



**NIGHTS
IN
THE
CONCERT
HALL**

Thumbnail Reviews, Notes, and Scores

By Daniel Goode



FROG PEAK MUSIC

(a composers' collective)

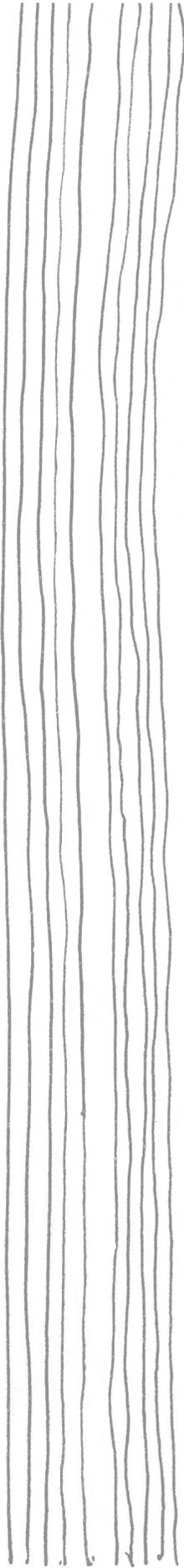
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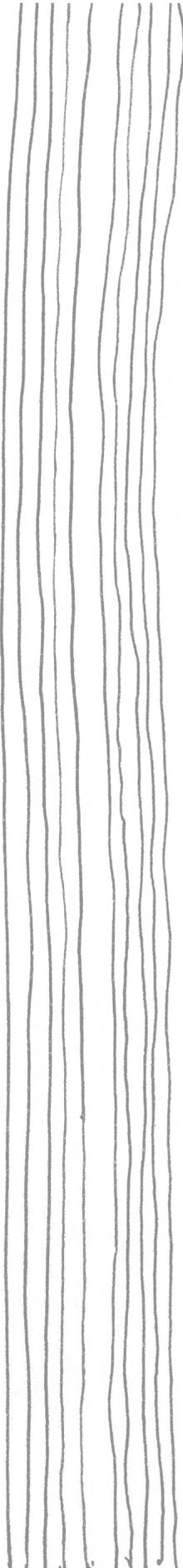
cc: Daniel Goode 2019





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INTRODUCTION

Often after a concert, drifting along the streets of New York— my hometown where I was born and educated—I found myself forming words and even whole sentences about the concert I had just experienced. In a few cases that concert was not yet over! Sometimes I was floating on musical air: delighted. Sometimes bemused, confused or even angry at the event. I felt I knew something no one else knew, or at least had an insight worth preserving.

In these moments I resolved as soon as I got home to sit down at the computer and put my thoughts in order. Sometimes they flew in order, sometimes they appeared in disjointed form and need re-doing the next day. In a few cases, I had jotted down notes on the program that captured the instant of my feelings, and I transcribed them as part of the essay-in-progress.

But it wasn't just for me that I was thinking. I wanted to share with my dearest friends and longtime musical colleagues these often piquant thoughts. I felt authentic and articulate, enlivened as a messenger with important news.

So it didn't matter whether or not I liked the concert or the music. It was going to be a recording of value: my values.

I wrote most, then, as messages, email was the medium, and sent them out the same night or the next day. I decided they were going to be short, pungent. The phrase "thumbnail review" popped into my mind. The first one was written in early 2011, the last in the series in 2016—a five-year span.

These texts appear mostly on the right of each set of pages. On the left are selections from my instrumental scores.

Daniel Goode
New York 2019

CLOTHESLINE

II

By Daniel Goode

for **RELACHE**

1. Subject: Bells and cells in Tully Hall atrium February
22nd

It can't be the first audience-does-cell phones in a high art chamber music event, but was my first, and it's got to be one of the best. Nathan Davis, the new percussionist/ composer with ICE, was commissioned to compose for the recently opened atrium on street level at Lincoln Center—a glassy, high-frequency resonant, flashy, bar-friendly entrance to the concert hall. On entering we were each given a card saying “Please unsilence your phone. When you hear bells, dial the number on the reverse and enter any one of the access codes...” Circulating the space was like being in a forest of chirping industrial insects. It reminded me of those burbling short wave radio sounds that accompanied global communications before the internet and cell phones. With flute, piccolo, clarinet, 12 spatially traveling players of crotales and triangles, the composer above us on a glassed in balcony adding more percussion and a huge gong —agung—it was a lovely twenty-five minutes. Cap your ear and you got another, filtered composition. Walking among the speakerphones, I greet a friend, listen to what her cell is broadcasting, drink a coffee...

2/24/2011

Daniel Goode

Triple Concerto
for Three Lecturers
and the Flexible Orchestra

INSTRUMENTS

Six bassoons
Two contrabassoons
Viola
Vibraphone

Three spoken voices (“Lecturers”)

NOTES

The three speakers begin before the orchestra enters with the one *tutti* line: “Around 4.5 billion years ago,” followed by Lecturer 1, then 2, then 3, then 1 again according to plan. The orchestra can enter right after that first *tutti* line or shortly after during speaker 1. It is important that the spoken text always be understandable. And equally important that the music lasts a little longer than the spoken text. Tempo might have to be slightly altered from the metronome marking altogether or selectively to make this happen.

2. Subject: Buckner's, the only "inter-racial" new music audience

That's because, since he came to NY from SF (Arch Records was his great new music label in SF), he started performing (baritone), commissioning and premiering Black artists from the AACM (George Lewis just did that big book on them, "A Power Greater Than Itself"—hope Musicworks reviewed it). They came and so did their audience. Unique in NY. Roscoe Mitchell, the talented wind player/composer was represented from that original AACM group at Buckner's Interpretations Series, March 10th. Peter Garland, Michael Byron, and Fred Ho were the others on the program. Joseph Kubera pianoed. Sold out house in Soho. Tom Buckner is the "George Soros" of new music. He puts his money where his mouth is: into progressive causes. More power to them both. All the pieces were interesting, urgent vocal/instrumental essays. Peter Kotik's Buckminster Fuller/Gertrude Stein setting was from 1971. Peter Garland's "Smokey the Bear Sutra" setting of Gary Snyder was from 2007, clangorous, conch shells, bass drum, singer, marimba, smokin' in a minimalist way of layering. Michael Byron's Anne Tardos setting ("Pure of Heart") was brand new.

Notice there were no women composers on the program. There were a couple in the audience. It's still a mystery why that bulge of women composers that came in the '70's seems to have disappeared into business as usual. Something to explore. Maybe it's less true in Canada than the U.S. —hot from NY.

3/11/2011

2-Noter

Daniel Goode

$\text{♩} = 54$

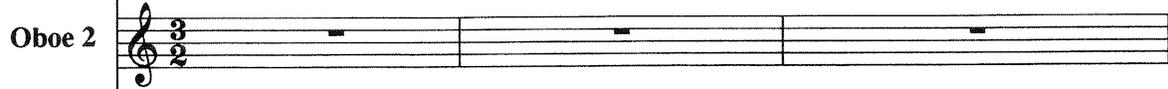
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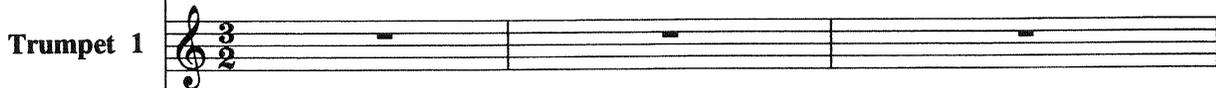
Oboe 1



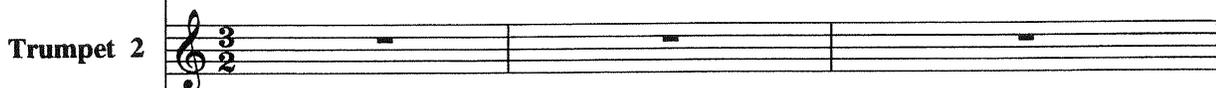
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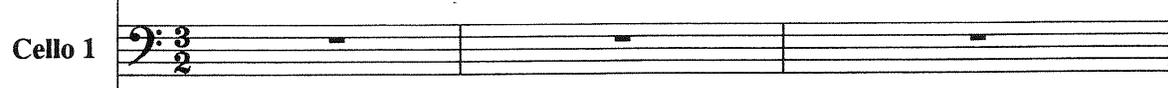
Trumpet 1



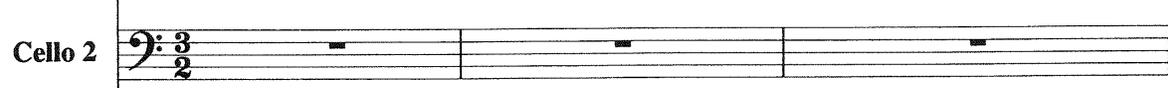
Trumpet 2



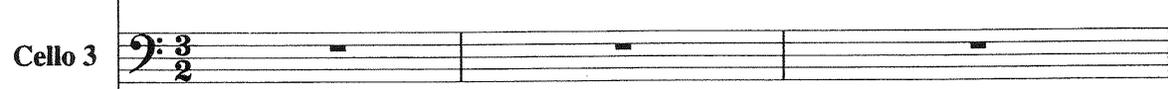
Cello 1



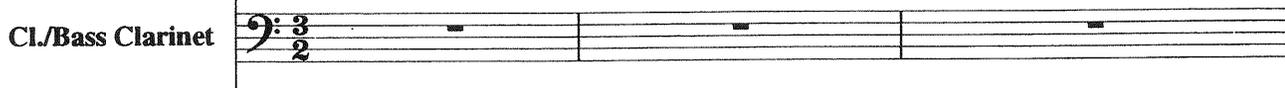
Cello 2



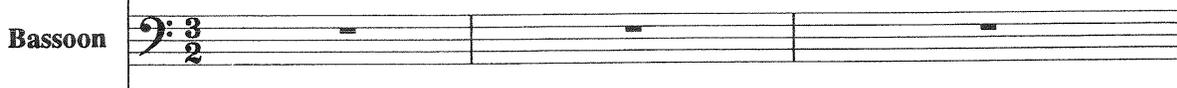
Cello 3



Cl./Bass Clarinet



Bassoon



Trombone



Viola



p < *f* *mf*

Double Bass



3. Subject: Byron and Polansky, maximalist piano music at Interpretations in Soho

Maybe it is or is not Kyle Gann's definition of maximalist. But intensity of piano composition, played brilliantly by Kubera and Nonken, could qualify. Both composers winged into the air as Minimalism was fading into the sunset while flaccid Post Modernism rose in the East. They each took some major ideas from high minimalism: Polansky is one of the most versatile algorithmic composers, often using his own software inventions. Byron started out with some idiosyncratic "spacey" non-pulse related clouds of sounds and has become a rigorous modal moto perpetuo composer of a non-down beat variety. In fact in both Larry Polansky's Three Pieces for Two Pianos and Michael Byron's Book of Horizons (for piano solo) met in a kindred world of non-pulsed, two (or more in Polansky)-part counterpoint, rhapsodic, stretching toward but never reaching a cadential moment. They've been friends since they met in Toronto in the mid-1970's. Christian Wolff's Exercise 20 (Acres of Clams) was also played brilliantly by Nonkin and Kubera. Piano in a world of internet and virtuality? Think again about what's important. The object, the piano object, the former center of classical music composition, is back, never left, always inspiring new work. Larry links up to Jim Tenney. Michael seems sui generis to me, but at one time was part of the California minimalist scene, as was Peter Garland and a host of others, a master of it was Harold Budd. Sunset seems a fitting atmospheric, a tonal, sometimes romantic use of harmony put in new repetitive structures, not at all formalist as was Steve Reich. And on and on. Try an adjective, or an analytic: "not-New York." That was then.

3/17/2011

4 5 6

Oboe 1

Viola

7 8 9

p *mf* *pp* *f* *mf*

10 11 12

13 14 15

ff *p legato* *mf*

16 17 18

Ob

5:4 3 6:4

4. Subject: Goebbels (H.) does Gertrude (S.) at the new Tully Hall this eve.

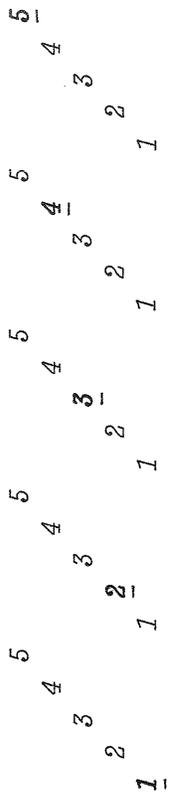
Estonian conductor Anu Tali's platinum ponytail over her musician's-black uniform beating a metronomic 4/4: was mesmerizing. Heiner G. said in an interview that he knows he'll always be confused with Joseph G., Hitler's minister of propaganda. So he's inoculated himself from this by setting passionate cantorial singing, sampled in his Sampler Suite, from Surrogate Cities. It began with a lighting blast on a male bass drum player smacking the instrument, two handed, with giant switches. It did take the breath away. Was the piece, as a whole, brilliant imagination or crap with brilliant lighting?... He "micromanages" the lighting according to one orchestra member. The whole stage dramatically changes its illumination at apt musical moments. In the Stein piece, it is in the score that the downstage part of the orchestra is all women (dressed in solid colors), who recite on mic and also play the orchestral instruments, while at the back are the men players dressed in black, who never recite. Stein's World War II text, "Wars I have seen" was Goebbels 2007 homage to her 1943 observations of everyday life in her adopted France. A friend in the audience, a holocaust survivor, was revolted by Stein's line that "you could always get butter." He said butter was unobtainable, and he only tasted peanut butter after the war. He fried it with an egg; called Stein "superficial." I suggested that maybe in southern France she had a neighbor with a cow. Butter was next door. Spectacular playing by the London Sinfonietta, and a newer ensemble, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. The latter (women) did the Stein aided by the men from the Sinfonietta. Not like American, Canadian, or even most European music said another friend. Orchestra as theater. Not since Fellini's hilarious, "Orchestra Rehearsal." But Goebbels is suitably serious, even "germanic." And NOT boring. Interesting that both orchestras were 20th Century versions of the 16th-17 century "broken consort." (Approx. one of each instrument.) The festival of the new hall ends, demonstrates that the social redesign of this high-art temple is successful: the new Tully Hall is fun for mingling, and for listening to music. Some eating and drinking too. Thumbnail review. Spring means music overload.

3/19/2011

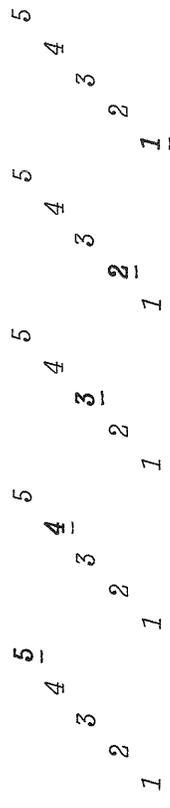
CIRCULAR THOUGHTS

I. Taking any 5-note scale pattern (or mode) of one's choice, either ascending or descending, played in a regular rhythm by two hands one or more octaves apart, the following scale patterns can be brought out through accentuation:

(a) a 6-beat ascending scale



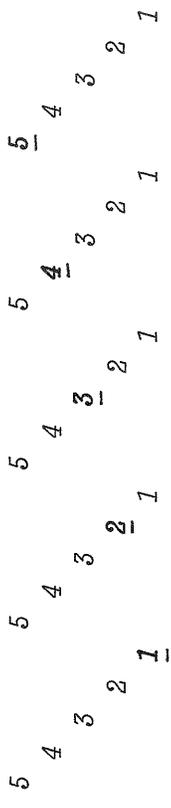
(b) a 4-beat descending scale



(c) a 6-beat descending scale



(d) a 4-beat ascending scale



II. These four possibilities are repeated and combined continuously to create phrases and larger formal units according to some pre-arranged plan, leaving some choices to the actual performance time. Some basic connections are (a) for one or more times followed by (d); (b) followed by (c); (a) by (b); (c) by (d).

5. Subject: Roi Reviews: more H. Goebbels

3/18/11 Tully performance

Orchestra qua Theater. But why? It is (they're) the medium, not the message. I have a feeling that he's spinning his wheels waiting for a suitable text or libretto to come along. His wheels are well oiled. The Surrogate Cities raised that question most. But in the G. Stein, it was so over-the-top all the time. But the Stein is so intentionally flat. A mismatch spiritually. Still, along with cantorial music samples, he is associating himself with Jews, and with lesbians. Well inoculated. I thank him for that.

He doesn't need more than an acoustically thin "broken consort" (or the Schoenberg kammer-symphonie/radio orchestra) sized orchestra because he adds a mesmerizing layer of sampled invariably THICK drone-ish, or rhythmic texture which distances and interprets the chamber orchestra's sounds. These drones and samples become electronic hooks themselves—that's possible now, ever since techno, and before that, electronic music and radio. H.G. has beautiful white hair and a large frame dressed in musician's black. I complimented him on giving new life to the "broken consort" (he even had a theorbo in the mix). At first he looked puzzled, but then got it, and thanked me for coming.

The chamber orchestra is being re-contextualized with lighting and concret sounds. And you hear right away not to focus on the instrumental orchestration, melody, etc. But what are all the bells and whistles focusing you on? They were beautiful bells and whistles. The new Tully sound system and lighting were spectacular. So resources count. At times I thought of it as an "uptown Richard Foreman." Instead of a mad cacophony of actual bells and whistles in Foreman, we had smooth, elegant textures of fabulous instrumentalists doing difficult imaginative music. Flashing lights and breathtaking cuts.

3/19/2011

III. Varied means of articulating the patterns are crucial. A basic technique would be: sustaining each note of the larger pattern until the next arrives, e.g.:



Accents of touch, dynamics, pressure or pedaling, even grace notes and mordents, are all appropriate. A different pattern by each hand is even possible.

IV. Other patterns besides the four augmentations of the scale may be developed. For example: alternation of steps 1 and 2:

||: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 ||; larger accumulations: ||: 5.....4.....3.....4.....5: ||

and, in fact, an infinite melodic wealth is available to be ordered or improvised.

V. At some point, with or without a steady increase of tempo, a new pattern should gradually emerge:

||: 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 ||, out of which comes, once more, the slower moving upward and

downward scales:

1 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4 and: 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4 1

The transition to the new pattern, 1 3 5 2 4, must be smooth. One way, using extensive pedaling, allows the new pattern and new pulse (half as fast) to emerge as the other dies away. This process is completed when the intervening notes (2,4,1,3,5) are no longer sounded.

VI. Now the procedures and possibilities described in sections I - IV should again be used. Many new patterns may now suggest themselves. For example, the augmentation of the 1,3,5,2,4, pattern and its inversion:

1 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4 1 3 5 2 4

Mode changes should occur during this section, with changes occurring at different times in right and left hands; for example a progression of major to minor to phrygian and then backwards to major. When the two hands change accidentals at different times the conflicts in mode between them produce an accentuation of the notes affected, hence a pattern such as 1 3 5 2 4 may be brought out as a by-product.

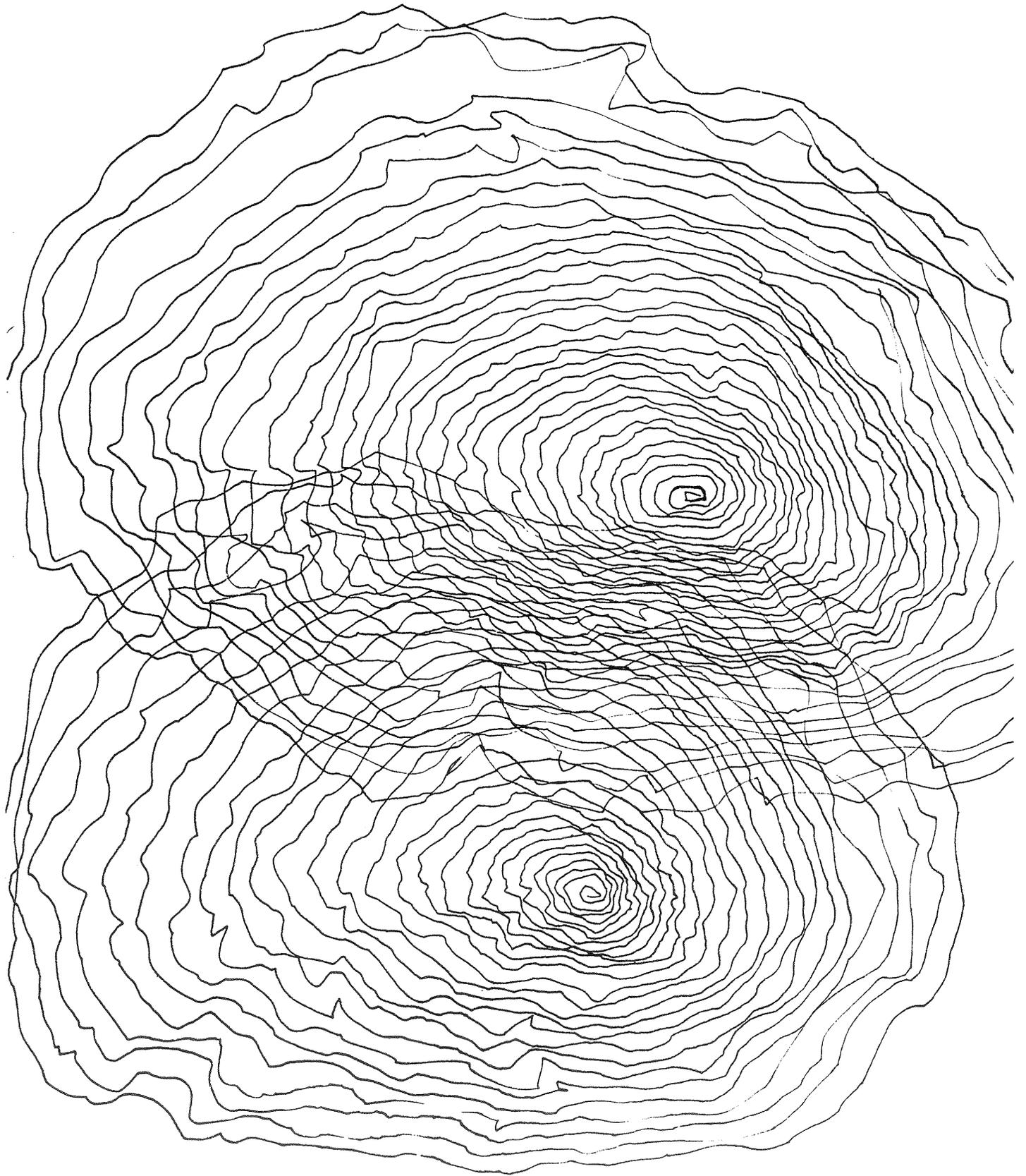
Gradual increases or decreases of tempo may be used throughout as well as changes of dynamics and tone color; also stops or pauses and new beginnings. A seven-note scale may be used rather than the five-note scale as in "Circular Thoughts" for clarinet and for gamelan ensemble.

