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The Open Strings of the Quintet as a Basis for Detuned Orchestral Sound

ARSENY AVRAAMOV trans by ANTON ROVNER

[The Russian microtonal theorist, Arseny Avraamov (1886-1944) was well known in the early 20th century for his theoretical articles on microtonality and experimental tunings. He was the composer of, among other works, the unusual *Symphony of Whistles*. This article was first published in *Muzyka* weekly newsletter, September 5, 1915, Moscow, Vol. 5, N.222, pp.315-318.]

The string quintet does not provide well-tempered open strings. This way, the temperament of the orchestra contains five (excluding the repetitions in the different octaves) fixed points,

c-g-d-a-e

which contradict with an acoustic precision the entire foundation of orchestral intonation. To begin with, there is no tonality, in which all five pitches of the open strings could be used with impunity: at a first superficial glance it would seem that there are three such tonalities, --

F major, C major, G major,

Plus the three relative descending melodic minor keys. Nevertheless, with a few rather simple experiments it is easy to prove the contrary, which is exactly as follows:

1. In C major it is not possible to use the open strings E2-A2 of the double bass, the A3 of the cello, the A4 of the viola and the A4-E5 of the violin.
2. In G major - the E2 of the double bass and the E5 of the violin.
3. The tonic of F major is not available on open strings, which is why on the given tonality it is not possible to establish one unified rule. Everything is determined by those tonalities from which we have come to this F major. If the modulation took place from C major, then only the pitches C and G of the open strings would be appropriate, while all the others would be excessively high, whereas if it would be a sudden modulation from A major (assuming the tonic a, lying on the open string), then the opposite would be the case - all the other pitches of the open strings would be appropriate except for C and G, which would turn out to be excessively low.

4. Similar double applications are feasible on the relative minor tonalities of D minor, A minor and E-minor: if they happen to be the source tonalities, then undoubtedly it is particularly their tonics are given on open strings, and the limitations of their usage consist merely of the following: in D minor, the undoubtedly low pitch would be the descending C, in A minor it would be C and the descending G, whereas in E minor it would be C, G and the descending D; if we approach these keys from their relative major keys, then the aforementioned pitches would be in tune, while all the other open string pitches would be excessively high. Any move upwards or downwards from the pitches of the open strings in all the mentioned cases would be at an interval of a comma (80:81); this practically always demands the replacement of the open string with the corresponding pitches, taken by ear on the adjacent lower string.

The following experiments undoubtedly prove the validity of my position. They were written for the particular purpose of being tried out on a violin, in this case the durations of the notes are of little consequence: the important thing is to adhere to the unbreakable chain of dyads. The pitches, placed below into the bass-clef, present themselves as the actually heard combinational tone, complementing the major sixth, for the purpose of obtaining a full triad: they are indicated for the purpose of exact tuning with the ear of this interval - all the others are in essence octaves and unisons.

Musical examples given on one staff (resembling a fourth species counterpoint exercise, the lower voice given in whole notes, while the upper voice appearing as the second half note after a half rest, and then suspended over the next measure with bass-notes given as supplementary notes on an adjacent staff:

I. G3-C5-/-C4-A4-(bass: F2)-//

II. G3-G4-/-E5-(bass: C3)-E5 (open, sul E) (fermata)-//

III. (chord on a whole note) G3-D4-B4-E5-//

IV. G3-C5-/-C4-F4-/-D5-D4-(bass: Bb2)>>

I. Approaching the "unison" on A, we hear that the open A presents a detuned, excessively high-pitched sound. The fact that we are situated within the boundary of C major is obviously demonstrated by the presence of its tonic and of both dominants in this example.

II. The E of the open fifth is higher to the same degree than the E taken on the A string with the fourth finger. It is excessively high-pitched for both tonalities, the tonic chords of which are given in the example.

III. Tuning the D-B dyad exactly and checking the B-E dyad we can see that it is strenuous; raising B to an adequate degree and checking out the major sixth, we can hear the combinational tone, which is close to G# (the eleventh partial of D), which sounds somewhat lower; returning B to its initiate tuning, we will notice that the combinational tone descended to a pure G. Consequently the E of the open string, likewise its derived perfect fourth do not pertain to the temperament of G major.

IV. In this example one must be extremely careful, as the stretch of fingers on the octave C-C and the transfer of the second finger from G to A might cause a change of the F pitch, unperceivable to the eye. If the experiment is carried out successfully, then the D on the open string will turn out to be excessively high-pitched. Consequently in F major, the sounds of all the strings except of the G-string should necessarily be taken only as closed strings. If one is to play out the last example in backwards or retrograde motion, or to achieve the same result, if one plays the F major scale in scalar motion downwards starting from the open A string, we will notice that the G string has already become excessively low-pitched, whereas the D string sounds very much in tune.

I recommend the readers to convince themselves of my statements also by the following means: to play in first position at a slow tempo all the six scales mentioned by me, respectively from G upwards and from E downwards, always utilizing the fourth finger and comparing it immediately with the sound of the corresponding open string.

