

# MUSICWORKS 38

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LANGUAGE AS  
MUSIC:

BUILDING AN  
ARCHITECTURE  
OF SOUND  
BY HELEN HALL

STELLA  
TRYLINSKI AND  
THE UKRAINIAN  
WOMEN'S  
CHOIR OF  
THUNDER BAY  
BY KIM ERICKSON

IMPROVISING  
SOUND:

TEN SOUND  
POETS ON THE  
POETICS OF  
SOUND  
BY bpNichol

A TRADITION OF  
BALANCE: WORD  
AND MUSIC IN  
THE ORTHODOX  
CHURCH  
BY SIBYLLE PREUSCHAT

SOUND ASLEEP:  
DREAMING  
OF MUSIC  
INTERVIEW WITH R.I.P. HAYMAN

# BRIDGING LANGUAGE



# BRIDGING LANGUAGE

## EDITOR'S NOTES

The most unique and personal sound we each make (produce?) is our voice. We communicate the day-to-day meaning and emotion of our lives with our voices. And on occasion our voices become instruments for larger purposes, to express the musical, poetic and sacred aspects of our experience.

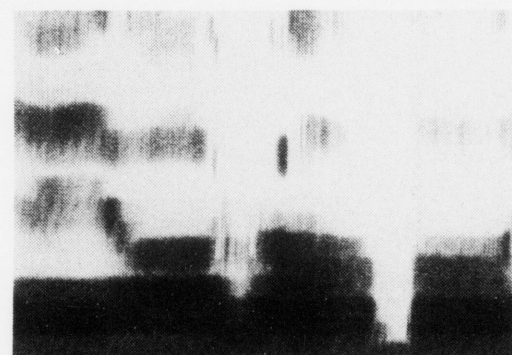
In this issue of MUSICWORKS, **R.I.P. Hayman** discusses the experience of a temporary community which shared in his event called *Dreamsound*. **Serge Boldirev** emphasizes the role of the Orthodox Church Choir in providing a focus for a pre-existing community and a shared religion. **Stella Trylinski** highlights the role of the Ukrainian Women's Choir within the Thunder Bay Ukrainian community. For each, the sound, the music and the voices become the focus of the event. The voice is transformed from a verbal communication mechanism to a medium for artistic expression.

The exploration of different vocal techniques has become an increasingly prominent element of western music in the twentieth century. During this time our understanding and use of the voice has been altered in radically new directions. In his book **Alternative Voices: Essays on Contemporary Vocal and Choral Composition** (University of Toronto Press, 1984), **Istvan Anhalt** discusses several examples of work by composers, poets, artists and playwrights. He provides a detailed examination of selected works and discusses their precedents in the work of other artists as well as in the traditions of many world cultures. He concludes with speculations about the mystical and magical elements of language and the celebratory nature of performance.

**Helen Hall** describes in this issue several aspects of vocal acoustics, and of how sounds are assembled in language. She shows the influence that her research in this field has had on her understanding of all sound including instrumental music.

**bpNichol** interviewed ten people who perform sound poetry either alone or in small groups, using various levels of structure and improvisation in the interplay between text and sound, among one another, with the audience and with the performance space itself.

As voices transform personal communication into community events, are they at the same time transformed by the experience, by the interaction with the audience and with the other voices? Perhaps we are reminded of the statements of **Dr. Alfred Tomatis** (see MW no. 35) that the voice can only produce what the ear hears, and that listening to certain sounds will stimulate, re-charge and re-awaken.



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BRIDGING LANGUAGE

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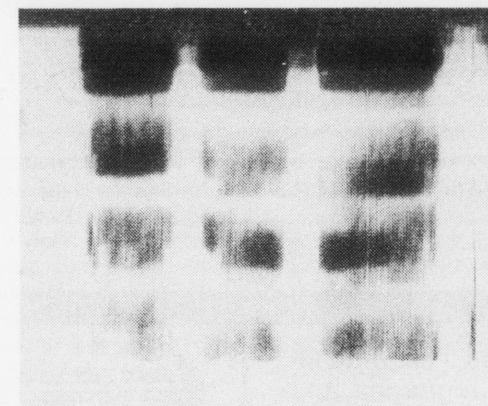
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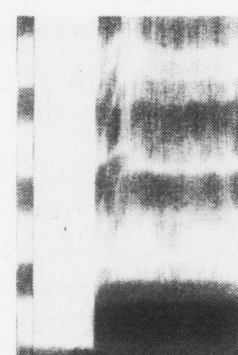
### THE CASSETTE

The cassette accompanying MUSICWORKS 38 includes examples of sound and music from:

- Helen Hall's compositions *Stoicheia*, *Winter Trees* and *Photoskia*
- Several sound poets who spoke of their work with bpNichol: *Stereo Nose* by Paul Dutton, *Simultaneous Translations* by Susan McMaster (with David Prentice), *8 States of Denial for the 1980's* by bpNichol and Steve McCaffery, *Factory* by Steven Smith and *Readings from Cortazar no. 1: End of the Game* by TEKST.
- The Ukrainian Women's Choir of Thunder Bay sings *Good Evening Dear Neighbours* and *Oy U Polee Krenechenka*. Stella Trylinski plays a mandolin solo, *The Cossacks Whistle*.
- The choir of Christ the Savior Russian Orthodox Church sings *Orthodox liturgical music* and *Serge Boldirev*, the choir director, demonstrates the *Tones*, melodies of which the music is composed.
- R.I.P. Hayman speaks of his *Dreamsound* events, and illustrates them with two pieces, *Snore Sonata* and *Yawn Quartet*.

### UPCOMING

The next issue of MUSICWORKS, number 39, sees *Françoise Coté* trace the febrile but calming sculpture/music art of Montreal's Michel Archambault and Michel Tétrault. *Claude Schryer* deconstructs an electroacoustic aesthetic theory which, with his article, appears to have precluded any further composing on his part. *Wende Bartley* writes on the variety of sound possible in timbre design and sampling technology. And *Gayle Young* investigates Michael Snow's newest creation, *The Last LP*. This issue explores how we shape and are in turn shaped by our increasingly electro-acoustic environment and whether a frontier has been reached.



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# LANGUAGE AS MUSIC

## BUILDING AN ARCHITECTURE OF SOUND

### HELEN HALL

Three years ago while studying non-Indo-European language structures, I became intrigued with the underlying structural principles that are universal to all languages, and the implications of these principles both for the understanding of vocal sounds as acoustic phenomena and as a model for structuring these sounds into some sort of timbral syntax.

In linguistics, language is deconstructed into sonic patterns of vowels and consonants. When semantic constraints are released, all languages can provide an infinite resource of vocal sounds that can be organized along a continuum of sound colour, or timbre to create transformation and contrast in music.

The human voice is the acoustic instrument with the greatest potential for timbral transformation, and the sound source for which we have the richest structural comprehension. In the rich and varied tradition of sacred chant, vocal music is structured as a stream of vowels and consonants. This is also true of the ancient tradition of Bulgarian singing which is based on the drone principle — words are sung on a single, repeated pitch, with continuous changes in timbre created by changing patterns of vowels.

#### INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

The International Phonetic Alphabet was developed by the International Phonetic Association as a set of universal symbols for the transcription of language sounds. The symbols are always enclosed in square brackets.

- — small circle above or below a sound indicates that the sound is unvoiced. Unvoiced sounds are produced with an intensive stream of breath.
- ◌̥ — desonorisation: a voiced sound becomes unvoiced in desonorised vowels the vowel colour is breathed, or whispered rather than sounding.
- ʔ — glottal stop
- ◌̤ — sonorisation: unvoiced sound becomes voiced through vibration of the vocal chords.
- ◌̃ — nasalized.
- ◌̥̤ — continuous transition: for example e → e̥̤ — second sound is not separately articulated.

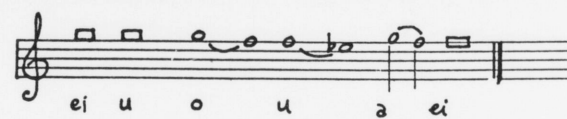
#### VOWELS:

- [a] — as in father.
- [ɑ] — as in law.
- [ɒ] — as in hot.
- [ʌ] — as in but.
- [æ] — as in bad.
- [e] — as in day.
- [ɛ] — as in french misère.
- [ə] — as in better.
- [i] — as in be.
- [ɪ] — as in hymn.
- [ɪ̯] — short, diphthongal [i], as in joy.
- [j] — as in yes.
- [o] — as in open.
- [ɔ] — as in oral.
- [ɹ̥] — unrounded, closed [o].
- [ø] — as in French peu.
- [œ] — as in French peur.
- [u] — as in do.
- [ʊ] — as in put.
- [y] — as in French menu.
- [ʏ] — more open [y], as in German füllen.

#### CONSONANTS:

- [b] — as in bed.
- [ç] — as in German ich.
- [tʃ] — as in march.
- [d] — as in do.
- [ð] — as in that.
- [dz] — combination of [d] and [z], as in beds.
- [dʒ] — as in just.

- [f] — as in five.
- [ɸ] — bilabial [f] — sound made when blowing out a candle.
- [g] — as in give.
- [h] — as in hill — unmodulated, intensified breath.
- [ɦ] — voiced [h].
- [x] — as in Scottish loch.
- [ɣ] — voiced [x], as in Dutch [g].
- [k] — as in key.
- [l] — as in look.
- [ʃ] — as in silk.
- [ɭ] — retroflex [l], as in original.
- [ʎ] — as in million.
- [m] — as in much.
- [ɱ] — labiodental [m], as in German senf.
- [n] — as in nine.
- [ɲ] — as in canyon.
- [ŋ] — as in ring.
- [ɴ] — uvular [n], formed at the very back of the oral cavity.
- [p] — as in pen.
- [r] — as in rare.
- [ʀ] — as in French rare — uvular [r].
- [s] — as in sound.
- [ʃ] — as in show.
- [ts] — as in lots.
- [θ] — as in three.
- [v] — as in voice.
- [w] — as in well.
- [z] — as in zen.



Hildegard Von Bingen: Ending of an antiphon.<sup>1</sup>

Through an understanding of the spectral content of sound, linguists have discovered the structural role of vowels and consonants in creating the sound shape of language. Acoustic phonetics reveals the role of sound colour, or timbre in creating the underlying sound structures.

The voice is a complex sound consisting of a fundamental frequency and up to twenty harmonics. Harmonics are the result of sound waves set in motion, all vibrating at different speeds, or frequencies.

Spectral analysis of vocal sounds provides an acoustic mapping of the underlying sound structures of linguistic signs and symbols. Each vowel represents a characteristic spectrum. The phonetic quality of vowels is determined by regions of intense resonance at specific frequencies known as formants. Formants are created by resonating chambers within the vocal tract, head, and chest, which act as *multi-resonance filters*, giving more acoustic energy to specific frequencies. Consonants are the result of rapid changes in resonance in the vocal tract. They give vowels form and place in the timbral stream, and have a high noise content, similar to the attack characteristics of percussion instruments. The word *phoneme* is from the Greek *phonema*, meaning *sound*. Phonemes are the smallest segments of sound that can be separated by their contrast within words. There are approximately twenty to sixty phonemes in any given language.

#### WINTER TREES

In my piece *Winter Trees*, vowels extracted from a poem by **Sylvia Plath** orchestrate the music, giving each fundamental pitch a specific array of resonating spectral elements. The acoustic properties of the voices (two sopranos and alto) are combined with the acoustic properties of the three instruments — alto saxophone, bassoon, and cello to create the compositional structure. The poem is used in such a way that the ear moves freely between sound and meaning, focusing at times on a single line, following a thread of meaning as it slips from voice to voice, and at other times allowing the assonances<sup>3</sup> and dissonances to wash through it as the voices become submerged into the texture. The text provides a lexicon of language sounds, as well as a thread of meaning.

The first section contains words and phrases from the first part of the text. The succession of words is based on the spectral content of vowels. The meaning is ambiguous, as some words emerge from the texture. The piece begins with the vowel [a], a single voice concentrated on a point of resonance in mid-register. With this range as a starting point, there is a gradual widening of the spectrum above and below [a] as the second and third voices move within a close frequency range of the central pitch. The movement of sounds is a gradual transformation in timbre and texture from spectrally simple to spectrally complex. This is followed by a section of contrasting vocal sounds — *ululations* and *jaw trills*. Ululations are perceived by the listener as a rapid, relatively even repetition of a basic vowel sound — similar to the sound children make when imitating sheep. This sound is produced with a combination of *creaky voice* (partial constriction of the larynx, resulting in a low-pitched, creaky sound) and glottal stop (total constriction of the larynx). This articulation results in a movement from a wide spectrum to a narrow spec-





o - - - - - soi hi po hi dſiu seŋ me oi to - - - - - tram

sčri ra lŋ - - - - - si nyi dæ gian pa oi di i dam gœruratna mandala kam rŋya

ta ya mi

Chant for Mandala Ceremony (Tibetan Gelupa sect).<sup>1</sup>

In Tibetan chant, changes in timbre are controlled by sequences of vowels and consonants.

trum. Ululations are common in Bulgarian vocal music and also appear in the music of **Monteverdi** and *goat trills*. The spectrum widens again with jaw trills — wide vibratos created with a relaxed jaw on the phonemes [wi- ɛ i- ɛ i]. The movement to this sound creates a shift in spectral energy to the high end of the spectrum, and the movement of voices and instruments creates a layering of spectral density, leading to a concentration of spectral energy in the high frequency range [i]; gradually descending to [a]. (Fig. 1)

The second segment of the text is presented as a chant. In this section it is the meaning of the words that is structurally significant. The rhythm of the chant follows the natural rhythm of the text. The final section is a traditional (syllabic) setting of text and music, with phrases of the text presented polyphonically in three voices. At this point the text slips in and out of meaning, as phrases alternately emerge from, or are submerged into the texture. The overall shape of the piece is an evolution from a single spectral strand into a continuously changing stream of vowels, percussive vocal sounds, and spoken and sung text.

WINTER TREES

The wet dawn inks are doing their blue dissolve  
On their blotter of fog the trees  
Seem a botanical drawing —  
Memories growing, ring on ring,  
A series of weddings.

Knowing neither abortions nor bitchery,  
Truer than women,  
They seed so effortlessly:  
Tasting the winds, that are footless,  
Waist-deep in history—

Full of wings, otherworldliness,  
In this, they are ledas.  
O mother of leaves and sweetness  
Who are these pietas?  
The shadows of ringdoves chanting,  
But easing nothing.

Sylvia Plath<sup>4</sup>

blue	dawn on	wet memories weddings	dissolve	inks ring trees seem
[u]	[a]	[e]	[i]	[i]

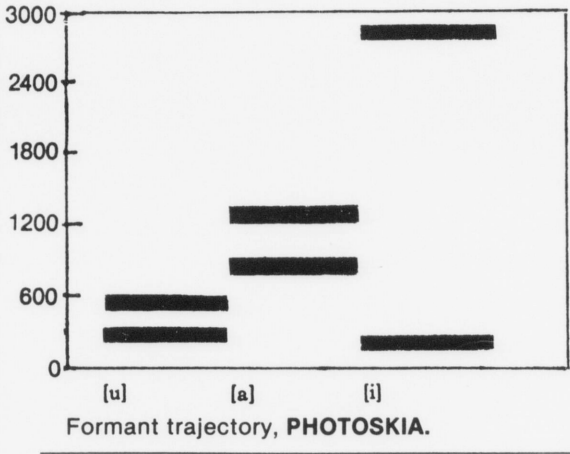
PHOTOSKIA

*Photoskia* is a work-in-progress for solo tape with a section that is based on the acoustic properties of the vowels [u], [a], and [i], which are treated as a harmonic progression. The term *harmonic progression*, when used in this context refers not to a progression of chords that requires a resolution of dissonance, but to what is perceived as a gradual transition in timbre from the low, grave dark sound of [u] to the high, acute, bright sound of [i]. Where in a more traditional context harmonic progressions are ordered to create tension and release, this progression creates a slow evolution in frequency structure that does not require resolution.

The sound sources for the tape are acoustic instruments: violin, contrabass, bariton saxophone, soprano voice, and tenor voice. The sound colour of individual instruments orchestrates the vowels, *composing* the characteristic timbre within each vowel sound. The acoustic sounds are not electronically modified — changes in timbre result from the layering of sounds into a single entity, or vowel sound.

I did a spectral analysis of each vowel sound with spectrograms, tracing the formant trajectory from [u] to [i]. A series of up to twenty-one harmonics was constructed on the fundamental pitch of each vowel, in this case the pitches **B**, **B**, and **C** within the range of each instrument. Each pitch was then tuned to just intonation, or the overtone series, with the use of the tape-speed variation control on the tape recorder. The tuning of each individual harmonic to an acoustically true interval helps to fuse each individual timbre into what is heard as a single sound. Timbral coherence is achieved through gradual shifts in timbre created by shifting vowel qualities and orchestration.

*Photoskia* is a Greek word meaning *shadow/light*, and refers to the qualities of spectral elements in the piece.

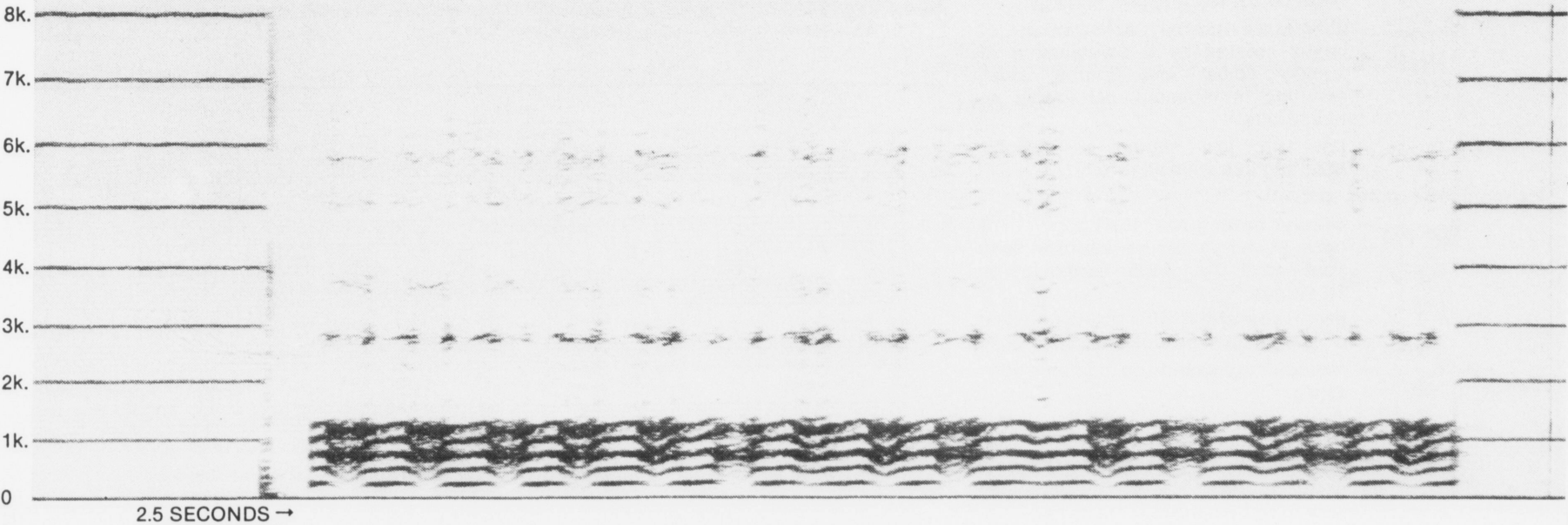


TIBETAN CHANT AND HARMONIC SINGING

In the tradition of *hoomi* singing in Mongolia and *sacred chant* in Tibet, singers work consciously with the physics of sound vibrations and the perceptual qualities required both to produce the sounds and to hear them. Each singer produces a fundamental note in the extreme bass register (around 60 hz.), and by changing the position of the larynx and jaw, and the shape of the mouth with the tongue, cheeks, and lips, produces a whole spectrum of sound from the harmonic series of the sung fundamental note. Spectral elements are brought into the foreground — they are not simply colouring the fundamental note. The harmonic content of words is then brought to life and experienced physically as sound vibrations. Different harmonics, or areas of resonance are emphasized with different vowel progressions.

*David Hykes*, founder/director of the *Harmonic Choir*, describes *harmonic singing* as building an architecture of sound above a sung note. The actual practice of harmonic singing involves several stages: the first stage is to produce the sequence [m]-[u]-[a]-[ei]-[i] moving from a nasalized, closed consonant through an ascending progression of vowels. It is important to feel the vibrations physically, in the floor, in the air. Hearing the upper harmonics of the sung vowels is an important prerequisite to actually producing the sounds. Harmonic singing involves a series of timbral transformations through changes in pitch, register, and spectral elements.

Fig. 1 ULULATIONS





# DVE NEVESTI

Quick

(1st pair)

Bulgaria

Ej, dve ne-ve-sri or- o vo-dat doZ

doZ done le done li-be mo- je

(2nd pair)

Ej, dve ne-ve-sti o- ro vo-dat doZ

doZ done le done li-be mo- je

Ej, em.

Raim

## BULGARIAN SONG

Bulgarian singing is an ancient tradition that still continues. The music is traditionally sung by women. Vocal sounds that are characteristic of Bulgarian singing are ululations, nasalized tone quality (originally developed so that women could project their voices across fields), and *flips* — rapid ascents and descents from a notated pitch (usually the interval of a minor third). The music is based on the drone principle: singers are divided so that one sings the melody, and two or more sing a second part that functions as a drone.

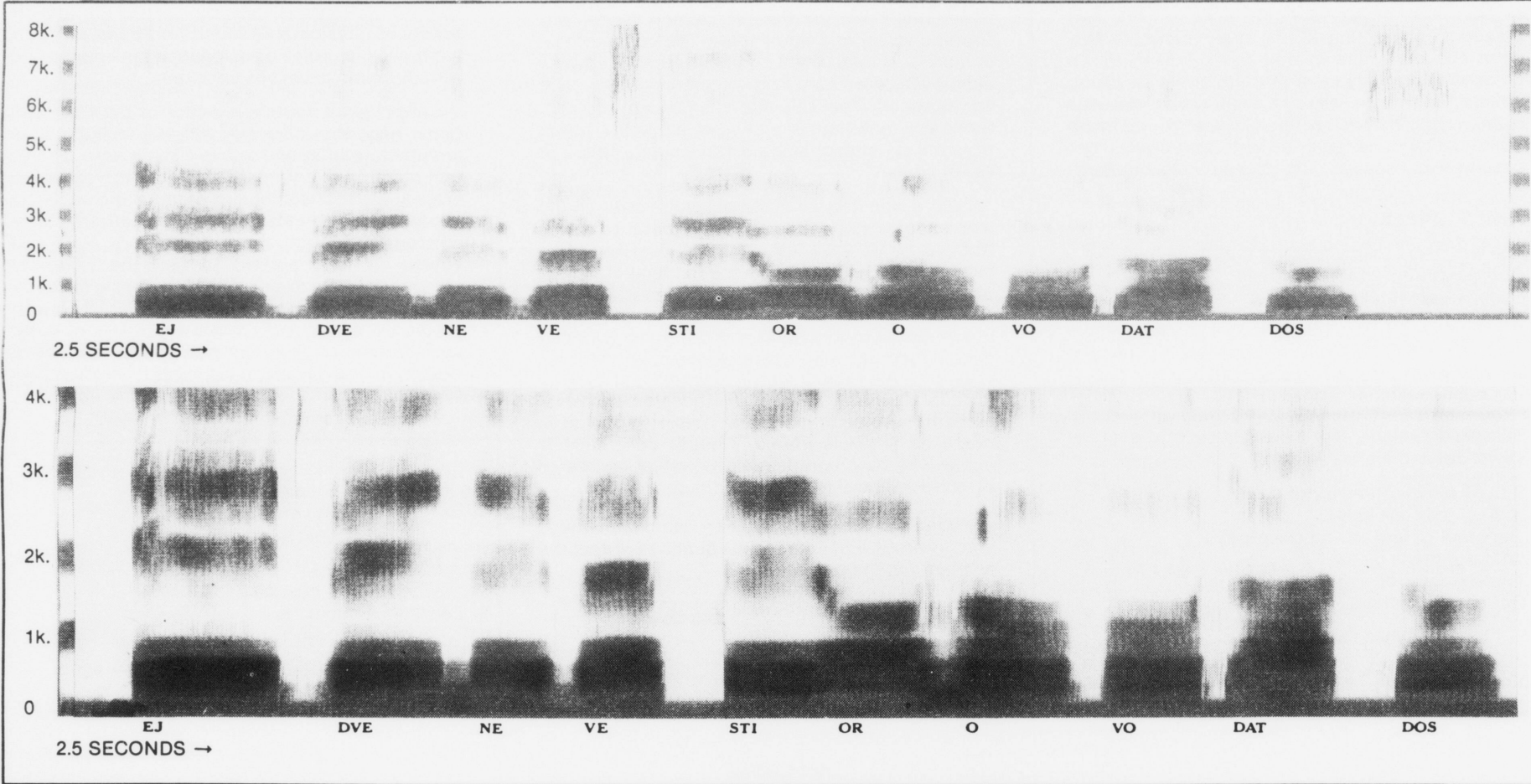
*Dve Nevesti* is a characteristic example of a Bulgarian song. It is antiphonal (two groups of singers answer one another in alternation) and in a diaphonic (two-voice) mode. Voices are in a close frequency range of each other. A spectrogram of the drone part of the first phrase of the song (second voice) indicates how each phoneme of the text gives the phrase a definitive shape. The noise bands created by [s] can be seen in the high end of the frequency spectrum. The phrase begins in mid-range with the vowel [ei] moving to [i] and down again to [o]. (Fig. 2) In this spectrogram the phonemes are recognizable as sound segments consisting of vowels and consonants. The phoneme boundaries are distinct, and are blurred only in the transition from [sti] to [or], where the high formant area of [i] descends to [o].