A particular performance might emphasize only one phenomenon (such as the downward augmentation over the upward scale) or several. A "symphonic" approach might be taken, weaving many ideas together, or even a suite of clearly defined "movements" each with its own idea. Circular Thoughts may be looked at as keyboard pedagogy, as meditation music, as concert pieces, and as a theory and practice of composition.

6. Subject: "Music for Merce" CD party

10 disks from New World Records of composers for the Cunningham Dance Co. In the audience or on stage were those still alive. Wonderful artists. To single out is to ignore. 2 concerts-worth. Kosugi's incredibly intense mouth sounds, hand-filtered, and later an ear-splitting oscillator piece that was thrilling, if dangerous. Gordon Mumma's elegant short piano pieces, he played beautifully, presided professorially, dressed the part. Christian Wolff, calm and steady at the piano. (We were told that he composed his first piece for the Company when he was 18). A beautiful sax sound from Matana Roberts, not part of the cohort on the disks. Only criticism, is that all the original pieces were composed for dance. Only one film clip was shown, at the head, but the electric nature of the the music and image when combined really eclipsed the rest of day and evening concerts as experience, though not as to accomplishment.

3/23/2011

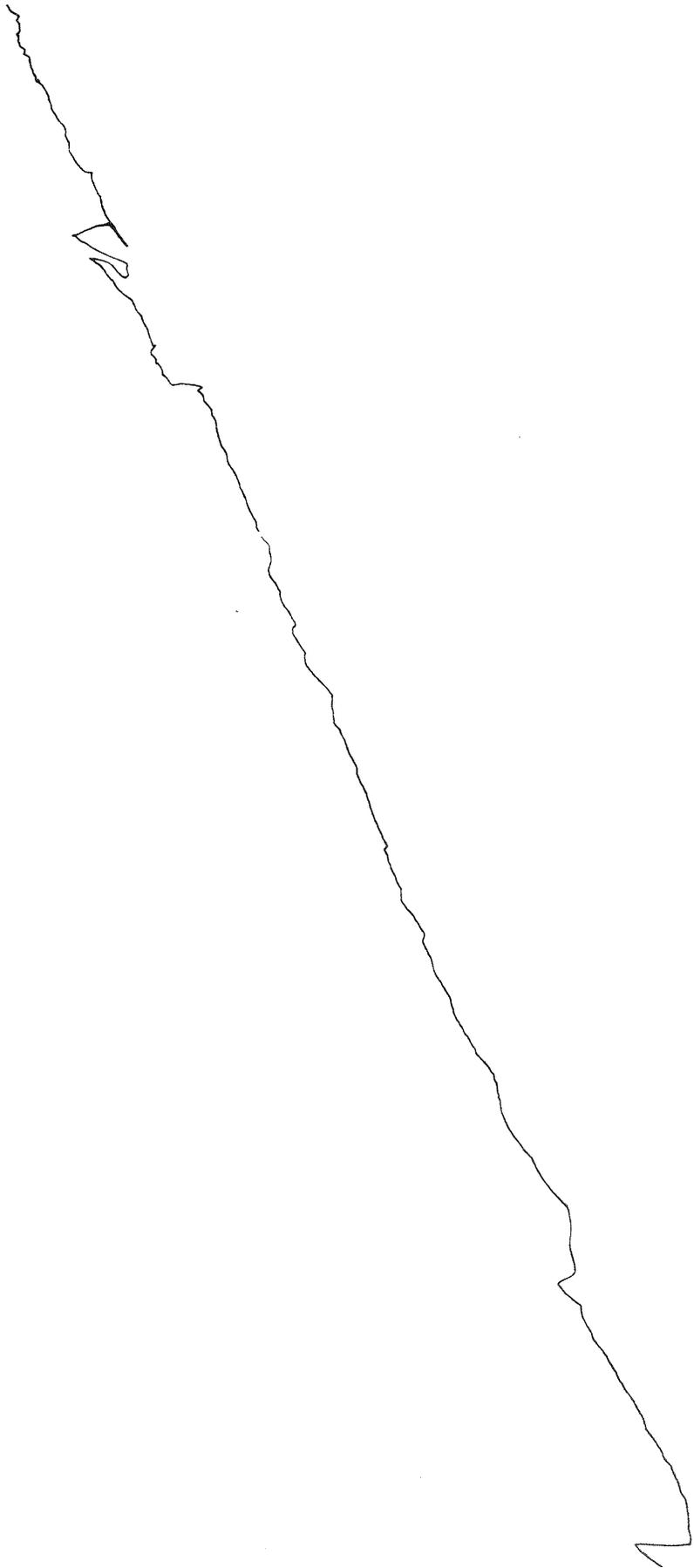


7. Subject: Monodramas @ NYC Opera, 4/8/11

Zorn, Schoenberg, Feldman (interesting that all three are Jewish). I hope the NYC Opera prospers in its Lincoln Center home, refurbished courtesy of David H. Koch, billionaire buster of Wisconsin unions. In every way, the "David H. Koch Theater" is just as ugly as its former, named New York State Theater, but he gave it an extra aisle in the orchestra. These are not really operas, but female vocal one-act arias. Big trouble in directorial concept: gratuitous staging and choreography—the wheels grinding away with shiny descending cubes, ascending bodies, comic-book balloon flats for elaborate projections (Zorn opera), but without binding force on the music. Zorn's *La Machine De L'Etre*, an homage to Artaud, sounded like the early non-triadic score of Schoenberg's. Amazing how in 1909 during Mahler's last symphonic composing, Schoenberg had a whole vocabulary of orchestrated, free and easy colorful non-tonalism. Feldman's 1976, minimalist *Neither*, setting a Beckett text, sung on high notes by Cyndia Sieden was also over-staged, tainting the music with its pretentious stage-craft. Funny how Feldman ended up being more of a committed minimalist than those famous brand-makers we all know so well.

Standing on the subway platform, I heard a sound reminiscent of the high, heterophonic, bell-like string tones towards the end of the final piece: the Feldman. What was it? Oh, yes, the sound of each individual subway rider as the turnstile acknowledges their card swipe. Doppler effects bringing microtonal resonances to our ears.

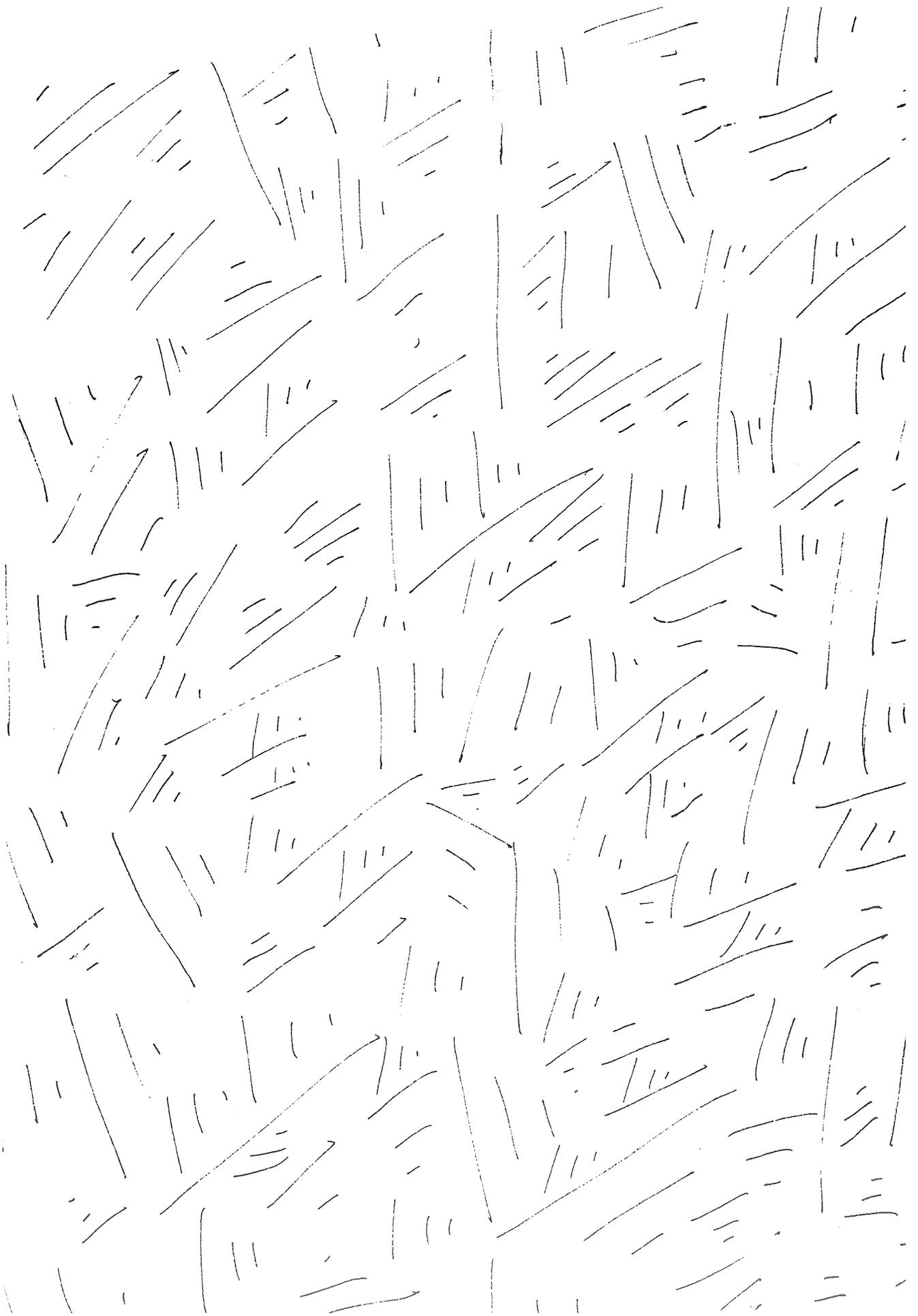
4/8/2011



8. Subject: Christian Marclay

Zadie Smith's luminous review in a recent NY Review of Books of his apparently amazing 24-hour film, *The Clock* (which I missed) didn't make one very important distinction. In showing clips of films with the narrative moment fixed on the clock time shown, Marclay must of course erase the critical tension imparted to that film-moment by its maker. But that's why we can call Christian Marclay "post-modern." According to the reviewer, however, there was a huge increase in audience excitement as *The Clock* approached the film's midnight hour. Thumb nail review of a review.

4/17/2011



9. Subject: Another listen? for Mahler, Messiaen

NY Phil. sounded ravishing in the Mahler 5th. In such HD liveness, it's overwhelming, though the last, the 5th movement is superfluous. Olivier M. is the most "mahlerian" of modern French composers, but Couleurs de la cité is not one of those scores. Piano with clarinets, brass, percussion (with very fast 4-player mallet unisons!) is cluster-heterophony, and is mostly high frequency, though the 2 tuned gongs are midrange and ho-hum, and two tamtams for noise a la Varese, also ho-hum. Intimate, still in an orchestral setting even when loud. Emanuel Ax: pf. Was the downstage clarinetist playing a D- or C-Clarinet? And besides tubular bells and gongs, what was the third percussionist playing? And if Alan Gilbert had conducted this open dress rehearsal straight through, what satisfying? gestalt would have emerged of the Couleurs. I'm arguing for my going back for a performance tomorrow, because sometimes after a musical even I'm all questions and few answers. Another reason: I'll get choked-up now and then during the 4 Mahler movements, but that's an expectation, not a certainty. Ax playing Debussy Estampes for piano alone? is this a programmed encore? Questions, kvetches, or kvestions?

4/28/2011

10. Subject: Peter Garland, solo piano @ the Stone

Last night, two sets, all his music but for Terry Jennings' "Winter Sun" (1966), and Michael Byron's "Song of the Lifting Up of the Head" (1972). Peter, anti-establishment from a very establishment Maine family, transposed to Cal Arts in 1971, was part of the important Southern California minimalist school, mentored by Harold Budd, so gracefully and fully a minimalist himself. David Mahler, Tom Nixon, Jim Fox were some of the others, as a group more "minimalist" —if that has meaning—than anyone else except, arguably, La Monte Young or Philip Corner on the East Coast. Probably "more minimalist" doesn't have much meaning, let's scratch it. The Stone is a hard-to-cool, windowless storefront tucked into corner of the Lower East Side, paid for by John Zorn, and curated by a constantly changing bunch. This month it's been Steve Peters. Next month it's Paul Tai of New World Records. Garland was also important in the 70's and 80's for his periodical, "Soundings" (subsidized by philanthropist, Betty Freeman) which published a host of important compositions and composers (full disclosure: one piece of mine was published there). With Byron's "Pieces," and the trail-blazing 60's "Source," these must be remembered as the era of hard-copy, beautifully looking bound objects, continuing a small but crucial tradition going back to Cowell's "New Music Editions" of the 30's. Remember these hand-held, caressable things, oh, you internet mavens of the 21st Century! Unrepeatable, unscannable. So the music was uncompromising, beautiful, simple, resonant, even redolent of a time of ideological fresh air blowing out the dust of a tired Modernism. In the third movement of four commissioned by Sarah Cahill, titled as a whole "After the Wars" (2007-08), Peter hid the attacks of the melody note under a full chord, building up long phrases of such timbrally unique "after-tones"—soft, little magic lights-in-sound, an antidote to the car horns, the drunken catcalls, bangings of all kinds which leak into the avant sound world of the Stone.

5/13/2011

Mason Gross School of the Arts - Rutgers University April 17, 1979

CLARINET SONGS

1979

by Daniel Goode

Entrance Greeting

#2

Practicing Micro-tonal Scales

Slendro

0 o

Stream Flow with irregularities

Reed Squeak and after-image, reversing

INTERMISSION

V - I (in two minutes)



Random Fingers watched and listened to

The Right descends, the Left descends and ascends

Inner Motions, the tune from

Reveille at night

Clarinet drum

ACOUSTIC AND AMPLIFIED (in an adjoining room) - please circulate freely -

11. Subject: All the Sopranos were Beautiful, even the Male Soprano—

—though he was grayer than the blonds and brunettes. Well, beauty is still the currency. But besides, he had an exquisite falsetto and though less used, a nice tenor. His name was Eric Brenner. And he wasn't the only male soprano of the evening. But, to what end? VOX Contemporary Opera Lab didn't tell me the answer to that. The opera excerpted was "Blood Rose" by Hannah Lash, a dialogue between Beauty and the Beast. The NY City Opera Orchestra at Le Poisson Rouge was a string quartet plus some stuff, and they swung! That was number two of the evening. What of the final opera excerpted, "Three Weeks" by Yoav Gal (Haifa, Brooklyn), in Hebrew and Latin, about the destruction of the Second Temple. I have no idea why a composer would write for an American audience in Latin and Hebrew, with no subtitles and only a garbled, but friendly explanation of the plot by the composer beforehand: A distancing device that worked like an unwanted charm. The small orchestra made some very beautiful sounds: three (usually) muted trombones, contrabass, piano and some sampled string-like timbres. The audience was multi-generational, cool, and eager. The bar flowed, the noisy fans white-noised. I couldn't help this thought: while Stephen Sondheim writes real operas that touch, move, and athletically cover the waterfront, here at VOX we are constantly reminded that opera is high art, ART, opera tradition, vocal posturing from perfectly trained, excellent musicians. To what end? I wish I knew. Still, I wasn't bored. And where do they get their ideas, their plots, these composers and librettists? The most commissioned librettist of series, Royce Vavrek told the audience: "from Wikipedia!" Maybe I'll boot that up later tonight.

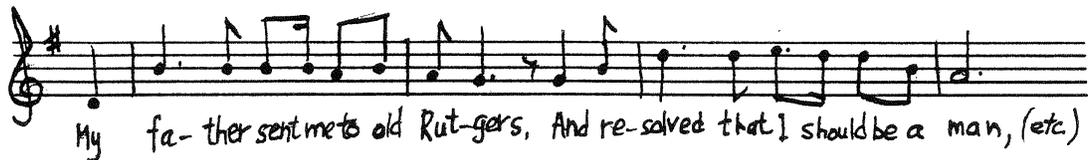
5/16/2011

FAUST CROSSES THE RARITAN SOMEWHERE IN WEST AFRICA...

- - - a performance piece for synthesizer

Take a familiar tune, a march or anthem, for example:

"On the Banks of the Old Raritan"



12. Subject: We've been demoted

The Stone is a cramped, windowless, airless, former storefront on a Lower Eastside corner without public transit nearby, secured for the new music community by composer/entrepreneur, John Zorn. A piano (not always in top order), a polite young man to take your ten dollars, some unidentified jazz greats and others in 60 black and white photos on one wall, a john through the stage area, a committed audience of friends and associates of the artists, and recently: notice of some concerts by the New Yorker, the NYTimes, and, I've been told, the Village Voice. The composer or performer does their own publicity with no mailing list from the Stone—though its website has the full schedule. The composer/performer takes the entire gate, which at ten dollars a pop multiplied by the randomness of attendance scarcely helps the composer/performer hire associate musicians, pay cartage, transportation or any of the usual New York costs for what one needs to put on a show.

Ah, remember those romantic former industrial spaces called lofts with their various but always capacious acoustics and interesting visual aspects? Remember how you could set up the seating from floor, cushion, or chair in interesting ways that made the space lively and part of the performance itself? Remember that some lofts were already galleries with an infrastructure suitable for concert use? And a mailing list of significant lovers of the arts? Or just lovers! Remember that one of these spaces was called "the Kitchen" on the second floor at 484 Broome Street, with poetic noises outside of trucks over potholes and over metal plates covering potholes? And with not only an elaborate printed schedule, press releases and printed programs and bios, but also a budget with money for yourself and to hire a reasonable number of other performers? And a recording engineer with a tape for YOU at the end of the run, which might be more than one day. And even sometimes a New York Times reviewer officially slumming; certainly a fabulous reviewer from the Village Voice (no longer such a reviewer, even online).

And the music at the Stone? First rate, which only proves my point: We've been demoted.

6/17/2011

stream dancing in the stream sounds from Methane possible party
 amplified stream
 stream walks
 casting of bell
 by Phil Overstein

Sunday May 8 (rain: sat May 14) from 12-noon
 on through dark. bring some refreshments and
 rubber boots or sneakers for stream and other
 pieces or tapes, instrument. 201-369-8351.

playing the evening

stream watching the stream sounds from Methane spring festival
 songs along the stream bells party sounds from Methane walking in the
 stream through the combine when and arches from Methane standing in the

13. Subject: We've been demoted, Part 2

I don't blame John [Zorn re: The Stone]. Also, the current curators are certainly well-meaning, and I understand that New World [Records] did some actual promotion, which is what is necessary to get beyond the composer-only-fueled concert. I don't even feel my usual righteous indignation. More in sorrow. Larry [Polansky] noted the undeniable fact that there is a raft of new music chamber groups out of various schools and conservatories, made up of crack performers, getting big coverage and big bucks relative to us. The nub of it is that we all BECAME new music performers to get our own music out, while also expressing our interest and passion for new music and our composer friends' work. Now that the virtuosi are taking up new music and are such good practitioners of it, our down-home DIY style is pushed into limbo. But just having done a Sound/Text program upstate twice this weekend with the Downtown Ensemble, I know that SO percussion or ICE or ACE or whatever—they would never do such a weird mixture of things, one of which was erotic verging on porno text by Richard Kostelanetz requiring no standard virtuoso instrumental techniques but rather speaking sensitivities and some clever well-motivated playing, would certainly never be chosen as a repertory number by any of these crack groups. Bill [Hellermann] made that general point. And Anne Tardos's quirky, odd, non-virtuoso songs for voice and two instruments: they'd never do that either. Nor Jackson Mac Low, nor Daniel Goode's text, "Misdirection of the Eye" about Wisconsin politics with free improv using "On, Wisconsin." So composer-driven groups are still important counterweights to virtuoso performer driven groups. And we're still poorly funded. It's that awful circus virtuosity problem in music culture since forever.

