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An Interview with Dimitri Cervo

TOM MOORE

I met the young gaucho composer Dimitri Cervo at the 2003 Bienal of Contemporary Music, where his works for solo flute and strings, *Pattapiana* [named for Pattapio Silva, a great Brazilian flutist who died tragically young at the beginning of the last century] made quite an impression. His work *Canaué*, Op. 22, was heard at the 2007 Bienal. We spoke at the Sala Cecilia Meireles, in Portuguese, on October 7, 2007.

MOORE: What was the musical environment like in your family? How did you become a musician?

CERVO: My family does not have a tradition of professional musicians, but there was a tradition of listening to classical music at home. Music was always present. I remember dancing to the *Symphony No. 6* of Beethoven when I was three years old. We also listened to Brazilian popular music. Something drew me to classical music, and I asked my mother to study piano. We had a conservatory near the house, and at eleven I started piano lessons. We didn't have a piano at home, and I would go to the conservatory three times a week. The following year, when I was twelve, I was already beginning to improvise and compose things. Since I didn't have a piano, I would play the piano pieces on the guitar. I began to learn guitar – a friend of mine was teaching me classical guitar. Things went along like that for three years, playing piano and guitar, until when I was 14, my parents rented a piano, and from that point on, I began to dedicate myself more to music, began to compose, and write scores. I decided at fourteen to be a musician, something I remember clearly. I went to college at 18, and wanted to do composition, but at the time the course in Porto Alegre in composition and conducting was a six-year program, and I had the impression that I would learn more composition if I went deeper into the piano. So I did a bachelor's in piano, a five-year program.

MOORE: What was the music you enjoyed as an adolescent? Were there important classical pieces? What kind of popular music or jazz or rock was present for you?

CERVO: There were some formative musical experiences. One was the *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Rodrigo -- when I was thirteen I would listen to this piece every day -- I heard it hundreds of times. I used to listen to the university radio station at the time, which played classical music all day. At home I would listen to Beethoven -- the *Pathétique Sonata*, the *Appassionata*, the *Piano Concerto No. 3*. These were pieces I listened to a great deal, since I would dedicate myself to one work over many months. In the area of popular music, the centerpiece was Chico Buarque -- my parents very much enjoyed Chico Buarque. I knew all of his records. This was at the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80's. Later I began to listen to more music from the 20th century, when I was 19, 20.

MOORE: Is your family from Porto Alegre?

CERVO: We were born in Santa Maria, which is four hours from Porto Alegre. I was born there; my parents were born in the vicinity, and studied at the Federal University of Santa Maria. But after I was born they moved to Porto Alegre, so I grew up there.

MOORE: Every Brazilian is a mixture...but is your family from Brazil, or do you have immigrants from Italy, Portugal...?

CERVO: On my father's side my family is Italian. My great-great-grandfather came from Italy to Brazil, with my great-grandfather on his lap. My grandfather also married an Italian, so my father's side is all Italian, pure Italian, let's say. My mother's side is more mixed, a mix of Spanish, Indian and Portuguese. My second name is Avila: Dimitri de Avila.

MOORE: What are the Italian traditions in Rio Grande do Sul?

CERVO: The culture there is mainly formed by the Italian and German culture of the immigrants. You also have the indigenous traditions through the missions [Jesuit centers for catechizing the Indians]. There is a tradition of quadrilles. The folklore of Rio Grande do Sul is very much influenced by European traditions. I couldn't say, since I was never much involved with Italian culture.

MOORE: Your undergraduate studies were in piano, but with the idea of becoming a composer.

CERVO: I had been planning to be a composer since the age of 14. When I finished the program in piano, I began to dedicate myself more to composition, although by then I already composed several works. I began to develop my own voice in composition with a piece called *Toccata*, which I wrote when I was nineteen, twenty years old. In 1988, when I was about twenty, there was a touring program of minimalist works by German composers, which was in Porto Alegre for four or five days, so I had a lot of time to get to know that esthetic.

MOORE: Which composers were represented?

CERVO: Arvo Part, which was my first contact with his music. Hans Otte. No Steve Reich or Philip Glass, since all the composers were European. I did a number of workshops of contemporary music. Once I finished my undergraduate degree I began to do recitals of chamber music with my works, and so I moved more decisively toward composition.

MOORE: What is the classical music scene in Porto Alegre like? What are the important institutions? Is there a contemporary music scene?

CERVO: The institutions were the Symphony Orchestra of Porto Alegre, the Chamber Orchestra of the Teatro Sao Pedro, which was more amateur, but still playing at an impressive level. Contemporary music events tended to be limited to those at the Goethe Institut, usually with composers who would come to do master classes and workshops. I remember a musical life in Porto Alegre that was quite rich overall, with classical music being strong there proportionally. If you look at sheer numbers, Rio has more, but if you look at their relative populations, Porto Alegre may be stronger in classical music.

MOORE: In terms of literature there are many important figures from the south of Brazil.

CERVO: We have Érico Veríssimo, a great writer, perhaps the greatest gaucho writer of all time, the poet Mario Quintana...there are some composers who have made an impact on the national level, but few, since the south has always been a region which is more isolated, a state which was separatist, another Brazil, really.

MOORE: It has its own traditions, the figure of the gaucho...

CERVO: It has much more to do with the culture of Buenos Aires and Uruguay than with the culture of Brazil, perhaps because the presence of the African element there is minimal. So the idea of brasiliadade, which has a strong Afro component, is something we don't have in the south. This is something which sets us apart.

MOORE: You mentioned the minimalist music of Part and other European composers. You went on to do a master's after your bachelor's in piano...

CERVO: I went to Salvador. After I finished my bachelor's I spent several months traveling in Europe. I spent a month in Italy and managed to get a fellowship to study composition at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena. I returned to Italy some months later, did the two-month course with Franco Donatoni. I enjoyed the experience, but it was not the kind of music that I wanted to write. I was still trying to find a voice, and my music at the time had influences from impressionism, a little minimalism, a language that was more modal and tonal, but without influences of any sort from Brazilian music – nothing. I even remember that once I played at the Academia Vulcan, in São Paulo, in 1990, played the *Toccata* which I consider my first mature work, my opus one, and pianist Yara Bernete said, "Your music doesn't have anything Brazilian in it, does it?", and that made me start thinking about the matter. I was living in Salvador from 1992 on, where I was doing my master's at the Federal University of Bahia.

MOORE: That must have been very different from Rio Grande do Sul.

