

# 21ST CENTURY MUSIC

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APRIL 2003

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# Lou Harrison (1917 - 2003)

## An Important Message

DONALD HARRIS

Last night, while traveling from Chicago to Columbus, Lou Harrison passed away. We had sent Adam Schweigert and Joe Panzner, two students in Composition and Theory, to Chicago with an Ohio State University van to greet Lou and his traveling companion, Todd Burlingame, and drive them back to campus for the Festival. Lou does not like to fly and took the train, the California Zephyr, from near San Francisco to Chicago. The train arrived at about 5:15 PM. While en route to Indianapolis, their overnight destination, Adam, Joe, Lou and Todd decided to stop at a Denny's restaurant in Lafayette, Indiana, for some dinner. Lou stumbled and fell upon getting out of the vehicle and apparently suffered a heart attack. He had great difficulty breathing. Paramedics were called and they arrived within minutes. Lou was transported to the hospital but was unable to be revived. He passed away around 9 or 9:30 PM. We are awaiting the coroner's report for final confirmation of the cause of death.

This is a great tragedy for the entire world of music. Lou was as excited about the OSU Festival as we were. Our sympathies go out to all in the world of music and dance who treasured his great gift. I will always remember the joy in his voice when we spoke over the telephone about the Festival. He was an active participant in planning the concerts. He had also prepared a special seminar for students in composition. He was very much looking forward to the CSO performances of his *Third Symphony* in a final revision that he had just completed. He told me how honored he felt to have so many of his compositions performed on the Festival. Let everyone know that the Festival performances will go on as planned as a tribute to this legendary American musician.

I must also at this time offer our sincere thanks to Adam and Joe. As you might imagine, they were devastated by what took place. Yet they remained calm at all times, stayed in close touch with me, and were of great comfort to Todd Burlingame. We can be proud of the way they represented Ohio State and the School of Music. Adam and Joe will return to Columbus today. When you see them, please thank them for their calm and measured reactions under such tragic circumstances.

Lou Harrison will be cremated today; his remains shipped back to California. He was eighty-five years old.

## In Memory of Lou

JOANNE D. CAREY

The passing on of Lou Harrison is indeed a sad event for all of us. I was fortunate to have been student of his when I was a graduate student at San Jose State in the early 80's. As you all know of him, he always encouraged students to follow their own muse and never to feel obligated toward theories of music that didn't resonate with their own creative flow. He had standards, but they were always musical ones.

I also played gamelan with the San Jose State group under his direction for three years or so. We did many concerts, even traveling a bit. It was a great learning experience and fun, too. We switched instruments from piece to piece, in the process learning different ornamental patterns. The one time I visited his house in Aptos in 1982, I was 8 1/2 months pregnant with my first child and we had just watched a screening of a movie of Dennis Russell Davies's wife in which our gamelan had provided the sound track. Even his house was original, on a hill in Aptos and built by himself and his partner, Bill Colvig. I regret not visiting him in recent years.

He was basically a happy person, and it was contagious. His interests were many both within music and without. He taught the first World Music course in the 70's at San Jose State, which was a breakthrough in its time. He had an impressive collection of musical instruments from around the world and art books. Also a calligrapher, he hand-wrote, in a wonderful, varied calligraphic hand, a gem of a book called *Lou Harrison's Music Primer* that was published by C.F. Peters. I have a signed first edition of this little book which he gave me hot off the press, not even bound yet.

As a tribute to Lou, I will write a percussion piece.

Parting quotes, in memory of Lou Harrison, from the *Primer*:

"The knowledge of madness (i.e., that we ARE Mad) & the Vision of Reason (imagination in the light of the former) - the one is Humor, the other is Art. These are the essentials." (p. 43)

"Someone has said that music is to be recommended because the Angels practice it" (p.48) (Now Lou can truly join forces with the Angels of which he speaks.)

"Somewhere in the world, at every minute, a Solemn Song is being sung." (p. 48)

I trust we will all add our solemn and not so solemn songs to "somewhere in the world".

# La Monte Young: Compositions 1961-

## MARK ALBURGER

Then I became interested in these chronological titles, these dating titles which I like a lot [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 70].

On January 6, 1961, I determined the concept. . . . that night I coldly wrote out the dates [La Monte Young in Kostelanetz, 204].

*Compositions 1961* was simply an absurdly logical extension of *Composition 1960, No. 10*. Young drew a straight line. And followed it. Twenty-nine times. Noting that he had completed a composition approximately once every thirteen days in 1960, Young wrote all twenty-nine *Compositions 1961*, with titles from *Composition 1961, #1 January 1st*, to *Composition 1961, #29 December 31*, well ahead of schedule, on January 6 and so dated. Coincidentally, Epiphany.

If you perform all of the 1961 compositions under the same conditions, you find that you can never draw the line the same way twice, and anytime you try to do something perfect[ly], you begin to notice all the little deviations from perfection [La Monte Young in Pelinski, 8].

*Compositions 1961* was premiered, with the assistance of Robert Morris, along with "the original" *Composition 1960 #10 ("Draw a straight line and follow it")*, at the Harvard-Radcliffe Music Club on March 31, 1961, and in New York on May 19 or 20 at Yoko Ono's loft. The Harvard and New York dates predated the "writing" of the majority of the pieces.

Nam June Paik started dropping pianos out of airplanes and so on. A number of people took up the idea. I thought it was kind of destructive, and besides, I was always into moving on to other things. . . .

I invented [a style of blues] where I'd stay on each chord, the I, then the IV back to I, then V-IV-I for as many minutes as I wanted, according to feeling [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 63].

*Young's Aeolian Blues in B-Flat with a Bridge* (summer, 1961), recorded with Terry Jennings on alto sax and Young on piano, was an extended blues work featuring changes not every one-to-four bars but rather every one-to-infinite bars with held harmonies prolonged as inspiration led. It was performed in 1968 with Young's All-Star Band.