All that has been stated above results in the surprising conclusion, that our diatonic scale is extremely inexact, so no fixed points, even those that are acoustically well tuned, could satisfy the diverse demands of the modal intonations: All the more to be concluded about chromaticism and enharmonicism.

Until all of these considerations have not entered the heart and mind of orchestral musicians, it would be best if they would avoid open strings entirely, substituting them each time with closed strings; this would even greatly enhance the melodic wholeness of a musical phrase, since who could ever fail to notice that the sound of the open string stands out even in a many-pitched chord by the means of its strength and evenness, creating with its sound a bright but petrified spot: Nevertheless, we know very well that once we deprive a violinist or a cellist of open strings, his intonation immediately begins to hang in the air: the open strings present themselves as that "oven", from which his fingers dance on the fingerboard: How many trickeries, how much conscious false temperament is brought in by the violinist, in order to hold on, to grasp that one single open string in "difficult" key signatures: even if its pitch holds a most insignificant position in that key - he will still think about it continuously and if you, naive composer, would deprive him of the "last" foundation with a sporadic modulation happening at a decisive movement

-- blame yourself for that surprise, which the interpreter of your violinistic fancies will bring to you: It would be better to drive the performer to despair at once by a complete lack of open strings, by means of insertion of no less than four flats or five sharps into the key signature, so at least you do not risk hearing an unwieldy open E string in G major if not something even worse!

It is quite characteristic that the cause for this continuously rising carelessness on the part of instrumentalists towards the purity of musical intonation has been the result of the development of virtuosic musical literature: If the contemporary virtuoso cannot treat with respect the feigned "Gelaufigkeit," obtained at the price of all sorts of faking and untidiness in virtuosic passages, how much more sadly must the theoretician witness the development of a literature which is unthinkable to perform without a conscious faking of intonations: moreover on those very instruments, one of the main accomplishments of which is particularly the ability to perform with the purest intonation possibly, relying substantially to the demands of one's audible perception, which arise out of the unshakable logic of sound. It is already a long time that we should stop considering as "high art", smelling of sweat, the mastery by one "artist" of the technical difficulty, which is non-existent for two musicians: the quasi-three-voiced Capriccio by Paganini will turn into a child's play, if one is to give the tremolando to one violinist and the melody to another, albeit undoubtedly these two would play it in a much more pure and expressive manner - not to mention the fact that the composer, not being burdened by a special technical challenge, could have put in a much more significant musical idea to this "present trifle". That creative art which is contained into the narrow limitations of the possibilities of dexterity of fingers limits itself in such a heartless manner, that it ceases to contain a self-contained value of its own. Following this train of thought, no technical accomplishments can arouse our happiness when you know concisely at what expensive a price they were bought. The moment will eventually arise when art with a sober critical glance will view its buffoonish costume and will desire to cast it off, in order to clothe itself once again in a white tunic and a modest wreath of field flowers - alas! - it will be necessary to tear out this buffoonery, firmly enrooted, together with pieces of living flesh: and the snow-white tunic, when put on blood-let wounds, will more than once be speckled with crimson.

The bitter pathos of these lines will appeal and be understandable to those, who love music in itself, as a magic combination of tones into upright harmonious constructions, torn away from Chaos, adorned with intricate melodic and rhythmic ornamentation. No matter what is "expressed" or "depicted" by this or that chord, it should first and foremost be a true chord and not a false likeness of one. And if the purity of the creative conception would shine with a bright halo over the spirit of our art, then the spirit of melodic intonation becomes that snow-white tunic, which covers its beautiful body, so as a result, it becomes difficult to be excessively demanding in this primeval condition, without which music ceases to be music!

La Monte Young to 1960

MARK ALBURGER

What for Webern would have taken a few minutes, for me takes about 52 minutes [La Monte Young in Strickland, *Minimalism*, 121].

La Monte is a wonderful person and in a way the mother of us all, but also full of it in a way, concocting these theories and playing to invented intervals nobody's ever heard before in the universe. STRANGE [Ingram Marshall in Strickland, *American Composers*, 207].

La Monte Thornton Young was born on October 14, 1935, into the Swiss hillbilly Mormonism of a log cabin in Bern, Idaho. His father was a shepherd who played saxophone in his spare time, and his uncle played alto saxophone professionally in swing bands. Young's earliest sonic memory was the wind whistling off Bear Lake blowing through the criss-crossed logs of his first home.

[T]he winters in that part of Idaho are just notorious. My father told me that once they had a blizzard on the Fourth of July. I told this to my mother's father, Grandpa Grandy, and he said, "Oh hell, that's nothing. I remember one year when it snowed every month of the year!" He said, "The reason I left Bear Lake County is I got tired of wading through snow up to my armpits. Then you come home and take your pants off and they just stand there." So the log cabin had a very special effect on the most important years of my life -- this very simple, spacious, open-ended-in-time type of setting [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 214-215].

He began singing along with the long-held harmonies of cowboy songs and tap dancing at three, played the harmonica and guitar as a preschooler ("Goodbye, Old Paint"), and took up the saxophone at seven.