CERVO: It was a considerable culture shock for the first six months, a shock that was greater than when I lived in the USA several years later. In Salvador I began to have a contact with a very strong afro-brasiliadade. You see various cultural manifestations, capoeira....I had a colleague who was doing

work on candomble. She was doing ethnomusicological study, and I went with her and was present at various sessions of candomble, which made quite an impression on me – that rhythmic music. Salvador was a very important experience for me, something that I only realized later, because while I was there I continued to write the sort of music I had been doing before. The *Passacaglia Fantasia*, for example, which is a work that blends romanticism with minimalism, is from 1991-1993. Later, in 1993, still in Salvador, I wrote *Flot*, music that had no connection with Brazilian music. But when I left Salvador in 1994, then the thing clicked, and I began to incorporate in 1995 a rhythmic dimension which had not been present before, an emphasis on rhythm, and this is something I associate with my experience with rhythm in Salvador. I began to write music which I enjoyed more and which had a Brazilianity, but which still had a lot of use of repetition. The pieces for clarinet and piano, the *Abertura e Toccata* for orchestra...this was music I started to do in 1995. In '95-'96, I had a almost nationalistic phase. There are the *Variations*, Op. 10, on a theme which then becomes *Luar do Sertão* [a Brazilian popular song], and I wrote a *Bachiana Brasileira* [*Renova-te*, Op. 9] for chorus. I felt the need to write something Brazilian, but it seemed the nationalism was too explicit, as if I had said, "Now I am going to do something Brazilian." The piece for chorus Op. 9 is one which I really like. I think it is an excellent work, while Op. 10 seems to have a nationalism which is too heavy. I stopped composing for two years. I went to Seattle in 1996, and between 1996 and 1998, I had a period of little compositional activity, a year without composing anything....I was in an environment of post-serialism, with a professor who wanted me to write that sort of music, and it wasn't working very well. I wasn't going to write music in the way that the professor wanted. My experience at the university was excellent. This is when I went deeply into minimalism, because I had access to scores, recordings, and musical literature. I got to know the music of Steve Reich and Philip Glass very well, and some La Monte Young as well.

MOORE: Let's go back to Bahia for a moment. Who were your professors?

CERVO: The Federal University of Bahia always had a very strong presence of contemporary music. Koellreutter settled there, and created a school of composers in Bahia -- Ernst Widmer, Lindenbergue Cardoso -- so it was always a school that had space, opening, movement in contemporary music. When I got there, this strain was diminishing somewhat, but there were still many opportunities to have pieces played. My adviser was Jamary de Oliveira, but I didn't work on composition with him. We had seminars on Schenkerian analysis, analysis of atonal music, etc. My final work for the master's was the *Passacaglia Fantasia* for piano and orchestra, which is a piece that I have rewritten three times. When I got to Bahia I wrote the second version, and recently once more. Now I consider it finished. It's the same music, just that I worked on the writing and the orchestration. I presented this piece with the UFBA Symphonic Orchestra in Bahia. It was a propitious environment, but my musical language was not affected.

MOORE: In Seattle you were studying for the doctorate?

CERVO: The two years in Seattle were part of a “sandwich” scholarship [where Brazil supports the student abroad for part of his/her doctoral study]. In '95 I started the doctorate at UFRGS, and in the middle of '96 I went to Seattle, intending to stay for one year. But since I loved it there, I extended the fellowship, and managed to stay for two years, and really managed to take advantage of the second year, since I had mastered the language, knew my way around the library.....I did a seminar on minimalism with Jonathan Bernard, who at the time was editor of Music Theory Spectrum. But the people there at the University of Washington were into post-serialism – my professor had studied with Ferneyhough. It was an esthetic position that did not interest me, but I absorbed what there was to absorb, did three semesters of conducting, which was wonderful. I had opportunities to hear excellent concerts.

MOORE: What was your experience being a Brazilian in the United States?

CERVO: Look, I felt more relaxed in the USA than in Salvador. In Salvador I felt more like a fish out of water, since I was tall, white, had green eyes – I felt more different.

MOORE: As a Brazilian in the USA were you something exotic, different?

CERVO: No, I didn't feel that, since Seattle is a city with many foreigners living there, a port city, a city which is the closest to the Orient, with Indians, Koreans, Chinese – there is even a Chinatown there. There are Russian immigrants. I found it to be an extremely cosmopolitan city. All port cities are cosmopolitan. I had a very negative impression of the United States before living in Seattle.

MOORE: How?

CERVO: I had that idea that Americans were alienated, knew nothing about anything, were cold personally. That stereotype we have, that might be true of people from the interior, the South, but I was very surprised by Seattle. I loved being there, and never felt like I was different, always felt respected and well-treated. I didn't have problems fitting in. It is a nice place to be.

MOORE: And very beautiful to boot.

DC: Beautiful, beautiful, with an excellent quality of life. But perhaps even within the U.S. Seattle is an exception, a privileged city, in terms of natural beauty, in terms of the population, the connection with the East. I know that Cage, Lou Harrison taught there --

MOORE: the “Left Coast.”

CERVO: It's a different United States, and I don't know the rest, just a little of Los Angeles and San Diego. This United States was one that I liked a lot.

MOORE: When you returned from Seattle to Brazil, where did you end up?

CERVO: I finished my doctorate, and began to compose quite a bit before returning from Seattle. It was clear to me that my esthetic was one that would combine minimalism and Brazilian music. I composed *Papaji* for cello and piano in Seattle, in 2000 I wrote *Toronubá*, in 2001 *Pattapiana*. This was a phase where I had lots of time to compose, since I didn't have a steady job: I taught piano, had odd jobs. Time was available, and inspiration was not lacking. I came back to Brazil in 1998, and in 2000 I was awarded the fellowship from CNPQ for those who have recently completed their doctorates. I went to teach at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), classes in ear-training, counterpoint, harmony. My research led to a book on minimalism and its influence on contemporary music in Brazil. I also spent two years at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas, and then returned to the University of Santa Maria for another two years, and since 2006 I have been in Porto Alegre at UFRGS.

MOORE: Let's talk a little about the piece which we will hear today at the Bienal.

CERVO: *Canauê* is a piece I wrote in 2005. It is the last piece in the series *Brasil 2000*, which is a series of nine pieces for various instrumental forces. Since the series was directly inspired by the *Bachianas* of Villa-Lobos, as Villa-Lobos intended to fuse Brazilian music with Bach, I wanted to produce a series of works that would combine Brazilian music with aspects of minimalism.

MOORE: What does the title mean?