## STOICHEIA

According to the Ancient Greeks, the origin of grammar was not the *gramma*, or letter, but the *stoicheion*, a vowel sound. Speech and melody both involved the organization of tone; one according to verbal reason and the other according to pitch. The ambiguity of speech and song is characteristic of Greek poetry. The congruence of harmonics, rhythemics, and grammar were thought to be theoretical abstractions from an original verbal/musical unity.

*Stoicheia*, the ancient Greek word for vowels, is the title of my piece for five female voices, three saxophones, cello, bass, and two percussionists. It is based on a progression of vowels, beginning with [u] in a low register, and progressing to [o], [a], [ei], and finally to [i]. The acoustic properties of vowels are a form-determining parameter. The instruments and voices combine in the first section to reinforce an unbroken stream of vowels with a continuously expanding registral field. This movement of vowels has determined the spectral form of the piece. (Fig. 3) Timbral transformations of vowels are created with the additions of nasalization and consonants, creating phonemes from Bulgarian singing. Consonants are also used to create distinct phoneme boundaries, and to accentuate rhythm. Ululations function to create transitions to percussive sections with a narrow spectral field. The final section is a dense textural accumulation of vowels [u], [a], and [i] in all five voices. The piece ends with a gradual filtering down of the spectral field, until the voices dissolve into a single spectral strand with the closed consonant [m].

Fig. 2 DVE NEVESTI, first phrase (Drone part).



## STOICHEIA

Voices should use very little vibrato.

- u o a — nasalized vowels.
- harmonic singing: fundamental (lowest note) is produced with upper harmonics simultaneously through relaxation of vocal cords, tongue, jaw, and lips.
- ? — ululations: partial constriction of larynx created by a combination of 'creaky voice' and 'glottal stop', resulting in repeated, percussive articulations.
- wi-li-fi — jaw trill: jaw should be relaxed, resulting in a wide vibrato.

Harmonics sound as written.

- HH — circular bowing near the bridge of the bass; sound should be unbroken, with continuous changes in harmonics on all strings.
- c.l.b. — percussive effect with bouncing wood of bow on open strings near the bridge.
- harmonics glissando on indicated open string.
- if preceded by a single note, that note is held for the duration of the line. If preceded by a note group, the note group is repeated at the indicated speed for the duration of the line.

pp

mf

f

pp

mf

f

H. 1.

F. 2.

L. 3.

L. 4.

T. 5.

fuaia i

uaia i

uaia i

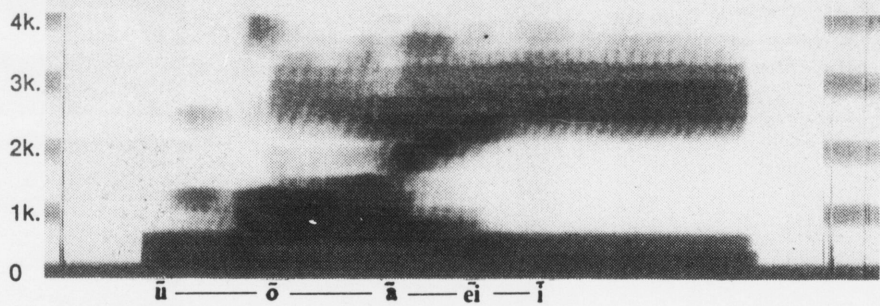
uaia i

uaia i

STOICHEIA: textural accumulation of vowels in fine voices.

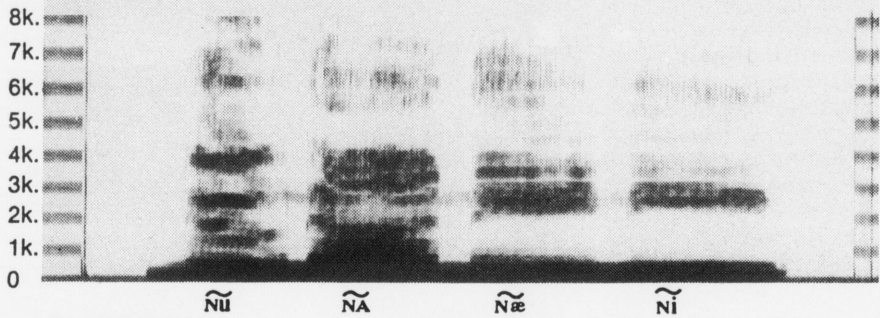


Fig. 3 VOWEL PROGRESSION



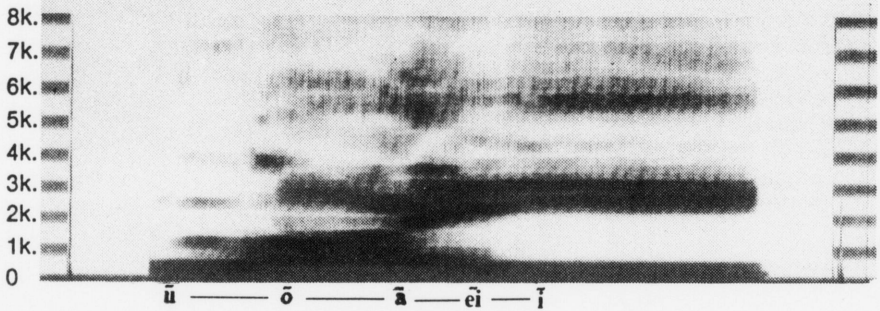
2.5 SECONDS →

Fig. 4 PHONEMES FROM BULGARIAN SINGING.

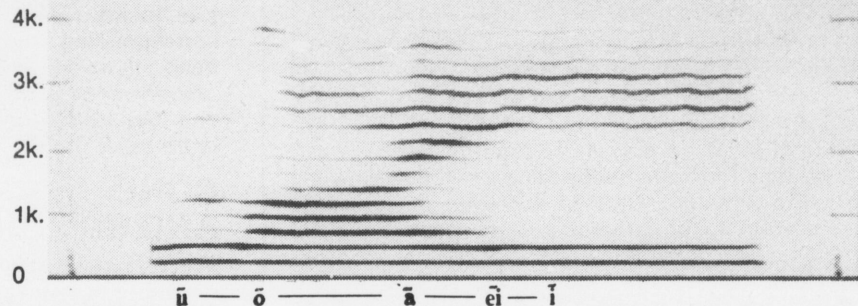


2.5 SECONDS →

Fig. 5 FORMANT

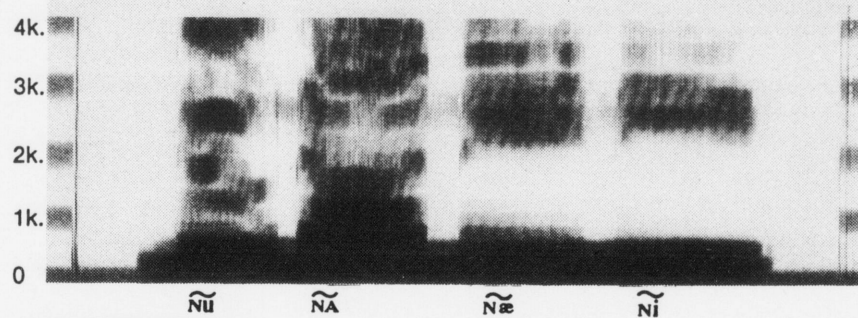


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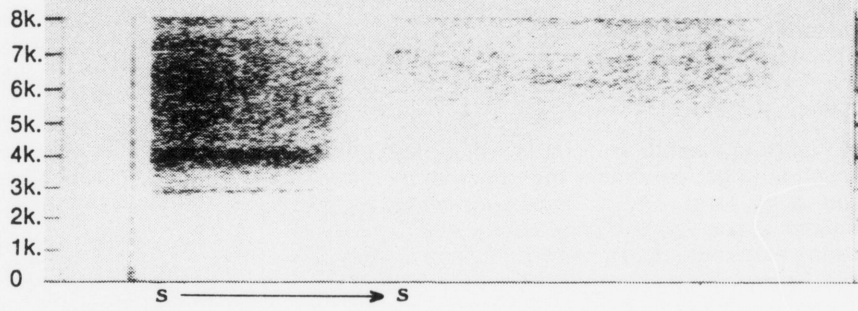
2.5 SECONDS →

Fig. 6 NOISEBAND CREATED BY CONSONANTS [S]—[S]



2.5 SECONDS →

Fig. 6 NOISEBAND CREATED BY CONSONANTS [S]—[S]



2.5 SECONDS →

## SPECTROGRAMS

Visual representations of vocal sounds, called *spectrograms*, are made with an instrument called a *sound spectrograph*. The examples shown here were made in the phonetics lab of the Linguistic Department of McGill University. Vocal sounds were recorded in an acoustically dead room with a microphone. With the help of an acoustic engineer, I recorded my voice onto a half-track tape recorder in the adjoining room and the recorded sound was then fed into the spec-

trograph. The sound is converted into heat energy by a bank of electro-acoustic filters. The output from the filters goes to a heat stylus which burns varying degrees of darkness around a revolving drum, and the resulting pattern that appears on paper is called a spectrogram. The spectral content of sound is displayed on an axis of frequency against time. The relative intensity of component frequencies is shown by the relative darkness of the impression. Formants appear as dark, horizontal bands on the spectrogram, in the low end of the frequency spectrum between 85 and 3500 hz. (Fig. 5)

The high end of the frequency spectrum, from approx. 3500 to 8000 hz. shows in general an uneven distribution of sound over a greater bandwidth. This is the result of consonantal noises produced during speech by lips, teeth, and the back of the tongue. (Fig. 6) Spectrograms of speech sounds reveal organized patterns of formants and noise sounds, separated by short intervals of silence. Silences are the result of the spacing of word boundaries, as well as interruptions in the flow of sound caused by *stop consonants*.

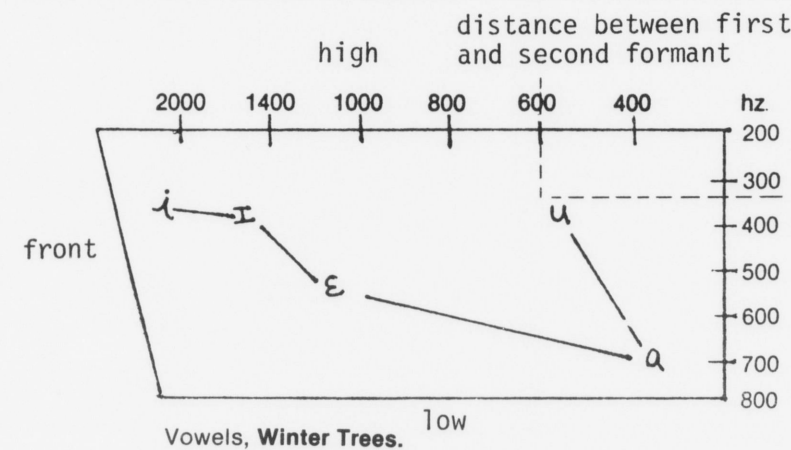
## EXPLANATION OF THE FORMANT CHARTS

In formant charts, each symbol represents an area, rather than a point in the vowel space. The frequency of the first formant is shown on the vertical axis, plotted against the frequencies of the first and second formant on the horizontal axis.

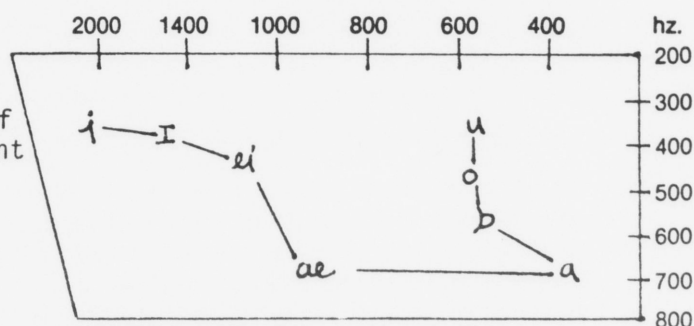
The axes have been placed so that zero frequency is in the upper right corner, arranged so that formant charts will correspond to the charts used by linguists to indicate the auditory qualities of vowels. Vowel symbols are arranged from left to right to correspond with the front to back dimension of the oral cavity. Secondary articulations are placed in columns, following the primary place of articulation. The primary organization is by decreas-

ing degrees of stricture. The diagram roughly corresponds to the mouth, with the left side representing the front of the mouth, the right side the back of the mouth.

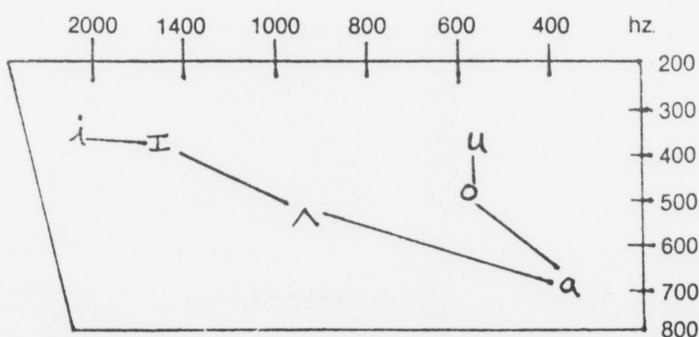
Frequencies are arranged according to the "mel" scale, in which perceptually equal intervals are represented as equal distances along the scale.



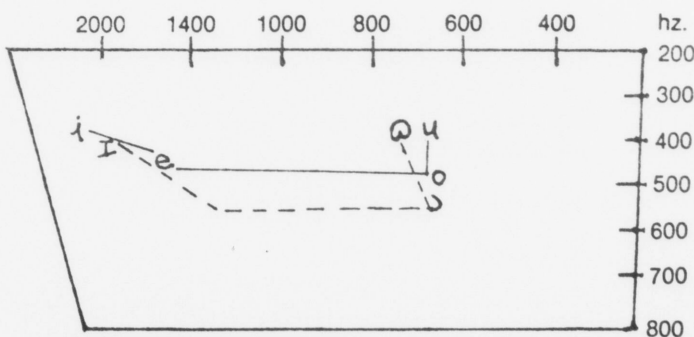
Vowels, Winter Trees.



Vowels, Stoicheia.



Vowels, Amharik (semitic language language of Ethiopia).



Vowels, Dhuoluo  
solid line = higher set, dotted line = lower set.



LANGUAGE AS MUSIC

There is currently a resurgence of poetry and theatre that cross the boundary of language as abstract acoustic sound and language as meaning. Rhythm and music are essential to the oral texts of Montreal playwright **Rene-Daniel Dubois**. In his play *Don't Blame the Bedouins* the language sounds of Italian, German and English create a counterpoint of rhythms and simultaneous melodic lines, resulting in a dense polyphonic texture and an intensified declamatory form of verbal expression. Martin Kevan describes the work:

*Don't Blame the Bedouins* is a poetic play for theatre and, as such, should be read aloud. Only in this way can the sounds and rhythms be appreciated fully and the confusions that arise from the silent reading of accents be avoided. Rhythm and music are vitally important to the oral texts of Dubois.<sup>5</sup>

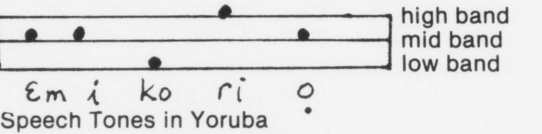
Dubois explores the concept of language as music, recalling a concept of language that can be traced back to Sophocles and ancient Greece.

In his work *A-24*, the American poet **Louis Zukofsky** arranged his writings into a *five-part score*. Each part was conceived as an independent voice — **Handel's** music is one voice, and the other four voices are thematic arrangements of Zukofsky's writings such as *thought, drama, story, and poem*. With the American language as basic source material, Zukofsky organized the text into simultaneous melodic lines, in which the resulting harmony and counterpoint is as important as the meaning of each individual line.

Poetry is a sonic art form in which timbre is a much stronger parameter than pitch in the structuring of form. The form-bearing elements in speech are vowels and consonants, and the structuring of these sonic elements in time is rhythm. In the English language, pitch is not a significant structural parameter — it functions mainly in grouping sounds into phrases, and in communicating meaning.

TONE LANGUAGES

In tone languages, for example Vietnamese and Cantonese and the African languages Yoruba and Ibe, tone is phonemic, affecting the lexical or grammatical meaning of a word. Languages in which tones occur within a fixed range are called *register tone languages*. Yoruba is a West African tone language with three different levels of tone or *bands*: high band, mid band, and low band. Yoruba music developed naturally out of the tonal inflections of speech.



Vowel systems in African languages, Turkish, Finnish, Hungarian and Mongolian have patterns of vowels that are classified into harmonic sets — some vowels can't co-exist in the same words with other vowels. Vowel systems of these languages have nine or ten different vowels, in two harmony sets. Often the vowels are divided into harmonic/disharmony on the basis of the place of articulation (front, back, etc.)

According to the patterns of vowel harmony in Mongolian a word may contain only the vowels [a], [ā], [o] [ō], [u], [ū], or only [e], [ē], [i], [ī], [ü], [ū]. The vowels [i] and [ī] are neutral since they follow all vowels and can precede any vowel in a word.

And it is possible in imagination  
to divorce speech of all graphic elements,  
to let it become a movement of sounds.  
It is this musical horizon of poetry  
that permits anybody who does not know Greek  
to listen and get something out of the poetry of Homer:  
to 'tune in' to the human tradition,  
to its voice which has developed among  
the sounds of natural things,  
and thus escape the confines  
of a time and place,  
as one hardly ever escapes them  
in studying Homer's grammar.

Louis Zukofsky: A Statement for Poetry 1950.

In DuoLuo, a language of Kenya, the vowels of one harmony set are respectively higher than the corresponding vowels of the other set and have been labelled impressionistically as *hollow, breathy, or muffled*. The other, relatively lower set has the impressionistic qualities of *hard, creaky, or brassy*.<sup>6</sup>

CONCLUSIONS AND SPECULATIONS

Exploring how sounds are assembled in language (syntax minus the level of meaning), and the underlying psychological structures of speech perception could point to an understanding of how sound streams are formed; how sounds are grouped in their original context. The psychological structures underlying the perception of speech have implications for the creation of sound structures in music with timbre as a form-determining element. A compositional syntax could be developed through the creation of groups and sub-groups of similar sounds, based on analysis of their acoustic properties. An understanding of the spectral morphologies of speech could also be applied to the structural organization of all sound — with language as a perceptual model.

In *Winter Trees* and *Stoicheia*, I was working with the acoustic qualities of vowels and combining vocal and instrumental sounds to create a fusion of timbre. Consonants were used primarily for their percussive quality and noise content. It would be interesting to explore consonants as time markers, to create rhythmic structures. Sound patterns could be developed based on the system of linguistic oppositions, which organizes language sounds in terms of functions, relations and values.

Vocal sounds from all languages and vocal music can contribute to create a new sonic vocabulary for an emerging aesthetic in vocal music.

NOTES

1. Peter Hamel: **Through Music To The Self**. Colorado, 1976, P. 216.
2. The size and shape of the mouth and vocal cords control variations in the resonance of several frequencies.
3. Assonance refers to a repetition of vowels, an alternative to rhyme in verse.
4. *Sylvia Plath: Winter Trees*, London: Faber and Faber, 1971.
5. Martin Kevan, **Quebec Voices: Three Plays**, Robert Wallace editor, (The Dubois play, *Don't Blame the Bedouins* is published in this book, translated by Kevan.) Coach House Press, Toronto, 1986.
6. Leon Jacobson, **Issues in Vowel Harmony**, p. 187 Robert Vago, Editor, John Benjamins B.V., Amsterdam, 1980.

HELEN HALL was born in Montreal. She studied composition at the University of British Columbia with William Benjamin and Cortland Hultberg, and with alcidcs lanza of McGill University. She is currently living and working in Montreal as a freelance composer and is involved in research into language sounds and structures in preparation for a large work using voice and tape.

IMPROVISING SOUND



PENN(Y) KEMP



CHILDE ROLAND



JW CURRY



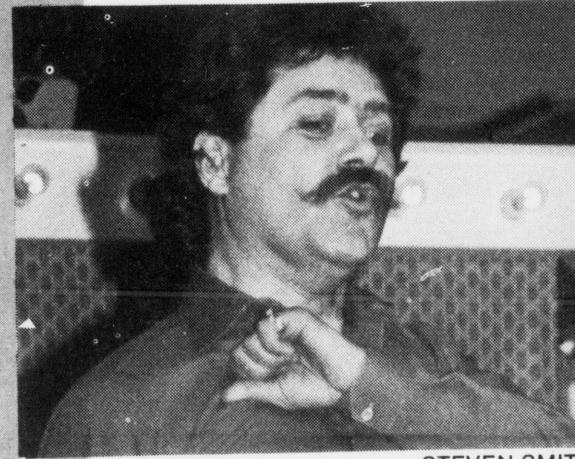
PAUL DUTTON



SUSAN MCMASTER



STEVE MCCAFFERY



STEVEN SMITH



GERRY SHIKATANI



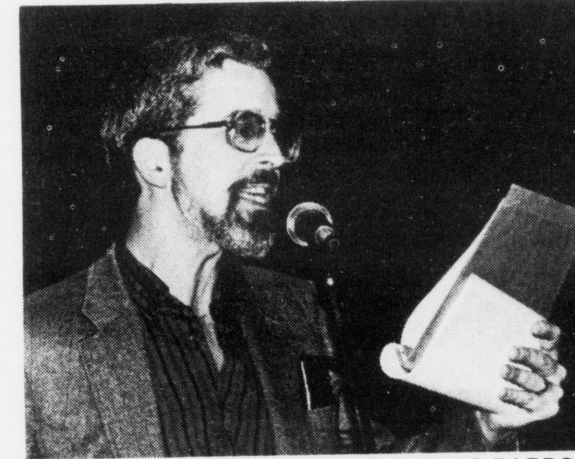
RICHARD TRUHLAR

**IS SOUND IMPROVING?** The standing joke among *sound poets* in Canada is that every two years they get discovered by the C.B.C. *You people are a natural for radio! We'll put a special together*. Occasionally it even happens. When it does the producer usually gets flak from the higher ups for putting something the average person can't understand on the air, as tho all that grunting and lip flap will scare their listeners away to the safety of A.M. rock & roll. The other standing joke is that all the articles about Canadian sound poetry that ever appear are histories, the old archival moment, where something alive and vital gets contextualized among the mothballs and dirty underwear as a genuine past moment. Barely anyone knows we're alive, and for certain barely anyone believes we represent a significant movement, or point to a set of enduring values re the craft, and yet there we are — already dead. Between being unknowns freshly discovered and genuine artifacts of a no longer relevant sensibility, the schizophrenic life goes on.

**IMPROVING IS SOUND.** The idea then, in this article, was to speak to a representative sampling of *sound poets*\*, or poets whose public performances have included strong sound elements and whose work has therefore been seen as dealing with improvisation, and to ask them their sense of what improvisation consists of. In addressing the question to sound poets, who, on the whole, can't fall back on the language of music, it was hoped that a general language of improvisation could begin to be formulated by some of its active practitioners. Along the way other fascinating possibilities were pointed to, additional puzzles to be probed and understood. The interview with *jwcurry*, for instance, raises the interesting possibility of a standard approach to the reading of such marginal linguistic information as the density or colour of the type. I did not interview myself for this piece. But I have included a number of my own questions or asides where they seem to contribute to the ongoing research. I specifically chose to work with taped interviews so that the different writers I was addressing my questions to were being put into a situation where they had to make sense of their thoughts as they went along, were forced to, in that sense, improvise. As you will see, each person interviewed had a different sense of what the term improvisation means. This difference in definition caused all of them to make assumptions in their answers tho, in the end, it was obvious that each of them did, in fact, use some element of improvisation in their work. I tried to steer clear, then, of any one definition but attempted, rather, to elicit the revealed plurality. A collective improvisation on the meaning of improvisation.

**SOUND IS IMPROVING!** What follows is edited with an eye to clarity but with an ear to retaining the idiosyncratic pattern of each speaker's thots.

\*It must be said that all of the writers interviewed had trouble with the term *sound poetry*, but that's a subject for another article. Here we use the term in the sense of its current general usage in North America, i.e. poets whose primary focus is on the sound of the language and the performance of those sounds.



DOUGLAS BARBOUR

bpNichol

TEN SOUND POETS ON THE POETICS OF SOUND



# DOUGLAS BARBOUR

auoom ba auoom pa aauu ooom ba pa bapa  
bedeba bededa bedebedebedeba bedebe bededa  
bede bede bede ba

swish  
DON do dadom do dadom dadadombom  
titiss DON do dadom do dadom dadadombom  
ikktassshhk ikktassshhk ssossshhk kts kts  
thrummm thr thruumm numb mum NO  
mum NO OM bo br br bombom  
be da ba da baada bada bada beda  
bedum  
dom (its) dom (its)  
sashay sashay sashay  
DONE  
dudummmddummmdo done BUT  
WAIT NOW WAIT A MINUTE NOW HOOEEYOWLING  
Well a haul of howls to gather in an ending always beginning a gain  
horns & bass & perCuSSION wailing well  
yeah its a  
well YEAH its a  
well YEAH its a  
well YEAH its a  
high wide side flight wide open  
float float float floating  
of those sounds  
OPENNING WIDER thatss wiider ranges  
falling A W A YYY  
yip eeeee  
yo yaaa yo yeee yo yllili yo yoooouuu  
go with it go with it  
if youre lucky then youre sounding and youre gone

Douglas Barbour  
10-11 10 85

Douglas Barbour, excerpt from *that gone tune*:

**db:** Stephen (Scobie)\* and I do a piece called *The Suknaski Manuscript Variations*. That's the one in which we probably get the most into pure sound and away from words. And in that piece, last year, when we did close to 20 performances over about a five week period, the changes that piece went thru were amazing. You could get into a groove that sounded good and then try to repeat it, more or less, but even if we did sometimes think we were going to be — *that sounded so good yesterday, let's try to get the same thing* — it wouldn't. We'd go off in different directions, different things would start happening. And that meant that partly we were listening to each other and partly a room. I think the acoustics of a room continually affect the way you're going to improvise. If you're in a room that's large or has good echo or something like that, I am tempted just by the sheer playfulness of it, and I think the performance joy of it, to start testing my voice against the room. And that means I'm going to do something different than I did in another room. Secondly I think on some level, even when you're thinking about what you're doing or you're doing it, you're listening to the other voices. And part of what you're trying to do is to make sounds with the human voice which can either be baby babble, noise making, hollers, or even verbalizations which in some way or other are connecting to not exactly what all the others are doing but what you hear of what all the others are doing. It reminds me more of the best dixieland ensemble than say more contemporary avant-garde jazz, in the sense that you're trying to weave your melody or your play of your voice, your instrument, thru the other instruments so that all of them will be heard together but they'll be making some kind of collage that sounds correct, sound collage that sounds proper. I guess you could say that certain kinds of contemporary improvisation, totally abstract music, does the same thing. There was a period when Stephen & I, as *RE:SOUNDING*, performed with an abstract improvising music group and we may have learned something from that experience. So when you get up to improvise, to become part of what is really a choral situation, I think you're doing two things: if there's a text you'd be trying to follow it, in so far as it allows you to, and improvise on it; if it's just improvisation you're still listening to the others, trying to fit in with them — sometimes if you've got six or eight voices maybe two, two, two will start playing off each other together, but also, in that doubleness, listening to the other doubles as they play. So obviously part of what's happening is hearing as well as possible the rest of it so you can fit in. And that's part of the pleasure but it's part of the discipline and the testing of it too.