On, Composers, On, Composers, fight fight fight fight fight!
I felt I was attacking my very "base" when I wrote that humble report on the current Stone series. Felt guilty, but it was as plain as the nose on our new music faces—what I noticed. [A reply to composer, David Mahler]

6/24/2011

(The duration of this game may be free or fixed. If fixed use some external timing device--kitchen timer or alarm clock--to signal the end. After the end wait several minutes before speaking or going on. Playing this game in a dark room or with eyes shut will help to overcome shyness and sensitize the sense of hearing. Playing the game in a bright room with eyes open will allow one to confront and overcome inhibitions and self-consciousness).

as suggested by Kenneth Gaburo

MANTRA SWING 1977, Daniel Goode
Each module (group-top & solo-bottom) should be repeated a few or many times.

The group melody can be embellished ad lib. with parallel intervals (any ones).

The solo part may be altered as it is repeated: notes added, subtracted, endings changed, chords added, but it should never be much longer than the original phrase that it is varying

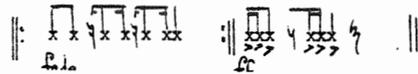
It is suggested that the soloist lead so the group will know when to reenter

Rhythm: afro, afro-cuban, Latin or imitation Indian (tabla sound), but not Rock!

OTAG (THE MAGNIFICENT) Citizen's Band Group Composition

On a two chord vamp samba...each member solos for four bars
...each soloist chooses his accompanists
...whenever any member has eight or more bars in which he isn't accompanying he plays a miscellaneous percussion instrument of his choice.
...after the last solo, fade on the following unison rhythm:

repeat many times.



The musical score consists of eight systems of staves. Each system has a top staff with a treble clef and a bottom staff with a bass clef. The music is written in a rhythmic style with many eighth and sixteenth notes. There are first and second endings marked with '1.' and '2.'. Chord symbols like 'C4 1a Bb' and '(b)' are present. The score ends with a double bar line and a downward-pointing arrow.

14. Subject: Janacek's Cunning Little Vixen at NY Phil. concert 6/24/11

Do you ever long to edit someone's work to save what is fabulous and make disappear what, well...what stinks? Just read on. But first: a piece of schlock was added to Janacek's opera by director Douglas Fitch, and—unaccountably—by that very in-choreographer, Karole Armitage: little diaphanous wings pasted onto scampering children, fox tails onto grown singers, archaic titles like "Forester" instead of woodsman or hunter or farmer, or anything of that ilk. Cutsey-poo, sentimental animal stuff that adults think children like. But there was a critical blowback from all this onto the music itself, forcing one to peer into Janacek's overuse of whole-tone scales and their augmented chords as holding patterns between segments of ravishing, ecstatic music of his late years, with orchestrations to tear you apart with beauty. His pre-Minimalist repeating, sequencing, spiraling patterns of melody, rhythm, chords, counterpoints with their gritty, off-kilter modelings of Czech folk music, oh yes, that's all in there in the manner of his late string quartets and the blazing Sinfonietta. If only I could have done some on-the-spot excision. That's a funny composer-fantasy I've been having. Or you could try to justify those holding patterns as recitative, or even as Janacek's functional substitute for sprechstimme. Dream on! You'd have to be him to do the re-stitching of the good parts. And you'd have to go in there again to re-write the prosaic and clunky English translation. It's an early 1920's libretto by the composer with some odd feminist moments between the Vixen and the other barnyard animals. Maybe it's better in Czech. In the last act Janacek has the cunning Vixen shot dead. Well why not? Isn't the Vixen that other species of female: lower class/gypsy/family-destroyer/composer-temptress? the OTHER!—with that kind of thing, scarcely disguised as a "folk tale" re-written to still be a folk-tale about a femme fatale. For Americans there is also an echo of Bambi—a terrible mash-up to dwell upon. I remember her death as being heartbreaking, musically. And then after that, life just continues on with the usual banalities. But I didn't stay to re-experience those moments. I left at intermission.

6/25/2011

ORDERLY THOUGH ANALYSES OF PIECES

Daniel Goode

MUSIC & PROCESS:
A universe of discourse defined by the intersection of these two ideas: music and process.

RELEVANT CONNECTION:
A special and distinctive type of music can occur which consistently and systematically isolates, suffuses itself with is generated out of a single dominating process (sometimes within a set or system of processes).

DEFINITION OF PROCESS: for this discussion
The musical parameters necessary for the production of sound, for example the process of:
 Piece X —pulsing a single tone
 Piece Y —playing through the circle of 5ths with seventh chords
 Piece Z —singing (playing) a single long tune for the duration of each full breath

Piece Q —total serialism of all parameters

TWO KINDS OF PROCESS MUSIC:
 1) That which is grounded in the perception of that process: where the working out of that process is the main aural event of the music.
 2) That which is grounded in intellectual process which is not directly perceptible, but rather its "effects" may be.

TWO KINDS OF PROCESS: an historical distinction
 1) In the classical european tradition much of the music of Bach is process music because of harmonic or melodic process: the sequence, the canon.
 2) 4'33" of John Cage: based on a completely internal process of listening (perhaps to the ambient sounds that take place in four minutes and thirty three seconds of "silence."

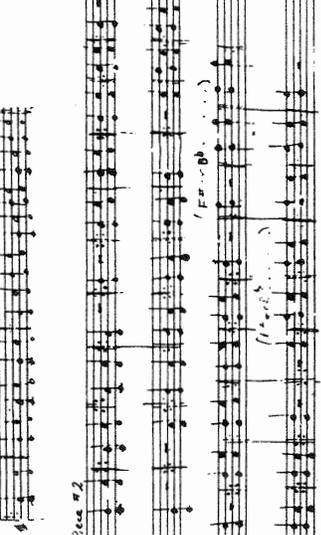
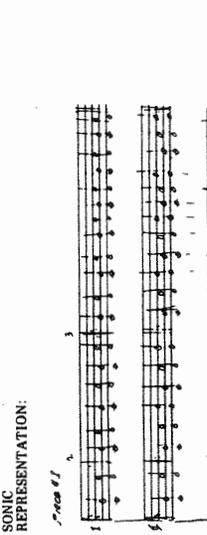
MORE EXAMPLES:
 — Medieval and oriental chanting
 — African Drumming
 — Change-ringing in England
 — Gamelan music
 — Drone and related musics in America
 — Systematic choreography and structural theater
 — Modular processes in much "Folk music"
 — Rounds and canons
 — Pedagogical exercises in "methods" books for instruments and voice

CENTRAL PHENOMENON:
Somewhere in this continuum of process musics we must stop and register a certain kind of interaction of continuity and contrast that permeates the continuum at some points more completely than others:

Two relationships define this interaction:
 1) **Figure-Ground:** where a constant phenomenon, e.g., pulse, or timbre, or chord, or rhythm, or texture, etc., remains unchanged while one or more elements shift perceptibly in some patterned way.
 2) **Evolving Unit:** the total sound is a single constantly changing entity.



INTERLOCKING RELATIONSHIP:
 1) and 2) are not interchangeable but share each other's characteristics.
 1) as a "gestalt" is an evolving unit. 2) is a figure-ground relationship if one takes the vertical lines or white background as the ground for the changing figure (length of lines; spacing of lines is ambiguous: it could be seen here as either figure or ground.)



ANALYSES OF PIECES:
 Piece 1 as Figure-Ground: how it is instrumented and performed will determine what is heard as figure, what as ground. Choices for the ground: (a) the continuous alternation of the first two items in Part 1. (b) The return of the unison in Parts 1 and 11 every six beats or every twelve beats in all three parts. Choices for the figure: (a) the new item whenever it is added (or the new chord that results). (b) The highest pitched line.

Piece 2 as Evolving Unit. Similarities with both canon and sequence. The canon similarity would be more pronounced if the lower part omitted its first measure. But that first measure is the key to the difference. There is no *dux* followed by *comes*. Rather, there are two interlocking parts of a single process. The notated beginning and end is arbitrary, one could begin and end anywhere. The process is not true sequence because of the repeat signs which indicate an indeterminate repetition. The process is the addition and subtraction of certain tones in a systematic way, one which is continuously changing, rising in pitch throughout the given scale or mode.

RATE OF CHANGE:
 No change: to that degree we have the spiritual realm of meditation, the participation of the individual in *stasis* — the symbol of eternity.

The continuum between polarities of *sudden change* and *gradual change* is where Western music has vacillated, sometimes moving in one direction or the other. In recent centuries we might describe a typical Western piece as a "collage of processes." To a greater or lesser degree we have gradual process in: a cumulative string passage in a symphony by Sibelius; in a modulating sequence of Bach; in a typical example of 16th century polyphonic continuity.

FAMILIES OF PIECES:
 Because process is an objective part of the universe as well as of human creative work, we have the possibility of new genres of composition based on choice of process. The individuality of process may turn out to be more significant than the individuality of the composer.

(c) by Daniel Goode, 1972-73, revised: 1979
 (c) coming soon: Disorderly Thoughts

15. Subject: Heretical Musicology

The omniscient narrator goes inside saxophonist Lester Young, and Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday, and other great jazz musicians, and tells us their experiences as if they were having them right then. And not only their musical experiences. That's what happens when you open Geoff Dyer's 1996 "But Beautiful [A Book About Jazz]." The back cover says it's to be filed on the "MUSIC" shelf. What can you call it: anti-musicology? Fictional musicology? Keith Jarrett says it's the only book about jazz that he recommends to friends. And it draws you in like any wonderful fiction—while you ponder: "did this really happen? did he/she really say or feel this?" I call this the "Lawrence of Arabia syndrome" because I first started asking myself that stupid but unavoidable question after seeing David Lean's exciting, grandiose film about explorer/writer, T.E. Lawrence. Especially after he was tortured.

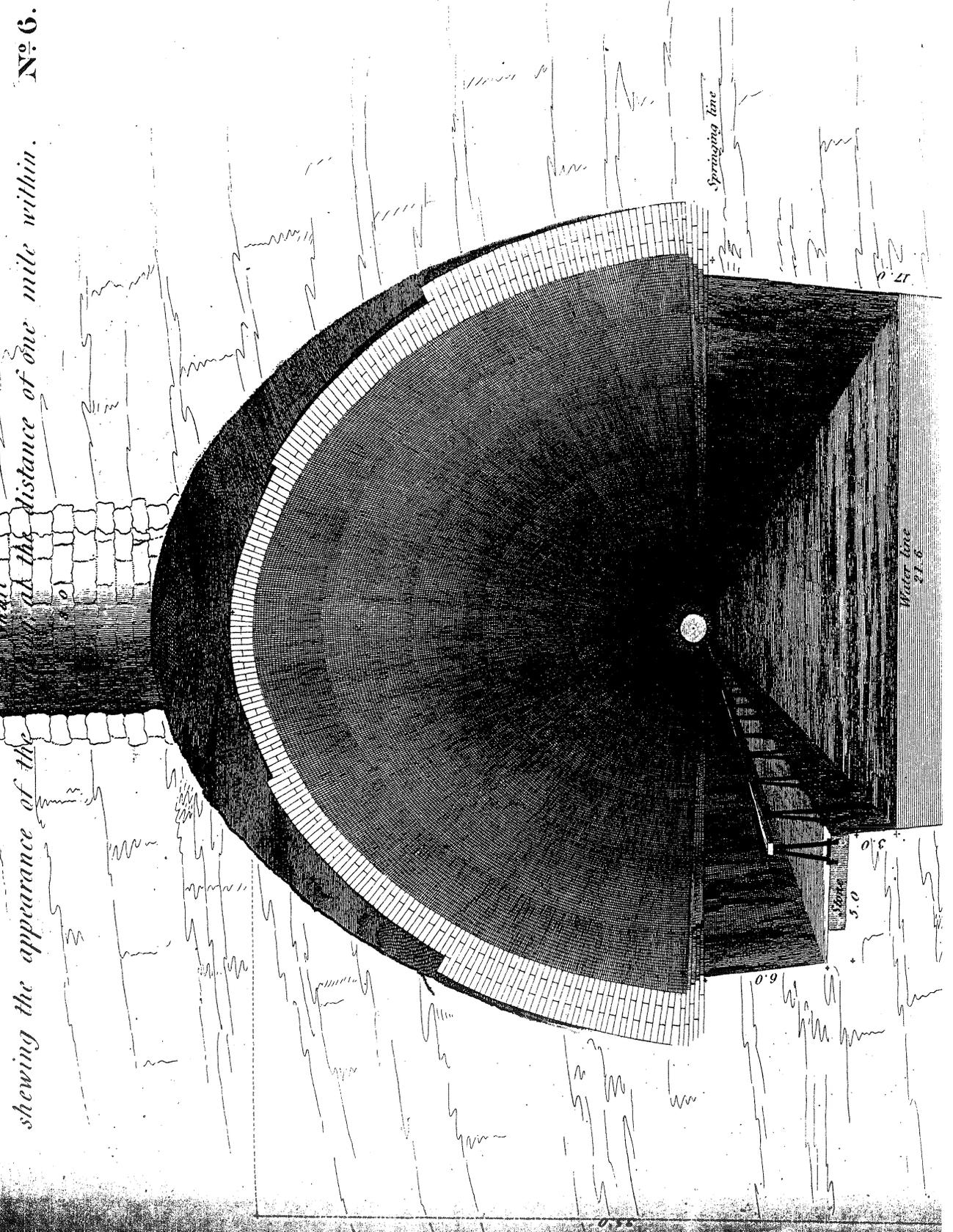
So Dyer stands musicology on its head as was said of Marx about Hegel, and Einstein about Newton. But let's call his strategy an 'informed poetics.' Fine to name it, but to my mind he takes a heroic risk to put his subjective narration up with all the well-known ones already out there. He succeeds, I think because he deals with a probabilistic world of weather, landscape, roads, cities, drugs and their effects—these universals in any historical picture of jazz, and then we hope and trust in him to add the specifics of these real people, and their relations to the events, in an informed and astute way. Whomever thinks he hasn't done so, speak up, but with the evidence, please!

I see the same impetus as Dyer's in Ken Russell's series of films about famous composers, Liszt, Mahler, Delius, etc. And there's an interesting parallel in Thomas Mann's "Dr. Faustus" with its "cover" of Schoenberg as Adrian Leverkühn. Here names are changed, but intellectual history is reported and interpreted.

I'm musing a bit... The Dyer technique could be used to flesh out that mysterious "walk in the woods"—as performance artist, Chris Mann calls it—in which Mahler had a four-hour walking psychoanalysis with Freud around the Netherlands city of Leiden. Freud was on vacation, and Mahler with his marriage breaking up, his health going, his world disappearing, went to him obviously in desperation after first cancelling several appointments for the session. Some protégés of Freud tried to find out from him decades later what transpired between the two of them, but little seems to be reliably reported. Rather, projection by current writers about the historic meeting is obvious. But it's not a conscious literary strategy as is Dyer's. It's half-way to Dyer, thus inept. We'll never know what was said. We'll have to make it up!

7/4/2011

TRANSVERSE SECTION OF THE PHOENIXES AND MEDWAY TUNNEL,
 showing the appearance of the ^{part} at the distance of one mile within. N^o 6.



16. Subject: We've been demoted, Part 3/ Kamala, Miguel, David/
NYC

You got a "sweet" if you guessed the Indian actors, the cartoon themes ("I'm showing my age"), or the video games ("I played when I was eight") in Kamala Sankaram's absolutely winning suite of pieces premiered at the Stone on the hot night of July 26th. Great playing by her band of two saxes, electric guitar, with her singing and playing accordion; wonderful laptop electronics in each one. Noise, pitch, harmony, vocal brio were in satisfying combinations. Interesting too. Then a new song on "Crest Gel" toothpaste commercial ("showing my age again"—'30's-something, shouted the guitarist), and a ("nerdy" she called it) chamber song using vowel extraction from a Cage text. And finally an entrancing short ensemble riff on material from "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" spaghetti western. It was new music with connecting narratives to charm a jet-lagged jaundiced New Yorker in a humid room kind of unreachable by public transit. And even with a starred recommendation from Time Out New York, only a small and enthusiastic audience, probably from Kamala's address book, not TONY. So my point again. Demoted, having to pay the four players from a total gate that couldn't have been more than \$250. Wonderful work, poorly compensated. Our heroic selves repeated. Brava! Bravi!

To while-away the hour plus before the Miguel Frasoni and David First collaborative concert, well, the loud bars in the neighborhood are ubiquitous. Their set at 10 PM for an audience of ten, was absolutely jet-lag proof hypnotic drone music on rubbed glass (Miguel) and laptop electronics (David). The resultant pulse modulations started by matching frequency of the oh thank you, thank you, Loud Fan behind my left ear! Followed-on soon by a harmonizing third below, and so on into deep noggin space. Ann, next to me, with the same jet lag, lapsed in and out of consciousness most happily (our bodies cried out it was 3 AM).

True to Stone style: no program notes. Players' names shouted out, band style at the end. Everyone so nice in our friendly family ghetto of new music. A warm feeling from the skin down. Cab home.

P.S. The 60 square black and white pix on the wall, were not "unidentified jazz players" as I said in an earlier Stone piece, but people who have played at the Stone like Laurie Anderson, Ned Rothenberg, Ikue Mori, Theo Bleckman, and 56 others. Thanks to Miguel and others for identifying them in the gloom.

7/27/2011

GONG DANCE a 7 by Daniel Goode

--for seven performers with hand-held gongs--

Line up in order of pitches, high to low.

In a march-like tempo, each plays their gong in order, high to low, one per beat with the eighth beat as a rest:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,(rest). During the next 8 beats, #'s 1 - 6 exchange places in pairs while #7 improvises an 8-beat rhythmic solo:

↔↔↔
1,2,3,4,5,6,(7 solos)

2,1,4,3,6,5,7,(rest). Play this resulting new pattern as before.

2,4,1,6,3,7,5,(rest) While #2 solos, the remaining 6 players exchange places in pairs and this resulting pattern is played. This process continues with the solo alternating between one end of the line and the other. The 8th time is:

7,6,5,4,3,2,1,(rest). After this phrase, instead of one solo, all improvise together rhythmically for 8 beats while turning in place. Then repeat this line, after which #7 solos and the rest exchange places. The process continues as before until the original series re-appears the 8th time:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,(rest) In the next 8 beats, the players turn in place silently and on the 9th beat play one note together, not loud.

The piece can be performed as a stationary line or as a moving line (a processional). If the latter, the performers should have their shoulders facing the audience. In order for the line to move, the rear of each exchanging pair must move ahead of the other. Room must be kept between each person in line. During the tutti improvisation, the direction of the line can be reversed, so the line ends where it began. If on a march, the line could simply continue in one direction.

A well-rehearsed style of performance is necessary. One suggestion is to have each person develop a consistent style of movement and gesture which is unique and continued throughout the performance. There should also be some group gestures in common, for example turning the head in the direction the sound is moving before, during, or after one has played one's note.

The piece may last one complete cycle, or many. If many, the ensemble might develop some variants such as occasional syncopation during the playing of the series.

17. Subject: Against clichés about Mahler's music

Why should we care? Because some of us love the music. Some of us even commit that chauvinist crime of saying: "He's the greatest Jewish composer" as if there were a contest out there. (He was reviled with anti-Semitism in Vienna during his lifetime, especially around his directorship of the Vienna Court Opera). But two of the most progressive conductor's, Leonard Bernstein and Michael Tilson Thomas (both Jewish), both of whom regarded Mahler as central to their lives, are just full of the usual clichés about him. Oh, like: that those wonderful and suggestive, disintegrating endings to his final works are "about death" or about his death. Well, maybe they are, but HE never said that. The latest slew of these interpretations came in a visually elegant public television program conceived by Tilson Thomas called "Keeping Score." I won't list instances here, maybe some other time. Actually the best one-liners came from the first clarinetist, Corey Bell, of the SF Symphony (featured in the film). He spoke about the "skin-of-your-teeth tonalities" in the Scherzo of the 7th Symphony, and of the "corners to hide out in." Thomas does get off one perceptive analysis: tracing the use of the musical "turn" from Mahler's first work, "Songs of a Wayfarer" to the final movements of his last two completed works. And the importance of the tone, A, in that early work and then in the climax of the first movement of his 10th Symphony.

A final shot of Thomas at Mahler's grave in Grinzing, a suburb of Vienna, shows without comment, stones placed in the traditional Jewish manner on top of the Mahler's gravestone. His remains were not allowed to be buried in the same cemetery as Beethoven and Schubert. "Those who love me will find me" he said.

10/15/2011

GONG SPREAD

by Daniel Goode

—————*for any number of seven or more performers playing a family of (similar sounding) hand-held, resonant instruments such as gongs.*

A regular pulse is used throughout: slow or moderate in tempo.

At least two or more people begin by playing no more than one note per beat. Play a rhythmic unit (or cycle) that equals the number of people who are playing:

2 are playing = cycle of 2 beats
3 are playing = cycle of 3 beats... etc.

Play only once (one note) in each cycle, no matter how many beats long the cycle is.

Play only on the beat, no off-beats.

Play on any beat in the cycle, resting on the other beat(s).

After the initial group has been playing a while the remaining group(s) may begin at any distance from the first group as long as they can hear and co-ordinate rhythmically through a common tempo.

Any performer may leave or join a group at any time. Make a visually clear, aesthetically acceptable gesture when entering or leaving so as to cue the new metric cycle.

When someone leaves or joins a group the rhythmic cycle changes as smoothly as possible to the new number of beats. At that moment any player may choose (or not) to move to a different beat in the cycle coming up.

A 'group' of one occurs only when all but one person is left in a group. That person may continue playing the cycle of one beat or stop and go to another group.

Never play while walking to a new group.

