

# Reviews

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## Events

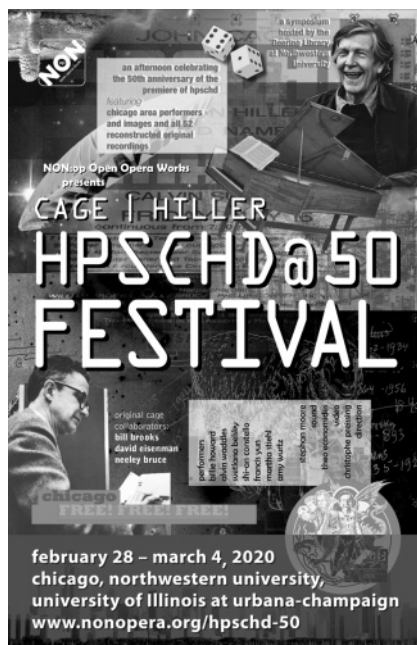
### HPSCHD@50

This concert took place 4 March 2020 at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Stage 5, on the campus of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois, USA. For more information visit: [www.nonopera.org/WP2/hpschd-50](http://www.nonopera.org/WP2/hpschd-50). To hear a randomly selected tape from the 52 original tapes used for HPSCHD, call the number +1-217-290-2473.

*Reviewed by Ralph Lewis  
Champaign, Illinois, USA*

Fifty years after the premiere of John Cage's immersive, multimedia work *HPSCHD* at the University of Illinois, it returned to Champaign-Urbana in a performance by Chicago-based NON:op Open Opera Works in collaboration with the Illinois Modern Ensemble. The production, *HPSCHD@50*, was led by Christophe Preissing with input from William Brooks and Neely Bruce, two of the seven harpsichordists from the 1969 premiere. This anniversary concert on 4 March 2020 followed NON:op's performances of *HPSCHD* a few weeks earlier at The Chicago Cultural Center, a symposium about the work at Northwestern University,

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and a panel discussion the day before at the University of Illinois's weekly composition forum.

*HPSCHD*'s premiere on 16 May 1969 represented a culmination of two years of collaborative efforts between John Cage and the university's Experimental Music Studios founder Lejaren Hiller. Laetitia Snow, James Cuomo, James Grant Stroud, and Max Mathews also contributed in realizing the work, which required extensive computer programming and technological expertise. Initially envisioning a work based on a commission from Swiss harpsichordist Antoinette Vischer, Cage would find procedural inspiration in Mozart's dice-based composition game. As one of a handful of proposals he made to the university's Center for Advanced Study, this starting point of combining harpsichord solo with electronic music that used chance operations based on rolling dice eventually expanded into an arena-sized happening in the university's 18,000 seat Assembly Hall (now State Farm Center).

At its premiere in 1969, seven harpsichordists played aleatoric parts on amplified harpsichords constructed from original material, and music from Mozart and other historical composers using FORTRAN computer code that replicated and built upon the dice-rolling procedures. The additional media used, according to Kenneth Silverman's biography of Cage, included 52 monaural tape machines playing 208 different tapes through 59 speakers, 64 slide projectors showing 6,400 slides, and 40 films projected on eleven 100 × 400 film screens as well as a 40-foot circular screen. As if to further pinpoint the work's moment in time, many of the slides contained newly released images from NASA's space missions, anticipating the moon landing a few months later in 1969.

Although *HPSCHD* is known for the multifaceted spectacle of its premiere, the resources required to stage it are as open-ended as many of Cage's other compositions. As described on the John Cage Trust's Web site, *HPSCHD* can be staged with one to seven harpsichordists and at least two speakers playing some of the many tape parts. Similarly, its duration can be any agreed upon amount of time. In this way, *HPSCHD* resembles other indeterminate works by Cage, where another staging can bring about profoundly different results.

Even so, the premiere's staging and ambience seems to create a peculiar sense of continuity in how *HPSCHD* is performed, even if the scale of these later realizations is noticeably smaller. The impact of this is similarly visible in tributes to the work. For example, a commemorative concert party on 16 May 2019 (the actual 50th anniversary of *HPSCHD*'s premiere) at Analog, a wine bar in Urbana, Illinois, presented an array of music and art by local artists approximating the premiere's ambience.

Another amusing aspect of this continuity is the presence of David Eisenman at the 1969 premiere, the 2019 Analog concert-party, the panel in Chicago, at this 50th anniversary performance, and other *HPSCHD*-related events. In addition to being in touch with Cage as part of planning the premiere (a telegram from 1968 sent to Eisenman by Cage regarding the planning, that David Tudor is likely to play *Variations II* on campus that year, and a suggestion about popping aerial balloons to celebrate Mardi Gras, is among documents collected about the original performance), he made and sold the famous T-shirts depicting Cage's head on Beethoven's body at the premiere. He has remained a presence, with more T-shirts, buttons, and CDs ready to share at each event. Ever the puckish figure, each encounter with Eisenman furthers my fascination with the premiere.

Joel Chadabe, who has produced several presentations of *HPSCHD* since its premiere and was a resource to Preissing and NON:op Open Opera Works, has similar thoughts about the ambience of the work. Writing about the general performance history of *HPSCHD* on his personal Web site, which he continues to update (already listing this 4 March 2020 performance at the time of writing), he shares these thoughts: "*HPSCHD*, in my view, should always be extravagant, exuberant, and wild. Unlike a sewing machine. I understand it and hear it as a joyful melee of continually sustained intensity, of computer-generated trumpets sounding an ongoing charge by a cavalry of amplified harpsichords through a landscape filled with thousands of flashing and swirling overlaid projections of color, form, and space imagery on the ceilings and walls and, as on occasion, on special screens placed throughout the space."

The recent performance at the University of Illinois's Krannert Center for the Performing Arts took place on Stage 5, the intimate concert space and bar in the middle of the building's immense lobby. Four harpsichords were arranged on the stage by the bar, and within the seating area. Its personnel included harpsichordists Francis Yun, Shi-an Costello, Mathal Stiehl, and Ann Warde, audio by Hugh Sato, and visuals by Theo Economides and Ilse Miller. Mark Enslin and John Toenjes provided additional support.

The work's electronic music elements appeared in ways that reflected a more nimble approach geared toward presenting *HPSCHD* in different spaces, as well as contemporary trends such as the use of smart devices in performances. Rather than tape machines (or any of their contemporary equivalents) and speakers, attendees' phones played the electronic music parts. The event program asked attendees to call the specified phone number and select a number between 1 and 52. Based on their choice, one of the original tape parts would begin playing from their phone speaker. As of 8 July 2020, the telephone number (+1-217-290-2473) is still active and Preissing has approved sharing the number here. One of the joys in writing this review was calling to check if it was still active, sometimes multiple times a week.