[My Dad] would really knock me about . . . They started me singing cowboy songs when I was very young. My Aunt Norma used to sing at rodeos and in school -- operettas and so on -- and she taught me to play the guitar. I learned "A-ridin' old Paint, and a-leadin' old Dan." My dad taught me "The Red River Valley" [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 215-216]. . . . My dad was a very strict [saxophone] teacher. He'd absolutely beat me if I played a wrong note [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 56].

Not exactly the environment of a young Ives or Copland. Like Terry Riley, this Young was part of a rustic Western Euro-American culture far removed from Western culture -- a world of natural, vernacular, and industrial music. Young moved with his family to Los Angeles at four, to the vicinity of Utah Lake at about ten, and thence back to Los Angeles for high school.

We can divide my influences into environmental and musical. The environmental we can divide into the natural and the electrical or mechanical. In nature the wind, crickets, cicadas, outdoor resonances like canyons or the owls in the woods near Utah Lake. Under electrical we have the sounds of the power plant next to the Conoco station my grandfather ran in Montpelier. I can remember just standing next to the plant a lot of times and listening to it I just found the transformer sound completely interesting.

. . . Also there was a favorite telephone pole I used to like to stand by in Bern. I went back with Dad and Mom and tried to find it, but you can't tell anymore. Things have changed, poles have been moved, wires have been run. Transformers that used to hum don't hum anymore. But the power plant is still there. I stood next to it and listened to it again [The "Step-Down Transformers" alluded to in many later works].

Motors in the machine shop at school -- I used to sing and whistle along with them.

. . . in L.A. the second time I lived next door to the L.A. River and across the river was a train yard. All day and night trains would be pulling in...oo-oo, oo...and there were train whistles in Montpelier too [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 57-58].

In high school Young began studies in classical music -- an acquired taste first picked up on the radio and fostered by concerts of Bartók and Schoenberg. He fronted jazz combos on alto sax and drummed for the dancing of an Apache friend. Like Robert Ashley, he noted the connection of music to the land.

Young was first introduced to the music of Africa and South Asia at Los Angeles City College (1953-1957), where he studied with Leonard Stein and worked his way through music from plainsong through serialism. He continued playing jazz and demonstrated himself to be no slacker, incredibly enough beating out Eric Dolphy for the second alto chair in the band.

I grew interested in pygmy music at L.A. City College and later transcribed an African wedding song. And of course jazz is a strong Afro-American influence.

. . . I worked my way back from Debussy to chant, Pérotin and Léonin, the Notre Dame school. I see that line going to Debussy. His music to me -- *The Sunken Cathedral*, *Sirens* in the *Nocturnes* -- all of that to my ear comes out of the organum tradition.

But the static element in my music I see very much as coming out of the land of America. Gertrude Stein said, "The music comes out of the land," and Cage and I often discussed this. In Ruggles, Cowell, Cage, even some of Copland, the static American style features sound in and for themselves, suspended in time [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 58].

When I was young and first developing my long tones in 1956, '57, '58, I spent an entire summer -- I think around '57 -- mainly staying in a bedroom in my grandmother's house. I would just lie flat on my back, go off into a meditational state, and think about the meaning of my life -- why was I here, and what was I trying to do. Out of that gradually came these long sustained tones. . . . I wrote a quartet in the style of Bartók, "Variations for String Quartet," which is one of the first compositions that I consider a composition. So I was very inspired by Bartók and then even more inspired by Webern as is evidenced in my "Five Small Pieces for String Quartet." . . . [I]n '56, when I was writing "Five Small Pieces for String Quartet," that's where jazz and contemporary music coexisted [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 217].

If people just aren't carried away to heaven, I'm failing [La Monte Young in Kostelanetz, 194].

Though serial, Young's, *Five Small Pieces for String Quartet on Remembering a Naiad* (November 2, 1956) has poetic haiku-esque titles, repeated chords, and long tones. The composer cites Bartók, Webern, and gagaku as the chief influences in this music.

The latter music was encountered in further ethnomusicological study at UCLA (1957-1958). There he participated in composers' symposia directed by Lukas Foss, and heard one of the first commercially available recordings of Indian music -- improvisations by Ali Akbar Khan (sarod) and Chatur Lal (tabla) on the ragas Sind Bhairavi and Piloo, introduced by Yehudi Menuhin.

His enthusiasm for the soon-to-be free jazz of John Coltrane was heightened by contact with many young professionals, including Ornette Coleman. For a time, Young led a group which included Don Cherry, who achieved fame as a member Coleman's quartet and a bandleader in his own right.

But the jazz didn't get into the music in any overt way. Instead, long tones and silences, in a context of rhythmic textures and broad dynamic ranges, continued in an octet, *for Brass* (1957), and *for Guitar* (1958). Spare titles. Spare music.

[C]louds were the image that I was thinking about around the time I composed *for Brass* [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 247].

