genesis. While UCSD, compared to other schools, seems particularly impervious to the stupor of an overly Eurocentric artistic heritage (we are on the west coast, after all), it should be mentioned that the first real patriarch of the music department was Ernst Krenek. And though the department tends to be thought of as a place where one might more readily encounter more “American” experimental figures like Harry Partch or John Cage, and they do loom large, I am reminded of how many students came to study, while I was there, with Brian Ferneyhough, or Joji Yuasa, and how Enid Gleich established a fellowship dedicated to furthering the study of the music of Kurt Weill. Indeed, the music faculty (a group savvy enough to resist such geo-aesthetic polarization) is an assemblage of the most improbable and catholic worldliness: Jimmy Cheatham played with Duke Ellington and John Coltrane. Miller Puckette (with David Zicarelli) developed the real-time, highly volatile, and interactive software program, MAX. Marnie Dilling wrote an important (and widely recognized) guide to world music in San Diego and brought countless world ensembles to the department, and Bert Turetzky virtually created the modern repertoire for extended bass techniques. From John Fonville’s research in extended intonations to George Lewis’s and Pauline Oliveros’s

improvisational work, to Ed Harkins (who can be induced at parties to demonstrate the most intoxicating ratio-based periodicities) and Philip Larson's performance theater in THE, UCSD's faculty seem to embrace, in their foci, virtually every major trend and development in written, studied, performed, and improvised music of this and the last century.

And, they teach. While UCSD is a research university--where one can surely encounter all forms of academic omphaloskepsis--the faculty continue to show an uncommon advocacy and regard for their students. Ask the students of Jann Pasler or Roger Reynolds how engaged their mentors are. They'll tell you.

Given the collective faculty résumé, it was all the better that Sonic Diasporas highlighted the students--the collective product of these teachers and facilities. It's certainly the case that most of these alumni are themselves teachers, and some of them work here in this department (which is the richer for it). But this felt to me like a student event. To begin with, this was three long days of music-doing in one form or another, from morning 'til past-midnight, put together with a logistical deftness that was a credit to the planning committee. Virtually all the faculty I know came out to hear, and see, the work of their progeny. I suppose it's not best to give a color commentary of every work or performance, but I was affected by a sense that whatever concerns these people had when they were studying here have been pursued, honed, and enlarged. The number and mass of the participants was reflected not only in the empirical count of the presentations but in the creative ambit covered from beginning to end. I was particularly moved by:

--Diamanda Galas's keynote address--sprawling, utopian, excoriating, and at times genuinely funny; vividly urgent, ranging in its topics from the curious realities of urban life in New York to issues of violence and power asymmetries in Anatolia that many of us were forced to confess we'd never heard of.

--The panel by Trummerflora Collective (an aggressively engaged and homegrown enterprise) and contributors discussing how improvised new music is connected to local communities, or how it might be--a frank and progressive look at the university as an entity. The idea of avant-garde art, and how music that "we" do rubs up against the music that "they" do was openly put on the table. They talked of how San Diego's ubiquitous gebrauchtmusik--in the music for parties, Quinceañeras, weddings, dance-based gatherings, and all kinds of culturally functional music--interacts with and might actually be aided by new, improvised and often prohibitive (in its harmonic and rhythmic weirdness) sound-art.

--Jaroslaw Kapuscinski's Oli's Dream, for piano and computer projection. Jarek's work has always, for me, done something very special, which is to set into prominent relief informational bits (in this piece numbers and letters), and to give to these bits a particular, and profoundly magical and poetic, quality. The process of putting together letters and numbers into words, and, um, ideas.... is a basic part of our learning, and Jarek not only brings that process to our attention, but aids it, and makes it personally implicating (and rewarding), as we involve our own perceptual histories in our hearing/seeing of his pieces.

--Pat O'Keefe organized an animated and buoyant "inter-generational" improvisation, which lasted for over an hour, in which small groups of improvisors gradually overlapped, ceded to, and played off of one another, many of them moving through the (large) space. In its inclusivity of gestures and ontologies, this event in particular offered itself as a gentle metaphor for the entire festival.