[Jennings] improvised over a tonic drone raga-style [with] the ghost of John Coltrane [Moore, 28].

*Death Chant*, written on the death of a friend's child, is a notated piece for male voices with optional carillons or bells. The heavy, deep, regular singing relates it to Tibetan chanting [Smith, 19].

The additive process of *Death Chant* -- dated 1961 by Morgan and Smith, but 1962 in Young's manuscript and list of works -- predates Philip Glass's additive compositions of 1965 and beyond, but Young did not follow up on the consequences of the piece's possibilities. It remains, with *[X] for Henry Flynt*, one of Young's rare repetitive pulse explorations, with a steady beat, reduced pitch relations; limited dynamics / timbres / number of pitches, static texture, extensive repetition, unification of structure and form, and long compositional duration. Unlike *[X]*, but like Terry Riley's *String Quartet*, the music in excerpt is consonant, tonal -- about as stripped-down a G as one can imagine. This is a singular Young undertaking which connects up with the popular conception of repetitive minimalism, the relatively slow pulse notwithstanding. The wordless vocals and the general eastern mysticism which is suggested also seem prescient.

[*The Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Steardown Transformer*] was premiered on bowed mandolins on May 19, 1963, during a weekend frolic at George Siegel's New Jersey farm, during which Happenings czar Allan Kaprow threw Young off a hay mound where he had been playing soprano saxophone during the Happeningites' processional [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 154].

Young wrote *The Four Dreams of China* on a restaurant napkin during a cross-country trip in December of 1962. The work is for unspecified musical forces, with each performer assigned one note, and improvisation within given parameters. When the performing ensemble is made up of strings, brass, or guitars, the connection to earlier works is clear -- the triads and intervallic content of the *Dream Chords* go back to the *Trio and for Brass*.

The best known section of *Four Dreams* is *The Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Steardown Transformer*, which involves the selection of four pitches (frequency ratios are given: 36-35-32-24 and 18-17-16-12). The work was first heard on a frequency generator and, after 1969, on a Moog synthesizer. It has also been given with two violins; two violins and reader; violins, violas, mandola, and guitars; and eight trumpets (two per sustained note to facilitate breathing).

[The audience was] barely suppressing hysterical laughter [Goodman, II 15].

More than two decades later (1988) in a trumpet realization, the music was still given unfavorable reviews by critics writing positively on motoric minimalist music. A December 9, 1990 performance of *The Melodic Version of the Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer* by the Theatre of Eternal Music Brass Ensemble, conducted by Ben Neill, was released by Gramavision in 1991.

The Dream House was conceived by Young in 1962 as an

environment in which a work would be played continuously and ultimately exist in time as a "living organism with a life and tradition on its own [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 340].

This light (by Marian Zazeela) and sound environment would be a place for musicians and artists to live, work, rehearse, and perform. It would feature constant drones and periodic composite waveforms.

Blues, has for me, always represented a unique musical mode [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 274].

When I started playing soprano saxophone, I started putting a group together. Angus MacLise was playing hand drums, and Simone Forti was singing drone in the group. Then after I met Marian, she sang drone. (I met Marian on June 22nd, 1962. Or rather we got together then. I had seen her once or twice before.). The next person that joined the group was Billy Linich (now Billy Name). Later, Tony Conrad joined, and then John Cale. Meanwhile Terry Jennings would float in and out of the group as he would come to New York. And Dennis Johnson, who I had also known from California, occasionally came to New York and would perform with the group [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 240].

Inspired by Coltrane's soprano sax playing, Young turned to a higher saxophone himself. As he was already an accomplished E-flat alto sax player, Young did Coltrane one better and opted for the E-flat soprano saxophone, but the soprano sound was also inspired by South Indian flutist R. Mahalingam and North Indian shenai player Bismillah Khan.

Young formed his own ensemble, which would eventually become known as The Theatre of Eternal Music, after moving in August 1963 to a loft in the TriBeCa area of New York -- the first Dreamhouse. To Young's gong, saxophone and piano playing was added Marian Zazeela's voice and harmonium (Young and Zazeela had married on June 22), with Tony Conrad on violin and Angus MacLise on hand-drums. This group anticipated Steve Reich and Musicians and The Philip Glass Ensemble by several years. Violist John Cale first joined the group for a recording on September 29, 1963.

I joined the Theatre of Eternal Music in 1964 and subsequently met Tony Conrad and Angus MacLise. That was before we worked with amplified music. One day Tony showed up with an electronic pickup and put on his violin. Then I decided I wanted one. So we both got one and then La Monte had to play his saxophone much louder because he had something to compete with. Everyone was amazed how La Monte could play saxophone for six hours at a time. From the amplifying of the string performers, La Monte's developments in harmonic theory proceeded and eventually La Monte was forced to give up his saxophone, because the sax was not capable of being as accurate as the string instruments. . . . So La Monte gave up the sax and started singing [John Cale in Wentz, 38-39].

*B-Flat Dorian Blues* (October 19, 1963), *Early Tuesday Morning Blues* (December 23, 1963), and *Sunday Morning Blues* (January 12, 1964) are jazz-inflected works influenced by John Coltrane, and Greek, African, and Indian modes. *B-Flat Dorian Blues* features Young on soprano saxophone, Zazeela on vocal drone, Conrad on bowed guitar, Cale on viola, and MacLise on hand drums. *Early Tuesday Morning* includes only the Youngs and Cale. Rapid-fire improvisations over static chords serve to paradoxically suggest movement and stasis -- a characteristic of much later minimalist works. Young considered learning the Indian double-reed shenai, but opted for studying Indian singing techniques instead.