Young continued his studies at the graduate level for two years at the University of California at Berkeley (1958-1959). While his music to this point had contained fair warnings, no one was prepared for his next piece.

for Brass is quite strongly in that direction [of total sustain] as is *for Guitar*, but *Trio for Strings* is just totally pure and radically different [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 226].

[La Monte's rests are] like being on a space station and waiting for lunch [Terry Riley in WKCR-FM].

In *String Trio* (September 1958), Young united the minimal pitch content of Webern with the maximal silences of Cage to produce a new musical landscape spreading out glacially over yawning abysses of silence. The execution and concentration must be precise, in a manner that recalls the ceremonial music of East Asia. The gargantuan Beckettian pauses allow room for any Zen master or Quaker to breathe, but, in an academic patronage system where complexity equals value, even a private society for performance à la Schoenberg was too large.

The piece was performed at [Seymour] Schifrin's home. . . . The very small audience consisted of Schifrin and his class, including David del Tredici, Pauline Oliveros, Douglas Leedy, Loren Rush, Jules Langert, and Charles McDermott; Young describes their reaction as polite bewilderment [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 123].

Although Ann Halprin danced to *Trio* sometime during 1959-1960 season, the hour-long work was formally and finally premiered, along with an hour's worth of the later *Composition 1960: #7*, on Columbus Day, 1962 at Judson Hall, Greenwich Village. It has since been performed in 1987 (reviewed by John Rockwell), and July 22, 1989, at London's Almeida Festival by members of the Arditti Quartet.

The post-serial language of *String Trio* is far removed from what has become the tonal/modal minimalist norm. The work remains a specialist's piece, appealing to an educated, slightly counter-cultural audience in its numerology and fussy rhythmic notation. It is classic "eye music" with entrances on minute divisions of the beat, and requires the attentive patience of a musical Job.

Unutterably boring [Rockwell].

The *Trio* unfolds with a sense of suspended time to which the closest analogies in European music may be Notre Dame organum, Debussy's *La Cathédrale engloutie* (which Young hears as twentieth-century organum), and perhaps the slow movement of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier*. [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 121].

With *Poem for Chairs, Tables, Benches*, etc. there was one performance that was about a quarter of a second long. I just moved a bench. I did other performances in which I had large groups of people moving chairs and tables over cement floors, and the whole building would sort of rock and resonate [La Monte Young in Strickland, *American Composers*, 62].

You have to see it in performance. You know, it's possible to get some really lovely cello-like sounds if you very carefully drag a chair or a bench and impinge it against either a wood or a cement floor. And you can really control it if you avoid the rhythmic element -- if you don't let it bump. And you can change the pressure. It's incredible! [Marian Zazeela in Strickland, *American Composers*, 62].

In 1959, Young traveled to Darmstadt to attend a summer session with John Cage, where Karlheinz Stockhausen and David Tudor took great interest in Young's music, discussing it extensively in seminars.

The biggest revelation was hearing David Tudor play those various scores that had been written for him . . . [and] having access to more of [Cage's] lectures [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 232].

Returning to California, Young served as music director from 1959-1960 for the Ann Halprin Dance Company, a progressive ensemble whose other composer-collaborators included Morton Subotnick, Pauline Oliveros, and Luciano Berio. Young had been put in touch with Halprin through Cage, and first worked with her on *Birds of America or Gardens Without Walls*, a disconnected piece which avoided beginnings, middles, ends, and fixed time (!). His *Vision* -- eleven sounds in 13 minutes -- came directly out of the Darmstadt experience [Duckworth, 233].

While time is difficult to fix with regard to Young's first meeting of Terry Riley, the initial encounter of these two composers proved the beginning of a lifelong friendship. Though slightly younger than his California-born spiritual brother, Young proved often the elder creative force in their relationship.

Young's next piece, assisted by Riley and others, was *Poem for Tables, Chairs, Benches*, etc. (1960). It is Cageian to the core in its furniture-moving cacophony for any number of players, and lasting anywhere from almost an hour down to a Webern-ianly-brief nanosecond. Riley recalls a performance at the Western Student Composers Symposium at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah on April 30, 1960, which provoked not only ridicule, but tears.

I would make circles with the gong on the floor and it would just screech [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 302].

This made a sound not unlike a wagon wheel creaking, which was repeated for at least fifteen or twenty minutes and it seemed like three hours. Members of the audience became quite distressed [Hansen, 35].

2 sounds: it's really a very radical piece, and very noisy, and created riots when it was first performed [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 231].

Young was assisted again by Riley in his realizations for Halprin of *2 sounds* (April, 1960). Instruments are not specified in the score, and the work has been performed in both taped and live versions.

In one realization Young did not drum the gong but dragged it over the concrete floor, while Riley scraped a wastebasket against the wall. This particular performance led the audience to burst into both loud swearing and "The Star Spangled Banner" in self-defense [Strickland, *Minimalism*, 136].

2 sounds has been performed within *Poem for Chairs, Tables, Benches*, etc. at Berkeley's Hertz Hall.