There were new instruments: Marion Garver Fredrickson playing a flute literally taller than she; Paul Drescher's "Quadrachord," a massive horizontal set of strings, amplified, prepared, bowed, plucked, struck--capable of clearly playing harmonics up to the 24th partial; Tom Nunn's "Skatchbox," a shoebox lid-sized piece of wood, fitted with combs, heavily amplified, and played, much if not all of the time, with serrated disposable picnic knives. Nunn would occasionally stop, and with great consideration and sonic purpose, swap out one disposable knife for another. It mattered.

Steve Schick has created an astonishing and fierce percussion program since he came to UCSD: "Red Fish Blue Fish" (Theodore Geisel's collected materials now live at UCSD) has recorded the entire body of percussion music of Xenakis (Mode Records), the early percussion work of Stockhausen, and Reynolds's Sanctuary. To close the festival, they performed Steve Reich's Drumming, a work they've owned for years, in the Price Center's Loft, a more casual space (an antidote to the concert hall and yes, you can drink there) on campus, which surprised and seduced a number of listeners who hadn't known about this performance. A perfect, culminative, and more importantly, collective effort, typical of "Red Fish Blue Fish"---riveting, synchronized, ecstatic.

I can't help mentioning the performance that moved me the most: the appearance of bassist and vocalist Kristin Korb. I remember when Kristin came to UCSD from Montana, at which time she expressed a somewhat heterodox (by localized standards) goal: she wanted to be, as in be, a jazz bassist and singer. Well, Turetzky was here, as were Cheatham, Lewis, and Davis, but eyebrows were (on occasion) raised and folks left her to her asynchronous appetites without all that much interest, as I remember. I gather she's simply gone out to the woodshed for over a decade to practice, because on Saturday night, Kristin just killed it. As in, she slayed: she came out with a fresh version of Green Dolphin Street and several other pieces--she has herculean hands; she sings with pitch-mirroring on the bass flawlessly; her vocal improvising is genuine and alive; her bass playing (both as an outside solo instrument or an accompaniment) is imaginative, and her control of her own physicality is at all times infectious and winning. She did it, and she did it her own way, and she may have, ultimately, embodied the department's mission more than anyone knew; I was seated among a number of folks who were her pals when she was here, and, well, the joy we felt is a huge part of what I'm taking away from this entire three days....

One has to laud the performers who played this music, all of them not only technically brilliant but collaborative in influencing the composers who write for them. James Ilgenfritz gave an illuminating reading of several works by Anthony Braxton. Anthony Burr rendered Erik Ulman's tough and complex solo bass clarinet piece "Days and Days" into a lyrical and lucid song. In fact (and how might it be otherwise?) many of these players themselves compose, and compose well. A number of the most vital groups dedicated to new music today--Zeitgeist, Either/Or, Clockedout, Skin and Bones,

Duo Runedako, Cosmologic, Psychoangelo, Calliope, and the Nonsense Company--come from UCSD or at least in part developed here---

The people who were not there were missed, and missed acutely, especially those who are no longer with us: among them Mark Osborn, Harry Castle, and those whom this writer is sadly and unintentionally omitting.....

The Prebys Center is astounding. The concert hall, designed by Cyril Harris (who designed the Metropolitan Opera, and who died just two weeks before this festival) is an amazing space. The sound is just as critics have described his earlier acoustics, with a chamber music-like quality to individual instruments: warm, open, and clear. Thunderous sounds, as in Steven Takasugi's massive Die Klavierübung, for amplified piano samples (some of them really loud) were easily handled not only by the space itself but by the amplification system--almost deafening, but clear, undistorted and immediate. UCSD continues to profit from the expertise of engineer Joe Kucera, who has been behind every successful recording project in the music department for the last twenty years. There are (and this makes me, an ante-Prebysian alumnus, a little jealous) all kinds of practice rooms and dedicated spaces, at least one given over to experimental piano treatments (preparations, bowing, amplification, ...). The building itself is big, transparent and made alive by both the light from without and the music within.

Writing this, I wish I could mention everyone, and everything, that shone so vividly during these three days. The impact of what I'm calling a grass-roots gathering (grass roots can, apparently, grow in a concrete mushroom field) was extraordinary, is extraordinary, and for me, will only become more so as I await our next such meeting....