In a similar way that the audience's phones replicated the multiple tape players and speakers, a more lithe, mobile approach was also used to reference the projected images. A few people circulated throughout the crowd with iPads showing photographs of space, in a nod to the NASA photos, and projections from the premiere. Although less ambitious and certainly less impactful than Calvin Sumsion's 1969 visual spectacle or this performance's use of phones as speakers, the presence of

photos of nebulae and constellations as people walked by increasingly felt like a part of the space's casual mass of the harpsichords playing and cell phones creaking and popping electronic music throughout. It seems that the imagery is less important to capture the feelings Chadabe described than the environment-distorting presence of projections and light sources. (Notably, the performances at Chicago Cultural Center's Preston Bradley Hall used extensive screens that NON:op Open Opera Works hand-built for the occasion.)

In thinking about the Krannert Center as a space, I was reminded that the space in which this concert was held celebrated its own fiftieth year anniversary recently. Opening in April 1969, the Krannert Center would seem to be a likely partner with *HPSCHD*, especially considering its current stature in presenting music and dance events in Champaign-Urbana and its close proximity to the university's music building. Even so, *HPSCHD*'s premiere in 1969's size and focus on simultaneities throughout a single large space made the assembly hall a much better fit for it.

On the other hand, this year's event reflects the presence Krannert has established in the Champaign-Urbana area. In addition to being the performance hub for music, theater, and dance productions, its main lobby was designed to be a meeting place in which people attending different productions could meet. The stage in the central part of the lobby used for *HPSCHD* has had as many preconcert talks and postconcert libation partaking as it has had performances of its own. It makes sense that one of the most attention-getting works from the University of Illinois this side of Salvatore Martirano's *L's GA* should finally appear in its marquee performance

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space. Even so, the question is, how did it engage its attendees?

Of the 50 people who came, including those from the preceding Illinois Modern Ensemble Concert in the Studio Theater, a number stayed as *HPSCHD* played on until Martha Stiehl's final notes. Many, including University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign School of Music Senior Recording Engineer Frank Horger, were engaged by it. Horger related that "*HPSCHD* was pleasantly disjointed, easily digestible, and fascinating for both its musical content as well as its historical context. It welcomed spectators to linger and focus on the disparate elements both individually and collectively as part of this 'happening'."

History doctoral student Kat Wisnosky, meanwhile, had another take. "My first thought about it was that it didn't quite work as well as the organizers hoped. People seemed shy about participating." Wisnosky went on to suggest that "maybe having started it in the theater space and then moving it out into a larger area would have worked better. The concept and how they were trying to do it was really interesting. I just don't think the audience was into it." While Wisnosky's comments do reflect on the relative energy of an audience for a Wednesday evening concert as compared to a massive happening on a Friday or Saturday, they also reflect, perhaps, on how times have changed, as have cultural interactions with Cage.

Although experimentalism has continued since Cage's passing, and is not simply the domain of the New York School aesthetics, what Cage's work is and how it is dealt with—even in historically receptive spaces—is overdue for evaluation. On a personal level, having in the last decade seen how Cage is digested

quite differently in various contemporary music spaces throughout the United States, often there is a confusion, a disinterest, or sense that Cage overshadows other experimentalism. While encouraging people who have not yet performed Cage's music or gotten over acceptable, initial giggles to venture further, it is a good sign that other experimentalist approaches and voices are being amplified too, such as in Jennie Gottschalk's superb book *Experimentalism Since 1970*.

Disconnects with *HPSCHD* also speak to the relative trouble in explaining historical or older works that depend upon a community to sustain new or related event-going practices. It should be easy—*HPSCHD*'s atmosphere is so close to where Burning Man, arena rock shows, dance clubs, and immersive art environments have since gone. But being pitched to a concert-going crowd, it feels different. Cage scholar Sara Haefeli, also a panel member for the 50th anniversary celebrations, writes about how place and time feel different in her article "*HPSCHD*, Gesamtkunstwerk, and Utopia." Even in this seemingly now-familiar space where we can converse, drink, and tinker with our smart devices this "utopian 'no place' and . . . 'no time' suggest that *HPSCHD* represents a possible, anarchic future, and not a prescriptive future; the Utopian future is not a fixed, determined 'should be,' but rather a flexible, multiple 'what if'."

I deeply enjoyed this "no place" and had a great "no time" during the performance. Although, indeed, some people were shy about things, they also were intently watching the harpsichordists play, often dialing up Cage's monaural parts with one hand and enjoying a beverage in the other. Others sat and chatted. Newcomers

and longtime-tenured professors alike bought and donned David Eisenman's Cage-headed Beethoven T-shirts. Attendees walked onto and over the small stage to look inside the harpsichords and at the sheet music. James Beauchamp, Scott A. Wyatt, Sever Tipei, and Eli Fieldsteel—Hiller's successors in the University of Illinois's Experimental Music Studios and Computer Music Project—were all in attendance.

The harpsichordists played their parts exquisitely. After spending time watching Francis Yun and Shian Costello play up close, I made my way to Ann Warde, who was, at that moment, surrounded by a number of cell phones playing the electronics tracks, creating a poignant and complex texture. As the performance winded down, I settled in and followed along with Mathal Stiehl's part. While this "do it yourself" performance (as described by *HPSCHD@50* themselves) was intentionally not extravagant, the cranky, spirited performance was my favorite Wednesday night of 2020.

In follow-up correspondence with Preissing, he spoke about the experiences he and his collaborators went through to produce this set of performances. Even in attempting to make this University of Illinois version of *HPSCHD* a "no projectors, no screens, no hassle" performance, the amount of behind-the-scenes work was considerable. It included tracking down the individual 52 electronic music tapes, their digital versions, setting up the app to control them, and locating enough harpsichords for each performance.

Although the last performance of the *HPSCHD@50* Festival was postponed due to COVID-19, this Champaign-Urbana performance and the events in Chicago show the kind

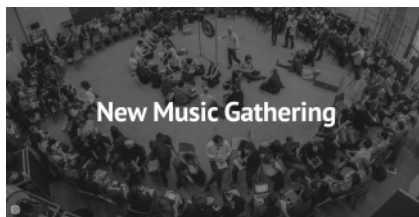
of care and excitement Cage's music still inspires in people. I am curious if and how people will stage it in 2044 and 2069. Perhaps augmented reality goggles simulating some aspects of the enormous crowds of the original? Perhaps it will be exponentially harder to find a three-dimensional harpsichord? Will there be a new musical space that Champaign-Urbana's music community uses, and if so, how will *HPSCHD* fit into it? Maybe a future staging will take all evening? Maybe all of the harpsichordists will be on the screens and the electronics will be reconfigured using AI for each performance? Maybe it will stretch for 100 hours to celebrate 100 years of *HPSCHD*? One thing is for certain—this piece will live on in some form for a very long time.

