

# MUSICWORKS

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Vid Ingelevics photo

## MISHA MENGELBERG

INTERVIEW BY ANDREW TIMAR

**M**isha Mengelberg, born in Kiev in 1935, has lived in Holland since 1938. He was co-founder of the Instant Composers Pool (1967) and the Studio for Electro-Instrumental Music (1968), and was appointed president of the Society of Improvising Musicians (BIM) in 1972. In 1966 the Netherlands Society's annual award went to Mengelberg, who handed out smoke-bombs at the ceremony.

Music Gallery, October/80

ANDREW: You've told me about your work at the conservatory, was that in Darmstadt?

MISHA: No...In Darmstadt they have these holiday courses... July, June and I was there maybe two, yes, I think two times; two and a half times I would say. In the late fifties...

ANDREW: That's when you met John Cage.

MISHA: That's right. I studied at the Conservatory in the Hague, in Holland. For six years I studied musical theory. This I was able to do without having to be a

composer or an instrumentalist. There would be other ways...but they were not attractive at all to me. I could have studied school music for instance, and become a teacher. I have taught but I don't like the idea of doing that for a long time; not being able to travel or have other projects. I do like this idea of being attached to the Music Gallery for a month very much because it's a project over a certain time.

ANDREW: In other words the duration is short enough for you to keep interested in the place, in the people.

MISHA: It might be too short to go into some subjects, but not for a kind of general survey of what the scene looks like here. That must be enough.

ANDREW: Then you see yourself just as much a student of us as we are of you.

MISHA: I would think so, yes. Maybe I use information I gain here; I see how improvised music is evolving which helps me form an opinion about circumstances in which improvisational music can flourish. I think the situation here is not very unsimilar to Holland. Improvisation is not so much linked to jazz music as I should have expected, Canada being very near to centres of jazz like New York and Chicago, but I in a way I understand that Canada must be, or is, different from the United States in many respects.

ANDREW: I guess that's difficult to appreciate from Europe.

MISHA: Yes. That's something useful I learnt here.

ANDREW: I think it's difficult for most Americans to perceive too.

MISHA: Yea. Well the Canadians liberated my country in '45, so thinking of Canada always brought happy associations.

ANDREW: The queen was also here during the war, in Ottawa I think... Regarding your perception of improvised music not having a strong jazz base... since that view would be naturally based on the music you've heard around the Music Gallery, I should comment that if you surveyed the country as a whole you would find that to be rather the exception, the rule being just the opposite.

MISHA: I'm aware of the fact that Oscar Peterson is a kind of a national hero over here, coming from Toronto...

ANDREW: The music such as you would hear from the CCMC, Bill Smith and kindred groups are by far in the minority.

MISHA: Yes, I can imagine that. In Holland it's much more mixed up. We have this musicians' union named BIM in



which nobody asks where your improvisation is coming from. This is the major union. Jazz musicians are members, as are improvisors. The title means Union for Improvised Music.

ANDREW: What about the classical or pop musicians, are they not members of that union?

MISHA: They could be, but they are not. They have unions for people who work in classical orchestras and a very small union for pop musicians...

ANDREW: So there are several...

MISHA: Quite a number.

ANDREW: Here there's one musicians' union which is a part of the American federation, A.F. of M.

MISHA: I see, it's also the same as the U.S. union?

ANDREW: The head office is in New York; in fact a large proportion of Canadian business is controlled by U.S. interests, including music.

MISHA: That's funny, does it give any substantial help toward developing possibilities for musicians to...

ANDREW: It's a strong union in that it seems to stand up for members' rights.

MISHA: Yes, but does it support any podia for performance?

ANDREW: It has a pension fund programme which supports music in public places and is administered by New York of course.

MISHA: In Holland we are not as concerned about what people earn per concert, but we try to make structural efforts to establish podia and circumstances in which musicians can work. We have asked the government (indirectly because as a union we should be free to be in opposition to the government) to help with direct aid to musicians.

ANDREW: I mentioned the Pension Fund, whose goal is to keep music workers working...

MISHA: I have to say here that in Holland the interests of the classical musicians and the improvisers seem to be in opposition. There is only a certain amount of money that the government injects into music--what we want is some of that money--and the classical musicians are a little afraid of losing something when that happens. They are therefore frightened to delve into newer structures which would govern the totality of the musical supply in Holland. Consequently they back the status quo which is opposite to what we are striving for--a better

overall structure for the co-existing of all kinds of music making.

ANDREW: The Union here is not particularly concered with improvised music or contemporary music per se...

MISHA: Why not?

ANDREW: Good question...I guess because most of the members are concerned with music that makes money--commercial music--and not with more experimental forms.

MISHA: But wouldn't it be natural that all sorts of music would have their opportunity to be heard? Unions should not only walk behind the facts but should also have a policy to raise funds in order to lay plans for development within.

ANDREW: I obviously agree...yet, for instance, I'm not a member of the union. Why is that? Perhaps because I've not worked often enough in commercial forms and haven't found it necessary...

MISHA: Yes...there's only one thing you can do then, and that is to combine your interests with other people who have these same hangups and make a pressure groups outside or inside that union.

ANDREW: In a sense the union is for performing musicians.

MISHA: Not for creative musicians; composers, they are not members?

ANDREW: Not necessarily. They don't have to be. Basically it's like a truckdrivers' union; they set the payment scales, benefits, considerations and restrictions on the working place, they lobby for higher wages and try to monitor and take care of abuses that the employer commits...

MISHA: They are into a kind of labour...

ANDREW: relations. Exactly. In that sense it's rather reactionary to people who are not interested in the status quo or commercial styles. As far as I know, only in Quebec is there an attempt to form a parallel union, where certain elements of pop and more innovative musical styles have joined forces to forge an alternative.

MISHA: Maybe you should join them or make relations...

ANDREW: There is a language barrier since that union is French-based...

MISHA: Well, Switzerland has four languages and they get along very well...

ANDREW: Unfortunately, Switzerland is not Canada...

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# MUSICWORKS

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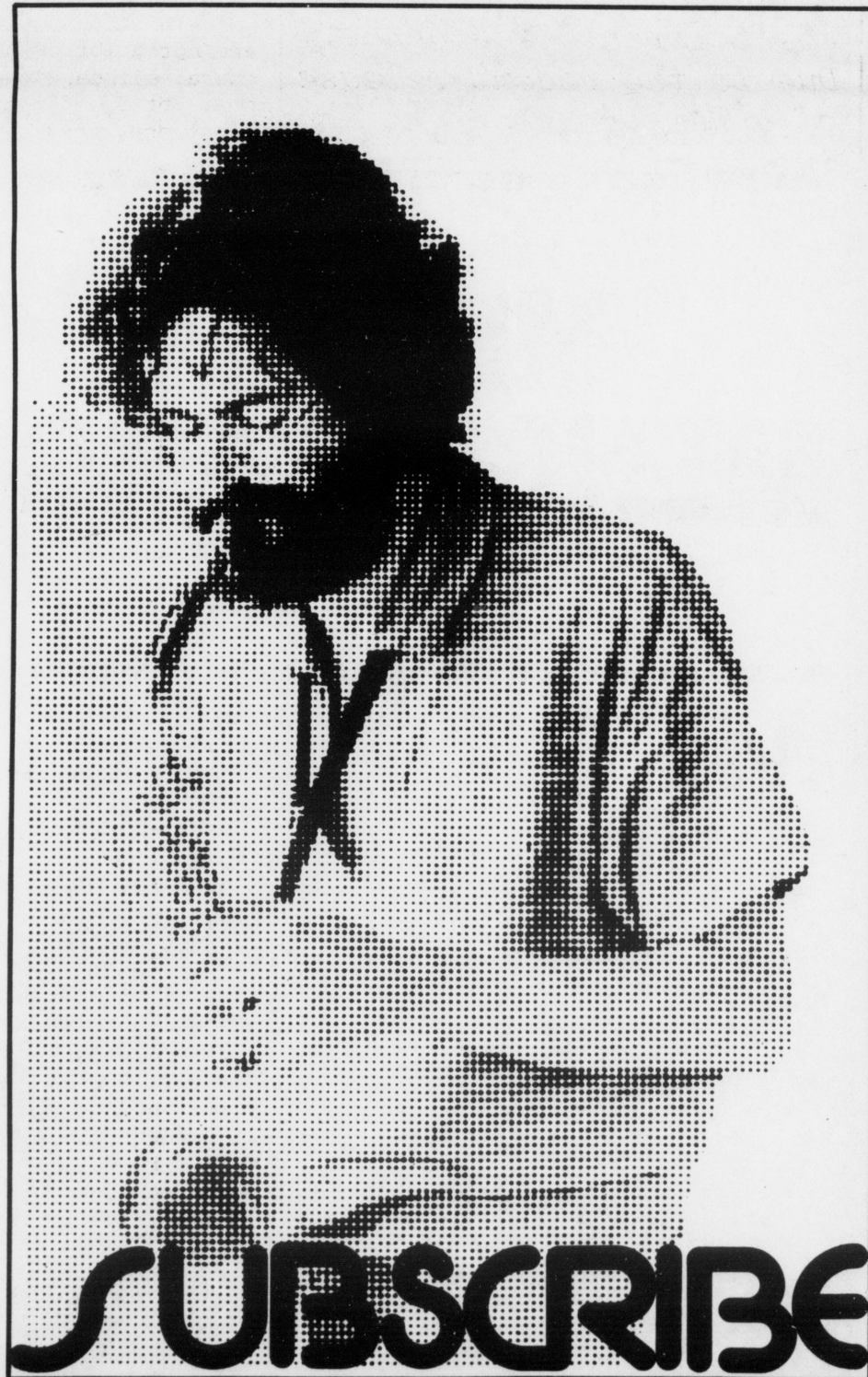
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BOB WILCOX, design  
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In issue #13 John Oswald was erroneously listed as co-editor, which he is not.

Next issue will be guest edited by Donna Zapf in Vancouver. For the summer we will present our second annual score issue.

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# MENDELSON

## JOE SPEAKS

*to John Oswald at Mister Joe's Toronto residence. Due to the recent release of a new LP record he is in the midst of giving several interviews a day. Meanwhile an exhibition of his paintings has gone to Paris. Mendelson is a songwriter, painter, musician and concerned citizen.*

(on the phone) Yes. Yes. OK Sterling, let me cut you short. I'm just doing an interview now and I would like to speak with you at greater length. And I'm prepared to do it right on the phone... Anything you want to talk about I can talk about, you know, unless it's something I really don't have any knowledge about, then I'm humble enough to say I don't know... OK, well, I know a bit about me; I like talking about nuclear energy though, that's the thing that I like talking about the most, but I don't mind talking about music, popular music; I don't mind talking about Canadian culture, or lack of it; I don't mind talking about war, peace, and common sense. So if you call back ...I'll be ready...OK. Ten-four, over and out. (hangs up)

I believe very strongly that sooner or later my music is going to make it into pop music in a big way. It's just that it's still not: it's in a small way, in this country anyway.

You know something? Most people don't have any idea what I'm trying to do anyway. All they know is that they like it or don't like it. But I might not even be reaching them at all at the level where I perceive what I'm doing. I don't do it for other people. I do it for me.

Well all I know is I'm happy. I mean, I don't have fifty bucks but all I know is that I look around me and I know a lot of people and although I don't have a lot of friends, but I have a million acquaintances or maybe not a million but hundreds; and there are not a lot of happy people out there, although they should be, 'cause they got freedom of thought, freedom of speech, they get fed and they have it so good but people are just, uh ...all you got to do is just do what pleases you. But most people today, so-called artists et cetera, to me most people are just basically, whatever clothes you wear, whatever your thing is everybody to me looks like a lawyer.

'I Think I'm Losing My Marbles' is one song in my repertoire I always play; I don't because people request it, I play it because I relate to it. So it still stands up and I still have fun with the song. Now I've taken it much further in the sense that...the key is, when you're a songwriter and you do your own songs, you got to believe what you're doing or it doesn't happen. The song must happen. I mean to me music is like sex, it can't happen all the time but it should happen most of the time if the foreplay is right and all that kind of stuff. Well, 'I Think I'm Losing My Marbles' (although it's more than a decade old) still happens like it was just born yesterday. That is the proof of a good song, to have sustaining power. Some are dated--my Jimmy Carter song. That song probably has no real future because Jimmy's future is ending. It has no value now except I think it's good aesthetically. This is a song I wrote for him, so he should have sung this song when he became president, it sounds like a joke but I'm serious, he might have got re-elected. Because, I told him what he should have said, in the song. It goes:

*Here's a song Jimmy Carter should've sung  
Back in '76 he just smiled and won.  
Well Jimmy bought a challenge,*

*The challenge was not peanuts.  
Jimmy he was the leader of the pack.  
Well leadership is a very delicate  
kind of ship to sail.*

*I say common sense please take the wheel,  
You will not fail.  
Responsibility it rests on you and me,  
So let's get responsible.*

(concerning alleged artists:) All these people think they have something to say. The key to saying something is going somewhere and growing; whether you're a painter or you're a musician, or something else, I really believe that in these alleged artists' growth...I think there is a purpose to life more than experimentation. That's what I think. There's a responsibility. When you're an artist, the higher the stature you achieve, and the more famous or rich or both you become, I believe you have a responsibility. I feel I have a big responsibility to my small following. Naturally I feel the major responsibility is to myself but I feel a complete responsibility to man and I mean man, the whole planet man. All men. All life. Some people are inclined to grow musically and others aren't. I think everyone has a capacity to be musical, but that doesn't make it grow.

A producer at the CBC was doing a sort of a franchise Sesame Street, and this guy, Bill Usher, he also produces Sharon, Lois and Bram, have you ever heard of them? They do children's records; as you know there's a growing market in Canada for children's records. Anne Murray has one, a guy named Raffi makes children's records. Well, Sharon, Lois and Bram, by the way they have a new record out and it's the best record ever made in Canada, for me; well Usher produced it. So he knows me 'cause he once taped an album that I made with Ben Mink which is in the can which is the best record I ever made by the way; but the point of all this was he asked me, as the producer of the 'Sesame Street' record which is forthcoming, to write some songs; he's approached a whole bunch of songwriters, so I was just happy that he would approach me because that means there's the possibility I might get one of my songs on a record...See I don't believe in writing songs for children like pandering to them. Raffi completely panders to children; in other words his approach is 'Let's get together and be sucky,' and that's what it is; well I don't believe children...they're people, and there are certain topics that may interest children more than others; in other words children might be more interested in giraffes than adults, but the approach should be exactly the same--my approach to children is that you treat them exactly like I want to be treated. So I wrote two songs and they're very serious songs. One of them is called 'We Are Aerodynamic'; it's about flying in an airplane and it's real serious, 'cause I fly, I used to travel a lot, so I really like flying, flying to me is ultimate, that's why I paint myself flying. And the other one's called 'Homesick'. And totally I just wrote how I feel...I think 'Jack Frost' would be good on a children's record. I've written a few that I think kids relate to easy.