CERVO: The titles of my works allude to things, but many do not refer to something specific. *Canauê* is a word I invented, like *Toronubá*, but with an indigenous sound. I feel music in an abstract way, so I prefer not to give titles which are explanatory, but that instead have a sonority that has some connection with the work. In 2004 Maestro Roberto Duarte gave a course in orchestral conducting with the Orquestra Unisinos, which is no longer active, lamentably, but it was very active and had a winter school. I did two courses with Duarte, and in the second was in contact with the *Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9*, which I directed in the students' concert. I did the prelude, and another conductor from Rio did the fugue. The score made quite an impression on me, with its ample writing for strings, full of divisi. The following year, when I began to write *Canauê*, I think there were subliminal influences from this work, because the *Bachianas No. 9* begins with a mystic theme which becomes a fugue. So *Canauê* follows this same structure -- a slow, mystic theme, which in the second part of the work becomes a quick theme, just that in *Canauê* you have an expansion of the theme, with a return of the slow theme, which closes the work, a ternary structure, ABA. This is a work that I conceived as orchestral from the outset, with all the colors, orchestration, but I only wrote the orchestral version in 2007. I wrote the version for strings, because there was the possibility of a performance, and I don't like to write pieces which don't get played. Then there was a version for percussion: marimba solo, with three

percussionists, and this version has an additional movement. The orchestral version I wrote this year, and it was performed by the Orquestra Sinfônica de Porto Alegre recently. After I wrote the orchestral version I returned to the version for strings and changed a few things, so that now it seems well-finished.

MOORE: Brazil has an amazing wealth of composers and music, but this music is largely unknown outside Brazil, perhaps because the internal music publishing market in Brazil is too small, and so there are no scores for export. What solutions could make it possible for Brazilian music to be better known abroad?

CERVO: I think Brazilian music life has improved in how it regards active composers. Over the last 20 years the number new Brazilian works which have been included in concert programs has increased considerably. The advent of the CD facilitated dissemination of Brazilian music. It's true that classical music is on the periphery of Brazilian musical life, but I think that this is not so different from other countries, even those in Europe. I think it has to do with the level of education of the population, and with the level of purchasing power. What needs to be done for this music to have a greater presence is more emphasis on education, as well as an improvement of the economic conditions of the country as a whole.

MOORE: Is there some way to improve the marketing of Brazilian music before these improvements take place?

CERVO: There are professional activities in this regard in Rio and São Paulo – there are publications such as Concerto and VivaMusical! We have strong institutions in Rio and São Paulo which support classical music, but in order for this music to reach a larger portion of the population education is necessary, access to education. Another problem is that our economic elite is an elite which is intellectually and culturally poor. There are plenty of people with money, but they won't use this money to support art, which is different from the situation in the USA, where people leave bequests to support culture, fellowship, where students support the universities where they studied. Brazil is less mature as a people, and the public good is not valued. This is a profound cultural problem. We have to be conscious of the fact that our colonization was done in a chaotic fashion. Brazil only really began when the Portuguese court came. Thanks to Napoleon, Brazil began to be a civilized country, when D. João came, and there started to be libraries, music etc. We have to remember that our civilization is only 200 years old, so our people are very young and immature in a number of areas -- a happy and playful people, but not ready for the sort of messages which are carried by high culture. You can't compare Brazil with somewhere which has two or three thousand years of history.

MOORE: What future projects do you have on line?

CERVO: I have been dedicating myself to making the things which I have done better known. I haven't been writing so much at the moment. I always like to write for particular occasions where the piece will be performed. I feel better

working like that these days. If I can have a good work played ten, twenty, thirty times, this is more interesting for me than having ten pieces which are each played once. *Pattapiana*, which was heard at the Bienal in 2003, is a piece which was played by the Symphonic Orchestra of Campinas last month, and will be played in Paraguay in November. There was a very nice recording made of it in Israel -- it's a piece that has been performed seven or eight times in the last five years.

MOORE: How did you make the connection with Israel?

CERVO: A flutist from São Paulo who has connections with Israel, James Strauss, got a grant to record a disc of Brazilian music for flute and strings, which includes *Pattapiana* – there's also a piece by Tacuchian, a piece by Julio Medaglia. The album hasn't been released yet, but now there's a nice recording of the piece. *Toronubá* has been played more than 30 times, principally in the version for eight percussionists and piano, which is coming out now on the CD of PIAP. The piece being played today, *Canauê*, has already been performed 15 times in two years.

MOORE: This is a lot of work, doing the publicity.

CERVO: Yes. Sometimes I prefer to use my time to make connections and publicize pieces, than to write new works. It is hard to write a really good piece -- something that you almost don't have control over, and the incentives, financial incentives for writing new works are minimal. I have written relatively little because I write on commission. If I am not writing new pieces, I may be rewriting old ones. Next year there is a strong possibility that the *Passacaglia Fantasia* [Op. 3] will be played by the Symphony in Bahia. So this year I rewrote the piece, since I only had the manuscript, produced a set of parts, revised the orchestration, and this is more pleasing than writing a new piece for orchestra.

MOORE: It is certainly no fun to write things that will stay in the drawer.

CERVO: I only have one piece which has not yet been played. These days we have such a variety of music available. There's no point in writing 100 works. I prefer the style of Webern or Varèse -- a few works, which are consistent, which are really good, and enter the repertoire, than to write a lot of works. Of course sometimes quality comes from quantity, but one is busy with teaching, extension projects, administration, preparing entrance exams. I am always doing something: rewriting a piece or producing the parts. I have written only one or two pieces per year.

MOORE: Final thoughts?

CERVO: Brazilian classical music has an enormous potential, just like our popular music. What is necessary for this music to become better-known outside Brazil is simply for it to be heard, for Brazilian performers who have an international presence to bring it with them on their concert programs. They are beginning to look more to their own country. And we have to value our classical music more, create references within Brazil, and this will have an effect outside as well.

Concert Reviews

Wordless Music...Hitting on Something?

KATHERINE BUENO

Ronen Givony presents *The Wordless Music Series – Concert XVII*: Gavin Bryars's *The Sinking of the Titanic* (1969), John Adams's *Christian Zeal and Activity* (1973), and Jonny Greenwood's *Popcorn Superhet Receiver* (2006), conducted by Brad Lubman. 1/16, The Church of St. Paul the Apostle, New York, NY. Repeated 1/17.

Ronen Givony was working at Lincoln Center a few years ago, when he was startled by the ominous question he repeatedly overheard: "What can we do to get some kids here?" With an average age of "something like 76" in the chamber music audience, Givony decided some serious action was warranted.

And so, in order to sway youth into the concert hall, he created the *Wordless Music Series*, featuring dozens of concerts since 2006 in a chamber setting with an indie rock flavor. We experienced this innovative project first-hand at the most recent concert on January 17. With artsy downtown hipsters filling the elegant church, the conductor in jeans, and former Talking Heads frontman David Byrne in the audience, we had a sense that Givony is on to something.