### New Music Gathering 2020

This festival took place 15–30 June 2020 online via Zoom and Facebook. For more information visit: [www.newmusicgathering.org](http://www.newmusicgathering.org).

*Reviewed by Seth Rozanoff  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

The annual New Music Gathering (NMG) has always been a three-day event, organized around a particular city's musical culture "meeting the needs and desires of the community in ways that are increasingly direct and diverse." In 2015, the San Francisco Conservatory of Music hosted the first gathering. The following years were hosted by The Peabody Institute (2016), Bowling Green State University (2017), and Boston Conservatory (2018). Each of these years opened



with a keynote speaker, helping to establish a particular artistic theme. Due to coronavirus regulations in the United States, New Music Gathering 2020 was moved online to Zoom and Facebook platforms. All of this year's concerts, panel discussions, and presentations, as well as social interaction between those who registered, were roughly expanded to a two-week period. Typically, submitted proposals for programming are selected by Lainie Fefferman, Daniel Felsenfeld, Mary Kouyoumdjian, Jascha Narveson, and Angélica Negrón. As such, even though this event is open to a range of hybrid experimentation stemming from a Western Classical perspective, the organizers attempted to schedule selected works and projects based on a given location's available resources for production, and in what manner a proposal supported this year's artistic theme. The selections reflected issues such as partnering with the community, youth outreach, place as an artistic focus, improvisation, self-publishing, and social justice. Regarding works that involve technology, NMG has become increasingly open to proposals that represent a sound art approach.

Much of the programming for NMG 2020 was in fact a mixture of works with and without electronic sound sources. For example, roughly the second half of the first concert (15 June) relied on technology. These two works were built around prerecorded sound. Andrea Reinkemeyer's oper-

atic triptych, *Gales Creek, Vanport, and Manzanita*, were scored for two soprano and baritone voices, piano, and electronics. Patrick Wohlmut wrote the libretto. The underlying theme in this work was local action. It could be viewed as site-specific as well, working with environmental recordings that accompanied the other players. An interesting sonic feature heard in *Manzanita* was a minimal noise layer produced by an analog synthesizer. This sound was paired alongside a recording of the seaside. In contrast, ending the program was a playful work by Dan Tramte for saxophones, objects, and video. Kyle Hutchins's humorous saxophone performance was featured throughout. Most evident was a tight coordination between the video and soundtrack by Tramte, often highlighting short rhythmic loops.

Part of the evening concert on 16 June was *Bestiary* (2018) for piano and fixed media by Kate Moore. The fixed track meshed well with Moore's piano writing by harmonically amplifying the acoustic instrument.

Most of 17 June's concert featured selections from Jennifer Wright's *Obscure Terrain*. That work uses her own instrument, which she calls the skeleton piano. This concert's version of that work included Takafumi Uehara's projections, and the Agnieszka Laska Dancers. Wright's work *Incognita*, and a piece she cocomposed with her students, *The Battle Cry of the Phoenix*, were performed. These works were produced with the skeleton piano as well. Wright's performance setup for *Obscure Terrain* used a group of amplifiers, a mixer, and microphones. Here, Wright's skeleton piano adapts the use of cymbals, preparations inside the piano, applied reverb, and digital delay. The electronics used further developed Wright's sonic trajectory. These electronic processes were used

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sparingly, never overwhelming the composition.

Typical for Wright's other works that use the skeleton piano are collaborations with dance, and site-specific works using fixed soundtracks as well. The skeleton piano is an upright piano that has been disassembled, exposing the instrument's sound production mechanism. In the work *Incognita*, Wright performs with a body suit, which seems to allow her to further enhance and sustain her range of metallic sounds and other delicate textures. The mixture of subtle electronics, auxiliary metal percussion, and focus on the piano strings themselves supports Wright's sound art approach. The skeleton piano project also tends to relate not just to the instrument, but the environment and musical narrative developed throughout the performance. As such, the adjustable nature inherent in Wright's skeleton piano encourages collaboration and openness. Another interesting feature in Wright's setup is that it has at times included live video, used to further expose the internal mechanism of the piano. Overall, the skeleton piano stems from a need to continue merging the roles of composer and performer. Wright's practice also aims to introduce technology to younger students, such as *The Phoenix Project* documentary. This video demonstrates Wright's educational approach, relying on a design-based musical philosophy for transmitting musical and social concepts to her students. This work shows Wright's commitment to supporting youth creativity.

The concert of 18 June featured Ecology Ensemble's *Sequoia Standing*. This piece demonstrates a distinctive approach to working with video and audio processing, alongside performances on synthesizer, drum set, electric guitar, saxophone, and voice.

This work could be viewed as a type of collaborative site-specific work.

On 19 June, Elizabeth A. Baker and Nathan Corder's audiovisual work *Invisible Seems* was featured. On that same program, cellist Seth Parker Woods performed Freida Abtan's *My Heart is A River* (2020) and George Lewis's *Not Alone* (2015). The Baker/Corder duo creates an ambient-leaning sound world. At times audio samples resembling water help to link the landscape seen in the images. At other times, a multilayered drone, simulating the flow of air in the environment, supports the emergence of a pulse. This background follows the images that move through a series of scenes. Abtan's work not only includes a robust electronic system, but also an immersive visual environment. The total configuration of sound seems to mirror the sequence of superimposed images used to form the video immersion. Lewis's *Not Alone* displays instrumental virtuosity as well as a developed and nuanced electroacoustic sound world. Parker Woods demonstrated a carefully coordinated performance, working with Lewis's interactive electronic system effectively. Here, the listener can't help but notice a consistent dialogue between cellist and the electronics.

On 20 June, JP Merz and the duo Robin Meiksins and Ralph Lewis gave presentations regarding YouTube as a composition and performance tool. Merz's two *Compression Studies* explored writing for networked electronics and an additional instrument. Merz explored the use of YouTube's time-stretching algorithms for constructing new sonic material. Meiksins (flute and laptop) and Lewis (laptop) collaborated to produce *Duo Tube*. This work relies on YouTube's keyboard commands for controlling playback in real time. The concert of 23 June highlighted two works

performed by the LA Electroacoustic Ensemble (LAEE). *How To* was composed by Cristina Lord, and *Becoming* was composed by Marcus Carline, both laptop performers of LAEE. This group tends to improvise with laptops and custom-built synthesizers using Max as their program of choice.

