MUSICWORKS

In the spring of 1980, I worked with Martin Bartlett to produce a week long festival, Music from the New Wilderness (the title was borrowed from the New Wilderness Foundation). Our idea of "wilderness" incorporated music-making which involved new sounds and compositional ideas. As well we considered "wilderness" to be an inhabited landscape, not an emptiness or an uncharted area to be exploited, filled, or tamed. An unconfined landscape of possibility and imagination.

The final evening was a performance by Kwakiutl Indians from Alert Bay off the north east coast of Vancouver Island. The song maker of the group was over ninety years old. It became obvious during the negotiations to bring these musicians to Vancouver that they considered the idea of *performing* their songs as strange or even 'funny'. They had a totally other relationship to this music; it was integrated into their lives. The songs had meaning as part of life activities. A performance prescinded from this context seemed curious to them. "Who would want to sit and listen to a lullaby?"

In retrospect, I have come to believe that the valuable questions and explorations that musicians in our culture have pursued in the last century must now be superceded by the primary question of where music exists and where it can exist in this society.

Certainly the material expansion of music's parameters in the past decades is actual. Formal/constructional ideas and sounds available for composition are extended - and both of these are affected by a growing technology concerned with sound. The parameters of performance have also been changed through music/theatre experiments; sound without performance; performance without sound; and in some pieces audience integration into the performance space.

The important inquiry, however, seems to be one that probes what music is and does in western culture. Without questioning the larger context - the framework, it is impossible to enact anything new.

This involves a critical awareness of how music functions. Music is a sounding art; a musician is someone who is sensitive to sound. When a sound is made, it is immediately in a public realm - it connects us. A performer/composer must be aware of what connections are being made. If we do not critically examine the framework of our musical activities we hold our work cheaply. After all taking one's play seriously is a potent 'contradiction'. In doing this we acknowledge the place and importance of music in a society that considers music-making a superfluity.

It was therefore of great importance to find in the articles of this issue of MUSICWORKS musicians ranging in this critical territory, reconnecting ideas of performance, composition and technology, aural imagination, communication, perception - the human dimension of music. Finding the human perspective and the larger context for our music-making is also finding the door to the wilderness of possibility.

Donna Zapf
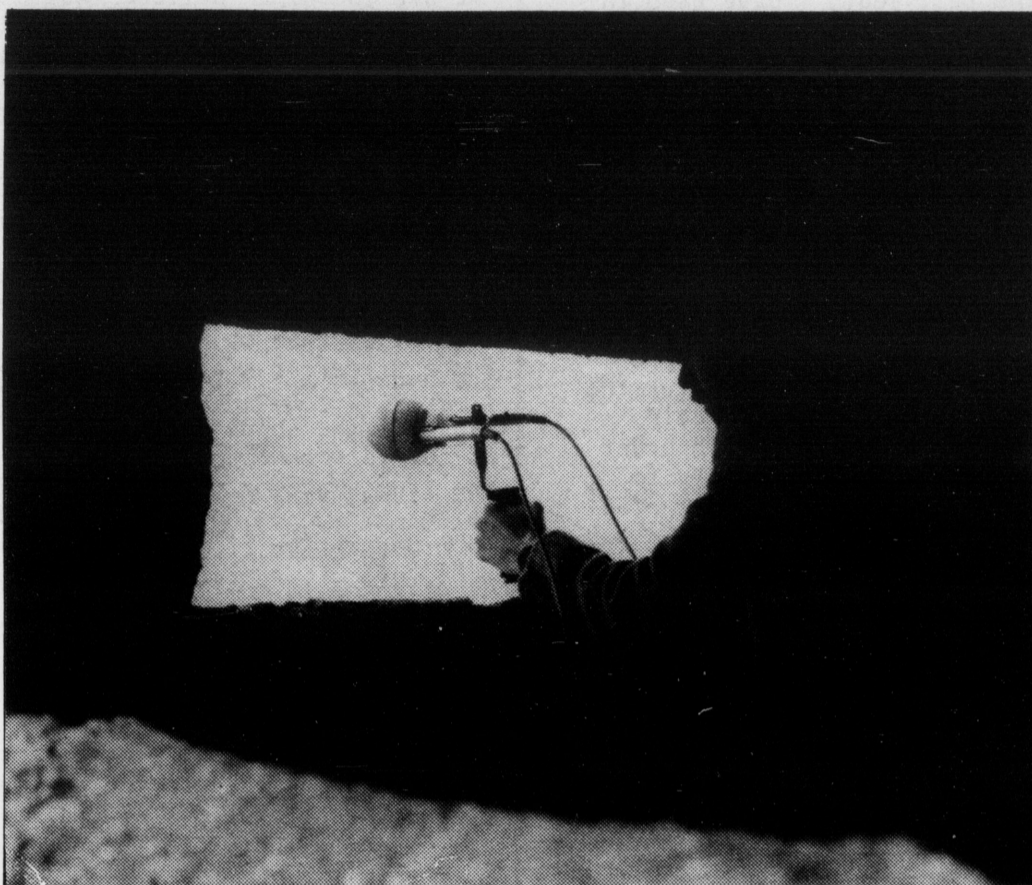
Stephen Parkinson

Acknowledging the Mind's Ear

For the past year, I have been involved in an ongoing project, Music For the Imagination. It is an attempt to understand the imagination, particularly as a suitable medium for musical performance. As well, it is a series of compositions. Both the research and the compositions represent preliminary exploration.

"The world is far more accurate than it appears to the senses."

When I first approached the project, it was fundamental to determine if imagination is capable of being a musical performance medium. In order to answer this it was necessary to define the constituent elements of a performance medium. What resulted was an exploration of imagination and existing media in relation to some of these elements.

"Imagination rules the world."

A traditional characteristic of all music is sound. All existing forms of musical performance produce sound. Since imagination cannot produce sound, can it be considered a medium of musical performance?

"My God, what has sound got to do with music?"

When I hear a sound, what is it that I hear? A quick reply would state it to be a more or less complex wave train composed of condensations and rarefactions of molecules. When this reaches my ear, it is transmitted to my brain. Here, by a process not fully understood, it is introduced into the world of neurons and synapses and then somehow, sound occurs. This common explanation however, fails to address the problem of how consciousness of a sound arises from a physical stimulus. It is the problem of mind and brain. The pressure waves which result in electrical activity in the brain are not the sensation of sound which occurs in the mind. Stimuli may cause the sensory experience, but it is not the experience itself. Vis a vis Kant, when a tree falls and no one is there to hear it there are sound waves but no sound because there is no mind. If sound then is different than sound waves, the possibility exists of separating the two. Imagination allows this separation since it produces the sensation of sound without sound waves. In this way imagination fulfills the traditional requirement that a performance medium must produce sound.

"Imagination, or knowledge or the image, derives from the intellect which applied to the physical impression made in the brain, yields consciousness of the image."

If it is agreed that imaginary sound is nevertheless sound, it is possible to compare imaginary and physical sound. Imaginary sound initiated internally, is subjective, whereas physical sound is objective and externally initiated. Imaginary sound is real in another sense.

"...the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there
and the nothing that is."

"We are taught to believe that only the 'out there' is real. We are taught to consider our perception of reality to be transient, accidental and insignificant, arising only from and oriented to economic biological necessities."

I have red-green colour blindness, a slight and not uncommon visual dysfunction which alters my perception of the colours red and green. When I look at a green object on my desk I see a different shade of green than I would if I had 'normal' colour vision. If the shade of green that I do see is somehow not true, what is the true shade of green? 'Normal' colour vision is not related to uniform perception of a colour but to a range of colour perception which includes the majority of people. Everyone has at least a slightly different idea of what a colour looks like and that idea represents the 'true' colour to them. If this argument is extended to include all of the senses, it becomes possible to see how individual interpretations of reality are based on individual perceptions.

"The universe is a creative process carried on by man's imagination."

A dolphin uses sound to 'see' underwater. Its perception, based on sound rather than light, is going to differ radically from our own. Whose interpretation is true?

"How do you know but every bird
That wings the airy way
Is an immense world of delight
Closed to your senses five?"

The purpose of these arguments is to make clear that we do not perceive objective reality. We perceive our perceptions and construct reality from them. Since perception of either internal or external sound is only perception they are equally a part of reality. This is not to say an internal sound can exist externally but that it exists in the same way any object exists, through our perception of it.

"The activity of imagining reality is the center of experience."

"The object may be real or imaginary, the subject is deemed to manifest unity of presence."

In sum, imagination produces sound even though it does not produce sound waves, and this sound is as real as any externally existent object.

Another necessity for a performance medium is the ability to convey a wide range of expression. A hammer striking wood, for example, may be delightful in a particular composition but does not contain enough expressive possibilities to become a medium of performance. Imagination, however, seems capable of conveying a nearly infinite range of expression.

"The Imagination also shapes and creates."

"What we cannot think, we cannot think; we cannot therefore say what we cannot think."

"The imagination is the name we give to the mind when it is prepared to change everything except itself; or when it is prepared to give up that exception lest a limit be placed upon its freedom."

It may be argued that imagination merely synthesizes sounds previously heard. This is equally true, however, for any music that we hear. Only those things which are extrapolated from our existing knowledge can be perceived or understood. New knowledge results from a restructuring of old knowledge. Even if there was something really new under the sun it probably wouldn't exist for us. We would not hear, see, smell, taste or feel it.

"We rebound forward under the collective effect of our recollection."

"It is the theory which decides what we can observe."

"Imagination...opens to syntheses larger than the sum of total reason."

A final aspect of imagination as a performance medium is the relationship of composer, performer, and listener, to each other and to the music.

Composer creates music A and interprets it as notation.
notation
Performer interprets notation as music A.
sound waves
Listener interprets sound waves as music A.

Electronic music or improvisations by a solitary composer - performer do not fit neatly into the above representation. It does show, however, that in all cases the interpretations deal with the same parameters (pitch, rhythm, harmony, for example). Even in aleatoric or improvisational works, the composer specifies the amount of freedom given to the performer.

In this sense, freedom cannot be considered an aspect of the music. Each interpretative step in the process results in a different music (A,A',A''); each music is derived from its predecessor. The existence of the notation assures that the piece can be repeated with the same parameters whenever the performer wishes.

In imaginary music the relationship is somewhat different.

Composer creates notation and interprets it as music A.
notation
Performer interprets notation to create music B.

Here the composer creates a textual notation with which he produces within his own imagination, music A. This notation is also interpreted by a performer - listener who creates within his imagination a different music, music B, which is not derived from music A. In fact, each presentation of Music for the Imagination will generate different sounds within individual imaginations. The composer cannot imagine the performer's imagined sound and vice versa. In listening to non-imaginary music one can remain passive and still hear sound. In imaginary music a conscious effort must be made if sound is to be created. Since the notation does not describe the actions necessary to produce the sounds nor fix its parameters, there is little to say about the performance. The musical experience is highly personalised and essentially non-communicable. A repetition of the imagined sounds is impossible even though a performer may wish to re-create the previous performance.

"So I assumed a double part and cried
And heard another's voice cry:
What! are you here?
Although we were not. I was still the same.
Knowing myself yet being someone other."

Thus each interaction with Music for the Imagination is unique. It resists labelling or categorization. Western culture cannot avoid reductionism. This has allowed science but has removed much of our ability to appreciate the unique qualities of things. An A played on a violin is considered the same as all other A's on all other violins. This produces a multitude of different A's which, for the sake of convenience, are considered to be all the same. Each imagined sound, on the other hand, because of its inherent uniqueness, demands consideration as an individual sound rather than as a member of a group. For me, this individuality is one of the most interesting and explosive results of the project.

In its present form Music for the Imagination is very simple. Through the use of a text, I attempt to create an environment and stimulus which allows a receptive mind to create sounds that would be impossible in any other medium. In some cases the sound has no perceptible physical counterpart. A performer may say that such and such did have a sound; it would sound like this.

"We can conceive of the imagination as an input-output device. Its input is sets of propositions. Its output is sets of possible worlds."

Our imagination allows us to reach beyond our normal limits to the unknown. We extrapolate knowledge and extend it into new areas. Through Music for the Imagination, I have tried to extend our perception of reality and increase our understanding of what constitutes individual perception.

"You have confused the true and the real."

"Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."

There is another facet of Music for the Imagination besides the generation of sound. Some of the texts arise from a belief in composition as organization. Imagination allows us to organize other material than that traditionally associated with music. Music becomes in effect, a metaphor of life through the organization of experiences and concepts. If there are parallels with poetry in the project, I believe the overlapping is a superficial similarity. I have been solely concerned with the generation of sound and the organization of material. This places the project unarguably in the realm of music.

For the future I envisage a development of the methods of producing imaginary sound to include other senses. In addition, I am interested in the possibility of generating other imaginary effects such as multi-media compositions for the imagination. And I would like to investigate a means of transmitting sound from the performer's imagination back into the objective world.

"A trumpet sound is the feel of some sort of plastics...
smooth and shiny I felt it slipping."

Ultimately, of course, since anyone can create sounds at any time, the texts are unnecessary. Furthermore, I urge all those interested to experiment with imagination to produce their own music. I have not created a new medium.

"Imagination lies within our own power whenever we wish."

If my work illustrates the power of our imagination and arouses interest in its possibilities, it has justified my effort.

"Some of the songs in this book, particularly among the later ones cannot be sung, and if they could, perhaps might prefer, if they had a say, to remain as they are; that is, 'in the leaf' and that they will remain in this peaceful state is more than presumable."

Consider an imperceptible sound

Transform it into
an imaginary sound.

Is it possible
to hear
the sound of gravity?

Imagine a dark, cold
incredibly vast and empty space.

Listen to the silence of the space.

Listen long enough for the silence
to become a tangible presense
of unbearable magnitude.

Now create a small, warm
and almost inaudible sound.

Place it within the empty space.

Let us write
music
in the air

With exquisite
colours.

Considering all the possible
sounds in the universe, and

considering all the possible
minds

how can you ever expect
to meet the same
sound twice?

Imagine
the sound of water
turning into ice.

Consider the world

as a graphic notation
for music.

Allow a silence
to unfold

...slowly...

then
find a path

through it.

Imagine hearing all sounds
simultaneously.

Imagine
the next sound
that you will hear.

Stephen Parkinson is a composer living in Victoria, B.C.

Donna Zapf

The World Soundscape Project Revisited

As a good idea loses immediate currency, it often appears to drop from conscious consideration even within the community which it most urgently addresses. Perhaps the music community at large needs to readdress the sound environment issues actively brought to public attention by the World Soundscape Project.

In the early seventies, a group of composers working out of Simon Fraser University pursued the interconnections between music and the living sound environment. This group, the World Soundscape Project, included in 1974, R.M. Schafer, founder, Howard Broomfield, Bruce Davis, Peter Huse, Barry Truax, and Hildegard Westerkamp. The architect of the project and initially the primary voice was R.M. Schafer. The premises of World Soundscape derived from Schafer's teaching and research of the previous decade. Schafer's books written and published up to 1970 such as The Composer in the Classroom and The Book of Noise lay the ideological foundations: the music community and society at large could no longer afford to ignore the implications of the sonic environment.

Western culture is visual in orientation. Music therefore, non-visible, non-verbal, described only awkwardly with words is the least tangible of the arts. Most of us are unaware most of the time of the detail of the aural information that engulfs us constantly. It is easy, therefore, to feel music and all the concomitant issues of sound as peripheral to more visible life issues. Sound is literally invisible, ergo it is figuratively invisible in the larger scheme of things.

Yet in this we are left insensitive to the roar that surrounds us constantly. We are unaware that the earth's skin is sound and within our culture, a constant howl of humanity. We literally do not believe our ears; as a society we do not listen.

Musicians, usually concerned with the details of their art, an art which in any case seems illusively detached from the world, ignore the political context and implication of their work. There is a tendency to see music as intersecting with society only in the formality of the concert space, radio broadcast, or gramophone recording.

The profound changes that World Soundscape Project stressed in terms of music described and actively countered this situation. It proposed the connection of diverse and disconnected disciplines dealing with sound, thus placing music within the larger context of the sound environment. Not only did it expand the possible material of musical composition bringing new ideas and new sounds, but as well proposed an expansion of music's framework.

The basic tenet of World Soundscape lies in its name. "Soundscape" like landscape is not ontologically existent reality outside of human perception, but the human-perceived sound environment. Further, soundscape ideology recognizes that when humans enter an environment, they have an immediate effect on the sounds; the soundscape is human-made and in that sense, composed.

Schafer states at the outset of his essay, Music of the Environment, (Universal Editions, 1973), "Throughout this essay, I am going to treat the world soundscape as a macrocosmic composition." Barry Truax in a later article, "Soundscape Studies: An Introduction to the World Soundscape Pro-

ject," (Numus-West #5, 1974) states:

"The discovery of man's potential role in composing the various soundscapes he experiences is a means of re-establishing a balance now quickly disappearing through thoughtlessness and ignorance, but it involves the creation of a new art which we call acoustic design and whose task is the (re) composition of the world soundscape."

If the soundscape is composed, then passive acceptance of present day pollution, or even the negative approach of noise abatement are inappropriate or inadequate responses. Society can choose its sound environment. World Soundscape embraced a politic of possibility.

The turning of the negative spectre of a polluted sound universe into the possibility of creation and perceptual development was the genius of the organization. The means of effecting change was through a syncretistic approach to the disciplines concerned with sound. This would be a union of science and art, recognizing the necessity of careful analytical understanding of sound and its perception, but also recognizing the human, the subjective, and the aesthetical - the presence of poetry, metaphor, and musical composition.

"In various parts of the world important research is being undertaken in many independant areas of sonic studies: acoustics, psychoacoustics, otology, audiology, noise abatement practices and procedures, communications and sound recording engineering (electroacoustics and electronic music), aural pattern perception and the structural analysis of speech and music. These researches are related; each is dealing with aspects of the world soundscape, the vast musical composition which is unfolding around us ceaselessly. In one way or another researchers engaged on these various themes are asking the same questions: what is the relationship between man and the sounds of his environment and what happens when these sounds change." (R.M. Schafer. The Music of the Environment).