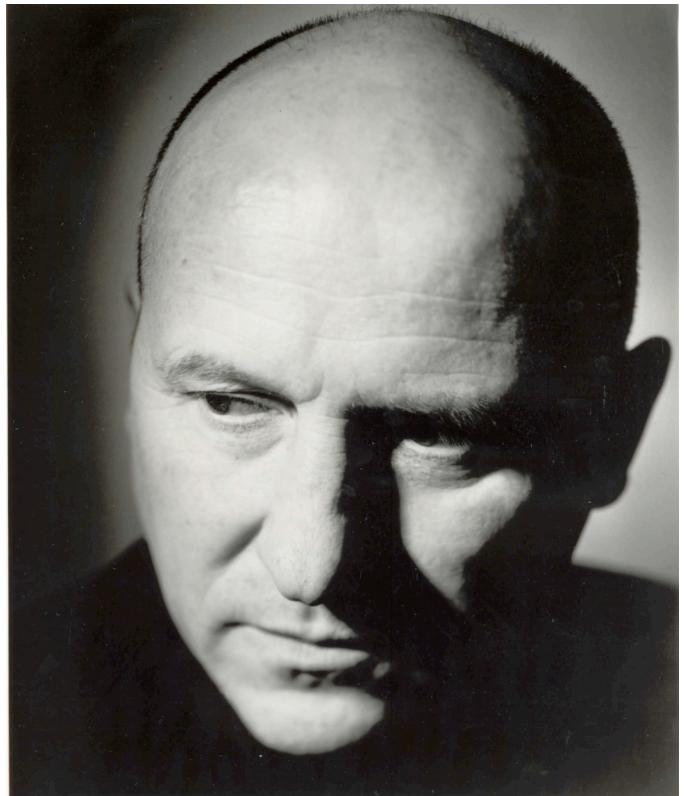
Gavin Bryars's *The Sinking of the Titanic* begins with a simple ocean bell, its percussive metallic sounds somehow suggesting an industrial atmosphere. Reminiscent of a foghorn, an imperfect pedal tone contributes to a soundscape in which non-tonal sound effects are juxtaposed with a beautiful, consonant string chorale. As the work unfolds, one is brought back in time by vintage tape recordings of Titanic survivors, period music, and the chirping of sonar. The music becomes increasingly "warbley" -- an orchestra sinking underwater.

Perhaps most emotionally charged is the entrance of the three female vocalists; the church, with its cross still fully illuminated, now houses angelic voices emulating a British boys choir. The greatness of this work is how Bryars tells this well-known story. Dissonances emerge slowly between musique concrete and strings, and a painfully high-pitched note pans fiercely between opposing speakers. Finally, a warped recording of a music box fades in, a lullaby to eternal sleep. As the orchestra and low tones fade out, the listener struggles to hear the sounds. With a great pause before the applause, hearts pound while bodies remain still. *The Sinking of the Titanic* is a wonderful example of the cross-pollination of amplified orchestral and ambient music and the church only helps one achieve a complete philosophical immersion into the soul of this horrific tragedy.

Popcorn Superhet Receiver is a string orchestra work by Jonny Greenwood, the lead guitarist of Radiohead, and composer of the score for the recently released film, *There Will be Blood*. Beginning with an overwhelming swell of cluster tones, intense vibrato, and ominous, near silent clusters, this is a work about white noise. Inspired by the static between radio stations, Greenwood's strings continuously glide between broad-ranging frequencies and captivating unisons. The swirling, harsh static of the violins eventually become a backdrop for the moving bass and almost ethnic melodic line in the cello.

In the middle section, Greenwood expands his love for full-ranging frequencies in an extended pizzicato section reminiscent of Bartok. Complicated pulses and buzzing create an intense drone eventually coalescing into a rhythmically charged melody. The string players, strumming their instruments like ukuleles, emit a vibrancy that, along with abrupt neon lighting in sync with the contours of the music, create a multi-sensory experience.

Though Givony's next project is "to get a lot of sleep this weekend," we anticipate more great things to come. The next performances from the *Wordless Music Series* include concerts by Stars of the Lid, the ambient duo, and Face the Music, a New York City new-music ensemble for students, grades 4-10. Topping it off, Givony is even hoping to host a summer concert at Lincoln Center for Rhys Chatham's *A Crimson Grail* for 400 electric guitars!



Calendar

April 10

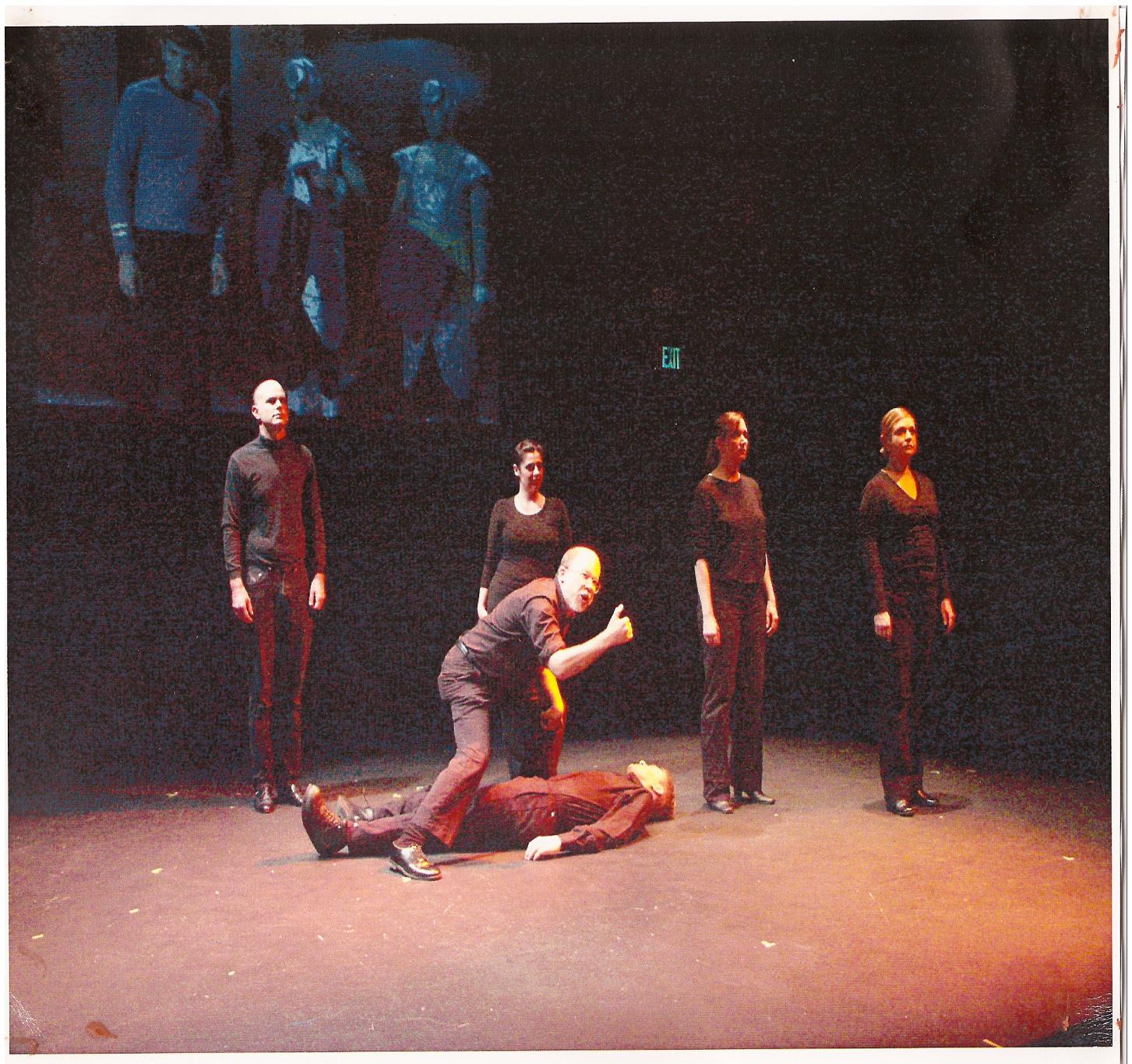
Michael Gordon, David Lang, and Julia Wolfe's *singing in the dead of night* and Steve Reich's *Double Sextet* performed by eighth blackbird. Herbst Theatre, San Francisco, CA.