More performances and installations were also found online at the NMG 2020 Gallery. For example, the Kroko Israelsen Duo performed "Audio Postcards" from their work *Cabin Radio*. That work brings together interviews, field recordings, and improvisation, composing a sonic narrative based around specific locations in Alaska. The duo describes their improvisation as "nature based." In their work, amplified materials such as small parts of pine trees, bark, and other debris found in nature were used. Each sonic postcard highlights a range of environmental sound heard in places such as Anchorage and Juneau—forest, ice, and river landscapes in particular. These sonic postcards included video of the given locations as well. Other works such as Nicholas Shaheed's *Chaotic Substrate* seemed to explore visualizations of noise-based sonic material, while *Barnes Ryken*, an audiovisual collaboration between composer Nick Norton and video artist Kelly McGillicuddy, explored transformations of color in various images.

As a result of moving NMG 2020 online, not only were there many technologically based works, but a diverse social community developed as well. The social connections formed during this period are a scenario that the organizers of NMG 2020 are now interested in extending, possibly during the coming months. The goal here is to continue developing dialogues around issues of music production and online collaboration.

## 2020 SPLICE Institute

This festival took place 21–27 June 2020 online via Facebook Live. For more information visit: <https://splicemusic.org>. Panel discussions and featured performances are available for the viewing public at: [www.facebook.com/spliceorg/live](http://www.facebook.com/spliceorg/live).

*Reviewed by Seth Rozanoff  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands*

This year's SPLICE Institute, conducted online because of the COVID-19 pandemic, was generously supported by Western Michigan University, allowing for accepted participants to attend for free. This version featured guest composer Nina C. Young, who gave a workshop on *mc* for the Max 8 programming environment. There were other workshops that also related to this year's theme: Coding Extensions. Issues covered this year included introductory concepts in Max and SuperCollider; using *gen~*, *poly~*, and JavaScript in Max; IRCAM's OpenMusic; and improvising with electronics. Along with SPLICE's core group of faculty, six new panelists were present: composer-harpist Becky Brown, composer-musicologist Flannery Cunningham, composer-educator Brittany Green, bassoonist Dana Jessen, composer José Martínez, and composer Bahar Royae. Similar to previous Institutes, this year's workshops highlighted a range of practical concerns about producing electronic music. Again, similar to previous installments, the Institute was organized into categories



such as composition, performance, documentation, and collaboration, along with concerts. Panel discussions and featured performances were available for public viewing on Facebook Live ([www.facebook.com/spliceorg/live](http://www.facebook.com/spliceorg/live)).

On 23 June, the opening concert of the institute was streamed live from Keith Kirchoff's home. Kirchoff is a pianist and SPLICE cofounder who has premiered over 100 new works, specializing in electroacoustic solo piano performance. The first piece performed was Scott L. Miller's *Katabasis* #2. Kirchoff arranged Miller's work, which was originally scored for four unspecified instruments, for piano. For this performance, Kirchoff chose to play the piano strings with EBows and transducers.

Next, without pause, was Sam Wells's *Leander's Swim* for piano and electronics. Wells, also a cofounder of SPLICE, performs regularly with Kirchoff on trumpet and electronics as well. Wells's composition was inspired by Cy Twombly's 1984 painting *Hero and Leandro*. During this performance, Kirchoff chose to include a charcoal drawing by Sally Moore, which was unscrolled for the online viewers during his performance. The work overall results in a delicate mixture of tonally inflected gestures heard in the piano, along with subtle digital processing. Wells's work demonstrates an emergent sonic quality, reminiscent of the pianism one encounters in works such as Claude Debussy's *La Cathédrale Engloutie* (1910).

Evan Williams's *Pralaya* followed Wells's work without pause. This work explores themes relating to destructive characteristics of humanity. "Prayala" is the Hindu term describing the world's life–death cycle. This is an audiovisual piece, presenting a range of video material in support of that concept. The "Introduction" features footage of J. Robert Oppenheimer's interview in which he expressed his views of the atomic bomb. The piano's contribution accompanies this footage and its soundtrack. Other footage used included the bombing of Hiroshima during World War II. The second movement, "Naimittika," also depicts destruction. Here, a Hindu raga melody can be heard developing throughout. Next, in the "Passacaglia for the Dissolution of All Things," the video again uses scenes from Hiroshima. In "Hymn to the World without End," Williams composed a chaconne based on Gustav Mahler's *Urlicht*, alongside images of Earth's aurora borealis.

The mountain landscape seen in *Prayala* (in the video at the end of the work) is used as a background, transitioning to John Luther Adams's *Red Arc/Blue Veil*. That work is scored for piano, mallet percussion, and processed sounds. Matt Sharrock accompanied Kirchoff on percussion. Regarding the programming for Adams's work, Kirchoff mentions, "*Red Arc/Blue Veil* has always felt like a mountain to me, rising from the depths to the highest peaks, and back down to earth. This felt immediately relevant to the final imagery of *Pralaya* (a mountain image which I use as a backdrop for the Adams), and perfectly bridges to the final piece, which similarly focuses on the rise and fall of peaks." The final piece on the program was Chen Hui Jen's *Onto the Silent Peaks*. This work does not

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have a video component. However, the audience is given a bird's eye view of Kirchoff's hands while playing. Also, this work reflects Debussy-like extended harmonies heard in the piano, while intermingling with lightly processed sonorities.

The 24 June concert was titled "Adam Vidiksis Presents *Part->Link->Bond*." Vidiksis performed works live and remotely for percussion and electronics. He worked with musical guests—soprano Stephanie Lamprea, Taylor Brook (electronics), Scott L. Miller (electronics), Sam Wells (trumpet), Joo Won Park (electronics), and Rajeev Mandela (aka Currency, on electric drum kit). The concert opened with Vidiksis's excerpt from *The Altering Shores* for video and percussion with real-time processing. This work explores the layering of text against video sequences during Vidiksis's performance on percussion. The video part was created by Rod Coover. Additionally, the piece featured poems by Nick Montfort.

*The Altering Shores* was followed by a networked improvisation with Stephanie Lamprea and Taylor Brook's AI-generated electronics. Afterwards, Scott L. Miller's *Long - Short* was heard, performed by Wells, Vidiksis, and Miller. Here, the group's musical efforts seemed to result in a free jazz-like interplay, while still seeming to explore formal sections. Another improvisation with Joo Won Park and Vidiksis then took place with Park performing on a Volca synthesizer. The last work on the program was another improvisation with Vidiksis and Raj Mandela, both performing electronics parts. This work was relaxed in character compared with the other energetic performances heard beforehand. At times the pace of their improvisation was led by rhythmic grooves,

with a range of tempo fluctuations, however.