Let a group stay constant for a good while so that the polyrhythms among groups can become audible. Use dynamic and timbral changes sensitively during these periods of rhythmic stasis.

To start a new group in a new place, go to that place and wait for one or more to join you. Or go with someone else or several to the new place and begin.

ENDING: There are many possible ways of ending consonant with the rules given. Examples: (1) All groups coagulate to one, and someone gives a cut off. (2) All groups subtract to one person, each stopping at will or on any agreed upon time, either diminuendo or non-dim. (3) Ending occurs with any group configuration subjected to a diminuendo to silence. (4) Individuals could leave groups randomly until all are gone or have stopped playing.

18. Subject: Heretical Musicology, Part 2

I was quoting Keith Jarrett in Part 1 about Geoff Dyer's *Beautiful* [A book About Jazz], and marveling at how Dyer uses the omniscient narrator to tell what goes on inside the heads of Lester Young, Duke Ellington, and many more.

And now, reeking from the descriptions of the vomit, blood, glass-in-the-mouth life of saxophonist, Art Pepper, a heroin addict, I have to say: The book is something of a death trip. Not to lessen its impact, just to say this in order to balance my head-in-the-clouds omission of the horrors Dyer paints. The long boring road trips Duke and his musicians had to take, the airless hotel rooms. And for many the drugs and more drugs, the crashes, the rehab, the jails. The jazz creators didn't get their kicks from their urgent urges of playing creatively (which gives our kicks as listeners). Their nirvana came from the absolute pleasure of heroin or some other cocktail of heaven-on-earth.

It was pointed out to me that Geoff Dyer, the travel writer, is interested in the journeys, on all levels, of his jazz heroes. Later in book he drops his invisible narrator role and lectures us a bit on how the nightly stresses of improvisational creativity had a cost to mind and body. The whole period caught fire fast, leaving lots of burn-out and destruction among the artists who made the revolution in jazz happen. And then its over. What happens after is endless re-enactments of that music.

11/13/2011

----- an homage to Martin Buber's idea of the I - Thou relation -----

I ↔ ou

Start from the sound of the word YOU as a whole or in any of its parts (phonemes). Chant the sound(s) in long, slow-breathed phrases.¹ During the process of chanting begin to turn you inner attention to another human being, or to a part of the animate or inanimate world, or to the universe as a whole, or God. Bring yourself slowly to the point where you can address this other presence directly in the most intimate way possible. That is, establish your own contact through inner address so that the other presence is not an object, but an equal, responding as intimately and directly to you in its own way. Let the word YOU symbolize this relationship. And when you feel this point has been reached let your chant stop immediately (even abruptly). If you feel that you cannot reach this point, gradually and beautifully let your chant fade out, to try once more some other time.

This chant can be done as a solo, or a duet, or as an ensemble. If the piece is done as a duet and the two want to turn the inner address towards each other, they may want to combine it in some way with the traditional "meeting of eyes" by chanting with eyes closed until the YOU-point has been attained, then opening eyes as one stops chanting. It may be helpful to make some musical decisions about kinds of vocal sounds, degree of pitch variety, etc., to ensure good ensemble feeling.

¹Variant: at some point when the first sound(s) are quite developed, introduce as smoothly as possible the sound of the word I in parts or as a whole. Continue both sounds.

19. Subject: SONiC Festival: Does “uptown” and “downtown” still exist as a stylistic?

Any large curatorial slice of the total pie is always going to be criticized in some aspect or other. Since I only went to two events, I can't really be a good outside observer. Alex Ross (who reviewed the festival in the New Yorker) may have, or maybe I was the one who noticed that the choices seemed conservative. As if, even through the eclectic and catholic largeness of the field which obscures the “uptown-downtown” stylistic divide of the past, still the music was very much a front and center stand up and wow-em chamber music. The odd, the spiritually quiet, the non-virtuosic and contemplative kind of music, the contextually different, the political, were all categories I thought were missing. That's what made me feel that the divide between “uptown” and “downtown” still exists. And EVERYTHING is now amplified (a horrible contemporary performance practice steam-rolled by Bang On A Can—when they did my 15-person Tunnel-Funnel, I insisted on all-acoustic, and darned if it didn't sound “too soft” because our ears had been pinned back by all the previous amplified chamber music).

11/27/2011

20. Subject: Mavericks?—Still?—Review of a flyer

“American Mavericks” series. The usual suspects: Ives, Ruggles, Cage, Feldman, etc. plus whichever young(er) ones can be wedged in between those. So, then who are the un-mavericks? Copland? Or just other American composers not considered important nowadays, like Howard Hanson? I think “mavericks” are the American composers. I’ll be a little snarky and question John Adams as a “maverick.” Like him or not (I like Shaker Loops), he seems more of a Copland/Hanson mix than a Cage/Ives kind of person.

“Who Changed Music Forever.” Well, not a claim I’d want to make about (again: like ‘em or not) Mason Bates, David Del Tredici, Elliot Sharp, Jennifer Higdon, Missy Mazzoli. Martin Bresnick. Granted, maverick is a marketing term, and it’s been around for a long time to rope a bunch of composers together without otherwise branding them. But that was then (decade or so ago)... Ho hum now. And finally, every festival is political in that after the banner of great masters passes, others will be chosen by someone to fill in the ranks behind. The choosers are key to understanding this.

Thumbnail review of the brochure for Michael Tilson Thomas’s “American Mavericks,” March, 2012, New York.

2/25/2012

CLOTHESLINE I

By Daniel Goode

for RELACHE

21. Subject: Ashley at Roulette. What's an opera and why do we care?

Robert Ashley says in a video on line that Broadway musicals are too musically symmetrical, are only in 4/4 or 3/4, and don't deal with the rich language of diphthongs found in the English language. He's being interviewed about his new opera—his term—The Old Man Lives in Concrete, currently at Roulette. But what he said could be about any of his recent music theater works, written for and performed by his trusted band of vocalists: Joan LaBarbara, Jacqueline Humbert, Sam Ashley (yes, it's his son), and Tom Buckner. Besides the text (he calls it a libretto), the program credits him with composing the “electronic orchestra.” Tom Hamilton composed “Orchestra frames for the four singers,” and did the “Mixing and live electronics.” I'm tip-toeing carefully around these credits, because, in a certain sense, Bob Ashley, hasn't composed a note, and yet, it's all because of him. I'm struck primarily that the five monologues (he's the fifth, “Bob (Observer)”) never relate to each other, and unlike in earlier works, similar in style and forces, there are no longer the exquisitely timed choral ensembles of these five musician-actors. I miss those chanted, spoken choruses because they made for the ‘togetherness’ I think of as being an essence of opera. And they were wonders of ensemble performance.

Elaborate, eloquent...but still: talking heads, these monologues. And yet, not talking to each other. Could other monologues by Ashley be substituted without changing the nature of the work? Would “Bob (Observer)” then have to have other observations? When is a libretto a collage? I think in this case. John Cage's Europera is an in-your-face collage of all things European and operatic. But Ashley has always been different from Cage in my mind. His texts, taken singly, are stories, told in the first person. They seem to be different characters with different energies and texture. But they are not part of one overall story. Some synergy is lost by this, and the whole tended to lose me. Is Bob Ashley now a composer of texts in which the music kind of goes on anyway? He's made a music machine that spins out his ruminative sentences. That should be a real accomplishment. But:

Suddenly, I wanted something more: the very subtle (or was it my imagined ‘more’?) way that certain pitch inflections of a reciter seemed to appear in the electronic mix accompanying them—spoke to me, but, I thought: why not more of this, it would be beautiful, engaging. One wants to fall in love at the opera. Or at least hear some singing. I felt impatient with the restraint expressed in the music. I wanted a re-write so that these fabulously expressive performers would stand up, go out in front of their desks and stand lights, and then belt out something together...or even not together!

I saw the first half of the show, and wandered out into the rich, damp Spring of seedy, Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, wondering what an opera is and why I care.

4/26/2012

The image shows a page of a musical score for an orchestra and voices. The instruments listed are Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Viola, Contrabass, Voice 1, and Voice 2. The score is written on eight staves. The Flute, Oboe, and Voice 1 parts are mostly silent, indicated by rests. The Clarinet and Bassoon parts have dynamic markings of *mf* and *accel.*. The Viola part has a *mf* marking and a section labeled "quasi harmonics" with a *p* marking. The Contrabass part has a *p* marking and a section labeled "lunga" with a *p* marking. The Viola and Contrabass parts also have a *pizz.* marking. The Voice 2 part is also mostly silent.

Flute

Oboe

Clarinet

Bassoon

Viola

Contrabass

Voice 1

Voice 2

22. Subject: Re: Musicworks coverage of Philip Glass

Good to hear from you, Micheline. We should talk some time about what's happening in New York. Actually, I'm not sure "what's happening in NY." I try, but come up with issues, venues, and generations, and of course, economics just as often as a name or a piece of music I like or don't like. I'll never forget hearing Phil Glass's Music in 12 Parts (one or two of them) in his Bleecker St. loft, with the four loud speakers at the four corners, the listeners in a circle next, and the musicians, mostly, but not all amplified, in the center of that circle. Must have been early 70's. So, everything's good about that Phil Glass, and really nothing bad at all. It's just that the brand, Phil Glass or another brand, is what rules new classical music. I have a problem with this! Because of what that means in practice. And the cover of the Musicworks with that familiar brand, in face form, well: is he going to be like Elliott Carter?—every 5 years (Carter's about 103) it's time for another round of THE birthday festival. That jumped out at me while I was writing to the circulation department with which I've had some lively correspondence now and then. I decided because of that "threat" (the 5-year festival threat), that I would only celebrate my prime number birthdays. Next one's 79. This does not a brand make!

Anyway, thank you for taking the time to write.
Daniel

5/4/2012

Fl. *p*

Ob. *p* smoothly, quasi legato

Cl.

Bn.

Va. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

U1 *mf* Spread the word, the word, the word, Now's the time, Tell them all

U2 *mf* Spread the word, the word, the word, Now's the time, the word, the word, the word, the

23. Subject: Phenomenological Approach to Elliott Carter's Music

Steven Beck performed the complete solo piano music of Carter this May 5th at the New Spectrum Foundation on 23rd Street, NYC. It was about an hour and a half of very technically demanding music which he played with panache and complete conviction. He was a pleasure.

The music was either soft-ish, loud, or very loud. It was either very fast or slow. You could cut a swatch of it at any time from his continuing career (he's 103) and it would sort of sound the same—similar. (I've thought that of Philip Glass, too, on the other end of the spectrum of style). Punkt. Period. That's all. Nothing more to say. Nada.

Well, there's a little more: Most of the music makes an auditory impression of cantus fermi. There is a long, accented series of tones, "elaborated on" by very fast sprinkles of notes in between and around. Both layers are non-tonal. It's amazing how few gestures he uses, but also, how tedious to hear them over and over again.

I am, admittedly, looking through blurry glasses which can only discern general shapes and qualities. I'm not sure I want to focus in.

It's catty, but fun to say that Carter's Little [Liver] Pills must work, because the family invention has given their composer-son a century plus of life and creativity.

5/11/2012

35

36

37

Fl.

Musical staff for Flute (Fl.) in treble clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *dim.* at measure 37. A dashed line connects the measure numbers 35, 36, and 37.

Ob.

Musical staff for Oboe (Ob.) in treble clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *dim.* at measure 37. A dashed line connects the measure numbers 35, 36, and 37.

Cl.

Musical staff for Clarinet (Cl.) in treble clef. It is mostly empty, with a few notes in measure 36.

Bn.

Musical staff for Bassoon (Bn.) in bass clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *molto rit.* at measure 37. A dashed line connects the measure numbers 35, 36, and 37. The staff ends with *pp*.

Ua.

Musical staff for Alto Saxophone (Ua.) in bass clef. It is mostly empty, with a few notes in measure 36.

Cb.

Musical staff for Contrabass (Cb.) in bass clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *dim. molto rit.* at measure 37. The staff ends with *arco* and *pp*.

U1

Musical staff for Violin I (U1) in treble clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *dim.* at measure 37. The lyrics "Now's the time, to Spread the word," are written below the staff.

U2

Musical staff for Violin II (U2) in treble clef. It contains a melodic line starting at measure 35, marked with *Rit.* and *dim.* at measure 37. The lyrics "Now's the time, to Spread the word." are written below the staff.

24. Subject: Letter to an opera singer

Dear Kamala,

This letter about the 19th Century opera voice, is not about you, since you have at least two voices, if not three (counting your "Balkan voice"), but you and others may be able to help me with my problem.

I just finished listening to the live radio broadcast of the 3rd Act of Janacek's fabulous "The Makropulos Case" at the Met. It has an almost deadpan libretto about an incredible (and hence impossible) situation, but still, it's naturalist theater that requires naturalist acting from the singers. That's a problem of a different kind I'll leave alone for now. So, without checking, I think there are tenor, baritone, bass baritone singers in key roles. And the soprano heroine, Emilia Marty, sung by Karita Mattila, the great Finnish singer.

First the music: harmonic richness made of classical and folk elements shining through a prism of pungent orchestration. And the cut-cut lyricism: these phrases interrupted but longing for completion. Lyric montage? Yes, something like that. And modulated often with rhythmic ostinati. Or the rhythms take over. Take you over. You get it! Expression-modernism.

So this is captivating. Then an operatic voice chimes in. Mattila was the most acceptable. Her bell-like tones pleased you so you could forget the operatic grit, which is the part of the territory I abhor. The music is now all but spoiled by those male voices, floppy-vibrato-ing all over the scale. Straining and pushing those tones to "expressive" extremes. Here is where I rebel. We are no longer in the 19th Century, and Janacek and others would be much better served if singers tried something different. First of all: curb that vibrato. Not that it has to disappear. It just has to be put back in its box and used as was originally intended as an ornament similar to the trill—in key moments, but not continuously. Well that's the beginning. Go back to the straight voice and then start to re-inflect it from a fresh perspective. How would that sound? I don't know, but I'm sure it would make a better mix with the sound of his orchestra, a sound which is honed to beautiful edges, and not at all like the traditional operatic voice.

5/12/2012

gapped CONNECTIONS

This heavier thread---we have heard it before in another form, in an earlier time and place.

In a live performance, your mind sometimes travels backwards to an earlier moment, to bring it together with the present, **SO, HERE, WE JOURNEY BACK** to: **JUST BEFORE THE JUNCTURE:**

which contains within it:

from the JUNCTURE POINT (poco con moto):

OR BACK TO AN EARLIER MOMENT YET, TO:
JUST AFTER THE BEGINNING:

There is no end to connections, and any clever fellow can multiply the number of patterns indefinitely. At some point, though, the composer's pattern is merged with those of the performer. The artist who reaches prima materia of the piece. The artist who reaches this point will find himself parroting the sets and subsets that belong to "music theory." He has gone farther and missed his subject. Some place before this point he must see the nerve-cells of the piece -- ITS BEGINNING calls.

25. Subject: Why was Roy Harris plowed under?

Probably because in the post-war years and the stultifying '50's that followed, no one wanted to hear even the best Americanist anymore. It was time for the "international school" and all that we now think of as the 12-tone Mafia. But Harris was the best of that large bunch of '30's-'50's American "nationalists." A lousy way to dismiss them, to call them that... Certainly he's the only one (besides Ives—but how differently!) who seriously advanced the art of the symphony. Let's forget Copland, Hansen, Schuman, Bernstein (as symphonist), Berger, early Carter, and just so many more. It's not that he had no champions. Bernstein did his Third Symphony often, and Koussevitzky commissioned and premiered several symphonies.

But then: a desert. I tried iTunes, to no avail. Now we have a stunning recording (2008) of Harris's 5th and 6th symphonies by Marin Alsop and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Glowing!

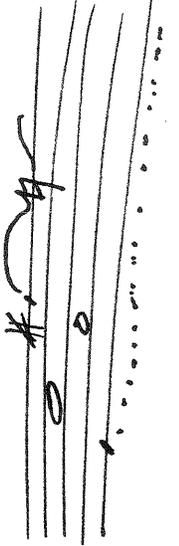
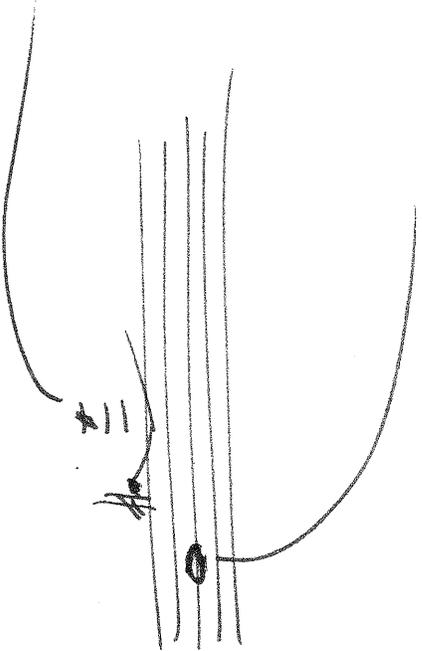
Harris has so few proponents in the new music world, that I might be the only one besides Kyle Gann. We had a mini-bonding experience over Harris not long ago. But it's hard to get through to him now, what with blogging, that noise-medium.

Right off, let's say Harris is "our Bruckner:" Grandeur, wide-angle scope, a limited palette, recycling of ideas and processes from work to work, abstract, but exciting, catchy tunes that are asymmetrical, but occasionally veer towards folksy and spicy without sounding like kitsch. No pandering to unmotivated big climaxes. Fabulous chorale harmonies. Unpredictable phrase structures. Fragments that come from nowhere, that then seem "inevitable." Sudden endings. And something really special I just noticed during my first listen to the Alsop recording: such thrilling orchestral cross-cutting, using the different choirs to interrupt each other, and yet build to a larger whole. Last time I noticed this phenomenon was in the unfinished latter movements of Mahler's 10th Symphony. Totally different kind of material, different intent, different poetics. Still, it's rare in linear, tonal modernism to hear cross-cutting outside of film music or in John Zorn's cartoon-influenced scores.

And there's an oblique connection to "process music." More needs to be said about this. And also about his harmonic language which uses endless variations on the "Justin Morgan progression:" as in C-major to C#-minor. These and other progressions are his substitute for tonic-dominant.

One caveat: he wrote 16 symphonies. I'm not sure what happened after his 7th. I'm not sure I want to know.

7/3/2012



echo/answer between them...
(a snapshot from WATER-POT MUSIC of Aug '81)

26. Subject: "The Cradle Will Rock"- Blitzstein's 1937 "play in music"

His tight-fisted, angry, union-loving, anti-capitalist, anti-militarist singspiel had a four-day run at the New York City Center, ending last night. Marvelous music with acid chamber-music textures from the pit orchestra (on stage for this concert performance). Thrillingly seamless transitions between speech and song. The whole ninety minutes, without intermission, flowed like a dream.

Most of us "know" Marc Blitzstein for his translation of the Brecht-Weil "Three-Penny Opera," still the one most used in English (and I think the best, with lines like "Let's all go barmy, and join the army...we chop 'em to bits because we like our hamburgers rawwww")

I had one guilty reservation about the music—guilty because it was so good, why would one complain! As I listened to the lovingly embodied (but not over-used) Kurt Weil harmonic influence, it dawned on me that I was missing the "big numbers" like the "Moon of Alabama" in Weil's Mahagonny, or all those wonderful songs in "The Three-Penny Opera." I kept waiting, but the stirring, combative finale (the cradle not only will rock, but COME DOWN!) came and went without that swoon of pleasure and relief-in-song that opera can provide—especially after long swathes of satiric or bitter political rhetoric set elegantly in a through-composed style. My hunch is that Blitzstein's musical persona is too tightly wound for the expansive lyricism of Kurt Weil, to name only one of many "numbers" opera composers. But moving, exciting music it is, fresh, sassy and as brilliant as you could want. I'm so glad I went to hear it on a hot, humid summer night in New York.

And what of the politics? During the depression, the industrial unions had a physical place in the plants that they no longer have: a strike was a dramatic disturbance of a whole complex community of working and living. No longer true in dematerialized, yes deracinated global capitalism. Where do you go to protest? The internet! If you believe, as I do, that unionization is the only countervailing force to "wild, savage capitalism" (of which Pope John Paul told us to beware)—well nothing has changed since the '30's. And that, like it or not, is what Marx would say, and he'd be right. Blitzstein's target: the evil monster steel-plant owner, "Mr. Mister" is harder to find now, harder to organize against, harder to know even what the tools we are to array against today's Mr. Misters.

And that leaves activist composers scratching our collective heads, while muttering or loudly intoning: "Capitalism, capitalism." We wonder as we wander out under the stars, what the hell to do!

7/14/2013

27. Subject: Universe Symphony: metaphorical music?

Now we're talking! It used to be called program music. I'm thinking metaphor.

Mahler wisely declined the term of program music for his symphonies. Strauss didn't. I'm sure Ives didn't care a fig what one called his programmatically titled orchestral works like "The Housatonic at Stockbridge." The Universe Symphony could be called the program of Everything. Or nothing in particular. Still it's a metaphor for Everything (or nothing in particular).

The highly committed Nashville Symphony under Giancarlo Guerrero, on May 12th at Carnegie Hall, performed Larry Austin's 20-year project of finishing and realizing Ives's Universe Symphony. This "program" is so all-inclusive as to be a non-program. (Most of my favorite music is in this category.) It can put us all back into the silly arguments between Hanslick ("The Beautiful in Music") and Wagner and others. I always sided with Hanslick's, but continued to listen to Wagner with amazement. Or with complete delight to Kleinsinger's "Tuby the Tuba" and Prokofiev's "Peter and the Wolf."