**bp:** What's the difference for you between a good improvisation and a bad one? What makes you walk away saying *now that was a good piece*?

**db:** Oh christ! I don't know. There are times when we've come off the stage & said, *shit! that was really humming tonight!* And there are other times when we've come off saying, *that was okay, but there wasn't anything special about it*. And there must be a couple of things that affect it. One, it seems to me, is sheerly the energy that you were both putting out but that, because you put out, you felt coming in. And in a funny way when it's really working you're not losing the energy. Now how that happens partly has to do I guess with precisely that psychic feedback you're getting from the audience. You can *feel* that they're feeling that something's happening and they're enjoying it. Secondly I guess it has to do with, it seems to me, and here I speak as audience, that if I see a group improv which I didn't feel was good... I've seen a couple where they didn't totally work — sometimes they go on too long — and something was really happening and then it began not to happen — sometimes the energy... everybody was doing

\*Stephen Scobie and Doug Barbour are *RE: SOUNDING*, Canada's undocumented sound poetry group which has, nonetheless, managed to tour Europe, the States and Canada fairly extensively.

their thing but they weren't listening to each other that carefully. I suspect that what makes a group improv work well is when performers are paying attention to each other and aren't just doing something on their own. Also I think that the dynamics have to continually alter. In other words what interests me about the best times Stephen and I have done our pieces is that you'll have soft/loud, you'll have a large rhythm as well as the individual rhythm of the voices, and that that rhythm will in some way or other resolve itself and by the time you do come to a close it's the proper close because both of you or all of you feel that you've moved to a point where it's closed. To a certain extent you begin in a kind of chaos but it moves towards composition and when it achieves that that's where you feel and can feel that it's time to stop. *Composition is how it happens?*\*

## STEVEN R. SMITH



Steven Smith, *ECO* (1981)

**ss:** I've done improvisations on visual scores, in which you use this pattern on a page as reference, as trigger, as jumping off point. In the moment of improvisation it suggests something to you & you try to explore it, somehow always kind of connecting to that page, which might have a text and patterns on it, whatever. It's the ability, more enhanced in some than in others, to translate visual stimuli into verbal output, and different sound poets do it in different ways. It's a stronger connection even, the visual to the verbal, in some than in others. To me the sound is always the trigger to the next sound, but to some sound poets that visual stimuli is a very strong trigger to all the sounds. So I think there's a lot of variation in there. The other side of that coin is to use nothing, which is what I've been exploring most recently, to use no visual stimuli. The improvisation is based on a mental state, I guess, in which I try basically to, in a few seconds before doing the piece, to open my mind to whatever the first impulse is & then to start with that impulse & *then* spontaneously compose. For me the challenge is to create a strong composition spontaneously so that I'm making sounds at one time but I'm also aware of the overall form, that sense of composition. That's the challenge to me. And creating a compositional form to me means you have to have things in the piece like repetition, pattern, shape, all those things. So it's not just *I'm gonna make this sound & then another sound* and just go sort of like running thru the woods or something where you don't know where you're going. You actually give the thing shape & form & create a composition. And sometimes I've done something & I've thot *wow! that is composed!* And other times I've thot it's composed but it would've been stronger if... You know. It feels in me like the search for the perfect composition created spontaneously. I don't think I could ever write it down. I don't think I could ever on the page create one of those & then do it live. It has to be of the moment for me. And that's a challenge, to get up cold, that's the thing I like. You get up cold and you wait for the first trigger and then you go and you try to compose. And I think where I got that from was listening to some of the Europeans when I first went over to Amsterdam, to the 10th International Sound Poetry Festival, and especially *Franz Mon*\*\* who I thot, I mean, his stuff was all done on tape, but I thot he had an incredible sense of composition. And I think in some way I've always been trying to bring that kind of a sense of composition into my spontaneous live performances.

## JWCURRY

**jc:** I came to sound poetry thru an attempt to read *visual poetry*\*\*\* And later I came to it from the point of view of scoring specific sounds which could then be read. But originally it was thoroughly an attempt to read visual poetry. If you can read normal poems, so to speak, why can't you read visual poems?

**bp:** In that attempt to read visual poems do you feel like you arrived at a reading of them or an interpretation of them?

**jc:** A reading. It may have come out of an interpretation but then it evolved into a specific reading because then I found as I did the same piece over and over I read it the same. When I do readings I like to set it up so that there's a little bit of everything. Say the first piece you read could be very direct and then as you progress thru the reading it gets more and more seemingly randomized. But in a very specific pattern that hopefully allows for people to come from that straight reading, which you begin with, into stranger things later. And the improvisation, inevitably, if it's within the same piece, ends up being very similar. Especially after two or three times. Then it does become a very straight reading.

**bp:** So improvisation is a transitional thing you move thru until you arrive at a preferred reading?

**jc:** It's like scribbling really. You've got to write for awhile before you can start to edit it and form it into something. So you've got to read it for awhile until you find the *correct*, so to speak, interpreta-

\*A quote from *Gertrude Stein*, here turned into a question.  
\*\*German poet and essayist. Founder of *Typos Verlag*, leading German publishing company of the 60's.  
\*\*\*Visual poetry focuses exclusively on the visual aspects of language — on the page with lines and physical gestures.

the sheer  
playfulness of it,  
to start  
testing my voice  
against the room.



tion. It simply attempts to convey what's actually going on on the page. Like suppose you have a large letter M, except it's stippled, it's got pieces missing or something, then you don't articulate an *MM* sound, you put something in the way so that you don't get that full sound of *MM*.

**bp:** You're always working off the text then?

**jc:** Oh yeah. Definitely. I have done it without a text but I've always known before hand what sort of things I'm gonna do. It looks like it'd be improvised, but it's not. It sort of is within the framework that I've set up for myself but...

**bp:** So in any improvisation there's always some frame, some pre-existing frame like the page/text that you're trying to arrive at a reading of. Or a frame you may have set up in your own mind like: *I will get from point A to point B, do these things in between, and I'll choose the order as I go along* kind of thing.

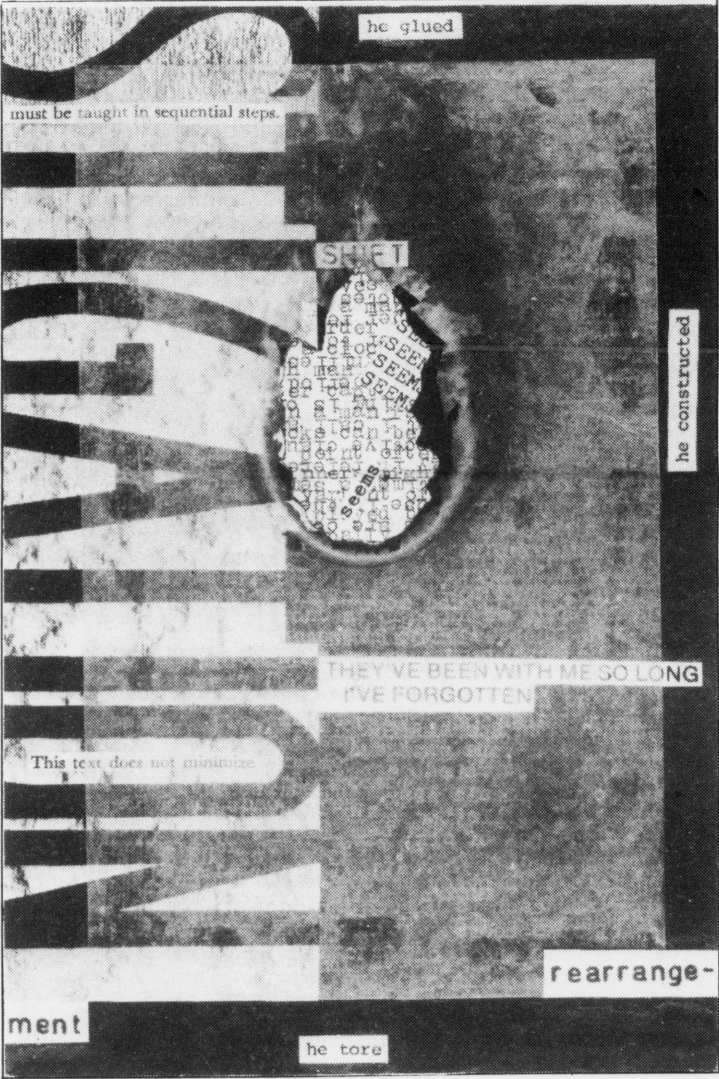
**jc:** Yeah and combine them in whichever ways seem appropriate according to whatever else is going on at the time. You see I don't think I could improvise alone. If I improvise with someone else, doing something over top, then I probably wouldn't have too much problem.

**bp:** Are you making decisions about structure etc. as you go along when you improvise, when you're reading? There's that large M on the page and various other letters are on the page too... how are you making your choices? Are you reading the page in a traditional way? Is your eye moving around it like it would *move* around a painting? How are you doing that?

**jc:** Some of the pieces, one letter leads to another in a very linear fashion. In some of them I just scan left to right, top to bottom. But then there're some in which I start out say at the centre point and move outwards and around more freely. But still if I were to do it again I'd probably follow the same pattern.

**bp:** So what you're always trying to do when you're improvising is trying to arrive at, in your own terms, a valid reading.

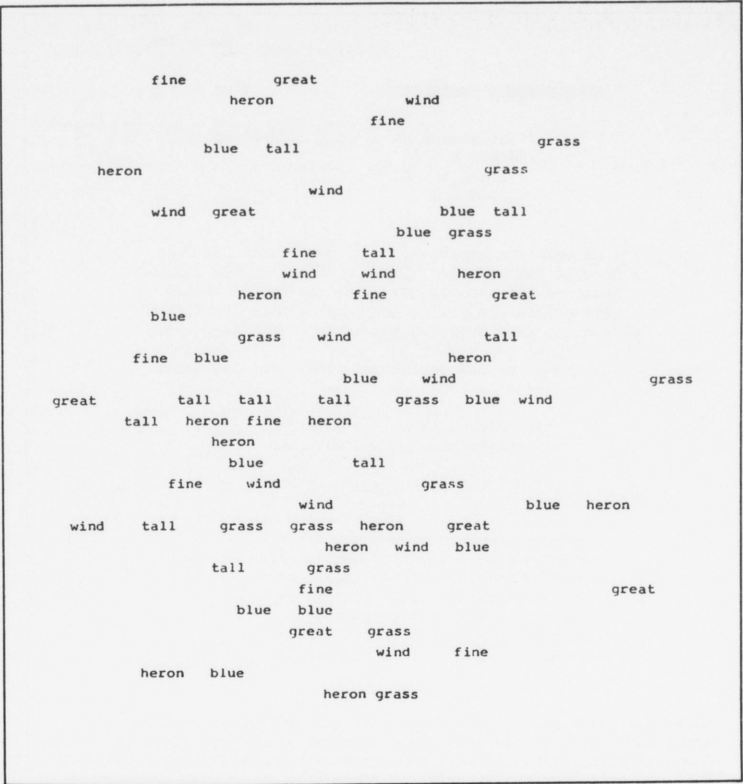
**jc:** Yeah. It's like a notebook page towards a final version.



jwcurry, STIGATION

## GERRY SHIKATANI

**gs:** Silence is an important component of what I'm doing. Essentially language works that way. To say *sound* tends to eliminate the opposite, the notion of silence. The wierd thing is for me that tho I've been involved with silence, people think of me as bringing silence into readings and performances for quite a few years now, the real push for the last five years or more has been, in a sense, away from it. I've been involving myself in silence by pushing myself away from it. I've been working much more with sound trying to absorb the silence. And the way I've been trying to do that is usually thru rhythm and thru what I see as energy fields between components of regular words. Not really abstract sound so much. I think what happens is that once I start to move into that and deal with that then there's a real movement in some of the work that I do between going from straight text into various small bits of what would be more abstract sounds or at least extensions of phonemes and things like that. Because at those moments I really feel the tension is there and I'm really working those kinds of energy fields. Improvisation is something I've been doing for a while. Sometimes I'm more in tune with it and sometimes less so but the main thing is working with the sense of non-self as performer. I'm moving into whatever the energy field is. Those energy fields are composed of text, if there's text, or if there's no text okay there's no text, of physical space and that sense of relation to people who are out there. Really, improvisation has always happened, whether it's a so called more conventional kind of form or less so. The improvisation is in breaking down, individually, a lot of those components of the energy field. And I want to say that good readers of very traditional



Gerry Shikatani, from **SHIP SANDS ISLAND** (circa 1975)

narrative works could be doing the same thing tho they may not label it as such. But I tend to include a lot of kinds of things into that whole notion of improvisation.

**bp** Improvisation as interpretation, intonation, etc.?

**gs:** That's part of it, sure. I think that's important personally for me. So much is the quality of the sound generated, the vibrational qualities, the potentials in the environment with the audience. It's hand/eye type thing. Depends on gesture, face and reaction. I mean those things can be something people can pick up on if you write normal narrative stuff, straight-ahead stuff. But to me that really becomes a question of picking up on the vibrations, in the quote 60's terminology, *the vibes*. I think that's really important.

**bp:** So you're saying that you see, in essence, words as having specific energy fields.

**gs:** Oh yeah. For sure.

**bp:** And that even within words — the phonemes, the syllables — there's the over-all energy field of the word and then sort of sub-fields as it were?

**gs:** Yeah. Specific gravities. Even yesterday when I was teaching a class I was talking the usual kind of very basic definitions between abstract language and concrete language. You know I broke that down into *the abstract* being *detachment* and *the concrete* being *attachment*. And one of the things is that attachment exists because there are in fact energy fields and that certain kinds of language act as magnets and therefore acting as magnets they have a centre point which is a still point relation. But that still point does not really exist as well until there is relation. That picks up on existential Judaism and things like that which is part of my so-called intellectual and academic background. But I mean all that stuff has worked, has been important for me. Things I learned in University and things I specifically studied in Religious Studies, which is what I went into, were all part of my hope at that time to become a writer. I was studying theology — Christian theology and, as well, Buddhist philosophy — and the religious things, spiritual things, and language, sound, music, elementary Einsteinian physics, were all very much connected. As soon as I finished university I was ready to start writing. I moved very quickly into working with silence after that. And I was very much influenced by Zen Buddhism, not that my family were Zen Buddhists but that the Japanese essentially have a very Buddhistic kind of thing. It's very much a racial thing. And Japanese art is definitely closely related to Zen Buddhism. Again there are all these little inter-connections.

## PENN(Y) KEMP

**bp:** When you improvise or when you're sounding the season, look at a tree and perform it, I wonder if you can articulate what it is that you're doing?

**pk:** I'm just working thru empathy. I feel as if I'm letting there be no interference between my presence and, say, the stone's presence. It's like I wrap my mind around the stone and begin to resonate like a tuning fork with it and then begin to sing it. And I love going to sacred sites to do that. I've just been working with the man who's done a lot of work with the ancient stones in Ireland, **Martin Brennan**, and sounding native stones. Sounding the cathedral, St. John the Divine, was a huge experience for me. Listening to the echo play back and then responding to it and then getting a sense of the size, the space. It's a way of bypassing the verbal and yet achieving an oral communication. Because once the resonance starts up between the stone and you then it feels like it's preverbal but it feels like I am receiving information and that I can then get into a communication where I can speak to the stone and the stone can speak to me in a way that I can get it. A way of receiving totally and then once you've received the willingness to communicate on a non-mental level. But who knows what's actually happening? Who knows? That's just play. But that's how I experience the universe at a deep level.

**bp:** So in a manner of speaking then one of your improvisations, or one of your performances, would you describe it as one half of a dialogue in which the other is, not silent, silent from an audience perspective perhaps, but one in which you're sounding both sides of the dialogue? Are you sounding for the stone and for yourself? Are you sounding for the stone?

I've been involving myself in silence by pushing myself away from it.

My attitude is reverential. So the context is of ritual or of greeting.



Penny Kemp

SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION

J' ai essayé et  
J S A A A  
J S A A A  
J S A A A

je ne suis pas capable / j'ai pensé tous les fois  
je ne suis pas capable / j'ai pensée toutes les folles  
jeune suivra capable jay pensée toutes les folles  
gène suivra cap pablum jay pensée toutes les folles  
gène sweep pa cap pablum jay pansy toutes les folles  
june sweep pa cap.pablum jay pansy toot les folles  
june sweep pa cap pablum jay pansy toot lay falls

tant m'échappe mais j'embarque  
taunt m'échappe mais j'embarque  
taunt may chap may j'am barque  
taunt may chap may jam bark

car nous sommes toutes traductrices  
car nous sommes toutes traductrices  
car new sommes toutes traductrices  
car new some toutes traductrices  
car new some toot traductrices  
car new sum toot trad duke trees  
car new sum too trad ostrich

dans un silence qui ne sait pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance un silence qui ne sait pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sillence qui ne sait pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sill once qui ne sait pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sill once key ne sait pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sill once keen say pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sill once keen say pas s'exprimer au langage masculin  
dance on sill once keen say pa s'exprimer au langage mask you lent  
dance on sill once keen say pa sez primer au langage mask you lent  
dance on sill once keen say pa sez primer oh langage mask you lent  
dance on sill once keen say pa sez primer oh long age mask you lent  
dance on sill once keen say pa sez preen eh oh long age mask you lent

essay on  
essayons

Penn(y) Kemp, **SIMULTANEOUS TRANSLATION**

**pk:** I would sound the stone... a lot of that is a private ritual or a ritual that would be done in a workshop so it's in a ritual setting rather than in a performance setting. Altho **Anne\*** and I have sometimes done that, sounding each other, in a performance. And at the cathedral, when I was sounding the theatre, that was a public performance of a sounding. But there I would be like listening for the echo, playing with the sound that reflected back. So it was both working with an objective sound that I think other people could hear, as in echo, and then working with the space.

**bp:** In a moment like that are there ideas of structure in your mind that you're working with?

**pk:** No. I'm really listening. It's more ecstatic, ecstatic in the sense of — I've stepped out of myself and around the back of the other that I'm working with. I feel really curious listening. The attention is at the edge of the ear. The ear is cocked.

**bp:** It reminds me of something a man from Africa said to me one time after I'd done a performance. He said, of the sound poems I'd done in the particular performance, that they reminded him of rituals without the ritual content. Now in terms of what you're saying would you say then that in your work you assume a ritual context? Or that there has to be a ritual context? It's part of what you're doing in it?

**pk:** My attitude is reverential. So the context is of ritual or of greeting. But the content I'm prepared to discover. That's the curiosity for me, that's the interest. I'm not interested in just paying homage.

**bp:** So ritual in the sense of the instituting of a dialogue with that thing or space.

**pk:** Yeah.

**bp:** Do you tend to bounce off natural things or do you ever have a text?

**pk:** Natural things but including in that the body. When working with a group of women one of the very first things that I would have them do in a workshop is have their consciousness settle into their womb and to have their womb speak, to have them move from their womb, to have the womb explore the world. To speak from there. It can get a little grotesque but elbows have great sounds. We stick to elbows and small toes, big toes.

**bp:** Uncontroversial parts of the body.

**pk:** Yeah. Very careful parts of the body.

**bp:** But for this piece here, *Simultaneous Translation*, obviously here you have a text which you are, in that sense, and you described it earlier as, *jumping off from, sounding*.

**pk:** That's different than the kind of work I've been talking about. I often work from an obsession. I remember ten or twelve years ago showing you a line that I first developed, which is *once having known you the symphony of seeing you move always through my mind*. It was a line that just came into my head, for the obvious reason, and it worked into the whole of *Eros Rising*, a twenty minute chant for sixteen voices, a long, long piece. And that was like a continuing refrain for *Animus*. But that one line of obsession repeated with changes lasted for about ten years. I still perform it. I love it. *Simultaneous Translation* is a little different than that. It comes with looking at the sentence and then playing with the words. It's less self conscious, a little more objective. It's looking at the page, what's there.

**bp:** In the first place there's a permutation that you've done, which is the translation itself, and then in the performance you seem to be doing things with duration, with pitch, with shortening and lengthening syllables and so on.

\*Canadian actress, and director, *Anne Anglin*.

**pk:** I'm very conscious of playing with the language of French, coming from where French is placed in the mouth. And I make it into this whole romance. I instructed **Dave\*** to play the violin in a totally lyric and romantic Debussy style. And the English is very truncated and very swallowed, gargled in the mouth. So it was play, that for me was the shift in language as persona.

**bp:** What would you say is the difference for you — obviously they both have an element of play but you see this second kind that we're talking about now as being much different — what would you say is the difference for you between the sounding and this second kind of improvisation, since you're really articulating two different kinds of improvisation here.

**pk:** Yes. This, the play of *Simultaneous Translation*, is where the language takes *me* places. So I'm allowing the language to direct me and I'm just sort of following. In both cases I'm following, I'm being led. But in here the language, the beginning line, would be on the page and I'd just see where it would take me. Most permutations for me are 3 a.m. Permutating. With the other, the ritual, it's a waiting. Both of them are waiting. Both of them are following. But the other is pre-verbal and it doesn't really ever get articulated. It remains pre-conscious. And it's always a waiting for, like being on the edge between subject and object, a waiting for the other's language to fall into your ear space. And then it never really can articulate itself into English. There's always a process of translation.

**bp:** In the pre-verbal kind does it ever actually achieve words?

**pk:** Once or twice in a total ecstatic, then it achieves words. But it's almost like the breakdown of consciousness in the bicameral mind and those words are just dropping into the head from some outer place where they're heard.

**bp:** Dictated in some sense.

**pk:** Yeah. That's like magic. I'm really interested in magic.

**bp:** I had that happen. There was a piece I used to do, I don't do it anymore, called *Beast*. It was a piece about ritual and sacrifice and it began from thinking about *Hugo Ball\*\**; what he was working with, which was finally religious ecstasy, I think, from my readings. Anyway there were a couple of times I just went out doing it. I just went out. In fact once I came to and I was right on the edge of the stage about to walk off into the audience. The entire front row was ready to catch me. But there were only certain pieces that did that. And then lines would come to me out of the blue and I'd say them. Of course once I'd said them then I would know them and they would enter memory and become subsequent parts. I've been playing with that from a different point of view more recently in some of the things with *CCMC*.\*\*\* I'll just start and I'll repeat a line over and over again until a new line occurs and then I'll move on the new line and repeat that over and over again and see where it takes me. But that's different again. That comes from another area.