On 25 June, Panel 1, Electro-acoustic Music Tools, was presented. Mediated by SPLICE president Adam Vidiksis, this panel included guest composer Nina C. Young, and faculty and staff members Becky Brown, Flannery Cunningham, and Joo Won Park. The following day included Concert III, featuring Sam Wells's *Four Winds* (2020). In this final concert, Wells's evening-length work consisted of his own performing and improvising on trumpet and electronics, alongside video he generated using Jitter in the Max environment. Wells's overall concept for the work focuses on a performance system that allows for continually developing performative relationships each time the work is produced. This initial idea stems from his desire to form an ecology of elements—meaning that the electro-acoustic performance environment and video is inclusive of the performance space. As such, Wells views his performance as a type of improvisation that is informed by the space in which the work is presented. He describes *Four Winds* as a "narrative exploration of spaces, internal and external, defined by air and breath." He intends for that narrative to emerge in real time, guided by his intuitive musical responses. We might characterize this process of interaction as a type of proliferation, in which a range of relationships, both internal and external, is expressed during performance. Perhaps the narrative Wells intends to demonstrate in his work stems from an overlapping of those relationships. Internal could be Wells's process of feeding back sound, where his electronic system manages large phrases or layers of trumpet and processed source material. External might refer to the perceived relationship formed by the total

configuration of video and sound. Important here is Wells's attempt to create a composite of his instrument, processed images, and sound. Regarding practical organization, Wells constructed a system of cues that he follows during performance, each corresponding to a particular audiovisual behavior. Another important element in Wells's work is his use of time-lapse photos and videos, which he recorded in Gothic Valley, Colorado. He created a system in Jitter that combined processes of noise and variable-speed playback of the images.

The final event, on 27 June, was Panel 2: Collaborative Relationships in Creating Mixed Media Projects. This discussion was mediated by Elaine Lillios, SPLICE director of composition activities. The panelists included Brittany J. Green, Dana Jessen, José Martinez, and Bahar Royae.

Although SPLICE took place online this year, it continued its tradition of supporting participants of all levels of experience, offering beginning and advanced workshops in multimedia software environments. Performance workshops were still aimed at encouraging players to apply their artistic production skills without composers present, for either live or studio scenarios. These workshops took a close look at electronic music aesthetics, addressing practical and conceptual issues relating to composition and performance. Documentation workshops were also adjusted to address an increased online presence, particularly with respect to video editing. Overall, this year's Institute successfully adapted its educational resources to the online environment while maintaining the composer-performer community that SPLICE is known for facilitating.

## Recordings

### Thomas DeLio: Selected Compositions III (1986–2017)

Compact disc, 2019, NEUMA 450-120, available from Neuma Records; [www.neumarecordsandpublications.com](http://www.neumarecordsandpublications.com).

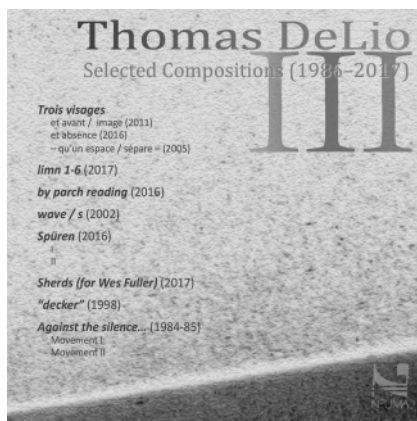
Reviewed by Bradley Green  
Washington, DC, USA

*Selected Compositions III (1986–2017)* is the fifth in a series of recordings by composer Thomas DeLio released by Neuma Records and Publications (now owned by Innova). This series includes three compact discs: *Selected Compositions (1991–2013)*, *Selected Compositions II (1972–2015)*, and the present disc, as well as two DVDs of multichannel work (*space/image/word/sound I and II*). With these albums, one is offered a representative journey through 45 years of music released by the ever-inventive composer, and this newest album is no exception to the sonic sensitivity many have come to expect from DeLio's work.

*Selected Compositions III (1986–2017)* is a collection of both acoustic and electroacoustic works, consisting mostly of percussion and electronics, offering a generous sampling of DeLio's sound-focused style. First, the recordings themselves, as well as the mastering work by Antonino D'Urzo, is of exceptional quality. Additionally, as spatialization plays an important role in many of DeLio's works, some of the tracks that normally contain multiple channels of audio have inevitably been rendered into stereo mixes. Though there is no stereo

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substitute for a true surround sound experience, the mixes on this album offer a faithful alternative.

Perhaps unique to this installment of *Selected Compositions*, the track order takes on a concept album-like structure that incorporates an alternating thread of brief, palate-cleansing, almost entirely silent works entitled *limn (1–6)*, of which each of the six versions are brief and occur between each of the other works on the disc. According to the liner notes, “limn” means “to draw or paint on a surface; to outline in clear, sharp detail.” The composer expresses a “hope to bring the listener closer to the experience of sound wiped clean, as if existing in some pristine state; not as an element of a linguistic, temporal, or timbral evolution, but as an entity in and of itself.” Though each iteration of *limn* is intriguing on its own, incorporating both processed sounds and intentional artifacts like amplitude clicks and pops (a common occurrence in DeLio's electronic works), knowing the composer's tendency to utilize form as a fertile ground to affect the listening experience, one can safely assume that this connective tissue was implemented intentionally. As such, though it is quite possible that these tracks may have less impact if

heard in isolation, when the album is experienced as a whole, *limn* allows the compact disc itself to assume a fascinating macro-structure across its 80-minute duration.

With the exception of *limn (1–6)*, there are seven works on this collection, the first of which is entitled *Trois visages*. Interestingly, *Trois visages [Three faces]* constitutes three separate settings, composed between 2005 and 2016, of the same short poem from the collection *Pour un tombeau d'Anatole* by French poet Stéfan Mallarmé. Revisiting or re-working previously used, or written, material as a means to offer a different perceptual context is a primary theme in DeLio's oeuvre. Each setting is for percussion ensemble and soloist (flute, violin, and soprano, in that order) and can be performed individually or as a set. Far too much is written about this work in the album notes to be successfully summarized, though the common thread between each work is the opposition of pitched and nonpitched sonorities, various contrary relationships between the soloist and ensemble (especially those involving the text, which is spoken in both French and English throughout each setting), and the use of spatialization, in which the stereo mix gives a decent impression, though I imagine some of the experience is diluted without a true spatialized setting (two of these three works are, however, available in surround sound recordings on the aforementioned DVDs).