April 14

Steven Clark's *Amok Time*. Boxcar Theatre, SF, CA.

April 19

San Francisco Cabaret Opera presents *Horsewomen of the Apocalypse: The Red Horse*, including Mark Alburger's *Antigone* and *The Bald Soprano*, Allen Crossman's *Log of the Skipper's Wife*, Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera*, and music by Sheli Nan and John Partridge St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church, San Francisco, CA.



Chronicle

February 2

Berio's *Sequenzas*. Rose Theatre, New York, NY. "[W]hen they are heard together, a sort of continuity emerges" [Steve Smith, The New York Times, 2/5/08].

February 3

Death of Jorge Liderman (b. Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1957), struck and killed by a train, in an apparent suicide. "A 50-year-old man who was struck and killed by a train in BART's El Cerrito Plaza Station on Sunday morning has been identified as Jorge Liderman, a prominent local composer and a professor in the music department at UC Berkeley. Liderman was struck by a Richmond-bound train at 9:42 a.m. in what appeared to be a suicide, said BART spokesman Linton Johnson. 'It's still under an investigation,' Johnson said. Liderman was a fixture on the Bay Area's classical music scene since joining the Berkeley faculty in 1989. His music . . . was performed regularly both here and abroad, and his discography included almost a dozen CDs. . . . Adam Frey, the group's executive director [of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players], said that Liderman had been expected to speak at a public run-through of the piece [on February 3] but did not appear. He said Liderman had attended a rehearsal as recently as [February 1]. . . . Johnson said there was no one else on the BART platform when the incident occurred and that the only witness was the train operator. The operator reported that he saw a man standing on the yellow tiles at the edge of the platform and that he honked several times, Johnson said. When the train came to within 5 feet of the man, he jumped in front of the train, Johnson said. In recent years, Liderman's work had been showing up on concert programs with ever-greater frequency. In March, the New Century Chamber Orchestra gave the world premiere of *Rolling Springs*, and in November, Cal Performances marked the composer's 50th birthday with a concert dedicated to his chamber and vocal music. Much of his music, including the orchestral work *Barcelonazo* and an hour-long setting of *Song of Songs* that was premiered in Berkeley in 2002, was influenced by the sounds of his native Argentina and by his Jewish roots. He also drew on the models of Stravinsky and Bartók, as well as more recent masters like György Ligeti and Steve Reich. Among his major compositions was *Antigona Furiosa*, a 1991 chamber opera that relocated the story of Sophocles' *Antigone* to the period of military rule in Argentina. Liderman was . . . the grandson of European immigrants. He studied electronics in high school, but soon found himself drawn to music. In an interview last year with The Chronicle, he cited a teenage encounter with the music of tango composer Astor Piazzolla as a formative experience. 'I was blown away,' he said. 'If I had to pick a moment where I thought, 'I have to become a composer,' that would be it.' Liderman attended college in Jerusalem, then came to the United States to earn a doctorate in composition at the University of Chicago. He joined the UC faculty immediately afterward. Despite feeling not entirely at home in academia,

Lidberman was a dedicated teacher to a generation of student composers. . . . [SF Gate, 2/3/08]. Colleagues and students of composer Jorge Liderman struggled [on February 4] to come to grips with the news of his death in an apparent suicide [February 3], just one day before the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players were to premiere his *Furthermore*, a new chamber concerto for violin. 'I'm still kind of reeling,' said guitarist David Tanenbaum, who collaborated with Liderman on four chamber works. 'He had project after project going on.' 'Jorge's career has just been on an upward swing,' said composer Edmund Campion, who taught with Liderman in the music department at UC Berkeley. 'He's been writing music and getting premieres and getting noticed all over.' . . . In a statement issued through a spokesman, Liderman's widow, Mimi Wolff, said, 'Jorge was a wonderful, kind and loving man, a brilliant composer and musician. He had an extraordinary talent for expressing himself through his music. He was a very private person, and everything he wanted to communicate to the public he did through his music.' Whatever pain may have afflicted him, Liderman's friends and colleagues said, he kept to himself. 'We knew that Jorge had problems that he'd been fighting for as long as we knew him,' said Campion. 'But he never shared them and he never complained about them. He kept his composure.' Instead, he continued to compose prolifically, including three string quartets, several large orchestral works and the *Aires de Sfarad*, a large compendium of traditional Sephardic songs arranged for violin and guitar. The mood was grim at the Berkeley music department office . . . with some students and staffers too distraught to comment. Liderman's is the latest in a series of deaths to strike this small composition faculty, beginning last March with the death at 57 of Professor John Thow, and continuing in December with the death of Professor Emeritus Andrew Imbrie. 'Jorge was a good and attentive teacher, with his door open for hours on end to encourage students to come in,' said ethnomusicologist Bonnie Wade, the department chair. 'He very much enjoyed teaching the craft of composition.' . . . Composer Steve Reich, whom Liderman often cited as an important influence, said, 'Jorge Liderman was a skilled composer and a delightful human being. It's very hard for me to grasp that he isn't here now. I will miss him' [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 2/5/08].

February 4

NASA beams the Beatles's *Across the Universe* across the galaxy to Polaris. Madrid, Spain. "'Send my love to the aliens,' Paul McCartney told NASA. . . . Apple was happy to approve the idea because it is 'always looking for new markets,' [Martin] Lewis said" [Associated Press, 2/2/08].