I was never interested (in being scholarly). All that interested me was I really wanted to bash out the music. I can't think and play at the same time. For me music is strictly a physical thing, although I know I have a brain, do you understand what I mean? As soon as I get clever I'm a failure. To me, I want to sit and take this guitar and be able to (plays guitar).





# HUGH LE CAINE

## PIONEER OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC

BY GAYLE YOUNG

**H**ugh Le Caine was born in 1914 in Port Arthur, Ontario. He studied engineering at Queen's University, receiving his Masters in Science in 1931. During World War II he was employed at the National Research Council in Ottawa where he made significant contributions to the development of radar. Before and after this time he was active in nuclear physics, involved here also with developments at the forefront of the field.

However, in the early 1950's he decided to make electronic music his life's work. His pioneering work in this field actually dates back to 1945 when, in his home studio after hours, he developed the Sackbut, an instrument that anticipated the 'first synthesizer' by 19 years.

The Sackbut is a monophonic synthesizer (producing one tone at a time)

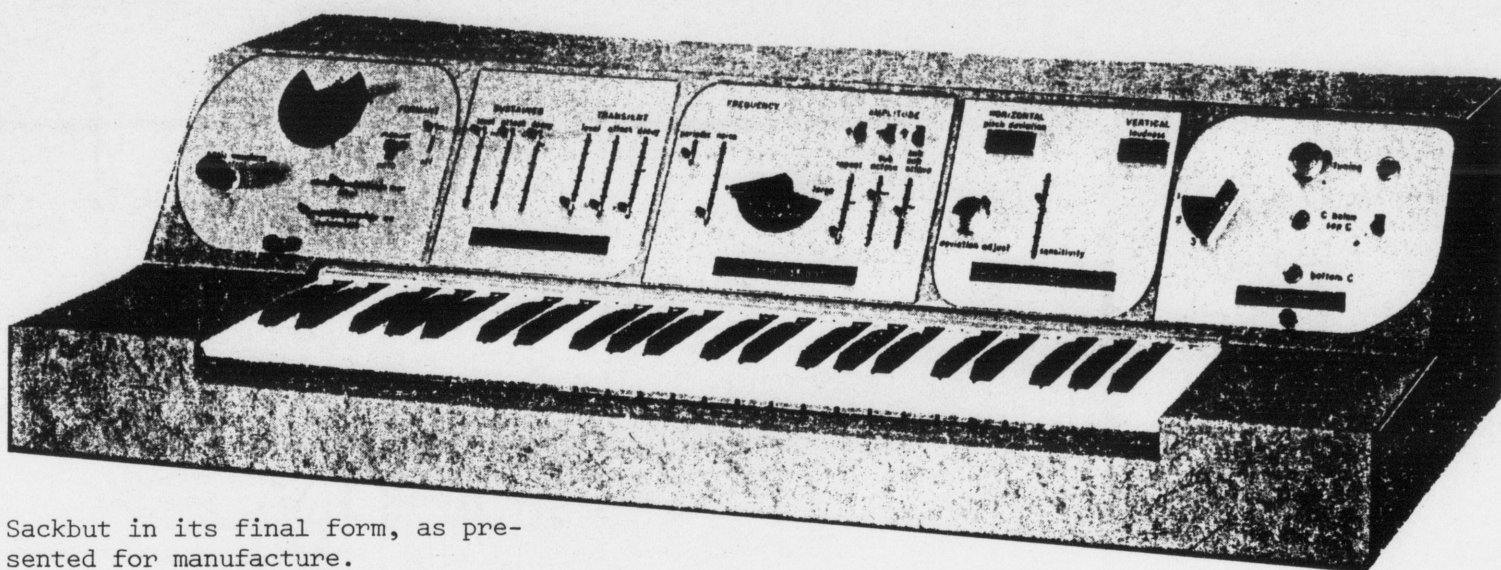
that was developed in consultation (on performance/musical issues) with Peter Jermyn. It was to have been manufactured for commercial distribution by Dayrand of Montreal under patents issued to Hugh Le Caine, René Farley and Dave Rocheleau, but this never happened.

The Sackbut was intended as a performance as well as a studio instrument. It was designed to facilitate real-time performance of an ensemble involving one or more Sackbuts with any combination of instruments. As in traditional monophonic instruments, the continuity of the melodic line is controlled by the performer through subtle variations of pitch, loudness and timbre: the expressive qualities of vibrato, intensity, attack, etc. This was accomplished largely through the use of a touch sensitive keyboard

The prototype Touch Sensitive Keyboard, one of the first projects undertaken by Elmus Labs.

(of four octave range) with a foot pedal. Volume is controlled by vertical pressure on the keys and by the swell pedal. Vibrato and small deviations of pitch are controlled by applying lateral force to the keys (a technique first developed for the Ondes Martenot in 1928). For more extended fluctuations of pitch, a glide strip, also touch sensitive, is located behind the keyboard. The portamento pedal controls a glide between two pitches with adjustable settings to alter the time of the glide. The keyboard touch control has a meter that shows the deviation from standard pitch and a slider that determines the





Sackbut in its final form, as presented for manufacture.

rate of pitch deviation caused by a given (lateral) force. There is also a meter and sensitivity control for vertical pressure (volume).

The four octave range of the keyboard can be shifted to different registers. This facilitates studio work with variable speed playback of a recording. To facilitate ensemble playing there is a fine tuning adjustment.

Continuous controls are provided so that the performer can change tone colour during the production of a note. Emphasis is placed on the plastic control of timbre, rather than on pre-set imitative timbres or on the provision of all conceivable timbres. All timbre controls are accessible to the left hand in one position, leaving the right hand free for keyboard work. (see diagram) Tone colour can be adapted by frequency modulation (noise or periodic voltage) and also by a means of amplitude modulation. A joy-stick controls basic waveform (pulse, square and octave related). The 'pulse width slider' and 'tone colour controls' can move the band of response frequencies over the audio range in ten steps. A 'formant slider' determines sharpness of resonance. The formant sound can be removed or changed by the performer as the note is being held or it can be set at 'auto' where the formant is swept over a band and back. The speed of the change is determined by 'attack' and 'decay' settings.

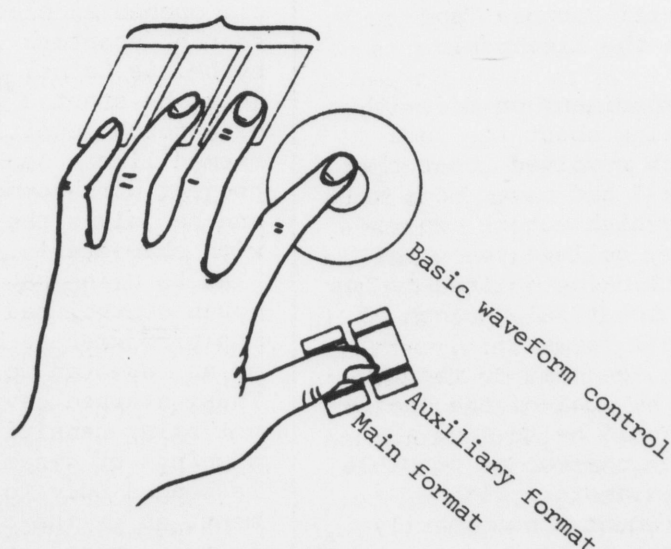
The 'envelope' panel is in two sections: sustain and transient. In sustain, the tone sounds as long as the key is down. An attack control gives an adjustable rate in increase, and the decay, also adjustable, begins

when the key is released. Sustain can be used alone or with transient, where the tone begins to decay as soon as a pre-set limiting value has been reached. This adds a tone with a changing envelope to the sustained tone, using similar attack and decay controls. This mechanism can be used in conjunction with touch sensitive control and electronic envelope control.

The Sackbut was developed between 1945 and 1948. In 1948, work was stopped. The first published description was given in the *Proceedings of the I.R.E.* (Institute of Radio Engineers) in 1956, by which time work on the Sackbut had resumed at the National Research Council, to develop a method of continuous pitch control, presumably the glide strip, and a reverberation pedal operated by a magnetic tape feed-back loop, which is not mentioned in later descriptions. In spite of these adaptations, the Sackbut was never manufactured. We of the Hugh Le Caine Project can only express our amazement and bewilderment at this sequence of events. Comparable synthesizers (pre-patched, portable, monophonic--such as the Synthi VCS-3 or the Mini-Moog) did not appear on the commercial market until the early 1970's.

In his autobiography, *Recherches au Temps Perdu*, Hugh Le Caine recalls his first interest in 'scientific experiments' and 'musical instruments' to have begun in early childhood and continued throughout his years at school

Arrangement of timbre controls in the electronic sackbut.

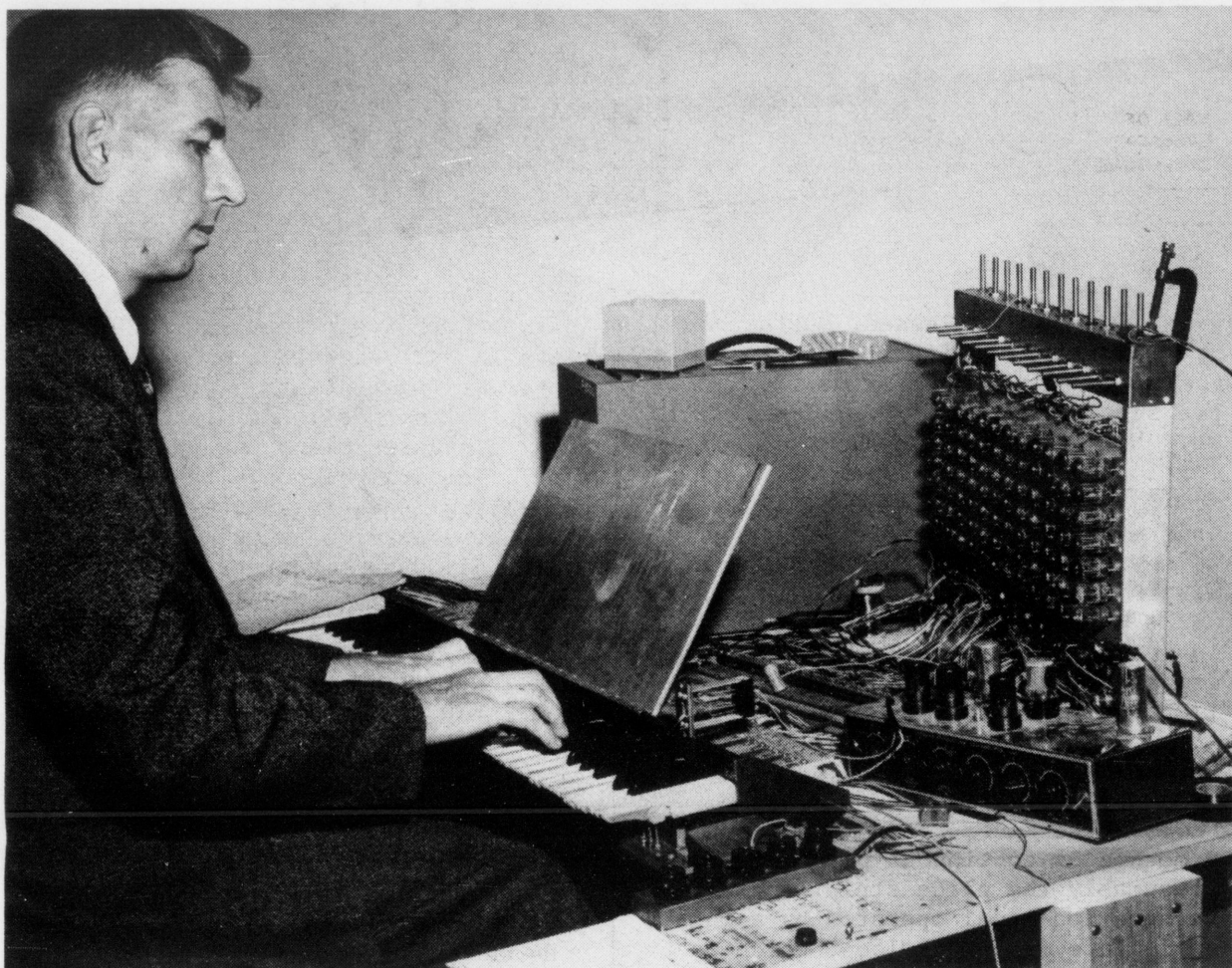


in Port Arthur with several experiments in building electronic instruments with the intention of obtaining 'beautiful sounds'. During this time, he also studied piano and guitar and sang in choirs. Although he had originally intended to pursue a career in music he changed to physical engineering at Queen's University after a short time at the Toronto Conservatory. However, he remained active in music and became interested in the new electronic organs, such as the Hammond and the Robb Wave Organ (the first electronic organ to be invented and manufactured in Canada). He had access to both instruments in Kingston and made a close study of their musical virtues and defects, much under discussion by both physics students and organists at the time.

He was doing well in his studies and found the laboratory work especially fascinating. After three years he was given a summer job in the Nuclear Physics lab of Dr. J.A. Gray. Nuclear physics was and is highly dependent on electronic instrumentation, and an early device developed by Le Caine was used both in the physics lab and in the electronic organ built in 1937. Le Caine considered it to have been his first successful electronic instrument. '...I had arrived at the required specifications through a clear formulation of what seemed to my ear as the outstanding defects in the sound of the Hammond Organ--lack of proper attack and decay process and a true and adequate chorus effect. The synthesis from harmonics derived from the equal temper scale seemed like a good feature and I retained that.' To resolve the problems he says, Le Caine decided to use what became the 'vibrating reed electrometer', an electrostatic coupling device that was very simple and inexpensive.