The soundscape is also a mirror of the mind. More than a catalogue of the physical parameters of sound (frequency, amplitude, duration, etc.) the soundscape reflects the imagination. Like Paul Valery's investigation of the seashell ("L'Homme et la Coquille", La Nouvelle Revue Francaise. February 1, 1937), a description of the soundscape is a description of the human mind - of the perception of sound.

From this vantage ground, soundscape ideology recognized the irony of music existing as an island of sonic-sensitivity within an aggressive, increasingly noisy environment. Unless the sound environment is altered, musical activity will be forced farther to the fringes for want of suitable acoustic spaces and human sensitivity to sound will be so atrophied that there will be no audience capable of perceiving sonic creations.

"Too often in both urban and rural areas we are cut off from our own sounds, alienated from our basic source of reference to the environment, surrounded and attacked by broad band noise which destroys all sense of time and space with an unbreathing, unending cacaphony. The environment has a poor

signal to noise ratio; that is, it has become low fidelity in character. When the balance is destroyed, the first victims are the delicate and beautiful sounds of man and nature. Unless we can listen critically and act on our awareness, the balance will not be regained." (Barry Truax. "Soundscape Studies").

These ideas evolved with and supported the activities of the project. It is important to stress that World Soundscape was an organization actively involved in field recording and studio analysis, public action and education, and finally the publication and radio broadcasting of the results of the work. The five documents in the Music of the Environment Series (the first published by Universal Editions and the remainder by Aesthetic Research Canada, Vancouver. Series edited by R.M. Schafer), the legacy of the project, witness the fusion of theory and action.

The first, Schafer's extended essay, The Music of the Environment, is an analysis of society in terms of the human soundscape, and an eloquent plea for a conscious restructuring of a dangerously noisy society. Schafer proposes the establishment of a new discipline, acoustic design, which would use the Bauhaus as a model to study and act on the soundscape of the world through comprehensive, inter-disciplinary connections. The human ear and voice, according to Schafer must be the measure of acoustic design, as Corbusier in architecture measured to the human body. This new field would ressurect a high fidelity environment where discrete sounds could be perceived in meaningful silence, where silence itself would be presence, not absence of sound. The final subsection of the essay, "The Recovery of Positive Silence", outlines the need of silence for thought and contemplation as well as for the general well being of any community.

The issues at stake in Schafer's terms are much larger than isolated aesthetic considerations or functional noise abatement. He concludes by relating how in classes he would use yogic exercises "as a preparation to the listening and creating experience. Little by little, the muscles and the mind would relax and the whole body becomes an ear. . ." Schafer states that through such exercises he has "come to believe that our ultimate hope lies in improving the acoustic design of the world. Still the noise in the mind: that is the first task - Then everything else will follow in time." If this idea tends towards artistic solipsism, still it stands as a recognition and affirmation by the artist of the seriousness of his work within a larger societal context.

Three of the four remaining documents of the series represent the results of field research. They detail the soundscapes of five European villages, the soundscape of Vancouver, and a sound diary of Europe (a record of a group tour of Europe which focussed on sounds rather than sights).

The final book in the series, A Handbook for Acoustic Ecology (edited by Barry Truax), summarizes and defines in dictionary format words invented by or appropriated by the soundscape project as well as technical terminology. As ideas are usually revealed in the language that expresses them, so the words included in this dictionary illustrate World Soundscape. Words such

4

as "soundscape", "soundmark", "clair-audience", and "schizophonia" point towards a political stance and to ideal hearing. The inclusion of a working terminology from acoustics, physiology, electronic techniques and psychacoustics to subjective description and analysis of sound reflect the range and inclusivity of the project.

Out of this broad statement of allegience to the creative possibility of macrocosmic composition, the compositional microcosm, the works of individual artists involved in the project could not remain untouched. The electro-acoustic music of Barry Truax, for example, contains implied sonic ambience. Sonic Landscape #3 is primarily concerned with space, while Nautilus, a dialogue for tape and percussion acknowledges sound sources playing on the tactile properties of different percussion instruments.

The composition of R. Murrary Schafer often contains literal references to a soundscape or to sound environmental issues: the use of the snowmobile in North White; or even the sonic representation of the apocalypse in his recent composition, Apocalypse. His string quartet, Waves, is formally based on the measured periodicity of the sea's swells.

Other composers within the project were influenced in their work as well, in particular Hildegard Westerkamp whose composition has remained exclusively concerned with environmental sounds and issues. Ideally, the materials and ideas presented by the environment feed composition, while the sensitivity to sound and the creative process of the composer when turned to the environment, ultimately change it.

The continuing effects of the World Soundscape Project must be considered in terms of music and music-making. The soundscape project revealed the lie of any music existing apolitically and self-contained. A more inclusive conception of music needs to inform musical activities, writings and dialogue about music. We have a tendency in music to work in enclaves, separated by genre or formalistic concerns. Moreover, most of what we do, even the 'vanguard' of musical activity is defined by the habits, performance situations, and attitudes of social situations which no longer have currency. Perhaps, in the creative interaction with the soundscape, in a conscious and sensitive awareness of ourselves as listeners, and in an open, critical, and interdisciplinary context such as the World Soundscape Project proposed, there is a hopeful and radical path.

Donna Zapf
Inside the Soundscape
the Compositions of Hildegard Westerkamp

Norbert Ruebsaat

Fantasy for Horns (live performance version with French horn) broadcast on "Two New Hours", CBC. January 4, 1981..

Under the Flightpath
broadcast on "The Hornby Collection", CBC. February 21, 1981.

A Walk Through the City
broadcast on "Two New Hours", CBC. March 29, 1981.

Cordillera, a sound environment installed in the Charles H. Scott Gallery, Emily Carr College of Art. April 3 - May 2, 1981.

Music from the Soundscape, An evening of environmental compositions presented by Hildegard Westerkamp. Open Space Gallery, Victoria, B.C. May 16, 1981.

Unless noted, all quotations in the artical are the words of the composer recorded in conversation with Donna Zapf in May, 1981.

Recently, the Charles H. Scott Gallery at the Emily Carr College of Art presented a show of the works of Domingo Cisneros. Cisneros is a Quebec artist who assembles animalskins, skeletons with flesh hardened on bones, furs into individual hangings which attempt to evoke a sense of the life/death reality of the wilderness. However successful, Cisneros' work hung in conflict with the brass, plaster, and polished wood of the gallery space.

Simultaneously, however, there was another confrontation that was more subtle and fragile because easier ignored and destroyed. This was the composition, Cordillera, which Hildegard Westerkamp had created using the poetry of Norbert Ruebsaat. It was chosen to share the gallery space with Cisneros' work because it too made reference to the wilderness. It was an evocation of a wilderness soundscape - intense, discrete, quiet sounds that both challenged the acoustic environment of the gallery space and the aural sensitivity of the listener. It pointed to a realm of issues about environmental sound and composition which is integral to Westerkamp's work.

Hildegard Westerkamp's environmental composition grew out of her involvement with the World Soundscape Project in the early seventies. Her composition assimilated aesthetical and political ideas from the project as it answered her desire to translate words into aural experience, to let the sound environment speak for itself. Subsequently, composition has focussed Westerkamp's environmental activities. It is in this commitment to the sound environment that environmental composition extends beyond the making of pieces.

Environmental composition attempts to bring the larger sound environment into the sphere of music, and for this reason deals with an extensive range of compositional concerns. Sounds may be chosen from an infinite sonic palette. The internal structure of acoustic sounds as well as their environmental context are important considerations. Further, because the material of environmental composition is recorded acoustic sounds and Westerkamp chooses to keep or even enhance the reference to the environment, the compositional material retains a literal connection to the visible world. An almost poetic concern with symbol and meaning in sound comes into play.

Environmental composition also necessitates an awareness of the entire field of sound. Most of us, however, are encultured to screen out the ambient sound as we select what we want to hear. Within the democracy of the ideal sound environment, all sounds are perceived. Once the field of sound is acknowledged, we can begin to discover the existence of sonic perspective, the foreground and background of the sonic landscape. The 'lay' of this soundscape is determined by the listener's perception; foreground and background are not necessarily determined by relative amplitudes of sound with louder sound dominating the foreground and quiet sound receding to the background. In Cordillera, for example, a sound that was frequently noticed and isolated was the quiet and delicate crackling of icicles. It is the listener who pulls

a sound to the foreground. The play between background and foreground is structurally present in Westerkamp's work, and sensitivity to this dynamic is important in the understanding and enjoyment of the pieces.

Perhaps the essence of environmental composition lies in its exploration of how sound exists in the world and how we perceive it. Music is after all a sounding art. If musical composition makes connections through sound, it must be a process of hearing first of all, and a consideration of how sounds will be heard. Environmental composition very much fulfills this criterion.

Of Westerkamp's works, Whisper Study (1975), Fantasy for Horns (1978), and Cordillera (1980) are concerned with the aesthetic content of environmental sound. Under the Flightpath (1981) and A Walk Through the City (1981), both recent CBC commissions, are concerned with urban sounds, and make political statements about human response to environmental noise. With the exception of Fantasy for Horns, all of the pieces incorporate voice.

In the earliest composition, Whisper Study, most of the material comes from the whispered text, "When there is no sound, hearing is most alert", and the word, "silence". The aural content of the piece, the whispered sounds and the presence of silence, acts as acoustic expression of the text. From the beginning, the listener must deal with an extremely quiet environment; the composer creates an acoustic space to accommodate the text. Further, she explores the very subtle connection between the way that words are spoken, the way that they sound, and their meaning: in this case the effect of whispering the words, "when there is no sound. . ."

The piece began as an exploration of speech sounds. But it also explores aspects of silence and aural perception. Horns enter. Brief and faint, they appear as ghosts in the texture. As they are foreign to the other material and almost inaudible, the ear reaches for the sound bringing it to the sonic foreground.

Westerkamp also considers silent soundscapes and complex sounds to contain infinite possibilities for the play of the aural imagination. She makes a subtle distinction in this imaginative play with sound, employing the term, "acoustic illusion". Illusions, hearing sounds that are not physically present while listening to real sounds, can occur in both quiet and oppressive environments such as those environments dominated by loud and continuous sounds like engine drones, machinery, or air-conditioning. Acoustic imagination as active participation, however, is only possible in a quiet environment, where the ear can find stimulus and room for remembering and imagining sound.

In a recent article which criticizes the Vancouver Museum of Anthropology's unconsidered sound design, Westerkamp argues for recognition of the sound environment. It should be as important as the visual environment which Arthur Erickson very consciously designed to house the artifacts of westcoast Indian culture. The article clearly describes the environment needed to encourage acoustic imagination.

"Every totem tells a story. It is as much a carrier of an aural tradition as are the songs, narratives and rituals of an aural culture. Totem poles stand silently: listening to the forest, ocean, wind and rain, to ravens and frogs and eagles; listening to everything they are telling us about; made of the material their surroundings are made of; their surroundings collected in them and brought to new expression in their large silent structures. Each totem is an acoustic event for those

who want to hear, for those who listen to its voices and stories it has to tell.

Ideally it is for the survival of this "acoustic event" and not just for the physical survival of the totem pole that the architect must aim in his design of the museum. For a totem pole whose voices can no longer be heard is nothing but a dead structure, and the space in which it stands is nothing but a mausoleum.

Without the air conditioning the Great Hall (in the Vancouver Museum of Anthropology) is a reverberant but quiet space. In that state it has all the potential for a stimulating acoustic environment. It could be transformed into a clear reverberant space of a forest environment in which totem poles stand; an environment whose quietness is punctuated by sounds in the same way a forest silence is punctuated by a multitude of natural sounds; an environment whose quietness stimulates one's acoustic imagination. In air conditioned spaces, a continuous wall of broadband noise - even if it is relatively quiet - makes it uninviting for the ears to listen. In such a space, the tendency is not to listen, because there is nothing worth hearing and what there is to hear is blurred and hard to locate.

On the other hand, a continuous sound like a creek can be very stimulating even though it creates as much of a sound wall around the listener as air conditioning does. The difference is that one sound is very complex and the other one very dull. The ear is drawn into the complex sound world of water, so much so that the longer one listens to a creek the more does one begin to imagine other sounds, such as wind and voices."
(Hildegard Westerkamp. "The New Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver: An Acoustic Dump." Musings vol. 2#1, 1980).

Whisper Study plays with an interchange between silence and sound complexity. Silence dominates the opening of the piece, changing into a texture whose effect is complex and liquid. There is another play in the construction of the complex texture: as Westerkamp imagines voices in water, so in Whisper Study the sibilant and plosive consonants of the whispering voice create the effect of water.

As the piece is made from minimal material, so timbral variation for the entire composition is made through minimal technique: filtering, speed control, delay feedback, and looping. In Whisper Study as in all of Westerkamp's composition, music leads technology.

"Technical skills are not important in themselves. It is more important to me to consider sound, its meaning, and its content; then, the studio techniques suggest themselves.

In fact the learning of a new studio technique often doesn't happen until I am working on a new piece that contains specific compositional demands. Certainly it is important to know the studio as an instrument, but not to the extent that one gets lost in technical exploration for its own sake."

Similarly and also characteristic of Westerkamp's composition as a whole, form grows out of the material. Nothing is preconceived.

"It is impossible for me to have a pre-conception of the form that a piece will finally take before I have explored in depth the content of the sound.

I work with sounds for a long time before I tackle a piece as a whole. What I do in the studio is examine sound environments, extract the most characteristic elements, then recom-

bine them in a new environment which is the composition."

Formal possibilities are suggested by the inherent qualities of the sound. In Whisper Study, for example, the low frequency hum which ends the piece is made from the word "silence". (Westerkamp says that this sound is "metaphorically a wind that can carry distant sounds into the present.") Even after alteration in the studio, the hum retains the natural inflection of the spoken word. Within this continuous sound there is an organic rhythm and fluctuating crescendo and decrescendo. This rhythm and swell are used compositionally as Westerkamp adds sounds to play off of them.

In the piece, Fantasy for Horns, a composition made from Canadian train horns, fog horns, boat horns, factory horns, the inherent qualities of the sounds even determine the choice of material. Horn sounds are chosen according to the way the landscape has formed their sounds, and their particular qualities influence composition at the micro-level.

"The distinctive quality that each horn has within its own surroundings takes an active part in the composition.

One horn, for example, has a weak attack, an echo an octave lower and a long reverberation time. When I played with that using only delay feedback, the result was a continuous sound with the attack just perceptible enough to provide slight punctuations: A continuity that was always moving. This quality was inherent in the original sound source. Within the sound as well, the octave would emerge and recede."

In Westerkamp's composition, however, other aspects of the material beyond its acoustic definition influence its use. Environmental sound contains literal reference to the visible world and therefore holds associative and symbolic powers. Since nothing can be ignored here, a balance must be struck that integrates and unifies these elements within a composition.

The acoustic content of a single sound, might conflict with the implications of its reference to the environment. In Cordillera, the sound of the airplane was "the only sound that could project the immensity of space that I was trying to convey". Similarly, the sound of car brakes in A Walk Through the City were for Westerkamp a "real source of music".

"Pitches can be discerned in brake sound; when slowed down in the studio, melodies of semi-tones result. I could make a beautiful piece using brake sounds, by completely abstracting the brakes from their source. I could make just a musical piece; the temptation to play with just the sounds is always present."

Ironically, both the jarring sound of brakes in traffic and the airplane drone are most frequently negative additions to the soundscape.

Westerkamp terms "musical" those elements of sound which can be defined by acoustic properties: frequency, amplitude, rhythm, etc. It might appear that the "musical" quality and the associative power of sound are distinct. Sound and significance, however, whether in music or in poetry are interdependant; they do not exist separately. Priority is given to one or the other by the listener, and in a composition usually follows the intention of the composer.

In Westerkamp's composition, both referential and acoustic meanings of sounds are dynamically present. The environmental reference provides the composer with a means of expressing the political framework of her composition,
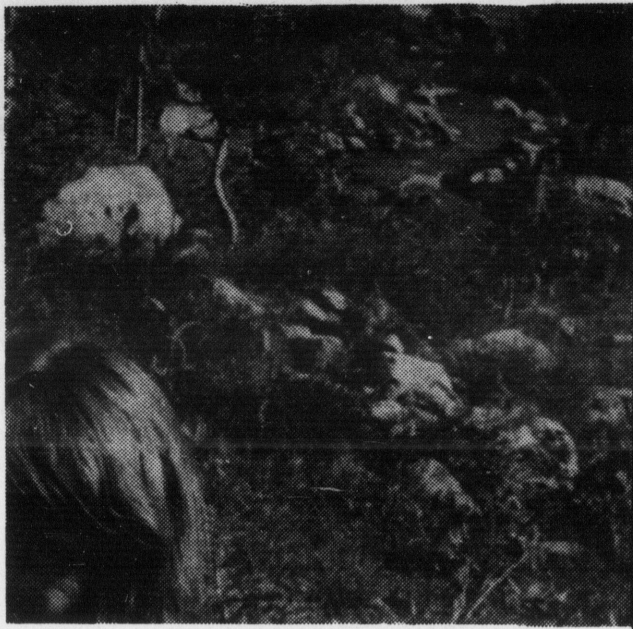
as well as providing the listener, again as part of the composer's intention with easier access to the composition.

"I find it hard to treat environmental sound as sound object and just make a piece out of it without the environmental context.

Environmental sounds contain reference and association. This is very important to me, not only because of my aesthetic preference but because my audience also has a relationship to these sounds. I like to exaggerate certain acoustic qualities in order to heighten the meaning of the sounds which people hear within their daily environment.

To me as a composer it is important to speak to the audience with material that is known. I want to use instruments that are known - in the sense that folk music deals with known material."

The "musical" aspect is no less crucial. Environmental sounds are usually complex and changing amalgams of frequencies and rhythms; these often provide the compositional possibilities of interconnections between sounds. Westerkamp sees this as creating a polyphony of sound - the threads of sonic coherence that weave together the tapestry on which the intended meaning can be revealed. As a result there is also a 'polyphonic' interplay between "music" and meaning.

In her most recent compositions, Under the Flightpath and A Walk Through the City, the "musical" and the associative content of sound struggle for ascendancy. The listener must focus alternately on the environment/political reference and the quality of the sound. Under the Flightpath exists ambiguously between documentary and composition. Its content and structure are dependant on the text (extracts of interviews with people living under the flight-path of the Vancouver International Airport) whose meaning is underlined by the manipulation or addition of sounds. The piece centres on the testimony of one elderly long-time resident who has developed a personal and poignant rationale that allows him to co-habit with an obtrusively loud environment. The message presented is one of human adaptability which becomes a passive and unconscious acceptance of an unacceptable situation. The most oft repeated line is, "you get used to it".