Thank you.....music people.

Max Mathews: A Remembrance for Open Space

Hubert S. Howe

I first met Max Mathews in about 1964, when I was still an undergraduate student at Princeton University. I was working for Jim Randall, who was composing his piece *Mudgett: Monologues of a Mass Murderer*. Bell Labs in Murray Hill, New Jersey was about the only place in the world that was doing computer music then. Jim's would compute a portion of his piece at Princeton and then drive up to Bell Labs with a digital tape to convert it to sound, which he would record on a reel-to-reel tape and bring it back to Princeton, where he could listen to it carefully and decide what to do next.

In the fall of that year, I became a graduate student and, in collaboration with Godfrey Winham, began to work on the process of exporting the music programming language Max had developed, *Music 4*, to Princeton, where we called it *Music 4B*. It was then that I came to realize what a comprehensive vision for computer music Max had created, one that came to dominate the evolution of these programs in the ensuing years. Godfrey, Jim and I would still visit Bell Labs to convert our files to sound, but it was not too long after then that Bell Labs donated their original conversion system to Princeton, and we did not have to make the trip so often. We would still do it at times, because Bell then had a stereo capability, which we lacked.

Computer music wouldn't exist if Max Mathews had not been running the Acoustical and Behavioral Research Center at Bell Telephone Laboratories. Since the 1920s, Bell Labs had been the main institution that did cutting-edge scientific research on sound, because it was crucial for their main product, the telephone. It was Max who extended this research to include music. Partly this was because he was a violinist, and he was interested in the acoustics of the instrument. For many years, he had admired the work of Carleen Hutchins, who made violins and other stringed instruments in the proportions of the violin, but this was really seventeenth-century research.

The modern computer was introduced in the 1950s, and by the latter years of that decade it was the IBM corporation that controlled the entire market. Computers at that time were mainframe machines, which were huge and required a special climate-controlled environment with round-the-clock technicians. They were very expensive, and only large corporations and universities could afford them. Fortunately, Princeton University was able to support our research, which they did by granting us what we called "funny money," representing the amount of computer time we used. Totals adding up to thousands of dollars were printed on the last page of each of our outputs.

Max was a great visionary, because from these early primitive machines he could see the power inherent in the digital representation of sound waves for both analysis and synthesis of music. In the 1950s he began creating a series of music synthesis programs that ultimately went up to version five. In addition, his researchers produced some of the first digital-to-analog and analog-to-digital converters that were necessary for this purpose. The main limitation of the entire process in those days was the speeds and data capacities of computer tapes, which were the only exportable digital medium.

Max hired a number of excellent people to work on his music projects. The first composer was James Tenney, who wrote a seminal article in the *Journal of Music Theory* in the early 1960s. When I visited Bell Labs in the early days, I met a programmer named Joan Miller, who was

probably exceeded only by Barry Vercoe. Through her work I came to see the programming sophistication that went into Music 4. Its power lay in the ability to construct a sound wave, and since all sounds are waves, any sound could be created. By representing all of the devices used in constructing the sound in little modules called unit generators, you could have virtually an unlimited amount of equipment, the only limitation being the amount of computer time it took to produce the sound, which was often quite long. Learning to describe the sounds was not easy, and it took me years to assimilate it.

One of the people Max hired at Bell Labs was Jean-Claude Risset, a French pianist and composer who had studied with André Joliver and also had a background in physics. He conducted two studies, one on violin tones and the other on trumpet tones, which were among the first to use the computer to analyze and re-synthesize sounds. The trumpet study was a real breakthrough. It was verified by playing sounds through loudspeakers to a group of professional trumpeters who were asked to identify the real and synthetic tones. They couldn't tell the difference. While I have never felt that the success of computer music should not be judged by how well it imitates acoustic instruments, these tests convinced many skeptics that computers could produce really interesting and lifelike tones.

Risset went on to compose two outstanding computer music pieces, Computer Suite from "Little Boy" and Mutations. Besides using the trumpet and other brass sounds he had worked on in his studies, he also used a variety of bell, drum, flute and piano sounds as well as some very interesting abstract sounds. He later published a catalog of computer-generated sounds to show the world how he had created them, and these have become widely studied and imitated by computer musicians.