'My idea was to use air driven free-reeds from an old parlour organ which in those days could be bought for \$5.00 (an important point for me...I was getting \$50 a month...) The novel part of the idea was that all the reeds were blown all the time. They were translated electrostatically... that is, they gave a sound in the speaker when a voltage was applied to a vibrating reed by a key. A tremendous problem was keeping the noise (from the airblown reeds transmitted by vibration) down to as low a level as possible. Since I didn't have the space to get the reed assembly far away (in a basement or closet), I had





to tackle the problem head on and build a series of concentric stiff enclosures connected by very compliant material. (I used rubber bath sponges from Woolworth.) In a mood of bravado I used the assembly as an organ bench. I blew the reeds at a low air-pressure using a second-hand vacuum cleaner I bought for \$3.00.

'The advantage of electrical control instead of air control was first that all reeds could have the attack which was desired. The outstanding defect of the Hammond was lack of attack--a click. My attack was potentially adjustable. An important feature was that each reed could be used as foundation or mutation stops (as in a unit organ) and at any level desired so as to obtain a wide range of tones from a small number of reeds... Strangely, the idea turned out to have immediate application in the nuclear physics lab...'

During his first summer at the lab Le Caine had produced a convenient way of measuring short durations mechanically (rather than by hand with a stopwatch), using a photocell as a light sensitive switch for the stopwatch. During the second summer the lab was willing to work with him to develop his new method:

'By using vibrating reeds as I had done in my organ, I found that I could amplify the minute power represented by a few hundred electrons or ions to a point where ordinary amplifying tubes without an evacuated chamber could reliably measure them...The vibrating reed electrometer has since

Dr. Hugh Le Caine demonstrates the prototype Electronic Sackbut as it was developed between 1945-48. Here it is at the National Research Council's Elmus Labs, for further refinement.

become the standard way of making ionization, or small-current-high-resistance measurements in physics laboratories all over the world.'

After his graduation, early in 1941, Le Caine began working with the National Research Council where he was involved with radar systems during the war. All work on electronic musical instruments was ended until 1945 when he set up an electronic music studio in his house near the NRC field station in Ottawa. Here he worked on recording apparatus which later developed into the Multi-Purpose Tape-Recorder, and on the Electronic Sackbut.

'I began to experiment on ideas that I had been thinking about for some time: ideas which revolved about the beautiful sounds I had never been able to produce in my high school experiments. (During my college years the emphasis in my thinking shifted to how to describe the beautiful aspects of sounds in physical terms.)'

Over the years, he came to the conclusion that: 'The goal of the instrument designer should be to give the performer as much control as possible over important parameters without making the instrument unnecessarily difficult to learn to play.'

difficult to learn to play. 4

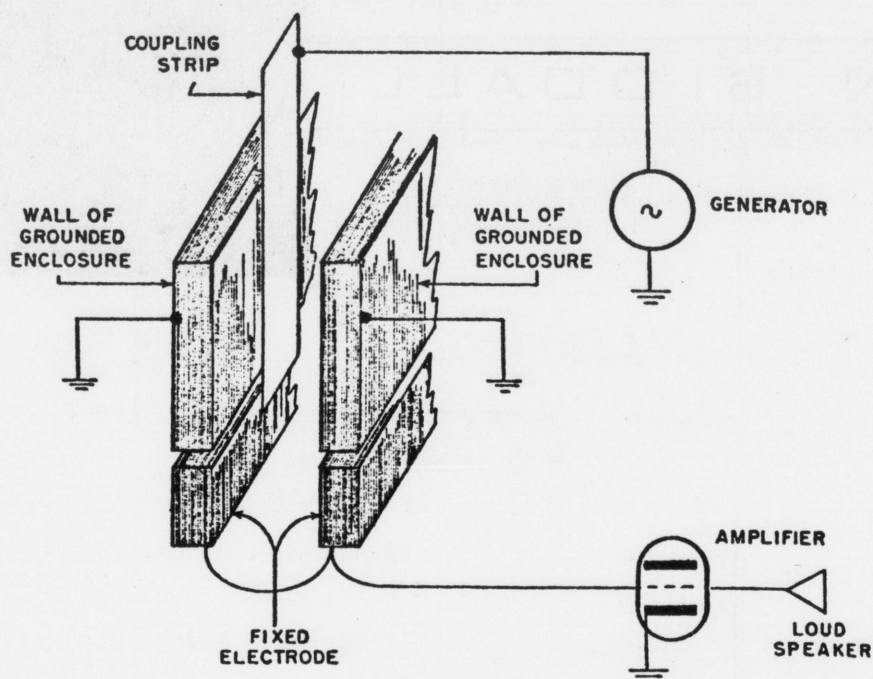
At this time, Le Caine was sent by the NRC on scholarship to England for three years to work in the nuclear physics lab of the University of Birmingham. In the late fall of 1952 he returned to Canada, having completed his studies. The components of his electronic music studio were in storage at his parents' home in Port Arthur and he was anxious to reassemble the studio and resume his work on electronic musical instruments. His new studio was located in the attic of a farm house near the NRC field station. There he continued to develop his ideas regarding the control of musical gestures by the performer. He noted that touch sensitivity had been lost in the pipe organ as a result of mechanical complexity. He felt that all instruments had originally been touch sensitive, but that his had been lost to other concerns such as the ability to play polyphonic music on one instrument. '...No continuous touch control had been successful for a polyphonic instrument...The possibility of having an inner part start soft and gradually become quite loud is an exciting one. In general, phrasing, articulation, and general control of the broad structural features benefit from the touch sensitive (force controlled) action. Attack and decay can also be usefully controlled by the touch of the performer. The singing touch which on the piano means merely an attitude becomes a directly controllable reality on the touch-sensitive keyboard.'

Le Caine felt that these problems could be solved electronically.

In 1954, the National Research Council opened an electronic music research department, Elmus Labs, headed by Dr. Le Caine. One of the first projects he started was the development of a touch sensitive organ as it seemed like a small, self contained project with commercial possibilities, and he solved the problem of control with characteristic efficiency.

As Le Caine saw it, any system of touch control had to meet the needs of the performer as he was and not merely as an inventor would like him to be. Thus, stepped devices were rejected as not being sensitive enough to slight shadings of dynamics. Any system which responded only to physical displacement, as is the case with the standard volume control, would necessitate the





learning of a whole new performance technique and would therefore have little success. The solution, as he saw it, was to produce a force-sensitive key that would react to a performer's touch in much the same way as a piano action.

The solution was an electrostatic coupling device. A coupling strip was connected to each key and inserted into a grounded enclosure. The enclosure was designed in the form of a long slot running the length of the keyboard. A coupler for each key was inserted in the slot. The coupler (the movable electrode) was prevented from contacting the fixed electrode by guides made of insulating material. This also prevented an accidental shorting to ground.

This system was inexpensive to make, since the conducting material could be painted on the walls of the enclosure, and it fulfilled all of Le Caine's design objectives. In the final form of his organ, five of these couplers were attached to each key, each coupler controlling a separate rank.

The technique used to play this instrument was similar to that used by pianists, with the exception of the sustained notes. The player had to keep in mind the necessity for continuous control over the keys once they were depressed. According to Dr. Le Caine, himself an accomplished pianist, this skill was not difficult to learn and only required a certain concentration when first introduced to the instrument. He recorded several performances on the touch-sensitive organ.

According to the literature, at least two organs were built, one in 1954 (a prototype), and a second model more directly related to piano playing techniques with fast attacks, slow decays, and a holding pedal. At the first industrial exhibition after it was built (around 1955) Baldwin organ company took an option on the patent,

#### Electrostatic coupling device suitable for use in a touch sensitive organ keyboard.

but the organ was never manufactured. (After several years Baldwin used the 'click-less key' on its own models.)

Unfortunately, the present location of either organ is unknown, and they may no longer exist. Any information concerning this instrument would be greatly appreciated.

In 1959, through the new Elmus Labs Project which he now directed at the National Research Council, Hugh Le Caine established the electronic music studio at The University of Toronto, the second such studio in North America. Further studios followed at Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1961, McGill University in 1964, and at Queen's University. He continued during the next twenty years at Elmus Labs to build at least fifteen different types of instrument. Several of them are still musically unique, having capabilities not replicated by current electronic equipment. He obtained numerous patents for his instruments and also produced eleven short electronic works.

For his work he was awarded honorary Doctorates by the University of Toronto, McGill University and Queen's University. Queen's University further indicated their appreciation in the naming of the Harrison Le Caine Hall.

Hugh Le Caine's music was played at concerts in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, usually within a few years of the composition date. It was also used in TV and film work, and was regularly broadcast by the CBC Radio Network.

Le Caine makes this note in his autobiography:

'I must explain that I did not regard myself as a composer, however, I felt that the only way to understand the composer's interest in the apparatus was to try to use the equipment

myself in the various current musical forms.'

His genius as an inventor of electronic music devices as well as his creativity and wit as a composer made him a figure of international stature during more than three decades' continued work in electronic music. Dr. Le Caine's death in July of 1977 was a considerable loss to music in Canada as well as to the international field of electronic music.

\* \* \*

The Hugh Le Caine Project was formed in 1978 by Gayle Young, Larry Lake and James Montgomery, sponsored by The Explorations Programme of The Canada Council and The Canadian Electronic Ensemble.

The objectives of the Hugh Le Caine Project are:

- 1) to research information on Hugh Le Caine and his work;
- 2) to make listings of all his instruments still existing, where they are and what condition they are in;
- 3) to explore the possibility of bringing them all together in some facility where they can continue to be used;
- 4) to disseminate information about Hugh Le Caine;
- 5) to encourage composers to write music using his instruments;
- 6) to promote performances of the works of Le Caine.

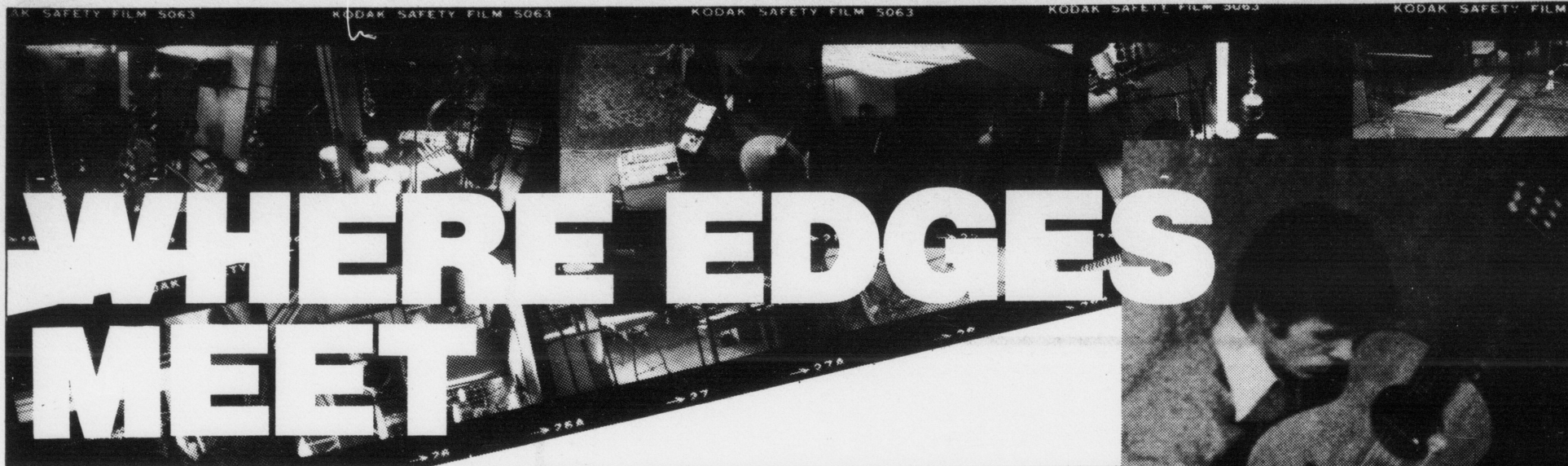
A library is being developed, to be available to the public, which consists of material written by Hugh Le Caine, written about Hugh Le Caine and his work, and information and manuals on his instruments.

A Newsletter is published several times annually outlining research to date and including biographical information, etc. The material in this article is drawn from previous Newsletters. Part II of Hugh Le Caine--Pioneer of Electronic Music will include more background information on Le Caine's work, detailed information on five of the most innovative and unique instruments, and further information about the project's objectives.

Any suggestions are welcome regarding the project, and any information that would be useful in the library or to the general research would be greatly appreciated.

The Hugh Le Caine Project is located at: 27 Davies Ave., Toronto, Ontario, M4M 2A9. Phone: (416) 368-2048 or 469-2893.





## A · SCORE · BY · JON · SIDDALL

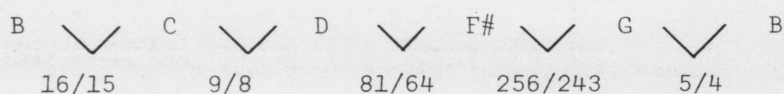
### Performance Notes for Where Edges Meet

At (A) through to the end of (B) the score shows a condensation of all possible activities. All parts except the kendang play, at some time, the main melody shown in the saron and rincik parts. The parts with different lines alternate between the main melody and their special lines or alok according to the schema given in the Order of Events. The schema also indicates the dynamics and points of entry for each instrument. This schema is designed for a concert performance of Where Edges Meet. With dance or theatre it could be augmented so as to maintain the formal progression while increasing the overall duration.

For the most part the parts are to be played as written although some octave transposition is possible.

Two players should double up if possible on saron, by playing in octaves, but not on the panerus.

The piece is written for Gamelan Degeung. It is a Lagu Tengahan, medium sized piece, in the tuning system Laras Pelog Degeung. It is in Patet Kenong or the b mode of this tuning. Pelog tunings for this Gamelan can generally be described as having small 2nds and large 3rds. More specifically in this case the tuning is



It is possible however, that a piece could be performed on a slightly different Pelog providing the integrity of the piece was maintained.

Finally it should be noted that the goŋg part is indicated by circles drawn around the notes of jengglong part. The goŋg is struck at the first beat of the given bar.

### Where Edges Meet

#### Order of Events

#### Six Repeats

1. p: saron, panerus, jengglong, goŋg.  
at (B) add bonang.
2. p: suling, rincik, saron, panerus, bonang, gambang, jengglong, goŋg, kendang.
3. mf: suling, rincik, saron, panerus, bonang, gambang, jengglong, goŋg, kendang.
4. f: suling, rincik, saron, panerus, bonang, gambang, jengglong, goŋg, kendang.
5. f:  $\Delta$  suling, rincik, saron, panerus, bonang, gamgang, jengglong, goŋg, kendang.
6. p: (A) suling, rincik, saron, panerus, bonang, gambang, jengglong, goŋg, kendang.

f: (B) same orchestration - ritard over last two bars to end. End everyone on a b note together.