I did a chamber opera version of *Poem*. And that was absolutely wild. I had somebody on stage frying eggs, and a girl in the aisle was sleeping in a sleeping bag, and a game of marbles was going on somewhere, and Phyllis Jones was playing Beethoven at the piano, and my *2 sounds* was being played electronically on speakers, and my entire music appreciation class and Garner Rust's entire music appreciation class were walking through the audience reading from their music appreciation textbooks, and I was walking through the audience shouting "Green" into a bucket. And Bruce Conner, the artist, had a cricket in his shoe -- you know, one of those that clicks -- and he was walking through the audience and passing out literature [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 235].

I am particularly interested in longer periods of time [Young, *arabic numeral*]. . . . *any integer* has the element of repetition that is associated with what I refer to as mainstream or hard-core minimalism [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 239].

La Monte Young's [*X*] for *Henry Flynt* (April, 1960) is also known as *arabic numeral (any integer)* and *X (any integer)*. Henry Flynt participated in and would coin the term "concept-art" -- works composed not of physical material but of ideas themselves. With [*X*], Young introduced the most characteristic component of minimalism -- repetition, but in a (what would later prove to be uncharacteristic) dissonant context, where a loud and constant sound is repeated at evenly spaced intervals for any length of time. While the score indicates that the piece is for piano or gong, in practice any sound has been used, typically a dissonant or unpitched one. Young has performed the piece by striking a bucket full of nails amplified with contact microphone, and beating a large frying pan with a wooden spoon. Tempo is slow and constant, between one and two "bangs" per second. Duration is intended to be at least thirty minutes. Young permits performances of shorter durations, including the minimum "one ictus," or single stroke.

When I told Richard Brautigan that I like to get inside of sounds, he said that he didn't really understand what I meant because he didn't visualize a shape when he heard a sound, and he imagined that one must conceive of a shape if he is to speak of getting inside of something. Then he asked, "Is it like being alone?" I said, "Yes" [La Monte Young in Kostelanetz, 197].

The title of any particular performance is based on the intended number of repetitions. Realizations have included *566 for Henry Flynt* and *1698 for Henry Flynt* (the latter on piano -- March 3, 1961).

In the summer of 1960, La Monte Young left Berkeley, on an Alfred Hertz Memorial Travelling Fellowship, for New York, never to return. He moved into an apartment on Bank Street in the West Village that fall.

You have to understand that when I hit New York I became the darling of the avant-garde. That's how Yoko Ono met me. . . . She would have never written [*Grapefruit*] without me. . . . I called my 1960 pieces the Theatre of the Singular Event when they hit the scene, and Henry Flynt later coined the term "concept art." I strongly admit that I didn't come out of a vacuum. I deeply appreciate people like Cage [La Monte Young Strickland, *American Composers*, 62].

Sometimes a title doesn't come. So, in the 1960s pieces, I decided, to hell with it, I'm just going to give these things numbers. It's enough that I composed the compositions [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 351].

We must let sounds be sounds [La Monte Young in Mertens, 22].

Young's *Compositions 1960* show where the indeterminate and minimal meet, in association with the circle of the Cage-inspired soon-to-be named Fluxus movement. Young has termed these pieces "The Theatre of the Singular Event," as opposed to the later Theatre of Eternal Music.

Build a fire in front of the audience. Preferably, use wood although other combustibles may be used as necessary for starting the fire or controlling the kind of smoke. The fire may be of any size, but it should not be the kind which is associated with another object, such as a candle or a cigarette lighter. The lights may be turned out.

After the fire is burning, the builder(s) may sit by and watch it for the duration of the composition; however, he (they) should not sit between the fire and the audience in order that its members will be able to see and enjoy the fire.

The composition may be of any duration.

In the event that the performance is broadcast, the microphone may be brought up close to the fire [La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 #2*, in Young and MacLow].

Young recalls the time of *Composition 1960 #2* ("Build a fire," May 5, 1960):

I was doing very far-out performances in New York. The one story everybody knows is when I burned the violin during a performance of Richard Maxfield's *Dromenon*, I think it was. It was my conceptual composition -- "Build a fire in front of the audience" -- WITHIN his piece. I'd bought a cheap violin and a couple of cans of lighter fluid that afternoon. I think it was with the last ten bucks I had. The audience went wild, but we continued with *Dromenon*. Richard always trusted me implicitly and let me do whatever I wanted, which was the precondition of my performing [La Monte Young in Strickland, "American Composers," 62].

Richard didn't know I was going to do it. Nobody knew. I played in a lot of Richard's music at that time, and prided myself on being a really creative performer. And I felt he'd gotten a kind of dull group together that time. So I had really been thinking about what I would do, and I decided that conceptually it would be interesting to perform my piece within his. I didn't have much money, so I bought a violin for about five or six dollars and filled it with matches. I also remember sitting in the reception room with a bunch of elderly ladies, pouring lighter fluid inside of it so that it would be sure to burn. On stage, we all had music stands.