The piece begins as documentary interview, gradually assuming a more "musical" sensibility as voice overlays become audible and interrupt the linear narration. This switch signals a poetic-subjective stance, the composer's interpretive presence, as opposed to reportage. Westerkamps says that she "purposely played the edge between documentary and composition. Perhaps Flight-path is closer to documentary, but it uses the techniques of studio composition to bring across a political sensibility."

A Walk Through the City uses a poem of Norbert Ruebsaat's, recorded in the studio and appearing in the foreground of the sound field of the composition. The sound images collaborate with the text, creating an expressionistic vision of the city, biased towards alienation and anomie.

This piece is rich in its inclusion of different possibilities of environmental composition. The message, singularly clear dominates a crazy-quilt of compositional ideas. Sounds sometimes illustrate Ruebsaat's poetry, sometimes indicate Westerkamp's interpretation of the city, and sometimes play out their own acoustic qualities. When the latter occurs, it is as if Westerkamp cannot resist beautiful constructional possibilities when they appear in environmental sound. Delicate sounds, for example, isolated from the sounds of car brakes serve as a unifying element through a lengthy section of the composition. At one point they converge with another equally delicate although texturally more complex section formed from a child's singing.

Text occurs both additively, on the surface of the composition as with the studio recorded poem, or it emerges from within the recorded environmental material. Voices of the inhabitants of Vancouver's lower east side occur in this way, surfacing from beneath a mask of extraneous urban sound.

Because environmental material retains the ambient context that contains it, voices from the environment add acoustic as well as verbal information.

"How do you bring the voices of skid road people into a musical piece about the city, so that they sound as part of the piece rather than making the piece like a documentary? I listen to the environment; I listen to the voice quality, modes of expression and sentences as sound material. An individual is characterized by a particular way of speaking, and it is that which I attempt to bring out. Just as with the environmental sound, I am aware here of form and content. But for me content is always the driving force.

Integrating these voices into A Walk Through the City was difficult. But I think it succeeded in that context. Certainly, however, it challenges the listener's conception of composition and music completely - because it is not clearly musical composition."

In A Walk Through the City as in Under the Flightpath, Westerkamp seems aware of the possibilities of sound collage, a bringing together of disparate sounds into a 'polyphony' of acoustic qualities and associative content. But in both these pieces, there is a sense of work in progress, exploration and experimentation with different compositional ideas. There is no precedent for environmental composition; ideas must be tried on.

The ambiguity in environmental sound, between its acoustic and associative content signals a multi-faceted listening - a rich experience of the soundscape. Moreover this dichotomy which is present in her works is perceived by Westerkamp in the macro-composition - the environmental soundscape. The composer simulates the environment in her composition, creating a personal soundscape, one that is informed by her imagination. Yet, from this controlled environment, sounds speak of themselves, arbitrarily adding information, life, presence. Conversely, within the arbitrary occurences of the environmental soundscape, the composer perceives and would have others perceive order, rhythm, pitch, texture, composition.

"I listen to the whole spectrum of sound. I am less concerned with specific pitches even though I use pitch in my pieces. If they are inherent in the sound I will bring them out because pitch holds great musical potential for my composition. But they also infuse the environment with a musical quality. Without the train horn, for example, the Vancouver soundscape would be much duller. I love the train horn; it is an acoustic pleasure whenever I hear it."

Westerkamp's composition is situated inside the soundscape. Her definition of composition is broad. Even her compositional process extends to her personal listening habits and their influence on the collection of her materials. The recording of this material, for example, is part of the compositional process, extending the act into the environment.

Pointing a microphone is after all no more a neutral act than taking a photograph; both are informed by the perspective and bias of the person doing the recording. With environmental recording, again as in photography, there is an interchange as unexpected events in sound environment influence the woman with the microphone.

"After years of recording, I have become very aware of acoustic perspective and I use the microphone in a way that acknowledges that perspective. The listener, as a person within the environment always has a perspective. When I go recording I am never neutral; I want to stress that.

There are always surprises when I record environmental sounds. I never know exactly what I will get even though I may have a preconceived idea of what I want to collect. In the city, for example, I specifically wanted the sound of pinball machines and the voices of people in Pigeon Park. But there were hundreds of surprises along the way and during the process. Often something becomes audible only as I listen back to the recorded material. It may in fact counter the original intention and alter the piece. The constant possibility of surprise contributes to the drama of composition.

Also when I record it is very much like being on stage. It is like a performance in that I react to what I hear, directing the microphone accordingly. The process of recording is already part of the composition."

A theory of environmental composition would have to be active, evolving, and inseparable from real involvement with the environment. Westerkamp's environmental composition takes this another step, becoming a life strategy for listening to and living within the soundscape. She is shaped by the sound environment which she explores.

"I find hearing my instruments outside, constantly around me, exhausting. Blocking out sound is not helpful, because you cease to hear sound, you desensitize yourself to the environment. In any case, I have problems blocking out sounds. I wear earplugs and physically block sound. When I remove them, I can once again deal with the environment.

In this way it is possible to develop a perspective towards environmental sounds, towards noise. You begin to have a political perspective at that point. You are aware of disturbing sound because physically your ear is still functioning and psychologically

7

you are not exhausted from listening to constant sound.

And as your perspective remains fresh, your judgement is active. In a way this is what composition is about. But for me that dynamic has to be extended and applied to daily life as well. If we are concerned about noise in our environment, we cannot allow ourselves to be oppressed by it. We cannot deal with something that oppresses us."

Finally, in Cordillera, Westerkamp creates a total sound environment which evokes Ruebsaat's imaginary landscape as it physically contains the studio recorded reading of the poetry. Unlike the other pieces, Cordillera is intended to exist spatially. A visual analogy would be an installation that occupies an entire space, into which an audience enters and participates, as opposed to a canvas on a wall which demands a focussed exclusive perspective.

Because Cordillera is a created environment, as opposed to a composition in the traditional sense, it is subject to the same perceptual deficiencies that most listeners apply to sound in the soundscape. Westerkamp is aware that this perceptual dynamic had to be considered in order for the composition to be heard.

"Conditioning to block out sound is so strong in most listeners that the larger ambient context is usually ignored. If I am to make compositions using environmental sounds, I must be aware of this. Also, people don't perceive of environmental sounds as music. What exists everyday is not noticed.

I must get inside the sound; I must know what its acoustical properties are and how it occurs in the environment in order to bring it to people's attention. I enhance or exaggerate the acoustical quality of the sound in order that the listener can be aware of how extraordinary or beautiful a sound
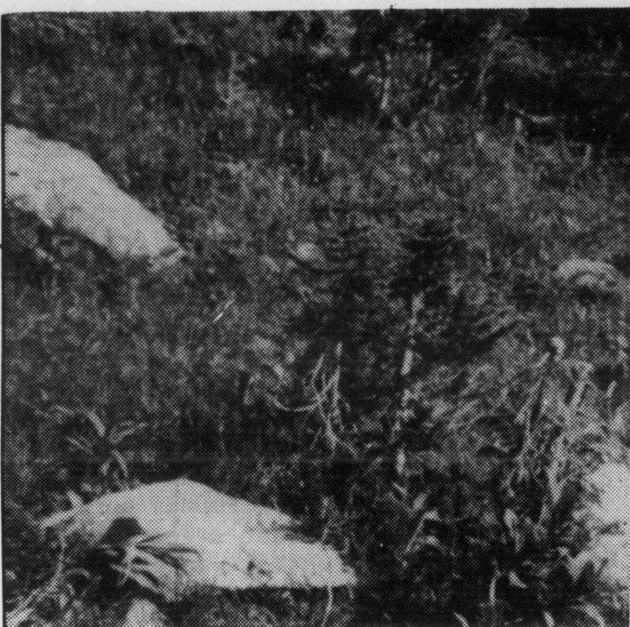
is. In composition using environmental sound, the details of the sound must be enlarged as in caricature in order for them to be hear."

The linear form of Cordillera is determined by the poem as are those details which are illustratively connected to the text: footsteps in the snow, ice, the sound of water. There remains, however, a separation between text and environmental sound. Simply considering it in terms of acoustic effect, the poetry emerges as foreground sound, while the sound environment recedes into ambience. Although the presence of the poetry lessens the environmental impact, however, by forcing the imaginary soundscape to the back of the listener's mind, Westerkamp has paced the inclusion of the text. In the long intervals without voice, the listener confronts the sound environment; there is nothing else to listen to. Cordillera needs the ideal listener, one educated to Westerkamp's own sensitivity, creatively aware of the entire sound field.

More than any other composition, Cordillera defines Westerkamp's relationship to the environment: a sensitivity to the environment catalysed by compositional concerns, and conversely composition arising out of environmental concerns. Cordillera most closely answers Westerkamp's desire to replace words with sound and let the environment speak. Her intention that Cordillera be experienced as an environment is aligned with her political sense of human interaction with the soundscape.

"I am not interested at all in disassociating the sounds from their sources. In that sense one could call the pieces that I do politically oriented. I'm really interested in making people aware of the sound that is happening around them.

In Cordillera, I brought the wilderness into a gallery - an urban cultural context. The B.C. wilderness is a very complex but quiet environment, very different than what is heard in the city. An encounter with that intense aural environment in the gallery is a political confrontation. For me, bringing the sounds of the landscape into an urban context is a political act."

For Cordillera to succeed in evoking the aural sense of the wilderness, the presentation of the composition is of utmost importance. Environmental composition cannot exclude extraneous sound from the listener's perception. The sounds of the gallery itself, or urban noise obscure the particular and carefully placed sound, diffusing the intensity. Acoustic spaces that can accommodate the quietness and subtlety of the composition are scarce. This issue, as much as the fragility of wilderness sound is central to the piece. And in this compositional statement, art becomes an encounter with the world.

Kenneth Gaburo speaking

I learned clikbing before I learned to run

In mid-March 1981, composer Kenneth Gaburo visited the University of Victoria School of Music and the Open Space Gallery. On March 16th he delivered a lecture on the relationship of music and the brain entitled 'WHOLE LANGUAGE LANGUAGE' and, on March 18th, presented a concert of works for video, tape, slides, film and speaker from the series 'Reading in Compositional Linguistics'. Between these two engagements Gaburo held an all day open seminar in the student lounge of the School of Music. The transcription that follows contains selections from that day.

Kenneth Gaburo was born in New Jersey and received his musical training at Eastman and the University of Illinois where he also taught for a number of years in the 1960's before coming to the University of California, San Diego. In the mid-1970's Gaburo resigned from that institution and since has 'freelanced' as a composer, teacher, stage director, author, and creator of the publishing company Lingua Press. Gaburo has dedicated over 25 years of research to musical thinking and composition which addresses the issues of music-as-language and language-as-music. His works are performed internationally and he presently resides in Ramona, California.
The transcription presented here is not and cannot be faithful to the original discussion. It is mostly selective although section 5 is reproduced at length. Section 4 is a compression. Section 1 is composed of a reverse ordering of the sentences and to some extent the words in the sentences. Audience insertions and questions are indicated in italic type. At some points audience bits are unintelligible on the tape transcipt and therefore have been fictionalized or eluded here. The title word 'clikbing' is one of the typographical errors in the type written transcript which has been corrected in this text.

1. That's the beginning. I've already begun, if I announce my presence. They're all beginning. . . choosing a book and so forth and so on, thinking about the book before I read it.
/its first word /is really not /of the book /of the beginning /So. . . its cover opening and a book of up the picking requires also a book of the reading.
Think of the way in which one sight reads images up pick I and it through browse simply I that means that and syntax its than rather sense its for book a scan may I Well for instance I know lots of people who read the last chapter first.

Where else would you start?

Because a book begins at the beginning doesn't mean that that's necessarily where you start.

2. Keeping the subject in mind.

How do you feel if the reaction of a listener to a piece of yours is meaningful to them but isn't necessarily what you are trying to present?

That's a very difficult question because what I say is only what I say, not what you have to say. Let me clarify that. You out there are not an object. Your mere presence in this room and the way in which I image you here means that you reside in my mind as much as you reside outside of my mind - you are in some sense possessed by my mind and my body therefore you cannot be an object, as I know I'm not an object. I'm a subject and you're a subject. I denounce the idea of objectivity. Now that's where it gets very difficult because a discourse, given a subject such as the one which you just raised, can immediately go awry if we start talking about these things as objects; as if they reside outside of us somehow. While I'm talking to you you are my subject and anything that comes as significant discourse between the two of us as long as we stick to the subject will be relevant to that subject.

Even if it's a misinterpretation. . .

It doesn't matter, but it's got to be relevant to that subject. I'll give you an anecdote: I have a video piece called Give and Take, for which there are no program notes but in any case it should be fairly obvious what's going on to anyone who is a careful observer who has looked at the piece for two seconds. I played this piece for a seminar at Oberlin College and then we had a discussion. At a certain point someone who had been quiet for a very long time said "Well I guess it's time for me to say something. I think that the piece sucks." I immediately asked him in what way the piece that he had just heard had anything to do with sucking. If the piece had anything to do with sucking then I would have said that that was a perfectly valid observation, and we could talk about sucking. But since it didn't, I couldn't. So then he said "OK I didn't really mean that. I meant that it didn't have any kind of form." I said "Nothing can exist without a form. So what you're saying is that it didn't have the kind of relationship which you wanted it to have. In which case, you can take my subject and make your own piece. But as long as we're talking about this piece, let's talk about its form. ". . . one which he didn't recognize. So I cooled that and then he said "Well it's not contrapuntal it's sort of linear monochromatic." And so I pointed out the ways in which it was contrapuntal. Then he said it didn't have any timbre. . . and on and on. Finally he said, "Let me tell you what's bothering me." I said "What?" He said "It isn't Schubert!"
So all the time his pretense was to discuss the piece on every level he was carrying in his mind another model, another image which he brought. In my mind that's a double jeopardy. First it trivializes the piece which he observed. And it also trivializes Schubert because if he really knew Schubert he would know that Schubert didn't belong there. So he had nothing to say.
If you are really involved in the interaction between you and the thing which you are observing, you cannot avoid speaking about it and to speak about it means to include, at least in some sense, what I've put there for you to speak about. But I do not insist that you describe it as I describe it.

3. It won't read itself. A

A performer who is playing a composition doesn't necessarily understand it. He's performing it, but what is he performing? We use words in the same way; we use them to communicate, but what precisely is it that we are communicating by the words which we use? In a sense we are always constructing a reality with our words, but that reality might not always be a compositional one, for instance if it doesn't take into account the necessary observer observed situation. By composition I mean making something; I don't necessarily mean making music. How can you make a piece without the presence of the piece? If you observe the interaction between you and that thing on the paper, you will have observed that the piece sometimes suggests what could be done. Doesn't it tell you something? And after you've gotten enough information down it almost begins to take care of itself. In many ways the piece is saying "Hey, get away, I mean lay off and let me work it a little bit!" So, I not only depend on myself to make the input, but I also depend on the input to tell me what it is and what it wants. I almost never have started a piece with a particular intention and then ended up with that intention. Why do that? There's no fun in that. Another thing that I've learned about myself is that not only do I not know what I want to do when I start a piece, but I also don't want to know what I want to do when I start. That's why I admire Samuel Beckett so much. Somebody once asked him "How do you devise these crazy characters, and what impels you to conjure up such extraordinary circumstances which these characters we see as humans are found in, and are the people you write about people you've observed in the world?" His answer to every one of those questions was "I write in order to find out."
B

There's no way I can know at the outset where my piece is going to be. The way composers were working fifteen to thirty years ago, and some now, was to add a little more after all the major parameters such as form, structure, note configuration, timbre etc. are done - to put in a lento, a con fuoco, an expression mark to give it some local colour. I don't do that since I know that I'm changing each time I visit a piece of music. The piece is also changed by the fact that I'm changing, so I don't really know what's going to come. If a passage says "with anger" it's because I was angry that day. The pieces are like an ongoing autobiography. If one makes an operating assumption that they are always entering into an experimental domain, one which does not yet have its areas defined, the piece will have an enormous amount of maneuverability and can connect in an infinite variety of ways until somehow the connections I make make sense to me. That's an experimental process.

Where would you start?

It may only be a primitive impulse or an urge to begin. There are works that are made in what boils down to be a pragmatic approach - by habit rule and technique, against a deadline. These are not well made because they don't include the life of the person who made them. It's an ongoing thing. By the time you've written

forty-five pieces you've got chops up the kazoo. You could write five thousand and more without blinking an eyelash. But why pollute the environment with more of the same things? It doesn't make sense to me. I don't think it made sense to Beethoven either. The only thing the Beethoven Sonatas have in common is that they are usually bound in the same volume.

Well they were all Beethoven's.