\* = play alok

+ = kendang play out

$\Delta$  = suling play out freely improvising around melody.

Jon Siddall © 1980

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#### #8 (Summer '79)

##### FEATURES:

- \*QUOI DE NEUT by Ted Dawson and Robert Etcherverry.
- \*NOTES ON PHASES by Phil Werren.
- \*INTERVIEW WITH JEAN CLAUDE ELOY by Chris Crawford.
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#### #9 (Fall '79)

##### FEATURES:

- \*INTERVIEW WITH LOU HARRISON by Chris Crawford, Andrew Timar, Miguel Frasconi.
- \*A EUROPEAN TOUR, 1979 by David Keane.
- \*MUSIC AND THINGS THAT MAKE ME THINK ABOUT MUSIC AND MUSICAL IDEAS ABOUT LIGHT AND THE SOLSTICE by Don Druick.
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- \*WORLD IMPROVISATIONAL FESTIVAL photo documentation by Vid Ingelvics.
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- \*WAVEMAKERS by Michael Brook.

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- \*TALK WITH THE GOVERNMENT by John Oswald.
- \*TALK WITH VICTOR DAVIES by Andrew Timar.
- \*TO BE DISCUSSED, AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER CUSSACK by John Oswald.
- \*TALK WITH EVAN PARKER by Peter Anson and Al Mattes.
- \*TALK WITH SESSIONE MILANO: SHAMANISM BY COMMITTEE by Chris Crawford.
- \*TALK ABOUT IMPROVISING by Yves Bouliane.
- \*TALK WITH PAULINE OLIVEROS by Andrew Timar.

with scores, reviews, and photos by Dennis Burton, Judy Whalen, Vid Ingelvics, Andrew Timar, Wes Wraggett.

#### #11 (Spring '80)

##### SPECIAL DENNIS BURTON ISSUE:

includes handwritten scores, drawings, calligraphy, writings of Dennis Burton.

#### #12 (Summer '80)

##### SPECIAL SCORE ISSUE:

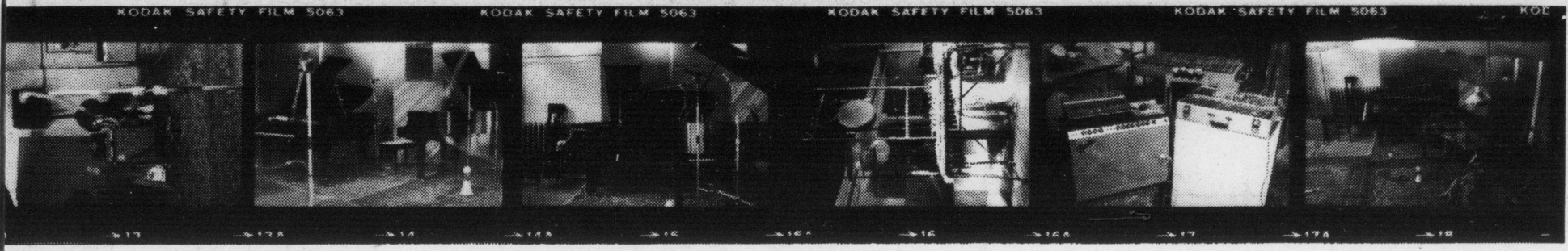
scores by Jonathon Bayley, Norma Beecroft, Stuart Broomer, Dennis Burton, Bill Buxton, Jon Celona, Graham Coughtry, Ted Dawson, Don Druick, John Fodi, Miguel Frasconi, Harry Freedman, Raymond Gervais, John Hawkins, John Kamevaar, Udo Kasemets, Henry Kucharzyk, Lubomyr Melnyk, David Jaeger & Jim Montgomery, David Mott, Al Neil, Andre Prevost, Jon Siddall, James Tenney, John Weinzwieg, Phil Werren, Wes Wraggett.

#### #13 (Fall '80)

##### FEATURES:

- \*EAR IT LIVE IN TORONTO with photos by Vid Ingelvics, H. Buchanan, R. Nigro.
- \*EAR IT LIVE IN TORONTO by Al Mattes.
- \*EARVIEW FROM MONTREAL by Robert Gelinas.
- \*NEW MUSIC FORUM by Susan Frykberg.
- \*A TALK WITH PHILIP GLASS by Andrew Timar and Miguel Frasconi.
- \*MUSICOGRAPHICS a collection of scores compiled by John Kamevaar.
- \*COLLABORATION by Gayle Young and Reinhard Reitzenstein.
- \*POSSIBLE MUSICS by Jon Hassell.





Where Edges Meet Jon Siddall © 1980

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring staves for Suling, Rineik, Saron, Panerus, Bonang, Gambang, and Tengklong i. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp*.

Handwritten musical score for the second system, continuing the composition. It includes a section marked with a circled 'A' and features staves for Bukka and other instruments. The notation is dense with many notes and rests.

Handwritten musical score for the third system, featuring staves for Suling, Rineik, Saron, Panerus, Bonang, Gambang, and Tengklong i. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp*.

Handwritten musical score for the fourth system, continuing the composition. It includes a section marked with a circled 'B' and features staves for Bukka and other instruments. The notation is dense with many notes and rests.



# PIECE FOR 12 INSTRUMENTALISTS: "FOR TRISTANO." - DENNIS BURTON

1. PIECE FOR 12 INSTRUMENTALISTS: "FOR TRISTANO." ©  
 KEY SIGNATURE: TO BE DETERMINED BY ENSEMBLE.  
 PITCH: STARTS ON MIDDLE C, BUT MAY BE CHANGED.  
 VOLUME: BY INDIVIDUAL OR ENSEMBLE CHOICE.  
 DURATION(S) BY ENSEMBLE CONSENSUS, ANY TIME  
 SIGNATURE MAY BE CHOSEN FOR THE ENTIRE PIECE  
 OR FOR EACH STATEMENT SEPARATELY.  
 LENGTH: THERE ARE 43 SEPARATE NAME STATEMENTS.

THIS PIECE IS BASED ON A 12-TONE ROW, STARTING ON MIDDLE C WITH SHARPS. THE NUMERALS FROM 1 TO 12 WERE WRITTEN FIRST, AS THE KEY TO A KABALLAH THAT EMPLOYS THE 26 ALPHABET LETTERS. MOST KABALLAHS USE 1-5, OR 1 TO 9 PLUS ZERO, THIS ONE USES 12, BECAUSE AS I WAS READING ABOUT THE CHROMATIC SCALE, I WROTE DOWN THE LAST NAMES OF 12-TONE ROW COMPOSERS, SERIAL COMPOSERS, AND JAZZ PLAYERS AND COMPOSERS WHO WORKED WITH CHROMATIC SCALES, AND FREE JAZZ, SERIAL JAZZ, AND LONG MELODIC LINES, STARTING PARTICULARLY WITH LENNIE TRISTANO AND HIS STUDENTS. THE NAMES OF THE COMPOSERS AND PLAYERS WERE FIRST CODED IN NUMERALS ACCORDING TO THE KABALLAH, THEN CODED ACCORDING TO THE ASCENDING CHROMATIC SCALE, SO THAT EACH NAME BECAME A MUSICAL STATEMENT, EACH LETTER BECOMING A NOTE. (THE 43 NAMES ARE OF VARIOUS LENGTHS, THE LONGEST TWO ARE DALLAPICCOLA, AND MANGELSDORFF, EACH WITH 12 LETTERS. IF THE ENSEMBLE WISHES THE ORDER OF PLAYING THE 4 STATEMENTS MIGHT BE FROM LONGEST TO SHORTEST, OR SHORTEST TO LONGEST.) IT WAS NOT MY INTENTION TO INCLUDE ALL OF THE COMPOSERS OR PLAYERS WHO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY SCHOENBERG, BUT SOMEONE MIGHT LIKE TO ADD ALL THE OTHERS TO MAKE A MUCH LONGER PIECE, BY USING MY METHOD, AND KABALLAH. IT MIGHT BE NOTED THAT GLENN GOULD IS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN SCHOENBERG AND HIS MUSIC FOR PIANO.

© DENNIS BURTON, MARCH 9, 1980, VAN COUVER, B.C., CANADA.

2.

NUMERALS:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
LETTERS OF ALPHABET:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X
	Y	Z										

SCALE FROM C WITH SHARPS:	C	C#	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B
SCALE FROM C WITH FLATS:	C	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	B#

COMPOSERS' NAMES: SCHOENBERG · WEBERN · BERG ·  
 STRAVINSKY · DALLAPICCOLA ·  
 MARTIN · BRITTEN · BOULEZ ·  
 BABBIT · BARTÓK · HINDEMITH ·  
 CAGE · REICH · MILHAUD · FORT-  
 NER · HONEGGER · CHARLES · WA-  
 LTON · VAN THOF · TRISTANO ·  
 KONITZ · IND · BALL · HADEN · K-  
 ATZ · MARSH · DAVIS · COLEMAN ·  
 COLTRANE · TYNER · TAYLOR ·  
 RUSSELL · DOLPHY · SANDERS ·  
 MINGUS · SHEPP · MONK · AYLER ·  
 MANGELSDORFF · WEBER · GARB-  
 AREK · HENDRIX · RUGOLO · END

3. NUMBER OF LETTERS PER NAME: 10 · 6 · 4 · 10 · 12 · 6 · 7 ·  
 6 · 6 · 6 · 9 · 4 · 5 · 7 · 7 · 8 · 7 · 6 · 7 · 8 · 6 · 3 · 4 · 5 · 4 · 5 ·  
 5 · 7 · 8 · 5 · 6 · 7 · 6 · 7 · 6 · 5 · 4 · 5 · 12 · 5 · 8 · 7 · 6 · 3 ·  
 THE LENGTH OF THE NAME MAY OR MAY NOT DICTATE TIME SIGNATURE (BY CHOICE)

THE 43 COMPOSERS AND PLAYERS' NAMES KABALLAHED INTO NUMERALS:

7383522567 · 1152562 · 2567  
 7861092711 · 412214933321  
 116892 · 2698852 · 2391252 ·  
 212298 · 2168311 · 892451988  
 3175 · 65938 · 19128194 · 6368-  
 256 · 83257756 · 38161257 · 111-  
 12832 · 1012 · 8836 · 86978123 ·  
 1132982 · 924 · 21212 · 81452 · 11  
 182 · 11678 · 41097 · 3325112  
 33286125 · 81256 · 811236 ·  
 69775122 · 432481 · 7124567 ·  
 192797 · 78544 · 13211 · 11256  
 1127512743666 · 115256 · 7162  
 16511 · 85246912 · 6973123 · 524

THIS MARK IS THE ACCENT OVER THE 'O' IN BARTÓK.  
 THIS MARK IS THE APOSTROPHE IN VAN THOF.  
 THE ENSEMBLE MAY ASSIGN ANY MEANINGS TO THE MARKS.

4. THE 43 MUSICAL STATEMENTS:
- F DGDECCEFF · AECEFC · CEFF  
 FGFCAGC · FAC · DCBBDGDDDBC  
 CCFGGC · C FGGGEC · CDGBEC  
 CCCCGG · CCFGDA · GGCDEC GGG  
 DCFE · FEGDG · CGCCGCGD · FDFG  
 CEF · GDCEFFEF · DGCFCCEF · AC  
 BGDC · ACC · GGDF · GFGFGCCD ·  
 ADCGGC · GCD · CCBB · GCDEC · A  
 CGC · CCFFG · DCAGF · DDBECC ·  
 DDBGFCCE · GCCEF · GCCBDF ·  
 FGFFEBB · DDBDGC · FCCDEFF ·  
 CGCFGE · FGEDD · CDCA · CCBEF  
 CCCFEBFD · DFFF · AECEF · FCFC ·  
 CFEA · GECDFGB · FGFDDB · ECD ·

THE STATEMENTS MAY BE PLAYED AS ONE CONTINUOUS PIECE, OR IN 43 SEPARATE STATEMENTS, WITH SILENT DURATIONS SEPARATING THEM, OF WHATEVER DURATIONS THE ENSEMBLE AGREES UPON. THE PIECE MAY BE PLAYED BACKWARDS ALSO. THE STATEMENTS MAY BE ORDERED ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF NOTES, OR AS IS. TRANSPOSITION IS ALLOWED, AND ENCOURAGED, TO HARMONIZE THE PRODUCT OF THE ENSEMBLE. THE ENSEMBLE COULD BE A 12-MAN RHYTHM SECTION OF PIANO DRUMS, BASSES AND GUITARS, OR THE ENSEMBLE MIGHT BE ALL PERCUSSIONISTS, ALL REEDS, ALL BRASSES, OR ANY MIX OF INSTRUMENTS, INCLUDING VOICE, OR THERE COULD BE 4 REEDS, 4 BRASSES, 4 RHYTHM SECTION, ETC. EACH STATEMENT MIGHT BE 'FRAMED' IN CONTEXTS THAT SUGGEST THE SOUND OF THE MUSIC OF EACH NAME.  
 © D. B. 02 00 00