I just laid my violin down on the music stand, and as the other people started to play, I lit it. It made quite a flame [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 236]

Young's insistence on absolute control, even in ostensibly "free" situations, is a hallmark of his work.

Announce to the audience when the piece will begin and end if there is a limit on duration. It may be of any duration.

Then announce that everyone may do whatever he wishes for the duration of the composition [La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 #3*, in Young and MacLow].

#3 ("everyone may do whatever he wishes," May 14, 1960) has been performed by Dick Higgins singing.

Announce to the audience that the lights will be turned off for the duration of the composition (it may be any length) and tell them when the composition will begin and end.

Turn off all the lights for the announced duration.

When the lights are turned back on, the announcer may tell the audience that their activities have been the composition, although this is not at all necessary [La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 #4*, in Young and MacLow].

#4 ("the lights will be turned off," June 3, 1960) combines the darkness of #2 with an inversion of #3 -- instead of "everyone may do..." the notion is "everyone did..." whether realized or not.

Turn a butterfly (or any number of butterflies) loose in the performance area.

When the composition is over, be sure to allow the butterfly to fly away outside.

The composition may be any length but if an unlimited amount of time is available, the doors and windows may be opened before the butterfly is turned loose and the composition may be considered finished when the butterfly flies away [La Monte Young, *Composition 1960 #5*, in Young and MacLow].

#5 (June 8, 1960) was flutteringly presented in Berkeley that year, but was not allowed at the University of California's Hertz Hall, where a chamber version of *Poem* was presented instead [Duckworth, 235].

All my pieces, I feel, deal with music, even the butterflies and the fire. [La Monte Young in Kostelanetz, 194].

. . . it didn't seem . . . at all necessary that anyone or anything should have to hear sounds and that it is enough that they exist for themselves. . . .

Isn't it wonderful if someone listens to something he is ordinarily supposed to look at? [La Monte Young in Young and Zazeela, 75, 78].

[T]he butterfly piece is very beautiful [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 234].

#6 deals with the conceit of onstage performers / audience watching offstage audience / performers.

[*Composition 1960: #7*] evoked a large number of ancillary sounds (mostly audience noises) but also revealed to those who continued to listen a whole inner world of fluctuating overtones in the open fifth as sustained by the players [Hitchcock, 272].

The groundbreaker is #7 (July 1960), an open fifth "to be held for a long time," which is the ground zero of minimalism. Certainly all of Young's later works spring from this one, and it is head-and-shoulders above the artful silliness of the rest, looking forward to the sustained tones of *The Tortoise* and *The Well-Tempered Piano* and backward all the way to Young's original dreams of the wind and step-down transformers. For Young, the rich blends of overtones are enough. And the perfect interval is perfect. Minimalism meets consonance.

A 45-minute performance of *Composition 1960: #7* was presented by a string trio in New York in 1961. Then an hour-long version was given, with the New York premiere of *String Trio*, on that Columbus Day, 1962, Judson Hall, Greenwich Village performance.

[M]usically, [#7 is] a very strong piece [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 238].

#9's straight line on a blank page is further reduced in #10 to the instruction "Draw a straight line and follow it." Both are dated October 1960 and have been performed as #7-style drone works. *Composition 1960 #10* was premiered at Harvard on March 31, 1961, and repeated on May 19 or 20 at Yoko Ono's New York loft at 112 Chambers Street.

My Composition 1960: #9 consists of a straight line drawn on a piece of paper. It is to be performed and comes with no instructions. The night I met Jackson MacLow we went down to my apartment and he read some of his poems for us. Later when he was going home, he said he'd write out directions to get to his place so we could come and visit him sometime. He happened to pick up #9 and said, "Can I write it here?" I said, "No, wait, that's a piece. Don't write on that." He said, "Wadaya mean a piece? That's just a line" [La Monte Young in Young and Zazeela, n.p.]. . . . "Draw a straight line and follow it" was . . . strong. The line on a card was my answer to Cage's graphic notations [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 234].

#13 runs concurrently with any fine performance of anything (or even mediocre or poor performances, for that matter, depending on the presenter's skill -- "prepare any composition and then perform it," November 9, 1960). While this has been realized by singing the national anthem and "Jingle Bells," Henry Flynt reduced it to tautology in performing #13 itself.

#15 rounds out the cycle as a Zen koan-like Christmas-tree-falling-in-the-forest theoretical "This piece is little whirlpools out in the middle of the ocean" (December 25, 1960).

I thought that the conceptually "This piece is whirlpools out in the middle of the ocean" was very strong [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 234].

All of above *Compositions 1960* (i.e. #s 1-7, 9, 10, 13, and 15) were published in 1963 by Young and sound-poet Jackson MacLow in the avant-garde *An Anthology of Chance Operations / Concept Art / Meaningless Work / Natural Disasters / Indeterminacy / Anti-Art / Plans of Action / Improvisation / Stories / Diagrams / Poetry / Essays / Dance Constructions / Compositions / Mathematics / Music*, commonly, and, minimally, known as *An Anthology. Compositions 1960*. Among the contributors were Earle Brown, Joseph Byrd, John Cage, Ann Halprin, Toshi Ichiyonagi, Richard Maxfield, Nam June Paik, James Waring, Christian Wolff, and Terry Riley (*Concert for Two Pianists and Tape-Recorders* and *Ear Piece*). The missing numbers, Young's *Compositions 1960: #1, 8, 11, 12, 14* have been withdrawn, although #11 seems to have been given in Stockholm on March 1, 1963. One of these may have been the succinct "Urinate" [Slonimsky].