Max went on to get involved in a number of other music projects after the Music 1-5 programs. One invention was the Radio Baton, which was used to follow the movements of the hands in three dimensions and had a number of applications, such as in conducting and percussion instruments. The Groove program was the first to concentrate on live performance of electronic music through computer control of sound-generating devices. He hired another interesting researcher, Richard Moore, to work on Groove. It was launched in 1970, well before keyboard-based electronic music synthesizers were even capable of polyphony or the invention of MIDI. He also gave encouragement to John Chowning's development of FM synthesis, which he correctly saw as enabling real-time computer music synthesis, as was later realized in Yamaha's DX-7 and subsequent instruments. The 1970s were also the decade when Bell Labs introduced the C programming language, which has gone on to dominate computer programming of all kinds. Max's music synthesis programs were continued mainly through the work of Barry Vercoe, whose Music 360, Music 11 and Csound programs are a direct descendant of the music series.

Max's work, as well as Bell Labs itself, was greatly affected by the divestiture of the AT&T company, which took place in 1984. The Labs themselves became a part of Lucent Technologies, which was later merged with the French company Alcatel. While they have continued to do research and have produced some important inventions, the focus of their research is no longer the same, and they are also involved in classified government contracts. It was not surprising that Max retired from the company shortly after the breakup. Later, he moved to Stanford University and became a Professor emeritus at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics.

Nobody working with computers back in the 1960s, when my involvement with them began, could have imagined the fantastic progress that would take place in the ensuing years to produce the amazing array of products that we now take for granted. Nowadays even the cheapest personal computers are more powerful than the IBM machines we used then. (Jim Lovell, the commander of the aborted Apollo 13 mission to the moon in 1970, remarked when he wrote his book about that experience that he was writing his book on a computer more powerful than that on the spacecraft at the time!) Those of us who lived through this time remember, however, that there

were a large number of incremental steps that generated a chain of events that ultimately became a landslide, fueled by commercial and even international competition.

It is the same with the evolution of computer music. There were many different ways in which it could have developed. The RCA synthesizer was an example of analog technology, as were the early music synthesizers produced by Moog, Buchla, and others. These were all very sophisticated in some respects (ability to produce interesting sounds) but sadly wanting in others (polyphony, accurate tuning, control). Sampling, such as implemented on early machines like the New England Digital Synclavier, could have provided a different direction for generating sounds from recordings that would have precluded creating original sounds. Computers were thought of as data-processing machines, useful for scientific research or for banks and the government. Nobody could see how music could benefit from them. The music institutions of the time were never going to sponsor the research needed to produce anything useful. Most were hostile to the idea, and some still are. Max Mathews, with his vision of how digitizing sound waves could be useful for music as well as the institutional resources of Bell Labs, provided the framework that ultimately revealed itself to be the most versatile way to proceed, and the subsequent history of the field has confirmed it. His work saved the rest of us the necessity of reinventing the wheel, as it were, so that we could think about more advanced ideas. That is ultimately his most important contribution.

Rainyday Reflections

[1. internal philosophy]

2. fourth and long in Baltimore

[3. inside in, outside out]

Benjamin Boretz

November 2007/April-July 2008

Fourth and long in Baltimore

An invitation to invade a meeting of philosophically interested music theorists to engage the thought of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* with respect to its musical implications elicited an impulse to take a wild leap in the dark, to imagine that there might be discoverable in a meditation on D&G a way to approach a possible problem in the mode of addressing the cognitivity of a strenuously nonverbal mode of receiving and thinking – and, maybe even, thinking about — music as music. The problem lodges precisely in the slippery interstice between the verbal and the nonverbal – not only when the nonverbal is discursively addressed, but when people whose culture at least makes verbal ontologization not only prioritized but virtually exclusive engage directly in the practices of musicmaking at any node of the transactional network. My piece, *Black /Noise III*, which consists of fragments of *A Thousand Plateaux* threaded into an unrolling series of musicsounds, video images, and sonic and visual silences, imagines that there's a latent aesthetics in the mix which only coheres in the conjunction of all its components, incoherent in the language of any component alone, but singularly determinate in their totality, a discourse without a metatext. But in a philosophical forum, a connection with verbal/symbolic discourse materializes as something more crucial to the episteme of cognition than just a casual fact of circumstance, because of the one really ineluctable issue of communication: a person's communication to oneself in the process of grasping and negotiating the matter and identity and qualities of the outputs of expressive-linguaging episodes. So a quest followed, and had a yield which I'm able to imagine is at least tentatively interesting, and perhaps provisionally operational in yet one more pass into my own realtime eartraining.