Furthermore..., a chamber concerto by Liderman for violinist Carla Kihlstedt and the San Francisco Chamber Contemporary Music Players. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA. "A sorrowful mood, vague but pervasive, lingered in the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Forum during

Monday night's concert by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. The only thing that could dispel it was music as bright, vivacious and downright beautiful as *Furthermore...* . . . In the lobby before the concert, music-lovers -- those who'd known him personally and those who only knew him through his irresistible scores -- greeted each other ashen-faced, with consolatory hugs and murmurs of disbelief. In brief remarks near the beginning of the concert, music director David Milnes called Liderman's death 'both a terrible personal loss and a terrible artistic loss, because the second half of his output is not to be.' . . . In one of the work's wittiest passages, right before the end, the violin launches into a sultry, sinuous burst of tango melody. But the ensemble doesn't get the memo and keeps churning out quasi-minimalist patterns, which now seem endearingly inapt. . . . Even the violinist's cadenza -- a semi-improvised affair that brought out Kihlstedt's most limpid and heartfelt playing -- is in the nature of a conciliatory gesture. . . . [T]here were still other rewards in this program of mostly American music. Clarinetist Carey Bell and percussionists William Winant and Christopher Froh joined forces for a gorgeous, still-voiced rendition of Morton Feldman's functionally titled *Bass Clarinet and Percussion*. . . . Steven Mackey's *Indigenous Instruments*, a three-movement quintet from 1989, wrapped facetious and rhythmically punchy free-for-alls around a slow movement that is probably the most alluring music I've ever heard from this composer. Exploring the same oscillating thirds that infuse the first movement, the music unfolds in slow, austere clouds of sound, trippy but never vague. . . . Violinist Graeme Jennings played Brian Ferneyhough's *Intermedio alla Ciaconna*, followed by Froh's account of a vibraphone solo from Philippe Manoury's *Livre des claviers*" [Joshua Kosman, San Francisco Chronicle, 2/6/08].

Merce Cunningham, at 89, begins offering his Monday night class online. New York, NY.

February 5

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Otto Ketting's *De Aankomst (The Arrival)* and Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto No. 3*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 6

Ground breaking for The Musical Instrument Museum. Phoenix, AZ.

Royal Concertgebouw orchestra in Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 5. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 7

San Francisco Symphony in Gyorgy Ligeti's San Francisco Polyphony, Bela Bartok's Piano Concerto No. 3, and Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 6. Davies Hall, San Francisco, CA.

February 8

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Benjamin Franklin's *Quartet No. 2*, Henry Cowell's *Quartet Euphometric*, Louis Greenberg's *Four Diversions*, George Antheil's *Sonata No. 2 for Violin, Piano, and Drums*, and Amy Beach's *Piano Quintet*. New York Society for Ethical Culture, New York, NY.

Budapest Festival Orchestra in Bela Bartok's *The Wooden Prince*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

February 9

Marin Alsop conducts the Boston Symphony in Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Steve Mackey's *Time Release*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Joan Kwuon and Andre Previn in Sergei Prokofiev's *Violin Concerto No. 2 in A*. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

Manhattan Sinfonietta in *The World of James Tenney*: Tenny's *Harmonium No. 7*, Henry Cowell's *Ensemble*, Larry Polansky's *Shma: Fuging Tune in G*, and Michael Byron's *Awakening of the Birds*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

The Villa-Lobos Event. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

February 10

50th Annual Grammy Awards, including a citation for Herbie Hancock's *River: The Joni Letters*. Staples Center, Los Angeles, CA. "[A] spectral duet . . . found . . . Alicia Keys trading verses with Frank Sinatra . . . in a performance of Mr. Sinatra's 1955 hit *Learnin' the Blues*. . . . 'Sinatra looked pretty good for 150, didn't he?' Prince asked an appreciative audience [N.B. - The crooner, born 1915, would be 92 - ed.] [The New York Times, 2/11/08].

Terry Riley's *Remember This O Mind* performed by the American Composers Orchestra. Annenberg Center, Philadelphia, PA.

Manhattan Sinfonietta in *The World of Milton Babbitt*: Babbitt's *Ars Combinatoria*, Arnold Schoenberg's *Herzgewachse*, Christopher Buchholz's *In Just*, and Jonathan Dawe's *Symphony of Imaginary Numbers*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Budapest Festival Orchestra in Bela Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

February 11

Ernest Bloch's *Avodath Hakodesh (Sacred Service)*. Central Synagogue, New York, NY.

Jean-Frederic Neuburger performs Dmitri Shostakovich's *Prelude and Fugue No. 14 and 15*. Weill Recital Hall, New York, NY.

February 13

Midori and Mac-Andre Hamelin in Toru Takemitsu's *Between the Tides* (with cellist Johannes Moser), plus the Miro Quartet in the composers *A Way a Lone*. Rose Theater, New York, NY.

February 14

Joshua Bell and Jeremy Denk in Sergei Prokofiev's *Violin Sonata No. 1 in F Minor*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 15

Olivier Messiaen's *Turangalila-Symphonie*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

Meredith Monk. *Symphony Space*, New York, NY.

February 16

San Francisco Contemporary Opera in *Horsewomen of the Apocalypse: The White Horse*. Mark Alburger's *Flying Out the Mouth* (Harriet March Page) and *White Horse Suite*, and music of Cynthia Weyuker. St. Gregory of Nyssa, San Francisco, CA.

Anton Webern's *Six Pieces for Orchestra* and Alban Berg's *Three Pieces for Orchestra*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY> Carnegie Hall, New York, New York.

February 17

Alexander Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg (The Dwarf)* and Viktor Ullman's *Der Zerbrochene Krug (The Broken Jug)*. Los Angeles Opera, Los Angeles, CA.

February 18

Bill Kaulitz and Tokio Hotel. Fillmore, New York, NY.

Juilliard Orchestra in Rolf Wallin's *Das War Schon!*. Avery Fisher Hall, New York, NY.

February 19

Da Capo Chamber Players in Alla Borzova's *Merry Hour*, Louis Karchins *Gods of Winter*, and Paul Salerni's *Speaking of Love and Bad Pets*. Merkin Concert Hall, New York, NY.

Foo Fighters. Madison Square Garden, New York, NY.

Jennifer Higdon's *Concerto for Orchestra*. Mannes College of Music, New York, NY.

Soyeon Lee, in a dress made of recycled juice containers, in Huang Ruo's *Divergence: For Piano and Speaker* (recycled from the composer's concerto for five players) and Sergei Prokofiev's *Piano Sonata No. 7*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

February 21

Enrico Rava and Stefano Bollani. Birdland, New York, NY.

The Magnetic Fields. Town Hall, New York, NY.

Berkeley Symphony in Dmitri Shostakovich's *From Jewish Folk Poetry*. Zellerbach Hall, Berkeley, CA.