The first setting of *Trois visages*, entitled *et avant / image (2011)*, was performed by flutist George Pope and the Akros Percussion Collective. The pitch to noise spectrum DeLio uses is apparent immediately, manifesting as various nonpitched percussion (primarily maracas, cymbals, and tom-toms) and unvoiced words pitted against flute, various



pitched percussion (primarily vibraphone and tubular bells), and voiced words. Additionally, though the flute part is sparse, existing mainly in the first third of the piece, Mr. Pope's performance is understated, serving as an effective catalyst that begins the transformation from mostly nonpitched to pitched sonorities. As such, the Akros Percussion Collective gives great attention to the individual colors, allowing this transformation to occur seamlessly.

Contrary to *et avant / image, et absence* begins with an extended solo performed by violinist Airi Yoshioka. The ensemble (the University of Maryland College Park Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Lee Hinkle) follows with a beautifully balanced performance that supports the central role played by the violin. Yoshioka offers an incredibly dynamic and colorful performance, which runs the gamut of pitched and nonpitched extended techniques, including speaking and playing simultaneously.

The final setting, *qu'un espace / sépare*, was performed by soprano Stacey Mastrian and the University of Maryland Baltimore County Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Tom Goldstein. It contains the only instance in *Trois visages* where the text is sung melodically. As the flute soloist was confined to the first third of *et avant / image*, here the soprano is confined entirely to the last minute of the work, which occurs after a continuity-interrupting span of silence. Though Mastrian's part is noticeably brief, her performance is memorable, delicate, and necessarily reserved, especially when juxtaposed against the much more aggressive percussion and spoken text. Additionally, the University of Maryland Baltimore County Percussion Ensemble delivers a dramatic and thoughtful performance.

In contrast to the previous work is a two-channel electronic setting of a poem entitled *by parch reading* (2016) by P. Inman, a poet who has been a consistent source of influence on DeLio's music since the 1990s. The connection between their styles is neither incidental nor artificial, as DeLio's use of sound in regard to perception mirrors Inman's "intense focus on language as substance in and of itself." He further states that Inman's poetry "vivifies the interconnection of language as it is engaged and meaning as it is shaped . . . it does not just talk about the world . . . it becomes part of it, a thing in it." This piece, like the majority of the electronic works on this album, utilizes *musique concrète* techniques consisting entirely of processed and filtered recordings of readings of the text by male and female voices, with a third voice used briefly for timbral contrast. The result is an ethereal rendering of the text that, like Inman's poetry, flirts with concrete meaning without ever becoming fully explicit. As such, some spoken passages are heard without any alteration, electronic or otherwise, allowing the listener to focus solely on the words and sounds therein, and at other times the audio is so heavily processed that the textual meaning is obscured. What is left is sweeping mid-high spectrum material that is faintly colored by the inflections of the words and register of the speaker. The processes used to create the sound material of the piece are manifold (granulation, filtering, various effects, processing, etc.). No one filtering technique or device is favored, so the goal seems to be the resulting sound and not the technique used to achieve it.

The next piece is a percussion solo performed deftly by percussionist Morris Palter, entitled *wave / s* (2002). This work is an outgrowth

of the previously written marimba solo *Transparent Wave IV* (1999), in which DeLio added other pitched and nonpitched instruments to the work, while keeping the original marimba part untouched. This results in a surprisingly unassuming piece, where each passage emerges out of silence for a brief time before submerging again, usually in the form of a decrescendo for the nonreverberating instruments, or sustain for the reverberating instruments, or both. As most entrances occur as rolled and notes that slightly crescendo out of the silence, the few unannounced accented attacks that do occur throughout are jarring and poignant, consistently keeping listeners on their toes.

*Spüren* (2016) and *Sherds (for Wes Fuller)* (2017) are two short two-channel electronic works consisting entirely of processed sounds. In the two movements of *Spüren*, each sound was created from samples of music from non-Western cultures, although, except for two brief moments in movement two, the material is so heavily processed that a listener will likely not be aware of the connection unless told. It seems to me that *Spüren* (German for "to feel" or "to sense") is an apt title, as the piece is as much a physical experience as it is aural. Abdicating the more subtle use of dynamics and contrast as found in the other works, *Spüren* is more about harsh and immediate contrasts. After a frame of silence, the first movement opens with a misleadingly quiet and pleasantly reverberated gesture before abruptly bombarding the ear with high-spectrum tones mixed with very dry and granulated clicks and pops with bell-like timbres underneath, all of which is clearly felt as well as heard. What follows is a warm, ocean-like band of noise along with other soothing mid-range colors (which sound somewhat like seagulls,

to complete the ocean analogy) that offer a brief respite before once again delving into another physically taxing passage. This harsh and urgent contrast between discomfort and soothing occurs throughout the piece and appears to be purposeful, and, as such, though it is short, its brusqueness makes it stand out from the other works on this album.

On the other hand, *Sherds*, dedicated to composer Wesley Fuller and named after his piece *Sherds of Five*, is closer to the aesthetic of the other works. DeLio states that this is “an examination of the juxtaposition of wet (reverberated) and dry (nonreverberated) sonorities,” which is reminiscent of the noise to pitch spectrum used in *Trois visages*. In the case of *Sherds*, the progression stems from which type of sound is taking perceptual precedence, as both the wet and dry sounds occur many times in tandem, and the impetus seems to be from moving from a total mixture at the beginning (perhaps initially favoring dry sounds) to wet sounds dominating at the end.

The penultimate work on this collection, “*decker*” (1998), is another electronic setting of a poem by P. Inman, who also supplied the reading from which most sounds were derived. The most salient difference between this setting and *by parch reading* has mainly to do with Inman’s poem itself, in which “it seems clear that the page has superseded the line as the most important structural unit in the design of his poetry.” As such, though his nebulous use of language is still present, the type of page (of which there are two: physical and “virtual”) and the placement of words on the page are now integral structures that Inman, and thus DeLio, explore. In the piece, the text is filtered and processed to create new timbres similar to *by parch reading*. However, much of the piece is dedicated to

cutting around the unprocessed (or very lightly processed) reading in a variety of interesting ways in order to hear individual syllables and mouth sounds, or to have the reading exist as a backdrop for the more colorfully processed excerpts. Additionally, there is a recurring use of a single sine tone and soft white noise that frame and occupy the spoken sections, which I assume are to symbolize, at least in part, the two page types DeLio mentions in his notes, which is juxtaposed against the concrete representation of the “virtual” pages, spoken by the poet as “page one,” “page two,” and so on.

