CHAPTER 11

Interfaces with Rock and Jazz

As late as 1975, jazz was jazz, rock was rock, and classical music was classical music. Even the minimalists and conceptualists, independent of Europe as they were, knew which side their music stood on. The general public had no problem with that. But with each passing generation, musicians were becoming increasingly unhappy as more and more grew up trained in parallel traditions and were impatient with having to compartmentalize their abilities. Jazz and classical music had carried on a mutual flirtation since the 1920s or earlier, but rock was a newcomer and ostentatious about its vernacular, "low art" status. To cross that line from classical music into rock—if line there was, or perhaps only a magic fire like the illusion with which Wotan surrounded Brünnhilde—was a daunting taboo. Future generations will probably have difficulty understanding that it occasioned more anxiety than even the New Romantics' return to tonality.

Rock went through its most fertile, aggressive, electrifying period in exactly the years in which classical music was most caught up in dry, cerebral complexity; almost as though the two streams had polarized in some chemical reaction by which all the physical and emotional energy rushed to one side, all the analytical energy to the other. The years that forged rock-and-roll in the crucible of black popular music by performers such as Billy Ward and the Dominoes, Joe Turner, Big Mama Thornton, and Chuck Berry—1951 to 1955—were the very years in which Cage turned to chance processes and Babbitt and others to serialism.

Rock and roll emerged as a social force in 1955, the summer when "Rock Around the Clock" by Bill Haley and the Comets became the most popular recording in America. Elvis Presley made his first recording in 1954 and dominated the pop charts of the late fifties. Then, in the sixties rock-and-roll became simply rock, developing lyrics of greater political significance and making more of electronic amplification and distortion. Almost exclusively the domain of the young, the new style came to symbolize the social and political upheavals of the sixties, espe-

cially after the creative energy had flowed into English bands. Most notably, the Beatles appeared on the Ed Sullivan show in 1964, capturing the heart of America's youth. Continued by artists such as Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, the Doors, the Beach Boys, and the Grateful Dead among many, many others, rock became *the* music of hip, liberal, young America.

Given all this, it is amazing in retrospect how separate the avant-garde classical musicians kept themselves from rock as late as 1978. In the musics of Robert Ashley, Steve Reich, and Philip Glass, one can sense the desire to tap into the physical energy that rock thrived on, but the materials and formulas of rock were off-limits, not to be considered. To the dismay of the purveyors of serialist complexity, certain artists like Leonard Bernstein defected to the pop world, finding there a healthier and more confident energy. In 1966, Bernstein wrote:

> as of this writing, God forgive me, I have far more pleasure in following the musical adventures of Simon and Garfunkel or of The Association singing "Along Comes Mary" than I have in most of what is being written now by the whole community of "avant-garde" composers. . . . Pop music seems to be the only area where there is to be found unabashed vitality, the fun of invention, the feeling of fresh air. Everything else suddenly seems old-fashioned: electronic music, serialism, chance music—they have already acquired the musty odor of academicism.[1]

Bernstein was hardly alone. As much as serialism and conceptualism represented diametrically opposed poles of the classical spectrum, one seeking after consummate control and the other a complete abnegation of control, both were marked by a cerebral quality almost totally devoid of physicality. Milton Babbitt's serialized time-point rhythms and La Monte Young's "This piece is little whirlpools out in the middle of the ocean" had in common that you couldn't tap your foot to either of them.

The classical prejudices against rock were deeply based in training and musical values, and not entirely without basis. One prejudice was against rock's extreme harmonic simplicity, stemming as it did from a musical practice in which the harmonies I, IV, and V sufficed for most musical structures. To classical composers trained to value pitch structures above rhythmic energy or timbral sophistication, such voluntary abnegation of subtlety seemed suicidal. An even more serious problem was notation, for the drumbeats and guitar riffs of rock had nuances that notation could not capture nor classically trained ears always register. For hundreds of years the classical composer had lived by writing down his melodies and rhythms for someone else to read; rock musicians worked more along the lines of Indian or Arabic music, working musical materials out in rehearsal, memorizing them, and improvising around

Most
aptur-
; Janis
rs, the
;, rock

avant-
'78. In
1 sense
iut the
ed. To
its like
althier

1-
e
it
1-
·e
h
c,
ir

m rep-
e seek-
tion of
void of
Monte
ocean"

·aining
ce was
from a
r most
struc-
untary
·oblem
es that
egister.
; down
.sicians
nusical
iround

basic structures. These two vastly different models could not simply be reconciled by an act of will.