## A SYSTEM FOR WRITING MUSIC CALLED "O.E." (ODD-EVEN)

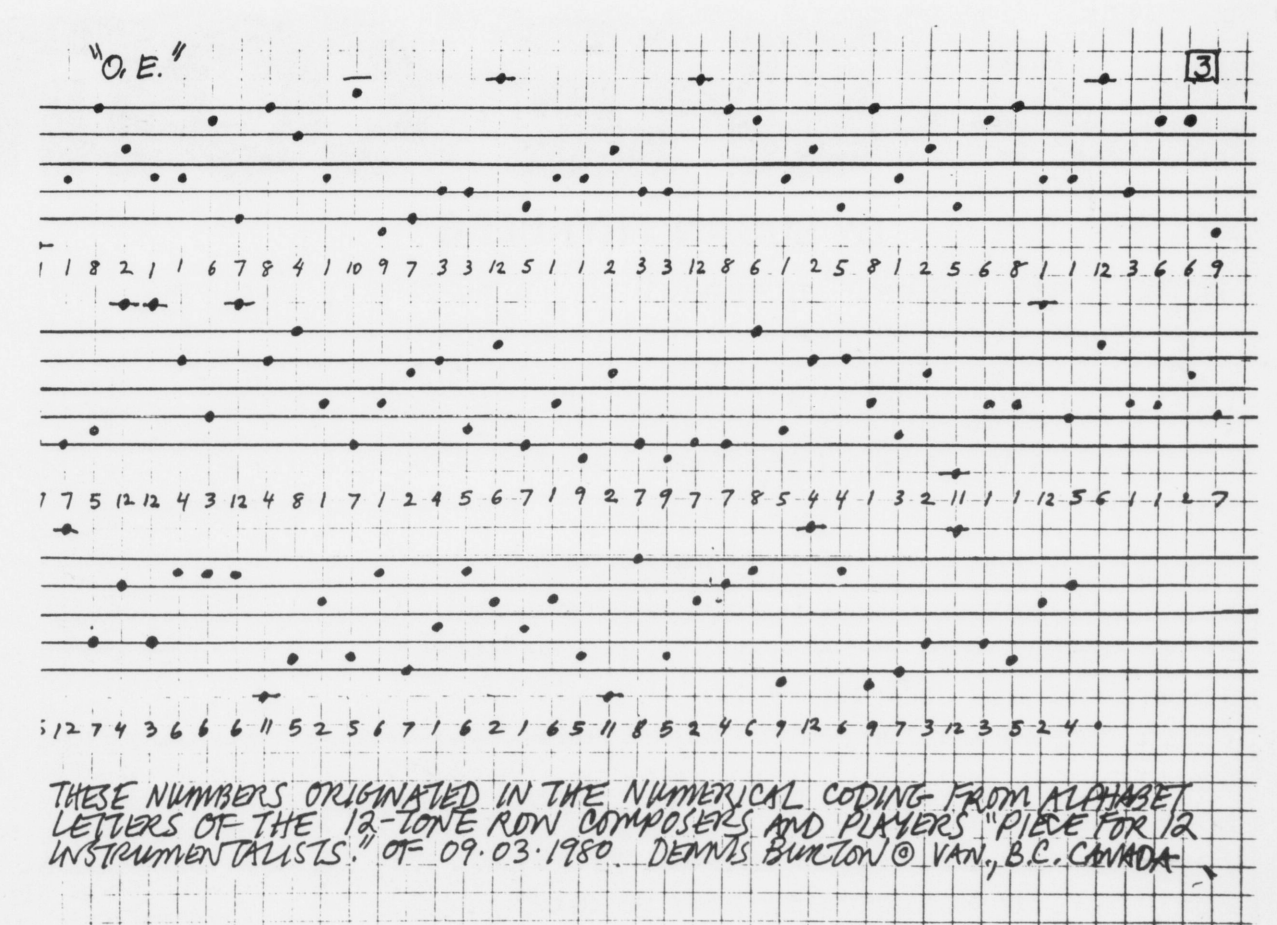
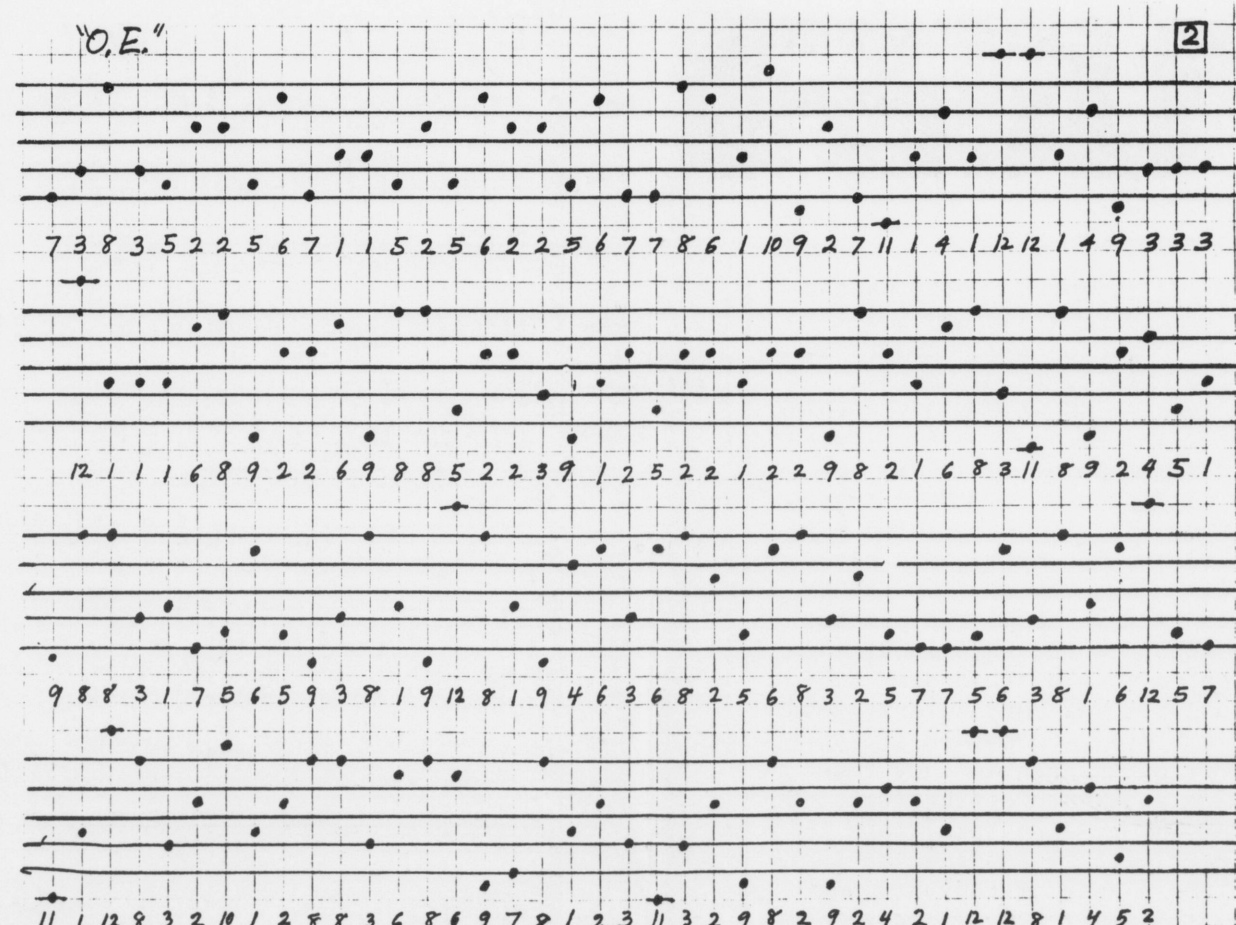
THIS SYSTEM USES THE TRADITIONAL STAFF OF FIVE LINES AND FOUR SPACES. HOWEVER WE FIRST CONSIDER THE MID-LINE OR CENTRAL LINE OF THE STAFF, AND WE LABEL IT ZERO (0). ANY NOTATION ABOVE THIS MID-LINE IS CALLED "EVEN." ANY NOTATION BELOW THIS MID-LINE IS CALLED "ODD." WE ASSIGN TO EACH SPACE AND LINE ABOVE THE MID-LINE AN EVEN NUMBER BEGINNING 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 ETC. WE ASSIGN TO EACH SPACE AND LINE BELOW THE MID-LINE AN ODD NUMBER BEGINNING 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 ETC.

THEN TAKING ANY NUMBERS, SOCIAL INSURANCE, DRIVERS LICENSE, CREDIT CARD SUBSCRIPTION, PRESCRIPTION LICENSE NUMBERS, TELEPHONE NUMBERS, OR ANY NUMBERS, AND WE WRITE THEM OUT BELOW STAVES, LOCATING THE ODD NUMBERS BELOW THE MID-LINE, EVEN NUMBERS ABOVE THE MID-LINE, THEN DRAW NOTES OF ANY TIME VALUE.

E.G. HERE'S SOME RANDOM NUMBERS AND THEIR PLOT ON A STAFF, AS 4 NOTES.

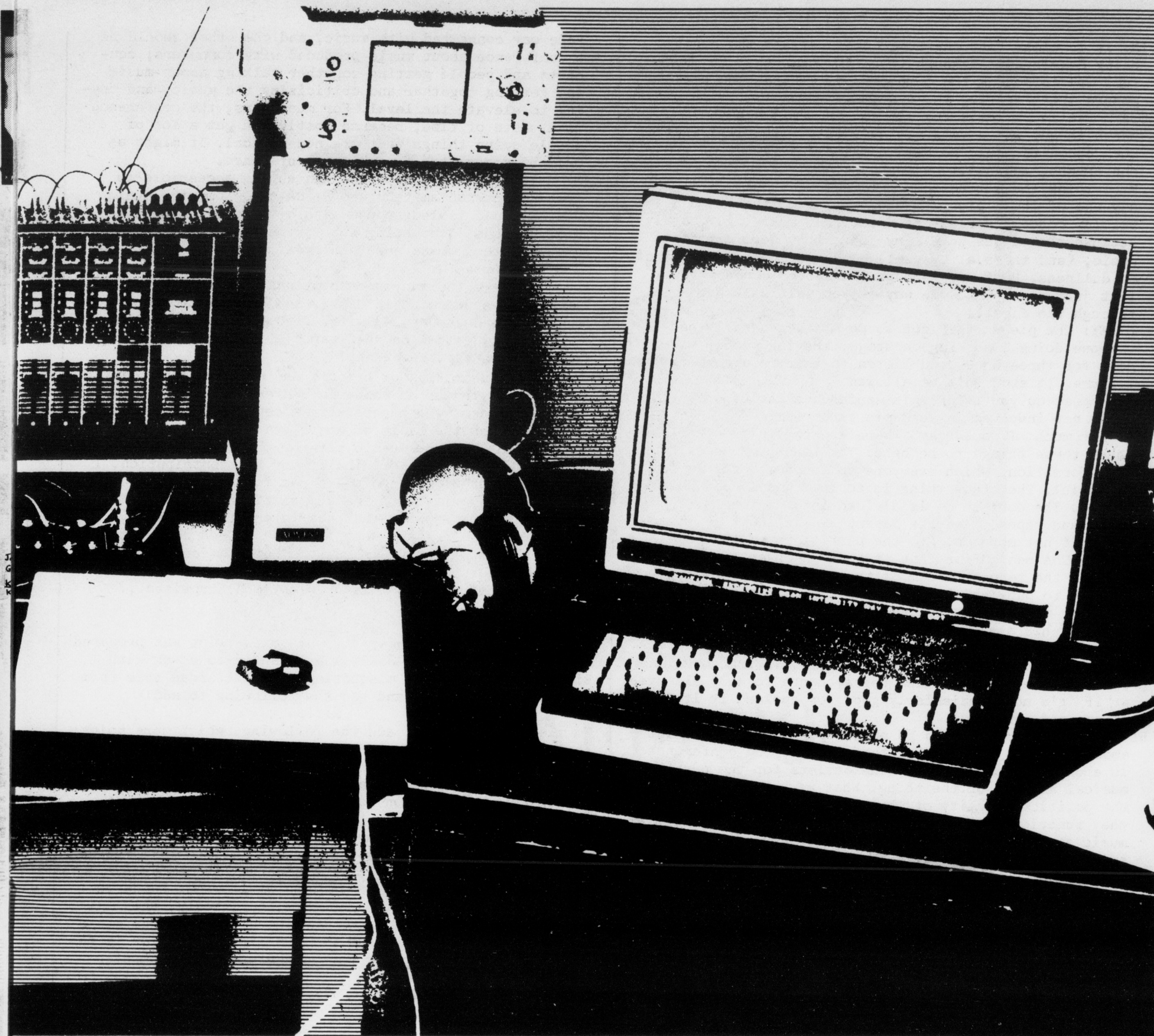
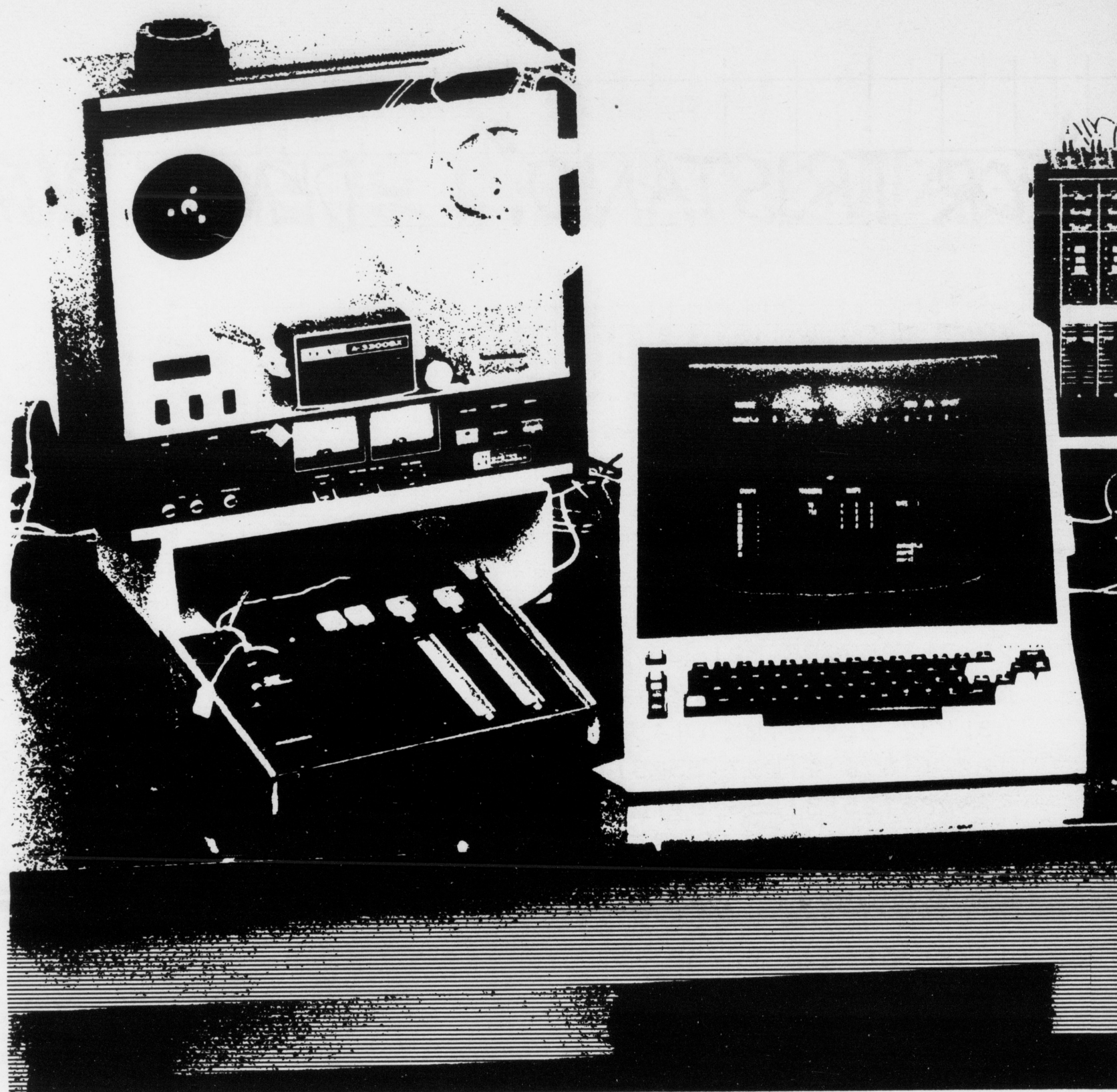
TO MORE FULLY ILLUSTRATE THE SYSTEM THE FOLLOWING IS A SERIES OF NUMBERS PLOTTED ON STAVES, TO SHOW THE ACCURACY AND SPEED OF MUSIC NOTATION BY THIS METHOD:

FROM AN IDEA OF AUGUST 6th 1969  
 © DENNIS BURTON 09.03.80 VAN, B.C.