**pk:** That's more like *Simultaneous Translation*.

**bp:** In a funny kind of way, yeah. It's less concerned with possession than those earlier pieces were.

**pk:** I'm leery of possession.

**bp:** As am I. And that's really why I stopped doing them.

**pk:** Yes. I wouldn't go so far as that. It's the dialogue that I'm interested in.

## CHILDE ROLAND

WORDS

LIKE BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER IN ONE HERCULEAN BLUR

WORDS

LIKE BURLINGTON AND WORTHINGTON, EARLS AND SIRS, EARTHY AND WORTHLESS

WORDS

LIKE VIRGINS, PERCEIVED AND ENTERED, LIKE SHIRLEY AND YESTERDAY

WORDS

LIKE BURLAP BURDENS PURGE THE URGENT URGE AND THIRST

WORDS

LIKE PERSONS AND IRREGULAR VERBS, LIKE YOU WERE, WE WERE AND THEY WERE

WORDS

LIKE EARLY AND EARLIER, HURLY-BURLY AND HURDY-GURDY

WORDS

LIKE PEARLS AND THEIR DIVERS SURFACING THROUGH THE PURPLE, TURQUOISE, CERULEAN WATERS OF PERDITION

WORDS

LIKE HEARSEs, HERMETIC AND HURLED TOWARDS MERCURY, JUPITER, URSA MINOR AND URSA MAJOR

WORDS

LIKE ANSWERS, FLAVOURS, COLOURS AND TEXTURES, LIKE MOTHERS AND FATHERS, BROTHERS AND DAUGHTERS

WORDS

LIKE SPERMO-CERVICAL-UTERINE TRAVELLERS

WORDS

LIKE HURRAH AND HURRAY, LIKE MISS MUFFET SITTING ON HER TUFFET EATING HER CURDS AND WHEY, LIKE LIZARDS AND SPIDERS

WORDS

LIKE CHILDREN SEEN BUT NOT HEARD, LIKE DIRT ON WHITE SHIRTS OR CALICO SKIRTS

WORDS

LIKE QUIRKS OF NATURE, CURSED OR ADMIRIED, LIKE MERMAIDS

WORDS

LIKE CIRCE'S ISLE, SURF-SURFEITING AND CIRCUMVENTING ALL DEPARTURES

WORDS

LIKE HERBAL HURDLES, CURLED AND TWIRLED LIKE NERVES

WORDS

LIKE FJORDS, RIVERS AND CRATERS, LIKE ICEBERGS MELTING ERG BY ERG, LIKE SLAVE GIRLS AND DESERT SERVED DESSERTS

WORDS

LIKE FLOWERS, PERFUME AND PERFORM, LIKE SERENADING SERENADED SERENADES

WORDS

LIKE FLIRTS, STIR AND HURT, LIKE TURPS AND DETERGENTS, LIKE THERMO-NUCLEAR

WORDS

TERMS AND DETERRANTS

WORDS

LIKE ERGO AND ERSTWHILE, LIKE WHERE'S IT ALL LEADING

WORDS

LIKE WHIRLPOOLS AND HURRICANES, LIKE BERTHA AND MARIAH

WORDS

LIKE MEGA, HERTZ, GIRTH, THE EARTH, LIKE CULVERTS AND DIRECTIONLESS TURNPIKE

WORDS

CHURNING CATERPILLAR TRACTORS

WORDS

LIKE TURTLES, TURRETED AND TIGERS, TRIGGERED

WORDS

LIKE CERTAINITIES AND FURNACES MEIN FURHER

WORDS

LIKE HURRY, HURT, HURT

WORDS

LIKE CANKERS AND VERRUCAS, WARTS AND TUMOURS

WORDS

LIKE SURGICAL SCISSORS AND TWEEZERS, LIKE NURSES AND SISTERS OF MERCY

WORDS

LIKE BIGGER, BETTER AND LONGER, LIKE EARTHWORMS AND ERRING SUBURBS BURIED

WORDS

UNDER LAYERS OF CERAMIC SHERDS, UNCIRCULATED CURRENCIES AND PRESERVED CADAVERS

WORDS

LIKE PLEASURES, WEIGHTS AND MEASURES, LIKE HIS AND HERS, FOR RICHER OR POORER, LIKE THIRD OR AT WORST THIRTEENTH

WORDS

LIKE BURNT BIRCHES AND CONIFER STANDS

WORDS

LIKE SURPLASSES AND IRKSOME GESTURES

WORDS

LIKE BUTTERFLY FLURRIES, LIKE HERALDS ON HIGH HERDING SHEPHERDS TOWARDS A BIRTH PERHAPS

WORDS

LIKE PURPOSE AND TO WHAT PURPOSE, LIKE CIRCLES COMING FULL CIRCLE.

Childe Roland, **WORDS**

**cr:** What's great about concrete poetry is that we are now, we have certain methods, we have evolved a methodology, a vocabulary. I'm very proud to belong to a movement. I'm not alone. But I despair of how we've been suppressed continually in high schools and colleges.

\*David Prentice, Canadian avant-garde violinist. Some of his work can be heard on the *The Bill Smith Ensemble* cassette **Live in Toronto**. Available from *Onari Productions*, Box 87, Station J, Toronto, Ontario M4J 4X8, Canada.

\*\*Famous German Dada poet who, after a particularly ecstatic performance of a sound poem, retired from performing and took up ministering to the poor.

\*\*\*The variously interpreted acronym for the Canadian based total improvisation musical quintet.

I feel it's more important to write a piece where the sound comes first. I only look at one word when I write a poem.



It's still the case I'm afraid. I just can't understand why people produce the other type of poetry, what they would call traditional poetry, which it isn't. Coz they've broken with tradition. They're writing poetry for the eyes. I despise that view — to write to say things — of course I'm trying to say something — I'm motivated to say: *I write because I want to say something* myself but I squelch that because I think it's not what you say, or what you have to say, it's how you say it.

**bp:** Yeah but that in itself, of course, is to say something. This is the philosophical problematic, right? I think that in those kinds of pieces what you're working with is the notion that, in fact, language itself says. Language itself is a system of symbols. That's why your poem *Words* works so well, because the words themselves have these extra meanings. So it doesn't matter what you do. That's what I'm always trying to get across to students of writing. I say: *look don't worry about getting symbolism into your writing, words are symbolic and they accrue meaning. They'll have meaning whether you want them to have it or not.* In fact your problem as a writer is much more when you write something and you suddenly realize it means something you don't like, that you just don't believe in emotionally or philosophically or spiritually. That's much more where the problem is in that direction. Words will sit down with anybody. They'll have a plate of dinner with any meaning.

**cr:** But I'm very militant on this point. Of course I write something because something's happened in the world and I'm touched deeply by it. But then again I feel it's more important to write a piece where the sound comes first. I only look at one word when I write a poem. Like in the poem *words* I looked at the word *words*, you see. But how do I get into the poem *Words*? I must find the key to get into that word. And there I found by just finding a lot of words that rhymed with the word *words* I could get into the word *words*. My expression for describing this is *passing thru the vortex* of that word, as Blake described it in his epic poem *MILTON*. When you *pass thru the vortex* the whole world opens up to you. And that's how I operate.\* I found a way to pass thru the word and the whole world opened up after that, just by doing that. The minute you get the key, then you unlock it and you're through. I could write pages and pages on the poem *Words*, it could go on for pages, but I just cut the vision at a certain point. But that's my technique. I just take one word, a word that hits me, and I try, maybe for months and years, to find how I can get into that word.

**bp:** So you've got the piece composed and here you are, it's a performance situation, is there any improvisation that goes on within a performance situation or do you always read them pretty much the same once you've written the text down?

**cr:** Depends what mood I'm in and depends on the audience as well really. I've always been very very careful because I remember when I was in college and went to poetry readings they were all so dull and boring. So I said I'd make sure that I'd write a poetry that would be entertaining. I believe that. I'd make sure that the words were already down on the page in case I went blank on stage. That way I could always refer back to the page and start up again. I like sometimes to do performances, a really planned performance having musical backup and things like that. And I think that maybe brings the poetry, makes it even more beautiful. I think to be kind to audiences is a very very good thing to do. I think you have to entertain really when you're standing up there. Maybe there's a bad side to doing that, I don't know. I could probably go up on stage and read the telephone book very entertainingly, you know have everybody laughing. And that would be the bad side I would say. That's a bad trap to fall into, the quick high of being the clown up there on stage. You gotta have the poetry there to begin with.

**bp:** There you are with your texts and that's your foundation?

**cr:** Yes. Which is already orchestrated coz the words, everything is there.

**bp:** So what is the element you would see as being improvised there then?

**cr:** Hamming it up. Literally hamming it up. Really really laying it on thick. I have different levels of performance but I can really ham it up if I want. I try to present as much pathos as possible, trying to present as much humanity as I can. What's going on I suppose is I'm crying inside. What I like most of all tho is I always make a big big effort to portray a character of a person that's slightly insane but he's in control of his insanity. He's got control because the rhyme is holding him together. So the poem *Words* is the world of words because every word in the poem *Words*, rhymes with *words*. I force the audience to enter that particular world. And the moment I read that poem the audience is my prisoner and I've forced them because of the sound, because they're only getting that sound, *words* rhyming with words, they're in the poem *Words*, there's no escape until I finish that poem. But that's insane to do that. Coz that's all they'll get while the poem lasts. There's no escape while I'm up there.

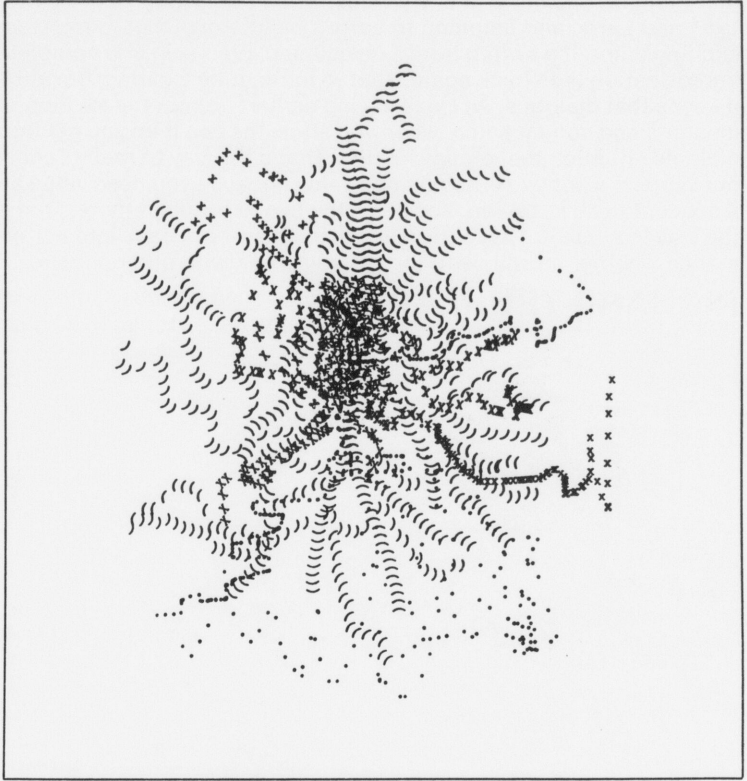
**bp:** Would it be fair then to say that performance for you is an improvised theatrical piece within this notion of insanity that you're

\*Earlier in this interview *Childe Roland* described his process of composition in *Words*, and other pieces, in the following manner: I began by just getting a whole pile of words that rhymed with the word *words*. I then took those words and put them together to describe how words look on a page. So I collect little bits of line you see, and then one day I'll get all my courage up, feeling really good, it'll maybe take me two weeks to build up to this, and I'll take all those little bits and put them all together in one big poem. There's no beginning or end because I don't believe in poetry having a beginning or an end. I just take all these little bits and chuck them all together. You can start in the middle of the poem if you want. It's totally alright. If anyone wants to take that poem apart and put it together again it's totally alright with me. But it had to be done. It had to be put together. That's why I like *Jean Paul Riopelle* when he puts the colours on the page. He does it in one good rush you know and that's it you see. But there's months and months and months of preparation towards this big moment.

talking about. That you like to portray a character who's slightly off the wall but who is in essence being held together by his texts? Would that be a fair description?

**cr:** Yes. I'd say yes.

STEVE MCCAFFERY



Steve McCaffery, *XXxxX* (circa 1969)

**bp:** When you improvise what is it that you're doing? In the moment of improvising what are you improvising with, upon; how does it take place; what goes thru your mind? What constitutes an improvisation?

**sm:** That's a difficult question. I don't know that I can give an adequate answer. What immediately springs to mind is it's a situation that is almost like an accelerated meditation but a meditation in which it's opening up to other people and sounds. So it's almost like a micro-social context. It's where I'm listening and contributing to something that I'm not totally in control of. I'm talking now about where I'm working with other people. At the same time, if I had to be honest with myself, there's a whole kind of *Proustian* area which is like falling back almost on involuntary memory that I think happens. I think it certainly happens with me, because I don't think improvisation necessarily means that it's going to be this one unrepeatable moment. The aspects of repetition that occur within an improvisation are quite amazing. So really I think it's this low key stroll between these two things, jettisoning all kinds of externally imposed structures but then, within that, finding this tension between repetition, involuntary repetition, and doing something new. I do not feel conscious of creating in those situations. It's much more like a survival within slightly sort of predetermining areas, a survival in terms of non-semantic sound, perpetuating a state which could at any moment become a vacuum. So in that way it's analogous to the Victorian interior decorator who has this horror of an empty space so he fills it with things. I feel at times, too, there's the aspect of discovery, an aspect of journeying in which there is a sense of novelty even if it's fabrication. And it's also questioning that value that sheer outlay itself is an important factor, it's not something to be shunned. It seems aligned with many kinds of traditionally negative areas. What I've always felt a personal problem within improvisation is this imposition of a beginning and an end, why it ends there at a particular time. And usually in my case, my own individual experience and my experience with other people, is that it's not gone on too long.

**bp:** Some notion of the correct length.

**sm:** Something like that.

**bp:** I was actually thinking about this today. I remember watching a history of comedy, which included situation comedy, in which they were remarking that what **Monty Python** did was to free comedy from the necessity of the punchline, that most Monty Python routines don't end with a punchline. And it seemed to me that for the *Four Horsemen*,\* where we were always very concerned with ending, when we began to work with *CCMC* we were literally freed by that experience from the necessity of thinking of ending things, of tying things off. Part of that had to do with the sheer size of the group. When nine people are improvising at once no one individual, not even two or three people, can, in that sense, take responsibility for an ending.

**sm:** But it's not just that. There's a kind of politeness that comes in. We've always been nice guys, Barrie. There's always been a sense of politeness, external values that are non-artistic values. I remember the times when we'd be drawing up the programme for an evening and we'd be thinking *well that's too much for an audience*. A kind of pre-judging. Balancing a programme not really from what we wanted to do but from what an audience could take. And that was a pure kind of a fiction in our minds. I must say that improvisation isn't something I'm actively thinking about these days. I'm not creating new performance pieces. One reason for that is a reaction in me to the sense of a secure repetition, even within improvisation, that even if the sounds weren't being repeated there were emotional bonds that were actually being repeated. The group, any group you happen to be performing with, is, itself, very structured on these unspoken bonds and hierarchies and configurations.

**bp:** X always duets with Y at this point...

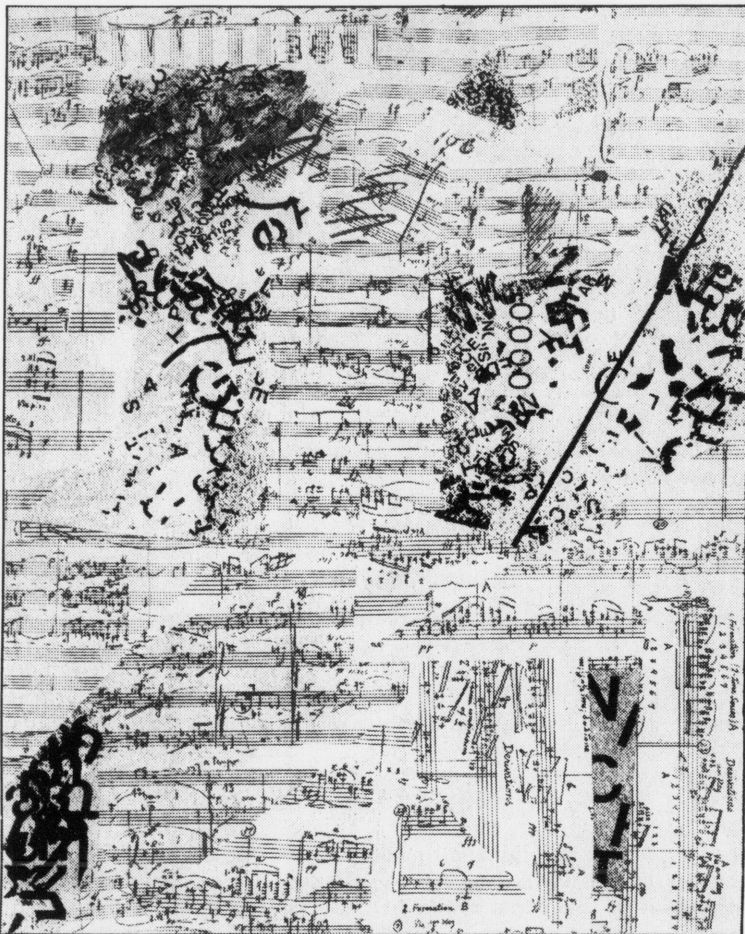
\*Canadian sound/performance poetry group founded in 1970 by *Paul Dutton*, *Rafael Baretto-Rivera* & the two people talking here.

almost like  
an accelerated  
meditation  
but a meditation  
in which  
it's opening up  
to other people  
and sounds.



**sm:** Yeah. So to throw in dixieland or this or that at some point would be taboo. It's okay to drop a cymbal and scream but to be nice and melodic doesn't work. What I feel in this very kind of immediate retrospective around improvisation is the difficulty of getting away from repetition. And the way that improvisation itself can conceal these deeper bonds that relativize how open and transgressive the initial thing is. Speaking to **Larry Ochs**, when I stayed in Berkley with **Lyn\*** and Larry, and listening to Larry's band, *Rova*, that to me is an exciting point, the switch from a mechanical precision into complete improvisation then back again. That to me is quite exciting. Because it keeps that dialogue. As I was saying earlier\*\* about the relation of meaning and non-meaning, when you stage the two then you get that dialogic situation that eludes finality. That's the way to really cancel out value. It's not by setting up non-value because you need value as a concept to be put down. You allow the two to oscillate there. That's the way to elude it. That's the way I'd go if I ever got back into performance whether myself, with the *Horsemen*, or with other people.

## RICHARD TRUHLAR



you  
can see when  
things are very  
loud and raucous  
and you can  
see when things  
are very quiet.

Richard Truhlar, **PHONOGRAPHY**

**rt:** Improvisation in the sense that you place yourself at **X**, naked, with no reference, no context whatsoever, and then you're expected to produce — to me that is what a lot of people mistake for what I think is real improvisation. The great jazz musicians will take a tune, they've got a point of reference, and they work from that tune. They may create something totally different but they've always got a point of departure and something to come back to. Now to me that's the strength of any improviser, and I do that too, with all my work. Even when I perform on stage with *TEKST* I do that. Some people like that feeling of danger in the moment where they don't know what they're going to do, where it could bomb completely. But I like improvisation — I think it's essential to music, or sound poetry, or whatever you're talking about — in the sense that you have a context, you have something to work with. I remember once when I did an improvisation for a group of people what I picked was — it was a funny context, kind of like a soiree, very relaxed and all the rest of it — I picked a cedar wall and used that as my score. I just focussed all night on that cedar wall, picked out all sorts of details, things that I could use. Improvisation... it's a funny area because improvisation to me has always meant *danger, the moment and total blindness to whatever is to come and whatever's gone past*. I've always had this feeling that when we talk about improvisation it's really what one could call an innate sense of composition within a person, an unconscious sense of how he's going to compose it. He's just looking outside himself for a context that he can then take off with, use that context, that cedar wall or that particular few notes of a tune or whatever, as his basis. And then thru his unconscious, almost innate, sense of composition he can take that and turn it into a whole new work.

\*Lyn Hejinian, American author, former editor and publisher of the *Tuumba* series of chapbooks.

\*\*Earlier in this interview, while critiquing the term *sound poetry* and its meaning and practise in Canada, Steve McCaffery said the following: I think that first, within the context of Canada, sound poetry comes out of the context of cabaret sociology and it has never really discerned and made that distinction between a theatricalization and just a presentation. So you get that margin between, and this is a tricky distinction I'm making, between art and entertainment, the way that these are socially defined. That in itself has never really been challenged. But the fundamental misgiving, apart from the cabaret sociology, is that it has not dealt with this fundamental issue of presence and the way that that is the big ideological contamination that's gone on for 2000 years. I say that presence is a contaminant because it's a way that sound poetry connects with philosophical notions, political notions, economic notions, the whole base and super-structure within western society, western culture, western economics that is based on a sense of presence. That meaning is that thing that is there as a full plenitude. And whereas in sound poetry we kicked out meaning, we did not kick out the fullness and plenitude. We kicked out meaning to get a closer kind of immediate presence between sound and energy and the physical body. And I think that restored a very conservative notion of the self. What Freud and Lacan teach us we have not fully explored in sound. There's still the sense of the enunciator and the message enunciated. And that's where my reservation around sound poetry is.

**bp:** **Cobbing\*** talks about how there was a certain point, at the beginning of his sound poetry, when he suddenly began to perform his paintings. He'd painted them, and then at a certain point he began to perform them. What I'm wondering is: you look at that cedar wall and you say *ah, here I have a basis for composition*. Another person looks at that cedar wall and they say *say what?* What are you seeing? What are you taking from it? You say you see it as a score...

**rt:** Well I'm seeing the dynamics in the actual cedar wall. I'm seeing the dynamics between the different shades, the lines within the cedar, perhaps there're holes in the cedar or black-marks, and I'm looking at it and I'm seeing that there's an amazing amount of variety in this cedar wall. It was a living thing once, it was a tree, these lines — I mean you can get into all sorts of crazy thots but really what it is is it's a projection of your own sense, your own sensibility, into something that's outside of yourself. And it's also about letting what's outside of yourself affect you. So it's really like a communication. Even tho it's only a one way communication, it's kind of a two way communication.

**bp:** Would you say you take the structure of the composition from the wall? As opposed to what goes into it, if you think of the overall structure of the improvisation, which we'll then call the composition, do you take the structure from the wall or is the structure there inside you and then these are the elements that you plo into it as it were?

**rt:** I think it's both. I think it's a two way thing. When I look at the wall I realize I've got a lot to work with. So I allow the wall to take me in different directions at times. But at the same time if during that motion I find something I really like I'll save it and repeat it later, or use it later, or develop it later. And as I go along, improvising, I can take those moments then and because I've got a memory I can use those moments and bring them back and then create a composition. On the other hand if I don't like a sound... and there are a lot of sounds go by I don't even notice, or a lot of things on the wall — maybe I'll clue in to a particular few things on the wall that are really strong points — that big knothole there or that particular red spot over there or whatever — and they will become maybe characteristics of the composition with their sound equivalents and then working them and then adding some new things in between too. But I like the idea — it's almost like building structure out of the void. But you're still building structure.

**bp:** Would you say in a moment like that that you are seeing the wall in a certain sense as an optophonetic score in **Hausmann's\*** sense of it, that there's a kind of analogy made between visual space and sonic space? For instance if there was a greater density of pattern in the middle of the wall then there'd probably be a greater density and incidence of sound in the middle of the improvisation.

**rt:** I'd say that's true. The visual experience... I mean density's density and you react to it that way socially. On the other hand people could see density as being volume. Whereas someone else could see density as long very subtle sounds held for a long time. In other words, the density is like pressure, it's an amazing pressure to push the sound into a very minimal thing. That sense is unique to the way a person interprets a score, their environment, whatever. But the other thing that you've also got to consider is the person who is perhaps new to that and then the person who is experienced in that. For instance I could come across a dense patch and something in me calls for volume but I make the choice not to go loud volume but to get into maybe a lot of very high dense cluttery sounds.

**bp:** Yeah, that you could end up making the improvisation a counter-point as opposed to a direct interpretation. An anti-interpretation or reaction to it really. If it's loud you get soft, if it's soft you get loud for instance, as a sort of simplistic example.

**rt:** That's right. But I think, for one thing, when you get into script things — a large giant A printed on the page with a bunch of little a's beside it — the little a's are definitely soft and the giant A is usually loud. I mean that's the way people perceive that kind of visual representation.\*\*Like in the scores of **R. Murray Schafer†** you can see when things are very loud and raucous and you can see when things are very quiet. Even musically you can see that. The density of notes usually means that the harmonics are denser†† and louder, because the more things you've got sounding simultaneously the more volume you've got. Whereas if the musical score is very minimal you know that the music is going to have a lot of silence in it.

**bp:** When you improvise would you say that generally there's something you're reacting to, be it the palms of your hands, the cedar wall, a score? You'd never just start reacting to your mind, as it were, just go out and start to work with what's in your head?

**rt:** I do that too. I don't just react to an environment when I'm improvising.

**bp:** So how would you make a distinction between that then and total improvisation? Is it that you would know in advance before you walked out?

**rt:** Well I'll give you an example. That cedar wall thing actually happened. I knew that people wanted me to perform that night. I didn't know what I was going to do. I saw the cedar wall and thot *well that's*

\***Bob Cobbing**, English sound & visual poet. His selected poems are available from *Coach House Press*, 401 (rear) Huron Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

\*\***Raoul Hausmann**, Dada painter and poet. His seminal essay on sound poetry notation, titled *The Optophonetic Dawn*, was published in an English translation by *Frank W. Lindsay* in **Stereo Headphones 4**, Spring 1971 (reprinted from **Studies In The Twentieth Century 3**, 1969).

\*\*\*There's a suggestion here, which I love, that what writers have been learning about reading these last twenty years could be of benefit to musicians, that we could be in a position to do a radical rereading of, say, *Vivaldi*. And it strikes me now that sound poetry was never really about sound; it was and is about reading (cf the *jwcurry* section of this article). More on that tho in some other article.

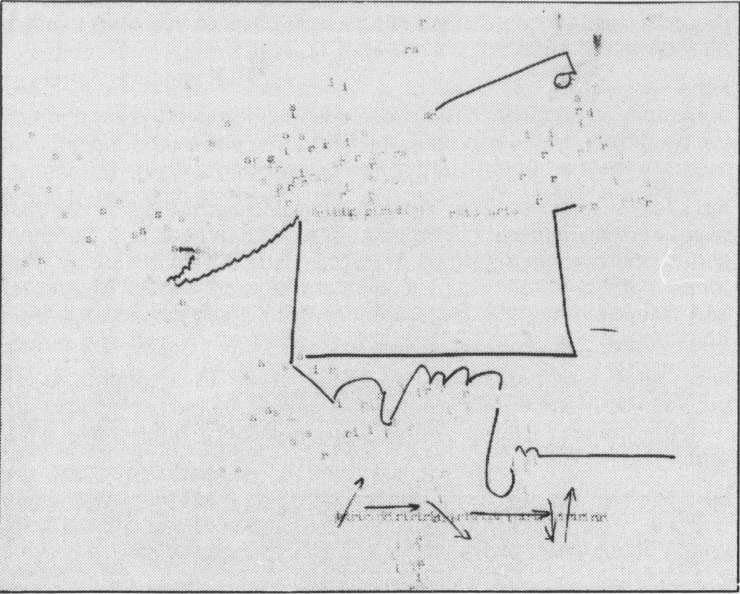
† Canadian composer who has used sound poets and sound poetry principles in a number of his compositions, particularly in his major multi-part work *PATRIA*.

†† Compare this to *Toby MacLennan's SINGING THE STARS* performance piece where a musical grid is suspended between the singer and the stars and the stars are then sung.



