

MUSIC PROGRAM ZERO:
A SAMPLER OF PROJECTS
1980-1989

-FORMING XIV

This semester is to initiate a critical, analytic study of interpersonal, interactive, expressive thought and practice, including extensive reading and discussion followed by realtime collaborations in investigative (improvisational and compositional) projects designed to promote experiential substance as matter for subsequent further critical reflection. Writing and other articulate formulations (apart from audio and video documentation of sessions) of issues, insights, and proposals emerging from these pursuits should be a regular outcome. Readings are in the line of critical-analytic inquiries into conventional thoughts, attitudes, assumptions, and practices in intellectual, political, scientific, artistic social contexts. Some probable texts: Artaud's *The Theater and its Double*, Canetti's *Crowds and Power*, Schneiderman's *Jacques Lacan: Death of an Intellectual Hero*, Koestler's *The Case of the Midwife Toad*, Llosa's *The War of the End of the World*, Boretz's *If I am a musical thinker....* Participants are welcomed from a diversity of backgrounds and interests; diversity of home-base media is an intensely desired composition of this population.

STUDY & PRACTICE: INVENTING MUSIC

This workshop exists as a laboratory to enable its participants to create a workable and meaningful first music-learning context in a communal environment of direct, practical musicmaking activity, primarily consisting of composing, playing, and listening. An essential objective of the workshop is the derivation of music-learning objectives and strategies out of each participant's existing musical intuitions, common sense, and prior experience. Open to students with a substantial investment in a creative musical future, whatever the contents of their previous experience.

INVENTING AND PRESENTING

Composing, improvising, experimenting with music, paramusic, and extensions of music through other expressive languages (as, visual, verbal, gestural) are activities engaged in this workshop under the principle that the senses of diverse expressive inventions are inseparable from the context of their presentation, from, that is, their relevant social interfaces. So the appropriate design of modes, occasions, and environments of presentation is a principal topic of discussion and analysis as well as a primary objective of the projects undertaken by the members of this group. The Equinox Festival of Sound and Space, and the SOUNDSPACES project, both consisting of the creation of optimum total listening environments for specific musics, were inventions of this workshop.

CLOSE READINGS OF MUSICS

This group encounters a limited but diverse collection of music artifacts, phenomena, documents, "reading" them closely in depth and detail to derive, from the observable sonic and behavioral characteristics of each music, a relevant context for listening to it so as to be able to hear the particular sense it makes. Items are drawn from a wide range of cultures and times, emphasizing issues of especial relevance to ourselves and to the expressive predicaments confronted within our culture.

BACKGROUNDS TO THE PRESENT: MUSIC OF THE WORLD, 1880-1980
(4 semesters)

Here is initiated an intensive encounter with the sounds, conceptions, and behaviors which articulate the history of sound expression in the world's cultures during the last century. A principal thesis of this project is that the evolution of sound-expressive behavior within any single culture during this period is comprehensible only as the product of the massive intercultural confrontation which has been taking place during this same time. East-West, black-white, urban-rural, high art-vernacular, sacred-secular, top dog-underdog, America-Europe are some of the interactions being investigated, as is the profound effect of technology (especially electro-acoustic means of sound production and reproduction) upon the course of music history.

Another principal thesis is that music, to be experienced relevantly as music and to be understood experientially as music, needs to be disentangled from the conventional music-historical mythology which reifies the musical artifact as an autonomous phenomenon and creates a "music history" which is an autonomous interpretive history of such autonomous phenomena, viz., "masterpiece" miracles and teleological structure progressions. Instead, music needs to be conceptualized as expressive behavior, multi- and vari-functional in the instances of its happening, and inextricably fused with all the other significant behavioral characteristics of the people who practice it, localized to times, places, cultures, subcultures, and environmental circumstances.

Texts are primarily audio tapes for group and individual listening and thinking about, but much surrounding verbal-text material is also invoked, both as primary source phenomena and as explanatory discourse.

