

INVITATIONS

ANDREW CULVER

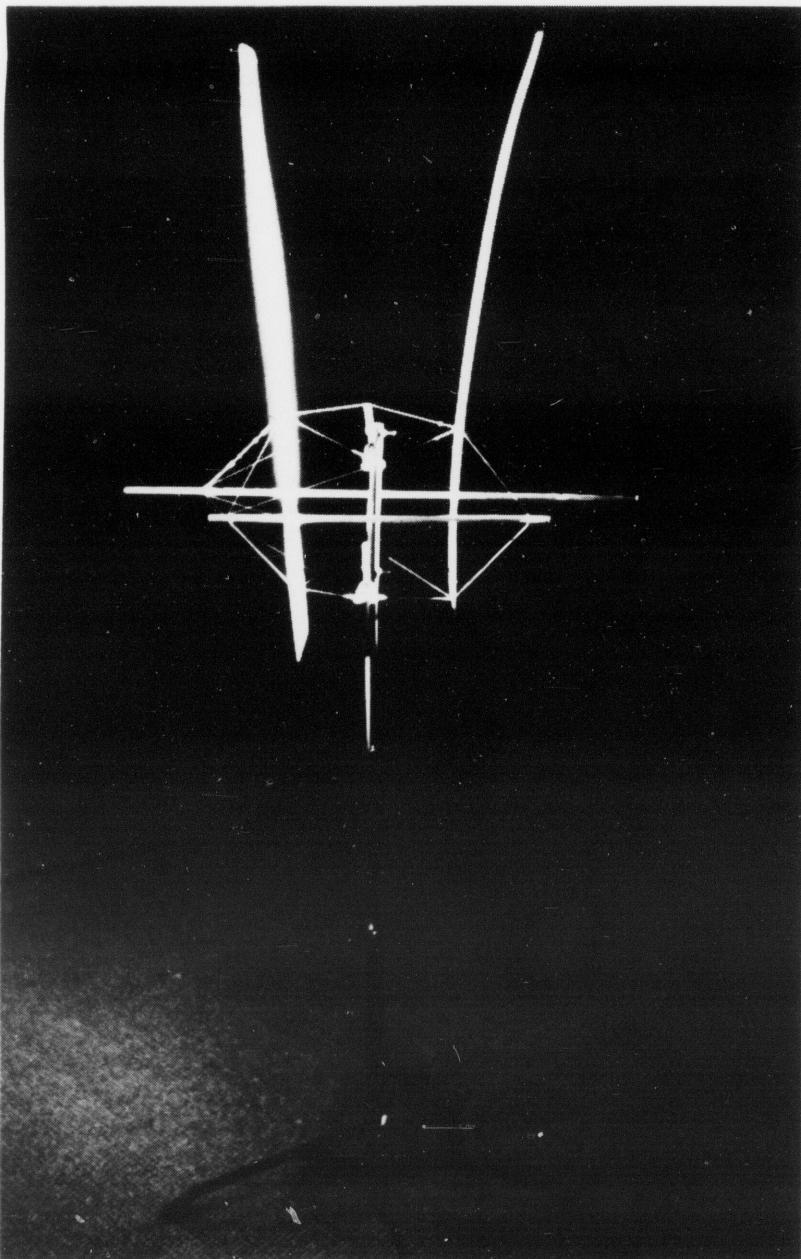
When Udo Kasemets announced an event — *Symposium: Synergetics and the Arts: (Re) Tuning Humanity* — MUSICWORKS announced an issue devoted to the theme and to R. Buckminster Fuller, and I offered *Invitations*. Thus it was in the context of my work as it relates to Fuller that the piece was conceived.

Fuller began his work with a global issue: shelter, he developed his work method into a powerful thinking process, and he tested his work's viability against a standard for which he was unusually gifted: modelability. These three are, I think, the salient features of his work, and from them spring the truthfulness, clarity and generality that attract us so much.

In comparison, my starting point is different, my thinking sporadic, and my standards unclear even to me. Hence the open-ended, unfinished quality of these *Invitations*. Most notably, they are not related sequentially, and their leaping from specifics to generalities is somewhat abrupt. Correcting and refining the language, as I did many times, resulted in the individual parts becoming even more isolated. Faced with the question of how to arrange this multiplicity of single-mindedness on one page, I settled on an unbiased newspaper layout with a chance determined sequence. The reader then could skip about as one does reading a newspaper, without the obstacles of headlines and dividing lines that an editor uses to signal (bias) one's attention.

As John Cage has pointed out, chance operations involve not the making of choices but the asking of questions, bringing about a situation unforeseen by the questioner, and answers that surprise and enliven. Chance operations have to do not with what we are and have been, as in self-expression, but with what we are able to allow ourselves to become, as in self-alteration. In relation to the radical shifts of the twentieth century, self-expression may be a comfort, but self-alteration is a necessity.

The paragraphs of *Invitations* are divided by either one or two empty lines. Paragraphs divided by one line are joined in one text, and divisions of two lines mark the boundaries between texts, of which there are 22. Within the confines of where the longer ones would fit, I used ic (a program of mine that runs on an IBM PC and that simulates the I Ching coin tossing oracles) to determine the placement of each text on the page. The title and byline were treated as any other text: their symmetrical arrangement is unchosen. The one partial exception is that the parts of the 'Provisional History of Structural Principles' were manipulated to assure a sequential progression from top to bottom, though left to right placement was left to chance.



The photo and tape excerpt on the MUSICWORKS 33 cassette are of **Tensegrity Sound Source #5**, a performance sound source developed between 1981 and 1983. Being a tensegrity icosahedron, it has 6 compression (rigid) members and 24 tension members. The latter are all .018" diameter stainless steel wire. The two compression members that are at the top and bottom in the centre of the picture, and that are difficult to see because they run in line with the camera, are made of turnbuckles and threaded rod; they are used to tighten the structure and to attach the pedestal. The two that run across the picture are of 70% T6 aluminum, a very hard alloy that promotes clear and strong upper harmonics. Of the two tall compression members that seem to reach up, the left is 3/32" (.09375") 3-plywood, and the one on the right is .024" cold-rolled steel.

A model is worth a thousand pictures when it comes to describing a tensegrity, but suffice to say that its rich resonance is a result of the manner in which its tension members freely sustain its compression members. On **Tensegrity Sound Source #5**, the electronic pickup is by small crystal contact microphones, one on the wood sheet and one on the steel; the stereo information results from this physical separation of pickup points in the structure. Amplification is at a maximum relative to system noise; there is no signal processing. The tape is a small excerpt of small excerpts: in performance, the work runs about 50 minutes and requires a multi-speaker stereo sound system and powerful spot lighting.