*interesting.* I had been listening to some of **Henri Chopin's**\* recordings and had these sonic ideas going thru my mind so I thot well I want to do something really minimal, extremely minimal, and I want to use those kinds of sounds that I'm going to hear within myself but I'm going to use the cedar wall as my score. So it was like a combination of this that was going on in me at the time, ideas that I had around sound, and then reacting to the wall at the same time. It was bringing this that I had to that that was out there.

PAUL DUTTON



Paul Dutton, **TEXT FOR EVENT HORIZON** (circa 1979)

**pd:** If I do one of my *Imp's Roves*, which is a play on *improvs*, what I'm doing there is building an energy rapport. I'm reading the energy in an audience and working off it. And I'll have built the energy rapport with the audience thru the other poems I will have read or performed.

**bp:** What does the term *energy rapport* mean?

**pd:** I sense a rapport there with the energy that's coming from the audience. It's a collective energy; there may well be individuals sitting there completely closed to me and everything I'm doing but... It's something that is non-verbal, intuitive, visceral and very intangible. But I know that I get a sense of a kind of energy in the room. It's emotional — I don't mean that it's weeping or screaming or anything like that — but it feels an intuitive, emotional kind of thing, altho I don't specify the emotion in it. And when I do the *Imp's Roves*, I close my eyes and I try to clear my mind. I reject every idea. I wait and I reject every *notion* that occurs to me of how to begin. I think that is very much the case at the conscious level. I think at another level what I'm trying to do is tap into the energy that I feel, you know the old sixties term, the *vibes*, the energy vibrations, the emotional tenor or temper or timbre of the room, of the people in it. And then I just respond to it with sounds. Now there are times when I will not do an *Imp's Rove* even tho I may have intended to do one in planning out the program. There was a *Four Horsemen* reading in a community college in Prince George once where the room was all carpeted and concrete and thru the performance I couldn't get a feeling of the audience. I felt like I was performing in a vacuum and I wasn't going to attempt an *Imp's Rove* in that. There've been other times where I've attempted an *Imp's Rove* and found that I can't feel the audience and I've foreshortened it and abandoned it. I'm going on at great length about the *Imp's Roves* because other than improvising with others that is basically where I improvise. I may have improvisatory elements or sections within pieces, scored sound pieces or chant pieces or whatever, but those I don't think of in the same way as this. That's an improvisational element as one might in reading a prose piece skip a parenthetical phrase or invert the syntax at one point from what they're reading on the page. If I do a free improvisation, an extended improvisation, other than the electronic work I've been doing this summer, if I do an acoustic stand up in front of an audience improvisation then I announce it as an *Imp's Rove*. What I do is once the first sound comes out I then become a listener. Say it comes out as a throat gurgle. I will continue with a throat gurgle for a bit, I will let it establish itself, and then I will listen to the sounds that are coming out of me and listen for other qualities in the throat gurgle. Like sometimes you'll be making a throat gurgle and you'll hear a kind of a whistle sound come thru, a whining sound come thru. I will look for that other sound and try to follow it, pick up on the whining sound or the little throat whistle that's happening involuntarily, and try to make that voluntary, and try to draw out that element. I guess it's like a painter trying to draw out another element of a pigment that he's using. I will then also play with the sound where it's located. If it's in the throat I will try to find ways to do different things with it: do it with the throat closed; then with the throat more open then bring it up into the nose and mouth. Usually, and this is why I call them *Imp's Roves*, I will rove where the voice leads me, or the *sounds* lead me, because sometimes they're not voice sounds that I work with. I will try not to think very much about it. I remember once shortly after I bought a car I did an *Imp's Rove* — it was the first car I'd bought, a little Italian sports car — and I realized after doing the performance that the piece was rammed full of lots of rolled r's and k's, voiced and un-voiced gutturals, t's. All this kind of stuff was occurring in the piece. I hadn't been thinking about the car but I realized after I'd done this that it was like I was doing this hymn to the sounds of the motor of the Fiat. But fortunately it's all subtext. The audience isn't aware of it.

**bp:** How do you know one is over?

**pd:** Well I stop don't I? So it must be over. It's just a question of when I decide to stop really. I did one recently in Cork, a marvelously resonant room, I used sounds in that particular piece, which was *Imp's Rove 27*, that I would normally not use without a microphone, but I was quite confident that they were going out. The room itself was a microphone. I was doing subtle little throat things and I got quite into that. I really lost the sense or the feel of the people there. At a point I got lost and I felt like I was up there just self-indulgently fool-

ing around and I then began to look for an ending for the piece. I didn't want to stop in the middle of a particular sound but I started tapering things off.

**bp:** What you're saying when you say you sort of rove then, and you try not to let the mind in fact interfere too much, is that you're really trying to make it an event of listening and uttering that listening. So is there any idea of structure in the piece?

**pd:** The structure evolves. There is a point where I do think because I do want to have some kind of structure to it. Can you talk about aesthetics as being instinctive? I don't know. But I like to put some shape into it either by going back to something, a sound that has been dominant at some point, or maybe bracketing it by ending it with something similar to the sound that I began it with. I mean I found myself in Cardiff one time bouncing down on one knee and slapping the stage with my hands. I was in a complete trance, a frenzy. I don't know what it was. I knew what I was doing. I felt I had complete control of my self. But I hadn't planned to do this. I just suddenly in the course of making sounds found myself close to the stage and my hands seemed to want to hit it. It was risers. There was some sound from it. It was quite violent activity and... that's another thing about these pieces for me is that they really do, whatever the energy in the audience, if the *vibes* are good, if the rapport is there and the timbre of the room is right, it's like I am given the liberty by the audience to really explore whatever's in me. At times I've done *Imp's Roves* that've wound up being very erotic and I've realized that after I was horny. This one, the one in Cardiff, was actually quite violent. And I realized, or at least I believe, that what it was was there, was some anger, was moved in me or moving in me around that time. I still to this day don't know what it was. So it's cathartic, if you want, but there are other times where I have found that I'm just doing things. I've always believed that the performer becomes a focus for the emotions of the whole group, both himself and his audience. The performer is a focus for all the emotions in the room. That can be good, and these aren't the best terms for it but, it can be a pleasant or a calm emotion, or it can be more agitated — you know the whole range of things that occur in a group setting. I've always believed that.

**bp:** So here you are and you're doing the piece. How do you know it ended.

**pd:** I am wandering a bit aren't I? A kind of verbal *Imp's Rove*.

**bp:** How do you know where it ends?

**pd:** I usually don't. It's an intuitive thing. Sometimes it just feels right to me. Sometimes I'm just too tired to keep going. Other times I feel that I've exhausted the ideas that are relevant to the particular sound that began the thing and the particular areas that it went. Some times I will have begun with a sound from low in the throat and I would've moved up thru the nose up into the front of the mouth and back down into the throat again and felt like a circle was complete and then just finish it there. Sometimes I just begin to get bored with it and so find what I think is a nice way to end it.

**bp:** So ending for you is a more conscious act then, a return to consciousness.

**pd:** Yes. And the structure occurs within that. Sometimes I'll end an *Imp's Rove* because I think *I'm thinking too much*. I'll realize it's becoming very cerebral. One part of your question at the start was *what do you think of when you're improvising* and one of the things I think about is the structure. I think of the structure that's evolved — I use the past tense — and that is also evolving. I will try to go back but the thing about the *Imp's Rove* too for me is that it has to be fluid. I don't want to contrive things. If I'm in the middle of a nasal sound or a tooth sound I'm generally not going to stop in the middle of that and go back to the open vowel high volume rounded tone that the thing began with. There will be times where I will make very constrasting sounds for a certain effect but generally I try to have one thing flow into the next. And if a previous sound seems appropriate to bring back in, to bring that sense of continuity — some pieces I think want that — then if I can do that I will. So that's my improvisation. Then there's group improvisation where it's more reading the energy of the group instead of the audience and trusting that that energy is representative of the audience. The audience certainly comes into play in it when you're improvising with others, either with a group of sound poets or with musicians or mixes of that. It's very similar principles for me. I want to be listening to the other person. I want the other person to be listening to me. If I'm starting it for instance, I will use a sound, an idea that occurs to me for a sound. I'm not so worried about leaving out or rejecting every idea that occurs to me in the beginning. I will usually accept the first idea that comes along as a way to get started, to kick off. And then it's just discovering a shape with the other person or persons and getting my mind in touch with theirs, establishing some kind of contact with them, some kind of gut contact. And some amazing things have occurred in the course of doing that. One of the most amazing was when I was improvising with **Sue Ferrar**\* who I had met only once before. We had taken part in some group thing where each of us had performed but we hadn't peformed together. Essentially two unknown quantities there for each other. And in the course of an improv, which we taped and I subsequently accidentally erased which I'll never forgive myself for, at one point in that we were in unison, melodically in unison. We didn't plan it. It was a melody that neither of us knew. We made up a melody and did it in perfect unison. When we played the thing back we could not tell who was leading who. It just simply was in unison. And I've had the same thing occur with rhythms within a piece where suddenly at the exact same moment two or three individuals have fallen into exactly the same rhythm. Maybe not the same sounds but exactly the same rhythm. And often a complicated one.

SUSAN McMASTER

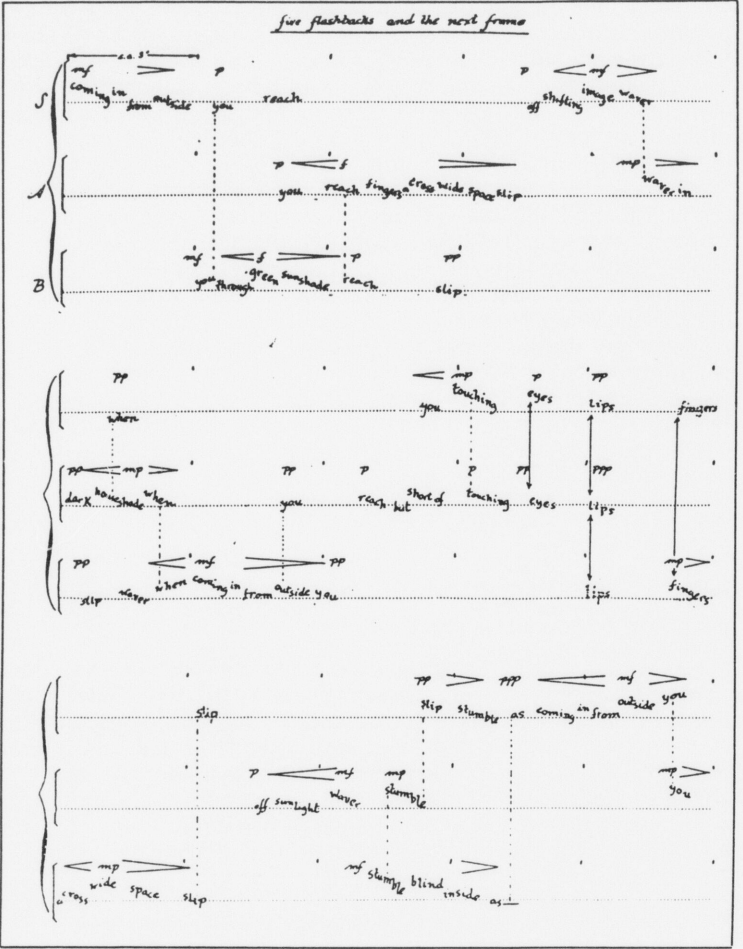
**sm:** My work with *First Draft*\*\*, and I think this is true of any collaborative work, any exploratory work, comes from a central intense

\*British new music violinist.  
\*\*Ottawa based performance/poetry group consisting mainly of *Andrew McClure* (composer), *Susan McMaster* (poet), *Colin Morton* (poet) and *Claude Dupuis* (painter) but frequently joined by other musicians, dancers, poets, photographers and painters. Their book of performance scores, **Pass This Way Again**, and their first cassette, **Wordmusic**, are both available from *Underwhich Editions*.

once the first sound comes out I then become a listener.



focus and interest. Mine comes from a personal intense interest in, among other things, sound, the sound of words and the sound of the voice itself, the spoken voice as opposed to the voice heard in the head when you read something on the page. I push it, I push the edges in the work with *First Draft* because I have to hand a number of different voices. So that allows me all kinds of explorations. But one of the intense interests in my own personal work, which I have trouble notating unless I use a notation system like the one developed by *First Draft*, is the sound of the breath, the sound of those things that are notated in English literature by, for example, *HARRUMPH*, which I suppose is meant to stand for *humph* tho now people will actually say to you *harrumph!* they'll say. Which is a really quite amusing change. But there are innumerable sounds which have strong meaning, emotional meaning, which can't be caught or haven't up till now been caught easily in conventional poetry. My work with *First Draft* allows me to explore something that's of intense interest to me and that's why I'm in it.



First Draft, FIVE FLASHBACKS AND THE NEXT FRAME

**bp:** Do you ever improvise?

**sm:** The joy of improvisation is a wonderful thing. It's pure pleasure to dance that kind of sound. Basically I don't improvise. I'm a slow thinker perhaps. I can catch an idea on the fly and play with it, but I'm not entirely sure for myself of the relevance of my play for somebody else unless I've been able to play with it further, to consider where it might lead. Some people seem to be able to take the first caught moment of idea and develop it in performance, to follow those ideas, push them further and further and further. And writing down what happens is irrelevant for such a performer. For me what I want to do is get that idea, get it down where I can look at it in some way or other, and consider what the extrapolations might be and then which ones I want to follow and how. So for me my most interesting work personally is non-improvisational.

**bp:** Yet you talk about the *joy of improvisation*. So is there some situation in which you might improvise?

**sm:** In my work with creative drama with children, which I've done for years and years, the improvisation gives you a lightness of touch, a sort of immediacy, a vibrancy, a glitter in the air that can certainly be achieved in notated work but it's harder. That wonderful magic feeling of improvisation is much harder to attain. You have to reach towards it from a notated work whereas in improvisation it's there or it isn't. And if it's there it's just wonderful. We have done some improv, presented some improv work, in *First Draft* in the last year. They were fine but... it gets dull too easily. It gets predictable. There's at least as much skill in improv as there is in notating work and then doing it. And I guess that *First Draft* at this point is not a group that has the skills of improv at its fingertips. A lot of sound poetry that I've heard, and a lot of the things that we've tried to do, because we've been trying to work towards improv, to me what happens is you get one good idea and then push it and push it and push it and just keep it going and keep it going and keep it going. The possibility of an entirely different idea coming into that... I suppose it's there but somehow it doesn't seem to happen very often. I suppose the kind of improv that appeals to me is a properly jazz-oriented kind in which there is a pre-set structure, a pre-set form, a pre-set of expectations on the part of the audience and the performers around which the wildest improvisations are drawn, around which the most elaborate lines of melody and dissonance are braided. But without that underlying formal structure, without that satisfying formal shape to it, I don't know that anything has been said in the end except one idea. What fascinates me is to put simple dictionary meaning or connotative meaning or ordinary meaning of words against the translative forms, the transforming forms, of the sound meaning of those words, of the musical melodic meaning of those words, of, and this is the area I'm exploring right now with great interest, the gestural language, the gestural translations, transformations, of those words. That was the most successful and interesting piece we did on this tour we just finished. Putting a gesture against word meaning, against sound meaning, against melody and musical meaning. Altogether against breath meaning, against the meaning of silence. Bringing all those

things together. It's an extraordinarily rich text. It can go into all kinds of grounds that I think can't be caught any other way, can't be explored any other way.

**bp:** What I hear you saying is you want to go for maximization in every piece. That is to say, these things are not in any sense hierarchical or otherwise negating. Obviously if I do a piece which is entirely abstract sound it doesn't say anything about my feelings about sound which is meaningful. So what I take from what you're saying is that your desire... what is personally unsatisfying to you is that there's a desire to meld those things, maximize, so you want to have it all there all at once.

**sm:** Maybe it's the view of a miniaturist. I don't know. I want somebody to come back to a piece and hear it again the second time, the third time, the fourth time, the fifth time, and each time get more out of it. With an improv it can't be repeated anyway.

**bp:** Well it can be, given current recording technology. I can hear, say, **Louis Armstrong's** improvisations or I can hear Bob Cobbing's sound poetry improvisations or **Paula Claire's**.\* So obviously I have the possibility of hearing how your spontaneous senses of structure and composition work. Repeatability is not there *per se* as a limitation.

**sm:** What we've started to do in *First Draft* is to incorporate improvised sections into longer notated works. So the overall structure is there, the idea that starts the section is there, but it's free within that.

**bp:** Well let me ask you a final question on that level. When you're doing a piece in which there are improvised sections what is it that you're doing when you're doing it, when you improvise?

**sm:** I'm listening. Mostly. I'm trancing. I'm moving into a biofeedback system, an environmental feedback system. I'm letting myself be pulled by whatever the creative aspect is rather than pushing it from behind. I feel this is vital in any writing. If I try to improvise and say *okay I'll do some real neat things and I'm going to do some yells* etc., etc., it's dead. If I allow... here I am now working, I'm working with my body in an improv section perhaps as a tool, so I have to let my lips and teeth and tongue ears and eyes and shoulders and chest and pelvis and knees give me the rhythms, give me the sound, give me the possibilities and then I can move with it in a kind of dance.

**bp:** When you say you're moving into a bio-feedback system, where is that feedback coming from? Your body?

**sm:** Strongly from my body. Strongly from the sounds and the shapes and the possibilities of the body. Some sounds are easier and more joyful to say than others. For example sometimes you want the contrast of a closed sound as opposed to an open sound. Your body begins to yearn for contrast. Moving outward to the people around me, I want to know, if I'm improvising with a group, where they are physically. I want to be able to feel them — peripheral vision, sound, body sound — as well as hearing what we're doing with the audience. And I want to be aware of the audience as well, of how it's moving. Is it leaning forward? Is it withdrawing if we do certain things? What's happening to its eyes? And also, to extend it even further, what sound are we surrounded with? What white noise is in the air? What actual noises are in the air? One of the pieces we did on the tour there were buses going back and forth all the time. Now we were doing a scored work. It wasn't possible for us to take into account the buses in any way. Had we been doing improv work we could've. We could've responded to that sound. We could've allowed it to fill some spaces in the improv. We could've overcome it at other times by making things much louder. As it was we were doing a very gentle delicate little piece and the bus happened to come right thru the middle of it — there you are, done for.

**bp:** When you have done an improv section in a piece, what would make for one that you felt had gone well or had been successful as opposed to one that you felt had failed?

**sm:** The outward symbol, the outward sign, would probably be a lovely ending, a delight filled ending, an ending in which the voices came together or ended separately apart in a way that seemed to be consonant. That the sound or the feeling of the voices was consonant. Another symbol would probably be the wide smile on the faces of all of us, audience and me. Now that doesn't mean that only glee and delight come from that kind of thing because it can also end very very quietly and eerily. More than melancholy. A sense of the mystery of the universe perhaps. And if that well then everybody's going to be hushed and listening aren't they? They're going to be waiting to hear more. So something that has brought the whole group who are involved in the experience to a point, a shared moment, a consonant moment of perception, of understanding, of listening. We start from listening and end with listening. That's a successful improv to me.

## A FEW BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

**DOUGLAS BARBOUR** — teacher, critic, reviewer, theorist, ditor, publisher and poet. Resident in Edmonton, Alberta, his most recent book is **visible visions: The selected poems of Douglas Barbour**, published in 1984 by NeWest Press, Suite 204, 8631 — 109 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, T6G 1E8.

**STEVEN SMITH** — founding member of the Canadian sound poetry group **Owen Sound**, Smith has published books of both prose and poetry. His most recent book is **Blind Zone** published by Aya Press in 1985. His cassette, with **Bob Cobbing** and **Keith Musgrave**, **Various Throats**, is available from *Underwhich Editions*, P.O. Box 262, Adelaide Street Stn., Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5C 2J4, as are a number of cassettes by **Owen Sound**.

**JWCURRY** — editor and publisher of *CURVD H&Z*, Toronto's most prolific underground press. A major interview with *curry* was published in the seventh issue of **WHAT** magazine. You can buy some of his many pamphlets from *CURVD H&Z* at 729a Queen Street East, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4M 1H1. Free catalogues available.

\*British sound poet, member with **Bob Cobbing** and **Bill Griffiths** of the sound poetry group *Konkrete Canticle*. A cassette of her work with *The Paxton Group* (U.S.A.) was released in 1985.

Putting  
a gesture against  
word meaning,  
against sound  
meaning, against  
melody and  
musical meaning.



PENN(Y) KEMP — poet, playwright, novelist and sound poet. She performed in numerous festivals including the *Twelfth International Festival of Sound Poetry* in New York City, has published ten books of poems and had three plays produced. Her most recent book is **Travelling Light** from Moonstone Press, 11 Dundas Crescent, St. Catharines, Ontario, L2T 1T4, Canada. A cassette of her sound works is forthcoming from *Underwhich Editions*.

GERRY SHIKATANI — has published, exhibited and performed his poetry since the early 70's. He appeared at the *Polyphonix Festival* in Paris in 1985. His major collection **A Sparrow's Food** appeared from *Coach House Press* in 1984.

CHILDE ROLAND — the nom de art of *Peter Meilleur*, Quebec born trilingual visual and sound poet. He is probably Canada's least known experimental writer even tho he has been publishing, performing and exhibiting his work since the late 60's. He has been resident in Wales since the late 70's. His work may be ordered from him at One Glanaber, Hill Str, Llangollen, Clwyd, Wales, UK, LL20 8EU.

STEVE MCCAFFERY —poet, prose-writer,essayist, theoretician, saxophonist, video artist and performance artist. *McCaffery's* output is prodigious but frequently ignored in Canada. He was a founding member of both the *Four Horsemen* and *The Toronto Research Group*. His collection of essays **North of Intention** is due out from *Nightwood Editions* in the winter of 1987 and his cassette **Whispers** is available from that same publisher at Box 5432, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 1N6, Canada.

RICHARD TRUHLAR — poet, prose writer, *pataphysician*, composer and founding member of *Owen Sound*. Along with *Steve Smith*, he edited a special number of *The Capilano Review* (Number 31, 1984) devoted to articles on, and including a record of, a number of Canadian sound poets. Cassettes of his music, sound poetry and his work with both *TEKST* and *OWEN SOUND*, are available from *Underwhich Editions*. His book **PARISIAN NOVELS** is available from that same address.

PAUL DUTTON — poet, prose writer, performer, and co-founder of *The Four Horsemen*, *Dutton* has released one album of his sound work, **Blues, Roots, Legends, Shouts and Hollers** (with British sound poet *P.C. Fencott* — *Starborne Editions*, 1980), and has a new cassette, **Fugitive Forms**, forthcoming from *Membrane Press* in the states (to be distributed in Canada by *Underwhich Editions* who also distributes his album). His amazing book **Right Hemisphere, Left Ear** is still available from *Coach House Press*.

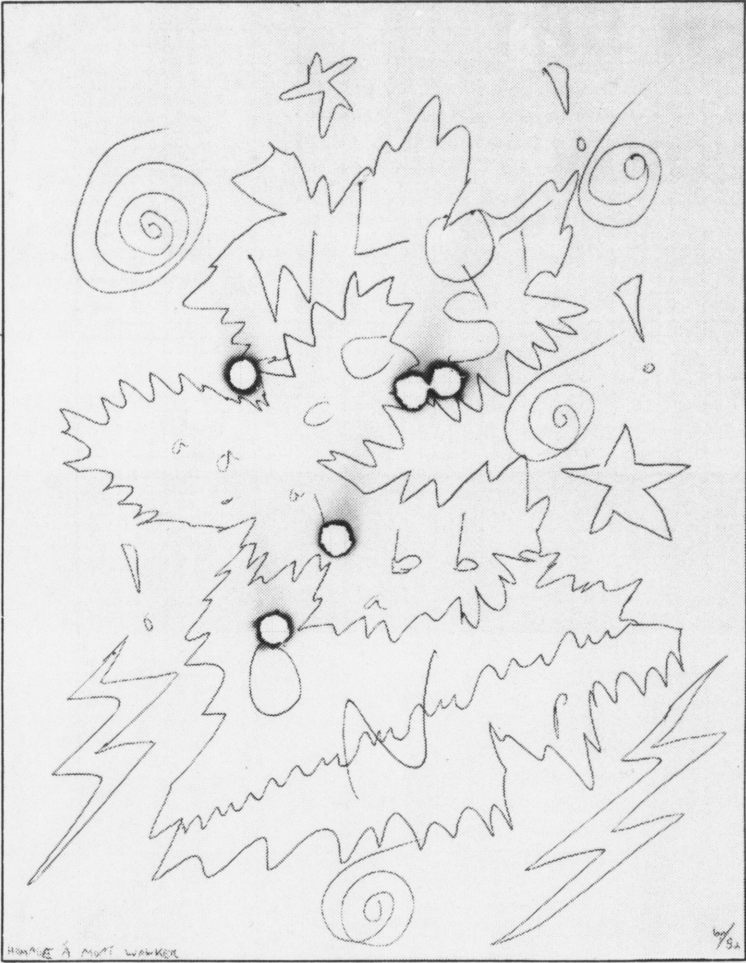
SUSAN MCMASTER — Ottawa based poet, member of *First Draft*, co-author of **Pass This Way Again** (*Underwhich*, 1983) and **The Scream** (*Ouroboros*, 1984). Her first solo book, **Dark Galaxies**, appeared in the autumn of 1986 from *Ouroboros*, 40 Grove Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1S 3A6.

bpNichol — wrote and transcribed this article. He is a co-founder of *The Four Horsemen* and *The Toronto Research Group*. Along with *Steve McCaffery* he edited **Sound Poetry: A Catalogue** (*Underwhich Editions*, 1978), still one of the best surveys of the international scene. He edited the cassette anthology of Canadian Sound Poetry of the 60's **Past Eroticism** (*Underwhich*, 1985) and his own cassette **Ear Rational: Sound Poems 1970-80** (*Membrane Press*, 1982) is distributed in Canada by *Underwhich Editions*.