A SPECULATIVE HISTORY OF MUSICAL IDEAS AND PURPOSES, FROM
NOTRE DAME IN 1160 TO IRCAM IN 1989

What kinds of ideas, self-conscious or not, have people had in music? And what kinds of ideas of music, or about music have they expressed in extramusical form? What kinds of intentions, actions, preoccupations, etc., can be inferred from the traces of musical behavior at specific times and places of human activity? What sorts of cultures exhibit traits that might be thought of as 'ideas', within their musical behavior? What kinds of qualities other than 'ideas' are exhibited by music of other peoples, at other times? Beginning with the Notre Dame school of organum composition, and the heretic culture of poet-composers in 12th-century Languedoc, the avant-garde manifestoes, theories, and music of France in the 14th century, up through the self-conscious cultural elitism of the Florentine Camerata of the late sixteenth century, the cosmically ambitious and constantly escalating megamusical programs of and claims for the music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to the ideological and epistemological upheavals of the last sixty-five years, these questions will be investigated through listening to music of a diversity of social types and cultural provenances, through readings of metamusical and other relevant verbal textslllll, and continuous discussion.

MUSIC CULTURES OF THE SIXTIES: ROCK, BLUES, JAZZ,

. . .
Here is offered an encounter with the 'revolutionary' sounds and talk and writing articulating the principal anthemic music of a cultural episode when more or less 'popular' music had a singular and unprecedented gravity as a symbol and totem of cultural self-identity in at least several formative segments of western society. Intramusical as well as extramusical issues are implicated, and negotiated via texts in a variety of media, sonic, verbal, visual, gestural...

THE ART OF THE IMPROVISOR

A historical perspective on the theory, practice, and aesthetic values of five world music traditions. We research and analyze the diverse techniques of improvising in music of Asia (Iran, China), Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia), Indonesia (Bali, Java), with a contemporary view of improvising systems in Europe and America.

WORLD MUSIC WORKSHOP

A study of the styles and structures of selected traditional world music and of their influences on several 20th century composers inspired by them. The non-western genres studied are Japanese court music (Gagaku), Buddhist chant (Shomyo), and Shakuhachi (KinKo HonKyaKu),. Korean court and folk-art music, Indonesian Gamelan, and other Asian traditions. Western composers observed are Debussy, Messiaen, Cowell, Cage, Harrison, McPhee, LaMonte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, and others. Such concepts as 'bi-musicality' and attempts to create intercultural and 'metamusical' forms are both explored and experimented with.

EXPLORING MUSICAL MATERIALS, SOUND SITUATIONS, AND OTHER POSSIBILITIES.

What are the basic materials of music? How many ways can you find to harmonize a pop standard? What kind of context can you create (on tape or in vivo) so as to really hear what some sounds sound like? How can you set up an interactive situation so as to create a specific and meaningful stimulus for players without pre-empting or inhibiting either their initiative or the sound outcome? What might it mean to play a piece of Classical music 'from memory' when you haven't got it memorized nor maybe even ever played it before? How can you formulate projects of individual or collective soundmaking so as to specifically explore explicit preoccupations, and to make authentic discoveries rather than grind out predictable results? How can you regard the design of a new instrument as an act of significant composition? What projects could you invent to explore the creation of time by means of sound, of sound by means of time, or of new sound by the combination and arrangement of old sounds? What do you need to do for yourself by doing music? What do you want to do for others? Can you design sound experiments that would help you and us investigate such questions?

SOUND CONSCIOUSNESS

A workshop devoted to discovering and making sounds and sound objects, to finding, using, inventing, and listening to soundthings of many descriptions, by using tape recorders to capture sound, by composing with tape-recorded sound using two or four-track recording resources, by collaborating in realtime, taperecorded soundmaking (improvising) sessions, the participants to be students of any previous experience and any serious intention.