Example 1. La Monte Young. *Composition 1960 #6*

Composition 1960 #6

The performers (any number) sit on the stage watching and listening to the audience in the same way the audience usually looks at and listens to performers. If in an auditorium, the performers should be seated in rows on chairs or benches; but if in a bar, for instance, the performers might have tables on stage and be drinking as is the audience.

Optional: A poster in the vicinity of the stage reading: COMPOSITION 1960 #6 by La Monte Young admission

(price)

and tickets, sold at stairways leading to stage from audience admitting members of the audience who wish to join the performers on stage and watch the remainder of the audience.

A performance may be of any duration.

Example 2. La Monte Young. *Composition 1960 #10, #13, #15*.

Composition 1960 #10
to Bob Morris

Draw a straight line
and follow it.

October 1960

Composition 1960 #13
to Richard Huelsenbeck

The performer should
prepare any composition
and then perform it as
well as he can.

November 9, 1960

Composition 1960 #15
to Richard Huelsenbeck

This piece is little whirlpools
out in the middle of the ocean.

9:05 A.M.
December 25, 1960

[Jim Burton's] fine pantomiming made the piano really look like a horse [Johnson, II 13].

#1 of the three *Piano Piece for David Tudor* ("Bring a bale of hay and a bucket of water onstage for the piano to eat and drink," October 1960) was revived in autumn of 1973 at Hunter College by composer Jim Burton. #2 requires the pianist to continue trying to open the keyboard cover inaudibly until succeeding or giving up. #3 reads cryptically: "most of them were very old grasshoppers."

I cannot really explain "most of them were very old grasshoppers" beyond this one thing, which is, where I was born, Bern, Idaho, in this little log cabin, I remember one bright sunny day, sort of mid-morning, really hot, walking out of the cabin and walking across a couple of fields to go to my aunt Emma's house. There were many grasshoppers. . . . I think it was those grasshoppers that came to me. I just felt inspired about writing this. It's like haiku, you know. "Most of them were very old grasshoppers." It may not be a formal haiku, but it is.

There's not much more to it than that. It's just that I liked it . . . [La Monte Young in Suzuki, 316].

Piano Piece for David Tudor #3 (1960), "Most of them were very old grasshoppers," is radical because it's just a poem, and you have to play that. I don't think anybody had done that before, whereas people such as Bussotti HAD made pictures to be performed [La Monte Young in Duckworth, 234].

Piano Pieces for David Tudor and *Piano Piece for Terry Riley #1* ("Push the piano up to a wall," November 8, 1960) appear, along with *Compositions 1960*, in *An Anthology. Piano Piece for Terry Riley #2* remains unpublished.

From December 1960 to January 1962, Young organized a series of concerts which presented, in addition to his own music, works by Joseph Byrd, Henry Flynt, Toshi Ichiyanaqi, Terry Jennings, Jackson MacLow, Richard Maxfield, Robert Morris, and Terry Riley -- most of whom came to be associated with the Fluxus movement. *Composition 1960 #10* ("Draw a straight line and follow it") and *Compositions 1961* were presented as part of this series.

Example 3. La Monte Young. *Piano Piece for David Tudor #1*

Piano Piece for David Tudor #1

Bring a bale of hay and a bucket of water onto the stage for the piano to eat and drink. The performer may then feed the piano or leave it to eat by itself. If the former, the piece is over after the piano has been fed. If the latter, it is over after the piano eats or decides not to.

October 1960

Example 4. La Monte Young. *Piano Piece for Terry Riley #1*

Piano Piece for Terry Riley #1

Push the piano up to a wall and put the flat side flush against it. Then continue pushing into the wall. Push as hard as you can. If the piano goes through the wall, keep pushing in the same direction regardless of new obstacles and continue to push as hard as you can whether the piano is stopped against an obstacle or moving. The piece is over when you are too exhausted to push any longer.

2:10 A.M.
November 8, 1960

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Concert Review

Thomas Sets Reverse French Course

MARK ALBURGER

San Francisco Symphony, conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas, in Claude Debussy's *La Mer*, Maurice Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Cello*, Olivier Messiaen's *Couleurs de la cité céleste*, and Pierre Boulez's *Messagesquise*. January 29, Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco, CA.

Like fine wine, 20th-century French music seems to improve with age. By far the most engaging, entertaining, and nuanced work on the San Francisco Symphony's January 29 concert was the oldest: Claude Debussy's *La Mer (The Sea)*. Michael Tilson Thomas brought the watery abodes to glistening life in a Davies Hall performance that sparkled.