To me it's clear that if you need to interpose a program in order to groove on the music, the music has failed. So program music as a genre cannot be taken seriously. But we've all taken Ives monumental conceptual symphony work very seriously, in that there are at least two realizations. (Johnny Reinhart's is the other one I know).

As to other metaphorical music, we listen and respond to the music as music, but take the programmatic titles as handy monikers, epiphenomena if you like, to spice up our memories of the work, or simply to communicate in short-hand about it to others. The "Tragic" Overture (by Brahms). OK, I'll give it some picture or interpretation. It might color my memory, or help my memory with some particular theme.

But Ives clearly DID mean to represent the infinity and grandeur of the universal processes we call "The Universe." He worked on it for over forty years. That, and Larry Austin's twenty years on it show huge commitments.

(The other two works on the Nashville Symphony evening paled and annoyed: Terry Riley's "The Palmian Chord Ryddle for six-string electric violin (performed by Tracy Silverman) and orchestra, and Percy Grainger's "imaginary ballet" music, "The Warriors,")

What stands out in both Reinhart's and Austin's realizations of the Ives, is the opening percussion (plus piccolo) ensemble of 20 independent pulses going for a long time, and sharing a downbeat every eight seconds: "The Life Pulse." It's thrilling, and interesting, and does kind of feel like an aspect of infinity, or the vastness of vibration. The dense and dissonant string sound which follows is thick and impenetrable in a succulent sort of way. I don't have a strong feeling or tactile memory of other parts of the piece, other than a generally positive one.

So the Grainger and Riley pieces were washouts. Terry can write for orchestra, but he doesn't seem like an orchestral composer. His piece was a diffuse journey about ethnic influences: music about other music. Metaphorical. Grainger's piece, dedicated to Delius (!) was a bombastic bomb with lots and lots of xylophonists and a big bang at the end. His "Greek heroes," "Zulus," "Vikings," "lovmakers," "fighting men" claimed not to be program music. Sagging metaphors to me. What's a well-meaning, politically correct orchestra to do?

A review about Everything and nothing in particular is a nice place to end or pause in a cycle of twenty-eight pieces.

7/26/2012

CHORD PROGRESSION

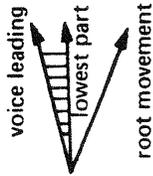
A triad in 3 or 4 parts moves (every voice moves up) to the nearest chord tones of the triad which is a half step lower . . . and so on (or vice versa)

it is an expression of contrary motion in which two forces of different kinds are pushing in opposite directions simultaneously:



There are many realizations of CHORD PROGRESSION --and many variants--or complex mixes of this idea with others

one realization:



in a 4-part texture, one of the voices (either the lowest or the highest) goes to the 7th of the next chord *if that* is the nearest tone in the progression. An interesting phenomenon occurs: *that* voice ends up an octave further away from the other 3 voices than it started, after one complete cycle of 12 chromatic triads. So in addition to contrary motion (above), there is oblique motion within the voice-leading phenomenon.

with a mixed grouping of instruments: when all instruments have entered on the first chord, move anytime during a breath (wind instruments) to the next chord tone; play that tone (any number of breaths) till you hear that everyone has reached the chord you are playing; then anytime during your *next* breath, move on to the next chord tone, waiting as before till everyone else has arrived before moving on. All other instruments: use your own full breathing in a like manner: as a measuring device. Phrase your chord-change notes melodically: use dynamics, timbre, articulation to realize this.

Choices to be made:

triads with major or minor 3rd's;
7th's either major or minor: leave to performer choice or schemes of alternation (e.g. every other 3rd major.....)

Shape of piece:

one cycle of 12 changes:
or going back down:
or always starting from bottom:
or

28. Subject: SON!C -

Get it! "Sounds of a new century" (where everyone is under 40). Great theme: youth, always a winner. October 14-22nd, 2011 with something like 14 concerts and over a hundred composers (all young!). Otto Luening used to say that when he started out, a young composer was someone in his (yes "his") 50's. Otto was young in his 70's). So are we going backwards or forwards, please?

Four young men in black, the Jack (quartet), from Eastman to NY, play best: XenAK (-is). "Did all they played sound like XenAK? —what a CRACK!" "Can't be XenAK if it's him we lack." Alex Mincek's was my favorite of lack-XenAK. Or was it grey not black wore by the Jack? Too dark to read their names (even in the light I couldn't find their names, much less their aims). But a friendly, humble virtuosity was on offer, fine! But then, betrayed by the sound engineers: how perverse that only their loudest sounds got amplified. The soft, wispy sul ponticellos and harmonics shifted the aural perspective back to them on stage, then a loud sound, and you were looking, once more, at the loudspeaker to their left. Ouch. Said a musician in the audience to me: "they play so many more notes per... than...[blah, blah, something or other], with not a bit of sweat on them." Could this be the aesthetic aim of "a new century?"

Some nice choral music followed the Jack. Beautiful performances by the New York Virtuoso Singers conducted by Harold Rosenbaum. In one piece the sopranos and the basses were at the back of the stage, left and right, while the altos and tenors were front center. Nice idea, but why not go further, like Meredith Monk and actually have them change places at different times, even sing while moving.

Douglas Repetto's robots let down colored three-dimensional looking tubes while several members of Talea, performed a graphic score by Victor Adan. Did the music control the robots? No way to know from the program notes. The final effect was like the drip paintings of abstract colorist, Morris Louis, though less messy.

7/26/2012

CHORD PROGRESSION : for orchestra

The score is written on four systems, each with five staves. The instruments are grouped as follows:

- System I:** Vn₂, Va, Ob₂, Cl₁, Bn₃ (Staff 1); Tr₂, Tr₃ (Staff 2); Fl₂ (Staff 3); Pic. (Staff 4); Fl₁ (Staff 5).
- System II:** Cl₂, Bn₂ (Staff 1); Tr₁ (Staff 2); Ob₁, Vn₁ (Staff 3); Fl₁ (Staff 4); Pic. (Staff 5).
- System III:** Vc₂, Tr₂ (Staff 1); Vc₁, Tr₁ (Staff 2); E.W., Tr₃ (Staff 3); Cl₃ (Staff 4); Fl₃ (Staff 5).
- System IV:** Vc₂, Bn₂, Bc₁ (Staff 1); Cb., Tr₃, Tbn. (Staff 2); Fl₃ (Staff 3); Pic. (Staff 4); Fl₁ (Staff 5).

The notation includes various notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *8va* and *8va #2*.

- Start from beginning note for your instrument
- Follow instructions for durations and phrasing (in the printed part)
- When your part moves to a note beyond your range, go back to the octave lower without a pause
- End on your highest note of the part

Daniel Goode

29. Subject: Monk congratulations!

Wow, Christian,

I was blown away by your Monk interpretation and playing. And Greg's too. He's such a creative drummer! It was such a breath of fresh air to hear something that feels musically akin to what Monk does in composition. He's really the only one I ever want to hear improvising on his tunes.

So you've made an intervention. No matter how brilliant the other side-men's playing is—was—it's always seemed business as usual compared to Monk's minimalist use of his own motifs. He couldn't leave it just to the changes. He does the material.

And I loved your "dry" playing. That also is what I love about Monk doing himself. But your interpretations were also lush in harmonic ideas, and textures. And never gooey.

Also, your medley's of more than one tune, your intros and outros. Totally convincing and groovy.

I've been doing a little "instant criticism," called Thumb-Nail Reviews. I'd like to add this letter. It just goes to a few people as an email, some of whom you know, like Larry. Hope that's OK.

Greg Campbell and Christian Asplund, collectively AC/GC will perform all 70 or so compositions by Thelonious Monk to celebrate his 95th birthday on 10 October, joined by special guest performers. Interpretations of these sublime/inscrutable compositions will run the gamut from inside out, familiar to unexpected. At Spectrum, 12 Ludlow Street in Manhattan.

10/16/2012

30. Subject: The Rite Resists Dance - March 9th

How can the most famous dance score of the 20th Century, The Rite of Spring, resist choreography? It does, easily. I watched a solo pianist, Neil Alexander play his arrangement of the score on an amplified upright piano at the corner of the stage of the Alvin Ailey Theater in New York (thank you Citigroup!) while a dance troupe (Jonathan Riedel Dance Theater) did a lot of things with seven dancers, one, a man with a vicious looking stage knife or alternatively a German cross as pendant. A lot happened.

With all this action going on, my eyes and ears were still glued to the music. Sometimes the amplified sound distorted. Mostly it sounded as familiar as a Brahms lullaby. It was just lovely piano music, not spectacle, or dissonant blockbuster. (I remember an L.A. Philharmonic performance of it at the Disney auditorium where I was seated behind the stage, almost falling into the brass section as I swooned to their hypnotic choring.) This was not like that. It was more like delicate Chopin tracteries with occasional big bangs. Wonderful bangs, still 100 years later! And the gorgeous achingly beautiful slow dance in Eb-minor-ish: "Spring Rounds." I could listen to that section over and over again. Maybe I'll make that happen.

It's been going around during this 100th anniversary of its premiere, that the booing and hissing in Paris was to Nijinsky's choreography, not Igor's music. How would we know? Maybe I need to see a few more dance versions before I proclaim that the score will always resist its dance interpretation—because of the mind-numbing stupidity of a "pagan ritual" with female sacrifice as its coup de grace.

It's dumb 19th Century imaginary "anthropology," romantic primitivism put out, I think, to rationalize the great innovative break that Stravinsky made, and foisted on a conservative culture. Perhaps that insufferable pagan ritual context was the reason the Riedel interpretation overlaid it with another story, the program notes told me, from a 13th Century Swedish folktale. Relief! when the dance ended with an embrace instead of a sacrifice. I predict that only a miracle will find a dance that matches the music and satisfies all senses.

3/14/2013

DREAM JOURNAL. August 20th 1979.

I'm at a rehearsal of Mahler's 10th Symphony in a cluttered workshop-like room. I hear the piece coming to its end. (It's not literally like the piece but has its feeling.) -- it surges slowly to its end. (I've never been interested in those endings as representing "End" or "death", but mainly as very slow flow.) I'm not aware of a conductor and feel ~~myself~~ as in part responsible for the performance. At the very end a piano ~~score~~ punctuates with an F#-major chord and an upward moving slow scale in another instrument: there's an awkward mistake as one note of the scale is suddenly louder than the rest. But it's only a rehearsal. After the rehearsal Debbie Heilner comes running up to me and excitedly tells me she's going to spend all her money on an electronic device -- she shows me a black box and I'm about to discourage her from it when she shows me that the box has two levers and inside there's a tape loop -- so it's some kind of delay device. I'm mollified. CUT to another dream with elaborate subterranean travels with friends and colleagues meeting and separating, going out to eat, etc..

DREAM JOURNAL. August 21st.

They are rehearsing my Phrases of the Hermit Thrush. The parts are given out and the orchestra members look annoyed that they have trouble reading the parts (they seem to be xerox parts maybe with some blotches). At the end of the rehearsal a woman, nice roundish face, light hair around face comes up to me, concerned and asks: "Don't harmonics come down to us from Paganini?" I look at her surprised and try to summon up an answer. The only thing that comes to mind is: no, of course they come to us through --- Berlioz. End.
(NOTE: the string orchestra in the piece described plays only harmonics.)

31. Subject: Folk bass amped up

Two Macedonian/Roma bands played at Le Poisson Rouge last night, sponsored by the Center for Traditional Music and Dance, and each over emphasized their bass instruments to the detriment of the intricate lovingly played treble lines. The opening band was twice diaspora, first a younger generation, now American, then leaving New York for Pennsylvania. Their synth was their bass, pounding the lower end like a rock band's guitar section. Their clarinet/saxophone duo strained beautifully against their own bass lines. But I was exhausted on their behalf.

The main event was the brass band, Koçani Orkestar with a solo clarinet/sax, accordionist, male vocalist, and the traditional Balkan tupan/bass-drum. The whole lower end of three euphoniums and tuba were amplified. I'm not sure if the three trumpets were also, but it didn't matter: the floor shook with amplified tuba.

I noticed this because I'm a long-time amateur folk dancer, and have heard and danced to scores of traditional Balkan folk bands. I was struck last night, as I often am by the way the amplification of non-electronic instruments is used: to theatricalize some aspect of the playing by making it "larger than life." There are new music groups, too, that do this with acoustic instruments! About this—another time.

The evening opened with a fast-paced workshop led by a well-known New York folk-dance instructor, to teach some circle-dance steps to the audience so they could more authentically dance to the music. He used his forty-five minutes to teach four different dances with some very difficult style added in—more difficult for me, because thinking I was at a bar, I already had my drink in hand while negotiating grape-vine steps and other hops and skips.

What was strangely unanticipated by the dance instructor: this was a Roma or Gypsy brass band, scorchingly hot, with fast-double-triple tongued melodic and accompaniment figures, trance-inducing, totally ecstatic music that roused the audience as I've hardly ever seen. Money was pasted to the players' foreheads, bundles of dollars thrown in the air, spontaneous movement by almost all in the room. Yet hardly any authentic Balkan circle dancing emerged from this appreciative crowd, many of whom I've seen for years at folk-dance evenings. Why? Well, the non-Roma folk culture is the source of the circle-dance as I understand it. This was music and dance that transcended those local customs, referencing, but not limited by that repertoire, trying and reaching a more universal idea of ecstasis through music and movement.

And finally the over-amplified bass line was over. How? The audience would not let them go, so the whole band, minus the accordion, left their amplified stage positions, and wandered, as they would at home, among the audience, playing and collecting ever more tips, surrounded by mesmerized, happy people. Now the balance of high and low instruments was perfect, and perfectly memorable.

4/28/2013

Untransposed score

Fiddle Studies

Daniel Goode

measure = ca.66

Flute

Oboe

Soprano Saxophone in B \flat

Clarinet in A

7

15

23

A OR

ornament ad lib. in bracketed sections: e.g. turns, mordents, double-noted; also patterns of slurred and tongued notes: set up symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns among ensemble.

32. Subject: Mahagonny timely, packs a big bang

The Manhattan School of Music just finished a brilliant run of the Kurt Weill-Bertold Brecht, 1927 opera, *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny*. Because largely of a NYTimes review, the last performance was mobbed at the former home of the Juilliard campus in Morningside Heights—a kind of old-fashioned infrastructure, worn, homey, but not technically up to legible super-titles in its Borden auditorium.

The Brecht homilies like “As you make your bed, you must lie in it,” the Weill melodic templates over and over, the needling orchestra textures with saxes in the mix, the big choral outbursts about eating, loving (sex), no help for anybody—all of this adds up to putting a nail in the coffin of neo-liberalism, capitalist triumphalism, and just plain developer-ized mega cities. Coming during our second-biggest depression, it was mythic and moving, sitting there in the audience. I don’t remember feeling this so profoundly when I first saw it in a Met production years ago.

So, the singers and orchestra were all students, and all terrific. We’re so lucky to have these young, almost-professionals in our midst. The problem still is with so much opera, the lumpishness and lack of movement in the bodies of fine singers. Choreographers know so much more about this than opera directors, so it seems: how to make those bodies “talk” whether singing or just “being” on stage. The constant ebb and flow of small ensembles and large panoramas was inelegant, probably part of the complex, many-times revised original by Brecht-Weill. The production needed both small and large movement concepts. Then there’s the matter of our visual culture: quick-cutting from the movies doesn’t work with the staging of real bodies. Sometimes the new tradition of filming operas for one-time presentation in movie theaters does some of what we want from opera. But it doesn’t solve live opera. I’m waiting and hoping.

4/29/2013

Eleven Phrases of a Hermit Thrush

-- from which he sang his song... transcribed for piccolo...

all phrases are legato. ♩ = as fast as possible. ♩ = a portamento, not a true glissando appropriate in all grace note connections even if not marked. ♩ = an indistinct note

♩ = an ornament that is a cross between portamento, a trill and an overblowing to upper partials. Experiment!

♩ = ca. $\frac{1}{2}$ tone flat.

33. Subject: Just another Thumbnail review—Mahler's 7th

Looking down from my magnificent box seat (thank you, cousin Martin), straight ahead at the Met Orchestra under James Levine in Carnegie Hall this afternoon playing the 80-minute Mahler Seventh Symphony—I saw so many bald and grey heads, and hardly a youngin'. Could it be the prices (my seat was \$142)? Could it be ignorance? Or all of the above. This orchestra is wonderful. The playing was thrilling, oh I wanted a slower beginning, but so what, it was gorgeous, warm, brilliantly together. Why wouldn't the younger generations be thrilled at the sound, the drama, the pazazz of this invention of European origins with so many hundreds of versions throughout the world? Tell me! before I cry in despair.

Brought up on the "Three B's" (Wagner substituted Bruckner for Brahms, the dumbkoff), I never heard a note of Mahler until I was in my 20s. I still try to understand why it worms its way into me.

It's something about the statement and the commentary being almost simultaneous because the orchestra is such a fabulous monster, so big, so various, it can do both at the same time. So a "one-liner" which is where Mahler starts, becomes in a few seconds, a multi-liner, and your breath is taken away. (This ignores the accumulations of form, the travel, the experience of being on a journey...just as important.) But it starts with the phenomenon that feeling is transmitted when he tells you why this theme, this chordal passage, this rhythm turns him on: by making the orchestra say it in many varied voices, right from square one—to the very end. It's anti-classical in that sense. The classics just lay it out, and let you take it or leave it.

Mahler is not of that ilk. He can't let you go home without telling you, showing you, why you should be moved by this scrap, or that, this odd piece of tune, chorale of chords, this walking or marching or dancing rhythm. Then he connects the dots and you have a symphony. It works.

Hats off to the Met Orchestra for bringing this out.

1/2/2014

Phrases of the Hermit Thrush

for solo clarinet

Daniel Goode

legato sempre

f *p* (quasi echo) *f* *p* 10" 8"

f *p* 10" *f* *p* > 7"

f *p* 8" *f* *p* 9"

f *p* 8" *f* *p* 10"

f *p* 7" *f* *p* 26"

34. Subject: Film ventriloquizes itself into opera

Today's epic films with ear-flattening immersive soundtracks (like Lord of the Rings with its odious prize-winning score by Howard Shore) practically force its music into the voices of its characters, giving us the impression of opera, while replacing that medium with the newer, more flexible, more accessible, cheaper medium of film. No one is the wiser, except the poor opera company, opera composer, and their donors and subsidizers. Film has stolen their show.

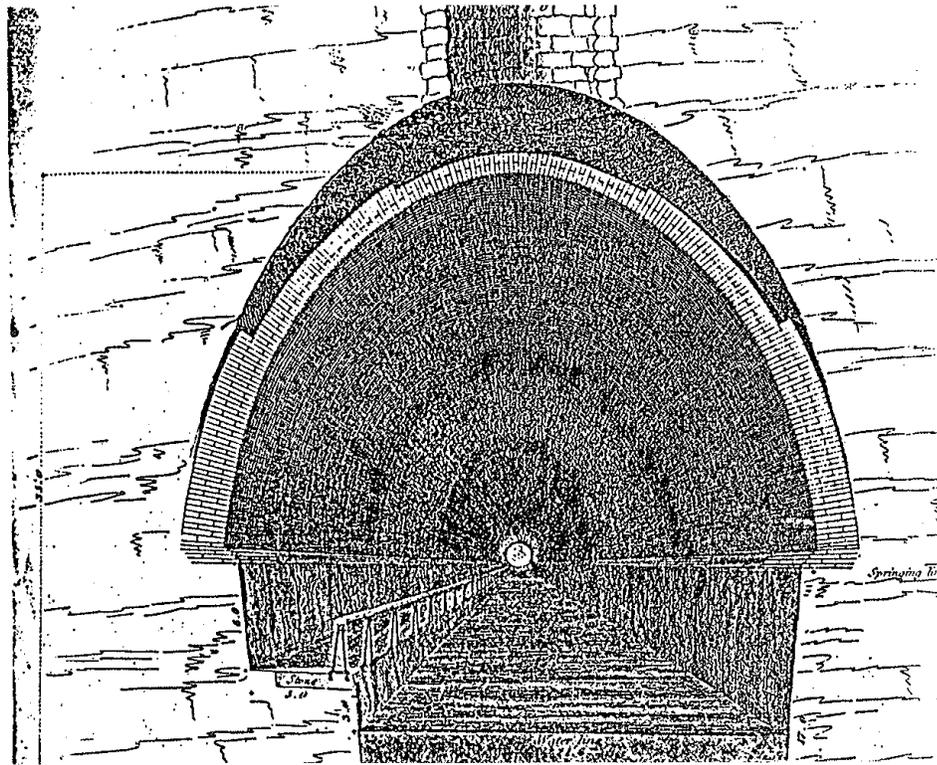
But opera has not completely slept through this development: The Metropolitan Opera has filmed many of its productions in HD, and now, worldwide wherever there are movie theaters, you can once again hear and see opera at reasonable prices. Still, film is the master medium, live theater, the loser.

I've seen two HD filmed operas this season, both wonderful experiences: Shostakovich's *The Nose*, and Verdi's *Falstaff*. William Kentridge's visual and directorial masterpiece of the former was one of the most fabulous theatrical things I've seen in years. And *Falstaff*, while not an avant-garde production, was entrancing. Verdi's last opera is his own quick-cut version of his earlier lyric style. So easy and fresh sounding, you wonder how he does it. Magic!