THESE NUMBERS ORIGINATED IN THE NUMERICAL CODING FROM ALPHABET LETTERS OF THE 12-TONE ROW COMPOSERS AND PLAYERS "PIECE FOR 12 INSTRUMENTALISTS" OF 09.03.1980. DENNIS BURTON © VAN, B.C., CANADA





# THE COMPUTER MUSIC CONFERENCE

BY SUSAN FRYKBERG

**T**he 4th Annual International Computer Music Conference was held in Queens, New York from November 13th to the 15th. A large number of Torontonians presented themselves, their music, and their papers.

Bill Buxton, Jim Montgomery, and Bentley Jarvis had pieces played, and Bill Buxton and Mark Green (a computer scientist affiliated with the SSSP (Structured Sound Synthesis Project, University of Toronto) gave papers. To get some of the feeling about what this conference was about, I talked to Bill Buxton, Jim Montgomery and Bentley Jarvis. Restrictions on time meant that each had to be interviewed separately. I have however rearranged this as if it were a group interview.

SUSAN: The conference was divided into two parts, papers and concerts. Papers were given during the daytime (technical reports and studio reports) and concerts at night. Since this is a music article, we may as well start by talking about the pieces. So what did you think of the music?

BENTLEY: Well, I didn't think too much of the music really.

BILL: Given this is a newspaper, this is going to be a meaningless conversation, because nobody's gonna have heard the pieces.

BENTLEY: I think it's important to talk about the pieces. JIM: There are certain things that can be said about the music. Compared to other conferences of this sort, the music was generally very good. It was particularly good considering the techniques employed. Composers are getting much better at this sort of thing than they used to be, and they are producing more interesting music. It was interesting to note that it was almost all tape music, and music that was specifically designed as that --very little live performance either of conventional instruments in conjunction with the tape, or of the digital or analogue apparatus used to make the piece.

BILL: OK, if we're going to talk about the music, we can simply say: having been to many of these conferences, the comment to make about the music in general is that the pieces were the most memorable part of the confer-

ence. That is in direct contrast with previous conferences, where the papers and the presentations were the most interesting. That is due to a couple of factors--the diversity of the pieces, i.e. music style, and the techniques used, and the musicality of the pieces. The musicianship was higher than in previous years, and I think that that sheds a good light on the work that people have been doing in technology. That is, the ideas have been invested in the systems, so composers can work better. The majority of composers present were not people who have designed or built systems. Also, many of them are not permanently associated with studios. What I found disappointing, was that I don't believe the concerts we heard were reflective of what is actually going on--for instance there was little live computer music.

BENTLEY: I detected a lot of cliches in the pieces. Many of the pieces were similar and I got the impression that composers were doing what was easy on the systems and not going very far beyond that. A lot of the music had an academic quality to it. I mean it didn't have too much humanity in it. It reminded me a lot of early electronic music, that was done in university studios, in which academics got hold of the equipment, did a few things, then presented it to the public as a piece, without really expressing anything.

It also sounded as if the people using the equipment didn't know what they were doing. I felt that the qual-

ity of music at the concerts was generally lower than music that you would find at a concert of say 'New Music Concerts' (series held in Toronto). This presumably was a representative sample of the computer music being put out today. But I didn't think that the quality of the music compared to any other music was very good. You see here we have fantastic facilities where presumably you can do fantastic things which you can't do instrumentally. But technically, I was surprised at the scarcity of interesting sounds. I've heard much more interesting sounds produced using classical tape techniques. You get cliched sorts of things--fm sounds--in so many of the pieces, it was difficult to separate one piece from the other.

SUSAN: It seemed that almost all of the pieces represented were North American, and more specifically, had a North American kind of sound.

JIM: The music could be categorized as belonging to a certain school, or having a common point of view. But it's a North American concert in a particular part of North America. It seems to me that this always happens. The predominant type of music seems to come from closely related geographical areas. That's fine. If they want to listen to European music let 'em go to Europe. (that'll simplify your editing Susan!)

SUSAN: Do you think that by listening to the music alone you could determine anything about the systems?



JIM: It is clear that the music does reflect the systems being developed. Although it is the case that the systems are infecting the composers as much as the composers are affecting the systems!

SUSAN: Really it seems that if you are to judge the concerts in any way at all you have to ask yourself whether such concerts could be held outside the format of the conference, and still be worthwhile.

JIM: I think there were some programming problems. Almost any one of those pieces could have held its own on a regular concert series; however, the packaging... Mostly because the pieces were very long, they were all tape music, (and the p.a. system!) all contributed to a kind of dullness. Half way through the second concert you felt just about the same way as you felt half way through the first!

BENTLEY: The pieces that got to me most, generally had someone doing something on stage.. Having people sit down for three hours and listen to tape is a form of torture. It shouldn't be allowed.

SUSAN: What do you think this conference has to offer to those not involved in academic careerism?

JIM: Not much, I would say. There are two things that cause these things to be held. The first is the exchange of information, which everyone applauds and thinks is wonderful. The other thing is so that people can deliver papers. The conference is divided into two parts, concerts and papers. And the papers are at least as important, if not more so, (to the participants) than the music. The reason for that is that in order to participate in the tenure stream of the university, it's necessary to publish. It is so far the case that a composer in the university can't use his compositions as proof of his academic skills...he has to publish! It's not quite as nasty as all that...it lets other people in the field in on the kind of research being done, and it also gives one's colleagues a chance to dump all over it if it's not particularly good, or applaud it if it's unique and wonderful.

BILL: A lot of people who go expect people to talk a lot about music. I don't think that is what the conference is about. The concerts are the outlets for the purely musical aspects of the thing. What we have to accept is the political reality of why these things exist and how they function. Composers can not have their own computer music systems yet. Therefore they are dependent upon institutions. So people like myself cannot create such systems unless they have a forum such as this, to gain brownie points, keep getting funding, and keep those studios going. And furthermore, although such a conference may not have been interesting to you the composer in terms of the content of the papers, you get an indirect benefit, in that I come out of it with technical information which makes me better able to make a system that suits your needs. Music comes into it in the sense that the information that people are presenting will enhance musical systems.

BENTLEY: I wasn't interested in the talks, I went for the music. A lot of people felt the same way.

SUSAN: Can you say anything about the conference as a whole; criticisms or suggestions?

BENTLEY: There should be two conferences. One for people involved in doing things with computers, that are in

some way connected with music, and the other should be a conference about music produced with computers; concerts and people getting together talking about music and getting together and criticizing the music, and trying to elevate the level. For musicians, the conference is a waste of time, because mostly you get a lot of people doing things that are non-musical. It might as well be a computer fire alarm conference.

JIM: A lot of this conference was easily accessible to the enlightened amateur who reads the 'Computer Music Journal' and fooled around with his micro in the basement. It was interesting that there was a forum available to demonstrate new instruments, such as the Crumar and the Touche.

There were too many presentations, there were not enough presentations in depth, and the studio reports could have been handled without someone standing there doing a slide show on what parts of the room they installed the tape recorders!

BILL: There was a lot of breadth and not very much depth. If this is run as an academic conference, then I have one criticism. The papers were accepted and allocated a time slot on the basis of abstracts only. That is not sufficient for someone to referee them, and decide on the significance or originality of the contribution. I wasted a lot of time going to sessions which looked interesting by virtue of the abstract, then found out I was missing something that was interesting. The majority of things I did learn were from one to one confrontations. I would just seek out the information directly. On the other hand there were people there I'd never heard of before, who came up with some surprises...

#### Postscript

Aren't computers wonderful. This manuscript was prepared on a computer here at SSSP, and I wanted to check with Bill Buxton (to avoid misquoting). So Bill read this from his terminal at home and had the following to add:

To the last question, add the following, which were points that I believe that I made: For those who wanted to do nothing but talk about music and listen to music, they were bound to be disappointed. They also did not read the preliminary information advertising the conference, so their disappointment was their own fault, in a way. There was a lot there for the musician, although the primary reason for the conference was for specialists in computer music. Nevertheless, there were sessions on commercial systems, studio reports on various facilities, hands-on demos of devices, and the concerts. Admittedly, the reality did not always match the intentions. If one wants a conference on music, then it is silly to restrict it to computer music. You can't have a conference on computer music without getting into the technology. If you want to just talk about music, then there are other forums. Finally, if the music was tiresome, be wary of attributing that to just bad music. I don't see that as being the case. Take any situation where you are listening to a long concert of tape music three days in a row. It has to be marathon, and equally fatiguing. I challenge anyone to program three days of saxophone music, or three days of wind ensemble, and not have the same effect. In the context given, normal concert reactions must be adjusted.

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GUITAR PLAYER Magazine

AUNTIE NATURE, UNCLE TREE AND COUSIN BLADE-A-GRASS, by Lloyd Garber is an ambitious undertaking (265 pages) for a method book on avant-garde guitar technique, and more important, it is written by one of its more visible exponents. But despite its great length, it isn't as formidable as one might fear. Garber gives straightforward information concerning intervallic relationships, tonal schemes, inversions, and clusters (as well as other topics), and keeps the language at an understandable level. In many cases, he uses nonmusical examples to relate such musical concepts as tone quality, tendencies of harmonic motion, etc. These are backed up with musical examples, as well as exercises. Sections encompassing the use of harmonics and prepared strings are also present, as are sketches for several of the author's compositions. Besides offering technical guidance, this softbound is also an enjoyable way of wading into the turbulent subject of the avant-garde. All illustrations are done by Garber, and the softbound book is available from him for \$37.00 at Box 7020, Station A, Toronto, Canada M5W 1X7



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# MAKING DO IN NEW YORK

## WHAT TO DO UNTIL THE 68000 COMES

BY CHRIS HOWARD

**I**t is widely accepted that the mass media have come to have more influence on our society even than the physical artifacts of mass production. Another perhaps more profound influence is beginning to show itself as computers move out of industrial settings and into our everyday lives. A computer culture is developing which promises to encompass at least a large fraction of our population and to have, in the long run, more than its share of influence on the rest.

How will both this technology and the associated changes in our perceptions that it engenders affect the arts, especially music? In the computer hobbyist press, after New Products and Games (the latter promise to become an art in themselves), two of the hottest subjects are always Graphics and Music. Computer music that goes beyond merely a novelty value, however, still requires more knowledge and equipment than most hobbyists possess, and a more technical approach than most musicians are interested in taking. To find out, then, where computer music is, and where it is going, one must turn to the specialists in the field. These, like specialists everywhere, communicate mostly through journals and conferences. The Computer Music Journal is the notebook, the Computer Music Association the body, and the International Computer Music Conference the voice, at least in North America, of this most serious tribe.

The leaves were still yellow on the trees as mid-November brought New York the 1980 International Computer Music Conference (ICMC). There were 264 registered participants, 22 from Canada, and our very full schedule included three evenings' concerts, two full days of presentations of papers, and a reception to celebrate the return to life of The Computer Music Journal.

Many participants spent more time on the chartered bus to and from Manhattan than they did sleeping; the conference was hosted by Queens' College (CUNY), quite a distance from its hotel or most other available accommodation. Queens' is comfortable in a tacky sort of way, compared with some of the big name universities of the U.S.; it is a newer school and has not exactly become a lavish monument to its successful alumni yet. It is thus perhaps a little more like home to those of us from similarly constrained circumstances here. While the spartan surroundings did no real harm to the conference, the fact that they could not be made available on Sunday did cause some difficulties. Four days' worth of papers were delivered in two, many ran overtime, and if it is accepted that these sessions are a central part of such a conference, almost everyone involved was put at a liability; forced to miss an important talk for one more so. In addition, the very long days resulting were, possibly to a greater degree than in most conference situations, quick to take their toll when it came to assimilating all this new information, especially that of the concerts. As the proof and point of all the theoretical and technical work presented though, the concerts are worthy of special attention.

The conference began Thursday night with the first of three concerts. (For those with the capacity, a listening room had been stocked with the many pieces that could not be included in three longish evenings.) Having the good fortune to have heard previously both Toronto's SSSP and Jean-Claude Risset's Mirage in concert, I was at first tempted to lament that the audience was freshest for the least inspiring of the evenings presented. How soon we come to take things for granted!



Those hearing their first of Risset's *Songes* (Dreams), which uses the tape but not the live instruments of *Mirages*, or of the SSSP in live performance, may have felt very differently. These two may be the clearest indications we were to have of the magic that our electronic Djinni can produce, should the user but know the right spell. The Risset works use the analysis by computer of many aspects of instrumental sounds, modifications made in their re-synthesis, and the combination of these new timbres with the originals to create startlingly beautiful illusions in an always musical space. In *Mirages* the effects are enhanced with the presence of the orchestra; as it all came from the tape, *Songes* was perhaps more mysterious if less enchanting. Form is always present, but like the recorded instrumental sound, like the electronic shadings, it never becomes an end in itself or intrudes on the music. Risset remembers always that that must come first, and already understands this new vocabulary well. He is thus a doer in a talker's field, already producing imaginative and striking art.

The SSSP was the only group to use a computer to produce sound live in a formal concert throughout the conference. It might really be more appropriate to find this disheartening in general than inspiring in particular. One other system at least, Gary Kendall's, from Northwestern U., was available to come but inexplicably heard only on tape. Many readers will be familiar with the SSSP synthesizer to some degree: in performance use, one takes more or less the role of a conductor, not only governing the interpretation of, but also selection and mixing from, several scores previously stored on the system. While the sounds which can be produced are rather more limited than those that might be coaxied from a large system using up to an hour to compute a minute's music, the system's effectiveness often simply seems to prove that there is more to music than just vibrations in the air. Even in company such as this, there seem to be inherent difficulties in the presentation of tape music in a concert format. The mere presence of a performer at the console, even if never modifying at all a piece cycling through as programmed beforehand, would likely make an appreciable difference in its reception in concert.