ADDITIONAL READING AND LISTENING:

Those of you interested in this whole field should seek out the following artists all of whom have worked with elements of sound poetry in their work: *Pierre-André Arcand, Rafael Barreto-Riveria\*, Shaunt Basmajian, Earle Birney, bill bissett\*, Jim Brown, Victor Coleman, Michael Dean\*, Raoul Duguay, Endre Farkas, Fred Gaysek\*, Karl Jirgens, Lionel Kearns, Tom Konyeves, Mark Laba, Claudia Lapp, Richard Martel, Colin Morton, sean o'huigin\*, Alain-Martin Richard, Joe Rosenblatt, Jean-Claude St. Hillaire, Stephen Scobie & david uu\**. Others undoubtedly exist.

\*These artists have cassettes available or forthcoming from *Underwhich Editions*. Also check out issues of *INTER* (c.p. 277 Haute Ville, Quebec, G1R 4P8, Canada).



bpNichol, **HOMAGE A MORT WALKER** (1982) — disintegrative elements by Steve McCaffery



MARILYN WESTLAKE

bpNICHOL





# STELLA TRYLINSKI AND THE UKRAINIAN WOMEN'S CHOIR OF THUNDER BAY

KIM ERICKSON



FT. WM. MANDOLIN ORCHESTRA, 1939.

When I listen to the singing of the Women's Ensemble, I am not awed by polished delivery and flawless intonation. These women are not professional singers; singing is only one of the many activities of their busy lives. What I do hear is a sincerity and a clarity of intent that I find lacking in many concerts of more professional demeanor. The voices of the ensemble members are unaffected and reed-like; many are aging now, but still strong. Some of the women seem to close their throats or vocal chords, producing a lamenting kind of sound that tugs on the heart and the soul, that *transports* (as painter/musician friend Jennifer Garret describes it). This is a way of singing that has been practised by Russian and Ukrainian women for ages, and that still exists in the folk traditions of those people. Others of the women produce a more Western classical sound with their voices. Of course, not all the members of the ensemble are Ukrainian Canadians. Some, like me, are mixtures of a variety of backgrounds. The varied use of the voices reflects this. Whatever the vocal techniques employed, consciously or not, the resulting music is alternately humorous and mournful, and always warm.

The melodies of the songs, which are for the most part old Russian and Ukrainian tunes, stretch, turn, make some surprising octave leaps, and come back on themselves, like an elastic band. The sense of *line* is never broken. Voices begin in unison, diverge into two or three part harmony of 3rds, octaves, and sometimes 5ths, and then converge again into unison at the end of the line or section. Similarly, a song might begin using the natural minor scale, change to a major centre, and then go back to the minor at the end of the verse. Always there is a return to where you started. A song will grow in dynamics, and come back down to the level with which it began. There is ebb and flow, and constancy to this music, like the *flowing stream* described in one of the songs. In the rhythms, it is not unusual to find changes of meter, or dropped beats. Tempos might bend and slow, or suddenly change.

Formally, the songs are written with **AB** structure. Often part of a section, or the whole section will repeat; sometimes a section will contain an irregular number of bars. The soloist might sing the first **A** and **B**, and the chorus will repeat the **B** section, or sing a refrain at increased tempo. At times, there is a kind of call and response set up between soloist and chorus. There is much unison singing, with *all* the solidarity that that implies.

I became a member of the *Lakehead Mandolin Orchestra and Women's Ensemble* because I went to one of their concerts, and the occasion was so warm and full of life that I wanted to join them. The hall of the *Labour Temple* was full of older members, and their children, grandchildren, and friends. Outbursts by the children, or by those hard-of-hearing who spoke too loudly, were not thought of as disruptions. A wide variety of song, dance and orchestral music filled some two hours of the Sunday afternoon, and was followed by tea and sweets — all included in the two dollar price of admission! This was a social, as well as a musical, event.

During my second season with the orchestra and ensemble, I was pregnant with my first child. I felt a wonderful security in being surrounded by so many mothers and grandmothers offering predictions as to the sex of my baby, and other bits of wisdom. In short, I was taken in by a community, a community now getting older, and smaller. And who will be left to carry on this tradition some twenty-five years down the road?

It is possible, while you are singing this music or listening to it, to gain small insights into another time and tradition — or perhaps a possible route to pursue now. In order to maintain what is useful of a form or tradition, the outer trappings of it must be left behind when the time comes. If the spirit of a worthwhile endeavour takes on other forms, the *line* will *not* be broken, and will continue. For me, as a singer and composer, my involvement with the Thunder Bay Association of United Ukrainian Canadians (AUUC) gives grounding and rootedness, as well as every possibility for new work to be done.

**Stella Trylinski (Nicholaichuk)**, conductor of the *Ukrainian Women's Choir*, was born in 1916 in the relatively young town of Fort William, N.W. Ontario. Her father had come over to the new land first and was joined by her mother. They were immigrants from Bukovina Ukraine and they came to stay. Stella, among many other achievements (in-

cluding a family!), became a moving force in one of the local Ukrainian organizations. She was instrumental in the musical education and cultural work of her compact community on the north shore of Lake Superior.

In this interview many topics are touched upon. The Women's Choir is the main topic, however, the life of these communities is so integrated that it is not possible or really very useful to isolate one particular facet. Their cultural work was a necessary part of raising children and finding work.

**Stella:** You wanted to know... why women's choir compared to men's. And it wasn't a question because they had men's choirs and men sang in battle (or at least we thought they did!). Men sang all over. It wasn't a sort of feminist idea that we are trying to express here. It's been in existence all the way you know, through the years.

**Kim:** Men's choirs and women's choirs.

**S:** It just so happened that for variety we, you know, to increase our programme, we had to have something different so we tried having a women's choir. And that's it! Nothing new because they used to do that in the old country. The women worked and the men were away. And they sang as they worked. They had to express themselves somehow. You know, their conditions. And I shouldn't really say it was a special feature of the Ukrainians. It happened in other cultures too.

**K:** What are the differences between the songs that men's and women's choirs do?

**S:** Well, naturally, when you're a man going on a march, you are going to sing *March* songs. Where the women didn't sing that. They would have a *Walking to Work* song. At present there is a song they sing about beets. *The Sugar Beet Song*. Back then the men went away to the salt mines with oxen. They had those kind of songs, where the women didn't go with them, you see. Women sang lullabies and love songs about their loved ones gone.

**K:** There seem to be really specific types of songs...

**S:** You mean specifically Ukrainian songs?

**K:** Yes.

**S:** Well, as I said, there were marches, many marches. When the men were called into the army for the czar, there were *Forced to Go* recruiting songs. Then there were the songs when they went for their feudal lords to get salt from the Crimea by oxen. They had *Chumuk* Songs they called them.

**K:** Chewmuck?

**S:** Chu'-muk'. That's an ox driver.

Yes, that's the old songs. And then they had love songs, of course (laugh) and songs about being forced into a marriage. A marriage of convenience because the family was so poor, probably because they lost the man of the house, the man that provided them with food. Or he had to go away... whatever. So these forced marriage love songs expressed how they didn't want to live with this fellow and of course they just had no choice. And they were not love marriages at all, the emotions that the woman feels when this happens. There are a lot of love songs like that. And when she loves a man who is lost in war, you know she's going to lament all her life. She's left with children probably or... There are many many songs like that. The women just express themselves in these songs. And the lullabies naturally, where the mother would instill little facts into their children like, *someday we will be free, and you will help make us free or you will take your daddy's place*. There were always messages in those songs. Songs of freedom and wishing for freedom... There are many songs.

**K:** The poetess *Lesya Ukrainka* wrote many songs about women's fate.

**S:** Yes. She has a monument at the University of Saskatoon. A gift from the Ukraine. They were very happy to receive it there. She was born to intellectual parents whose hearts were with the people. She wrote protest verses, mostly about women and died at a young age of tuberculosis near the turn of the century.

**K:** Has the Ukraine been dominated a lot by other peoples?

**S:** Well yes. Of course you'd have to be well versed in history, but I know they were attacked by Turks & Tartars. Under czars. Ruled by Rumanians.



Polish and Austrian... they weren't even allowed to study Ukrainian in the schools at certain times. They weren't allowed to whisper or write in their mother tongue, their books were confiscated. They preserved their culture fairly well, considering. (Laugh).<sup>1</sup>

**K:** Yeah. I'm also thinking of the songs we performed with the choir in the last concert. Those were love songs, and the funny one that Olga & Mary did about borrowing a husband (both laughing).

**S:** The one called *The Neighbor*. Her husband was probably gone away.

**K:** Right, right... oh, right! I didn't think of that (both laughing)! Would you talk a little about the tradition of choirs and mandolin orchestras?

**S:** Ok, I'll start from the time that the Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada. It has to be tied in. They came in 1891. I wrote some points down so that I could be more fluent: "Music has always been a fundamental part of the cultural traditions & history of the Ukrainian people. And folk music forms the basis of the performing arts among the people of our heritage. Our organizations grew on the basis of drama, orchestra and dancing. Since the first Ukrainian immigration to Canada in 1891, cultural activities have remained as one of our main functions." Perhaps you'd like some more background on these songs?

**K:** Oh yes.

**S:** "Ukrainian songs (as I have said) reflect the centuries old struggle against czarist, feudal and any foreign oppressions. Women's songs are often characterized by lament & sorrow for the loved ones who are participating in armed struggle against this or that oppression." You'll find most of their songs are in a minor key. Even some of their *Kolemeykas* (a dance) have a minor key to them. Although they are dancing, in the background they have this minor tone in the music. Have you noticed?<sup>2</sup>

**K:** Yes, that's true.

**S:** Um-hmm. "It is said a young girl could begin singing Ukrainian folk songs, have children, the children are grown, she is old, and still she would never repeat herself."

**K:** Is there such a thing as a classical Ukrainian tradition as opposed to a folk tradition? Here, as you know, there is a real distinction.

**S:** The only way I could explain it is that they based themselves on the folklore and then transformed into operettas, operas and symphonies, but all based on the folklore.

**K:** That's like the arrangements we do with the orchestra.

**S:** Yes. Ukrainian Symphony, Nataka Poltavka Operetta and so on. They had the overtures to their dramas in the 1800s. In the town of Poltava, where the Nataka Poltavka originated, this was especially well developed. So they did have a type of developing *classical tradition*. However, the peasants and poor working people didn't have access to these things, especially during the time of the czars.

**K:** And I would guess the czarist regimes were using the classical music of Europe.

**S:** Yes. Now when these immigrants came to Canada, they brought with them their songs. And having no knowledge of the English language, it was quite difficult for them. They generally faced a hostile environment, filled with discrimination, so they tended to live in compact communities. You know, for their social gatherings & their social life, it was all *in...* they were close to each other so they could communicate. And a large part of their social life continued to be expressed in their songs & music. They kept on singing what they knew and added to it about their life in Canada.

**K:** What about life here in Thunder Bay?

**S:** In Thunder Bay, for the benefit of anyone who is interested, it was Port Arthur and Fort William at the time. And these cities had their communities of Ukrainians. There were three different groups, so to speak, *West Fort William*, *Fort William & Port Arthur* because at that time they had to travel by horse & buggy. Still, they used to interchange with their cultures. And it was quite interesting to have *Port Arthur* group come and give us a play. They had dramas at that time, *West Fort* group being very well advanced in this. They'd perform for us and we'd go to their hall and interchange. It was quite interesting at that time.

**K:** These would be dramas with music?

**S:** Some music with the plays, background, it would depend on which play it was — **Tshevchenko's** play *Stolen Happiness*, where there were groups singing behind the curtains. Things like that.

In Thunder Bay, of course, their cultural ac-

tivities began in the early 20s. These consisted of choirs, orchestras, Ukrainian schools, schools of music, drama & dancing. And also english language classes, because they had to learn the english language.

**K:** Right. Now it's the other way isn't it? They have to have Ukrainian classes!

**S:** That's true! (both laughing) When they came, the children couldn't learn English from their parents, they had to learn when they went to school. That's when the parents began to learn from the children! (laughing) Now the children have to take special Ukrainian classes because their parents can only speak English!

**K:** That's the switch (more laughing)!

**S:** And because they couldn't read or write, they had difficulty in getting the better jobs. They had to do the hard labour...

Now I guess you're interested in the mandolin too?

**K:** I wanted to know why it was used in the orchestra & where it came from. You said it wasn't the instrument that was used in the Ukraine.

**S:** That's true. They had different instruments there. They had the *bandura* and the *kobza*. But here the mandolin was the most available instrument at the time. It was *cheaper* than any other instrument! (laughing) And it was very simple to learn. Because you had frets. You didn't have to guess where to put your finger! You know, like with the violin, for tonal quality you have to feel it out, where here, when you press a mandolin, you're bound to get the right note! (both laughing for awhile)

**K:** What about the other instruments, like the bandura?

**S:** They have a lot more strings and they are plucked, like a mandolin. Only it sounds more like a harp & it is more difficult to play. You play chords mostly, and sing along. You would sing to the accompaniment of the bandura.

**K:** Are there any banduras played in Canada?

**S:** Oh yes, everybody's getting into it now! I've seen, right on **Mr. Dress Up's** programme there was a Ukrainian woman from Toronto playing it. And it was just beautiful. One of the English folksongs, not *Danny Boy*, but like *Greensleeves*. An English song on a bandura (laughing) and it sounded just beautiful.

**K:** So the mandolins were an easier instrument to buy & to play.

**S:** Yes. You see they had no access, the people then, to public music education. Due to economic conditions. Often the fee at our centres was only a dollar a month, or two dollars for three or four children from one family. They'd get a basic knowledge of notes and tunes which helped to perform faster. And the parents were very happy to see the children learning these songs that they'd brought over. It was very interesting and sort of nostalgic, you know, for them.

**K:** Did the Lakehead Mandolin Orchestra go to the outlying communities?

**S:** We used to go to every farming community with our orchestra and dancers & duets and things like that. We travelled by truck. We didn't have any modern transportation. It was quite a lot of fun! There should really be a museum for all the pictures we took. And performing to the Finnish community. They'd always put us up for the night & treat us so well. They gave us great support.

**K:** That's great.

**S:** Whenever they'd ask us, we'd go and perform. And they would do the same. Lots of trade offs...

And there was a big centre in Winnipeg which used to send us music and dramas which we put on.

**K:** Now what happened to all these things?

**S:** Well y'know, I think it's more the fact that older people died off and the new ones learned English. They have different cultures, although they don't forget it, they don't continue their Ukrainian studies and many of them cannot speak, read or write the language. We have to write the words out in phonetics... There are completely different interests opened. A long time ago, or so it seems, where could you go to entertain yourself? You'd come to the Ukrainian Hall. You'd meet your friends, you'd learn something. You'd hear some music, you might be asked to participate in a play... But now you have your TV and it's an easy way to get out. You can get very professional plays, good plays...

**K:** Now wasn't it true that the mandolin orchestra used to sing along with their playing?

**S:** Yes. I think one reason for this was because we were amateurs. We couldn't play difficult numbers even if we had them & we didn't have a

complete orchestra right from the start. Like basses and cellos (or mandobasses & mandocellos) — it was mostly mandolins. And if you didn't have a four-part harmony, you didn't express the song, it didn't mean too much. So we used to sing. And of course the girls in Fort William especially, we used to have more girls than boys all the time & the girls had to sing the bass parts & the tenor parts (laugh). Really quite funny! But still it produced some music. And it played the heart strings of the people!

**K:** So that was the reason, to fill out the sound.

**S:** Yes, I think so. Also, then we didn't have as many arrangers as we had later on in the 40s, 50s & 60s. We got our repertoire from first Winnipeg & then Toronto later on. And when we began to play we realized we didn't know so much! We had to study some more! (laughing)

**K:** Do you think the singing partly dropped out because of the language things too?

**S:** It's quite hard to tell. I know that we haven't got many people left — y'know the lifestyles quite simply have changed. I can't really tell. It might spurt up again. I know that the Regina group is growing. Such dancers & singers... and Edmonton too. I think there's going to be a general *revivification* — is that the word? There's quite an interest around. There's going to be a heritage tour next year to the Ukraine. There will be something like 170 Ukrainian-Canadian performers going over. So it'll give new life to our cultural work.

**K:** Do you think that when the exchange happens you might find out how different the music and traditions have grown? Are there things still happening here that were given up long ago in the Ukraine?

**S:** Well, we always have contact with the society of the Ukraine & we get recordings from them & we're familiar with the new songs. Recordings have made this possible. And their music has grown. We perform quite a lot of their songs by contemporary composers.

**K:** Do you think they have given up some of their older songs?

**S:** Maybe it's because of their long history of oppression, but no, they maintain the old songs. They treasure them. They go specifically from village to village collecting them.

**K:** So there is a pride there.

**S:** That's right, that's right. Yes.

## FOOTNOTES

1. This is parallel to the experience of young Native Canadian people sent from reserves to residential schools where they were not allowed to speak their own language. In many ways, even today, the native experiences resonate more deeply with small ethnic groups than they do with the larger Canadian population. Musically, the expressions of these groups also begin to share a more basic human ground. Stripped of any possible popularity or general importance, the music is pared back to the essentials, left to bloom in a very humble fashion, on a very rocky till.

2. *Sophie Drinker*, in her landmark book *Music and Women*, talks of the minor scales as a direct link to the musical modes that expressed the sufferings of women.

3. Poltava, Ukrainian U.S.S.R., became an official twin city to Fort William (now part of Thunder Bay) when aid was sent to the war torn Russian city during World War II, after Stalin's alliance with Hitler broke down.

4. The Ukrainian Halls were closed by the Canadian Government in 1940 while Stalin was allied with Hitler. This was four years after the repeal of *Section 98*, the infamous law brought down in Canada in the 1920's that made it illegal for more than two people to gather in public. It was used at the discretion of any police organization, especially during the depression years against immigrants and *communists*.

When the Nazis marched into Paris, the Canadian Government passed an Order In Council, that not only interned German and Japanese Canadians, it also made any group that might be considered dangerous to the country illegal. This included all communist, socialist or *left-leaning* organizations. The Ukrainian (as well as Finnish), halls in Thunder Bay were padlocked. Certain contents of those that seemed dangerous (books, costumes, printing equipment, etc.) disappeared.

*KIM ERICKSON* is a singer/composer/musician (see MUSICWORKS 36) and a member of the *Lakehead Ukrainian Mandolin Orchestra and Women's Choir*. She recently returned from Edmonton where she most successfully performed her score for the *Patricia Ludwick* play **Alone** with *Workshop West*.

*WILLIAM V. ROBERTS* provided the notes and the tape transcription.



# A TRADITION OF BALANCE

## WORD AND MUSIC IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

In Church, music is worship. In Church, music prays and prayers sing.

—Father Sergei Glagolev<sup>1</sup>

Late in the ninth century AD, the patriarch of Constantinople sent two brothers, **Cyril** and **Methodius**, as missionaries to the Slavs of Moravia. Their work laid the foundations for the rapid spread of Christianity among various Slavic peoples. In 988, **Prince Vladimir of Kiev** converted to the new faith, and devoted himself to the conversion of his people.

By the time Vladimir converted, it was, in a sense, possible to choose between the Christianity of Rome and the Christianity of Constantinople. Although the Church was still one in name, barriers created by differences of language, philosophy and theology\* were growing and would soon find expression in the mutual excommunication of 1054 that mutually split East and West.

Political, economic and aesthetic concerns all contributed to Vladimir's final choice of Constantinople and *Eastern* Christianity for his conversion, and Russia became part of what would soon become the Eastern Orthodox Church. A thousand year tradition of worship was born, with its roots in Greek Christianity and its full flowering the result of centuries of Russian adaptation, refinement and elaboration of the original tradition.

Central to the transformation of Greek chants and icons into Russian ones was the work of Russia's monastic community, vigorous and active both in the realms of contemplation and social service from the eleventh century onwards.

The monks were also missionaries. One generation after another moved further northwards and eastwards, establishing agricultural colonies as bases from which to continue their activity. Finally they crossed the Bering Strait, beginning a mission to the native peoples of what is now Alaska in 1794.

Thus the Russian Church is considered to be the mother church of the Orthodox Church of America, the youngest of the fifteen autonomous orthodox churches in the world today.

One of the 600 parishes of the Orthodox Church of America has built its community home just to the west of Toronto's downtown. Christ the Saviour Russian Orthodox Cathedral is not a typical American Orthodox parish, however, since many of the parishioners are first and second generation immigrants from Russia. Their needs and tastes have dictated the continued use of Old Slavonic, the language of worship of the Russian, not the American, Church. The Cathedral choir is acknowledged to be one of the best practitioners and interpreters of Russian Orthodox chant in the world today. Earlier this year, **Sibylle Preuschat** spoke to **Father Nicolas Boldiress**, the parish's priest, and to choirmaster **Serge Boldiress** about the tradition of worship motivating and illuminating the choir's music.

**N.B.:** In the Eastern Orthodox tradition there has been the Church canon, set up a long time ago, that everything in the Church has to be chanted. There is no reading as such of scripture or psalms or anything else in the Church. It's always chanted for fear of the individual reading or chanting just alone — or even as a group — of reading in their own spirituality or their own theology and accentuating some of the passages that may be dearer to their heart or to their concept of understanding.

\*Some of the major theological differences between the two churches revolved around the nature of the Trinity, the authority of the bishop of Rome (the pope) and the nature of grace and salvation, which seems to be viewed quite differently by the Eastern Church than the Western.

<sup>1</sup>Sergei Glagolev, An Introduction to the Interpretation of Liturgical Music, **Orthodox Church Music**, No. 1, 1983, pp. 24-28, 31.

As soon as the word becomes identified with the content of the message, it calls for order (rhythm) and melos (arrangement of pitch), i.e. a musical form. In this way, the perfect word, the fully-developed word, most always has the nature of song.

David Drillock<sup>2</sup>

**MW:** Why would that distortion happen more with the spoken word rather than the chanted?

**N.B.:** Someone may put emotionalism into it — his own personal emotionalism and read some passage, and accentuate dramatically his own inclination as to what he would like. So the Church, to prevent that, set up right from the onset, that it has to be chanted in a not necessarily monotonous *boring* chant, but in a chant, for fear of this kind of dramatic or sentimental — sentimentalism was the root of Phariseism, condemned by Christ — and so for fear of sentimentality creeping in, and someone wanting to be more sentimental towards one passage than to another, it was chanted in half-steps or up and down, up and down in a steady kind of fashion.

**MW:** And the chants are prescribed by tradition, so that singers have to place themselves into the tradition.

**N.B.:** Right. There is harmony, harmony of colour, harmony of... everything is supposed to blend in unison to appeal to all the senses of those who are there for their salvation. The church really appeals to the senses of sight and smell and touch and colour and music and architecture and iconography and everything has to converge together in unison. It would be terrible to have a beautiful church, very ornate architecturally, with good iconography and terrible chanting or singing or reading — it would clash. Everything has to work in harmony, including the singing part or responses.

**MW:** What I'm still a little bit confused about though, is the relationship between that and the emotions. You said we don't want any excess, we don't want sentimentalization or dramatization. Yet the worshippers in the Church are being given all this sensory information and this harmony, and in their look at the scriptures they aren't supposed to dramatize any section over any other?

**N.B.:** Right, they should not, they should try to refrain from that.

**S.B.:** I think what the choir does is, the choir will, within the frameworks that are given to the musicians and the choir —

**N.B.:** — and to the composers —

**S.B.:** We perform or we chant the hymns or the psalms and convey what is considered by the Church the *correct* emotion to the people who are standing there. In other words, we don't let them interpret the texts emotionally, interpret the texts according to the way they individually feel. But we let them appreciate the texts emotionally as the Church sees fit.

**MW:** I see — rather than allowing it to become subject to whatever the thing of the day is...

**S.B.:** To whatever idea they may have, on that day, of that text.

**N.B.:** They are asked over and over again within the service to lay aside all earthly cares and to lift themselves up spiritually from the human emotionalism to a higher level of non-emotional kind of worship, joining the choirs of angels singing *Holy, Holy, Holy* or *Holy God, Holy Mighty*, or whatever chants we have from the Old Testament Scriptures of the angels glorifying God. And then we're also called upon to have one mouth and one heart glorifying the Trinity and love for one another to glorify the Trinity. They're asked to contribute from themselves, each individual standing within the church, three things. One is to lay aside earthly cares and to elevate themselves to a higher rank of

<sup>2</sup>David Drillock, Music in the Worship of the Church. Ibid., pp. 12-13.





beings and unite themselves with the invisible host of angels and archangels who are non-stop in their worship of the Trinity. The second thing that they're asked to do is to forgive each other, which is very very important in order to love *truly* one another so that with one mind and one heart and one mouth they can proclaim the holiness of God and the Trinity and so forth. And the third one is to unite to be in one.

There are two types of worship in the Orthodox Church. There is your private personal reading of Scripture and reading of prayers where you perhaps fall more prey to your emotionalism, but then there's the corporate worship of the Church where two or three are gathered. The Church services and singing give the proper direction within the proper understanding and norms and tradition of the Church, for you properly grow in spirit and elevate yourself from this fallen world.

And this is also depicted in iconography, it's depicted in architecture. In most Eastern churches you will see heaven is brought *down* to earth in more of a dome shape, rather than tall spirals as in Western architecture, pointing the way to where the Kingdom of God may be, somewhere way up there. It's brought down to you. And so we're asked to be elevated into the Kingdom of Heaven rather than staying down in this world.

**MW:** I read a little bit about the history of the music and there was a big controversy in the 17th century between people who wanted monophony and those who wanted polyphony and I was wondering, does that have its root in this idea of the unity of the congregation and the unity of tradition?

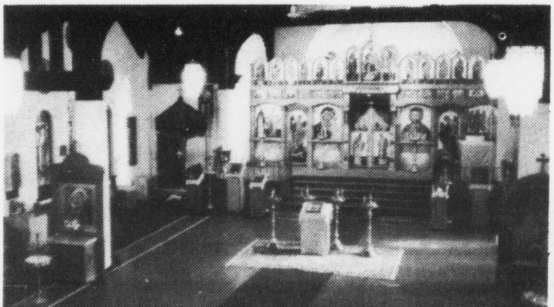
**N.B.:** The Church is very very slow in changing anything — it takes a long time before it will accept some kind of change, even from monophony to polyphony. But it has been accepted to have polyphony since the 17th century, especially with the Italian school of thought and western infiltration, even into what used to be purely monophony, you know, Eastern church singing.