I have one dark suspicion, however, about this whole HD enterprise. I think that in the final mix, the orchestra is mixed lower in volume than you would hear it in the opera house. Shostakovich's spiky, acerbic dissonances within his stripped-down modernist orchestration weren't as present as I would have liked. The camera's close-ups seduce us into concentrating on the visual—and for the singers: they are more exposed as actors. There is so much to see. Yet I strained my ears during the famous fugue finale in *Falstaff*, trying to hear if it was a “real” fugue or just fugue-like. Not that it matters. But the orchestra as equal is a treasure I refuse to give up. So, reformers of opera if you are still out there, there is plenty to do.

1/4/2014

DownTown Ensemble presents:



MOVEMENT

performed by Barbara Held, flute

Ushio Torikai

FAFAGONAE

performed by Kory Grossman, marimba

Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson

TRUMPET IMAGES-DRUM IMAGES

performed by Jalalu-Kalvert Nelson, trumpet, percussion, with tape

intermission

TUNNEL-FUNNEL

conducted by David Gilbert

Daniel Goode

Washington Square United Methodist Church, 8 PM, June 4th, 1988

35. Subject: Chou Wen-chung in his 91st year, at Merkin Concert Hall last night

With only three pieces on the program it wasn't exactly a Retrospective. Nor was it a Recital (as in 'here's what I do'). Better than either of these, it was an Event!

Student of Varése after he arrived from China in 1946; his copyist and editor, he completed Varése's Nocturnal, orchestrated his Etude Pour Espace—Chou is also his literary executor and lives with his wife, Yi-an, in Varése's house on Sullivan Street in the Village along with some of Varése's cherished instruments. And as you might expect, he was influenced by Varése's aesthetic. But with a new self-imposed task: to make a personal synthesis of "East and West."

Cursive for flute and piano was beautifully played by Jayn Rosenfeld (flute) and Christopher Oldfather (pianist, with coloristic inside plucks, et al). Cursive hand-writing which is no longer taught or readable by young people, was Chou's bridge to the calligraphies of Asia. I resolved then and there to practice my own cursive which is now deficient from over-use of the computer. The piece was quite atonal on first listen.

Twilight Colors for a luscious sextet of three winds and three strings, was the first piece on the program, played vividly by Boston Musica Viva, and conducted by Richard Pittman. Right away I felt a difference in the role of rhythm. A dotted rhythm, a triplet was not a Western "authority figure" driving the music motivically. Rather, it was more like a loving receptacle of a sound, of a tone, of several tones. There was room for a breath of contemplation, time slowed down. Different from Cage's 'let the sounds be themselves,' but equal in setting itself apart from the European grammar of connection.

Echoes from the Gorge was the last piece on the program, played brilliantly by the percussion quartet, Talujon, on a large array of quite standard Western percussion instruments. A glorious noise piece in many movements. Often in the silence between movements the wooden chimes, charmingly, had a few more soft sounds left to say. I was thinking while listening: all these instruments, didn't they come from "the East?" I watched one player repeatedly strike the giant tam-tam near its rim with three small-headed mallets, eliciting nothing but high piercing frequencies, not the low bonging we expect from a big gong. Just then there was a huge noisy climax of "ear-cleaning" zinging tutti tremolos.

Since color was a theme of the concert, I must report that all but two of the players wore the standard ho-hum uniform of black. Only Jayn Rosenfeld in a pale purple blouse, and Christopher Oldfather in a mauve shirt, begged to differ.

It was a small, but loving audience. Chou Wen-chung came up on stage to receive the applause and a bouquet. Small, dapper, charming, with a full head of grey-flecked hair—when I introduced myself later, he graciously thanked me for coming to the concert.

2/22/2014

Two Thrushes

for two woodwinds

by

Daniel Goode

TWO THRUSHES - for 2 Woodwinds 1)

Daniel Goode

from 2) b_2

legato no vibr. sempre 2)

3) b_3

accl. flutter, gliss.

3" 7" 3" 5" 3" 8"

pp (quasi echo)

{ more distant (softer) probably off-stage

accl. flutter, gliss.

3" 4" 1" 3" 5" 5" 5"

pp

accl. (simile) (gliss) (simile)

6" 2" 7" 2" 7" 2" 6"

b_2

accl. (simile) (gliss) (simile)

2" 3" 3" 4" 4" 11" 11"

pp

accl. (simile) (gliss) (simile)

1" 3" 5" 6" 3" 5" 6"

pp

1) flutes, piccolos, oboes, clarinets, reeders; mixed if in same register
 2) \downarrow = ca. $\frac{1}{4}$ flat
 3) \curvearrowright = portamento unless marked "gliss."

These two Wood Thrushes sang this duet on May 19, 1975 in Neshanic, New Jersey.

I transcribed it from the tape recording at half-speed and two octaves lower than the original.

— D.A.

Further suggestions for performance: (1) Top part—out of sight if not actually off stage. (2) Slight variations in phrasing and dynamics of repeated phrases, but not to exceed the thrushes' own limits of variation.

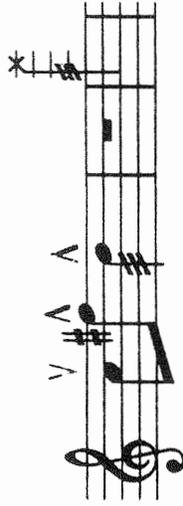
36. Subject: Beauty, a thumbnail review

I'm more convinced than ever, and long before today's text from NASA (below), that we are hard-wired for finding beauty "in nature," including, of course, the cosmos. Repeating patterns and symmetries bent by the complex processes of "nature" (including ours) is what we see all the time, even when we are just seeing our own retina. It just keeps happening. Of course it's not the only kind of beauty we find, but it's a start. And it's as true of sound as it is of sight. Morton Feldman's title, "Crippled Symmetries" puts an odd spin on it, but that piece and others of his testifies to the connection I'm making. Once, looking down from an airline on snow patterns scattered on a rectangular grid of Mid-Western farmland, I thought of the term: "collage of processes" to describe what I was seeing. That's also a way of describing some kinds of composing. (Fractals is another part of what we see and hear. Let's leave them for another time.)

"Explanation: Beautiful emission nebula NGC 6164 was created by a rare, hot, luminous O-type star, some 40 times as massive as the Sun. Seen at the center of the cosmic cloud, the star is a mere 3 to 4 million years old. In another three to four million years the massive star will end its life in a supernova explosion. Spanning around 4 light-years, the nebula itself has a bipolar symmetry. That makes it similar in appearance to more common and familiar planetary nebulae - the gaseous shrouds surrounding dying sun-like stars. Also like many planetary nebulae, NGC 6164 has been found to have an extensive, faint halo, revealed in this deep telescopic image of the region. Expanding into the surrounding interstellar medium, the material in the halo is likely from an earlier active phase of the O star. The gorgeous skyscape is a composite of extensive narrow-band image data..." [My emphases.] <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/> for May 22nd, 2014.

The passage from NASA goes on to talk about "glowing atomic hydrogen gas in red and oxygen in blue hues" Glowing red and blue hues is an invitation to beauty.

5/26/2014



(a)

(b)

Performance instructions:

All phrases are legato. Rhythmic values are approximate and the phrases should not sound metrical. Smaller note heads show the Wood Thrush's change of voice or timbre. These notes almost sound like an "afterthought," and they are softer. The rapid tremolo (flutter tongue) on a single note or on two notes (as in bar 9) are also timbral shifts. On single notes these may be shifted timbrally in some way other than tremolo.

Example (a) shows notes with a "V" and an inverted "V". The first means a pitch approximately one-quarter tone flat, the inverted V means a pitch approximately one-quarter tone sharp.

Example (b) which occurs as part of one of the phrases is a kind of noise with a generally high apparent pitch. Experiment! The **pp** dynamics found in most phrases may be difficult to obtain, but should give the illusion of relative softness. All other notes are not loud, but should be resonant and full.

The descriptions that indicate the bird's change of position should be performed by having several playing positions with stands and stand-lights. The furthest positions (last two) could be in the wings, in a lobby with door open, or in any place which physically separates the player from the listeners. The overall lighting should be dim.

37. Subject: Thumbnail review of "Orfeo" by Richard Powers

It's about us! Well, us, meaning us male composers of a certain vintage and background. Some of "us" may actually be in the Richard Powers 2014 novel, "Orfeo," disguised of course. The Champagne-Urbana music faculty of around 1960-something is named with their real names. The teacher and acidic mentor of the now 70 year-old fictional composer-hero, Peter Els who in his youth went to the University of Illinois, might have been Sal Martirano. Or, not. My mentor, later of UCSD where I met him, Gaburo, is named. So is Tenney. The fictional composer is also a clarinetist. There's an alto who.... It's a novel about music, composition, performance and ideas, woven together in a manner both gripping and moving. I found it a page-turner. But then again, I'm one of the "us." There are no women composers in the novel.

Descriptions of actual campus events of those times: a Cage Music Circus, and his HPSCHD are riveting—from the characters' ears and eyes, but also by someone who had really been there. The author calls Cage "the Imp Saint." Powers's language chosen for these absorbing descriptions of both real and imagined music is worth studying: he manages to weave "technical terms" we know from music theory into overlapping poetics. There's redundancy so if you don't know the music terms, you've got plenty of other language to hold onto. The two together work synergistically in an admirable way: music critics take note! And writers on the arts: how he creates both musical and plot momentum during many pages devoted to a single piece. What about style and history? Well disguised. Peter, the fictional composer, starts as an interesting eccentric, and eclectic. Minimalism comes on the scene in the middle of his career. It's really the only style mentioned by name. It makes its case, has an influence... Opera enters his life... A manic theater director. Success...failure.

Harry Partch's hobo experiences and music form a parallel track to the fictional composer-hero's last adventure of the novel. He also owns some "cloud chambers" like Partch's instrument. There's a futuristic turn to a kind of composing with DNA. The theme of a sometimes tormented composer is a flash on Adrian Leverkühn, the composer in Thomas Mann's novel. Each, something of a solipsist. Each involved in a spiritual search, but quite an imperfect one.

Novels about composers have got to be within number of fingers on one hand. There's "Jean-Christoph" by Romain Rolland which I've never read. There's Mann's "Dr. Faustus" (re: Schoenberg, serialism and the devil), and there's Herman Hesse's "The Glass Bead Game" (which has music as moves in a multi-dimensional board game of the elite). That's probably it for classical music. Proust, and ETA Hoffmann wrote about music in fiction. If we move to film, there are, of course, the entertaining composer films of Ken Russell. Composer-novels may be a strange genre. But not to me. It feels quite natural...of course.

(I did find it a little spooky that such a good novelist seems to know our world from the inside. Was he "spying" on us? Or was he one of us, once, not so long ago?)

7/30/2014

38. Subject: Mahler's 9th Rules-even in a chamber version!

So, it was reduced forces like 2 horns instead of 4, 1 trumpet, 2 clarinets, 1 flute, etc., no lower brass, and strings: 3,3,3,2,1. No harp? It's impossible without harp to do the 9th! But so cleverly, the piano and yes, that was an accordion, did amazing things to sound like all those missing instruments—the piano as harp was my favorite, but also its “lower brass” explosions were tasty. It was the Argento Chamber Ensemble conducted by Michel Galante. My friend and collaborator, Stephanie Griffin led the viola section and tipped me off to this September 15th New York premiere (of the chamber version)—seems to me it was a first—at the Advent Lutheran Church, Broadway and 93rd where they have a free Monday music series.

What worked amazingly was the completely adequate volume in the loud sections. It was overpowering where required. I sat close to minimize excess church reverb, but the direct sound was satisfyingly loud. (An aside: the emotional climax driven, formally clinched pushing-through (Durchbruch, or breakthrough—Adorno) must, of course, leverage the sheer phenomenon of acoustic volume, Must! Mahler is all about how to do climaxes right, and then what should follow.)

What didn't work in the chamber orchestra version was interesting. Not the missing instruments: and especially not-missing were all those piquant solos in Mahler's full orchestra original, no problemo! No, rather it was the counterpoint—I really mean something more generic even than counterpoint, the counterbalancing of competing rhythmic channels—among the five string groups, especially the upper three. So much information, expressional verve, sheer thrill is in the way these bodies play against and with each other within the generous harmonic framework of the whole. But strings merged as one body all too often, and especially in loud tutti sections.

But the symphony as a successful artifact was all there, and wove its amazing web. And we thank Klaus Simon, a theorist commissioned by Universal Edition, Mahler's publisher, for this brilliant feat. And for Michel Galante's directing these fabulous musicians. A free concert on the Upper West Side is a dangerous demographic act if you want to attract people as young as these performers were. Yes, dangerous, because it was, movingly, a

geriatric crowd with lots of walkers and wheelchairs in the aisles... We love our culture, and many of us, our Mahler! I'm thinking of images of those young string players biting down and into those forte attacks in those crucial places, because expression is a function of the gestures' placement in music's time experience, and in feeling's time.

I loved the lilting regularity of the opening Andante, first movement. I once touted this quality of the piece to Ann as being the perfect long, long theme for "meditative walking" (yes: the meaning of the best andantes for me is meditative walking). But when I took her to a full orchestra performance, the conductor made so many stretchings, speedups and slowdowns of these opening bars and pages, that I had to look at her helplessly and say, oh: I guess not. Anyway, Michel Galante understood the movement's beginning in the right way for me. The unfolding of the long, long theme and its varied repetitions was hypnotic because of the regularity, and much more cumulatively affecting than those other ways of doing it.

Only the viciously contrapuntal Rondo Burleske third movement didn't work that well. The fast clip meant that the final stretto section had to be too fast to hear much detail, becoming an exciting mess of sound, only, instead of a hilariously thrilling combining of all the ideas at once in a headlong race to the end.

Another review on the two new pieces by young composers influenced by Mahler's 9th will come in another thumb nail review...

9/17/2014

PETRA'S THRUSH

BY

DANIEL GOODE

*.....recorded on July 4th, 1994, transcribed at half-speed
and two octaves below the Wood Thrush.*

Petra's Thrush

by Daniel Goode

Vento sempre

1

6'' 7'' 7'' pp

7

6'' 6'' pp

13

6'' 6'' pp

19

5'' 6'' 7'' pp

25

5'' 6'' 6'' pp

changes position slightly:
more resonant.

31

6'' 5'' 6'' pp

37 *pp* 8" *pp* 6" *pp* 4" *pp*

Musical staff 37-42: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 37-42. Measure 37: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 38: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 39: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 40: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 41: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 42: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 8" above measure 37, 6" above measure 39, 4" above measure 42.

43 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 5" *pp*

Musical staff 43-48: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 43-48. Measure 43: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 44: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 45: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 46: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 47: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 48: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 6" above measure 43, 6" above measure 45, 5" above measure 48.

49 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 7" *pp*

Musical staff 49-54: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 49-54. Measure 49: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 50: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 51: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 52: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 53: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 54: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 6" above measure 49, 6" above measure 51, 7" above measure 54.

55 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 7" *pp* 6" *pp*

Musical staff 55-60: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 55-60. Measure 55: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 56: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 57: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 58: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 59: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 60: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 6" above measure 55, 6" above measure 57, 7" above measure 60, 6" above measure 60.

61 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 5" *pp* 7" *pp*

Musical staff 61-66: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 61-66. Measure 61: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 62: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 63: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 64: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 65: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 66: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 6" above measure 61, 6" above measure 63, 5" above measure 66, 7" above measure 66.

67 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 5" *pp* 6" *pp*

Musical staff 67-72: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measures 67-72. Measure 67: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note B4, quarter note C5. Measure 68: quarter note B4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter note F4. Measure 69: quarter note E4, quarter note D4, quarter note C4, quarter note B3. Measure 70: quarter note A3, quarter note G3, quarter note F3, quarter note E3. Measure 71: quarter note D3, quarter note C3, quarter note B2, quarter note A2. Measure 72: quarter note G2, quarter note F2, quarter note E2, quarter note D2. Dynamic markings: *pp* at the beginning and end of each measure. Fingerings: 6" above measure 67, 6" above measure 69, 5" above measure 72, 6" above measure 72.

109 *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 6"

115 *pp* 11" *pp* 10" *pp* 22"

121 *pp* 4" *pp* 15" *pp* 11"

127 *pp* 19" *pp* 6" *pp* 5" *pp* 5"

moves further away

133 *pp* 10" *pp* 6" *pp* 6" *pp* 6"

39. Subject: Waves of Noise at the Climate Change March,
Sept. 21st

But first, my favorite signs around me as we marched, leisurely, I have to say, pleasantly, were:

“There is no PLAN-et B”

“Shower together—Save water”

“Extinction is forever”

“Their greed crushes our spirit” (a sad looking young man in a baseball cap wore this T-shirt)

“Save the Humans” (spoken by a bunch of endangered animals, pictured)

We were still about a couple hundred yards from the head of the march at Columbus Circle at 1 PM when a mighty noise was scheduled to happen. Later I learned why it started a little early: there was to be a minute of silence before the giant noise made by everyone. And as surely as people can hardly be silent for long, that minute was cut short, so the big noise started about a minute or so before 1 PM. But it was a wonderful sound wafting over Columbus Circle to where we stood south of the front-most part of the marchers.

Later, when we had joined, and more than once, and mysteriously—why did it happen? a large mostly vocal noise swept up from behind us. We joined, and it subsided. It was thrilling each time. Ann and I had loud metal rattles from India, and a couple of mouth whistles. Some drums with a “sol-do” (up) tonality were happening near us, fun to play along with. We got quite tired by 42nd St. and took the subway home. Struck up conversations with others on the subway that never would have happened on a normal day.

I heard that at Wall Street civil disobedience today (the day after), the “people’s mike” technique was used to forward information to the protesters. (That’s this fabulous innovation of Occupy Wall Street in which succeeding rows or clumps of people repeat the message to the next group and on and on as necessary to reach the whole crowd.)

The estimate was of 311,000 people at the Sunday march.

9/23/2014

40. Subject: "Gustav Mahler: After Nine"

Two young composers influenced by Mahler's 9th Symphony were performed: by the Argento Chamber Ensemble, playing Matthew Ricketts's After Nine: Fantasia on Mahler; and by the JACK Quartet, playing Taylor Brook's Arrhythmia—as a prelude to the Argento's September 15th performance of the Mahler Symphony No. 9 (see my Thumb Nail Review #39.)

The latter of the two scarcely seemed serious. The composer wrote: "What does Mahler have to do with a string quartet written in 2012? It may be the result of an 'anything goes' attitude on my part." Yes, anything goes; and anything went...He claims the "melodic quotations promote a clear connection to Mahler's symphony..." I couldn't hear them, though maybe the recurring mi-re-do stood in for that (if you remember that the first movement is mostly mi-re, and very little do till the last note). In any case the JACK Quartet hacked through the piece with great vigor, though it seemed to very little artistic effect from the composer.

The Ricketts piece was a sensitive timbral study that moved from pitch level to pitch level, staying, expanding, then moving on. I'm thinking that there is newish style of creating tonal puddles based on this format. Each puddle gives way to the next. Then the piece ends. In Mr. Ricketts's case, the penultimate moment was a passionate, but quickly disappearing climactic moment, re-orchestrated, from the Mahler first movement. It couldn't stay long, or it would have been Mahler. Just a swipe at it.

I'm ambivalent about putting these two young composers with short pieces before the gigantic Mahler symphony. A little unfair. At the end of the evening my head was filled to overflowing with "ear worms" from its four movements. Usually it's days, if not weeks for these ear worms to subside. Not much room for anything else. These things rise up from the unconscious, or someplace in there, just to the level of singability, but of course can't be sung, because the underlying pulsing harmony can only be thought. I'm not sure I like this ear worm thing, but I know I can't control it. It has to die down at its own rate, and something else must replace it.

Now a little poem on varied repetition: Iterative, re-iterative, iteravia, via, vi.... Another meaning to repetition in music is this continuous

varied-repetition of long, well-formed melodic sentences. (One of my mentors in composition idly mentioned, the great length of a musical sentence in Mahler, which surprised me coming from a indomitable modernist.) Well-formed, by the way, includes ellipses, contractions, interruptions as part of a whole sentence, not some abstract symmetrical balancing.

Did Mahler have (“suffer” from) ear worms? How would we know? The simplicity of the melodic phrases—the parts of his long melodies—seems to force him into a paroxysm of increasing intensities of varied repetitions in the melodies and their orchestral counterpoints. Because of the simplicity of the original, and the obsessional nature of the composer? Were his putative ear worms vernacular borrowings or originals that sound inspired by vernacularities? Whatever you think about this, you have to create a special category of the archetype Repetition to account for Mahler’s underlying insistence on a musical gesture—call them themes, melodies, motives, or sentences. It’s not like Bruckner’s or Wagner’s iterative-ness. Nor Terry Riley’s nor Steve Reich’s, nor my own. Something special! It digs into you. It’s another kind of trance. I can imagine hating it because you believe that restraint is an essential part of art. But the only restraint necessary is that required by the instruments playing, and, historically, this has changed, partly because of Mahler’s composing. And every new generation of composers.

(Just to correct: the Argento string section: was 4,4,3,2,1)

9/23/2014

The image conjured by the title is of a burst of energy at the mouth of the tunnel which becomes compressed into a miniature world within the confines of the 'funnel'. Towards the end one perceives the same level of energy and variety as in the large scale once one adjusts to the change of dimension: You could call this change of state 'the light at the end of the funnel.' In fact the piece, though it ends after about 35 minutes clearly hints that this ending is arbitrary, that its trajectory continues silently, inexorably.