MUSIC INSTRUMENT BUILDING

Principles of acoustic and musical theory acquired through experience in the design and construction of acoustic musical instruments. Traditional instruments from Western and non-Western traditions, as well as instruments newly invented in the workshop, are being built and played.

LANGUAGES OF APPEARANCE

A laboratory-discussion group that looks into the nature of the 'nonphysical objects' created by artists and thinkers, and seeks to engage the activities of theorizing and analyzing in the service of cultivating experiential acuity. Works of literature, visual art, music, philosophy, and social and natural sciences are consulted and considered. Possible theories of verbal and nonverbal linguistic structure that might account for the phenomena under scrutiny are examined, and developed over the course of the project.

SEMINAR IN PROBLEMS OF REALIZATION

'Realization' is conceived as any of those activities, relative to any subject matter, medium, or technique, through which ideas are given perceivable form; the design of a scientific experiment, of an historical, critical, or theoretical writing, of a dramatic or musical performance, of a work of literature, painting, sculpture, film, or music, are examples. By collaborating on and analyzing actual working projects in the different fields represented by the members of the group, we hope to discover, and learn from, the common and divergent problems of realization that arise in scientific, artistic, and scholarly work.

LISTENING/STUDY GROUPS

Listening/Study Groups are formed of people who seek and can profit from strenuous immersion in the sounds and surroundings of some particular musical cultures. The activity is deep and extensive listening and reading, with regular opportunities for discussion. Documentation and description of each person's listening and reading experiences are considered valuable both as activities and as contributions to the resource literature for the project.

Sample Listening/Study groups of recent years:

Rock

New Music

Blues

Symphonic Romanticism

Jazz

East Asian Music

Black, White, and Latin American Music

TEXT-SOUND COMPOSITION

Seminar exploring aesthetic, political, cosmological, linguistic, ontological, etc., issues which form the intellectual background for the wealth of activity by contemporary composers, poets, and performing artists, based on the interaction between improvisation, performance, composition, and textuality. Seminar focuses on the intellectual issues relevant to such work, through tapes, records, and performances, and the students' compositional and performance concerns are an important part of the project. Non-musicians and interested participants from other disciplines are welcomed.

ALL-MUSIC ENSEMBLES

This is for anyone who is interested in getting into any kind of ensemble playing. Large and small groups performing rock, jazz, folk, madrigals, string quartets, free music, original notated and non-notated music -- or any other form of group music -- are encouraged to participate. Established ensembles, as well as individuals wanting to get together with other interested people to form new groups, are invited to join. Practice space is provided, and there are meetings of parts or all of the workshop population, as seems favorable, for coaching, response, and performance, live or taped.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC WORKSHOP

Composition and experimentation with the techniques of sound synthesis made available by the diverse facilities of the Electronic Music Studio: analog and digital sound synthesis, sequencing, MIDI, multitrack tape recording procedures. Discussions of technical, theoretical, and philosophical issues are engaged as they arise out of the work.

THINGS (a Freshman Seminar)

Obsrving objects, from which intellectual activity develops. Observing objects mundane, familiar, abstract, esoteric, vulgar, refined, obvious, subtle; from which develops intellectual activity of all shades of depth, complexity, quality, character. Observing objects from which intellectual activity develops: as vivid description is formulated, as coherent discourse is shaped. Intellectual activity develops: in the absence of prefabricated disciplinary conventions, in the presence of intellectual activity already developed as the world's literature of formulated ideas, as objects in which thought has been reposed. Observing objects: the same ones, viewed divergently, formulated into different thoughts and different objects in which thought reposes. Intellectual activity develops: as holders of divergent views of the same observed objects confront each other's views, criticize, eamine consequences together, and address apparent incompatibility, under the stimulus of which they create objects by which which thought is aroused, provoked, confronted, advanced. . .Observing objects, intellectual activity develops.