**MW:** Yes, well I thought monophony probably had its root in this idea of unity and that polyphony, metaphorically speaking, would indicate separation between the singers and that's why the controversy erupted.

**S.B.:** In the old days, polyphony just wasn't popular. People sang in unison mostly. The Gregorian chants, for example, were all in unison. The Catholic Church also evolved from that into polyphony and I think it's just a normal progression of humanity to go from monophony to polyphony.

At the same time, if you look at the Orthodox Greek chants or Arabic chants, they're also right now evolving. They were even much slower to evolve than the Russian Orthodox Church. They're just getting into polyphony this century.

Up to the last century they were still just doing the chants with a drone and then the melody on top. The Greeks do that, the Arabs do that. Now they're beginning to get into polyphony. So... I guess they were more conservative than the Russians but at the same time I think that Slavs, as a people, whether they be Ukrainians, Poles, Russians, Serbs, whatever, are very musical. In their culture they do a lot of singing and a lot of polyphonic singing, even in their villages. You can have a person sing a melody and right away there will be somebody else singing in thirds, to that melody, even though they've never studied anything. Or a third person will come in and will sing the bass harmony to that duet, again not having had any formal musical training.



Interior, Christ the Savior Russian Orthodox Cathedral.

**MW:** Has any of that folk music found its way into the Church?

**S.B.:** Yes, I wouldn't say the folk music itself, but there is a folk influence... on the melodies, on the rhythms.

**MW:** You know the concept in the West, of an interval called the *diabolus in musica*, the devil in music — is there a similar concept in Eastern singing?

**S.B.:** A friend of mine, Kominiski, used to mention that you cannot progress from this chord to that chord because, *it's the devil's chord*, he used

to say. Maybe it is so... I don't think I've really studied that. The composers that we sing in our Church, and definitely the chants, don't have any dissonances. On the contrary I think that everything is very, very melodic and peaceful-like. (pause) Basically it's not disruptive. On the contrary the music is there to set a mood, a prayerful mood, for the people. Even music that was composed by classical composers such as Korsikov or Tchaikovsky or Rakhmaninov — when they wrote Orthodox liturgical music they tried to stay within a certain style.

**MW:** Yes, certainly I've heard Rakhmaninov's Christmas Vespers and they're different from his piano concertos, that's for sure.

**S.B.:** Yes, although if you know Rakhmaninov you can probably recognize his style, the style remains the same.

**N.B.:** The Church fathers have set up some canons and safe-guards in regards to music. For instance, you could never repeat a word in the text that is not in the original text, be it from Scripture, or be it from the Psalms, or be it Church prayers written by the fathers in the golden era of theology (the fourth and fifth centuries of Christendom, when rules were evolved and developed and so forth.) They forbade composers, who for the sake of having a better climax at the end, would repeat the text four or five times, to emphasize it more. Because again it's one person's interpretation, tampering with the basic line of the Scripture.

**S.B.:** What I'd like to just comment on is that you do find that kind of repetitiveness and kind of —

**N.B.:** — accentuation —

**S.B.:** — accentuation in the Western Church. With Bach, Brahms, Mozart in their compositions of liturgical music you have *gloria gloria gloria gloria* and *excelsi gloria excelsi gloria excelsi gloria* and *excelsis Deo gloria* and *excelsis Deo* repeated five times, whereas it's only *gloria in excelsis Deo*. Once —

**N.B.:** — in the text.

**S.B.:** You don't have to say it twenty times just for music's purpose.

**MW:** And is it all Biblical texts that have been set to the chant that you're singing, or...

**N.B.:** Yeah — well, there's Old Testament, there's New Testament. The majority of the compositions that we hear on Sundays would be psalms and then some special prayers written by the writers of the liturgies of the past; the great *John Chrysostom* and *St. James' Liturgy* or the *Liturgy of the Sanctified Gifts*, attributed to St. — which saint was it? I should look it up in the book.

There are also troparions which are hymns which glorify the feast day of a certain saint or a certain occasion —

**N.B.:** — event —

**S.B.:** These may be written even today. If there's a new saint that is canonized, a troparion is written to honour that saint, so therefore there is somebody that writes that text.

**MW:** I was curious in terms of the relationship between the singer and the listener — the type of contemplative worship that you speak about — is that specifically taught or do you trust in the actual physical happening to create that?

**N.B.:** Well it's handed down traditionally and people usually attend from their childhood and they learn. Those who are gifted to read ancient Slavonic script are taught by a former cantor how to read, what to read, where to find the readings and how they're chanted and there is variety that's used. You do not chant the *Epistle* reading from St. Paul in the same way as you would chant an *Old Testament* prophecy regarding the forthcoming birth of Christ. It would be a slightly different way of chanting — but always chanted. But that's something you learn either in theological school or with the help of a good cantor who's willing to spend time with you to break you in, so that you can eventually take over. Or by singing in the choir for a long, long time you pick up bits and pieces here and there to improve your renditioning.

**S.B.:** The only addition to Father Nick's comment would be that there are certain texts that we would say are *read* quote unquote, because they're not really read, they are chanted. It would sound like reading to anyone or to a lot of people that would walk into a church, but basically they're chanting, practically on one note or two notes. Then there are certain hymns that are sung, usually by a choir, not by a cantor by himself. If there is no choir the cantor will do both the readings and the singings, but otherwise the choir will do the singing parts.

The texts are all chanted, yet one is a very plain chant... and the others can be very frilly chants because they are sung by a choir and this is where you get into the different, more colourful, type of singing.

Chants were developed in monasteries, and depending on where that monastery was located, the chants would have been developed in that particular style. Chants from the region of Kiev would be called *Kievan* chant. Chants from the Moscow region monasteries would be called *Moscow* chant. Chants from the monasteries of Finland — Finland used to be a part of Russia — there was a big monastery called *Valaam*, so it would be a *Valaam* chant. All these monasteries sang the same texts but they had their own music, their own chant. However, the *reading* chant would be the same in any of these monasteries.

**MW:** Which texts would generally be *read* and which would be *sung* in terms of their place in the liturgy?

**N.B.:** Ideally, everything should be sung in four part harmony if possible, every single stanza of every verse of everything celebrating a particular feast. However, sometimes it is difficult with time and space because if you sang everything it would be a much longer service and I don't know if we have — the monasteries had time for 4 1/2 hour vesper services. We don't have the time so we're limited. We would sing the first verse and then the rest would be chanted, but in a faster way.

**S.B.:** A faster way by the *reader*.

**N.B.:** And then maybe the *glory*, the very end of ten verses, would be chanted again.

**S.B.:** What I was going to try to lead up to was the *octoechos*. I'm going to come back to what I was saying about these different regions having developed their own chants. However, there's also a book —

**N.B.:** One of the thirty-seven liturgical books that we have. (laughter)

**S.B.:** — called *octoechos* (ok toy' kos) from the *octo*, eight, and it has to do with eight melodies. Basically all of the Orthodox Church music that has not been composed by composers can be sung in eight types of melodies. So in other words, if you know the *octoechos* melodies, you can sing anything in the Eastern Orthodox Church. What happens is that there's a tone (melody) called *Tone One* and *Tone Two*, *Tone Three*, *Tone Four*, going to *Tone Eight*, OK? And these tones change weekly

**N.B.:** On Saturday nights.

**S.B.:** On Saturday night. So for example, today was *Tone Seven* so that means all of this coming week will be *Tone Seven* up until Saturday night. Saturday night it will be *Tone Eight*. And it will go for another week in *Tone Eight*, and then the following week it will be back to *Tone One*. In other words, you're not bored singing the same melody all the time — you have different melodies.

**MW:** Then within the service all the chants would be sung in that one particular melody?

**S.B. and N.B.:** Uh... with a few exceptions.

**S.B.:** There would be a few exceptions, but basically that would be the tone of the week so that's the tone you'd be doing your singing in... Now to complicate all of this a little bit is that there is a *Kievan Tone One*, *Tone Two*, *Tone Three*.

**MW:** Oh I see...

**N.B. and S.B.:** A *Moscow Tone One*, *Tone Two*, *Tone Three*, there's a *Valaam*...

**S.B.:** Every monastic community has developed those eight tones in their own way. So now, you can sing *Tone One Moscow* chant. It's still *Tone Kievan* chant for a certain melody and then they can sing *Tone One Moscow* chant. It's still *tone One*, it's still the tone of the week, but it's a different melody. So this is where you get into the variety and the beauty of different types of music.

**MW:** Are there any American tones that have been developed?

**S.B.:** Not yet. This is a process that —

**N.B.:** It takes time —

**S.B.:** It takes centuries to evolve.

**N.B.:** We're even having difficulties in agreeing on the English translations that we use. There's five or six translations, or schools of thought about which translations we should have.

**S.B.:** But the interesting thing is that there are certain, for example, already Inuit and Eskimo melodies, that have developed and that are being sung in the Orthodox church.

**MW:** How did you get those?

**S.B.:** Well because Orthodoxy came to America through Alaska.

**MW:** So the first people that Orthodox missionaries —

**S.B.:** — were Eskimos.

**N.B.:** 1794 in Alaska.



**S.B.:** And now they already have developed some melodies, you know, that slowly are becoming accepted.

**N.B.:** In 200 years they have—

**S.B.:** — were accepted.

**MW:** So the first North American Orthodox were Inuits.

**N.B.:** M-hm, Klinglit Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts from the Aleutian chain.

**MW:** I had absolutely no idea that among the Eskimos and Indians there was an Orthodox church.

**S.B.:** Yes, there is one of our biggest dioceses in Alaska.

**N.B.:** Sixty churches in Alaska out of the 600 that belong to the Orthodox Church in America.

**MW:** Can you tell me anything about the technical aspects of the music in terms of its structure — its harmonic structure, its rhythmic structure?

**S.B.:** As far as the eight tones are concerned, each tone has its own *colour* — some are in minor keys, some are in major keys — Basically they are composed of two, at the most three, musical phrases that keep on repeating and with a specific ending. For example, you have a melody of *Tone Three*, which I can just sing to you very quickly—

**MW:** Sure.

**S.B.:** (sings) That was the ending. Now there are those two musical phrases plus the ending. And now this music is set to words. (He sings) That was the third tone. Now, *Lord, I call* is sung in the evening, is part of the Vesper service. So in other wrods that was a *Tone Three Lord I call upon thee, hear me. Lord I call upon thee, hear me* is sung every Vespers. And right now I'm singing the *Kievan* chant by the way. *Tone Eight* for example would be — (he sings *Tone Eight*, then *Tone One*). So you have an idea of what tones are — and now I was just singing the same text, but to the different tones. This is the basis of Orthodox music — based on tones like I've explained to you and on those melodies. And it's a little more complicated because not only are there eight tones and not only are these depending on whether they're sung in *Kievan*, *Moscow* or elsewhere, but also within each tone there is a *melody tone* for the *Troparion* hymn, for example, which is the hymn of the Feastday and then there's also a different melody, also *Tone One*, for other hymns, say like the *Canon*. So in other words, there are also within the *Tone One* four melodies of *Tone One*, and there are four melodies of *Tone Two*, so it's not always the same melody. So in other words, what's happening is that you don't have only eight tones but you've got—

**S.B. and N.B.:** Thirty-two tones.

**MW:** I see.

**S.B.:** There are thirty-two melodies all in all plus all the varieties of the different monastics. So now you're getting into a lot of richness. And on top of all that, you have composers.

**N.B.:** Who base their compositions on tones but then who add their own—

**S.B.:** —but who *ad lib* or who compose completely different melodies of their own or who take melody from a monastic chant, harmonize it in their own way...

**MW:** Has the church exercised any control over composers?

**S.B. and N.B.:** Yes.



Christ the Savior Russian Orthodox Cathedral Choir.

**S.B.:** There were a lot of problems. They got carried away sometimes. Some of the composers, when the influence of the Western Church and western composers got really felt in Russia, especially the Italian and the German music influence, some of the Russian composers started composing hymns, or melodies to the hymns, that were completely foreign to the ear of the people who were born of Russian culture and who were used to those chants and tones and not used to Italian sounding music. There were such composers who were very famous composers, such as **Berezowsky, Bortniansky, Dekhtiarev**, who are still

sung now, but who were at times outlawed by the Church and were not allowed to be sung in the Church in Russian at the time.

**MW:** Why is there no instrumental music allowed?

**S.B.:** I don't know that it's not allowed, because in certain Orthodox churches they do have organs.

**MW:** Oh.

**N.B.:** Well, that's the western influence in North America, not in any of the old countries where Orthodoxy's roots were established. We just believe that — it's a question of laziness of the people. If they have an organ to fall back on, then they can become more lazy in learning the tones. There's no greater gift than the vocal cords given to individuals by God to glorify him by, and it's sort of an easy way out or a *cop-out* I think. If you listen to a 160 voice Orthodox choir singing in twelve part harmony you'll have the organ sound right there, but from the talents of the people. It's much easier, you know, if sopranos are late or if somebody's flat to always fall back on the organ to correct the tone.

**S.B.:** I think it's also a question of non-existence of musical instruments in remote areas in monasteries where the monks wouldn't — they just didn't have that kind of stuff in Russia in the olden days, and not only Russia — in Greece either or Lebanon or wherever Orthodoxy exists. I think that they just chanted, period. And then when the organs did come about they weren't available. I honestly don't know even how old the organ is as an instrument. I'm sure that even the Catholic Church must have chanted Gregorian chant before—

**N.B.:** — for centuries —

**S.B.:** — for centuries before the organ became available.

**MW:** I know in the Jewish tradition cymbals and trumpets would have been used.

**N.B.:** The Armenian Church would use cymbals, some of the Old Testament mentioned instruments, sure. So would the—

**S.B.:** — the harp —

**N.B.:** —Church of Georgia (in the U.S.S.R.), maybe, and some of the ancient churches used cymbals and lutes.

**MW:** I wanted to ask you about the choir here. How does a person become a singer?

**S.B.:** Well, everybody is welcome to join the choir as long as they show an interest. They automatically get trained in *solfeggio* because we do not use any piano or other instruments to learn the music. Everything is sight-read. The pitch is given via a tuning fork and everybody just sings and gets to know the different intervals by practising, basically.

**N.B.:** It's mandatory to attend choir rehearsals if you're going to be a member of the choir.

**S.B.:** We expect minimum attendance of two rehearsals a month and we rehearse four times a month. Rehearsals last about two hous and that's once a week.

**N.B.:** I must say that we have the best Russian Orthodox Choir outside of Russia. We have several cassettes to our credit, we've travelled to Connecticut, New York, Quebec, Ontario, Ottawa and were well received. So we have several very good cassette recordings to our credit, to the credit of the choir. They're selling like hotcakes because Russia does not produce too many, they just produce maybe one record every three years for propaganda, very limited editions.

**S.B.:** Our church — this question must have popped into your head — we keep on talking about Russia, yet we're an Ameican church. The Orthodox Church in America's language is English. However because of the fact that our *ancestors* are of Russian origin, we do still sing some music in Slavonic. And because of the fact that there were a lot of migrations and immigrants that came, the Russian language remained alive in the churches in large centres like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver or New York or Los Angeles. However, if you go to smaller towns in the States, they don't—

**N.B.:** — Ohio, Pennsylvania —

**S.B.:** — in the inland states, no one speaks Russian anymore and most of the singing is done in English, not in Slavonic. We are really an exception here in Toronto. The fact that we sing in Slavonic is just because it so happens that there's still a lot of people that can sing that language and that can appreciate...

**N.B.:** There's a need—

**S.B.:** There's a need for it and so this is why we're probably one of the only Russian churches outside of Russia that can still do the stuff half-decently (laughs) — right?

**MW:** But if the church is singing in English it would still be using those old Russian tones?

**N.B.:** Yes, until America develops its own genre of singing. There's a few very good composers working on certain decent pieces and eventually they get accepted by the 600 parishes belonging to us, but it's a very slow process.

**S.B.:** Like I said, you see, all these tones were developed in monasteries by monastic communities over the years and even our monastic communities are just beginning to be anglicized. They would have to be living together and sort of — evolving — as an *English* Orthodox community for many years in order to develop some kind of music.

**MW:** Do you find that it's harder to hold onto your Orthodox traditions in this milieu?

**N.B.:** It's not difficult to hang onto the tradition. It's sometimes difficult to hang on to the people. This particular parish is 70 years old and we've had eight hundred mixed marraiges between a Russian and non-Russian person. Because of the lack of English being available in the last sixty years we lose a lot of the mixed marriages, the couples, to United Church, Anglican Church, where the kids have English Sunday School programs available to them. It's very important to have the language of the people made available. It's better to say two words understandably than to mumble five hundred words mystically that you do not understand. You know when Paul says we should understand whom we're addressing, what we're using to address God in worship.

**MW:** One last question: would anyone ever be turned away from the choir because of their musical inability or anything like that?

**N.B.:** It's a question of discipline. Most people know if they don't have an ear for music — I for instance don't — (laughter) but I'm stuck with leading. I hope to have a deacon soon that will take all the litanies in the proper key and proper note and I will just have a final exclamation. In Russia it was a prerequisite for all clergymen to have a very good ear for music and a big voice, because there were large churches and no electronic way to amplify the sound. So it was a prerequisite, not so much for a high IQ but for a big voice (laughter) and good ear for music. However, in smaller churches I guess we can get away with a smaller voice. But no one to the best of my knowledge has ever been turned away, except if they cannot give the choir the proper time. In some cases you can develop your ear to improve. Some of the choir members started off 10 years ago, before my brother came here, to be off in their pitch a lot. Now, because you're in a group and there's five other basses singing your part, you can sort of listen and amplify that sound, so basically if you attend choir rehearsals you're most welcome.

### Further Reading

Archbishop Anthony Bloom. **Beginning to Pray.** New York: Paulist Press, 1970.

This book gives an eloquent and concise introduction to the tradition of Orthodox prayer, with special emphasis on the integration of contemplative spiritual practice with life's everyday work and activity.

Johann von Gardner. **Russian Church Singing: Orthodox Worship and Hymnography.** St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979.

A detailed discussion of Orthodox Church Music, from a discussion of its history to guidelines for planning services, using the concept of tension curves present in the music.

Alfred Swan. **Russian Music and its Sources in Chant and Folk-song.** Norton Publishers, 1973.

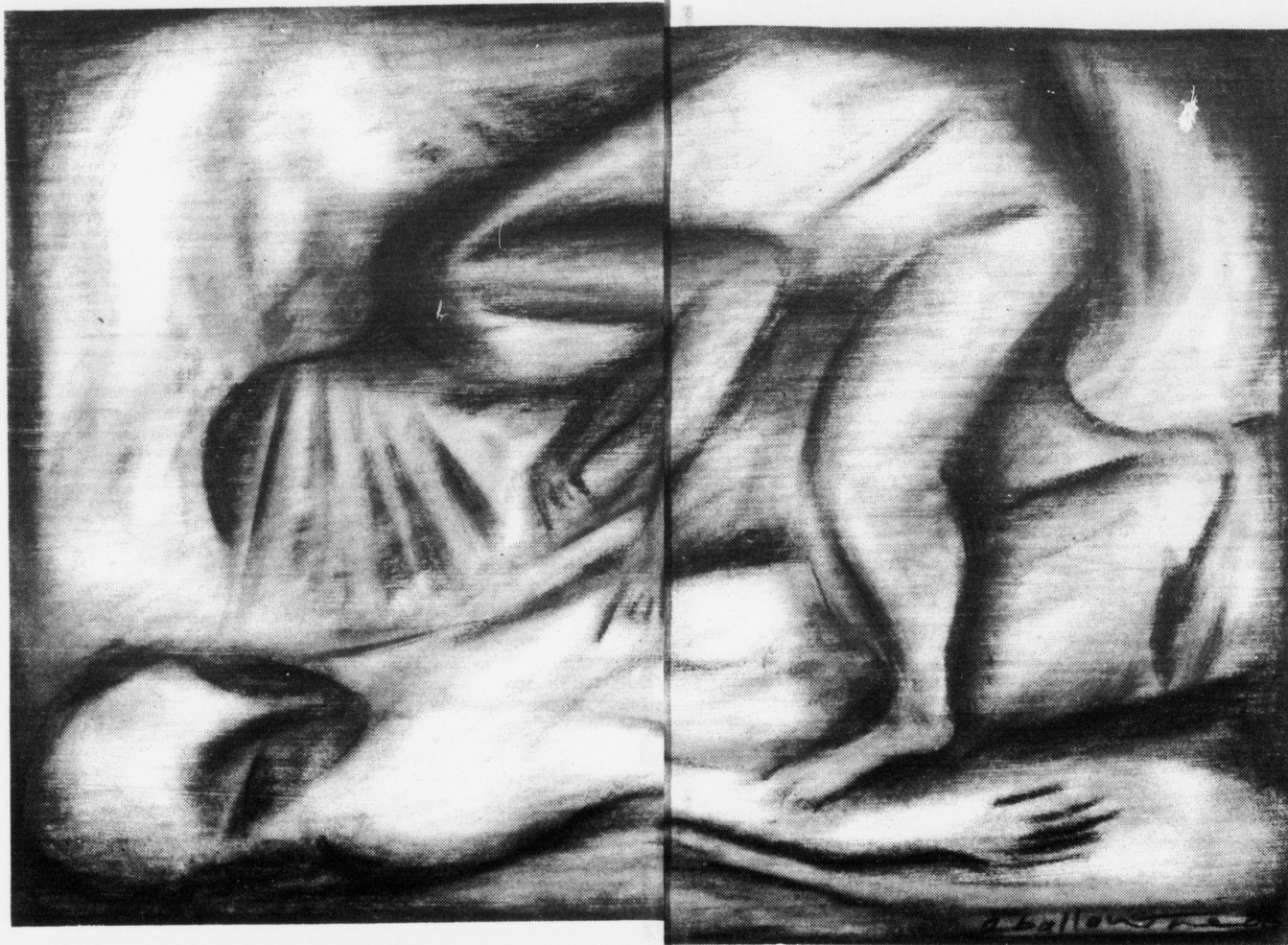
Finally, a periodical is available: **Orthodox Church Music**, from  
Department of Liturgical Music  
Orthodox Church in America  
P.O. Box 675  
Syosset, NY  
USA 11791

Cassettes recorded by Christ the Saviour Russian Orthodox Cathedral are available by mail order. Write to Robert Kanerva, 823 Manning Ave., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 2W9. Cassettes are \$7.00 each. Current titles include music for Vespers, for Holy Matrimony, for the Liturgy, Christmas Hymns, Christmas Carols from around the world, and one new title TBA.

*SIBYLLE PREUSCHAT* is an artist, thinker and writer with a broad range of interests. She currently lives in Toronto, where she works as business manager for **MUSICWORKS** magazine. Her most recent project has been the editing of an essay on tonal improvisation in **The Guitar Music of Brian Katz: Three Pieces for Classical or Jazz Guitarists or Jazz Ensemble, with a Supplementary Text on Tonal Improvisation.**



## GORDON MONAHAN



## SOUND ASLEEP: DREAMING OF MUSIC

**R.I.P. Hayman** composes and produces music for concert, dance, film, and video using voice, various instruments, electronics and effects. He and his works have been presented in venues across the Americas, Europe, and Asia. His writings have appeared in many journals and anthologies, and he is a founding editor of *Ear Magazine*. Among his varied works is *Dreamsound*, an event for sleeping audience based on the acoustic and social phenomenon of sleep. He presented this event at *New Music America* in Houston, Texas, where **Gordon Monahan** interviewed him for **MUSICWORKS**.

**Gordon:** You've been presenting a work called *Dreamsound* for quite a number of years now. How did this event come about?

**R.I.P.:** I've been practising my own *Dreamsound* for many, many years. I had fallen into sloth and fantasyland so much in my youth that I was particularly intrigued by music that I dream. Often I would jump up in the middle of the night with something in my head but it would evaporate as quickly as I woke up. Also, I knew that everybody has the experience of sleeping and hearing the radio or someone saying something to them, and that these outside sounds are transformed via your dreamstate.

I think it was in 1976 when I read about an experiment being conducted at *Montefiore Medical Center* in New York. They were doing studies of sound perception in sleep, particularly studying a phenomenon called **MEMA**, which is *Middle Ear Muscle Activity*. This is a feedback response of the nerve endings on the tympanic tensor muscles of the eardrum. They control the tension in response to outside sounds while you're listening. But when you're dreaming, these muscles twitch according to the sound *imagined* in your dreams in the same way that your eye muscles twitch according to what you're visualising in dreamstate.

I volunteered as a guinea pig for the experiment. I had electrodes put on me, and a special strain gauge put into my ear to measure my MEMA while I was dreaming. The experiment was a correlation: studies of monitoring my dreams; of monitoring the MEMA via EEG sub-audio frequencies layed out: eye movement, alpha waves, heartbeat, all that sort of stuff. And they'd wake me up and ask me what I heard while I was dreaming. I had to learn to *dreamtalk* as they call it, where, in the dark room, they have a little speaker by your head and they say *OK, what are you dreaming?*, and you develop an ability to immediately start talking and describe what's going on or without anybody waking you up. You just sort of carry on: *Oh, I'm flying in an airplane and we're landing but we're landing upside down and everybody's talking and dancing upside down, blah blah blah...* Then as you talk you tend to wake up, of course, and the dream begins to evaporate so at a certain point you say *Uhh, it's going away*, and then they say *OK, go back to sleep*, and often you will fall right back into the dream, and they'll pick it back up. Then they'll have dynamic graphs of what the sound imagination was. Well, this was pretty fascinating kind of work. Good work if you can stay asleep.