I developed a style of playing blues in which we would sustain the blues changes in the background for long periods of time on each change. Instead of having a certain number of beats to a bar, we would sustain the I chord indefinitely, and I would improvise over that. Then, we would move to the IV chord and then back to the I chord, and then, of course, the V chord, the IV chord, and back to the I chord. On "Early Tuesday Morning Blues," we just did it over a straight drone. And I did the whole thing over the IV chord so that I was playing a pattern that on the saxophone looks like C, G, Bb, C - - using the lower Bb and the doing the whole thing up an octave -- doing extremely fast combination / permutations just on that one chord for the entire set. That kind of playing was the precursor of the "clouds" in "The Well-Tuned Piano." And that kind of playing is also the precursor of the kind of rhythmic activity that happens in minimalism [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 243].

Cale and MacLise were at this time also members of the forerunner of the Velvet Underground (formed in 1965), variously known as the Warlocks, the Falling Spikes, and the Primitives. With the abrupt departure from both the Primitives and the proto-Theatre of Eternal Music of drummer MacLise, who left for India and Morocco on February 18, 1964, Young's music proceeded in a pulseless direction.

Despite an arrest for marijuana in 1964, Young was able to provide soundtracks for four of Andy Warhol's films: *Eat, Sleep, Haircut*, and *Kiss*, shown at the New York Film Festival (Lincoln Center, New York, September, 1964). The drone-based music was so loud that festival directors demanded the volume to be lowered.

I introduced the group to the aquarium motor I'd been running when we used to keep turtles. I put a contact mike on it, amplified it, and had Tony and John Cale tune the strings to it. . . .

Oh, it was very harmonious, so beautiful, so right, so natural, so consciousness-expanding, so much a key to the understanding of the old idea, the harmony of the universe [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 65].

*The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* (Fall, 1964 - ) was Young's major ensemble work of the late sixties, and continues intermittently to the present. It is a massive multi-sectional semi-improvisational entity, constantly evolving and never heard in its entirety. Individual sections fill entire evenings or days, and have themselves extended fanciful titles and subsections.

The first tape of *Tortoise*-like drone music, retroactively entitled *Pre-Tortoise Dream Music* was heard in private performance given for Harry Kraut of the Tanglewood Festival in 1964. Another early rendition of a section dubbed *Prelude to the Tortoise* was given on October 9 of that year at Philadelphia College of Art.

One of the strongest Mormon influences [in my music] was their doctrine of Eternal Life, life after death. They have the whole mythology outlined . . . [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 64].

Young named his ensemble The Theatre of Eternal Music in February of 1965.

The Theatre of Eternal Music may sound primordial but requires several tones of twentieth-century equipment. In the small quartet incarnation of three vocalists and violin that performed in 1966, Young, Zazeela, and Riley sang into condenser mikes, while Conrad's violin was plugged into one pre-amp and the turtle motor and sine-square wave oscillator into another. The two pre-amps and three mikes were connected to a custom mixer connected through a third pre-amp to an amplifier feeding four large Argus X 450 speakers and six Leak Sandwich speakers [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 231].

Terry Riley, who had returned to New York and joined the group late in 1964, sang with the ensemble from the time of its naming through mid-1966. The Theatre performed as far afield as Pittsburgh on October 16, 1965.

A performance of *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* in 1966 I'll never, never forget. I remember going into a three-story building and hearing one note, which you could hear all the way down in the street. You could stay on the floor where La Monte, Marian, and John Cale were playing and singing or you could go to other floors, but you had to sign a paper that said if anything happened to your mind after you left, they weren't responsible for it! Which put kind of an edge on the situation. I remember going in there having a very bad headache, staying about three or four hours, and leaving feeling wonderful. I love La Monte's music, and the visual aspects that Marian does are so beautiful [Meredith Monk in Strickland, *American Composers*, 104].

Oh, yes. In those days we were playing loud. . . . I liked to be able to go inside the world of the sound and leave the other physical reality that we normally exist in. Also, when you're working with tuning -- if you're tuning by beats -- when you amplify the tones the beats are amplified. It's like putting something under a microscope. You can hear the discrepancies in tuning even more. You can have a much finer, more precise degree of intonation because of the fact that you have amplified the frequencies [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 243-244].

Young disbanded The Theatre on August 20, 1966, after a performance at the Sundance Festival in rural Pennsylvania. Two subsections of *Tortoise* -- *Drift Studies* (1966), for electronics, and the Joycianly appellated *Map of 49's Dream the Two Systems of Eleven Sets of Galactic Intervals Ornamental Lightyears Tracery* (1966-), for voice and electronics -- did not require any larger an ensemble than Young himself.

From September of 1966 Young was able, for the first time, to have a continuous "Dream House" environment of electronic sound, which lasted, aside from a few interruptions, through January of 1970. This was a living, eating, working, sleeping environment, often turned down to very low levels of amplification, but always present.

Young performed *Map of 49's* as a solo Theatre of Eternal Music, his singing accompanied only by mounds of electronic equipment, in February 1968 at the Barbizon Plaza Theater, the second concert of the January through June Festival which Riley would close four months later at Steinway Hall with a solo *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band*.

Also in 1968, the year of Riley's recording of *In C*, Young was as well offered a contract with Columbia. David Behrman arranged to have Young sing over the sound of the ocean, but, when the company attempted to substitute another recording for Young's "live" ocean, negotiations broke down.

They even gave me an advance and recorded me, but we couldn't come to terms. . . .



I won't put out a record with anybody unless I have complete artistic control, from A to Z. Never. Under any circumstances. For any amount of money. That's it. Period. I won't do it.

I didn't go into music to earn money. I went into music because it was my life's work and I'm driven, consumed by the creative passion. It's true that I insist on earning money with my music, but I am only interested in producing great works of art. Life is too short. That's why I stopped playing in dance bands. . . . I went into music because I was drawn like iron filings to a magnet. The reason I'm here on Earth is to make music. I'm not here to make deals with Columbia Records [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 60].