Much earlier, in 1998, there was the polysensory piece *Black /Noise III*; and then, later, a probably misguided "program note" (no joke survives its own explanation); which, nevertheless, I feel I should offer here as part of the story of this excursion, if only as a sacrificial confession:

On the 1001st Plateau: *Black /Noise III*

Passages sliced out of *A Thousand Plateaux* juxtapose to suggest a musical aesthetic -- not an aesthetic necessarily of music *per se*, but an aesthetic quintessentially musical: specific but (verbally) inexplicit, experiential but impalpable. The text itself, in the course of its analysis of behavioral and mental structures, intensely preoccupies itself with the aesthetics of normalcy, or, the normalcy of aesthetics, or, even, the sense of therapy (its nominally explicit subject) as the work, constant and unremitting throughout everyone's life, of putting oneself and one's world together via a nexus of world-processing expressivities, mundane and elevated inseparably. Listening, as they suggest, along the paths of the "secret link constituted for the critique of negativity, the exteriority of forces and relations, the denunciation of power..." , proposes a discourse which exerts (and cultivates) vision exclusively to look, hearing exclusively to listen. Does the spectre of an issue appear at the convergence point of the sounds, words, images, silences, blacknesses which populate the discourse of *Black /Noise III*? Or is it only a polyphony of times, merging, or not, to

ontologize a fused or dispersed experiential residue? But it *was* the suspicion of a lurking issue within the text of *A Thousand Plateaus* which mobilized the setting together of computer-processed piano sounds, interactive playing, singing and speaking sounds, video photographs of domestic objects, bookpages of artworks, and vocalized fragments of the book itself -- a discourse groping to identify, make palpable, form in its cumulation, an otherwise unaskable question, an otherwise ungraspable thought.

So it seems I was envisioning the ontogenesis of a purely interior aesthetics, determinate but inexorably subjective. But why an aesthetics? And, what for an aesthetics? [And in what terms might it be relevant to interface such personal self-developmental, compositional concerns with the broader, socially directed theoretical and philosophical concerns of my music-professional colleagues?] On the other hand, if I need in personal thinking or public discourse to get behind the surface of sheer philosophical thoughtplay I'm going to have to collide with existential questions about my identification with music, of whether my intellectualizations are plugged into where my personal urgencies are, of what I need to cultivate in my own personal evolution in respect of music, how I think that might most favorably be pursued. So when I ask myself a question about thinking about music it devolves naturally into questions about the relationship between *understanding* and *experiencing*: not questions, for me, of *either/or*, but of hierarchy, of the direction of implication, and, to put it crassly, the most basic questions of personal goals and values. Are the ontologies of understanding-structures intercompatible with the ontologies of experiencing-episodes? Are they contingent upon one another, mutually, or in either direction? In another register, I may ask: is aesthetic perception distinct from extra-aesthetic perception, that is, from what I might call analytic perception? These are questions I've addressed before, but this occasion, and rereading D&G and elsewhere, has given me some new thoughts on them. Further on, I'll retrieve some of those earlier ways of thinking and re-examine them in the light of this moment.

Well, then — a Deleuzian aesthetics, a D&G-ian aesthetics. Not so much emanated from remarks explicitly touching art, music, expression, but from broader world-making perspectives touching issues of psychological and material reality located not only in *Mille Plateaux* but significantly, too, in Deleuze's *Bergsonisme* and in the philosophy of Henri Bergson itself. Because all of these texts address, implicitly and explicitly, the dualism I've suggested, the question of ontological connections and disparities between the world of understandings and the world of experiencings, between the analytic and the aesthetic.