I was interested in this phenomenon, that this leakage of sound imagination out the ear while you're dreaming might be monitored at an audio level somehow. Now, this is a project prospectus that has yet to be realised, but we had worked on adapting the ear mold to a miniaturized electric condenser microphone with limiters and all that stuff, to do an audio take of this MEMA phenomenon out the ear. Of course, that's just a crude version of the nerve impulse itself, but I thought that there might be some sound that leak-



R.I.P. HAYMAN.

ed out, a muffled sound. With *ZBS Media Foundation* we worked doing a controlled audio take of this with a controlled air mike over me. I slept a number of nights up at their studios in Fort Edwards, NY, then did listening tests to find out if there were any sounds. The problem is that the sound of breathing and blood circulation and teeth gnashing and things like that were just so loud that we only got little hints of peeps and pops out of the ear. There were a number of very strange sounds and we didn't know where they came from, but the majority of it was just covered over by the sound of breathing. To be effective, it would have to be done on a different scale, where you'd get the nerve impulse giving you an audio-out from the brain... hopefully. Now, this for the doctors was an ambitious thought because if you could do that, that would revolutionize dream research and psychology, because you would get a direct link to internal imagination without waking somebody up and saying, *What are you dreaming?* (reply:) *Oh man, I don't know leave me alone...* So they thought this would be great if you could do it but it would take years if not decades, and the technology is not there. They could do a direct electrode implantation but it would sacrifice the ear. I was considering doing this but I thought, *Well, if I can't go out and get a replacement, I think I'll wait until they develop the hands-off telemetric measuring equipment*.

Anyway, the outcome of that research was that I read all this material about sound perception and dreamstate and people's semi-conscious auditory senses, and I decided to do a concert using this research, and this became the *Dreamsound* event. It is not an experiment. It is a social-musical slumber party. And this is not a new idea, it has been done since prehistoric times, when people lived in their dreams and they had a strong cultural attachment and a visionary belief in dream power. One of the primary attachments of the waking reality is through dreams. A lot of people consider it very pragmatic to be able to listen to their dreams and act in their dreams, but it's a cultural trait that has been denegated in western society.

**Gordon:** Were there actual dream rituals that took place in ancient cultures?

**R.I.P.:** Yes. At the Oracle in Delphi, in Greece, for instance. You would go and sleep in the temple overnight and a vision would come. There was a long preparation: you were not supposed to be drunk; you were supposed to be clean and you would come and very reverently go to sleep to receive your vision. There are a number of other societies around the world that do that. There are fundamental Christian sects that have used dreamtime in a communal sense: sleeping together in groups for their spiritual message-making. One of the more famous dream cultures has been the Temier people of Malaysia. They had a consciousness in their dreaming which had been trained in the children from early on. Every morning the family would gather and they would ask each other what their dreams were, and if there were any problems they worked on it. They considered the dreamlife to be as real as the waking life, which is true, you know: that everything is real while it lasts until you wake up out of it. They considered that being able to control yourself in your dreamlife is the best foundation for controlling your life in waking hours. Particularly, every young Temier person was supposed to find their own personal song from their dreamlife; and then have a contest with a tiger or with an enemy or something or other; there had to be some kind of crisis that they had to overcome in their dreamlife, and then their feet would be firmly on the ground. Then these people would meet in a longhouse and they would all sleep together, you know, all stretch out. Then there would be a Shaman who would play a drum and be a conduit for the spirits that would come in the dream, and the people would begin to sing while they were asleep. There would be this low kind of hypnotic chant that they did. There's a recording of it made by **Richard Noone**, the anthropologist back in the 50's, which in my event I play. It's a *Folkways* record. It's a very haunting kind of melody. I would love to go and hear it live except that this culture has died out, as they have been Islamicised in Malaysia and the Muslim culture has suppressed it. I've read articles since by people who have gone there looking for them, but they're gone.

So communal dreamsleeping with music is a worldwide ancient tradition, and I've done my own up to date version of it: it is basically a space which is open and clear for people to bring their friends and their family and their pets and toothbrush and teddy bears, and settle in with environmental sound and some film and video. I give a comic academic lecture while disrobing from my tuxedo, revealing my nightgown. There's a lot of, let's say, off-hand humour and socializing which tends to get more and more boring to the point where it's really hard to sit up, and people tend to doze off quickly. The other environmental and musical pieces that I play are very sleep-inducing, but the primary function of it is relaxation in a certain atmosphere. Sleep in itself is very contagious, you know. I can fake a yawn and it'll spread all across the room.

**Gordon:** So you have little devices and tricks that you suggest subliminally, to relax everyone?

**R.I.P.:** Yeah, it's meant to be relaxing, friendly,

familial; it's not a party. For instance, I don't serve any liquor or anything else because drugs or liquor will suppress dreams. If you go sober for a long time you get very high just on your own internal daydreaming and imagination. A lot of the daily intake: things like coffee, alcohol, marijuana or anything harder, will tend to suppress your dream life.

They've done tests where they wake people up while they're dreaming so that they don't get to dream. Then the mind goes into an overload state and it dreams compulsively, even in the daytime with your eyes open. That's what happens to a lot of people who get overworked, overstressed, overdrugged, etc. So this event is — I don't mean to be puritan about it — but the intent of it is for people to relax, to dream and be together; not to indulge as they might normally. I serve camomile tea and warm milk, which has an enzyme which is sleep-inducing, a relaxant. So everybody lays down and fades out. It's very hard to stay awake in a group of sleeping people. I've had hard-core insomniacs come to the event and get to sleep. Just the sound of the breathing gets this rhythmic flow and it's *osmotically soporific*, to be technical. And it has a special feel, you know, if you've ever watched somebody sleep there's a sort of magnetic quality, a vibrational quality of that state of mind that is special. If you walk into a room with someone sleeping, it hits you emotionally. It really cuts across your mind: you immediately relax and quiet down.

Now some people who got up at 4 o'clock in the afternoon like I did maybe, they have to burn off energy. So I always have an extra room where I have my instruments and my control panel and my thermos full of coffee, etc. And I'll have late night conversations in the back while I'm putting on tapes, or coming and playing live instruments. I have a lot of wispy, suggestive, non-intrusive things that I do. I have a long repertoire. This is about a 12 hour concert so I have a lot of time to kill and it's a lot of work. Some of the things I do are not *per se* musical, but are psychological. One of the most effective is asking each person to record a message that they want to hear while they're sleeping. These are auto-suggestions, which have been one of the more interesting factors in the event. I have a little Walkman and I'll go around when people are starting to go to sleep and I'll say, *Well, what is your message to yourself?* and they'll go, *I want to go flying in the clouds...*, or something. I have long tapes of this and it really makes fascinating listening: what people want to tell themselves. You get incredible responses back. Some people are totally frightened by their voices, or don't recognize it, or don't hear it at all. I have to go back and play it privately to each person with a little speaker by their ear at almost inaudible volume. It'll only be received, though, when they are in dreamstate. When they are in deep sleep they don't hear it. Your actual listening ability has been shown to vary. Your ears are never closed but you're *on-line*, let's say, only at certain points in your sleeping cycle. So I never know where people are but I will go around usually three times and

play the auto-suggestion message to each person. I have to keep it all in order so I give everybody their private message. But I get very intense responses from that.

This sense of auto-suggestion is not a new thing, it's been done for years, you know, *Teach Yourself to Learn Russian in Three Nights While You're Sleeping*, this sort of thing. It's been shown to be a hit-and-miss method of learning things, but it does have its psychological reality in that it does work sometimes, unpredictably. So the responses are quite varied, and this is what makes the event quite interesting, this sort of psychological social state, which is very much the stuff of music anyway. So it all kind of blends and it's hard to tell what's what and apart.

In the morning, they wake up on their own time. I lead them into the breakfast room where there's a buffet breakfast, and they start to recollect what happened. They describe many things that happened or didn't happen. I get so many different versions of what went on, like *What was that sound?* and some people say, *It was a railroad train that went by* and the other person says, *No, it was a bird passing and, No, it was my mate who kept poking me*. But you don't know what really went on because you're dealing with the semi-conscious; and also what they call *hypnagogic perception* where, on the edge of sleep, you begin to vacillate between outside stimulus and internal imagination. Basically it's a hallucinatory state which all of us enjoy while going to sleep and waking up, though people usually don't remember it for very long.

**Gordon:** How much visually-oriented stimulus do you provide?

**R.I.P.:** Well, the visual components are in the early part before people have closed their *visual-inputs*. When the lids have dropped, that's when the lights drop and everything quiets down. I have a number of visual things I do: film loops, for instance, of a fireplace, a flickering fire, which I can't build in every site, but a film is more effective in many ways because it can keep going, I never have to restart it. And I do a performance in front of a late night TV show, whatever's on that night. I perform with soldering irons and cooked nails and other hot objects on a block of dry ice, which gives off clouds of gas. But the hot objects create wailing sounds, as is the nature of dry ice: frozen carbon dioxide turns from a solid to a gaseous state without a liquid state in between and therefore is a sound-generating device. In front of late night TV it's this kind of wispy, bizarre sound and people, as they're dropping off, they see this.

Throughout the night I avoid, let's say, a programmatic concert-type formality. The music either comes and goes very quickly as just snapshots of some sound or else it is long and extended and does not promote a listening consciousness where people would sit up and say, *Oh, that's interesting music, let's listen to this for a while*. I play the **Bach Goldberg Variations**, for instance, which were commissioned by **Count Kaiserling** (and published in 1742) to put himself to sleep. They're meant to be played on harpsichord, nice

and slow. They're endless, they have these variations that sort of turn around and around. For quite a while now people have been sitting up in concert halls trying to stay awake to this stuff. And harpsichordists or pianists play it faster and faster, just saying, *Oh, isn't this interesting music, and everybody's uuhh (snore)...* Yes, so, *what a nice concert...* So I play it at half-speed, you know, and it just sort of keeps going and going.

I have another piece for piano that I call *Spirits* where I have a live electronic transducer loop on the piano body, so the piano will give off continuous tones out of the resonance of the strings. I have piano key-work on it but it's all kind of a rhythmic wash. So the music that I do doesn't promote, let's say, critical listening. It's meant to avoid that and not keep anybody awake.

I'm trying to be as conducive to the sleep cycle as I can, from what I know of it, and that includes long periods of silence in the night. I might have little masking sounds so that the outside traffic sound doesn't come in: a little white noise helps cover over the gurgles at the other end of the room. Then in the morning I have birds that chirp, and I release smells. For instance, all I have to do is walk in and peel an orange in the room, and people dream about oranges. Or I walk in with a bouquet of flowers. People are usually very smell-sensitive when they're asleep, so I usually take a bath before the event.

Then all through the morning I'm bringing people in to have breakfast and talk to them and to protect the rest of those who are still sleeping, because when you're waking up it's a very critical point: that's when you'll remember your dreams. You dream on a 90 minute cycle, day or night. In the night time you have lots of dreams but you may only remember the ones you wake up from, when your memory starts to work. Or in the morning when you lay around in bed you can go in and out of dreamstate and you can remember quite a bit. Then in the day you can daydream all the time, that cycle of 90 minutes is linked to your attention span in the daytime. If you actually close your eyes at those points in the day, you will start to imagine all sorts of stuff. Typically, people at work daydream because they have to, then they can get their concentration back. It's a fundamental function of our brains. People who are constantly working and trying to concentrate their brain on the task at hand and not daydream, not take a little time off, are hurting their psychological well-being. They're forcing their brain to concentrate, creating stress that they're not releasing.

**Gordon:** Is this how people get to the point where they actually hallucinate during the day? I've heard that people you see walking around talking to ghosts on the street are hallucinating due to poor sleep habits.

**R.I.P.:** Yeah. Very typically, for people who don't get to sleep well, homeless people or people under stress, it comes out in the daytime.

**Gordon:** And even corporate executives can suffer from this problem, not just the destitute and





JEAN COCTEAU.

homeless.

**R.I.P.:** Oh yeah. It's fundamental to human nature and if it's not respected and cared for then it'll come out in different ways. People who suppress it will crack. Typically, the person who is so under control and does not fantasize and does not let their mind wander, comes out with it in a more intense way at another point in their life. Now that's a kind of pat generalization but I consider it as important as your sexual life, as your emotional affection for people, even as important as your eating habits. If you don't take care of these things then they cause problems. So personally, I love to sleep. I go into wide cycles of sleep, like I'll be working and not getting much sleep for days but then I'll *sloth out* for days on end. I just don't resist sleep if I can afford to do it. If work allows then I will happily take a nap at any time of the day, or I'll lie down for 5 minutes anytime. My up-bringing does not encourage that and I've always been criticized for that. *You're always sleeping too late or, You're sleeping anytime of day or, You're staying up all night working when you should be sleeping* and I'll say, *Well, there's nothing more important than sleeping in my life*. Because you can actually do anything while you're sleeping — except eat. I can think, work, make love, travel, be flying at 30,000 feet, and be sleeping. The only thing you can't do is actually chew and swallow while you're sleeping. If you do, you might gag.

So I consider it one of the fundamental priorities of my life, often more important than getting up and getting to work on time. I can always work when I'm awake, in better time. There's nothing worse than arriving to work and not really being awake and able to do it. You might as well take an hour off, sleep well, get there, feel good, and do it efficiently. You know, this 9 to 5 tyranny is damaging on people's dreamlife and not good for their work, either. So all this is a problem that people will have to work out on their own.

At the *Dreamsound* event, though, I have to stay up all night long. If I doze off then the concert comes to a screeching halt and the tape is twirling and everybody's waking up wondering, *What happened to the event?* So for years, as a preliminary event to the *Dreamsound* concert, I do an event called *Sleepwhistle*, where I take a nap in the afternoon in public display, whistling while I'm asleep. I put together these whistles that I can sleep with and they turn my breathing into tones. This event has caused a lot of interest as a kind of living sound sculpture. I get in a hammock or I sleep on the ground and basically I tape these whistles into my mouth. Of course when you're sleeping, you're breathing slows down and this becomes a very faint, whispy whistling.

**Gordon:** And you're able to sleep with those things in your mouth?

**R.I.P.:** Yeah. I usually go dancing or running and I stay up all night before so I'm really ready for some sleep, and I'm out like a light. Then people come and watch me sleep. Then I wake up and get

ready for the event and I can stay up all night while I watch other people sleep.

**Gordon:** How do you publically display yourself when you're sleeping, in a storefront window or something?

**R.I.P.:** Storefront windows, museums, galleries; I once did it at the *Academie der Kunst* in Berlin as part of a sculpture exhibit. There were hundreds of people going through the museum, Sunday afternoon in Berlin, and thought I was a plastic robot or something like that. You know, there was this whistling thing and they were all standing around talking. I had been up all the night before getting ready for my gig and I was really tired. But it was not a good environment: they had a little platform for me to sleep on but I was a little cold and I was kind of curled up, and I could hear these people speaking about me in my *Germanic dreamlife*, saying that I was some kind of machine. Then a couple of young girls sat on me to have their picture taken and all of a sudden these four Germanic cheeks landed on me and I went, *...ooh...uhhh... (sleepy grumbling)* and after that I didn't get back to sleep because I was afraid they were going to sit on me again. So I prefer to have a sign out that says, *Please do not sit on it or, Do not disturb*. It's usually a real personal display, like I just arrived and threw my clothes in a heap and have my pot of tea sitting there and a bed pan or whatever else, so that people know that I'm really there, you know, that it's not a robot.

**Gordon:** What are some of the unusual things that have happened in the *Dreamsound* event? Do you get sleepwalkers, or things like that?

**R.I.P.:** Well, I get all kinds of curious things happening. People get up and wander around in a daze — sometimes I don't know if they're asleep or awake. People will come up and have conversations with me and I'll think they're awake, and then they'll go back to bed and in the morning I'll say, *Well, how did you sleep?*, *Oh, fine*, and I'll say, *Well do you remember that you came and talked to me?*, *What do you mean I came and talked to you? You must be imagining* and I'll say, *Oh, I guess you're right, I was only awake, how should I know?* So people often get up and they don't know where they are, but they are comforted when they see their mate or their teddy bear. People have a whole culture they bring with them, their own private microcosm of their life on a blanket and a sleeping bag. But people are usually used to sleeping in their own bed, often naked or with their mate, so there is a sexual aspect to this. I'm not particularly encouraging sexual activity and I have to tell all sponsors or participants that this is not any kind of orgy. I have to make it clear that this is an event for sleeping and dreaming and relaxation. But I encourage them to bring their mate, and affection is encouraged but it's not meant as a romper room. Though I have had people who make love in the event. I can remember at *A Space* in Toronto, one particularly sleepless couple went into the back room and could be heard for quite a while before they finally decided to doze off. They shall remain

forever nameless. This is a certain aspect to the event that's sort of subliminally there but I would rather say that it's more of a sensual event: that you are with other people and there's that quality of warmth and affection there, and that in a sense is the best form of sexuality. Then people can go home for their calisthenics. But of course, people's dreamlife is full of sexuality. In fact, it's the ultimate proof that the brain is the sex organ: the fact that your greatest sexual moments are usually in your dreamlife and difficult to reproduce in the waking life.

I always remember when I did it at the *Kitchen* in New York. There was the truck traffic going down Broome Street in this noisy neighbourhood and the trucks were hitting big potholes right out in front of the loft. In some ways that was a terrible space to do the event, except that those trucks became these great lumbering giants and people were talking about how they were dreaming of rhinoceros' and hippopotamus' stampeding.

**Gordon:** Have you actually transcribed specific pieces from your dreams?

**R.I.P.:** Well, I would say yes but I'm not sure specifically what, because my own life standard is that I have tried not to distinguish so much between my nightmares and my daydreams. Often when I'm working at the piano, I'll doze off. If I'm composing, I'm ready to sleep anytime. I don't try to stay awake when I'm working on music because I will be more productive if I'm either semi-conscious or asleep-working, waking up. I was writing this long oratorio last week for Easter service at St. Mark's Church. I hadn't really sat down at the piano and written note-by-note for a long time, and I kept falling asleep. But then all of a sudden I'd be awake writing again and I didn't notice that I woke up. Or I'd be writing for a long time and I didn't notice what I was writing. So I consider my dreamlife to be ongoing, whether I'm actually in bed or whether my eyes are closed or not, because after a while you really have a hard time telling the difference. I have woken up in the middle of the night with a very distinct sound imagination that I have tried to write down. Or I have slept on a problem and had the solution in the morning even though I don't remember when I dreamt it.

Then there's the example of the *Devil's Trill* by Tartini, the 19th century piece which was claimed to have been completely dreamed and he just got up and wrote it all out in the morning. I have not had that conscious an experience but I'd say it's a continual function in my life. I think anybody, whether they're a professional creator or not, has that function in their life. Anybody with their daily problems will work on it. Their mind is continually synthesizing stuff in dreamstate whether they consciously realize it or not.

**R.I.P. HAYMAN** may be contacted at the Ear Inn, 326 Spring St., New York, NY 10013 USA.



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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**ART IN FORM** has recently released a new catalogue detailing their current inventory of arts related publications in the fields of contemporary art, literature and music. For more information, write ART IN FORM, 2237 — 2nd Avenue, Seattle, Washington, USA 98121.

**ARNALDI BOTTONI** and **MICHELE GRECI**, Italian guitar-builders, send word that they have designed a guitar with a new bracing system which effectively doubles the acoustic instrument's power and allows the guitar to easily hold its own in the concert hall, unamplified. More information can be obtained by writing to Arnaldi Bottoni, 00128 ROMA, Via Renzini, 75, ITALIA or to Michele Greci, 00153 ROMA, Via Arco di S. Callisto, 25, ITALIA.

The **CANADIAN ELECTROACOUSTIC COMMUNITY (CEC)** has been founded by more than 95 composers coast to coast in Canada. The CEC's first aim is to develop communications systems for this far-flung, multi-faceted community. Among the CEC's main activities are the publication of the **Bulletin CEC Newsletter** and the creation of a computer-based conferencing and electronic-mail system. The CEC has members in every major centre in Canada and operates fully bilingually, in English and French.

For more information on the CEC and its activities, membership information, subscription rates or to obtain sample copies of the **Bulletin CEC Newsletter**, write to: CEC, P.O. Box 757, N.D.G. Station, Montreal, Qc. Canada, H4A 3S2. The CEC welcomes all inquiries, national and international.

MUSICWORKS applauds **KCRW**, a community radio station broadcasting in California, for initiating a program to "engage its listeners in Amnesty International's **URGENT ACTION** letter writing campaign." Each month KCRW adopts a prisoner or prisoners of conscience and sends participation materials outlining the background of the case to any listener who wants to write the imprisoning government on behalf of the prisoner. In April, KCRW's support went to the seven members of Czechoslovakia's Jazz Section, sentenced for their publishing activities in support of jazz, rock and poetry. To lend your support or to find out more, contact KCRW at 1900 Pico Boulevard, Santa Monica, California, USA 90405 — 1628, or your local branch of Amnesty International.

**SOUNDINGS PRESS** is pleased to announce the publication of **A Lou Harrison Reader**, a 144 page anthology in celebration of the composer's 70th birthday. With articles, scores, original documents, an interview and photos by: Edgard Varese, Harry Partch, Betty Freeman, Charles Olson, Darius Milhaud, Carlos Chavez and John Cage, to name seven of thirty-seven contributors. Available for US \$15.00 from SOUNDINGS PRESS, P.O. Box 8319, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA 87504 — 8319.

**ECHO — The Images of Sound** is a catalogue of participants in the **Echo Festival** organized by Het Apollohuis in Holland. The book begins with a comprehensive introductory article written by Hugh Davies, surveying new instruments and sound sculptures of the twentieth century. This is followed by plentiful descriptive and photographic documentation of the work of artists who have appeared at Het Apollohuis. For more information write to: Het Apollohuis, Tongelresestraat 81, 5613 DB, Eindhoven, The Netherlands.

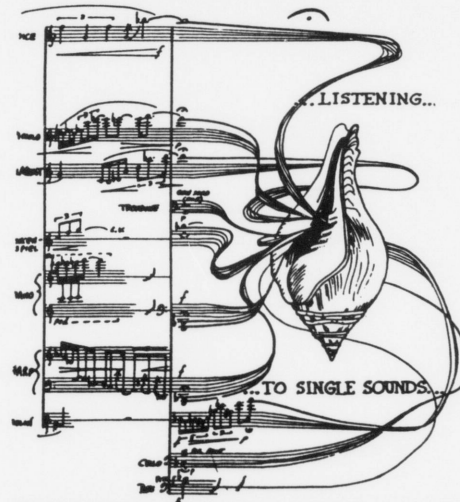
All of us at MUSICWORKS would like to extend our congratulations to **Murray Schafer** who was recently awarded the **Glenn Gould Prize for Excellence in Music and the Communication of Music**. We hope that the prize itself and the honour of receiving it will stimulate further creative work.

**Impact**, a newly released recording from Centrediscs, features the virtuoso playing of percussionist Beverley Johnston in four compositions: **Jean Piche's Steal the Thunder**, **Alexina Louie's Cadenzas**, **Gary Kulesh's Angels** and **Serge Arcuri's Chronaxle**. The recording is available on cassette, LP or CD through Canadian Music Centres in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, and Montreal.

**Michael Snow** recently released **The Last LP — Unique Last Recordings of the Music of Ancient Cultures**. To quote from the liner notes, this record offers a "collection of rare music derived from threatened, obsolete, or now-extinct cultures from around the world... The title of the album — while hopefully an exaggeration — refers to the eventual disappearance of the 33 1/3 rpm microgroove vinyl/stylus format." The recording and informative double jacket are available through Art Metropole, 788 King St. West, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1N6. Send \$10.00 plus \$2.50 postage.

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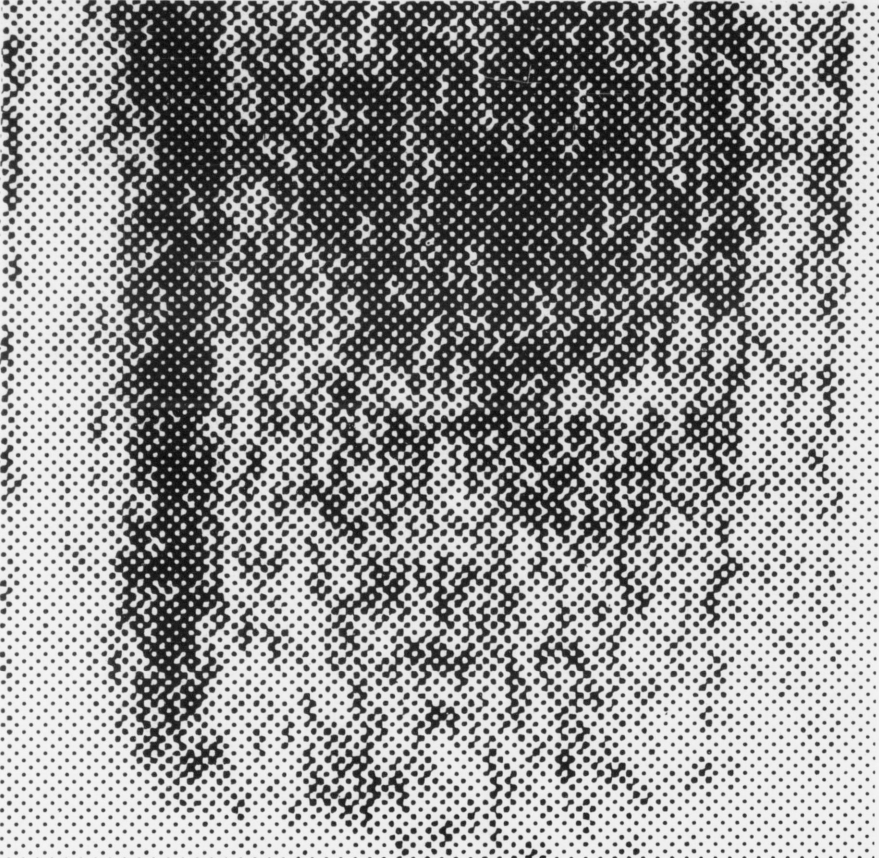


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