February 22

American Voices, 1750-2008. Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in Charles Ives's *Piano Trio*, Alan Louis-Smith's *Vignettes: Covered Wagon Woman (From the Daily Journal of Margaret Ann Alsip Frink, 1850)*, and music of Anthony Philip Heinrich and Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Society for Ethical Culture, New York, NY.

Kronos Quartet in Gary Leport's *Night of the Vampire*, Clint Mansell's *Requiem for a Dream*, Fernando Otero's *El Cerezo*, Aviya Kopelman's *Widows and Lovers*, John Adams's *Fellow Traveler* (based on an aria from *Nixon in China*), Jacob Garchick's *Lullaby*, and the traditional Iraqui *Oh Mother, the Handsome Man Tortures Me*. Zankel Hall, New York, NY.

Bern/Klucevsek Duo. Trinity Center for Urban Life, Philadelphia, PA.

February 23

St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble in Dmitri Shostakovich's *Piano Trio No. 2*, Sergei Tcherepnin's *Regenerations*, Igor Stravinsky's *Elegie*, Joan Tower's *For Daniel*, and Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. Chelsea Art Museum, New York, NY.

Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, including music from Igor Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*. Metropolitan Opera, New York, NY.

February 24

Markus Groh in Gyorgy Ligeti's *Fanfares* and *Arc en Ciel*, Gyorgy Kurtág's *Játekok*, Erwin Schulhoff's *Five Etudes de Jazz*, and Franz Liszt's *Sonata in B Minor*. Frick Collection, New York, NY. "The . . . Liszt arrived . . . almost as an apology for any inconveniences suffered earlier" [Bernard Holland, The New York Times, 2/26/08].

February 25

Juilliard Quartet and Gilbert Kalish in Ralph Shapey's *Piano Quintet* and Elliott Carter's *Piano Quintet*. Peter Jay Sharp Theater, New York, NY.

Eric Clapton / Steve Winwood. Madison Square Garden, New York, NY.

Pierre Boulez conducts the Chicago Symphony in Matthias Pintscher's *Osiris* and Bela Bartok's *Piano Concerto No. 3*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY. "Boulez . . . happily leaves the three B's and most of the M's and S's of the standard repertory to other conductors" [Bernard Holland, NYT 2/28/08].

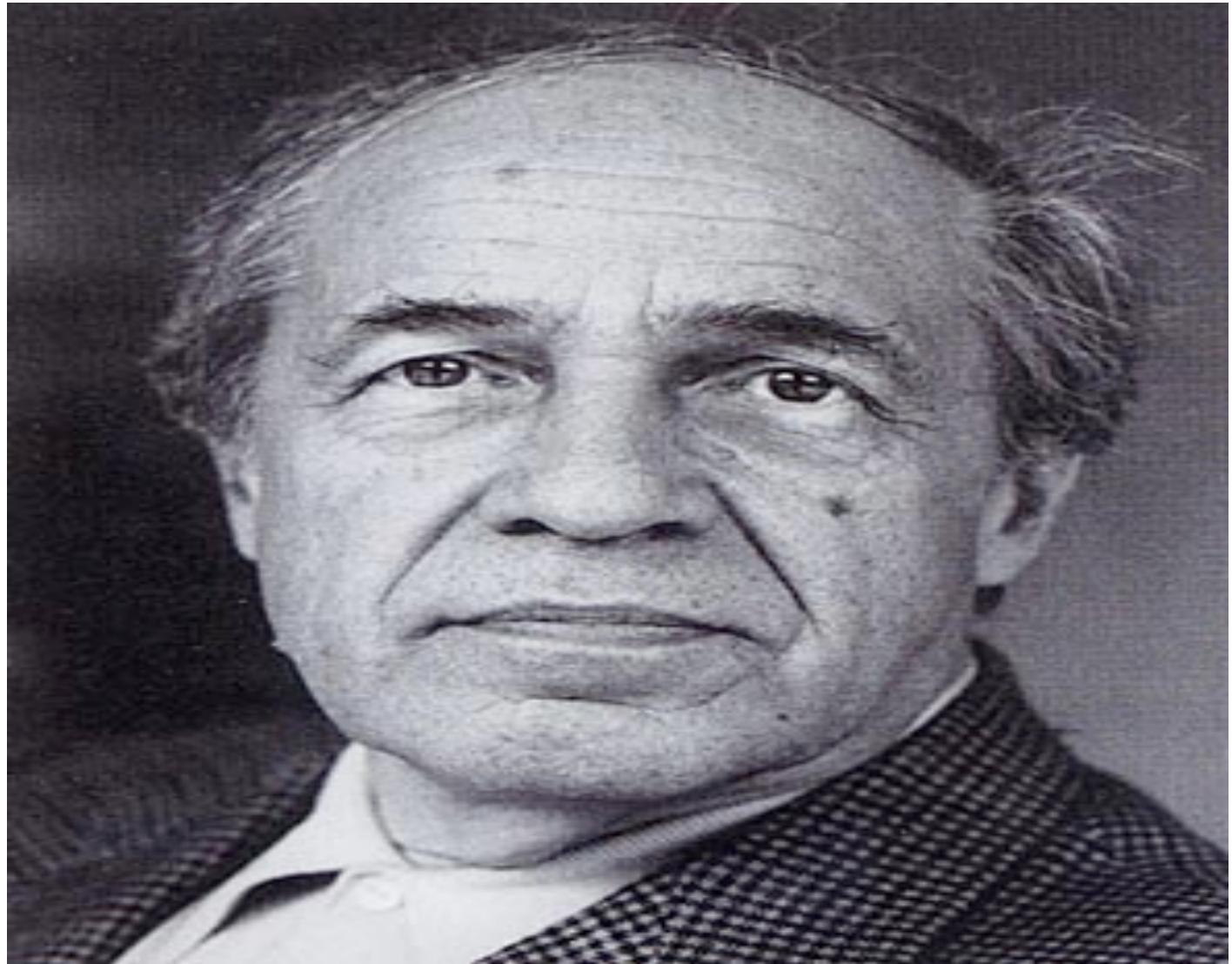
Joshua Schmidt's *The Adding Machine*. Minetta Lane Theater, New York, NY.

February 26

Pierre Boulez conducts the Chicago Symphony in Luciano Berio's *Quatre delicaces* and Igor Stravinsky's *Petrushka*. Carnegie Hall, New York, NY.

February 29

Network for New Music in *Ten for Carter*, piano pieces for the composer's 100 years, plus his *Triple Duo*. Settlement Music School, Philadelphia, PA.