They don't have anything to do with each other. If we say they belong to Ludwig then there were thirty-two Ludwigs, not one. I've analysed those pieces in great detail and I can't find anything to say about one or the other that causes them to appear the same to me. Even though they subscribe to some broad generalities, which again I don't have any sense for, the molecular structures which continually evolve and change in each piece uniquely make them so diverse that is really rather extraordinary. With things made there can be no single analytical technique which will answer all the questions. The language of analysis has to be created in the light that the subject of that piece begins to tell me what its analytical needs are.
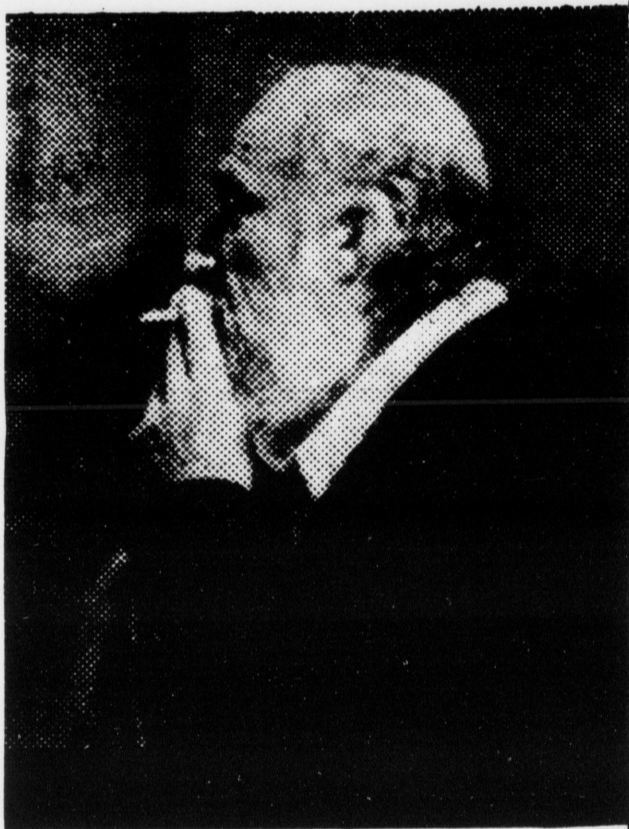
Many of us feel like we're rather affluent. I mean I have mobility - I can move around the world, and I know how to talk and I know how to make love and I'm full. I sort of know everything. That knowing is on the one hand highly desirable, but at the same time it subverts us. It's costly because we think that we know enough to deal with every phenomenon that comes down the pike; we see familiar signs about it. So, for example, I don't need to get to know you any better than I do now. I see you are a woman and I know what women are, so there we are, it's that kind of idea. Well it's really terribly inhuman. And when we treat the work made in the same way that we mistreat each other then we are doing the same thing to that work because it was made by a human. It has plenty to say if you just listen to it. This magazine is helpless in the sense that it won't move unless somebody does the moving. It won't read itself; somebody has to read it. In that sense it's helpless, but not because it's empty. Somebody put something there. Because it cannot answer for itself it's our moral ethical responsibility to see that we

maintain the integrity of that system. When I enter into a significant discourse, such as we're doing right now, my desire is to maintain the integrity of all of us, not to trash you out because I need to make a point, or to trivialize that because I think this is important.

4. You catch everything.

to advance the degree to which humans can rely on senses they thought they couldn't. visually oriented society. schools not teaching sensitivity to sound as noise: squeaking brakes as offensive as a symphony. pieces made without the benefit of sight. or ears. or hands. increase the body as an active receptor. almost any part can perform alleged functions of other parts.
e.g. woman thinks she is recognized by her walk, focuses on her walk for a week - weight shift, surfaces traversed, shoes. her description confounds and obliterates the notion.
e.g. mature artist stops painting, runs dry. Jackson Pollock kind of stuff at the end. a year and a half deep probing. indication she was not in contact with her work, gestures of getting rid of it, not a part of her. question: when did she last touch the pigment she uses? no answer. "How can you be an artist who works with materials all the time and not be intimate with those materials?" overlooks involvement in process. screwed her up. starts diary, i.e. when driving car think about feel of hands on steering wheel. the work began to pour out.

5. What else sayings.

When I was writing twelve tone music as such, the whole idea of the repetition of notes was a very big argument. Milton Babbitt got into that when he began to write octaves - this thing appeared and it was two A-flats. How do I regard that in the light of my presuppositions about that particular system? Do I throw it out because it is verboten or do I find a way in which I can be moved to another direction because of its presence. Very often when I'm writing a sentence I put down a word because I want to get the energy out. Then I read it and the word doesn't make sense to me. So I ask myself do I want to throw it out and put a word in there that makes sense or can that word make sense if I think about it? I may scan a book for its sense rather than its syntax and that means that I simply browse through it and I pick up images. How you assemble a thing in its totality is entirely up to you; where you hear a phrase that sounds like it was repeated later, where it didn't repeat, where it's clear or unclear, where it's intentionally clear or not intentionally clear. After all, you have to imagine that a work that's complex was made to be complex. It's always important for me to consider, that once you've said a thing, what else can you say? you say that...what else can you say? you say that...what else can you say...The pygmy has five hundred words to describe a tree. Those are whatelses. I think that the only reasonable way that I can answer your question is in terms of the unlimited degree of descriptions available to us as we review anything. So that inquiry seems to be an indispensible property of the observer; and to know that there's always more than can be said. That's where generalizations come in - because we can't take everything on in the world, we want to group and gather

things. At that point a rose is a rose is a rose, because there are too many. Now while I'll never be able to know the universe in its entirety, I certainly want to know as deeply as I can those things which I observe. For instance from an etymological point of view, I see words which we in 1981 have learned or inherited or been taught as having history. And the first time you learn the word uh 'love' is for you the beginning of the history of that word, but the word itself has an enormous history, which you inherit. So any time you trace an etymology there are enormous contradictions. For example I've just done one with 'common'. I've traced its etymology back two thousand years. The view we have of 'common' is in no sense related to 'common' as an entire unfolding of the human consciousness. As a person who is involved in language, just as you might be involved in note language, it seems to me to be very important to have the history of a given thing so that I know where I stand and therefore maybe know what I have to do to take the next step. We have thousands of years of history of music, which might be hard for people like the French who are surrounded by history all the time, with all the artifacts, they're inundated and suffocated by them, they can't move. It's a dilemma that Boulez and all the other composers in Europe faced. I'd like to have that dilemma sometime but right now we Canadians and Americans don't have it. They have to denounce it, not in any ultimate sense but in an operational sense, in order to get going. When I hear in my head a word which I wish to use for a particular purpose, I want to give it a uniqueness because the subject I want it to be part of is regarded by me as new. In some sense by doing this I repudiate all the previous uses. Which is what I mean by mereness. We know there are only twelve notes in the tempered system. Does that mean that each time we see those pieces coming back at us in pieces that they're the same notes because we give them the same names? Is A-flat ever the same A-flat? In order for me to engage A-flat in a piece and really become intimate with my sense of what the A-flat means to me, I have to imagine there is no other A-flat except that one. I'm down on information theory because it takes into account the redundancy factor and not sufficiently the variables in which the redundancy resides. That's an extracted technique. What an information theorist would look at is A-flat - A-flat, not the context and environment of each of the A-flats. Context has an important influence on the presence of a particular item - the item cannot be the same any longer.

The A-flat at the beginning of a tonal piece would of course be different, because, by the time it returned it would be imbued with all the implications of the intervening material.

All of that resonance is still there.

Why does the A-flat have such importance if it changes completely with the contextual change?

It was and still is a stabilizing property of music, just as we are stabilized by the notion that we have a home from which we leave and to which we return. I don't repudiate that at all. I think that it's indispensible. We recognize an A-flat again as an A-flat because there is something redundant about the A-flat with respect to the A-flat. I however am

saying that the only thing that's re-
dundant about it is that it has the
same name. Apart from that triviality
there is nothing that is in common
between one A-flat and another A-flat.
By at least the value of making a
distinction. For instance, of two A-
flats, the second A-flat cannot be
the same as the first A-flat because
it's second. That's a distinction. If
the second A-flat is an octave lower
then you have another distinction, a
timbral differentiation. Play two A-
flats an octave apart on the clari-
net and they do not sound the same -
the timbre of the A-flat in the chal-
umeau register is so distinct from
an octave higher, and one may be stac-
cato and one may be tenuto; one may
be played forte and one may be played
piano - I repudiate redundancy except
that I keep the name A-flat; other-
wise I would need a lexicon. A return
in formal music of a rounded form was
a return in some sense but not in
every sense. For instance, in Beet-
hoven Sonatas, the actual resolution
of all of the things that could be
called structural drive, that is har-
monic motion, takes place not in the
return but in the coda, which has
always been regarded as some kind of
a tag. The main stuff is already done.
The resolution is like afterburn, not
true at all. When I return home to-
night that completes a circuit, but
that does not say that I am in the
same sense as when I left.

*So that you don't think of an F
as being an F. The first and final
F's are identical...*

Well you could speak of the Mozart
Jupiter in C and the Beethoven Sym-
phony in C, given the same name, but
there is no way in which they have
anything to do with each other.

*Except in those circumstances the
C's are there and perceptible as such.*

Only if you extract the C's and
hold them up without context. The C
is a marker.

*Given a time difference, and dif-
ferent composers, a C-major for Schu-
bert is not the same as a C-major for
Beethoven or the key of G-minor for
Mozart is very different from Haydn.*

Somebody did a thesis in which
they tried to demonstrate that the
Schoenberg Fourth String Quartet was
tonal. Which it is. But not in the
sense you would use the term when
talking about Schubert. Anyway, he
counted every damn note and because
there were more G's than anything
else (there are a lot of G's in the
Fourth String Quartet) he felt that
there was a preference by weight to-
wards G and therefore G could be re-
garded as a tonal reference point.
It's really wonderful. He literally
made a recording of the thing and
took out all the G's and left every-
thing else and he strung these G's
together. It sounded like a discon-
tinuous drone. He wanted to focus on
the G's and then put them back in
their context and see if he could
hear the drone. Well he couldn't
hear the drone because there's no
such animal. When he strung all these
G's together there weren't two of
them that were the same. In terms of
plain old violin playing there are
many microtuning adjustments, because
in one case the string moves from an
A-flat to a G and in another it moves
from a G to an F-sharp. The micro-
tunings of G are always within the
domain of G-ness, a G is never so far
out that it's an A-flat but it's not
always the same G. The Greeks were
involved in equilinear space, which
means very very straight lines. They
actually built two Parthenons. They
built one absolutely straight in the
purest mathematical sense and from
any vantage point it looked crooked.
So they built another one crooked
and it looked straight. I find that
really wonderful. Because all the G's
in Schoenberg, whether they're related
to tonality or not, are G's because
they're not straight. In the same
sense that your signature is inevita-

bly going to be recognized no matter
how you try to disguise it, it's going
to be your signature, and yet you
can't reproduce it the same way twice.
I find that really miraculous. For
instance, if I got to know you better
I would be able to recognize you by
the sound of your voice without any
visual aid at all. My whole bag is
dealing with voice and in all these
years I have never found two voices
which have the same quality, unless
I want to generalize it by saying
that's a woman's voice and that's a
man's voice, and then you're all alike
again. Each of you has your own voice
print and I have never heard two
voices sound alike. This seems to me
very remarkable and far outshadows
the idea of a woman's or a man's voice
because it's your whole context, it's
the way you articulate, it has to do
with your weight, your height, your
age, your heredity. All these things
go into your voice quality and they
so far outshadow the fact that you're
a woman and that's a woman's voice
that I can't call it redundancy.

*You have outlined for us the idea
that from the time of birth all infor-
mation comes to us through someone
else - and I'm confused - How far can
you go saying that everything is some-
one else's information before you get
to the point where you say that there
is no such thing as individuality. How
far can you take that?*

You can take that ad infinitum un-
til... I don't think that composition
is a special case, but at this moment
in the world it is, because not all
individuals practise it. By composi-
tion I mean making something, I don't
necessarily mean making music. It is
in the making of something that you
begin to get your own identity, so
your proposition would hold for peo-
ple who never made anything. Composi-
tion is so extraordinarily important
because it does begin to break down
the notion that we're all reproduc-
tions of each other's history - Think
of the inventions that have had a
profound effect on mankind that didn't
exist in man's general sensibility
until that invention took place. How
is it that the first moon shot could
have been made without anybody ever
having done if before. That is not
a reproduction. I would call it a
composition.

*Recognition of the lineage and
chronological topicality of the moon
flight.*

Right, as far as we know that in-
cident could not be called a quota-
tion, a reproduction or a representa-
tion.

*It's not the accumulated data that
determines your individuality but the
way in which you put it together.*

The pygmy has five hundred words
to describe a tree. I can't call that
redundancy. A significant change in
the order of things causes the system
as a whole to be not the same. Some-
how I learned climbing before I learn-
ed to run-that's a significant change.

6.

A

G : I'm not gonna allow you to use a discussion of my piece as a representation
    for other music...Why should I...That is a piece within the entire
    domain of music.. It does'snt mean it is"nt worthy of discussing it
within the entire domain of music...I don't want the entire domain of music
in my piece, I want to be discussing my piece.

Q ; (unintelligible)

G : That piece...that language...What it says...Whatever that piece days and
    what it does...I'm talking about Maledetto MALEDETTO here...Do you know
    it... NO..Well then we can't talk about it...What can I possibly advance
by telling you something about the piecew tihout causing some kind of
    generality to take place...You have to know what this piece is in order
    to discuss it....It's perfectly true that the piece itself exhibits all
the properties which are contained within it and which BBB define and describe
    that piece. So far, so good...But the point of talking about it is that we
    can't describe it unless we talk about it.

Q : Unintelligible)

Anthony Genge
Notes on My Music

Since 1978, the musical ideas I have developed and experimented with have resulted in a music which differs in many respects from music being produced by other composers/performers who work in the many diverse styles and mediums. (e.g., serialism, atonalism, indeterminacy, improvisation, the 'school' of Riley, Reich, et al).

Today, I am interested in a music in which the musical elements that form the basis of the overall musical environment are immediately exposed in such a way, and limited to such an extent, that on first exposure the listener can easily identify them.

The ability to aurally identify these elements allows the listener to perceive and enjoy the various changes in the material which the composer creates through different juxtapositions of these musical components or through changes in the immediate environment in which they appear.

Perhaps an analogy can be made to a scene which is regularly viewed from a specific window or location. While some of the basic elements remain the same, other elements within the scene (colors, objects, etc.) continually change, are rearranged, disappear and reappear. Yet, despite these continual changes, the scene remains recognizable.

In my recent music then, the listener's memory (i.e. his ability to perceive specific elements within a particular musical environment and time framework) plays an important role in determining the musical nature of the work.

Unlike some 'process' music, wherein previous events tend to be replaced in the memory as one delights in more immediate ramifications of the process, in this music, the musical elements that form the basis of the work are continually reoccuring in similar or altered musical environments.

It is essential therefore that the musical environment be restricted to such a degree that all of the basic musical elements can be easily retained and recalled by the listener. This is, I feel, made necessary by a person's inability to normally retain and recall anything other than the most limited quantities of musical information on a first hearing, even within a restricted time framework.

Of course the limiting of musical material does not necessarily result in a music which is of limited aural interest. Repeated listening to this music, which is often erroneously mislabeled as 'non-developmental', or 'minimal', continually reveals manifold, subtle musical and time relationships. As the composer Jo Kondo has said, "An artless appearance can conceal a great sophistication."

A similar experience often occurs when listening to musics of other cultures. Many of these musics also utilize restricted musical environments that may have been intuitively developed for the same perceptual reasons.

Generally, my recent works are not characterized by definite beginnings or endings, nor do extreme changes in musical activity and texture exist. One can imagine the music occuring continually in time; it surfaces audibly only at the time of performance.

The realization of these musical ideas does not of necessity demand any one particular compositional procedure or musical style (so often, compositional processes result in similar sounding pieces of music). The only requirement here is that the essential sound elements of the work be employed in such a way as to be easily perceptible at all times. Other elements which characterize my recent music (a modal pitch structure, a regular, perceivable pulse, etc.) are the result of personal choice; the compositional process does not demand them.

Up to the present time, I have explored a number of possibilities to achieve these musical aims: an extreme limiting of the musical material; the use of a restricted pitch range; orchestration (specific pitches, intervals, motives assigned to specific instruments or specific instrumental coloration); and fixed pitch and octave assignment.

The primary demand placed on the performer in this music is an accurate realization of the notation. This allows the listener to hear the manifold relationships unveiled as the music progresses. Expressive interpretation is uncalled for and unnecessary. In fact, 'non-expressive' modes of performance are generally carefully prescribed in the score. However, a distinction must be found between selfless creative contribution and mechanical response.

In works that demand more than one performer, players are assigned specific 'roles'. Each part contains one or more of the musical elements that form the basis of the limited musical material. The combination and interaction of these 'roles' is essential to the completion of the musical whole, in a manner similar to the way in which the specialized interlocking parts assigned to the individual performers in a Gamelan or in a fourteenth century hoquet are combined to form a musical unit which is the sum of its parts.

As the ideas behind my recent pieces do not in themselves dictate a particular compositional process or sound product, I feel that these pieces have thus far only touched upon the numerous possibilities available for the realization of these musical goals. Each work opens up new directions and new avenues of exploration.

My desire in this music is not to dictate to the listener my own intentions regarding a particular perceptual or emotional stance, but to present a musical environment that is always recognizable and yet at the same time always changing; a musical environment that can be appreciated on a number of perceptual and emotional levels, the choice being left to the listener.

Anthony Genge is a composer living in Victoria, B.C.

Donna Zapf
Acoustic Metals
Robert Minden

*All quotations in this article were
recorded in conversation in May, 1981.*

Imagine a sound which floats in space
without acknowledging its source; or
bursts into a delicate polyphony that
belies the performer's single bow stroke
across metal rods.

These are acoustic effects of Robert
Minden's metallic instruments: three
waterphones, various metal sheets, and
musical saws. Like a renaissance chest
of familial instruments they are of a
kind, related through the material of
their construction and in the enormous
range of sound possibilities which each
contains.

Minden is a Vancouver musician who
for numerous years has explored and ex-
perimented with these instruments. In
the past, he has occasionally performed
alone, but primarily has worked with
dance and theatre companies. Now, he
is developing technical facility, tim-
bral range and improvisational strate-
gies, exploring his own music-making.

There is an unlikeliness, a theatri-
cality about seeing the instruments in
performance. The sculptural presence
of the waterphones, for example, cannot
be ignored, and is incorporated into
the listener's perception of the music.
The waterphones (designed by Richard
Waters of Sebastopol, California) are
wide-bellied stainless steel flasks
with long necks. Brass rods are at-
tached to their girth and extend up-
wards (or as in the double waterphones,
downwards as well) like fingers or an-
tennae, curiously organic despite metal
and solder. The instruments are anthro-
pomorphic, a confusion of whimsical
cartoon and futuristic artefact.

Novelty also surrounds the saw,
whose performance retains a nostalgic
and good-humoured reference to its
vaudeville past. Although equivalent
sound possibilities could be found on
neutral metal sheets, Minden chooses
the saw. The music is indeed more
than the sounds.