Taped music from *Tortoise* was presented in November 1968, in the Yale University Pulsa group concert of four minimalists -- with Riley's *Dorian Reeds*, Steve Reich's *Melodica*, and Glass's *Strung Out*.

[O]minous, perhaps, is Young's unblushing desire to control the listener's emotions by controlling his neurological system, a matter on which he has spoken frequently and unreluctantly [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 287].

When you have a long sustained tone, you can listen to the harmonics more and isolate them and think about them [La Monte Young in Pelinski, 6]. . . . I think [*The Well-Tuned Piano* is] my most fully evolved work, if you have to choose one [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 246].

Young began *The Well-Tuned Piano* (1964-), a work in just intonation, at about the same time as *Tortoise*, shortly before Riley arrived back from Europe. Like *Tortoise*, *The Well-Tuned Piano* is an ongoing work, but for solo rather than ensemble performance.

Not only do we have Pythagoras but Indian roots. Take the tambura and the vina, the two oldest Indian instruments along with the ektar, a one-stringed instrument which may be a bit like the tromba marina. And then you have the Chinese system. Harry Partch says that in Chinese music the understanding of harmonic relationships goes back to 2800 B.C. And then we have Helmholtz's writing, Harry Partch, Lou Harrison, Ben Johnston, and so forth. Terry Jennings had told me about the Indian flute players he'd heard at UCLA listening to harmonics. When Tony Conrad was playing in the Theatre of Eternal Music -- he was a mathematician and one day pointed out to me how with the integers you could basically understand and manipulate the overtone series. Then I just took off. I just sailed into just intonation and in 1964 I returned the piano for the first tape version of *The Well-Tuned Piano* [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 65].

By *The Well-Tuned Piano*'s first provisional completion -- a finished tape on June 8, 1964 -- Riley had been back in California for several months. But this improvised ongoing work's evolution has been heavily influenced by Pandit Pran Nath, a master of the Kirana style of raga singing, whom Young and Riley met in 1970 and studied with until the singer's death in 1996.

I really consider Pandit Pran Nath the greatest living musician of our time. . . . [T]he science of this vast subject of Indian classical music is something that I find extremely educational, and it's something that is inspirational toward my own work in musical composition. So that, while I'm a student of Pandit Pran Nath in Indian classical music and he's my spiritual teacher, I've also gained rewards in my own musical composition, which he doesn't try to teach me. . . . [H]e never ever said "boo" to me about *The Well-Tuned Piano*. . . . But my performance of *The Well-Tuned Piano* was enormously transformed over the years that I studied with him. . . . As a result of my immersion in alapa, and that approach toward improvisational structure, I began to improvise in that way -- that's the way I'm improvising in *The Well-Tuned Piano* -- so that everything unfolds out of the very first note [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 251-252].

Young's first live performances of *The Well-Tuned Piano* were on a custom-made Bösendorfer in 1974 at an East-West Festival at the Galleria L'Attico in Rome. On June 4, 1974, encouraged by Young's Indian singing instructor Pandit Pran Nath, the composer sang while performing *The Well-Tuned Piano* in its second live performance. Custom Bösendorfers have been used in all of Young's subsequent performances -- the first, initially shipped to America from Italy, and a second, which utilizes an additional bass octave. The American live premiere performances were in New York at the Dia Foundation in April and May of 1975.

When I sit down to play *The Well-Tuned Piano* I basically pray that I can become the servant of this source of information that comes through me that I will be able to realize it in the most pure and direct way, and that I will be able to have the energy and strength to perform what comes to me [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 65].

A complete recording of a live version of *The Well-Tuned Piano* on October 25, 1981 -- Young's fifty-fifth performance of the work and "The best I'd ever played to that day" -- was issued as five discs by Gramavision in 1988. The 1964 provisional tape lasted forty-five minutes. When Young performed the work live in the mid-seventies, an average performance would last three or four hours. The Gramavision version runs just over five hours, whereas the seven renditions at the Dia Art Foundation's 1987 thirty-year retrospective on consecutive Sundays beginning on March 29 lasted even longer, with the last clocking in at six hours and twenty-four minutes.

These recorded durations follow an opposite trend from Reich's *Drumming*, where each of three recordings became progressively shorter. But how does it feel to sit at the justly-tuned piano for six hours and twenty four minutes? How does it sound? What does it mean?

Wonderful. Absolutely fantastic. It's one of the most elating experiences . . . I give myself up to the piece - - you have to understand this! The piece carries me to the highest state of meditation [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 66].

. . . a cosmic overview of life's tragedy . . . In the end the whole piece comes down to two things, the single notes and the clouds. Only La Monte could get away with that! [Terry Riley in Rich, 58].

*The Well-Tuned Piano*, with perhaps the most pretentious title in music history, is one of grace and intermittent power [Page, 65].

It sounds out of tune, totally, doesn't it? . . . I don't hear that way. . . . I am very poor at hearing intonation, so when I hear his music, it just sounds out of tune to me [Philip Glass in Suzuki, 248].

George [Maciunas] hired me to conduct a concert at Carnegie Recital Hall. And the deal was, I wouldn't play unless I got paid, I wouldn't conduct unless I got paid, and I wouldn't have a piece on the program unless I got paid. So the composition that I wrote for that occasion was "Composition 1965 \$50." The way that was performed was that George would come in from the curtains on one side of the stage, and I would come in from the other side. We would walk to the center of the stage, and he would hand me the envelope with fifty dollars in it. Then we would shake hands and go off, and that was that. . . .