William Buxton's *Eugenia* had the luxury of twice the performing forces of any other work in the series--the composer at the console and Eugene Laskiewicz on free-bass accordion. While with respect to timbre and gesture there was rarely much in common between the parts, a real musical communication seemed evident between the performers, especially at times when the synthesizer adopted a more pitched, bellish sound. As the only example of ensemble work we were to hear from the computer throughout the conference, it was as important as it was welcome that it seemed successful.

Jim Montgomery's *Goddess*, though perhaps a bit light to deserve such a title, presented an in-depth exploration of what the SSSP system can do on its own. Despite the importance of his or her being there, the computer-player may forever be the least exciting of instrumentalists to watch, working more often with motives, phrases, and the execution of abstract concepts than with individual notes, one-to-a-motion. The comparison to a conductor, whose language is visual, also breaks down here: even more than with conventional synthesizers, gestures are small and often difficult to connect to the thread of sound they affect. *Goddess* showed this problem to some degree, and, just in some of its moments, was the first piece to display a fairly widespread tendency in the music heard to an almost aggressive traditionalism. An often lush and orchestral setting loosens up into thinner, more expected families of sounds, maintaining a sense of discovery throughout these variations.

When tape music is presented in concert, one has a right to expect high technical standards in at least its delivery. These were not met the first night, a maladjusted mixer providing rather more distortion and rather less level than could be desired. Before *Goddess*, we heard Gareth Loy's *Nekyia*, a suitably dramatic overture with which to begin, Martin Brody's short Turkish Rondo, which featured interesting spatial effects but sounded a little reminiscent of an ancient Hammond Novachord, and, from the U. of Padua (Padova), Mauro Graziani's *Winter Leaves*. The latter was especially impressive as the composer's first all-digital composition, showing a rhythmic freedom, a well developed sense of space, and a consistently pleasing use of tone colour that made it stand out as something special. The other tape-only pieces presented on the first night were Curtis Roads' *nscore*, which used a wide selection of original materials in a lively fashion, David Hicks' evocative *Sax Objects*, and James Dashow's *Conditional Assemblies*. Joel Gressel's *Joint Resolution* expanded the resources of the piano with those of the computer, getting some very interesting results when the tape part merged with that of the piano to add vibrato and other impossible nuances. However, the basic materials used often begged the question of why no university affiliation was mentioned in the programme! The evening ended with a clever if somewhat long computer animation by Ken Knowlton (pictures) and Emmanuel Ghent (music), *BAOBAB*, showing more potential for this combination than for the compositional algorithms used in the score.

One of several technical advances evidenced in Friday's concert was the use of non-linear distortion (wavershaping) by France's Daniel Arfib in *Le Souffle de Doux*. Use of these transformations, much more subtle mathematical relatives of the fuzz-box, may become as identified with computer music as the fm-instrument is now. Much of the interest of this piece derived from the types and particular sequences and structures of harmonic colouration this method affords. This was followed by Alexander Brinkman's spare and interesting *Septenarius*. Glasgow's Stephen Arnold contributed *Lyricon*, which tread a very precarious balance between humour and academic folly, and must sound very similar to its instrumental version. Bob Crites' *ABBA*, though apparently using voice synthesis techniques on serious biblical texts, did not escape the humour we still seem to associate with artificial voices. If this was not the intention of the composer, the piece was at least well received. James Hobbs' *Nautilus* employed computer aid in the composition as well as in the generation of an impressive large-scale sound structure, with especially interesting quad effects. (Most tapes presented were two-channel.) Barry Truax's *Aerial*, with Jim McDonald on french horn, ended the first half, the computer and horn parts fitting hand in glove in this well-thought-out 'landscape.'

Kenneth Jacob's *Drifter's Heart* began the second part by stealing the show. A live viola part played by Peter Horodysky was paired with a tape realized on the first delivered Synclavier II and a Lexicon digital delay. There has been a lot of progress between models of this instrument, and we were not again, Risset having played the night before, to hear sounds so attractive in themselves as those produced by this off-the-shelf combination. Even more sur-

prising than the richness of the sounds obtained were the things which were done with them! The musical language employed owed more to Prokofiev than to Stockhausen, perhaps reflecting also the composer's interest in popular music. The violist is given no choice but to play very intensely in order to match the volume (and emotional) levels used. It may have been the most convincing of many examples that the avant-gardes, for the usual want of a more fashionable term, in music and in music technology have little more in common than most blind dates. Judging by the reaction of the normally somewhat reserved crowd, this music may not only last, but prove to be quite influential in very influential circles.

Abstractions, a relatively serious piece by Hubert Howe, chief organizer of the conference, contrasted with two sometimes humorous pieces generated on the SSSP synthesizer, Bentley Jarvis' *Momentum*, and Otto Laske's *Terpsichore*. Sadly, the former had to be presented without the dance and lights which it was composed to accompany. Much of the composition of *Terpsichore* had been automated, and it showed that this no longer need necessarily be a disadvantage in comparison to works only synthesized by computer. The evening was rounded out with the *Concerto for Violin and Computer Tape* by John Melby interpreted by Peter Sacco.

The first of Saturday's presentations was Jean Piche's *Ange*. It mixed recorded voices with different treatments of an electronic core which also provided the overall structure. While this sometimes let things get a bit minimal, particularly beautiful internal details often stood out.

Neil Rolnick's *Wondrous Love* followed, with Per Brevig on trombone seeming to enjoy the opportunities for hamming it up that the piece gave him. In these variations on a hymn, the computer accompaniment ranged from flexible interaction with the soloist to a texture that could only have descended from the hydraulic organ. William Matthews' in memory (dedicated to Geoffrey Law) used some of the more attractive of the hundreds of bells we were to hear, in a sparse texture that worked well. It was the last example from the SSSP. Peter Child's *Three Brief Impressions* were too short to take notes on.

Neva Pilgrim, soprano, sang in the two works either side of intermission. Robert Gross' *Love (and Only Love)/I Carry Your Heart With Me* was perhaps presented a bit too loudly, obscuring the text. The first song used a nice multi-voice effect that somewhat compensated for its stridency. Ms. Pilgrim established quite a rapport with the audience, helping to confirm Dexter Morrill's *Six Dark Questions* as the most memorable composition heard Saturday and maybe throughout. In this work, which is available on one of the Colgate University records, much thought has been given to the presence and presentation of the part for loudspeaker. A single speaker is used in a prominent position and restricted in volume and timbre so as to balance the solo voice. Intended as chamber music and aided by the interesting text, the work was most refreshing in its lightness and clarity. Gary Kendall presented *Five Leaf Rose* next in a recorded version although it can be done live. It is a large mathematically-oriented composition, like *Nautilus* in ways, where the computer is exploited to organize a wealth of slow and subtle changes as a given curve is traced in many dimensions of musical space at once. This genre of piece suffers from the fact that one is unlikely to hear everything on the first try, and, as things are now, almost as unlikely to have another chance, at least in quad. There exists a great potential here to increase comprehensibility with the use of animation to present visual cues to help listeners sort out the threads and better appreciate the overall structure at the same time.

Text also seems to help in delineating structure, and the set and series closed with a return to a six-part form, *Six Fantasies on a Poem by Thomas Campion* by Paul Lansky. It is a magical combination of big technology, a text from 1602, and a reading of it presented six different ways, framed in synthetic voices. It underlined the affinity the most complicated of instruments shows for the simplest, the voice. The combination seems irresistible to both composers and listeners, and this successful example ended the conference on a most promising note.

The two days of the conference were packed solid with readings of papers, a business meeting of the Computer Music Association and displays of commercial computer music systems. The Proceedings will be available soon to document the papers, if not the concerts. (There would seem to be a place for a limited edition of the works played in concert, distributed on tape. Several participants had cassette decks running making bootlegs.) Many of the papers may also be expected to turn up in *The Computer Music Journal*, now published by M.I.T. Press.

The main business dealt with at the meeting was selection of dates and sites for the next conferences. It was decided that the 1981 version will be in Texas, while plans are being laid to have 1982's in Venice at the time of the Biennale, the music-theme of which is to be Music and Technology.

Commercially available computer music systems presented included the Crumar General Development System, the Fairlight CMI, the Synclavier II, Buchla's Touché, the ADS 2000, and the SBASS-1 hybrid synthesizer. The last is an add-on for microprocessors; the others are all more or less dedicated to their keyboards, although the Fairlight is equipped to read, analyse, and modify external sounds. Each has some outstanding features and some pretty clear weaknesses; market pressures are obviously beginning to cost these systems the generality that is one of the main reasons for starting in with computers at all. This is most apparent with the most expensive ones--only the Touché and SBASS can be had cheaper than a grand piano, and they seem to be the most flexible--which have the flavour of imitation, big-synthesizers-to-imitate-orchestras. If you want things done right, as the saying goes, you'll probably have to do them yourself.

Computer music now seems to stand in an interesting relationship to experimental music. Commercial devices are beginning to appear, but they are sacrificing many of the possibilities of highest interest to experimental music--for instance real time processing, nonstandard tunings, and flexibility in control. The potential for computer experimental music is by no means diminishing, though. In the institutional studios, work is being done that is fresh and interesting much of the time. If the requisite knowledge were to become as widespread as useable hardware is likely to, the computer culture might find its own authentic musical expression. It is up to musicians to get involved, if they are interested in seeing this equipment become more than just the cheapest way to do what has always been done.





# MISHA MENGELBERG

FROM PAGE 2

MISHA: In a way it's not necessary at all...you speak one language, someone else speaks another; you have to find ways of understanding each other, that's all.

ANDREW: Well...many things are unnecessary but they exist.

MISHA: Yes.

ANDREW: though it is indicative of the social-political situation in Quebec that a need for a parallel union would be uncovered there and not somewhere else in our country.

MISHA: In a way it's a very simple notion from which we depart from in Holland--where there are no possibilities for innovation or growth, the other fields (classical in this case) are adversely affected. They become...the whole system doesn't work; it seems to be frustrated... ah...drained...ah...

ANDREW:...constipated...

MISHA: constipated. It's not only in your interest but also in theirs.

ANDREW: But I don't think they think that it's vital to their livelihood.

MISHA: Well maybe you should make this a strong point. When you shout long and loud enough you will be recognized.

ANDREW: This necessity...

MISHA: It's essential...

ANDREW: In the last 20 years some of the gap between the poles we've touched on has been closed in a sense, not by creating a union, but by establishing strong individual organizations which are...

MISHA: subsidized...

ANDREW: by the government. Absolutely. Though certainly not to the extent of the classical establishment. Money has been accessible via the wonderful Canadian network of federal, provincial and municipal arts councils, so we could pass over the heads of the unions and go directly to these sources.

MISHA: OK. By way of example, you can find people who obviously exist only for their music, they do nothing but, and still they seem not to manage to make a living from that. To deal with that problem is one of our current concerns in Holland. Some of those people could attain the kind of status that those in the classical field have. You cannot do this without arriving at a consensus of one or two hundred in that field and a resulting lobby for these ideas.

ANDREW: Well, the councils do that in an interesting way.

In order for the agents of the councils to make their decisions on who is to get what funds they keep their ears to the ground as to the consensus among the community of your artistic peers. We've probably not felt the need for a union because the system we have works relatively well. The composers have a pressure group, a lobby in the League of Canadian Composers, yet the performers of contemporary music have no such organization.

MISHA: Between BIM and the composers' union we have very strong connexions in Holland. We have the same interests in creating opportunities for people to work on pieces or projects or to stage concerts of new music and improvisation.

ANDREW: That's natural. I read in Donemus, the Dutch composers' voice magazine, a couple of articles about improvisation. In Musicworks, John Oswald and I embody both these tendencies, John being primarily an improviser.

MISHA: Donemus also edits Dutch scores and the magazine promotes these; maybe that's not a very good motive but it is a motive.

ANDREW: As good a motive as any...

MISHA: Yes, but luckily it is for the public to ultimately judge what it wants to do with this music.

ANDREW: There's really nothing like that kind of publishing for Canadian music. Strangely enough, Musicworks is the only current one that comes to mind.

MISHA: How are Canadian composers published then?

ANDREW: There are the few major stars who get published by the private international houses and the few who manage distribution through smaller presses, but the Canadian Music Centre which serves as a library to member composers must remain the largest reliquary (depot) of scores. The centre has four regional offices now, so it's well represented across Canada. Unfortunately, composers still have to pass a musical fitness test before being allowed entry onto the shelves.

MISHA: It was like that in Holland too, but anybody who walks up and says 'I'm a composer' is a composer nowadays in Holland...

ANDREW: I believe we are in the enviable position of having two performing rights organizations here, which helps the lot of the composer...

MISHA: As in the U.S.--BMI and ASCAP...You only need one, in a way.

ANDREW: Sure, perhaps that's the good capitalist way--to



have a little competition.

MISHA: Yes, maybe...

ANDREW: You have two unions for performers and only one for the composers, so in a sense it balances out.

MISHA: And you get six dollars eighty cents...

ANDREW: Sometimes much more, sometimes less. They throw the figures into a computer at Capac and certain amounts are withdrawn and cheques made to Andrew Timar and Gordon Lightfoot. Of course pop stars subsidize Canadian concert hall performances of "serious" music through the formers' airplay...

MISHA: That's the same in Holland...

ANDREW: Which is fair enough, but the roles we play are very fuzzy, and that's because of the state of copyright legislation.

MISHA: The law is also very complicated in Holland. At this moment I am a member of the board of the people who run the authors' rights organization BIMA and...I don't know...

ANDREW: (laughing)...the computer knows?

MISHA: The people who are actually doing the job--they know of course, but it is so complicated that lawyers have to explain it and I still don't understand.

ANDREW: I don't understand why it should be so mysterious, although it has to do with money and money is a very mysterious substance.

MISHA: That's right...good point.

ANDREW: Though I should say that in Canada, Capac at least has gone as far as licensing and paying for certain non-published and even improvised musics (at a reduced rate of course).

MISHA: Unfortunately not every country has such an enlightened policy. In 1964 I made a record with Eric Dolphy and I got 250 guilders from Phillips and that was all. No rights.

ANDREW: Did you sign a contract?

