

Our Crowd—Four Composers Pick Composers

A good search engine is a wonderful thing. Information that once necessitated a trek to the library, an expensive consultation with an expert, a cocktail party of pedants or a tedious exchange of letters now lies within the stroll of a mouse: The name of a familiar-looking actor in a Billy Wilder film, a retailer of hedgehog food, the English translation of *Fernsprecherteilnehmerverzeichnis*, driving directions to Slough, the schematic for a Countryman Phase Shifter—a myriad of answers lie but a click away. However, neither the closely guarded search algorithms of Google nor the hospitable knowledge base of Wikipedia will suffice for all questions. Sometimes human networks trump digital ones.

This volume of *Leonardo Music Journal* is the 12th I have overseen. Papers reach the journal through a number of routes: Some authors respond to a thematic call I draft at the start of the editorial calendar, which is posted on various web sites, distributed through e-mail lists, circulated by members of our editorial board and published in a handful of print journals; other articles arrive unprovoked but serendipitously suited to the rubric; and then there are the authors that I solicit directly (beseech might be a more accurate term). *LMJ* serves a relatively small, tightly knit community, and many of its members are known to me personally—years of activity in this community have put me in contact with what I have occasionally naively assumed to be “everyone.”

But I *don't* know everyone, not by a long shot, and not everyone knows *Leonardo Music Journal*. And I can't reach everyone, neither by direct appeal nor through web broadcasting. Perfect potential contributors are out there, and very likely have a presence on the web, but here is where Google fails: “+ interesting” doesn't refine a search for “composer” in any useful way. On the other hand, the same expression in the ear of a smart colleague becomes an extremely powerful tool. This is where organic intelligence still holds a powerful advantage over its artificial sibling.

For this volume of *LMJ* I invited three such free-range human browsers to solicit articles from artists they deemed “important”—either visionary or historically significant but overlooked. Hans W. Koch works in Cologne, Germany, and is deeply involved, as a performer and curator, in the experimental fringe of live computer music (“Laptronica”); for his section of the journal he gathered papers by or about artists to whom David Tudor might have referred as “composers inside electronics,” working with the essences and idiosyncrasies of technology. New Zealand-born composer Annea Lockwood's music—ranging from Fluxus-tinged performances to environmental recording to pan-cultural chamber music—reflects her peripatetic, globe-spanning career. Her section is infused with the uncanny: infrasonics, ultrasonics and other acoustic phenomena that push at the boundaries of perception. Dutch composer Kees Tazelaar is head of the Institute of Sonology at the Royal Conservatory in the Hague—one of the world's most important academic programs in experimental sound and music research—and he cajoled some of his recent graduates to submit papers based on their theses. As such his section includes the youngest contributors and provides a refreshing look into the arenas that an emerging generation of sound artists deems worthy of research.

These three perspectives bring to the volume a diversity of content that reaffirms my faith in what James Surowiecki refers to as the “wisdom of crowds” [1]—the richness of the collective outcome of uncoordinated decision-making. I was fortunate to persuade Pauline Oliveros to curate the companion CD. With her extensive history of music and workshops devoted to

the intersection of sound, self-awareness, group behavior and network technologies, Pauline consistently evokes the spirit of the wisdom of crowds. For the CD she has assembled 15 tracks, primarily of music for small ensembles, that address these concerns. Pauline and her colleagues Sarah Weaver, Mark Dresser, Jefferson Pitcher, Jonas Braasch and Chris Chafe also contributed to multi-artist overview of telematic music, which is included as an on-line supplement to the print edition.

With luck the resulting volume should resemble a dinner party: a mix of different obsessions and gambits, combining to trigger those serendipitous leaps from one subject matter to another, unpredictable yet harmonious, pointing up connections that no single guest had perceived before.

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Reference

1. James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Anchor Books, Random House, 2005).