I began calling the performance of [*Map of 49's Dream*] *Dream House* when it took on these following characteristics: it took place in a sound and light environment, and it took place over an extended period of time. (The earlier *Tortoise* performances were always just one-night stands.). Then, we began to call Harrison Street a "Dream House," even though we weren't performing *Map of 49's Dream* in it. *Map of 49's Dream* had become the subject matter of all of the model *Dream Houses* that we had been doing as one-week and two-week performances. We even did a ninety-day *Dream House* at Documenta 5 in Kassel, where the group performed every day for a week, but then the tones ran for ninety days [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 238, 253]

The *Tortoise* section *Map of 49's Dream the Two Systems of Eleven Sets of Galactic Intervals Ornamental Lightyears Tracery* (1966-) was given in the first public *Dream House* at Galerie Heiner Friedrich (owned by a board member of the Dia Foundation), Munich, in 1969.

Trumpeter Jon Hassell performed with a resurrected Theatre of Eternal Music for a time, and, during an April 28-May 5, 1974 *Dream House* at the Kitchen presented his own music one night.

It was during this period that New York Times critic and fellow minimalist composer Tom Johnson objected to the religious aura surrounding Young's performances and the undeniably ritualistic element of Young's obliging his audience to remove their shoes before entering the space [Johnson, II 13]. Perhaps due to the constant *Dream House* drones, Young experienced a rock-and-roller's loss of hearing.

Not too long ago [1975] Young kept a constant sine-wave drone going in the loft 24 hours a day, for weeks and months at a time, boosted to a volume most visitors found decidedly uncomfortable [Palmer, 24].

Apparently, my hearing loss is inherited. I tried to convince the hearing doctor that it was an occupational hazard and I had ruined my hearing by listening to loud sounds. But he just would not buy it. He said my hearing graph is typical congenital hearing-loss chart. . . . It became dramatic in 1974, when we went to Rome to do *The Well-Tuned Piano*. . . . It seems like it may be getting worse. . . . But I have a pretty positive outlook; I don't let it depress me. I mean, it really concerns me, but the other side of the coin is it's very peaceful when you take off the hearing aid. It's really nice, you know. There's a lot of noise going on out there [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 264-265].

The longest continual *Dream House* ran from June 1979 to May 1985 at the Dia Art Foundation's 6 Harrison Street building. The electronic drones were continuous, although often turned down below the range of audibility. Young and Zazeela were devastated when the funding was pulled from the project.

Oh, it was worse than shocked. We were demolished. The problem was that we had worked on the project as if it would be permanent. We'd been given to understand it would. We even had the word "permanent" in our contract [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 254].

The Theatre of Eternal Music experienced another hiatus between 1975-1990, when it was reincarnated in March as the Theatre of Eternal Music Big Band, consisting of a whopping twenty-three members.

In his drone period Young did not abandon blues entirely. One technique of his Dream House installations entailed tuning his sine-wave generators to blues frequencies, one day per measure, resulting not in twelve-bar but in twelve-day blues. In 1991, in fact, thirty years after beginning his blues experiments, he went back to the twelve-bar format to record the 58-minute Young's *Dorian Blues in A*, leading an electric quartet on a synthesizer programmed to simulate barrelhouse piano. It was tersely described by blues scholar Robert Palmer: "funky." After a successful European tour, the Forever Bad Blues Band returned home in 1993 to standing-room-only crowds at the Kitchen [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 152].

The title, *Chronos Kristalla (Time Crystals)*, refers to images of time because of the unique setting of the structure of the work in time, and to crystal because of the pure crystalline sound of the harmonics, as well as to the relationship of time and frequency to crystals, as in clock crystals.

*Chronos Kristalla* is unique in the genre of string quartets in that it is the only work composed entirely of natural harmonics that is also designed to allow the harmonics to be perfectly in tune according to the whole number ratios of the system of Just Intonation. The eight pitches of "The Magic Chord," from which *Chronos Kristalla* is composed, all exist as natural harmonics of the open strings of a string quartet [Young, Program Notes, 33].

*Chronos Kristalla (Time Crystals)* from *The Magic Chord x 4* was composed in 1990 and premiered at the New Music America / Montreal Festival. It reflects the ongoing influence of gagaku, in sho-like sustains, and his early *String Trio*, in the extremities of held notes and silence. It was revived wondrously by the Kronos Quartet on November 24, 1996, at Berkeley's Hertz Hall, with the Cagean ambience of lighting design by Marian Zazeela, who was in attendance with the composer as part of the third Other Minds Festival.

A slow, almost imperceptible high cello is joined by sustained fragments of viola, a perfect fifth above. The cello drones to an upper chromatic neighbor as the first violin enters a fifth above the viola. The influence of alapa is evident in the gradual unfolding, where finally the second violin begins in an increasingly active role.

Is this La Monte Young the source of Feldman's late extended sensibilities? The colors and quietude -- to George Lewis's *Endless Shout*, here is an endless whisper -- beautifully committed and engaging, with a contemplative quality not unlike Quakerism or Zen, and utterly distinctive in its rhythmic details, characteristic tuning, and weak, spindly, raspidor timbres.

While the music is an endurance contest for performers and listeners, distinct motivic associations do emerge, such as a rise of a perfect fifth, followed by a descent of a major second (i.e. the relationships of fifths and fourths). Young achieves here, as in *String Trio*, a strong classical sense of balance in both large-scale architecture and small-scale details. There is a refinement non-dramatic yet deftly moving, a formal scheme non-developmental yet changing -- no drama and noh drama. The players achieve a unison of long sustains and the harmonics bounce around unstably into protracted silence. In a sense, the work is a long trope on "Composition 1960 #7." It obliges an audience to listen to one extended, multi-faceted chord until one long second violin sustain and its over. It does not feel like 75 minutes.

But, like Young's career, what remarkable events have transpired.

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# Concert Reviews

## Symphonies from Symphony

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony in Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1* ("Classical") and Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8*. February 6, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through February 8.