Close in its wake was an unlikely arrangement/orchestration of Maurice Ravel's *Sonata for Violin and Cello*, taken on by composer (and the evening's concertmaster) Mark Volkert. This was an enterprise that would have been shunned by many -- taking the brilliantly acerbic lines of the Frenchman's late work, and softening and sweetening with added instruments (a full string orchestra) and, yes, even added parts. The end result went remarkably well, and this perceived a listener often turns a very critical ear on such efforts. Of course Ravel is Ravel, and the music, particularly the athletic second and fourth movements, remain appealing in any context.

Olivier Messiaen's *Couleurs de la cité céleste (Colors of the Celestial City)*, manifests a related energy. But in this case the flip side of repose, offered in Ravel's first and third sections, is virtually nowhere present. Instead we are offered a caterwaul and jabberwocky of the late organist-composer's bag of tricks... many of us know the drill: birdsong, plainchant, "Hindu" rhythms, non-retrogradable scales and rhythms, unverifiable synesthesia. Scored for a din of percussion (including a wonderful set of Cuban pitched cowbells), keyboards (featuring the wonderful Robin Sutherland), shrieking clarinets, and chortling brass -- this is not exactly the subtlest of Messiaen scores.

On the other hand, the Pierre Boulez *Messagesquise* was. This "message sketch," a *soggetto cavata* (carved subject) based on the late conductor-philanthropist Paul Sacher's last name -- "Es" (Eb), A, C, "B" (H being the German notation of same), E, "Re" (the fixed-do solfège note "D") -- is scored for seven cellists (one less than Villa-Lobos's well-known *Bacchianas brasileiras* aria) and conjures up a variety of moods. If the work no longer sounds cutting-edge, it still has integrity. And was given, like the rest of the vintage on this attractive program, a first-rate sampling, with solo cellist Peter Wyrick.

Chronicle

January 12

Death of Maurice Gibb (b. 1949, Isle of Man, UK), of cardiac arrest before emergency surgery for an intestinal blockage, at 53. Mount Sinai Medical Center, Miami, FL. "[He] wrote songs and sang harmonies in the Bee Gees through decades of hits and more than 120 million albums sold world wide. . . . Gibb had performed with his fraternal twin brother, Robin, and their older brother, Barry, as the Bee Gees (for Brothers Gibb) since 1958, and many Bee Gees songs, including their biggest hits, were credited to all three brothers. Three Bee Gees' career crested twice. With their first string of hits, from 1967 to 1971, they harmonized on ballads like "How Can You Mend a Broken Heart." And in the mid-1970's they surged to even greater popularity as they rode Miami funk rhythms and falsetto harmonies to some of the biggest hits of the disco era, among them "You Should Be Dancing" and "Stayin' Alive." Their songs dominated the soundtrack album for the 1977 movie "Saturday Night Fever," which sold more than 15 million copies in the United States and an estimated 40 million world wide to become the best-selling album of its time (though it was later surpassed by Michael Jackson's "Thriller" and the Eagles' "Their Greatest Hits 1971-1975"). . . . The brothers began singing together in 1955, and when the family moved to Brisbane, Australia, in 1958 they began appearing at talent shows as the Bee Gees. . . . But their international career began after they moved back to England in 1967. . . . In the mid-1970's the Bee Gees and a new producer, Arif Margin, reshaped their music, putting ebullient Miami funk rhythms behind hits like "Jive Tallinn" and "Nights on Broadway" for the 1975 album "Main Course." . . . [T]he Bee Gees -- in white suits and big smiles -- became synonymous with disco as a pop fad. From 1975 to 1983, every Bee Gees album sold a least a million copies The Bee Gees separated in the mid-1980's and reunited in 1987 for the album "E-S-P." A year later their younger brother, Andy Gibb, a pop singer, died at 30 of myocarditis" [Jon Pareles, The New York Times, 1/12/03].

January 15

Dan Becker and Belinda Reynolds profiled by Joshua Kosman in an arts cover story. San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco, CA.

January 20

Death of Al Hirschfeld, at 99. New York, NY. "[His] caricatures captured the vivid personalities of theater [and music-theater] people and their performances for more than 75 years. . . . To find the word "Nina," the name of his daughter, hidden several times in the lines of his caricatures, was a weekend pastime for millions of readers. Next to his signature he put the number of "Ninas" in his drawings, creating a sort of pleasurable Sunday game for his admirers. . . . Hirschfeld continued to work and to drive his own car virtually until his death. On Saturday, as usual, he was a work in his studio, drawing the Marx brothers, all of whom were his friends" [Richard F. Shepard, The New York Times, 1/21/03].

January 27

San Francisco Contemporary Music Players in *A John Cage Retrospective. Third Construction, The Perilous Night, String Quartet in Four Parts, Ryoanji, and Four6*. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA.

January 21

Del Mar Chamber Players in *Drums, Castles, and Bees*. First Congregational United Church of Christ, Santa Rosa, CA. Repeated February 1, Sonoma State University, CA.