MISHA: Yes I did, as a matter of fact. Everybody did and it was to be a limited memorial record, but (laughing)

It was a tuesday, regular CCMC night at the Music Gallery, when Misha Mengelberg walked in. It was an October evening and I had come to meet him for the first time. He wore a wrinkled brown leather jacket and stooped slightly. A cigarette was hanging from his mouth and he spoke correct, good English with a soothing helping of vocal humms...Yes, he was the composer/improviser from Holland who was artist-in-residence at the Music Gallery for the whole month; I knew that. What I didn't, was that he had fondness for the game Go. He had found out that the Chinese groups in town playing the game didn't allow Westerners--that couldn't happen in Holland said Misha. He was amused. Or rather, I was and suggested he look westward--to Japan. He introduced himself to the person answering the phone at the Japanese Buddhist Temple as Misha Mengelberg of Holland and wanted to get in on a game. He took down the time and place. That was our first meeting. We had three others during his stay and two of those we spent in lengthy interview. I recorded approximately two and a half hours worth of talk. I never did find out if he got in a decent game of chess or Go.

--A.T.

they got hundreds of thousands of copies in the U.S. There is a composition on it that I wrote, but since it was not published in the United States, I never got any financial benefits from that.

ANDREW: Isn't taping it and sending it to the Library of Congress a form of publishing?

MISHA: No, you have to have it edited and written out.

ANDREW: Well, you can send it to yourself then, that's legal.

MISHA: Send it to yourself--how do you do that?

ANDREW: Mail the score to your address and never open it. It's legally registered through the postmark.

MISHA: What happens then?

ANDREW: If there's any dispute, then it's a legal document of your authorship before the postmarked date.

MISHA: Shhh...oh well...

ANDREW: Maybe you should send yourself some music... (laughs).

MISHA: ...in the next five minutes. (laugh). Phillips sold the master tape to some American enterprise...

ANDREW: and there are bootlegs?

MISHA: Oh yes.

ANDREW: and you never got any...

MISHA: never.

ANDREW: not one guilder...

MISHA: that's right. It was one of the reasons why we

started the *instant composers pool* I would say; a record company in which we were in control of business and not some fucking company...

ANDREW:...Did the performance rights organization stick up for you?

MISHA: They said that there were particular difficulties with the U.S....

ANDREW: and that was that, (rubs hands together, imitation of washing).

MISHA: Exactly.

ANDREW: Had you received your money from that record, you could have hired a lawyer to protect your rights...

MISHA: Yes, ha, ha...that's right...ha, ha...I probably could have made a lot of money from that record, but it would have probably been too early. I was still at the Conservatory then...

ANDREW: I guess that opportunity of selling a record in the hundreds of thousands doesn't present itself too often to an improvising (jazz) artist.

MISHA: No that's true, yet you cannot live on making one record.

ANDREW: Pop music where a record goes triple platinum before anybody even hears it is true business.

MISHA: Business...we're not into that anyhow.

ANDREW: But that's by default, no? It's the law of supply and demand--the demand isn't there so we're out of business.

MISHA: No, I don't think it's like that--there is never a demand for any music. There was nobody who asked Beethoven to write.

ANDREW: He had to create his own demand.

MISHA: That's right! That's what done always in music. The industry is very much aware of that in manipulating peoples' tastes with their controlled pop music. They make the money. If they tried to popularize your music they would not make as much money as they do off of those seamy guitar players who hardly own the equipment they use. The players are told to play this or that.

ANDREW: Those sort of musicians of course make money for the record industry.

MISHA: That's right, plus the authors who are dead more than fifty years--you don't have to pay for their performance rights.

ANDREW: Yet you get the benefit of their work--it's a beautiful arrangement.

MISHA: Not bad.

ANDREW: I read that in the past there were publishers who were interested in developing talent of composers, and I'm not simply referring to the popular streams, but to composers working with classical ensembles and the concert stage.

MISHA: There are always idealists...It's like the art galleries which buy work from unknowns and turn them into a known quantity--money.

ANDREW: It's a long term proposition (to allow a composer to develop) which few these days want to wait out. More and more record companies are being run by senior accountants, money men who know (or feel) little about artistic development and values,--they look for the yearly bottom line. I think this matter comes down to the question of the intrinsic and social value (worth) of our artistic activity.

(long pause)

MISHA: We've been speaking all day! So we are rather tired (to John Oswald who turns up and then leaves for another recording project).

ANDREW: John is a true improvising musician, that's all he does.

MISHA: Oh, that's possible. What does he play?

ANDREW: He's a saxophonist. He has a couple of records out...but you don't listen to records--

MISHA: If possible, not. I'd rather talk to the person or another person about the music, that's more interesting. Maybe I should listen more...I want to be really informed about things. My knowledge of music should be as compact as possible. As I told you before, one has to choose between making things and listening and I choose (very much) making things...but I know you disagree on this point.

ANDREW: Well what does an improvising musician do, does he make or listen?

MISHA: That's a situation in which he influences somehow the process of music. You listen in order to react, to do something with what you've heard. In a way you are responsible for the whole musical result of the group that's playing.

ANDREW: When did you get involved with improvised music?

MISHA: In the Conservatory I *had* to go through other people's music--it's part of that education.

ANDREW: How did you discover your own music and get involved with the community of improvisors?

MISHA: I've been improvising all my life. I started playing the piano when I was two or three and didn't bother to play any other music than my own.

ANDREW: Your father allowed that?

MISHA: Yes, he did. He was kind of permissive.



ANDREW: You mentioned he is a composer and conductor.  
MISHA: Yes, and a very open person. Sometimes he would say to me, 'I have to write all this down', (when I was playing) and 'Please, wait a few hours, because I have to think of other things.' I could feel that that statement was too much for him to make; he should have simply asked for *silence*. His argument was 'you must stop playing in order that I may write it all down,' for you see he had penchant for making notations of everything he heard. I have the same thing in a way. I try to imagine how you should notate noises and music...

ANDREW: So you're still guided by that internal graphic reference.

MISHA: For me, improvisation is not a holy cow but a method of expression. Some subjects are suited to that method and others, much better treated via other methods, so composition or semi-composition or remembering things or improvising--it's all one field of being busy with music.

ANDREW: You mentioned earlier that you were writing an opera.

MISHA: Oh yes, that's right, but it's a funny kind of opera. It's for trained voices--the classical way, the opera way--the *funny* way...

ANDREW: ha...ha...ha...ha...

MISHA: --and improvisers. The opera singers are also supposed to improvise--not all the way, I'll give them a little help. It's important that they find their own ways, I think. The subject of the opera is a kind of third rate metaphysics. It's about werewolves and vampires so I let the ghouls sing like opera singers. There are also those who cannot sing at all, yet who sing in my opera so I foresee some fruitful clashes.

ANDREW: How large a performing ensemble will there be?

MISHA: Maybe seven or eight improvisers, among them various guests appearing one night only during the run. Also guest actors who will be eaten by the werewolves and bitten by the vampires; scared to death by other terrible metaphysics.

ANDREW: Is this the latest in your line of yearly stage projects?

MISHA: That's right. I'm busy writing the texts. We got some money from the government to make theatre, being improvising musicians, but the money is not really enough to rehearse like you should, let's say, for a television appearance. There you should rehearse with the actors and all the effects and the complete scenery for at least two or three months to create something that has the flux of drama, the flow of one situation to another, etc. etc. This is all not possible because we have only the funds to rehearse a very short time, maybe two days, and then have the performances. Then there is an extra difficulty. I don't like the idea of every performance being the same. That would even include even more rehearsal and more difficulties, so let's say I would need four or five months to deal with all those problems but I cannot afford that. One day I write a scene for two vampires and one werewolf and the next day I would write another scene in place of that for one vampire and raincloud and somebody who's cleaning grocery stores--well, whatever seems to be needed. Actors cannot learn those texts by heart from one day to the next so they read them from the script on stage. What really happens is that I give a rough idea of how the scene could be when properly rehearsed plus the fact that improvisers are very much used to that kind of set-up always. The only people who can react properly to the whole condition are the improvisers.

ANDREW: That sounds like a bizarre combination of elements that could be really successful. I'm intrigued by the idea.

MISHA: I think so. What I hope for it that some day the city of Amsterdam would give the opportunity to do it the way it should be treated. Then it would become *clearer* to most people who are not thinking in terms of speculations when they see the theatre. You shouldn't underestimate people though, the public is not a kind of stupid melange of individuals; partly they are very intelligent and know more than the players. That is also possible.

ANDREW: You already mentioned that you have improvised practically all your life and that when you were still enrolled at the Conservatory you had recorded with Dolfy, so you must have begun your involvement with the jazz tradition early on.

MISHA: I wanted to irritate my parents a little bit by trying to play boogie-woogie.

ANDREW: Was that considered naughty?

MISHA: Yes, it was considered a little bit...out of the question. They were very much involved in classical music of course, but also in contemporary music and that's what I knew from a very early age. I had the privilege to know Webern, Stravinsky, Berg, whomever, before the age of ten. It was during the war '40-'45; we were rather secluded--there were no concerts anymore. It came as a surprise that other kids didn't have the

same information as I had...and the surprise is still there, that it's not common. During the war we had one Ellington record that I turned over and over, I was really intrigued by it. It was completely different from all the other music anyway. Jazz music had a very big influence on me, though there was almost none to be found. Then right after the war there was suddenly plenty. There were the transmissions for the American forces in Europe and in the later '40s records came in force. As I told you, I was always improvising (on piano as I never played other instruments). I started to play jazz.

ANDREW: Just from listening to the radio?

MISHA: That's right, and trying to play boogie-woogie. My parents disliked that a little bit. Not very much though, they adapted to that later and were interested in my work. They were always very open, much too open

## I took Misha to a pocket calculator

store where he made the acquaintance of a talking computerized chess board which I had punched in to an easy level of play. The computer indicated its moves almost instantly and at first, after several seconds of waiting for Misha's reply, it would say 'Your move!' Within a few volleys Misha had a sense of the computer's game plan and was then able to match its pace. An interchange ensued which was less than lightning fast only because of my incompetence at punching in the moves, which led to my erasing the computer's memory when I attempted to indicate a castling. Misha continued the game hypothetically, maintaining the pace while speculating on his deceased opponent's potential moves. I left them as a new game was begun, this time at the computer's most difficult level--the store management seemed happy to have such a match take place on their premises, Misha was performing. Five hours later he arrived at the Music Gallery. The game had been long, mostly because the formerly impatient computer had needed fifteen minutes to formulate each of its moves. Misha won, and said of the computer: he is good but he is not *very* good. But he is very slow.

--J.O.

maybe. I couldn't irritate them anymore, this was yet one more irritation, of course.

ANDREW: Hmhm.

MISHA: But then happily there were other things to get angry over. This motor of music, which I think is very important; being angry, being irritated...*somehow being* annoyed by things...that's in a way my main source of being busy.

ANDREW: What are you angry about these days?

MISHA: Oh...countless.

ANDREW: Then you must be pretty busy.

MISHA: No, not necessarily. I'm also kind of lazy, of course. Always being busy implies that you really believe that you can devise solutions to any problem. That's not how it goes.

ANDREW: You don't believe that every problem has a solution, then?

MISHA: Oh no, certainly not, but it's certainly a kind of motor. The energy comes from that.

ANDREW: When did you begin to play with musicians of like interests?

MISHA: Very late. Well, I'm 45 years old now and my Dolfy record was made in '63, so I was 28, and that's not so particularly early. I have been playing since 55/56 with other musicians.

ANDREW: These were local musicians?

MISHA: Yes, of course, we were playing jazz. In a way the improvisation opened up for me after I left the Conservatory since there was simply nobody I could play with. I was listening to Cecil Taylor records when I realized that I had been writing pieces like Cecil Taylor sounded in the fifties. Cluster pieces. I couldn't do anything with them in improvisation. People didn't recognize it as jazz, for instance. They thought 'He's crazy, he's out of his mind.'

ANDREW: You or Cecil Taylor?

MISHA: Both of us. For me Cecil Taylor's music was already common, it was nothing special, in a way. About '64 or '65 there were people from similar backgrounds and various disciplines like Han Bennink who came onto the scene. He was a pupil of the art school He learned painting and calligraphy. There was also Willem Breuker coming up--they were a new generation and they were open to play music that diverged from the jazz tradition. At that time Han Bennink and I were backing touring American players at local clubs. As far as influences are



concerned, there was a record by the pianist Herbie Nichols around '55, and the earlier '50's days it was Monk who was a real influence. I didn't like very much of the bop music.

ANDREW: Really?

MISHA: No. I wasn't very much into that. I thought it was all a kind of disease that Charlie Parker had spread around. Charlie Parker was a very fantastic player and although everybody tried to immitate him, it was all ridiculous; because Parker had advances on everyone of his imitators. Of course this is not funny at all. He has spoiled two generations of very talented saxophone players in that he mastered jazz saxophone playing to such an extent that right up to today it's impossible to imitate Charlie Parker. But that was what was mainly being done and it was all very dull; including Sonny Stitt, and all the others.

ANDREW: It's always hard to come after a major figure.

MISHA: Yes, I think Ornette Coleman who was kind of an influence in the '60's was more human because he was not such a fantastic instrumentalist but he had new ideas and gave some clues to which others could add things. I think that's a better, a more human way of being ahead of your time.

ANDREW: I don't think Parker calculated to level everyone else for a couple of generations.

MISHA: He must have known and he must have had fun with that knowledge. It's really not his fault--the others should have understood that they should have followed other paths. Anyway, the influence--of course there was influence on my jazz playing but that was earlier in the '50's.

ANDREW: What about in the '60's then?

MISHA: There were no influences. I consider myself being an influence on other persons from that moment. I figure out my line myself.

ANDREW: Can you speak of a style of improvising that has grown up in Holland since the '60's?

MISHA: Yes, it was a kind of notion that seems today very easy to understand but wasn't at all at that time; that the roots of jazz musicians were their special circumstances and situation in the United States, we had to find a way of exploiting our own European roots. They have to do with barrel organs, operas, operettas, Beethoven, what's left of European folk music but also the other influences that are around which include jazz, although it's a limited part of the whole. Jazz is a kind of teacher in the field of improvisation of this century in industrial towns. You can learn a kind of precision from it, and it's the standard of how to think about certain musical problems. To that extent it can be part of everybody's improvisation.

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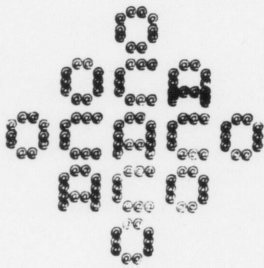
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