These days, it's not often that one goes to the Symphony and hears virtually nothing but symphonies, but such was the case this past week (February 6-8) when Mstislav Rostropovich conducted the San Francisco Symphony in symphonies by Sergei Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich.

It was not to have been. The program billed a major work by Henri Dutilleux, which evidently was shelved due to lack of rehearsal time. Instead, after a very brief curtain raiser by the same composer ushered in an 11th-hour reading of Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1* ("Classical") which still manifested charm and elan, despite relatively slow tempi and a rather ponderous rendition of the witty third-movement scherzo.

The main bill was the Shostakovich *Symphony No. 8*, where ponderousness, not to mention portentousness and pomposity were the welcome order of the evening. The late soviet modeled the first movement of this work somewhat along the lines of a combo plate of his previous fifth and sixth symphonic endeavors, the former for structure and the latter for length -- and in all there is a Russian mid-20th-century updating of Gustav Mahler. Like the *Symphony No. 5*, this later work has a dotted introductory figure; a mysterious descending first theme for first violins; a lyrical second melody (also violins) accompanied by pulsating drone figures in low strings; and an actively elaborate development for the full orchestra. It still sounds a bit like a TV episode blown up into a movie, but it is not without interest to dedicated listeners.

The second and third movements are both parodies, and here Rostropovich's heavy-handedness served in good stead. Brutal triads and shrieks capture the tone of Shostakovich's depiction of hells both personal and political, and there is a certain testosterone-addled sensibility that is impressively relentless. It all makes sense in an alternate-universe sort of way. So does the somber passacaglia of the ensuing section and the blithely out-of-touch finale, which seems to whistle in the dark (as Mahler also did at times) against the raging atrocities of fortune.

All in all, Slava, the boisterous cellist-turned-conductor, made a good showing with repertory from the old regime. Despite the commonalities seemingly implied by two symphonies by two mid-20th-century Russians, there was plenty of variety and interest.

## Pleasant/Unpleasant NOW

SALLY JOHNSON

NOW Music Festival. February 22, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA.

The Now Music Festival presented a marathon concert at Diablo Valley College on February 22. This concert was an offshoot of a composer's consortium usually performing at Goat Hall in San Francisco.

Compositions by three DVC professors participating in this concert were among the most musical sounds of the selections heard. It definitely was a marathon concert, lasting somewhere near four-and-half hours. Much of that time was spent by avant-garde composers experimenting with strange sounds. Some of the electronic offerings were aurally uncomfortable and intellectually irritating. I would rather listen to a jackhammer duet -- at least they take a break between jolts while doing a necessary job.

*New Work* by tuba player Tom Heasley was interesting and actually eerily beautiful at times. He made his tuba sound like whale songs with waves of sounds, not usually associated with music as I know it, flowing from his instrument.

*They're Gone*, a jazz saxophone piece written by Rory Snyder as a tribute to his parents, stood apart as a complete and perfected work. Nothing experimental or chancy here-- just elegant jazz statement, with terrific piano accompaniment. The melodic phrasing stating and re-stating the two note theme, *They're Gone*, is hauntingly still with me.

Owen Lee's piece, *Nocturne: Waiting in the night*, was amorphous, floating, curious -- defying consistent key or meter, but still holding together as a whole statement of delicate anticipation and resolution.

Mark Alburger, as expected, turned funny, exotic, taboo, yet important lyrics into first rate opera. Harriet March Page delivered a professional rendition of three songs dealing with the theme of incest. The music was exciting, energetic, and harmonically clever.

It was a treat to hear the Cypress Quartet play not particularly memorable music, but with such expert facility and technique, that one could enjoy the moment for its expression and expertise.

The music department provided a great stage for the Festival. It provided an intimate venue for interaction between composers, musicians and audience, and had an informality that allowed everyone involved to feel relaxed and receptive.

# Chronicle

February 2

Death of Lou Harrison (b. 5/14/1917, Portland, OR), of an apparent heart attack, Denny's, Lafayette, IN. "[He was] founder of the American gamelan movement and a leading exemplar of the marriage of Asian and Western music. . . . [H]e [was] cremated in Indiana, said Eva Soltes, an arts producer long associated with Mr. Harrison who had been videotaping him for two decades. Mr. Harrison was en route to a festival of his music at Ohio State University. He was accompanied by his companion and only survivor, Todd Burlingame, and two Ohio State music students. Mr. Harrison's primary contribution to Western music, aside from the sheer beauty of his works, was his wide-ranging, deeply felt connection to the musics of non-Western cultures, Asian especially. He studied in Taiwan and South Korea and was deeply immersed in Javanese music. He built several gamelans, or Indonesian percussion orchestras, spawning a movement that spread through North America (there are some 200 ensembles built in direct emulation of Mr. Harrison's). . . . His own music ranged with a giddy indifference to musical polemics, from Serialism to folkish tonality in the manner of Aaron Copland to Ivesian collage to percussion, along with the many pieces for non-Western instruments. He prized just intonation . . . . He sought universal peace and brotherhood, writing or titling several of his works in Esperanto. . . . In his instrument-building he was abetted by William Colvig, a craftsman who died in 2000 after 33 years as Harrison's companion. Colvig also helped design a house of straw bales in Joshua Tree, in the . . . Mojave Desert, which Mr. Harrison used as a studio in recent years and offered as a retreat to other artists. Personally, Mr. Harrison was warm and embracing, beloved by his many friends. Of a generation of homosexuals who often sought to mask their preferences, Mr. Harrison was an outspoken gay, marching annually and happily in the San Francisco gay pride parade. One of his last projects was the expansion, commissioned by the Lincoln Center Festival, of his 1971 puppet opera with chamber ensemble of Asian instruments called *Young Caesar* (his spelling) into a full-scale opera. He called *Young Caesar* 'the only opera with an overtly presented gay subject from history,' in the composer Ned Rorem's words in *The Grove Dictionary of Opera*. . . . He studied in San Francisco with Henry Cowell . . . and Arnold Schoenberg in Los Angeles, where he organized concerts of percussion music with John Cage. On the side he worked as a florist, record clerk, poet, dancer, dance critic, music copyist and playwright. Moving to New York in 1943, he fell into the circle of the composer and critic Virgil Thomson, although the influence of Thomson's music was less marked than Thomson's personage and patronage. Mr. Harrison wrote music criticism (including a stint in Thomason's collection of composer-critics at *The New York Herald Tribune*), and prepared and conducted the first performance of . . . Charles Ives[s] *Third [Symphony]* in 1947. But the atmosphere of New York and his life there proved stressful, and eventually the lure of the West Coast and its position on the Pacific Rim reclaimed him. He settled in Aptos . . .