The analytic, we perceive, has great trouble accommodating the phenomena we call *qualities*. So one great attraction of an imaginable Deleuze/Guattarian aesthetics is that it reintroduces the *qualitative* as against the *quantitative* as well as the *multiple*—or, rather, the image of phenomenal *multiplicities*—as against the *unitary*, into the discourses of perceiving-experience, in a way quite following on, quite consistent with, Henri Bergson's philosophy of intuition.

You might say that Bergson, at least implicitly, cultivates the ground of ontological creativity and perceptual relativism, but — significantly for my interest — in a conversely platonistic way: by reduction and elimination from a metaphysical given to an individuated entification as a virtual, hence a definitive, reality. Bergson distinguishes a “psychological unconscious”

from an “ontological unconscious”; subjective knowing — through intuition, self-contained, holistic and qualitative, whose content is *time* — from objective knowing, discursive, metricized, intercommensurable, constructively variable, and — spatial. He describes duration as “...a type of multiplicity opposed to metric multiplicity or the multiplicity of magnitude. Duration is in no way indivisible, but is that which cannot be divided without changing in nature at each division.”

So clearly I could — as I sometimes may appear to have done — mystify my intuitive-experiential ontology, confining it terminally to a purely subjective, self-inclosed namelessness, as pure existence individuating itself from occasion to occasion by an internal alchemy experienceable but ungraspable except in and of itself. But this is in conflict with my normal experience, with how I really do cognize music; the intuitive comes to me equipped with an identity — though not necessarily with a discourse. And the analytic comes along too, as a distinct, alienated mode, cognitively significant to the other but obscurely non-interpenetrable in specific with it.

So in what terms could the intuitive have an identity designable but nondiscursive? By bearing a *name* which is *it* but not a *description of it*, a name with which it is semantically fused. A name which might be a proper noun or an assemblage of nouns preceded by indefinite articles. By, in short, being attached to an abstract entity which carries its identity strictly *as a name rather than as a description*. In scholastic philosophy, as in Bergson and in D&G, such an abstract entity is a *haecceity*. This term originates in medieval scholastic philosophy, specifically the work of Duns Scotus. According to Gary Rosencrantz “The content of a haecceity is an entity’s individuality or identity...because nothing can be identical with more than one thing, there could not be an entity which exemplifies more than one haecceity” (D&G try to maintain a rigorously antiplatonistic version of this position, but that isn’t germane to my purposes here; Bergson’s relativistic platonism, mentioned above, is: a platonistic world which exists only in the time of an experience, and dissolves with the terminal relocation of that experience into the past, into memory; for in a context of what Rosencrantz calls *immanent realism*, “an *abstractum* cannot exist unless it is exemplified by a *concretum*”).*

For this contrivance to be the pillar, the very foundation, of my aesthetics, I have to enter a very strange platonistic world, a world of reified properties. Within such an aesthetic, crucially, metaphors are entirely absent; they are, indeed, categorically nonexistent; their places are occupied by haecceities which do inhabit this world, though in an oddly relativistic way: as abstract entities in one-time-only manifestations: one world-moment, one music-moment, one reception-moment, the entire contents of a momentarily materializing universe

*A FORMAL DEFINITION OF HAECCEITY (from Gary S. Rosencrantz: **Haecceity: An Ontological Essay**):

F is a haecceity =df. $(\exists x)(F$ is the property of being identical with $x)$

Logical structure (according to Rosencrantz): “necessarily, for any property y , y is a haecceity if and only if there exists an x such that Ryx , where R is the dyadic relation *being the property of being identical with*”.

instantaneously dissolving into retrievable memory, into past-time, leaving nonetheless a transformative trace on the whole of consciousness: a state of being whose own haecceity is the identity of the conscious whole. Aesthetics in this sense is necessarily platonistic insofar as it entails the exclusive and specific invocation of singular abstract entities taken as primitives and otherwise unexplicated; analysis, on the other hand, is preternaturally nominalistic insofar as its terms and predicates must persist outside of singular phenomena and must extend permanently, universally, and with unlimited variability and applicability, to an ever-expanding universe of subject phenomena. And every token in a music-analytic model is ipso facto a *metaphor*.**

So the terms of reference in my proposed aesthetics are just names, nouns, and indefinite articles, capturing in natural language the sense of the haecceitical fusion, the semantic fusion of a phenomenon with its own sense.