The saws, whose pitches are deter-
mined by the performer's alteration of
their vibrating length can produce tem-
pered or micro-tones in addition to
timbral play. The waterphones possess
more extensive timbral possibilities
and more complex and unpredictable pro-
perties of pitch. On the waterphones,
pitch is designated by the extended
rods; further, each rod produces two or
three pitches, depending on where it is
struck or bowed and on the pressure of
the bow. The smallest waterphone of
the collection has tonally pitched rods,
while the largest, or bass waterphone
and the double waterphone are pitched
micro-tonally. In addition there is a
pitch created by the reverberation in
the flask chamber. This differs from
the original pitch and changes accord-
ing to the performer's movement of the
instrument and the presence of water
in the flask.

Sound quality is changed depending on
how the sound is initiated: it is struck
with twine or friction mallets; bowed
with a modified fibre-glass bass bow;
or rubbed with the fingers. Percussive
sounds are used but do not pre-dominate.
Although discrete sound and silence are
consciously part of the musical tex-
ture, the long reverberation of the
waterphone creates continuity. Sus-
tained sounds in the texture are created
by bowing or by the waterphone's rever-

beration. Two reverberations can be
discerned: the relatively rapid decay
of struck metal - a short bell-like
ringing; and the hum which resonates in
the body of the instrument, fed by each
new stroke of mallet or bow.

There is a constant interplay between
the original sound and the reverberation
it causes. Within the texture, however,
these do not function as sound and
sound's echo. The echo/reverberation,
for example, is often louder than the
original sound whose presence might be
no more than a whisper.

Further, the reverberations are dif-
ferent from the original sounds, non-
directional, and seeming to oscillate
without decay. Because new sounds as
they are initiated create a counter-
point against this reverberation, the
texture is always intricate and poly-
phonic.

Structured improvisation is the es-
sence of Minden's own music making and
his collaborations. In his most re-
cent collaboration with a new Vancou-
ver dance ensemble, Pacific Motion
Dance Company, the final form which
the audience experienced evolved
through an interchange between the
dancers' movements and the musician's
sound. In the actual performance, the
linear structure and the choreography
were set while the music played freely
within this structured context. Fur-
ther, Minden entered the choreography;
music was invited inside the dance.

Minden's improvisation is a process
of continually revealing possibility.
The material of the instruments and
the material quality of the sound it-
self are meaningful in his music.

"Many of the sounds of percussion
are skins and woods - wonderful earthy
primitive sounds. I'm choosing not to
play with these.

I used to think it completely ar-
bitrary why I like these instruments:
the waterphones, the saws, the thunder-
sheets. There is something about the
combining of the acoustic properties
of the materials which surround us.

It's a funny thing to do. You take
high-tech metals, stainless steels
brasses and bronze. You stroke them,
touch them, put them into water, bend
them. It's not that these sounds are
nostalgic; they are strangely remem-
bered.

I have a reverence for their acous-
tic-ness."

The ambiguity of using metal in
this way is played out in the music.
The sounds are voices in metal; like

the bodies of the waterphones, they
have an anthropomorphism as if hummed,
whistled, spoken -- a conversation rich
in ambiguity and intimacy. The element
of water also figures. Water inside the
waterphone is an active part of the in-
strument. And water is actually incor-
porated into the improvisation by plac-
ing the waterphone into a tub of water,
so that sounds of water (like environ-
mental sounds) are metamorphosed into
musical elements. Water is the metaphor
that rides the surface of the music.
"It feels like transforming sound into
liquid."

The "acoustic-ness" of the instruments
is characterized by their delicate power
and their non-directional nature which
articulates the performance space as the
instruments are played. The listener is
involved in the space as she/he would
be in a sound environment. Moreover,
Minden speaks of sounds in terms of how
they affect the body. He would make
sounds that "are like whispers, whispers
which fill the space; sounds that can
resonate within another person's body"
His music-making acknowledges the phy-
sical presence and experience of sound.

This delicate acoustic quality and
tactile sense of sound, the fierce fra-
gility of the music, gives rise to is-
sues peripheral to the music-making.
These instruments, for example, must
be played within an intimate acoustic
environment, one that would be scaled
to human measure -- like R. Murray
Schafer's ideal sonic environment.[1]
Inevitably, the playing of music that
demands such an acoustic environment,
given our social context (where even
concert spaces are defined by the hege-
mony of high amplitude sound) makes a
political statement about the sonic
environment.

"I'm concerned with the framework of
performer/listener. I think that it is
amazing that we have few places for
conversation left where you hear the
rhythms of another person's body. And
there is a music which requires the
same kind of intimacy. We need acous-
tic intimacy. And it's amazing that
we don't have that."

Minden conceives himself as playing --
making a play on the work "play" as he
speaks. Just as he plays or makes
sounds on his instruments, so he is a
player, an actor dancer within his cir-
cle of instruments. And what he does
is playful.

The inherent theatricality of his in-
struments must be integrated into the

13

performance. Pierre Schaeffer, in a recent article describes a tendency in contemporary music that would separate the performance (visual presentation and theatre) from the experience of the sound.[2] Waterphones and saws cannot be performed without taking into account their particular physical/visual presence. The movement between the instruments must be choreographed, incorporated into the musical fabric. "Player" in this sense would be a consummate player, using movement, presence, sound: dance, theatre, music.

Inherent also in the triple-entendre, "play", is the sheer delight in playing. Minden's allegiance to his instruments and the sounds that they produce is coloured in delight and possibility.

"It's really playing. I have an uncanny sense that I am playing again. A lot is possible and I don't have to deal with the kinds of constraints in terms of form, performance, and sound reproduction that I felt so heavily all the years that I was training myself in music. And it surprises me. I am continually surprised by the sound of the bow scraping on the edge of the saw -- and suddenly lifting up into its voice."

In speaking of his sounds, the metals with which he experiments, he transmits wonder and the excitment of discovery. This is something other than dabbling in colour; what is really going on is mysteriously beyond license.

"You begin to shape sound, play with it and wonder at it, and something else begins to happen. I don't have a clear sense yet of what that form is that I'm playing with. But it is past the stage of the excitement of sheer colours. Even though that's always there in my ears and in my body."

The essense of this play, like the sounds themselves, finally cannot adequately be transcribed into language. The convincing moment in any music must be discovered by experiencing the sound.

"I'm using "play" with all its meanings. I mean playing as the player who is bowing or striking. But I also mean playing in this sense: when you've spent a long time thinking about music, and training yourself in your culture's music, there comes a time when you give yourself permission to play with it.

But it is not just the ideas that I'm playing with. It is in the playing that I'm playing."

He speaks of searching for a form which would extend beyond sound to include the situation between performer, audience, instruments, and acoustic space. All of these are not disjunct elements or adjuncts to centrally positioned sound. As part of the form, they are integral to the music, and for Minden, "difficult to assemble". He has yet to establish the framework necessary to make such music-playing accessible.

What is elusive here is what is being proposed. There is a shift in emphasis towards a re-connected music-making, which is why it is necessary to use allegory and play to talk about music.

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[1] R. Murray Schafer. The book of noise. (1970).

[2] Pierre Schaeffer. "Sound and the Century: A Socio-Aesthetic Treatise." Vanguard, Vol. 9 #1 (February, 1980)

Sten Hansen's Meta Music

On February 18, 1981, the Western Front and the International Circuit of Electro-acoustic Music presented an audio-visual program by Swedish composer, Sten Hansen. Each composition on the program consisted of a computerized slide-show using nine projectors on the screen, accompanied by electronic and recorded music on tape.

La Sera, A Letto, Ella Rileggeva La Lettera Del Suo Artigliere Al Fronte (In the evening, in bed, she reads again the letter from her gunner at the front) (1979) aurally reproduces the visual images of violent sounds (machine-gun fire, explosions, etc.) which Marinetti portrayed in his visual-poem. The slides gradually assemble parts of the poem until the entire poem appears on the screen.

A Propos Marcel (1980), generated at the Stockholm Electronic Music Studio, is a computer realization of Duchamp's La Mariée mise a nu par ces celibataires même, Erratum Musical (1913) accompanied by slides of Duchamp memorabilia. Duchamp's composition is determined by bails representing musical details, falling through a large funnel into toy traincars passing underneath. Duchamp ends his directions with the words: "A very useless performance in any case".

Take the Cage Train (1978) was composed on the occasion of a three day musical train journey made by John Cage in Emilia Romagna in Northern Italy as part of Feste Musicali Bologna 1978. The material in the composition is an edited sound track from the musical events on the train and in the station. The slide presentation collates photographs of the train trip, of working women of the region, and nature photographs. Also included are quotations from the scores and writings of John Cage.

A Propos Marcel and Take the Cage Train were collaborations with photographer, Nino Monastra.

The following conversation between Sten Hansen and Donna Zapf took place in the afternoon prior to the concert.

D.Z. What do you mean by meta-art, a term you have used in reference to these pieces?

S.H. Well, meta art and meta-music, is simply art which uses other art as its subject. You use the already existing art for developing new things.

D.Z. So you see the Cage composition and the Marinetti as your own?

S.H. Yes.

D.Z. In a sense, drawing on this lineage seems like moving in circles. Cage looks back to Duchamp and Marinetti; and you are returning to all three.

S.H. Well, of course, all of these people mean a lot to me as artists; but primarily they are important to me for their writings and their attitudes. They created liberation around themselves which is as important to me as their works. This is especially the case with Marinetti.

D.Z. Is he important to you in terms of his concept of sound, or his attitude to art in a larger context.

S.H. Mostly it is his attitude of wanting to liberate art from the old, very firm tradition: to "let loose the words." He speaks of "parole in liberta". Also, people around him,

such as Luigi Russolo are of great interest to me. Russolo was an artist and a painter who also wrote a manifesto about music; he even built musical instruments. Unfortunately all of the work that the futurists did was obscured by Marinetti's relations with the fascists and Mussolini.

D.Z. I think that that remains a difficult aspect of futurist art; it's really a janus-faced movement. There is a sense of renewal, a breaking with nineteenth century ideology, yet in reacting against the nineteenth century they remained attached to it. Also their connections to the fascist, . . .

S.H. For one thing, these people were not politicians. And all of them weren't involved as heavily with fascism as Marinetti was. From our perspective many things are obvious which were not apparent to them. For example, Mussolini's fascism was very theatrical. In many ways, to the futurists it was more theatre than reality. This seems to me to be often very typical of everything Italian. As a matter of fact very little action was taken by the Italian Fascists, it was mostly talks and parades.

I have little difficulty with Marinetti's connection to the fascists. He did, of course, glorify violence and war; but ultimately he was trapped in fascism and couldn't get out.

D.Z. I don't think that the element of destruction can be ignored in futurist art. The futurists did conceive of real violence as a societal antiseptic.

S.H. But even that was more theatrical than real. People did not know what modern wars were like. They had something of a renaissance feeling of war as something that involved very few people, only professional soldiers and never civilians. They thought of war as not terribly dangerous. I mean World War I was the first war that really was dangerous and involved a lot of people. And even World War I was mostly a military concern. World War II was the first war in which civilians were involved as well as military. All the notions that we have now are so much different from 1905 or 1910 when Marinetti and these people made their most important statements.
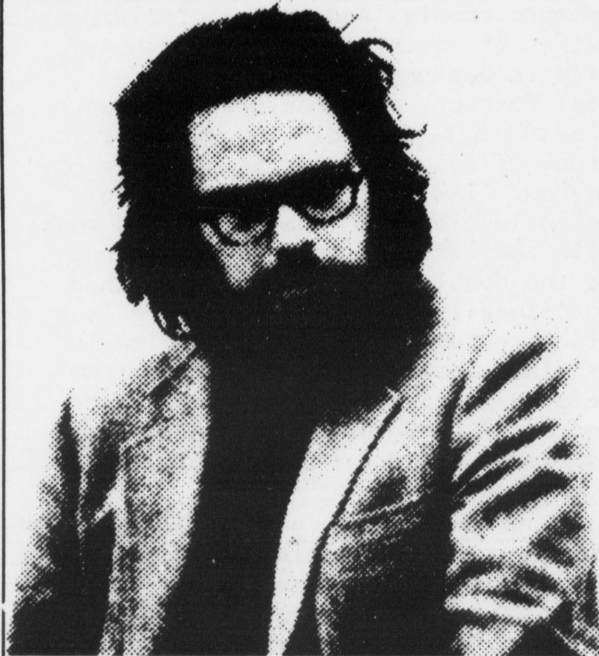
D.Z. When you made your piece that is based on the Marinetti poem, were you consciously using war-like sounds that paralleled sounds that Marinetti would possibly have used if they had been accessible to him?

S.H. The Marinetti piece is based on a

poem called "In the night in the bed she reads again the letter from her gunner at the front" which is, if you look at it, full of warlike sounds: gunfire, machine-gun fire and so on. But also the text in it is a love letter in Italian that I made up myself. It isn't part of the Marinetti piece.

D.Z. And the final slide image is the entire Marinetti poem.

S.H. Yes, that's the entire piece.

D.Z. You isolate sections of the image.

S.H. Yes. It's a visual poem spaced out over the page. My idea when I made the piece was to consider what Marinetti might have done if he had had access to the kind of equipment that I have. I think he would have wanted to do this piece or something approximate to it.

D.Z. Except the performance situation would have been very different for Marinetti. The context is totally changed. Marinetti's audience would have reacted in a very different way to this set of sounds.

S.H. Well this isn't (laughter) 1912, it's 1981; it's kind of different. (laughter)

D.Z. The change and motion of the images in this piece seems to apply musical ideas to visual images. How did the graphics of the Marinetti poem enter into your composition.

S.H. Well, I am a composer not a visual artist, so I work with visual images like a composer would. That's how these pieces are done. The emphasis is on the time factor, because that's what music is all about. Music is about time.

And that's why I like computer slide shows. I don't feel you can compose in a musical structure as easily in video or film. Here you control the process. When the projectors are programmed you can actually play them like a musical instrument. You can set the times and the images, and make whatever interchanges you want, after the actual images themselves are made. In video or film you make your decisions while watching reality, not while watching the material, as you always do in music. In music you work with the material rather than reality. You can do this with computer slide shows as well.

D.Z. The possibility then exists of creating a visual process out of the images?

S.H. Yes. And the only other art that works in a similar way is dance. At least that dance in which you can manipulate the time sense as you can in music. Dance, however, also always stays physical because obviously it is human and a human can do only certain things. It has a kind of biological limitation which cannot be stretched.

I think one of the beauties of music is that it's a time machine. It's a photograph of time.

D.Z. In the Duchamp piece, the sound was not synchronized with the visual images, although in terms of content, as a realization of a Duchamp piece, it was integrated.

S.H. Yes. It can't be separated. It's a static kind of music, all the sounds are exactly five seconds long, and although they have different spectral contents, they all have the same envelope and duration. Some of them seem stronger only because there are more frequencies. But all of the amplitudes of the individual sine waves are exactly the same throughout the piece. But then of course, if there are fifteen frequencies the sound is louder

than if there is only one. Dynamics are determined by a random process so to speak.

D.Z. And you set the random process, or is it Duchamp's model?

S.H. Well, it's a computer realization of Duchamp's model, with some modifications. I made the decision, for example, that all sounds would be five seconds long, that they would all have the same envelope and so on. I also decided the frequency. But after having made those basic decisions I built a random matrix exactly modelling Duchamp's concept of that piece of music: La mariée mise a nu par ces celibataires même.

D.Z. Duchamp's piece was a system for determining the details of a composition.

S.H. Well, for example, if a piano is used, the keys and balls are numbered. There is a contraption by which those balls fall into the wagons of a passing toy train. A certain number of the balls, one or several or none, would fall into each of the wagons. You would then just play those keys indicated by the numbers on the balls. Duchamp is faithful to the concept in that he says that he doesn't really feel that a performance of the piece is necessary. (laughter).

D.Z. You are dealing with three artists who experimented with the performance situation, using art as confrontation or denying the art-object altogether. Yet you are making pieces.

S.H. Well, I am not into everything they did. It's all filtered through my bias as they say in computer music circles. I just use what I find important. In the Cage piece and the Duchamp piece I tried to make a portrait of the artists. I used those things that have been important for me, things that I understood and felt. There might be a lot of other things left out. They are not critical essays.

D.Z. They remain Hansen compositions.

S.H. Yes, but there are things in these pieces which I have never done before. When I undertook the Cage piece, for example, I actually knew very little about the train event and what I had heard turned out to be very different than what had actually happened. But I told the people who commissioned me that I wouldn't do a repertoire piece. It would be an art work that would prolong the event itself. Also, I did not myself participate in the train event.

D.Z. Who commissioned you?

S.H. Fylkingen Stockholm, and the Theatre of Bologna who set up the festival.

Also my colleague and collaborator Nino Monastro, an Italian photographer who has lived for some time in Stockholm, was involved. He comes from Romagna, the region where the event took place; he went there alone, with his camera and a small cassette tape recorder. He made all the documents and returned with photographs and several hours of tapes. We then selected fifty-five minutes of sound and some of the photographs of the train. We added other things such as colour photographs from the region, nature photographs.

It's one of the most beautiful regions in Italy. It's up in the north under the alps so it isn't dry. It's green and pleasant, hilly, really beautiful. It's also different because it's the centre of Italian communism. The communists have ruled this region ever since the war. The mayors of cities like Bologna, Ravenna, all those cities, are communist. Bologna, the capital city of the region, is the very centre of Italian communism.

They have succeeded in something that you don't very often see; in making a dialogue between the communist party, ordinary people, and experimental and new art. There is a huge audience for everything. The Cage event, for example, even in small towns with only twenty thousand people drew crowds of four or five thousand to the station when the Cage train went through.

D.S. How many stops did it make?

S.H. Three or four stops a day for three days.

D.Z. What events took place when the train made its stops?

S.H. There were local arrangements: local musicians, amateur choirs, dancers, folk musicians playing at the stations. On the train itself they had electronic equipment and regular concerts by chamber groups playing Mozart and things like that. You hear it on my tape.

Also they had a couple of Moog synthesizers which everybody on the train, not just professionals could play. There was a mixer where all the sounds were mixed and sent out over loudspeakers to the wagons of the train. Cage himself didn't do anything. He was there, rather like a spiritual father. There wasn't any music of Cage played on the train or anywhere around it.

D.Z. But it was like a large scale, indeterminate Cage composition.

S.H. It was everything like that, and a collision of cultures. Everybody involved in it felt that it couldn't have been done anywhere else than in that region which is really unique in Italy.