I've always been affected by the tunnel (and the funnel is just a more intensive version of it--or, looking at the picture, the funnel is the tunnel in perspective). An early childhood dream was of a miniature train system that ran in a tunnel within the wall beside by bed: a little door opened to it. I would open the door (in my dream) to see that all was running. I understood that I was not necessary to its continuous operation: it has a life of its own! That's how I've come to feel about the music I like best whether mine or anyone else's.

I had recently returned to New York. It was 1971 or 2. I heard from an apartment eleven floors up the sound of--what? I hadn't been in the city for an extended length of time in years. It turned out to be an ambulance siren. It's the first three different pitches in TUNNEL-FUNNEL. It was around then that the idea occurred to me of a network made from these notes, actually a whole phrase. But I put it aside for other compositions. The piece eventually grew out of two ideas: the descending harmonic progression which this phrase makes, and its expansion by two eighths at each descent. I drew this on music paper as a kind of dense network out of which much material was extracted and ordered. (Actually, the beginning of the whole piece was written last as an extended prelude.) One process was to make a single melody out of the lowest sounding note at each instant in the expanding matrix, another was to extract the highest sounding notes, another was a kind of 'cross-hatching' cutting obliquely through the texture. Another: a recurring 'chorale' or chord progression made from this texture at a slow tempo. But all of this was incidental to the somewhat messy, intuitive, constant elaboration that occupied me from about 1982 through 1985. A penciled full score was finished then. Sometime in '82 or '83 I had a discussion with a friend about whether TUNNEL-FUNNEL should be an orchestra piece or for chamber ensemble. He convinced me not to take on the alienated world of orchestral politics. This freed me to think about exactly the right instrumentation for the piece. In 1986-7 I used a computer music notation system to make the final score, extract the parts and, via an interface to digital synthesizers, make electronic demo tapes. This all took a long time, with many other pieces coming and going in between.

"It works down to the funnel...and nothing gets out--i.e., like a black hole, nothing escapes -- the micro takes over from the macro --the ear is led..."
(June 9th, 1982)

"DISSONANCE-CONSONANCE makes no difference: wave-forms can be made of both or either." (August 2, 1983).

"In order for what is 'hidden' to perception to live and really function, it must be buried within what is perceptible as order, pattern...etc.. (June 29, 1982).

A brief roadmap: The panoramic introduction ends when the trombones begin their striding, even quarter-note overlappings (the 'bass-line melody' mentioned above). Flutes coalesce around the first of several 'chorale' statements, trombones join it (all the time a steady acceleration), then strings and flutes surround the slower moving 'cross-hatching' melody, with gamelan gong-type punctuations marking the expanding phrases lengths. Brief pause. 'Frozen tunnel': overlapping chords from the main TUNNEL-FUNNEL texture. Slower tempo: the ensemble breaks into smaller groups, expansion of the performance space accompanied by lighting change, coalescing back, and into a 4-trombone call-and-response riff suggested by the ambulance-melody (see above) accompanied by the original descending harmonic progression, slowing down into the long (endless) 'light at the end of the funnel', punctuated by gamelan-style gonging once more...some new shards flicker....

41. Subject: Pina Bausch's "Kontakthof"- a reaction not a review

Too long by a lot, yet magisterial, a spectacle, with twenty-three dancers on stage much of the time. Women in ballroom solid color dresses danced either in heels or barefoot. Men were in ugly charcoal black or grey suits over white shirts with ties. Music hall, tango-ish numbers on scratchy low fidelity recordings, in German, dancers often speaking, in English, sometimes screaming, insufferable repetition of "darling" by one, overuse of the same recorded songs became finally a good move, supplemented by the "Third Man" theme, and a music-hall kind of recording of Sibelius's "Valse Triste."

Yes, "kontakt," lots of it: from curiosity, sensuality, hostility, mixtures of all, sometimes very fast transitions from one to the other, very heterosexual. Sense of discomfort, awkwardness was an affect of the dancers, a theme of the choreographer. A lot of this piece appeared in Wim Wenders wonderful documentary of the Tanztheater of Pina Bausch (who died in 2009). Typical of the company's easy-going approach to time was a line-up of all the dancers sitting in a row facing the audience each telling some personal story softly in their own language while another took the mic from to each one of all twenty-two, letting each story fall where it may in the middle. "Heavenly length?" An issue worth pursuing. In spite of the speaking, singing, screaming, no attempt to have a sculpted vocal theater like Meredith Monk's.

Big age range, it seems, in the dancers. Lots over forty and beyond.

The appropriation of everyday movements into dance is familiar to us, and I'm guessing this piece is from the '70's or so when this was happening here too. It must have been shocking to a staid German audience of the time. Yet even now, some images were frightening: a female dancer being felt, felt up, slapped, lifted, manipulated by a large group of the men dancers. With my binoculars I was able to see that it was not a smile on her face, but an open-mouthed crying. Not funny. Yet a lot of the piece was mildly parodistic, and just plain pleasant. Especially the large rings of dancers walking in time over the generous whole of the Howard Gilman Opera House at BAM.

11/3/2014

Jamie's Thrush

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Daniel Goode

① *legato sempre* 5" 3"

③ 4" 6"

⑤ 4" 4"

⑦ = 7th 4" 7"

⑧ 5" 6"

⑩ = 7th 5" 7"

1 5 9 13 17 21

Jamie's Thrush

The musical score for "Jamie's Thrush" consists of six staves of music, each starting with a measure number and a circled fingering number. The notes are written on a five-line staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1 (Measure 25): Circled 3. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 2 (Measure 29): Circled 5. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 3 (Measure 33): Circled 2. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 4 (Measure 37): Circled 6. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 5 (Measure 41): Circled 11. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 6 (Measure 45): Circled 3. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Breath mark above the final note.

Handwritten fingering numbers are circled in black ink. The notes are written in black ink on a five-line staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1 (Measure 25): Circled 3. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 2 (Measure 29): Circled 5. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 3 (Measure 33): Circled 2. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 4 (Measure 37): Circled 6. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 5 (Measure 41): Circled 11. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5. Breath mark above the final note.
- Staff 6 (Measure 45): Circled 3. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. Fingering: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Breath mark above the final note.

Jamie's Thrush

Page 3

The musical score consists of six staves of music, each with a circled number at the beginning and a measure number at the end. The staves are as follows:

- Staff 1:** Starts with a circled '1' and ends with measure 49. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.
- Staff 2:** Starts with a circled '2' and ends with measure 53. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.
- Staff 3:** Starts with a circled '3' and ends with measure 57. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.
- Staff 4:** Starts with a circled '4' and ends with measure 61. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.
- Staff 5:** Starts with a circled '5' and ends with measure 65. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.
- Staff 6:** Starts with a circled '6' and ends with measure 69. It features a melodic line with a grace note and an accent mark.

Handwritten annotations include circled numbers 1 through 9, some of which are placed above specific notes or groups of notes. Measure numbers 49, 53, 57, 61, 65, and 69 are printed at the end of each staff.

Jamie's Thrush

Musical score for Jamie's Thrush, measures 73-93. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks such as accents and slurs. Fingerings are indicated by circled numbers 1-5. Dynamic markings include accents (>) and slurs (v). The score is divided into six systems, each with a measure number at the beginning and a fingering number at the end of the system.

Measure 73: Circled 11, measure number 73, circled 4, fingering 5".

Measure 77: Circled 5, measure number 77, circled 9, fingering 6".

Measure 81: Circled 10, measure number 81, circled 1, fingering 5".

Measure 85: Circled 8, measure number 85, circled 6, fingering 5".

Measure 89: Circled 7, measure number 89, circled 4, fingering 5".

Measure 93: Circled 3, measure number 93, circled 9, fingering 6".

Jamie's Thrush

② 97 4" 7"

⑥ 101 5" 5"

⑨ 103 8" 5"

⑥ 109 8" 7"

④ 113 6" 6"

⑨ 117 5" 5"

French Arithmetic

an opera about Minimalism in one act and three scenes

by

Daniel Goode

Libretto by Daniel Goode and Ann Snitow

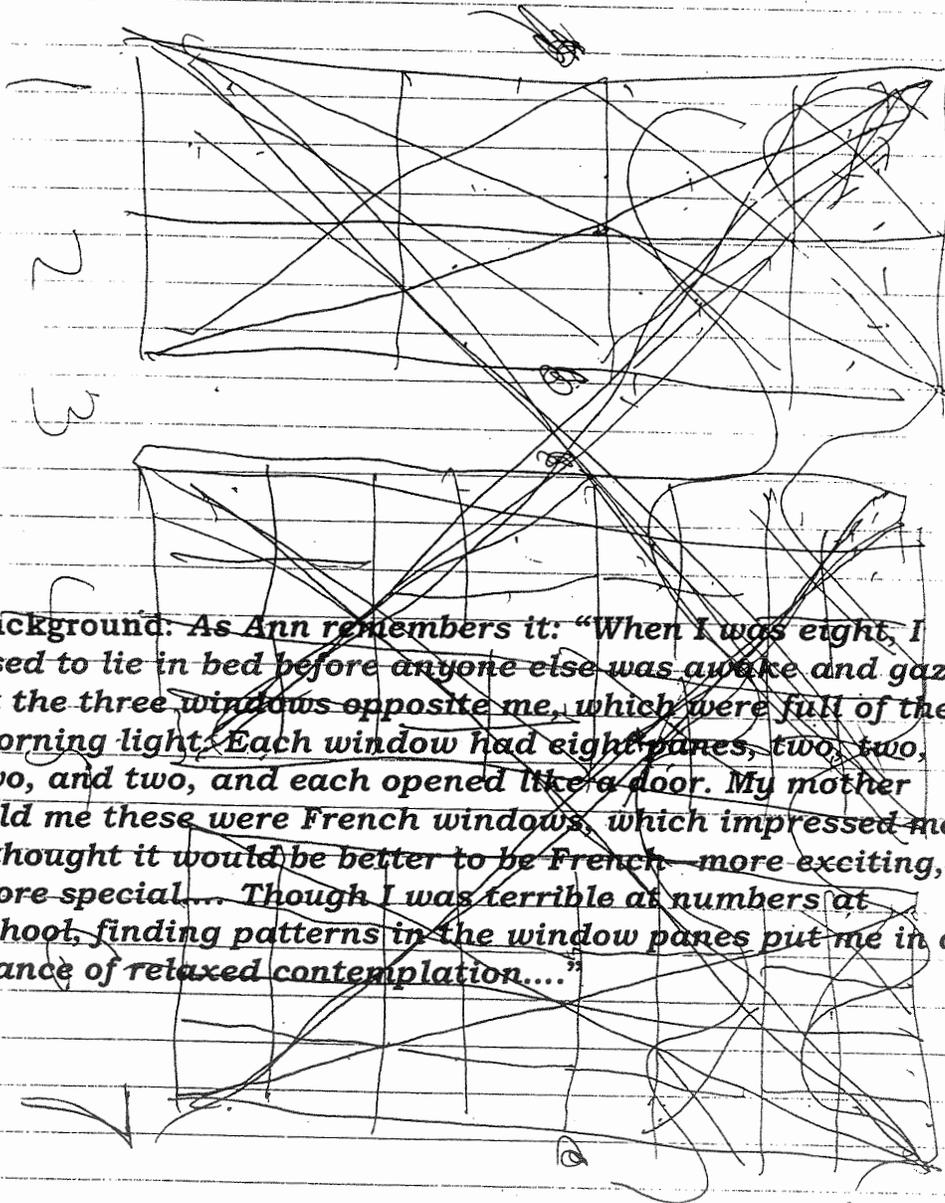
Characters:

Ann at the age of 8: soprano

Miss Wall, her Third Grade teacher: mezzo soprano

David Stigler, Ann's classmate: dancer

Ann's classmates: dancers



Background: As Ann remembers it: "When I was eight, I used to lie in bed before anyone else was awake and gaze at the three windows opposite me, which were full of the morning light. Each window had eight panes, two, two, two, and two, and each opened like a door. My mother told me these were French windows, which impressed me. I thought it would be better to be French—more exciting, more special... Though I was terrible at numbers at school, finding patterns in the window panes put me in a trance of relaxed contemplation...."

French arithmetic

42. Subject: Nielsen, McGill, the NY Phil, and the future

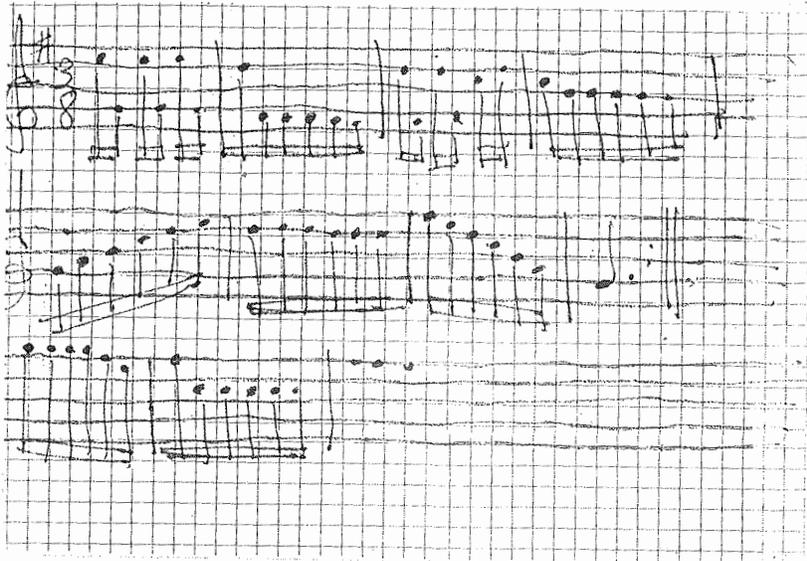
Such delicacy in the large orchestra which, incidentally, had two harps in the Ravel's Valses nobles et sentimentales, and was then chamber-sized for the Carl Nielsen Clarinet Concerto, beautifully performed by the NY Phil's Anthony McGill in this January's New York Philharmonic concert. It has fiendishly difficult cadenzas, and I've just only "played at it." His playing was exquisite, delicate, very straight, and more like a clarinet solo emerging from the orchestra's wind section than a front-and-center concerto style. Though I'd never heard a live performance of it before, I hear the concerto in a more raucous style than McGill's Mozartian sound. Nevertheless his is a valid interpretation and Nielsen is a refreshing composer—one without rhetoric who found a way of threading through 19th century symphony style into 20th century modernism, while holding on to poignant, sometimes witty, always expressive sound. Often this concerto shaped itself into treble-bass two-part counterpoint with occasional hectic fast figuration in the strings which became a texture within that frame. Shifting harmonic implications. A satisfying piece!

Delicacy was again the quality, in the Tchaikovsky suite from Swan Lake. The solo violin and harp movement, the violin and cello and harp movement, for example. Then, unexpectedly the full orchestra tutti brass-laced chords. What a sudden voluptuous, extravagant sound!... Thrilled.

The "future of the orchestra," my concern. Ever since I started playing and listening to Indonesian gamelan music, a "national" music, I've reflected on our own, Western "gamelan"—the symphony orchestra, suddenly valuing it more because it is a unique sound in world music: nothing else like it. I wonder about its ability to negotiate the poly-stylistics of all the music around us which competes for our attention, and especially that of young people. Everything is "niched." But symphony is not low-overhead, unlike gamelan, punk bands, or myself!... Also gamelan can use relatively inexperienced, or untrained musicians who can count. Only amateur choruses can do that with professional orchestras. Think symphony and then think doctor's and lawyer's training. And think ticket prices. Third tier, row DD was \$55 and the back wall was just behind me. Binoculars were glued to my face because I like to watch orchestration. [Clear throat: Ahem.] Binoculars were glued to my face, but not only because I like to "watch" the orchestration. I couldn't tell without them where the second violins and violas were placed. I'm not sure even now. I was "living to the back." (Talk to your Jewish ancestors or friends about this phrase).

Though Ravel and Nielsen are firmly 20th century composers, their roots were in the 19th, and the 19th century is still the basis of the symphony orchestra's repertoire. The kaleidoscopic variety of sound, even its wonderful excess come from that century. What of the future? The Flexible Orchestra is my commentary on the symphony orchestra, and my attempt to secure its future by trying different palettes, all firmly orchestral. But more will have to be done, imaginatively done, I suspect. And composers will have to do it. With some help. Think: copyist, parts editing, revision and recording. Think arts and market capitalism. I did. I am.

1/13/2015



from Nicaraguan book of Folkllore
a "bird" piece (S. Lagan
has book)

43. Subject: Memorial for Elaine Summers (1925-2015) at Niblock's,
NYC

d
tonight at 9
224 centre
p

Phill Niblock's email to me. The memorial was just like any other Experimental Intermedia event. The sound was too loud for my left ear. My right ear was less complaining. The audience members, some young, some not so, seemed dazed in the pleasant trance of the avant-garde. Friends gathered beforehand in Phill's kitchen, sipping wine, eating seitan, talking occasionally. I spoke separately to one or two people about how important Elaine was to me. They seemed glad to hear it.

Elaine's dance loft at 537 Broadway, 5th floor was where I did my first solo concert. Was it 1973? '75? I'll have to check. The faded flyer pops up every so often among other papers. I think the concert started at 8:30—before the standardized 8 PM had taken effect. Elaine was like an open door, encouraging me to come in, to make a piece, have an audience. Nothing like that had come my way in the New York of my birth. (Had that happened to me earlier, I might not have exiled myself from New York for ten years after graduate school.) I took her movement class, Kinetic Awareness: the body is important, pay attention! I did.

So it's all the more amazing to me that after all the years until now, the night of her memorial, I had never seen a film of hers, though I knew she was a filmmaker as well as dancer and choreographer. She didn't push them. She didn't push herself. So un-New York. It takes people not born in NY to make the city humane.

Five of her films were shown, the longest was seventeen minutes. Jerky hand-held camera in most, muted colors. A video by someone else in which she appears is mainly about Malcolm Goldstein—the shamanic violin improviser whose bright red hair, long red side-burns, pearly white skull punctuated his manic closed-eyed playing. Action-painting, but on a violin, and on the roof of her loft building. TV ariels and pipes, nearby buildings panned—hard not to say ugly. But they are, and no music can change that.

“Judson Fragments” was an interesting cross-cutting of dance moments, dancers in street clothes walking towards and away from each other (I think I recognized Simone Forti), other odd collaged images, somehow reminding me of Alain Resnais's “Last Year at Marienbad.” Not surprising. Both are in the same time capsule.

What do I come away with from the films? The grittiness, materiality of New York, not gussied up. An object is an object, neither beautiful nor ugly. Perfect fantasies of special effects are not yet in fashion. One can relax in this. Take a deep breath. Thank you, Elaine!

3/22/2015

44. Subject: Tom Johnson's Other Harmony

In spite of my continuing series of "Thumbnail Reviews," this is not a review. First because I haven't finished Tom's book yet, and second because I don't do reviews in the journalistic meaning of the word. More like: reflections.

I've known Tom since he appeared in the downtown scene of new music in the '70s around when I did, and admired his music, his theoretical approach, and his important role as a music critic for the Village Voice; his "beat" being the very downtown scene we were part of. I've performed some of his music with my Downtown Ensemble, and Flexible Orchestra. And I visited him after he had become an ex-pat in Paris in 2005, and where he has lived since leaving New York in the '80s. His habit for visitors was to offer to play you some of his "deductive music" and when he thought you had heard enough he would say something like: that's enough deductive music for today—and stop.

So this important, and I hope, controversial (index-less book), which goes "beyond tonal and atonal" music (that's his subtitle) pits once more the music as a listened-to phenomenon against the theory of music: a tradition of quasi opposition that goes back to Greek and Roman times. The most interesting of these writers are the ones who are also important composers, like Olivier Messiaen, about whose theory Tom has much—very positive—to say.

I've been ambivalent about this opposition. Partly because on one side, I contributed to a "structuralist" approach through my minimalist pieces, and through the "systems group" which we briefly had in the late '70s in New York with artists from several media, including composer, Philip Corner. Tom doesn't remember this group when I recently brought it up to him. But it was a fun and wonderful thing to have for its short life. The other side of the ambivalence comes out below.

My biggest question about the kind of structuralist approach that equates notes with numbers, is: Would any of this have happened if we didn't have discrete entities like twelve pitches to our "Western" scale? And my answer to my self is: maybe we have to have discrete numbered entities because of who (or what) we are. We are counters, enumerators, makers of discrete intellectual things, alphabetizers, and so on. But is that what music should be doing? All counting, I thought, was in the service of music, not music in the service of counting. But then Tom and Charlie Morrow did counting pieces. And they were interesting, even fascinating. Whether or not they were "music" seemed beside the point. Even when "boring."

“Equal and Complete” is one of the chapters of the book. In it he means that the system behind the notes should have equality and completeness. An example of equality might be the interval between notes of a chord, like a major 7th. Or, simply, our system of “equal temperament” whereby the distance between each note of the 12 in the octave is the same. Completeness is something like: what are all the four note chords made up of such-and-such group of notes in a scale.

So then the eternal question is: What is the purpose (and use) of music? Is it to exhibit or manifest a system or process or structure, OR to move, invite, satisfy, transport, or amuse the listener? Can it be both? Difficult, but yes, it can be. I count myself in both camps, at least for several of my pieces. Though Tom is firmly in the former, some of his earlier compositions like the Shaggy Dog Operas are in both camps. In those, the system or process was kept discretely (other meaning of that word!) behind the surface sound. And they were comedic, theatrical.

What is true of this book is that Tom Johnson has thoroughly brought the discussion up to date. Will he compose captivating music now, from the “other harmony” he’s written about? Does it have to be captivating? I would hope yes. But that’s because I like as much to be happening as possible.