But the predicates native to the music-analytic universe (as, “I⁶₄”) are essentially adjectives, adjectival pieces of a semantic network, placed into a one-to-one metaphorical position against the data of a music phenomenon, never transferring to them ontologically or becoming identified with them.

It seems, then, that I want to co-posit two experiential ontologies, call them “the analytic” and “the aesthetic”, not counterpositing but copositing; not mutually exclusive either because in the universe of each the other cannot even be formulated or materialized (at most the aesthetic could be hypothesized within the analytic without the possibility of materializing or being experienced — a purely nominal existence as a word at most). The sphere of multiplicity is the aesthetic sphere; in the analytic sphere, on the contrary, unity is an imperative since predicates must be interdefinable to be functionalized, to be intercoherent (inter-intelligible) — any incoherence in a predicate entails terminal nonfunctionality of an analytic model. Thus, in the world of analysis, what is aesthetically real is perceivable only as fantasy — as fanciful metaphor standing in symbolically for some easily substitutable quantifiable token or structure. Conversely, in the aesthetic world, what is analytically real is perceived as abstract and reductive, alien to experience and devoid of expression.

**D&G want to elude this platonism so they convert haecceity into a process rather than an abstract entity; they say: “It is the entire assemblage in its individual aggregate that is a haecceity; it is the assemblage that is defined by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects, which belong to another plane. It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child, that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable from an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life.” For my purposes it’s more productive to conceive a haecceity as an abstract entity which dissolves in lockstep with the cessation of the event it qualifies — unlike the analytic, which although it contains no abstract entities, persists as an ongoing, evolving but continuously ontologized semantic network, needing its polyphenomenal persistence to effectuate its generalizing purposes, its quantificational comparatives and variables, within and between individual phenomena to which it is applied.

Names, then, are ontologically expansive, in principle.

Descriptions are in principle ontologically reductive — for the worthy causes of clarity and specificity of focus and perception, and the reification of perceptually significant data.

In my text “Experiences With No Names”, the names I was trying to eliminate are what D&G call nouns “taken in their *extensive* usage, in other words those which function as common nouns ensuring the unification of an aggregate they assume.” Since this is a reductionism I was, and still am, strenuously trying to avoid, I declared names counterproductive unless understood and used as rigorously delimited or imaginatively suggestive imagery held in an indeterminate metaphorical relation to their ostensible denotata. But what was eliminated seemed — and Martin Scherzinger was quick to have it seem this way — to leave a void-space between our experiences and the experience of our experiences, to leave a blank in the place where we in real life *grasp* our own perceptions — gaps exactly complementary to the experiential inadequacy, the counterproductivity, of perception in the analytic mode as a substitute for the aesthetic.

And then, too, as I tried to emphasize in “Music, as a Music”, the discourse of analysis had its own expressive role in the domain of creative descriptive imaging, the imaginative domain of analytic metaphor. But that still left a major cognitive problematic, which issued from my implicit assumption of a seamlessly unitary conception of the whole universe of personal music experience. As I now distinguish, as I am trying to here, the world of aesthetics from the world of analytic structures, the significances of each in my own musical evolution, and toward its further development, begin to seem real, and interdependent: the aesthetic is a universe of possible multiplicities, unlimited in number or diversity; the analytic, to be minimally intelligible as such, is ineluctably bound to a commitment to unity — that is, to descriptive coherence.

I think I need to theorize and engage my aesthetics, in my pursuit of music as music, to experience my experience as experience without having to enter an antirational mysticism which is counterintuitive to me in any case.

And I perceive an ineluctable need, even just to make that experience possible, for an equally strenuous practice of musically believable analytics; at least, or perhaps at most, for the continuous expansion, connection, and concentration of those specific awarenesses of specificities, that creation of the particular experiential data through which the aesthetic is enabled to create its deepest and most meaningful expressivities.