D.Z. When you worked with the tapes and photos did you have a sense of conflict between making as you call it "meta-art" and making a documentary?

S.H. Not really. I never wanted to make a documentary. There are documentary elements in it, but it was never my intention to do a documentary in the sense of showing what happened on the train, or what happened here or there on this or that day. Documents come into the piece very randomly. The composition of the piece is also random, although not through the use of an I Ching or anything like that; it is just randomly made.

D.Z. Was it simply preferential selection?

S.H. Well Nino and I were just talking about it as we were doing it. We would say, "let's take this and let's take that. . ." Also after we sorted out the train, we selected photographs of the region; they were photographs of working women. Nino had done a book which pictured north Italian Romagna women at work; we used some of those photographs.

When Nino went to Italy for the event he didn't know what kind of piece he was going to do. He actually went back after the train event to make some more photographs of the area. We then chose some quotations from Cage's own scores and writing. These are also incorporated in the slides, occuring rather randomly.

This material is used like the superimposed transparent sheets that Cage himself would have used. I do that with quotations from his scores, even using scores which were not intended to be superimposed. But they are used as visual elements rather than scores. Cage makes beautiful scores. They are really graphic art; his are the most beautiful scores around.

D.Z. Have your interests in poetry

always been fused with your music?

S.H. Yes as a matter of fact. But I was never a formal student of music; I never decided that I wanted to be a composer of music until I was past twenty, and I didn't really feel like formal training. I did speak to people and take lessons, but most of my musical education I did by myself while I was also working. It took a long time, several years.

At the same time I was writing poetry. At the beginning, this was very traditional poetry. I published a couple of books of normal, modernistic, metaphoric poetry. Then around 1960 - I was twenty four in 1960 - I decided that I didn't like traditional poetry anymore, and that I wanted to do other things. So I became involved in oral poetry and different kinds of performances. This was in the beginning of the happening movement. I started to do those kinds of pieces: instrumental/theatre piece, event pieces and so on. I did a lot like that between 1960 and 1965.

D.Z. You were incorporating theatre, dance. . .

S.H. Yes, everything. Sound poetry and even some musical things were all part of it.

At the same time, I was working with tape recordings. I didn't have access to a real electronic studio, although sometimes I had access to the studio at the Swedish radio station. They had an experimental radio program which took place late at night one hour per week. When I did that I had access to their studio, with several tape recorders and the possibility of mixing. But even so it was still an ad hoc arrangement.

I found that to really work you had to have access to equipment where you could carry out your own work. And all I had at that time was an ordinary home tape recorder, not even a very good one. It looked like an old radio with a little net in front of the loudspeakers. I did a lot of experimentation with voice using that equipment, but until 1966-67 when an electronic studio was built in Stockholm, I never actually produced any pieces that I felt could be performed. Then I could process sounds and do more elaborate work. And it wasn't until then that I really felt that what I was doing could be publicized as pieces in the electronic music field and in sound poetry.

At that time I was a firm believer in the media. After I stopped performing musical theatre pieces in 1965, I believed that at least for me, the age of performance was gone. We should use the media, especially the radio or the grammophone record. So for several years, everything that I did was on tape and meant to be broadcast or exist on record rather than in a concert situation. Only the huge publication of tape music and sound poetry never happened.

D.Z. You no longer have that belief in the media? It seems that part of that belief was premised on the idea that the media would allow your work to reach a broader audience. And that didn't happen.

S.H. No. I thought that the media was growing. And in the sixties, there were more people interested in experimental work. Also, in the media, the general attitude was more favourable to experimental work and to art in general.

After the sixties, it was quite different. I had to largely give up on media like television and radio, at least as long as it is controlled as it is in our countries. Consequently, I

have come back to concerts and performances again. I am even writing instrumental music again. Between 1965 and 1971, I didn't write any instrumental music or any music that required live performance whatsoever.

D.Z. Did you also consider concert performance of the tapes?

S.H. We had that too. Most of the pieces were made in a concert version on four tracks and a media version on two tracks for radio broadcast.

D.Z. Do you see the concert situation for tape music as problematic? I think that it's not acceptable to play only tapes in concert situations that are designed for live performances.

S.H. Well I think that it can be done in a room like this (the Western Front performance space), for instance. It would be preferable without chairs of course, and set up so that people can move in and out. It should be a more relaxed situation. As a matter of fact, I don't like the traditional concert situation even for instrumental music.

D.Z. Sometimes the context of a concert is important. Even in electronic music, a freer concert situation is only appropriate to pieces that are designed for such a situation. It would be difficult to listen to a string quartet with the audience walking in and out.

S.H. I don't mean that you could walk in and out. It's always been part of my attitude to be against institutions. Although my music gets performed in big institutions, I have never associated myself with them. I mean maybe it's a little different in Canada than it is in Europe where this kind of music, the art music or serious music, is a bourgeois thing.

I mean it was a great thing when music moved down from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie. In the nineteenth century, music was the art of the bourgeoisie. And all of those big institutions like the symphony orchestras and operas have stayed very much the same. The patronage is the same. The reason that people feel uncomfortable in them now is because they reflect patriarchal patterns of the society which they were meant to serve.

In North America, I don't think that you have that huge group of cultivated middle-class bourgeoisie that you have in Europe. The European immigrant came from the working classes, not from the bourgeoisie. That tradition was not part of their lives.

In Europe, when people start to get on, start earning money, they tend to take up the habits of the bourgeoisie. People don't do that so much here, because there wasn't a bourgeoisie to set the style. In Europe, there is a basic respect for the arts and for artists, even among people who never go to concerts and never read books. There is a basic respect for art; everybody feels that something worthwhile is being done. If you are a composer or a writer in Europe, you have a certain status. In North America, you don't have that at all.

D.Z. Do you have a sense of the audience for your music?

S.H. Well, in the nineteenth century, the audience was homogeneous and well-defined. It spoke the same language as you did, had the same background, the same education and the same values. It is not like that anymore. There are no common values, no common education. Now the situation is different. As an artist today, you can't choose your audience. All you can do is make something that's open to everybody; anybody

who wants to can accept it.

D.Z. Or anybody who has access to the art.

S.H. Yes, but I feel that it is accessible to a lot of people. And it could be more appreciated than it is if it had the same opportunity and backing as commercial culture has.

D.Z. Is that realistic?

S.H. No, not in the kind of capitalist society that we have now.

D.Z. Do you find parallels between a commercial culture and "art or serious music"?

S.H. Not very much. The backing is not the same. There are no disc jockeys playing art music on all the radio stations; there are no magazines promoting it, or fan clubs and so on. It doesn't identify with a group. Popular culture always identifies with a group and every kind of group has its own popular culture. The middle aged housewife has soap operas, and the kids have rock and roll.

D.Z. Would you like to see your work promoted through the popular media?

S.H. Yes, I think that would be nice.

D.Z. You don't feel that it would change your work in some way?

S.H. No, No, I would still work the same way as always.

D.Z. When you leave Vancouver, you are going to New York to perform in the Soho Baroque Opera Company's production, The Heavyweight Sound Fight.

S.H. It is a joint composition by three composers, myself, Charlie Morrow and Carles Santos. The concept of the piece just emerged in conversations between the three of us. Then Carles went to Spain and we started making music individually for it.

There will be an overture which we will do together when I get to New York. There there will be music for each of the rounds, most of it improvised. And there will be pre-composed music in the intermissions between the rounds that will be either on tape or played by musicians. It's kind of an opera or music-theatre piece.

D.Z. What are you working on now?

S.H. Well I have a lot or projects for the future. I am working on a text-sound piece with computer speech synthesis. In New York I will work at Brooklyn College where they have a speech synthesis program directed by Charles Dodge. He invited me to do this piece on it.

After that I will be working on an orchestral piece with slide show which the American symphony wants me to do for a Carnegie Hall concert next year. It kind of excites me. I don't really know how a slide show with orchestra will work. But maybe it will be ok. I haven't really started thinking about the piece. As soon as I get back home I have to decide what material I will use in it.

(pause)

I have been a composer for twenty years now. Music has become kind of my home and my country.

I have given up almost everything else for it, and I guess all I can do is to go on with it until . . . until the end so to speak. . .

Michael Longton

Composition after Technology
the Real Time Digital Music System at U.Vic

Cage once quoted Morton Feldman as remarking, "Now that everything's so easy, there's so much to do." This seems to describe that state of events in which those pitfalls and hurdles, traditionally seen as aspects of technology, are suddenly revealed as compositional and aesthetic.

Computer-generated music - out of necessity - spent its first decade in the studio. The technique of "software synthesis" ruled out any other possibility Software synthesis refers to the representation and generation of sound as a series of discrete samples which are calculated by the computer, stored (usually) on magnetic tape, and then output at high speed (in excess of 30,000 per second) to digital to analog converters and then to loudspeakers. Because several steps are involved in the process and because of the high speed at which the samples must be output, software synthesis is not an appropriate technique for a real-time music. It does, however, allow one to deal with sound at an 'atomic' level and for this reason remains not only a viable synthesis technique in the studio but the most appropriate tool for acoustic research.

The alternative to software synthesis is what has come to be known as the 'digital synthesizer'. The digital synthesizer is, in effect, a separate computer dedicated to calculating and outputting the samples or atomic particles of the sound. Since the actual synthesis routines are implemented in hardware, it may conveniently be thought of as 'hardware synthesis'. The digital synthesizer must, of course, be controlled by a separate computer which, since it no longer has to concern itself with calculating and emitting discrete samples, can be dedicated to compositional-structural considerations. It is this segregation of tasks that gives hardware synthesis its real-time capability.

Given such a capability, then, what is one going to do with it? Some sense of the possibilities of the digital system can be grasped by comparing it to an analog system. With any given patch, the analog system offers a finite range of possible events. The physical configuration of the system has its aural counterpart in the musical structure: a series of extended blocks, each exploring the possibilities of a given circuit. And anyone who has worked with such a system in real time knows that the transition from one patch to another can be treacherous indeed, which may explain the tendency to extract the last second's worth of interest from one patch before attempting the leap.

In contrast, at the touch of a CRT key, the digital system can be completely re-patched in as many ways and as often as the performer wishes. The digital system potentially affords a degree of control over the musical macrostructure far beyond anything that can be achieved with analog electronics.

This assumes, of course, that the machine is truly programmable. Unfortunately, of the new crop of commercial digital synthesizers (New England *Synclavier II, Con Brio,* Fairlight *CMI,* Buchla *Touche, Crumar*) several are not. Malleability and efficiency do not generally go hand in hand, and the tendency seems to be to sacrifice compositional flexibility for directness and ease of access.

At the University of Victoria we have been working for the last three years with the New England Synclavier I. While the system has some severe limitations, it does provide a general-purpose computing language (a subset of the PL/1 language) which many of the newer machines do not, and without which the synthesizer is essentially a supercharged electronic organ.

The Synclavier has provided us with a vehicle to build several layers of software by means of which we can ask - and begin to answer - some fundamental questions about the interaction of man and machine in a performing environment. For example: over what range of parameters can a performer exercise effective control? It is clear that in a situation where parameters are not kinaesthetically linked (as they are, for example, in playing a piano) there is a threshold beyond which the performer will be unable to respond meaningfully to the sheer density of information.

The problem might be resolved by 'binding' certain parameters to others, or by making several sets of parameters subservient to a master control. Does one wish to pre-program the macro-structural elements and retain control over the musical microstructure, or vice versa? The first case would produce, in successive performances, a clearly recognizable shape with local variations; the second would be a program capable of producing radically different performances with a more subtle unity.

In practise, most performances on Synclavier I make use of at least three distinct levels of software. At the lowest level are those routines which address the digital synthesizer directly. This level is usually ignored by the user unless it is necessary for some reason to modify it. At the next stage it is useful to include a program which controls the timing of events and facilitates the generation of envelopes. This is usually MOXIE, written by Douglas Collinge, a research assistant in computer music at UVic. MOXIE is a program which allows one to specify 'actions' and to 'cause' these actions at specified times. Any action may cause any other action (or itself!) in a time ranging from 0 to 65,536 milliseconds. It should be pointed out that the structure of MOXIE makes unnecessary the building of extensive 'note lists' which might overflow the computer memory. In fact, in MOXIE it is quite easy to write programs which run forever. The highest level of software is the file supplied by the user. This will normally contain data lists, assignment of real-time controls (these might be selected keys on the CRT or the keyboard, or buttons of the control panel), and of course those procedures and algorithms which are the core of the program.

Specifically, we have found certain algorighms to be of general usefulness. Most of our programs involve some random choice by the computer, usually from elements of a data list. In most cases the performer will want to maintain some control over the range of this random choice. An efficient procedure is to specify a 'window' within which the choice can be made, with the performer having control over the boundaries of the window. The technique is similar to the 'tendency mask' mode of the POD programs in use at Simon Fraser, but with the addition of real-time controls.

One recurrent problem is the difficulty of controlling a system when the flow of information passes a certain density. John Celona has developed a technique for extracting elements from data lists and holding them in a 'ready' state from where they may be fed to the system at a later time. Dan Scheidt has written several variations of a program that emulates an analog sequencer with detailed control of phase shift, producing textures that undergo a kind of automated but controlled metamorphosis. One of the most innovative works produced with the system is Martin Bartlett's Response, for trumpet and digital electronics. Here the solo trumpet sounds are fed to the computer which, after analyzing them as to pitch, intensity and duration, produces appropriate "accompaniments". The performance of such a work is a process of continual probing by the instrumentalist to discover the nature of the digital system.

Though we have been discussing real-time systems in rather pragmatic terms, it should be clear that our first concern is not to build a system that is easy to use, but one that is rich in algorithmic and procedural possibilities. The final test of a system must be not the ease with which it can satisfy a compositional directive but the degree to which it enhances the composing environment. Otherwise we might find everything easy and little to do.

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17

Jean Piché

Thoughts, Contentions, and Composition
Electronic Music 1981

1. <u>Electronics and New Tonality:</u>
   <u>An Alternative Content for</u>
   <u>Electronic Music</u>

When one looks back on the development of post-war musical aesthetics, formalist concerns appear now as a convenient excuse for sonic experimentation. With the musical results of that period it becomes easy to believe that you simply cannot reinvent musical language. One can however, reinvent musical thought and what can be accepted as musical. In that sense the advent of electronics as a legitimate new way of producing music is certainly the most important event to have taken place in the post-war period.

Structuralism and what seemed to be the promise of a new language at the time swept almost all serious music composers into an idealist closet with no windows. People were told that serious experimentation was going on and that in due time they were going to be impressed by what this 'research' would yield. After thirty years, structuralism might be held responsible for the sad state of new music today. The promises were never fulfilled. Almost all formalistic musics are an affair of the mind, and strictly speaking, don't have much to do with the sensual experience music should be.

It is of some interest to note that one of the last bastions of new music to recognize the failings of structuralist aesthetics is that of electronic music. This is perhaps because of its more obvious 'scientific' overtones and its total involvement in inventing new processes of composition and sound design. While there was considerable legitimacy in having set these priorities in the infancy of electronic music, it now seems that electronic music composers never acknowledge the alternatives to structuralism. Structuralism is such a practical way to fabricate mental excuses for purely sonic experiments.

This kind of attitude, however, yields results that bear little resemblance to music. There is a lingering rejection of sensuality in experimentations of the formalistic variety, as if pleasure was a dirty word and 'research' its proper substitute.

Nevertheless, I truly believe electronic music to be the only legitimate offspring of serious music since the fifties. It is indeed a new way of doing music with potentially very powerful new results. However, it is the ways and means that are new, not the music. It is a historical first that the composer controls every step in the production of a piece of music, from conception to performance. But an encounter with electronic instruments that can produce new sound can be bewildering and seductive to a composer. New sound can become an excuse on its own, with what happens in the music becoming a question of lower priority, filling time in an arbitrary structure. This doesn't work anymore; the newness has faded as even newer ways of producing sound, like computers, have become available.

In electronic music there are certain types of 'musical operations' that are very difficult to perform, at least in the analog electronic studio. Precise polyphony and synchronous rhythmic structures are two examples. These require considerably more imagination and resources than electronic sound

doodling. I think this is precisely why electronic music is such a disaffected field. It is so much easier to succumb to the immediate attraction of sound, because establishing purposeful structures is subject to a lot of awkward thinking and procedures in a traditional studio setting.

But it turns out that in the last few years, namely with the introduction of computers, these problems are not so difficult anymore and I for one have been trying to move ahead by reintroducing pitch and rhythmic concerns in the music I make.

Periodic rhythm and key harmonic intervals like the octave, fifth, fourth, thirds, and sevenths are to me basic. In the context of serious music, they reintegrate pleasure. It is not particularly interesting to me to make historical justifications for sensuality in music. Further, whether the perception of periodicity and 'consonant' harmony is of learned or innate origin is a problem for academics and anthropologists to dwell on. I am not the least interested in their 'scientific' relevance. Musically, these types of organizations are useful for the very reason that most people can relate to them on an instinctual level. The brain and the body simply like them. This is not to say that one should be strictly concerned with giving pleasure, but to totally reject very important sensual functions on the basis that they are bred from cultural habit is asking for a lot of trouble. It is also, a very tired argument that never contributed much to the art.

Known intervals are useful in a number of ways. Within the context of a particular tonal field, for instance, they allow vertical timbral integration where sound and polyphony become one and establish a sonic 'wholesome-ness' not possible with dissonance.

Many composers reject this approach as too dependent on harmonic 'gestalts' like the major or minor chord As with the use of periodic time signatures, this is not necessarily the case. I am convinced that entirely new and fresh output can be obtained by incorporating known intervals or periodic rhythms, providing that sufficient attention is given to micro- and macro-time operations. Form is such an expanded concept now, that in this lies a true field of artistic invention.

To put this discussion back in the electronic music perspective, sound is a matter of taste and invention. Consonance and periodicity, I acknowledge as sensual building techniques as opposed to conceptual ones. There is hardly any nostalgia in this, unlike the current European practice, neo-romanticism.