The final and earliest piece on the album, *Against the silence* . . . (1984–1985), is scored for percussion ensemble and four-channel computer-generated tape (again here reduced to stereo), and is performed by the University of New Mexico Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Christopher Shultis. This is the largest work on the album, both in terms of scope and duration, and is the only one that combines electronic and acoustic forces. It is also the genesis of what is likely DeLio’s most often discussed compositional feature: Long stretches of silence between sound events (some almost a minute in duration) used to “rid those events of their connective tissue and prior sonic identities.” Contrary to works such as *by parch reading* and *wave / s*, in which silence is used functionally as an equal partner to sound, the silences here instead work to undermine the function of the sonic material by challenging our ability to connect them contextually in time “without losing the coherence of a single connected musical event.”

The first movement opens with a handful of percussive sounds followed by a succession of high spectrum tones with bell-like attacks and the sustained colors of additive synthesis.

These synthesized sonorities function as an extended and transformed decay of the opening percussive attacks, constantly layering and panning around the listener for the remainder of the movement. This is followed by a more timbrally vivid and turbulent second movement, characterized by rapidly pulsating and lightly reverberated sustained tones, and far more acoustic instruments, including the extended use of the piano. Through the first half, this movement is much more sporadic than the previous material. It then delves into a quiet, rhythmically static piano passage, aimlessly shifting across the instrument’s range and constantly fluctuating between the fore, middle, and background of the listener’s perception. This culminates, after another long silence, into a final stretch of the same palpating piano, slower and softer this time, which is coarsely and regularly interrupted by a very loud and piercing iron pipe, initially heard in the first movement. *Against the silence* . . . is one of the more compelling works on this album, and may be the one that appreciates the most during repeated hearings. The economic use of electronic forces and noticeable restraint utilized belies the stark juxtaposition of elements apparent between the large sections. Additionally, the University of New Mexico Percussion Ensemble does a fantastic job bringing depth to these structures, blending with the electronics as if it was just another member of the ensemble.

I have heard some describe DeLio’s music, and this album in particular, as being a “challenging” listen. Although I don’t necessarily agree that it is challenging per se, at least not in the same way as a John Cage or Christian Wolff piece may be challenging (where enjoyment is difficult to obtain prior to reading ample notes), it can take multiple

listening sessions before one begins to grasp the minutia of the aural relationships at play, both micro and macro, inside and between the works. There are layers upon layers of abstract structures permeating the album, and that is before one considers how the music connects to Inman's and Mallarmé's texts. It is music that can be enjoyed purely as a sonic experience so long as listeners do not agonize over what they need not explicitly understand. But it also begs for repeated hearings informed by a close reading of the liner notes, so that the seemingly amorphous structures begin to take on a more definite shape, all the while continuing to be captivatingly elusive.

**Thomas Dimuzio: SLEW TEW—  
A Compilation of Compilation  
Tracks 2003–2017**

Digital download, 2020,  
available from Bandcamp;  
[www.thomasdimuzio.bandcamp.com](http://www.thomasdimuzio.bandcamp.com). Limited run compact discs  
are forthcoming.

*Reviewed by Ross Feller  
Gambier, Ohio, USA*

In certain circles, San Francisco-based composer, improviser, sound designer, and engineer Thomas Dimuzio is a well-known pioneer in experimental electroacoustic techniques. Since the 1980s his work has demonstrated that he is no one-trick pony when it comes to his tools. Dimuzio has used modular synthesizers, modified bicycles, circuit bent toys, field recordings, resonating water pipes, loops, shortwave radios,

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and intercepted signal feeds from his collaborators to create music in ambient, noise, and post-techno styles. As a sound designer, he has worked with synthesizer and processor manufacturers including Kurzweil, Lexicon, and OSC to produce custom presets and sample libraries, and has played a key role in Avid's Pro Tools HD recording system. He also owns and runs Gench Studios, where much of his music is created and mastered, as well as albums by Negativland, AMM, Doctor Nerve, GG Allin, Fred Frith, and Nels Cline. It is fair to say that Dimuzio represents the electroacoustic version of an *auteur*.

On 26 March 2020, in the thick of the global pandemic, Dimuzio released *Slew Tew* on Bandcamp. There is also a forthcoming, limited edition, compact disc of the same material. All of the works in this collection were previously released on various labels between 2003 and 2017. As such, it serves as a kind of retrospective of Dimuzio's work. Of the 14 pieces, half were recorded live. The other half were created and mixed in the composer's studio. The 14 tracks range in length from 2.5 minutes to a little over 13 minutes. True to form, the composer utilized a Buchla analog synthesizer, field recordings, bottle recycling machine,

feedback, piano, and an electric guitar to create the work on *Slew Tew*.

The first piece from this collection, *Scanters*, uses the highly processed sounds of a bottle recycling machine to create a texture teeming with repetitive, industrial, machinelike sounds, sounding like a newspaper pressroom. The texture sounds like repetitive simple amplitude modulation combined with extremely short loops. This runs unabated throughout much of the piece, conjuring up a distinct sense of place, albeit with a degree of ambiguity if you did not know what Dimuzio used for his sound source. During the last third of the piece the composer presents a long and effective fadeout. Overall, especially considering its short, 3-minute duration, *Scanters* comes across as a torso extracted from a longer composition.

*Arc of the Fallen Arch*, the second piece from this collection, is a good example of a work whose title describes the formal plan for the piece, while at the same time serving poetic function. To create this piece Dimuzio used crisp, distinctive, analog sounds from a Buchla synthesizer. Various layers of material collide, producing a complex, pulsating texture. These sounds, as a collection, gradually move up, and then back down, in pitch, tracing an inverted-U or arch-shaped trajectory. The highest point in this process comes exactly halfway through the piece.

The next piece, titled *NG Cycles (If I Had a Stomach Pump)*, begins with a reversed sample followed by soft, menacing, dissonant resonance formed by a composite piano, pump, and nasogastric tube sound. The piano portion of this fused sound is used again and again during the piece as a formal marker. Each section features what can be described as aperiodic percussive sounds, resembling those found in a churning stomach. These

are combined with subtle, squishy sounds likely produced from recycled noise. At about 3:55 another section begins, characterized by low-frequency drum, or stretched skin, tones. Identifying whether the piece was taken from a live or studio performance is difficult to determine because it contains processing and spatial aspects of both. Gradually, the piece dissipates, followed by a long fadeout at the end.

*Abject Light* begins with a slowly evolving crescendo. As it becomes louder, more and more upper partials are added to the composite sound. This time-stretched texture sounds like it could have been produced by convolving voice with pitch materials. After about 6.5 minutes we hear a muffled voice, along with the continuous drone materials. At the 8-minute mark we clearly hear someone say, "I can't breathe," revealing the context for the entire piece. We can think of the title as representing a full, glaring light that is shined onto an object or scene in order to show the desolation or unpleasant aspects of the subject. In this case the subject is timely—racist police violence. The voice we hear is that of Eric Garner, who was choked to death by members of the New York Police Department in the summer of 2014, on the suspicion of illegally selling cigarettes. *Abject Light* is a powerful piece after one figures out the context. It is "political" in ways far beyond other, more obvious, works that rely upon more overt connections.