Publication

Jonathan Carr. *The Wagner Clan: The Saga of Germany's Most Illustrious and Infamous Families*. Atlantic Monthly Press. "Every summer, the lucky few with hard-to-get tickets traipse to Bayreuth in Bavaria for the opera festival that [Richard] Wagner himself created in 1876. . . . They are even welcomed by his octogenarian grandson, Wolfgang. . . . [I]n his second wife, Cosima, Liszt's daughter, [Richard] found a partner even more virulently anti-Semitic than he. After Wagner's death in 1883, the story turned still darker as Cosima, who outlived the composer by 47 years, fell under the influence of Houston Stewart Chamberlain, an extreme right-wing Briton whose writing on race influenced the Nazis and who married Cosima's daughter, Eva. A rare glimmer of decency was provided by Wagner's only son, Siegfried, a conductor and composer in his own right, who lived in fear that his bisexuality would become known. His punishment was to marry another ghastly Briton, Winifred Williams-Klindworth, who as early as 1923 had become infatuated with Hitler. . . .

In 1930, Cosima and Siegfried died within months of each other, and Winifred took charge of the Bayreuth festival, which from 1933 enjoyed Hitler's full support. Hitler was also a frequent visitor to Wahnfried, the Wagner family home, where he was the beloved 'Uncle Wolf' to Winifred's four children. Even during the war, he remained close to the family, visiting Wolfgang in the hospital after he was wounded in Poland and keeping Wolfgang's older brother, Wieland, out of uniform. Hitler favored Wieland as the festival's next director -- and was proved right. In 1951, the festival reopened, with Wieland and Wolfgang co-directors but Wieland the creative force. When Wieland died . . . Wolfgang became sole director and, as such, keeper of the family secrets, noting in his autobiography that 'neither my brother nor I had any reason to put on sackcloth or beat our breasts in remorse.' Today, Wolfgang, nearly 90, is bent on imposing Katharin, his 29-year-old daughter from a second marriage, as his successor at Bayreuth over the candidacies of his oldest daughter, Eva, and his niece, Nike. So the show goes on" [Alan Riding, The New York Times, 2/3/08].



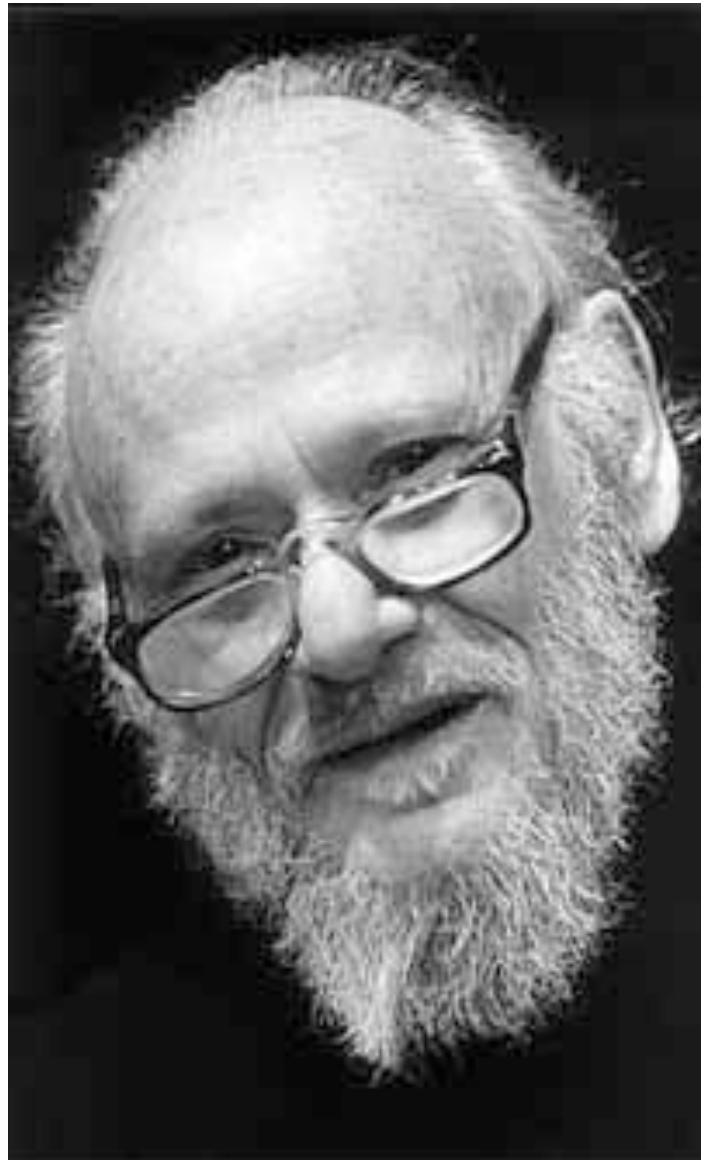
Recordings

Terry Riley. *The Cusp of Magic*. Kronos Quartet.

Ringo Starr. *Liverpool 8*. Capitol.

Ralph Shapey. *Music by Ralph Shapey. Five for Violin and Piano*. Millennium Designs. Centaur.

Ralph Shapey. *Ralph Shapey: Radical Traditionalist. 21 Variations* (1978). *Fromm Variations* (1966; 1972-73). *String Quartet No. 6* and *7*. New World Records. "[New World is] an essential nonprofit label This recording is evidence of a promise fulfilled. In 2003 CRI (Composers Recordings Inc.), a scrappy nonprofit label that maintained the widest-ranging catalog of contemporary music, went out of business after 48 years. This was a particular blow to the discography of American composers because CRI kept all releases in its catalog available, no matter the sales. New World Records came to the rescue, pledging to digitize the master tapes of the complete CRI catalog and to make every recoding available as a burned-to-order CD, complete with the original liner notes and cover art. New World also promised to re-issue selected recordings and compilations. The Shapey album is one. . . . Yes, like many curmudgeons, Shapey had a self-deprecating sense of humor, which came through in a 1996 interview with The New York Times when he turned 75. 'Now it's official: I'm an old fish, as they say in Yiddish,' he said, laughing heartily. Shapey described himself as structurally a classicist, emotionally a romanticist and harmonically a modernist. His musical language came from a free adaptation of the 12-tone technique that he called 'the mother lode,' in which aggregates of pitches around each note in his rows allowed him to shift from chord to chord through common tones, lending his harmony a grounded quality. In any case, during a good performance of Shapey work, few listeners will fret about tone rows. The music is too ecstatic, thorny and elemental for that. Though Shapey faced much resistance, he had his share of acclaim. In 1982 he became one of the first composers to win a prestigious MacArthur Foundation award. He had never heard of the prize, the so-called genius award, and was suspicious when a foundation official called him with the news that he had just won more than \$400,000. As he explained in that Times interview, he wanted to know what he would have to do to collect the award. Write a piece? Quit his teaching job? 'I got impatient and said: "Let's quit this nonsense. Which one of my friends or enemies put you up to this?" He hung up. The next day he received an official letter with confirmation of the award" [Anthony Tommasini, The New York Times, 12/27/07].



Writers

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