It mainly has to do with psycho-acoustics. One quirky characteristic of prime intervals like the octave, the fifth, the third, or the seventh is that when heard together in a chord, the brain will integrate them as one construct. That is how periodic sound is perceived. That is how, by extension, chords are perceived. The first harmonic of the root sound (let's say the middle C on the piano) will reinforce and blend into the fundamental harmonic of the C one octave above, the second harmonic of the root will blend into the fundamental harmonic of the G above, etc. When the tuning of these pitches is precisely controlled, you get into a situation where what is heard rides the thin edge be-

tween chord and sound. This is very difficult to do with acoustic instruments. It is called acoustic fusion, or quasi-fusion. You can only do it with electronics, and more specifically with digital electronics. That is the kind of work I find fascinating. You might refer to it as 'sonic sculpture', with a large concern for musical sensuality.

2. <u>Electronic Music Performance:</u>
   <u>Thoughts on Simulating Physical</u>
   <u>Reality</u>

The problem of unperformable music. Locked inside sterile computer rooms and recording studios. Laboratory music if there ever was such a thing. Working with sound that does not really exist. Storing the result of experiments on magnetic particles. Later there will be sound; on the radio, on the phonograph, perhaps in a room full of people. The music will never be performed, ever.

I originally got into electronics because, at the time, it was the only way to achieve the kind of sound I was looking for. The reason I never really took to live electronics is that the sheer hardware requirements to produce a 'credible' synthesized sound on a stage were staggering. As a composer, I'm interested in producing music that is unique. This is my priority over setting myself on a stage and pushing buttons for the edification of the audience. The studio is still the only place for me to do this.

However, as any music engineer will confirm, one can concentrate more and more acoustic power into a smaller and smaller package. The live performance of a sonic complexity equal to that of a symphony orchestra is just around the corner. Live electronics will no longer be confined to the thin-sounding music of the past. In such a case, it becomes of crucial importance to take a hard look at the current state of electronic performance and its usefulness in comparison to what performance is or should be.

First, the problem of human interfaces, muscular control in a performance setting, must be faced. Thought needs to be given to 'muscularity' in the performance of music. To me, the crux of performance sits in the direct connection existing, or not existing, between the sound that is heard and the performer's gesture to actualize it. The sense of timing, emphasis, drama, drive and sensitivity travels through muscles. The use of electronical systems poses a number of problems with regards to the interpretation of a performer's muscular activity. There are a number of muscular transducers available to convert human gestures into sound: the piano keyboard, single or double reed vibrators, strings, bows, or simply a stick on a resonating surface. These systems allow an intimate connection between human action and a resulting sound. With time and practice, a normal human being can be expected to control the use of one or two of these transducers in a lifetime. Learning to play an instrument is more or less learning to manipulate the idiosyncrasies of a muscular transducer. This task requires a considerable amount of finesse in order to express musical sensitivity.

Everyone has at least an intuitive understanding of the mechanics of a piano. The relationship between the sound and its means of production is a

mechanical one. The energy transfer from the pianist's hands to the vibrating strings is mechanical in the sense that it never leaves the physical world. This relationship is really what allows me to 'feel' the sense of a particular performance. What I see (the performer's hands and body) is really what I hear.

The intuitive knowledge of sound as a manifestation of activity within instruments, allows a listener to understand the actions applied to instruments. The consequence of these actions is sound. The quality of the actions can be apreciated through the quality of sound.

Electronic sound-producing devices were originally intended to be just signal-producing devices and not instruments. Electronic tone production does not know or care about the physical world. The oscillations of electrical tension in an arrangement of transistors and resistors are only analogous to sound; they are not sound.

In early tone generators, control of the parameters of the oscillations was done through knobs sitting on top of variable resistors. Turning the knob would produce an analog result in the electrical tension of the oscillator. More practical ways of achieving this were devised after a while, but the actual result of the gesture is still only analogous to the gesture. It is a coded gesture.

Electronic tone generation, as opposed to acoustical tone production, does not show any preference for a particular kind of interface between gesture and sound. Whereas, it would indeed be ludicrous to build an instrument where you would strike a single reed with a stick and have the subsequent vibrations resonate in a piano soundboard. An acoustical instrument is a holistic construction. The technique adopted for sound production will have a direct bearing on the type of muscular interface used. This is not the case with electronics because the technique which ultimately causes sound production does not itself produce sound; it produces variations in electrical tension.

Electronics don't even need muscular interfacing. Interfaces were later installed as a convenience. This point is perhaps best illustrated by disconnecting the loudspeaker from a tape-recorder playing a complex piece of music. Can we refer to the electrical variations still happening inside the machine as sound?

In the early Fifties when sound was the all-encompassing goal of music research, these problems hardly seemed to matter. The feeble attempts made at musical interfacing (mainly keyboards) were largely seen as regressive attempts at making the analog electronic instrument into a weirder variety of organ. Composers introduced the magnetic tape as the performance medium. The actual 'playing' of electronic apparatus was done 'off-line' in the production studio. So the types of interfaces designed were largely in the name of practicality in the studio and not for any 'expressive' quality they might have had in a live performance situation.

After thirty years of electronic music this problem is not really solved. Is it really solvable? The finesse of control required over the parameters of time, pitch, intensity, and timbre in a live performance of credible quality is closely linked to the nature of kind of detailed control. Without an acoustical nature of its own, electronics must copy the muscular transduction modes of acoustical instruments. Can it be argued that any amount of ingenuity in copying will never produce more than

the model being copied?

Even if a successful keyboard type interface is devised (and some keyboards available today can be surprisingly sensitive), in what way would it be different than other mechanical keyboard? The music performable on it would still be subject to the kinetic restrictions of ten fingers moving over it. And perhaps more pointedly, all gestures are liable to the deficiencies of electrical coding. A coded movement is not a movement.

Another approach to live electronic performance is the analog or digital automation of parametric control. This tendency is recent and has just begun to be practical. One good example of such a system is the 4CED language developed by Curtis Abbott at IRCAM. A set of potentiometers can be manipulated to control different music parameters as it is being played. The Structured Sound Synthesis Project out of Toronto has also done some work in that direction.

In such systems, a number of core parameters like pitch, dynamics and the ordering of notes are usually preset. The actions of the 'performer-conductor' will shape the general contour of the music in a real-time setting, much like a conductor controls his orchestra. While this research holds a lot of promise, it faces roughly the same kinetic problems as the muscular interfaces we discussed earlier. The relationship between the 'baton' of the conductor and the electronic interpretation or coding of its movements is a difficult one to define. It is certainly an advantage that the 'baton' can now be precisely linked to any parameter of the music as opposed to just general pacing and emphasis of a conductor of acoustic music. But here again the electronic interpretation of movement, whatever parameter it is applied to, can never be the real thing. Nevertheless, one can imagine a quite precise coding device that would understand the meaning of a movement. A likely situation resulting from such a device would be a conductor-performer controlling a very powerful computer-based orchestra on a stage.

How different is this situation from playing a tape-recorder? Surely the detail and interaction of live acoustic performance is greater. A particular voice can be brought to the foreground, the percussion section can be paced to the conductor's fancy, etc. The essential problem in computer performance is that the instantaneous risk of producing a sound is the responsibility of the computer. And that is no risk at all, relatively speaking. It would be trivial to trick the 'orchestra', i.e. the computer in order that there would appear to be more to the performance than there really is. Is it performance or the illusion of performance? When is the last time you went to a player-piano recital?

The genuine possibility of perfection is probably what will kill computer music. If something is too easy to get, it loses value very fast.

Just about a year ago in California, I took part in informal talks to design and construct a sophisticated digital signal-processor. The machine, using high-level techology, would have had roughly the acoustic power of a couple of symphony orchestras. More interesting perhaps was the incredibly precise controlability of the instrument: a frequency resolution close to absolute and a theoretic dynamic range of 115 dBs.

After much discussion, it was acknowledged that such detailed control was musically unproductive. It almost

made the 'happy accident' impossible. At that point we considered building some kind of randomizing processor to lend a measure of unpredictability to the instrument. The cost of building the randomizer would have exceeded the cost of building the original instrument.

After working on such synthesizers as the 4C at IRCAM and the Samson box at Stanford, I have come to believe that imperfection is what makes the music. With very precise digital sound processors, you never get more than what you ask for. To some this might be an advantage, to me it is a hindrance. The perfect saxophone might be one that produces a well-founded tone however you blow it. Undoubtedly, however, on the basis of its predictibility, it would soon join the ranks of kazoos, whistles, and other musical toys.

There is ultimately no point in building the sound machine that will do everything you ask it to do. The more precision and predictability are engineered into an instrument, the more personality and musicality is engineered out of it. When travelling in England in the early seventies, I acquired a vintage Synthi-AKS, outfitted with what are probably the cheapest, dirtiest oscillators ever put into an instrument. Once in a while I take the thing out of the closet and tune a unison with two oscillators. The sound is something that belongs to it. It is never quite the same and never ceases to amaze me.

This characteristic may be the saving grace of electronics in a performance setting. Cheap electronics have a way of living a life of their own. Their use certainly reintroduces a sense of risk and the mastery of electronic music performance may take advantage of this.

There is no easy way out of the performance dilemma. As I have tried to discuss, the essence of the problem sits in the very nature of electronic sound production. Performing and conducting have an ultimately undefinable edge. Past a certain level, you simply cannot implement 'humanity' more than you can theorize about it.

Electronics are indeed an extension of the brain and as such cannot be expected to process or generate reality, but merely a representation of reality. Even if one succeeds in implementing a perfect representation, you never get more then the original. It often seems to me that we are stuck with this problem. In the human sense of performance as a confrontation with the risk of failure, electronic music will never be performable.

The irking failure of tape music in the concert hall is a constant reminder of this. We need radical new solutions. Lately I have become interested in film as a possible lifeboat for electronic music. Video also perhaps, although video suffers many of the same misgivings as electronic music. At this point one might ask: "Are you a filmmaker or a composer, a visual artist or a musician?" Composing visuals from a musical point of view may be a secret goldmine. Many experimental film-makers have explored possible audio-visual grammars. Not many composers have done the same thing.

Jean Piche is a composer living in Vancouver, B.C.

Wilderness Lake

Point C: 4 trombonists
✕ ✕
✕ ✕

Camera 4
Sound 3

Sound 4

Sound 1 Camera 1

Sound 2

Camera 3

Point A: 4 trombonists
✕
✕ ✕
✕

Camera 2

Point B: 4 trombonists
✕ ✕ ✕
✕ ✕

Dock

Music for Wilderness Lake was composed by R. Murray Schafer for O'Grady Lake in Ontario. It was performed in two parts at dawn and at dusk by an Ontario trombone ensemble who were stationed in three groups around the lake. The performance was documented by Toronto film company, Fichman-Sweete Productions, and subsequently broadcast on CBC television. The piece was recorded from five locations, one of which was a raft in the middle of the lake which served also as a vantage point for Schafer, who cued the musicians with coloured flags.

On January 16, 1981 the Centre for the Arts at Simon Fraser University screened the film with Schafer present to introduce and discuss it. The following interview was conducted a day later by Hildegard Westerkamp on Vancouver Co-op Radio.

H.W. You wrote your piece for a specific lake in Ontario. Can you describe the surrounding landscape?

R.M.S. I am living in a part of Ontario at the southern edge of the Canadian shield which is studded with lakes, very rocky and has a large mix of deciduous trees like maple and birch as well as some evergreens. There used to be large cedars as well, but they have been logged leaving very dense underbrush.

The countryside is gently rolling with small hills. As a result, you get very different echoes than you would get in British Columbia, for example. The sound does not disappear into the great distance as it would in the mountains. In this landscape, the echoes are immediate and multiple, bouncing off the rock surfaces or the hardwood forests that surround the lake.

H.W. How far away is the nearest populated area?

R.M.S. The lake is about ten miles from where I live and probably twenty miles from the nearest village.

H.W. Does the lake play a role at all for the people in the area as a recreational lake, for example, or a fishing lake?

R.M.S. It is a fishing lake. Farmers know where it is and use it. When I asked them for a lake that might be suitable for such a piece, they told me about it.

H.W. How well did you know the lake before you started the piece?

R.M.S. I knew the lake for at least a year. By canoeing there at different times of day, I discovered that the piece would require a fair amount of logistic planning. For instance, there were marshes and swamps at one end of the lake and some rather steep hills on several other sides. It was very hard to determine where to situate twelve performers so that they had enough room for their music stands and also could see the centre of the lake.

H.W. Did you try out the echoes when you were there?

R.M.S. Yes, by shouting, clapping, and singing. I also had three trombone players come and play on the lake. The interesting thing about echoes is that they change depending on where you receive them. Supposing I am producing the sound; the echo that comes back to me is totally different from the echo that would be heard by a person standing on the other side of the lake. That was an interesting revelation, an empirical kind of discovery. I don't know why I had never thought of it before, as it seems so obvious now.
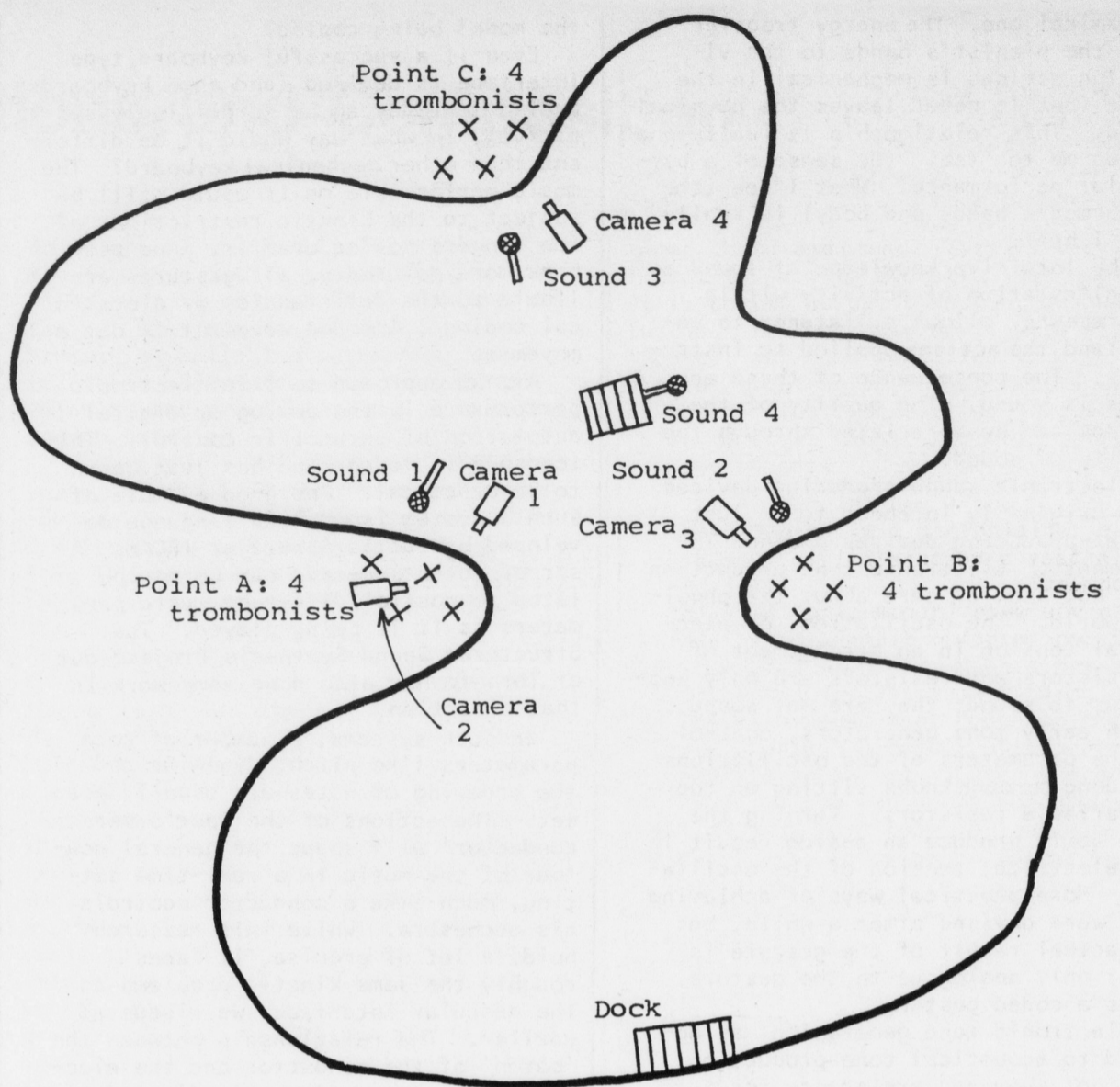
I also had to get to know the distances between certain points in order to be able to judge acoustic time delays. At a distance of half a mile there is a time delay of two to three seconds before a sound gets from one player to another. The score was written in such a way that the players could cue each other. In other words, one player would play after having heard somebody else.

H.W. Was the event announced locally?

R.M.S. No, we did it simply for ourselves. It began with a group of trombone students who had been after me to write a piece. They often got together in summer camps to play music, so I realized that they might be interested in a work that would fit a summer camp situation. They came out during a weekend and played the piece. It was not for the local public at all.

The only observers were a few reporters who came up with the film crew. It was actually fun because we had to get them out of bed from the local hotel at Bancroft at about 3:30 in the morning. We drove them up the highway for about an hour, down a sideroad then along a track. They had to walk the final distance to the lake where there were motorboats provided by local people. We took the reporters across to a far hill and out of the way until we were finished.

H.W. Would you ever consider doing it as an event for the people living in the area?

R.M.S. Sure. But I had not really thought of doing it for an audience because I am more concerned about the integrity of a musical composition.

The audience can come and go. Usually a consideration for the audience comes into one's thinking at a later point if at all. I was not really concerned about an audience.

H.W. What were you concerned about?

R.M.S. I was concerned about trying out a musical experiment, seeing if it would work, and discovering how to make it work. In doint that, however, the ritualistic side of the experience becomes more conspicuous. You have to get up at 3:30 in the morning and go out in the cold dawn before sunrise in order to experience this event. In this way it is a totally different ritual from attending a concert at eight o'clock at night. The merits become apparent when the sun comes up; you have an experience of dawn which few people touch anymore. Certainly, being on the lake as the sun came up and the mist rose above the water listening to music sliding across the water was a very moving experience.

H.W. Writing a piece of music for a landscape is not dissimilar to putting a piece of architecture into a landscape. In both cases you are imposing an alien element.