For a while he survived on the occasional grant and odd job, including a three-year period working by day in an animal hospital and composing by night. Gradually, however, teaching jobs came his way -- various visiting professorships and more extended positions at San Jose State University and, after 1980, Mills College. . . . In 1995 he composed *Parade for MTT*, the first work conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas as music director of the San Francisco Symphony" [John Rockwell, *The New York Times*, 2/4/03]. "Lou provided a model of expressivity and sheer beauty" [John Adams, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/4/03]. "This was an irreplaceable guy" [Charles Amirkhanian, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/4/03]. "By the time he graduated from Burlingame High School in 1934, he said, he had attended 18 different schools, 'so I never really put down roots or had a peer group.' He studied briefly at San Francisco State University, then began private lessons with Cowell. . . . Cowell also introduced him to Cage, who would be a lifelong friend and artistic collaborator. After a brief stint at UCLA, where he enrolled in Arnold Schoenberg's composition seminar, Mr. Harrison moved to New York in 1943. . . . But Mr. Harrison found New York life too stressful, and after a two-year teaching engagement at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, he settled in Aptos for good in 1953. In subsequent years, he taught at Stanford University, San Jose State University, Cabrillo College and Mills College. In 1963, he was one of the founders of the Cabrillo Music Festival, which continues as an annual celebration of new music. In recent years, Mr. Harrison's music was a frequent feature of San Francisco Symphony programs, with the composer himself, in his trademark red flannel shirt and snow-white beard, beaming from loge box. In addition to *A Parade for M.T.T.*, premiered in 1995, the Symphony has performed the *Third Symphony*, the *Canticle No. 3*, and the *Organ Concerto*. His music is amply represented on the San Francisco record label New Albion" [Joshua Kosman, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/4/03]. "He was just such a great friend to music, to our planet and to everybody. . . . We're going to miss him greatly" [Michael Tilson Thomas, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 2/4/03].

February 4

Death of Jerome Hines (b. 11/8/21, Los Angeles, CA), at 81. Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, NY. "[He was] a bass whose performing career spanned six decades -- including 41 years as a mainstay of the Metropolitan Opera, where he had the longest career of any principal singer in the company's history. . . . All told, he gave 868 performances at the Met, and after his retirement in 1987 he continued to sing with regional opera companies, in recital and at benefit concerts, including several performances last year. At a height of 6 feet 6 inches and with an athletic build that he kept trim throughout his career, he towered over other singers on the stage. He was also a colorful character, even by operatic standards.

In the mid-1950's, he became a born-again Christian, and made his faith the center of his life and work, noting in interviews that at the Met in those years, he was 'like a square peg in a round hole because of my beliefs.' Perhaps to contrast with the repertory of scoundrels and pagan gods he so often portrayed, Mr. Hines composed an opera of his own, *I Am the Way*, about the life of Jesus, in which he sang the title role. The work was performed at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1968, and Mr. Hines sang it 93 times around the world, including a performance at the Bolshoi in Moscow. . . . Before his singing career took off, he worked briefly as a chemist, but . . . [his] appearance in *H.M.S. Pinafore* with a small California company in 1940 led to a debut at the San Francisco Opera (as Monterone in *Rigoletto*) in 1941 . . . The impresario Sol Hurok became his manager, and persuaded him to change the spelling of his family name from Heinz to the Americanized Hines during the 1940's, to avoid any potential anti-German sentiment. In 1946 he made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Officer in *Boris Godunov*, eventually moving to . . . Boris, which he told interviewers was his favorite role. At the Met Mr. Hines held the record for performances of several roles, including Sarastro in Mozart's *Zauberflöte* (55) and Ramfis in *Aida* (104). He also established his European career in the early 1950's with celebrated performances of Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress* at Glyndebourne" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 2/5/03].

February 6

Ethel in music of Julia Wolfe and John Zorn. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Frederick Rzewski performs the first two parts ("miles") of the 8-part/mile *The Road*, on a double bill with Kathleen Supové playing music of Carolyn Yarnell and Randall Woolf. Kitchen, New York, NY. "Rzewski's first moves at the Kitchen . . . were to sit down on the piano bench, put on his glasses and look uncomfortable, to get up and stand in front of the piano, cock an ear and then ask rather firmly that the fan, which was basically undetectable be turned off. It was. The ambience improved, and the room was prepared for his obdurate and sometimes beautiful new music. . . . *The Road* . . . was written in eight sections, stretched across a six-concert series, on double bills with other pianists. . . . *The Road* is a cross between a travelogue, in that each of the eight sections is broken up into eight "miles," and a novel, in that it is music ideally to be "read" (or performed) at home. . . . *The Road* doesn't contain much lush piano music. The best part of *The Road*, at least the beginning of it, is how close it takes you to the difficult act of creation. . . . at one point, rather than play the keyboard, Mr. Rzewski knocked out a rhythmic pattern on the sides and top of the piano, and at another point he whopped the bottom of it. An echo of the ballad "900 Miles" drifted up without much fanfare: according to the program, we were now in Part 2. . . . Supové spread enough personality around in her opening set.