6/3/2015

Musical notation for the first pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 15". The second phrase starts with a dynamic of *f* and transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 8".

Musical notation for the second pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 9". The second phrase starts with a dynamic of *f* and transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 10".

Musical notation for the third pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 7". The second phrase starts with a dynamic of *f* and transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 18".

Musical notation for the fourth pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 27". The second phrase starts with a dynamic of *f* and transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 26". The dynamic *p* is annotated with the text "(moves further away)".

Musical notation for the fifth pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 30". The second phrase starts with a dynamic of *f* and transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 30".

Musical notation for the sixth pair of phrases. The first phrase starts with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a dynamic of *f*. It transitions to a dynamic of *p*. A bracket above the notes indicates a duration of 47". The dynamic *p* is annotated with the text "(moves further away)".

45. Subject: TWO OBSERVATIONS together only because I wrote them in pencil in the end-papers of a book. (Middlemarch by George Eliot):

These wispy things—clouds—gathering around the hard geometry of the city buildings and their silhouettes. (As seen from my roof.)

Mahler 9th, first movement: The simplicity of the surface-level melody forces the increasing intensities of the orchestra counterpoint. That is, the surface melody is Mahler's "earworm?" Did he have (suffer from) them? How would we know? Just what is an earworm? If he had them, were they vernacular borrowings or original, possibly, or not (interesting—this) inspired by vernacular.

6/27/2015

46. Subject: Mahler's 8th Symphony at St. John the Divine, February 25, 2016: What was it like?

The "symphony of a thousand." At the premiere in Munich, 1910 there were apparently 1,0030, counting the conductor, Maestro Mahler. I haven't counted last night's forces, swelled by very big choruses, but it might not be a thousand, and of course it often isn't and it doesn't need to be. Punkt! Big: yes, very.

I was anxious to have Ann, my wife hear it, and though I didn't really hear it very well, even though "enhanced" by the big loud speakers a few yards from our seats, still, it communicated a great and fabulous glowing sound.

What was this Jewish composer, who converted to Catholicism before becoming artistic director of the famous Vienna Imperial Court Opera under the Hapsburg emperor, doing in setting, in Part 1 of the symphony, a ninth-century religious hymn, "Come, Creator Spirit" and in Part 2, the final scene of Goethe's two-part, "Faust" poem? Very god-infested, yes it is!—(and why that from the humanist, cosmopolitan, Goethe? I don't know.)

Well, Mahler called it an allegory of what cannot be spoken of. A good defense! He was a well-read intellectual, interested in ideas, progressive aesthetically and helpful to, for example, the young composer, Schoenberg who befriended him. That's a good story.

Back to Ann who, not knowing the music as I do, coming to the event fatigued and ready for bed, was revived and full of enthusiastic appreciation. She said: "A superfluity; staggering, complex; moments when a kind of screaming enters from the side like a blue-note."

That's a complex review, probably not what Mahler consciously intended. As Theodore Adorno says in his excellent short book, Mahler, a Musical Physiology, "Mahler was a poor yea-sayer." So the Eighth Symphony is a kind of anti-phobic answer to a difficulty in his psyche. Fine! It works and the marvelous, doleful, dark shadings, in the beginning of Part 2, and in Part 1 with the verse that begins "Infirma" —"[strengthen] our weak body"—we get the wonderful part of Mahler who can't say "yes." And we know that he continued not to say "yes" persuasively in the Ninth Symphony, some of Das Lied Von Der Erde, and the uncompleted Tenth Symphony. We don't really like false positive-ness! Quite amazing, also, that neither of these three amazing works did he hear in his lifetime.

He was obsessed with death (well documented in marginalia), and in fact, though vigorous and athletic, was struck down by endocarditis at 51, an infection of the heart, now easily treatable with antibiotics. Heart! But there was more to it. He'd lost one of his two daughters to a childhood disease. And he'd also very late in life lost his beloved Almschi to a lover, the architect, Walter Gropius. Lots to cry about. He was bereft, finally, and sick, even while conducting the New York Philharmonic and the Metropolitan Opera as a European star! At the same time composing his

Ninth and Tenth symphonies, mostly in the summer, back home in the Austrian countryside. He was recognizably “modern,” 20th Century even with his rich, opulent, essentially late 19th Century musical language (thank you, Barry Goldensohn, for this accurate adjective: opulent). So in Mahler-time, he races through a huge amount of material in an hour and a half. It’s efficient, with no lovely dallying as in the “Night Music” of the Seventh Symphony. We get to the last line of text, “the eternal feminine leads us up” sung by the Chorus Mysticus, and that’s it. Terrible pre-feminist politics: masculine is striving, ambitious, heroic; feminine is nurturing, comforting, satisfying. But hey, he sort of lost his loved one. And also, how could he contradict his beloved, German, Goethe (he hated Austrian culture, was a Germanophile)!

At the same time he suffered from the standard anti-Semitism of the time, saying that being Jewish was like going through life with one arm shorter than the other; yet having to identify with the dominant Christian culture which repeatedly hired him to more and more prestigious positions. We are luckier living among the diaspora in New York, not in Budapest and Vienna of his time.

But of the performance at St. John the Divine under its music director and organist, Kent Tritle conducting: what was it like? Well, really not very intelligible to one who knows the music. The cathedral succeeded in muddying the very precise rhythms of the excellent players from the Manhattan School of Music, and making such things as the wonderful bass pizzicati throughout the beginning of Part 2 sound like random dull thuds. A “sound-designer” failure? Probably. And what about the stridently over-amplified, over-vibrato-ed soprano soloists (google the performance for names). It’s a lingering operatic disease from Wagnerian times on: vibrato amplifies the volume of the sound for very well-documented scientific reasons. The justification used to be that the Wagnerian orchestra was always in danger of drowning out the Wagnerian sopranos and tenors. But why now! in a piece of music where Mahler’s superior orchestrational knowledge allows a less strident vocal style? No answer to this persistent question.

And what of Adorno’s disparaging and sarcastic remark about the Eighth Symphony as a “genre chef d’oeuvre?” (page 138, op. cit.) A genre masterpiece. What’s the genre? Spectacle? Conflation of religion and art? He answers: “To glorify the collective sounding through him as an absolute... That he did not resist, is his offense,” his “false consciousness.” Adorno prefers, and maybe we do too, that part of the composer that looks “questioningly into uncertainty.”

So why given Mahler’s “offense,” and that last night when we couldn’t really hear Mahler in St. John the Divine’s, did we jump to our feet at the end, clapping and cheering with tears in our eyes?

Because we knew he was there! His temporary “Yes” was our temporary Yes.

2/26/2016

WALKING PIECE

FOR THE DOUGLASS STEPS

— overlooking the Paritan River

for any no. of people

- Start anywhere on the steps, walking along the length of the step until a crack is reached; then change to one level higher or lower and continue in the same direction. Reverse directions at end of steps.
- Where a flight of smaller steps interlocks, you may change to any level of the steps and/or change directions.
- When meeting someone on your level, turn and go in opposite directions.
- The turn could be a hand shake and pivot or a square-dance-like turn or a motion of one's own devising. It could be the same motion for everyone or different.
- Variant: if the group is very large or even if it isn't, turnings could be restricted to meetings between people with the same colored shirt (or hat, or gloves)

47. Subject: Blago bung, anlogo bung, Esa-Pekka done agung!

Esa-Pekka Salonen turned the Hugo Ball poem, KARAWANA, into a huge, sumptuous, post-modern orchestra piece so very much like the huge, sumptuous MODERNist orchestra piece he just conducted by Messiaen, his Turangalila Symphony. At the Philharmonic this week and last. I went to open rehearsals both times. Wonderful experiences. But:

Somehow I'm dying from too much chocolate. And yet—the symphony is so sexy; it hardly matters whether it's sumptuous or not. It glows in the light or the dark.

So, what's to complain about? Really not much, just that the great Dada master, Hugo Ball's wonderful nonsense poem with allusions on almost every made-up word, like bung (which occurs three times in the short poem), is not really audible, intelligible in the orchestra piece, or worse, not funny in the declamatory way it is funny if you recite it yourself. Try it in the attachment I'm including.

There's nothing funny in the Messiaen piece. It's too beautiful to be funny. So, two non-funny, almost too beautiful orchestra pieces. Then there's the deflationary Hugo Ball telling you it's all bung. And he's telling you in a beautifully collaged sound-text graphic which he designed. Now we've got three beauties, and very little satire left.

But Ball will win it back from beauty once we recite his poem in our own voice. And also...let's get off it about beauty being bad for art. Not true. Even in the most mundane, unbeautiful Fluxus event, presentation can be beautiful: the toy paper boats being blown about in a tub of water. Whose beautiful piece was that, I don't remember. It might be George Brecht. Bob Watts's F/R Trace has the performer walk on stage with a French Horn, bell up. He (there was only one female Fluxus artist, Alison Knowles, with Yoko Ono a runner-up), thus he, would face the audience, bow, and out would come from the bell of the horn a myriad bunch of ping-pong balls. They would bounce and bung all over the stage, even into the audience; the sound and the sight was awesome. A one-liner. How beautiful!

So that's what was missing. We don't get it all from one artist, and that's a little complicated to take in. We assemble it from parts made by several people, including from a gigantic, gorgeous orchestra that, nevertheless...leaves something out.

3/21/2016

48. Subject: Polansky's Three Pieces for Two Pianos

It's hard to know where to start with Larry Polansky's new Three Pieces for Two Pianos. There are more than three pieces on the New World CD, and they are not all for two pianos. But let's say we start in the middle, with the third of the three pieces which Michael Winter rightly calls, in his excellent liner notes, an "epic." Or, on the other hand, let's jump in with the next track, Old Paint, a rather sad folk song that was sung to me as a child by Tony Kraber, actor and folksinger, at our school fair.

It is sung softly to us here by the young, talented pianist, Rory Cowal, too soft to hear the words, but with the slow swinging rhythm of the original which acts like a baby's crib for the song, cradling it in a bath of non-related piano tones. So beautiful! Half-way through I started to sing softly with Rory, even though I don't remember most of the words. It was more than an exercise in nostalgia—though that is the sentiment of the song about leaving a favorite horse and his home town of Cheyenne. It's a piano piece that just moves you in a slow triple rhythm.

So on to the epical third movement of the Three Pieces for Two Pianos, played by such sensitive pianists, Marilyn Nonken and Joseph Kubera. Like many of his pieces this one begins softly, poignantly, only to betray that mood gradually with an outpouring of wonderful "cacophony." Caused apparently by what I'd like to call Larry Polansky's "irrational canons." They quickly stream into a low bass-register stream, and into at least one stream in the treble range. The ear tends to simplify at least in early hearings, so I'm saying one treble stream for now. Larry has used canonic practices in many earlier pieces, typically staggering the voices' entry times so that they all end together. Here the canonic texture can only be heard as fabulous heterophony. This gluing together of tones into streams that decorate unisons into spikey non-unisons is such an important development in modernist (and beyond) music. One can't really account for much great music of our times and before without heterophony. You can get there—to heterophony—by many routes. Mike Winter, composer and liner-notes writer can help you with Larry's!

I sense that his usual canonic practice is not the case here with piece no.3, but rather there is a big bubble effect that starts at the beginning, then continues on with a maximum explosion of energy in the middle, and a soft, again poignant, ending. Not all algorithmic composers do as

Larry does, shaping the expressive output along with the notes.

The first of the three pieces starts out almost like a Chopin prelude. But overlays soon obscure a single-minded trajectory. There are dominant seventh chords, and a couple of re-beginnings. You sense that inside of the complexity there are the modules of the earlier material. Only the second of the three pieces and its following "Interlood" feel amorphous. But even here as through-out, the harmony however generated, algorithmically or otherwise, is complexly interesting, and probably immune from chord labels and any simplistic analysis.

There is more to say about the other pieces. The k-toods, for example, which for the composer is about parenting, and for the listener about a set of romps, some of which claim a kind of motoric, ostinato quality that says to me: 'I'm not a minimalist, but I can repeat and excite!' Interestingly, much of these latter pieces is based on guided improvisations. So bravo for the two players, Tobin Chodos and Ittai Rosenbaum. Both have backgrounds in improvisation and jazz. Ending the CD is an arrangement with stretched-out harmonies made from a Shaker hymn. played beautifully by Amy Beal.

So what is our conclusion—though none is needed: There is grandeur and quietness, sheer positive energy, and complexity of composition. Ives feels to me like a progenitor, but new algorithmic and compositional ideas have come since Ives. Finally one can only ask the listener to listen. And then, listen again!

5/12/2016

LEAVERAGE

Daniel Goode

modes of playing:

literalistic (down=down; flutter=flutter; time of fall=time of playing;
no.ofleaves=no.of players in 1,2,3, a heap format, etc.)

reverse literalistic (up=down; time=time but out of sync. e.g. after the fall,
one leaf falls = many play, vice versa, etc.)

indirect (use only the time frame of the fall; literalistic to one parameter but
stretched in time or condensed in time; up in direction but no other
connection; no.of players literal, other parameters indirect)

modes of leaverage (dropping leaves):

vary leaf flow: single leaves if possible
a few leaves

pauses between leaf-falls can be controlled

interact with players: e.g. let them finish a playing event before sending
more leaferage down, interrupt with some very different kind of flow (heavy
for light, single leaf for a bunch, etc.)

ending: piece is over when the bag of leaves is empty

49. Subject: NY Phil.

Last night I went to the NY Phil. Alan Gilbert conducted and was, in addressing the audience, warm and eloquent, informal and good. I'm sorry he's leaving. I went to hear the very interesting Danish composer, Per Norgard—his 8th Symphony. I found it introverted, yes interesting, but folded in on itself, not outwards like Nielsen, Mahler, Sibelius, Messiaen. I was curious also about the late Steven Stucky's Second Concerto for Orchestra. Really, it was a slam, bang, thank you ma'am kind of thing. It won him the Pulitzer, but really it was more an exercise in orchestral virtuosity than a satisfying musical experience. OK, it was entertaining listening for the next orchestral kiss! The big surprise was how wonderful I found the Boulez piece for solo cello and six cellos. It was passionate, thorny, but was one of my best Boulez experiences.

This very next day I get an email from the NY Phil asking me to take a survey about my experience. Most of the questions dealt with things like were the ushers good, was the box office courteous, was the bathroom clean, etc. Finally there was something about the repertoire and performance, both of which I gave superlative ratings. But what a weighting of the "issues!" Poor symphonies and their staffs and their needs to cater to us! I don't have any problem endorsing the symphony orchestra in spite of problematic aspects of its war-horse weighted repertory and need to have charismatic soloists who are also good looking, probably female.

It's an amazing sound, a contribution to world-sound. And the players and their ensemble can be breathtaking. No problemo!

9/22/2016

♩ = ca. 84

Flute

Musical staff for Flute, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Oboe

Musical staff for Oboe, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Clarinet

Musical staff for Clarinet, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Bassoon

Musical staff for Bassoon, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Viola

Musical staff for Viola, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Contrabass

Musical staff for Contrabass, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*. The staff contains a melodic line with various notes and rests, including a long slur over the final measures.

Percussion

Musical staff for Percussion, divided into two staves. The top staff is labeled "gongs 1-12" and the bottom staff is labeled "drums 1-12". Both staves contain rhythmic patterns with various notes and rests.

Keyboard

Musical staff for Keyboard, divided into two staves. The top staff is labeled "synthesizer gongs A" and the bottom staff is labeled "synthesizer gongs B". Both staves contain rhythmic patterns with various notes and rests, starting with a dynamic marking of *f*.

50. Subject: Thumbnail Review of an idea

When you said I am, and my Clarinet Quintet is “romantic, but that’s all right,” you raised a big issue.

There’s much more to be said about Romanticism in music and in general:

What it did is reconnect music to dance and through that to orgasm. Music was disconnected from the erotic many centuries before, leaving folk music of whatever culture to do that important job. But in classical music:

The way it worked was to bring down tempo to a “slow dance.” This is the where the erotic and orgasm can act. Fast music, like adrenal-filled mostly military music worked a different excitement. (Beethoven did this latter in certain symphonies.) Still, he’s considered the beginning of Romanticism in music. His slow movements (not the funeral march in the Eroica though) really started the slow-dance tendency. Then Wagner in Tristan which is almost orgasm on stage (though maybe not for younger generations today) pushed so far that there was no beat at all. Just rises and falls of gorgeous sound. Harmony and melody became the seductive actors. But without Beethoven and others before Wagner this wouldn’t have been possible. Brahms went there in a much purer, I feel like saying, “cleaner” way than Wagner.

The late romantics (like Mahler and Bruckner and early Schoenberg) didn’t really change any of this. Only modernism severed the erotic connection. And a parodic faux-folk like the 3-Penny Opera was the only way to go to re-capture the erotic in that period. But it’s distanced by the Brecht alienation effect. It’s also bitter and self-parodic. It’s left for the staging and acting and fleshly presence to bring out the erotic, as in any theater piece.

Unfortunately the erotic remains severed from classical music, and the new generations are right to find it elsewhere.

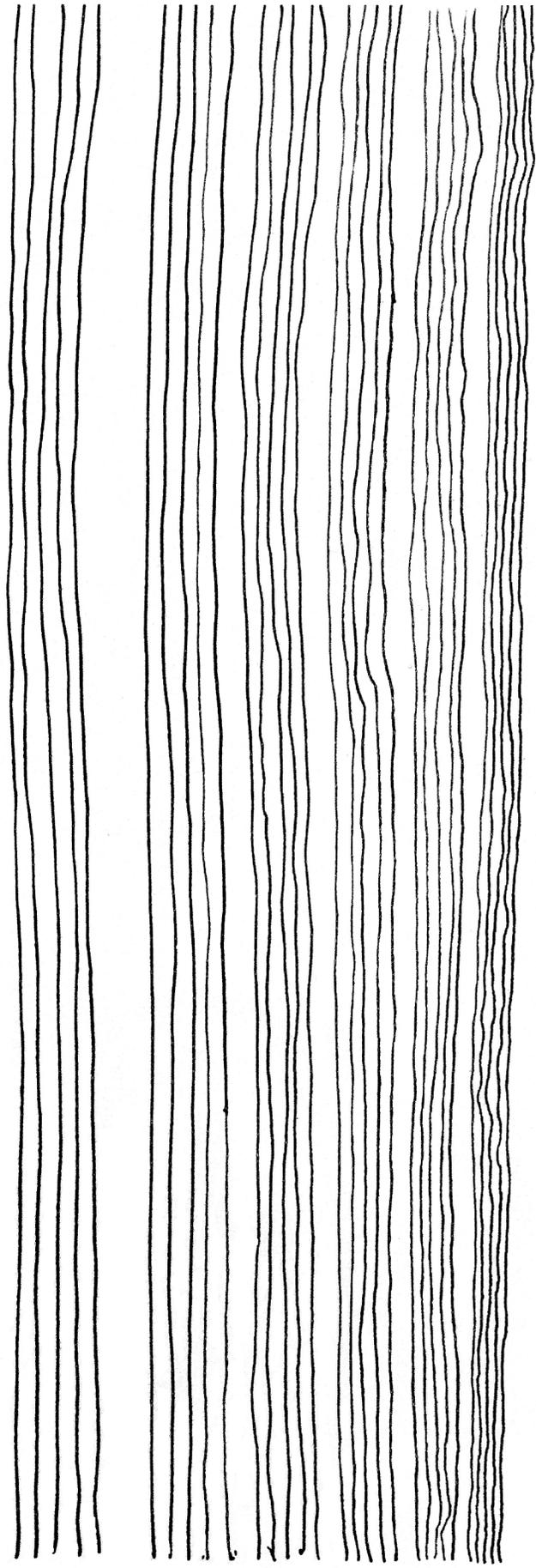
My Clarinet Quintet tries to reconnect. I don’t know if it is really possible though. Annbling, my CD, first track, also does it. I try not to feel like it’s perpetually pushing a boulder up hill. There are some late 20th Century composers, stylistically, that try: Brian Eno, Harold Budd, a few others. Mostly new music people just gave up on the idea.

P.S. for an interesting 20th Century attempt, I just heard on the air: Benjamin’s Britten early piece, “Variations on a Theme by Frank Bridge” (who was his teacher). That’s got the juice in it I’m talking about. Very few 20th Century classical pieces do. Trance-inducing is another way to get there. Some Ravel (not just Bolero) does that. So the minimalists, not all, anyway, do pick up the baton of the erotic. The rest comes from popular music. [A letter to Bob Schaffer]

11/17/2016

Symphonic Thought

I.



II.



III.

AFTERWORD

I originally called these reviews the “Roi Reviews” for Micheline Roi, the out-going editor-in-chief of the Canadian publication *Musicworks*. For this magazine with accompanying cassette or CD, in existence since the '70s, I had written some important articles over the years about my work and other American composers, plus some reviews of interesting New York festival selections.

I failed to interest the new editor in my work, wondered why they wouldn't want a “boots on the ground” experienced writer like myself to continue to tell them interesting things from our “cultural capital,” and in a rather melodramatic flourish, I decided to “go out” with a bang by writing these short, pungent, somewhat personal pieces in a white heat immediately after the events I attended. I emailed the results to the editor, but, as expected, never heard back.

Some of the broader, more culturally relevant pieces were published on the blog of Jeffrey Goldfarb of the Sociology Department at the New School for Social Research, a friend.

Nine of these thumbnail reviews were published in *The Open Space Magazine*, issue 15/16, Fall 2013/Winter 2014 with the help of Dean Rosenthal.

DSG