CREATING THURSDAYS

Each week, on Thursday, a daylong project in context creation is taking place, in which the workshop itself is the context created, integrating strenuous music learning with the devising, realizing, and examining of strategies for social interface (in the forms of both social and sonic texts), imagined in the light of perceived expressive purposes. Exemplary social considerations might be formulated as in the following verbal-text fragment:

"...So what do we want of you?

And in what name, on whose account, in what form, do we presume to seek to be acceptable, to feel ourselves acceptable, as conveyors of a communal soundsense, as we enter this public space?

And in what way, for what reason, do we seek that you acknowledge us, and that we perceive ourselves, as having been, in our soundmaking in this public space, legitimate interlocutors in the communal dialogue about the needs and forms of everyone's interaction?

And how is just surviving, enough?"

Composing, playing, listening are the principal music-learning means being employed in this workshop.

BARD COLLEGE/COMMUNITY COMPOSERS' ENSEMBLE

A standing ensemble of instruments and voices, electrical and acoustical, meeting weekly to rehearse and prepare performances of music composed for the ensemble by its members and by others.

THE MUSIC EXPERIMENTING GROUP

A playing ensemble devoted to exploring and evolving forms of musicmaking in which composition and performance are merged in a single activity. Work is done with and without frameworks both newly devised and derived from the various practices of existent realtime musicmaking modes (including jazz, 'free' improvisation, INTER/PLAY sessions, and situational scores).

OPEN SPACE

Weekly opportunity for prepared and unprepared, collective and individual, announced and unannounced, participatory or presentational, musicmaking, etc., for the benefit of musicians, artists, dancers, theater artists, or any others who wish to take advantage of the experience of working with such stimuli.

NEWS OF MUSIC

News of Music is a periodical edited at and published under the auspices of Music Program Zero, providing access to ideas, information, and expressive composition in the entire range of graphically presentable media to an international network of interested participants. It has been published twice yearly at Bard College since 1983; students have access to participation as editors, contributors, and readers.

RECENT BACKGROUND REFERENCES
FOR THE THEORETICAL SUBSTRUCTURE
OF MUSIC PROGRAM ZERO

Barkin, Elaine: _____ PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC, Winter
1988

_____ PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC,
Spring=Summer 1985

Boretz, Benjamin: The Logic of What? Journal of Music
Theory, Summer 1989

On Thinking About Various Issues...
PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC, Summer
1989

Relevance. Liberation. (Address to Society for
Music Theory, 11/87) PERSPECTIVES OF
NEW MUSIC, Winter 1989

Interface, Part II: Thoughts in Reply to
Boulez/Foucault: "Contemporary Music
and the Public" PERSPECTIVES OF NEW
MUSIC, 1987 (Double Issue)

Interface, Part I: The Barrytown Orchestra on
Hunger Day PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC,
Spring-Summer 1985

Bowman, Elsa M.: The Relation of Music and Popular Culture in
Schooling PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC, Winter
1989

Guck, Marion A: Cognitive Alchemy: Transmuting Theoretical
Vices into Analytical Virtues
(Address to Society for Music
Theory, November 1987)

Margolin, Arthur: Language, Thought, and the Talents of
Species PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC, Spring-Summer
1985

Maus, Frederic Everett: Recent Ideas and Activities of J.K.
Randall and Benjamin Boretz: A New
Social Role for Music
(Address to the Society for Music Theory,
November 1987) PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC,
Summer 1988

Pope, Stephen Travis: Music Notations and the Representation
of Musical Structure and Knowledge

PERSPECTIVES OF NEW
Summer 1986

MUSIC, Spring-

Rahn, Jay: A THEORY FOR ALL MUSIC Toronto: University of
Toronto Press

Cohn, Richard: Review of above: ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, Winter
1988

Rahn, John: New Theoretical Paradigms (Address to the Plenary
Session, Society for Music Theory, November 1987)

Randall, J.K.: Are you serious? PERSPECTIVES OF NEW MUSIC,
Spring-Summer 1985