Wearing a leather halter top and a cerise wig, she made vague, honest-ironic outbursts on the microphone ("You know, it's all about me"), played a cloying bucolic piece by . . . Yarnell and then interacted with a piece by . . . Woolf" [Ben Ratliff, The New York Times, 2/11/03].

San Francisco Symphony in Sergei Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 1* ("Classical") and Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 8*. Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA. Through February 8.

February 7

Merce Cunningham Dance Company celebrates its 50th anniversary. Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, CA.

February 8

*Composer Portrait: Huang Ruo*. Miller Theatre, Columbia University, New York, NY.

February 13

Charles Neidich performs the original version (thanks to researching the manuscript at the Library of Congress) of Aaron Copland's "Clarinet Concerto" with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "When . . . Copland wrote his . . . Concerto for Benny Goodman in 1948, it was considered suitably dazzling; in fact, Copland was told that parts of it made the clarinet play either too fast or too high, so he revised the score before it was published. . . . The differences aren't vast: the cadenza, the coda and a few other passages have figuration that Copland either softened or distributed to other instruments. Mr. Neidich sailed through the high-flying passages without much strain" [Allan Kozinn, The New York Times, 2/18/03].

February 19

Death of Johnny Paycheck (b. Donald Eugene Lyle, Greenfield, OH), of respiratory failure, at 64. Nashville, TN. "In 1977 he recorded the song "Take This Job and Shove It," written by [David Allan] Coe, and it became a national anthem of working-class resentment, staying at the top of the country charts for two weeks. . . . His name, changed legally in 1963, was borrowed from a heavy-weight boxer who was knocked out in two rounds by Joe Louis in 1940. In the mid-1990's he began capitalizing the C." [Ben Ratliff, The New York Times, 2/20/03].

February 22

*Now Music Festival.* John Hersh's *Sonata No. 2* (with Patti Deuter), Mark Applebaum's *Tlon*, Tom Heasley's *New Work*, Owen J. Lee's *Nocturne: Waiting in the Night*, Mark Alburger's *Cats, Dogs, and Divas* (Harriet March Page), and music of Laurie Amat, D'Arcy Reynolds, Brian Belet, Jim McManus, Bruce Christian Bennett, Michael Cooke, Gary Friedman, Jim Hearon, Hubert Ho, Daniel Asia, Dan Coleman, Benjamin Lees, Shaun Naidoo, Julian White, Denise Matzion, Yuan-Mei Chou, Rory Snyder, and Frederic Zimmerman. Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA.

February 23

Death of Tom[as Zachariah] Glazer (b. 9/2/14, Philadelphia, PA), at 88. Philadelphia, PA. "[He was] a folk singer and songwriter best known for his whimsical children's songs -- particularly one about a mountain of spaghetti. . . . Along with Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, Josh White and Burl Ives, Mr. Glazer was a Big City folk singer, one of a loose coalition of performers who made folk music a national phenomenon in the 1940's, presaging its commercial popularity in the 19650's. Pete Seeger, a member of the group, remembered Mr. Glazer . . . as a solid performer who worked well with entertainers of different styles and political beliefs. . . . As well as performing and recording, Mr. Glazer wrote books, most about music; composed songs recorded by Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and the Kingston Trio; and was the host of music programs on New York radio stations. But his best-remembered achievement -- though not Mr. Glazer's favorite - - was writing "On Top of Spaghetti," a hit novelty song in 1963. Sung to the tune of "On Top of Old Smoky," it featured a chorus of children singing lines like "On top of spaghetti all covered with cheese." A wayward meatball is the star. . . . His father, Jacob, left Russia for the United States to avoid the draft. . . . His song "Talking Inflation Blues" was recorded by Bob Dylan on his "Minnesota Party Tape" in 1960" [Douglas Martin, *The New York Times*, 2/26/03]

February 24

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in *Music for the Spirit*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA..

February 27

Death of Fred ("Mister") Rodgers, of stomach cancer, at 74. Pittsburgh, PA. "His guests included] cellist Yo-Yo Ma and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis" [San Francisco Chronicle, 2/28/02].

## Writers

MARK ALBURGER is an eclectic American composer of postminimal, postpopular, and postcomedic sensibilities. He is Editor-Publisher of 21ST-CENTURY MUSIC, an award-winning ASCAP composer of concert music published by New Music, oboist, pianist, vocalist, recording artist, musicologist, author, and music critic. His *Antigone Overture* will be performed on April 5 by the San Francisco Composers Chamber Orchestra.

JOANNE D. CAREY holds a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Music Composition from San Jose State University, where she studied with Allen Strange and Lou Harrison. A guest composer at the Center for Computer Research in Music and Acoustics (CCRMA, Stanford University) since 1983, she lives in Palo Alto with her husband and two children. In addition to composing, she has collaborated with composer-inventor Max Mathews on the development of new improvisation programs for his radio-baton. Ms. Carey has composed three computer-generated tape pieces at CCRMA. Two of these, *Clouds' Lament* (1988) and *Intonations of the Wind* (1990) are based on FM synthesis of singing tones. Her recent work has focused on pieces using radio-baton with live soloists. These include a song cycle, *Three Spanish Songs* and a recently-finished piece for flute and radio-baton. The *Three Spanish Songs* have been performed at the 1995 Society of Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States conference in Ithaca, New York, as well as in San Jose (1995) and Guanajuato, Mexico (1996).

DONALD HARRIS is Professor of Composition and Theory in the School of Music at The Ohio State University.

SALLY JOHNSON is a Bay Area composer, trumpeter, and writer on music.