The piece, *Black / Noise III*, that some time ago began my exploration of this aesthetic attitude is composed with a radical ontological posture: its visual surface ranges from simple blackness to homemade images of domestic commonplaces, high-culture art clichés and blatant exhibitions of outrageous psychosis; its texts, all drawn from *A Thousand Plateaus*, say very obvious and unsubtle things, in sequences skew to their places in the book; the musicsound is composed of separated segments of a piece for computer-processed pianosound interleaved with fragments of realtime playing sessions, including a fragment of Emily Dickinson, and passages of virtual silence. An assemblage, perhaps, which analytic listening and looking would perceive as a random collage of things posing no challenge to identification nor any opportunity for significant sense-making.

In the indefinite-article language of haecceity, however, you might experience it holistically, indivisibly, under some such haecceitic rubric as “some (familiar) images, some (obvious) texts, some (assorted) musics”; but in the world, in the aesthetic world, of *A Thousand Plateaus*, you might also receive it as an accumulating aspiration, a metastatically spreading multiplicity wanting finally to call itself “Becoming-Duration”...

listening on a curve

in sensorium Franz Kamin

1

coming to

Listen up to say what you don't know how.

Everything's coming from outside, here comes the inside!

This is how I know space, flowing till I hit bottom.

Backing up feels what can now come back.

There's more in the thing said than the sayer dares know.

My turn of mind is a good foot ahead of itself, even stepping back.

Tongue in a swing, tying the knot.

Say what's not.

Finalistic bending back, anything to stay on track.

Sometimes you wake up a wreck.

Well, admit we don't know which way is up, or off the edge.

Which end of the sentence is the real beginning?

Space surrounds itself.

It's waiting for its voice to come through.

2

a teaching ahead of its rime

Your head is big here, looking me through.

True and truer and all you are true to, still.

Feeling you forward I see you possible, as never before.

You still sound me in the grand sensorium, reserved for you.

I am here to think incipient matter. Help me out.

Real talk—at the crossroads, with word swords flashing.

Your messages still bound through leaping from nerve ends.

Handler of inaudible sound now taking hold in invisible light.

Sound down.

Now more than ever it's up to me to flesh you out.

3

view from the drive-through body

Nothing less than nothing serves.

Motivating the sense of life being written right here, *this is*.

A math truth's still teaching itself from scratch. Greechie Space.

It ratchets up intensity as it goes. *clink clink clink* Resonant nowhere.

Mysterious numbers people the mind, up the slope to the high emptiness.

Scribbled in the heart the question is questing.

That you walked through here is still how I know you.

Now the place has made itself matter *here*.

I'm on your trail.

You give certainty pained down deep, ends not loose but flying away.

Faced nerves of the scalped lives.

Your many. Mind all over. Sails swell.

Echoes the heartsphere in the end jammed open.

Something in me realer than me *is* your trail.

A rend is ended.

Each foray's gory in its own way.

Nothing like it, the grand laughing out of bounds.

This is special to humans, as far as we can tell.

The magical capacity for hell.

4

regeneration by self-removal

How is it far if you hear it? even inaudible.

It knows what it says in how to say it, opening the hand to let the bird out.

DO NOT BLOCK DRIVEWAY — a voice from beyond.

Life now—last allowable slogan in a slide.

A cleft in the known and a sudden valley of shadow.

Now opening mind to let the prehensile bird back in.

Knowing you is knowing why I had to be here.

Why here instead of nowhere—well, why not nowhere and still know you?

Sound down.

[read:] *The Psychotopologies of Everyday Life*

Even if you could prove who's talking who'd know the difference?

5

sound wants

Negative synapse in the nowhere absent flows back from heart-draining loss.
It mirrors your life, and the strange thing is I see me in there with you.

This is how I know you're there. So near.

In most alone—*enough space for your many*—finally, we're here too.

Count from one to two and not *still* fear three.

The overlooker seeing bottom is looking out past.

6

linguaging hereafter

Now I can lay mind down in this outside.

Outstretch over the edge underneath as I am.

Syntax is circling the drain as we speak.

Here we are at hexagrammic bottom, still together.

Near texture in backflow feels you appearing not to be.

Distancing penetration, ever at us, and round all around.

George Quasha

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