The fifth work is titled *Elegy of Safety*. To create this piece Dimuzio hung a microphone out of a window at the crossroad of Sixth Street and Market Street in San Francisco. The result contains compelling amplification of incidental and background noises, sounding at times like a large waterfall. The noise aspect is significant in this piece. The title itself is close to

the name of the industrial noise band called The Illusion of Safety, founded by Dan Burke and members of the Chicago band Dot Dot Dot. Burke is a musician with whom Dimuzio has collaborated on live and recorded material, and had an impact on his own practice. Dimuzio told me that Burke was responsible for him diving "head first into modular synthesis." They both share a predilection for noisy textures, using everything at their disposal to create their music.

*Chemtrails (3 Different Ones)*, harnesses and manipulates feedback within a three-part structural form. Taken from a live recording made in Oakland, it presents slowly evolving, contiguous textures. At times the overall level threatens to distort but somehow never does. *Chemtrails* is an appropriate name for this piece because it largely uses raw sound and pitchless materials to achieve its effect, which is one in which the composer manages to weave feedback sources into a coherent whole. The term chemtrails has also been used by conspiracy theorists to draw attention to the possibly harmful effects of contrails, what jet airplanes leave in their wake.

Producing skywriting contrails is one of the things for which the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels is known. Following *Chemtrails (3 Different Ones)* is a piece called *Blown Angels Blew Angels*, a clear pun of the Blue Angels. By the time listeners reach this work (if listening in album order) they will be quite familiar with Dimuzio's go-to compositional and processing techniques. *Blown Angels Blew Angels*, using field recordings as sources, manages to conjure up similar textures to some of the other previously heard works, such as a continuous, slowly evolving pitchless noise. But in this case, the noises sound like they were created from wind and large engine sounds. Metro-

nomics, pulse-like sounds appear at the end of the piece, resembling a heartbeat monitor.

*Shoil* presents a variegated approach to feedback processing. At the beginning of the piece it sounds as if the composer used granular synthesis techniques. Following this we encounter another pitchless noise texture, but this one contains the subtle presence of pitched materials in the background, which contribute to an eerie, unsettling sense. The foreground involves a drone that sounds as if it could have been taken from alarm samples. *Shoil* ends at 4:53" leaving one with the impression that it could have been extended without losing interest.

The ninth piece, *Fog Rolls*, is one of many pieces that constitutes the \$100 Guitar Project, an idea brought into existence by guitarist-composers Nick Didkovsky and Chuck O'Meara. After they initially purchased a \$100 guitar, they passed it on to many other guitarists, who subsequently recorded their contributions on a double-album release on Bridge Records (Bridge 9381A/B). Fifty percent of the album's proceeds went to CARE, an organization that combats poverty. *Fog Rolls* uses the guitar in question to create a piece featuring pitched drones that sound like the strings were activated with an EBow. At times the results resemble the early collaborative work done by Robert Fripp and Brian Eno as found on their albums *Evening Star* and *No Pussyfooting*. Perhaps the short duration (2:32) was a requirement of the \$100 Guitar Project, but one wishes that Dimuzio had released a longer, more developed version. The intriguing timbres would seem to call for further treatment.

The introduction to *Tire Damage (Car Crash)* is captivating. We hear extremely high and low frequencies, simultaneously faded in, providing

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a sense of otherworldliness—distant sounds from another galaxy captured as radio signals. The low frequencies gradually move higher and begin to become unsteady, like a wobbly tire. Perhaps I was overly influenced by the explicit title, but I thought I heard screeching brakes, the voices of the drivers, and maybe even the first responders arriving on the scene. On the other hand I wouldn't be at all surprised if all of the sounds came from an analog, modular synthesizer. Like other acousmatic music there is an unresolved ambiguity regarding source identification.

The eleventh piece in this collection, *Phyllocephala* (Victor French Mix), contains one of the most diverse arrays of sound. Named after a prolific, spiky Chinese plant, this piece conjures up subterranean, mechanical, and tubular sounds, as well as the sound of flapping wings. The latter resembles what you get when you close-mic a large woodwind instrument, performing rapid key clicks. We also hear vocal and birdsong “chattering” timbres in the vein of Paul Lansky's *Smalltalk*. *Phyllocephala* (Victor French Mix) offers us many separate layers sounding at once. It was simultaneously reminiscent of urban and jungle environments.

*Optisomic Debris*, the only previously unreleased work from this

collection, uses photographs, translated into sound, for its source material. Judging from the strict, periodic rhythmic layers, the photographs could have contained geometric figures, lines, or grids. The word “debris” in the title suggests several scenarios. Perhaps, only parts of each photograph were selected for translation, or the process of translation itself produced sonic debris, which then became the piece as it were. Whatever the process of x/y axis assignment was, it certainly produced a richly endowed and varied composition. This is also true with respect to sonic references. For example, around 2 minutes into the piece an arrhythmic, deep, percussive clicking sound is superimposed over the other layers, creating a subtle reference to avant-garde progressive rock music. Unlike many of the other pieces in this collection, the end of this piece fades out quickly, leaving the listener with the impression that it abruptly stops what was a much longer work.

The penultimate piece, *Fog Music* (excerpt), is an actual torso somewhat in the vein of Karlheinz Stockhausen's 1968 work *Kurzwellen*. The radio source material contains raw waveforms that move up and down in pitch and space. The sounds of voices are distorted or granularized as if we are listening to a radio through

a sonic fog. At the end of the piece we hear a 60-Hz hum that fades out, which is a suggestive sound given the radio as source.

At 13 minutes in length, the last piece, *Song of the Humpbacks*, is the longest piece on this collection. Humpback whales were recorded at San Francisco's Exploratorium. Many composers have used recordings of humpback whales but Dimuzio's piece manages to underscore connections between whale sounds and brass instruments resembling everything from pedal tones to high-pitched squeals. For much of the piece we also hear a very soft layer of resonance that builds up as more and more whale sounds become present, and is also the last thing we hear. As the piece progresses it becomes clear that the whales are communicating with a varied palette of evocative sounds. The large number of wails and glissandi suggests to me that this piece can be heard as a lament, perhaps about habitat destruction.

This retrospective collection by an important electroacoustic pioneer contains some of his most important work. It will appeal to those who appreciate sound art, noise, and drones, or anyone who appreciates the ingenuous application of a potpourri of devices and tools to create convincing electroacoustic music.