R.M.S. Yes, this is probably very true. The piece could be challenged on those grounds. In fact, a lot of people did when the film was shown on television. There were a lot of angry letters. I personally received one which began, "Today was garbage day, which reminds me, I turned on my television set and..." accusing me of being the arch-polluter of the environment.

H.W. What do you think of that comment?

R.M.S. Well, I think the piece could be seen as a confrontation; I would call it the dialectic of the environment versus society.

You see only by putting people, like the twelve bourgeois boys who played in the piece, out into the wilderness do

they ever catch anything of the spirit of the wilderness. And while they are bringing something alien, in this case brass instruments and a certain inability to navigate in a canoe, at the same time they are taking back a very precious experience. I think that criticism is justified here only in the same sense that it would be justified for any national park.

H.W. But you call the piece Music for Wilderness Lake. As you describe it now, it should be called Music for Twelve Urban Bourgeois Musicians in the Wilderness. Don't you think that a composer writing for a wilderness lake has, in fact a responsibility to that environment?

When you were introducing the film at SFU, you mentioned dialogue between nature and the piece. When I saw the film, I felt that the filmmakers were making a real effort to express this dialogue visually. Acoustically, however, I did not get any sense of dialogue because the music was continuous and uninterrupted. A true dialogue needs silences.

R.M.S. Yes, had one used flutes and other more delicate instruments, a more delicate kind of dialogue would have been possible. More of a confrontation of course would be created by the blatant voices of twelve trombones in a relatively peaceful soundscape.

In a piece that I am planning next I want to use a similar kind of environment but a more diversified group of musicians. The piece will have more silences and therefore the opportunity for greater dialogue. You learn these things with experience.

The main thing that I learned (in Music for Wilderness Lake) was the difficulty of actually coping with the problems of a natural setting. Most of us are totally inexperienced in that respect. For instance, when the dawn performance was half through, the mist became so thick that nobody could see anybody else. At such a moment you have to deal with nature at a very real level.

H.W. You talked at length during the film about how the context for music has changed throughout history and how this context should continue to change. For instance, music should be moved out of the concert hall because symphony concerts have become something of a dead ritual. I can't help but perceive Music for Wilderness Lake as an artificial change of context. Since music always happens within a cultural context, can a wilderness lake really be a meaningful context for music in our society?

R.M.S. I think that anything can be a context for music in our society. I was simply challenging the traditional context, trying to present a different set of parameters in which a work of art could be contained.

H.W. But if you are concerned about cultural contexts of music then you must be thinking about audiences as well.

R.M.S. Yes of course you are thinking about audiences, but first of all you are thinking about performers and performance situations. The audience takes care of itself.

There are however, variables that might be interesting to change for a performance. For example, instead of changing the time of day or night or the location as I did in Wilderness Lake why not change the temperature?

Consider folk music which is mostly created outdoors, some in a very very hot humid climate and some in a very barren cold climate. A piece like Snowforms[1] perhaps should be done out in the snow. Perhaps one has to feel the chill in the bones to be able to deliver a piece of that kind. All I was saying was that the really major changes in the history of art and ritual in society are those contextual changes in which whole field of operations shifts.

H.W. Those changes of course are always very closely connected with social and cultural changes.

R.M.S. Yes, they are always closely connected. But if you believe with Ezra Pound and Marshall McLuhan that artists are the antennae of the race, it is the artists who bring about these changing perspectives which stimulate large cultural and social changes. So, when an artist suddenly presents a work in a totally different context, it affects the way we live.

Going to a wilderness lake is part of a larger change that would move music out of concert halls and into the environment. In the city, people have already moved music into the streets. Streetmusic has become very fashionable again today. I think that one of the reasons for this is that cities are showing a great deal of interest in closing down streets to traffic.

H.W. However, by composing a piece for a wilderness lake you are creating a dilemma. On the one hand, the performance is exclusive. But in order to reach an audience, you are forced to make a film about the piece and it becomes a media event.

R.M.S. Actually making a film was a practical consideration primarily in order to pay the trombone players. Certainly it is the kind of piece that could be done without the film. The film is simply a record; but as such it is at least available to a larger number of people and is provoking some thought.

H.W. Did you anticipate the reactions to the film which you have been getting?

R.M.S. No I didn't. They were a surprise to me because I had never been involved with the more popular forms of media. From the beginning I wanted to make a film. In addition to paying the musicians, I wanted it for my own record and to show other performers how it was done and how they might approach the task.

The film turned out well, and the film company who made it was aggressive enough to sell it to the CBC and elsewhere. As a result, a large number of people have seen it and reacted to it. But I never expected that I would now have to explain, justify, and defend the film to middle-class urban types who have their own particular attitudes about both music and wilderness.

H.W. After Music for Wilderness Lake we are going to broadcast a recording of New Year's Eve in Vancouver[2] - the boathorns in the harbour as they welcome the New Year. I would consider the recording of this event a piece. How would you compare your own piece for wilderness lake with this one which happens each year in Vancouver harbour?

R.M.S. Yes, I suppose it is a piece. During the Russian revolution also, all the horns were blown. In fact some of the futurists spoke of that as being a piece. These are collective compositions and as you know there are lots of them in the soundscape.

H.W. This one, however, recurs every year.

R.M.S. Yes it has become a sound event, or a soundmark. It isprobably important to have more of these kinds of events in the environment. Margaret Mead once said that we lack celebration in our society in comparison with other more structured societies. Probably we should have more acoustic celebrations in which large numbers of people can participate.

H.W. Do you think that an individual composer would have the power to initiate that kind of thing?

R.M.S. No, I'm not sure that an individual composer could order such events. When the attempt is made, it usually sounds stilted.

H.W. But aren't you doing that at Wilderness Lake?

R.M.S. Well yes, I think that that is a valid objection. But, if I say that those urban pieces in which everyone is instructed to blow their carhorns at nine o'clock at night. . .

H.W. Would you compare your composition with those pieces?

R.M.S. No. I think that what I have done is more thoughtful than that. But you may be justified in saying that the actual outcome is not so terribly dissimilar. You are simply profaning an environment with something that is not particularly called for by the natives of the place. And that may be true.

The popular music world, much as I despise it, has changed our attitude towards the composer. In pop music, you are either good, popular and making a living or you are not. It is as simple as that. Those are realities of twentieth century art and entertainment that I think are going to have an influence on what young composers may choose to do. Perhaps that real desire to establish immediate contact with society will bring composers out into the open, and encourage them to make public music and plan acoustic or soundscape environments.

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[1] Snowforms is Schafer's most recent work. It was composed for choir and had its world premier in January 1981 in Vancouver. It was performed by the Vancouver Chamber Choir as part of the Vancouver New Music Society Concert Series.

[2] Every year at twelve midnight on New Year's Eve, all the boats and the trains blow their horns. Hildegard Westerkamp has recorded this event each year for the last three years. Each time, of course, a different piece is created. But all of them are part of the same 'ritual'; all of them are spectacular acoustic events for a large urban audience. At the end of the radio program that features the interview with R.M. Schafer and his Music for Wilderness Lake, Co-op radio broadcast the 1980/81 New Year's Eve recording.

Russell Keziere

Style Over Content

Andrea von Ramm
February 1, 1981
Vancouver East Cultural Centre

Meredith Monk
February 24, 1981
Simon Fraser University

It is interesting that the perfor-
mances of Andrea von Ramm and Meredith
Monk were both so profoundly dissatis-
fying. They failed to satisfy not
because of any lack of artistic pro-
ficiency or virtuosity, but because of
an essentially acritical approach to
art.

Each of the two performers presented
evenings of solo voice. Von Ramm sang
selections of medieval music in the
first half of her programme and did a
medley of early 20th century sound
poetry in the second. Meredith Monk
sang works from Songs from the Hill
and featured her new album, Anthology.
Von Ramm was, of course, performing
someone else's compositions while Monk's
work was emphatically her own.

Both artists are virtuosos with von
Ramm being evidently the better singer,
but virtuosity has never really compen-
sated for a lack of critical awareness
about one's choice of an art form. I
am, here, critical of von Ramm's choice
and her renditions and making a similar
criticism of Monk's compositions. It
is indicative of a prevailing accep-
tance of style over content, however,
that both of these performances were in-
credibly well attended and rewarded with
near standing ovations.

Von Ramm is an academic in many senses
of the word. She lectures in phonetics
and rhetoric at the University of Basel.
She spent eighteen years with Studio der
Fruhen Musik (Early Music Quartet) and
has recorded on such prestigious labels
as EMI-Electrola, Telefunken, Odeon,
and Deutsche Grammophon Archiv. But
her interests have not remained with
attempts to decipher the vagaries of no-
tation in some anonymous 9th century
St. Gall chant master; she has also
developed a programme at her university
called "Nonsense, Dada, Poesie Concrete
et Sonore" which explores the poetics
of extended vocalizations as they were
introduced by the early dadas.

Given the bifurcated nature of her
repertoire, it was appropriate that
both the Vancouver New Music Society
and the Vancouver Society for Early
Music should have sponsored this
event and brought von Ramm over at
considerable public expense.

It was a great idea. Unfortunately
what the audience received was an aca-
demic rendition of both medieval music
and sound poetry which relied on their
juxtaposition for significance. It
was especially unfortunate because the
real parallels between the 9th century
melismas and tropes and the extempor-
aneous experiments of early 20th century
sound poetry are pronounced: both tes-
tify to the inherent familiarity of
'new' art. Von Ramm did more to keep
them in their separate cubby holes
than to creatively express this com-
monality and the audience seemed con-
tent with the novelty of the idea.

The first half of the programme
was weighted with three selections of
Guillaume de Machaut. The "Planctus
Jephta", a long and dolorous lament by
Peter Abelard (1079-1142), was made even
longer and more dolorous by von Ramm's
recitations of the translated text.
Rather than making the planctus more
accessible, these destroyed the musical

structure of the composition. Further,
her interpretation was inspired more by
the depressed outrage of 20th century
fatalism than by the more appropriate
Boethian philosophy of benign acceptance
of Lady Fortune. Apart from a beauti-
fully sung anonymous piece from the 9th
century, "Clangam Filii", the first
half of the programme was merely an aca-
demic exercise.

I cannot be impressed with the fact
that the second half of the programme
consisted of a medley of sound poems
culled from the work of Ernst Jandl,
Emmet Lora Totino, Martin Marnov and
Velimir Chlebnikov. Juxtaposition
does not a comparison make. In point
of fact even these were delivered with
control, poise and again, academic dis-
tance.

The whole exercise reminded me of an
anecdote which Tom Graff, the Vancouver
performance artist, tells of his role
in a John Cage performance of "The Con-
certo for Sleeping Bag". Cage was di-
recting the performance and Graff was a
student in a traditionally conservative
music department. He was tremendously
nervous about the performance, since he
felt that what he was doing was 'silly'
and hardly music. Cage became angry
with him and told him that Graff had
better perform as a professional if he
wished to continue as an artist. While
apparently silly, the artist must real-
ize that play is serious business.
Graff relates how many classically
trained musicians look on some avant-
garde experiments as if they were pri-
marily divertimenti. When they perform
them, it is with more puerile indulgence
in doing something 'naughty' than with
professional understanding of the com-
poser's intent.

Von Ramm's renditions of early dada
sound poetry struck me as being equally
puerile. It was altogether too tongue-
in-cheek, and ultimately it lied about
what those pieces were meant to say.
Von Ramm's performance, in short, was
radically if not antithetically, dif-
ferent in intent -- and intent was so
very important to the dadas. Von Ramm's
intent was academic and she fed on a
conservative audience's willingness to
be titillated by 'silly sounds'. That
silliness, I would suggest, is mostly
a projection on the part of both the
performer and the audience.

Meredith Monk comes out of a visual
arts context. One of her earliest and
most successful works, for example, was
a 1969 performance art piece called
"Juice" which was held at the Guggenheim
in New York. Her work involves dance,
music and expanded voice techniques.
Works such as "Education of a Girl
Child" (1972) and "Quarry" (1976) have
involved large casts.

For her Vancouver audience Monk
presented a programme of works for solo
voice adding minimally accomplished
piano accompaniments after the inter-
mission. The performance aspect of her
work, however, remained ever present
through continual reference to her
self-hood, i.e. it is imperative in
performance art that the artist's self
be incorporated into the piece. It
would be impossible, for example, for
Andrea von Ramm to perform one of Mere-
dith Monk's solo voice pieces since
that would radically change the intent
of the work. (I do not doubt, however,
that some latter day Andrea von Ramm
will come along 40 years from now and
do just that.)

Through ambiguity of genre, Monk
gains a kind of dual citizenship; she

uses it, however, as an avoidance tech-
nique. She is relieved of the necessity
of answering to qualitative criteria of
either performance art or music.

Meredith Monk has developed a fine
expanded voice technique. Her use of
micro-tones and harmonics, her yogic
manipulations of her vocal chords are
impressive. But she is certainly not
alone, emphatically not original, and
nowhere near the best that has been
done. Hanna Aurbacher, Ewald Liska and
Theophil Maier, of the Trio Exvoco
Stuttgart, for example, can run rings
around Meredith Monk. So too can Mary
Thomas, a soprano with Peter Maxwell
Davies' "The Fires of London". In com-
parison, Monk's voice seems pallid and
in need of direction. But, since she
is a performance artist, she doesn't have
to listen to these criticisms. She can
seek refuge in her intention, her use of
self-as-art which characterizes perfor-
mance art.

In point of fact this wonderfully en-
dearing woman has given us compositions
which are indulgently cute. The notion
that the expanded voice technique somehow
transcends language as a new vanguard
art form is utterly negated by the
heavily illustrative, anecdotal, narra-
tive and literary aspects of her work.
Songs from the Hill, which she performed
in Vancouver, is a warm pastiche of
sounds describing various birds and ani-
mals and the experience of space in
Placitas, New Mexico, where they were
composed. But while Monk's work may
be wordless it is full of signs. The
melodic lilt, the rather predictable
rhythm and the patently descriptive
function of her sounds, all contribute
to something which appears novel but
which is anything but new.

In the second half of Monk's pro-
gramme the audience got a series of
selections from her new album, Anthology
which reminded me of what Laura Nyro
might do to Berg's Lulu. For an encore
Monk persuaded the audience to pretend
that they were raindrops in a pretentious
performance art version of "Row, Row, Row
Your Boat".

But Monk gets away with it, if you
will, simply because of her charisma
and because in some circles (perfor-
mance art) charisma is used in artis-
tic expression. The visual art com-
munity (knowing no comparison) con-
tinues to enjoy it because it seems
to speak of some kind of transrational
language where the self is used as art.
The music community, used to the type
of attitude characterized by Andrea von
Ramm's academic approach falls for the
performance art perspective. Both re-
main enchanted and neither learn any-
thing.

*Russell Keziere is a Vancouver writer
and broadcaster. He edits Vanguard,
a magazine concerned with the arts,
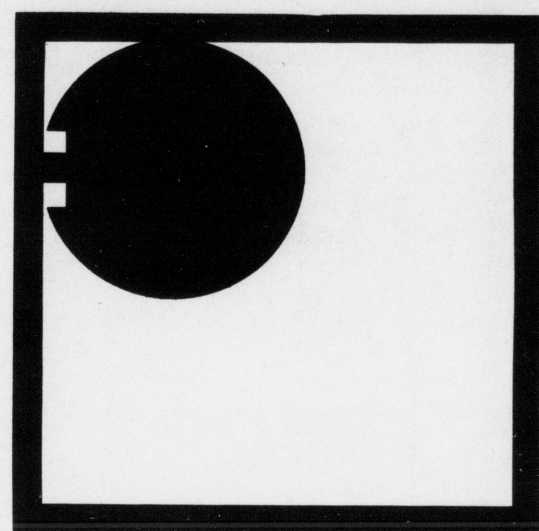published out of the Vancouver Art
Gallery.*

John Celona

Belief System

WHAT DO YOU MEAN WHEN YOU SAY: "I COMPOSE MUSIC?"

WHAT STEPS OR CRITERIA MUST BE TAKEN OR SATISFIED FOR ME (I.E., SOMEONE) TO BELIEVE YOU?

WHAT STEPS OR CRITERIA MUST BE TAKEN OR SATISFIED FOR YOU TO BELIEVE YOURSELF?

WHAT SIGNALS OR CONFIRMATIONS DO YOU RECEIVE (OR HAVE YOU RECEIVED, OR WILL YOU EVER RECEIVE) FROM A CULTURE THAT BELIEVES (OR DOES NOT BELIEVE) YOU WHEN YOU SAY: "I COMPOSE MUSIC?"

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42/I provides for the structuring and co-ordination of improvisation by any number of participants in any medium or combination of media. It is comprised of three large areas (1, 2, 3) which contain shapes (circles, triangles and squares) representing improvisations. The possible connections (and durations of inactivity) between the shapes are represented by lines. (Solid lines between shapes in the same area, dotted lines between shapes of different areas).

Explanation of Symbols

1. Each performer chooses a parameter of performance (e.g. tempo, register, body movements etc.) applicable to their performance medium.
2. The shapes represent different degrees of this parameter as follows:

◯ - the least amount of the parameter.

△ - the medium amount of the parameter.

▢ - the most amount of the parameter.

Some parameters may require a different interpretation of the shapes. Eg. Timbre will require that three distinct qualities are used rather than three degrees.

All other parameter's are left to the performer's discretion. Thus, if a performer's parameter is register, a circle would represent free improvisation in the low register.

3. Each performer chooses an 'event' which may be anything in the immediate surroundings. This event functions as a trigger for the performer's participation as follows:

▢2 the performer waits for two beginnings of his event before beginning his improvisation of the particular shape.

↓ the performer's improvisation is triggered immediately by the beginning of his chosen event.

↔ the performer begins his improvisation of the particular shape without waiting for his event.

Eg. If a performer's event is the playing of a note on the piano, the symbol ▢3 means they must wait for three piano notes to begin before beginning their improvisation of the shape.

A performer may replace his event with another at any time.

4. The ensemble as a group chooses a 'duration'. The numbers on the lines represent multiples of the chosen duration. This is the total time spent (without activity) between shapes. If there is no number the movement should be as quick as possible.

5. A performer may begin the piece anywhere within the structure.

6. The performance is over when all the participants have finished.