Furthermore, the popular appeal of rock was grounded in a sexually exciting, highly physical performance style that few conservatory-trained composers were temperamentally prepared to imitate. The truth is, despite rock's harmonic simple-mindedness, it had evolved its own highly inflected idioms that classically trained composers could not simply pick up with any authenticity. One could no more step into that tradition without the proper background than one could suddenly pick up a sitar and sing Indian ragas. Attempts to notate rock rhythms or to have classically trained percussionists try to drum rock-style have invited justified ridicule. As Rhys Chatham admitted after his experience with rock,

> I, too, had a fairly arrogant attitude as I first approached the study of rock. I had very few insecurities as a classical musician, so I thought, "I've been a musician all my life, I've played Pierre Boulez's *Sonatine for Flute and Piano,* and I know how to count to four, so this ought to be easy.". . . [B]ut my playing was stiff, very stiff. I was counting the rhythms in my head rather than really feeling them.[2]

Furthermore, the tremendous commercial success of rock musicians incited composers to envy and self-righteous resentment; in the seventies the poverty of avant-garde musicians became a badge of integrity.

However, with minimalism came developments that eventually paved the way to at least a partial rapprochement. First of all, in *In C* and other works, Terry Riley reintroduced a steady beat. Reich proved in *Four Organs* that not only could three chords provide sufficient harmonic interest for an extended work: one would do just fine. (To this day, however, even the most laid-back postminimalists avoid the well-worn I–IV–V progression.) Glass's electronic keyboards and amplified winds and strings edged closer to the timbral and dynamic aspects of rock. Perhaps most importantly, by working closely with their own ensembles, Young, Glass, Reich, and the downtown Manhattan composers who followed them initiated a new performance practice that was not entirely dependent on notation; inflections could evolve within the rehearsal process, and composers could impart their ideas to the performers directly without the filter of the printed page. The new-music band of the sixties and seventies, largely because of economic pressures, began to resemble the rock group, structurally and socially.

Conciliatory moves were coming from the other direction as well. The British rockers David Bowie and Brian Eno heard Philip Glass's *Music with Changing Parts* when his ensemble performed it in England in 1971, and soon after began incorporating drones and repetition of motives in their rock albums. Passages of composed, sometimes quasi-minimalist patterns began appearing in the early seventies music of groups like Yes,

Genesis, and Pink Floyd. Protean rocker Frank Zappa incorporated wild improvisation and dissonant gestures into his music and wrote liner notes that sparked rockers' interest in Varèse, Webern, and Feldman. Even the Beatles got into the act: their public enthusiasm (and that of The Who as well) for Stockhausen caused a temporary run on that composer's recordings, and in 1968 they appropriated tape-splicing and loop techniques for the tape collage *Revolution No. 9* on their "White Album."

Further outside the mainstream, underground bands like Henry Cow used unusual meters and sharply turning stream-of-consciousness forms that, to the embarrassment of many composers, were more adventurous and challenging than most of what passed for excitement in the academy. Starting with his *Music for Airports* (1978), and partly under Cage's influence, Eno revived Erik Satie's ninety-year-old dream of "Furniture Music," reborn as ambient: a music specifically made to be used as neutral background. (It would be another fifteen years, though, before ambient music would make effective inroads into the new-music world, having made a detour through hip hop first.) Having cornered the market on physicality, late seventies rock made an aggressive bid for serious intellectual respect as well.

Under these pressures it was inevitable that definitions would blur into invisibility, at least temporarily. Starting in 1977 Rhys Chatham caused a furor by inviting experimental rock bands to play at the Kitchen, mecca of conceptualist and minimalist music. About the same time Robert Ashley began collaborating with rock artists such as Peter Gordon from the new-wave group Love of Live Orchestra and the songstress Jill Kroesen. Laurie Anderson, performance artist, surprised herself by becoming a rock star. Glenn Branca switched from punk songs to symphonies. Peter Gordon wrote operas. As it became impossible to tell which context some performers were meant to be heard in, Robert Ashley, realizing that long pieces required more structural support than short ones, ventured a distinction: "If it's under five minutes it's rock, over five minutes it's classical."[3] No one came up with a better definition.

Except for Diamanda Galás—always a special case no matter what the topic—the composers covered below are those who fused some aspect of minimalism with a rock beat. Tensions between rock and the avant-garde didn't resolve in the eighties but only sharpened, and most of the composers who more selectively worked rock materials into their musical language will appear in chapter 13, in the totalist generation.

· **Laurie Anderson**

"Ha—ha—ha—ha—ha—ha—ha—ha. . . ." This lightly intoned mantra suddenly zoomed out of the art-world avant-garde into mass conscious-

Laurie .

ness in
Super
compo
invent
term "
son in
I
a teer
Interl
that b
one th
studie
then a
esthet
didn't
newsp
1
with c
starte

l wild
notes
:n the
'ho as
:cord-
es for

Ienry
isness
dven-
.n the
inder
im of
to be
ough,
music
nered
id for

l blur
itham
it the
same
Peter
d the
)rised
punk
npos-
rd in,
I sup-
nutes
)etter

what
some
d the
most
their
on.

antra
cious-

Laurie Anderson. *Photo by Jeffrey Mayer.*

ness in 1981 as Laurie Anderson's disarmingly innovative song "O Superman" hit no. 2 on England's pop charts. Actress, singer, violinist, composer, dancer, designer, standup comedienne, Anderson practically invented a new type of theater so striking and unclassifiable that the term "performance art" was coined to refer to it. Probably no other person in this book has achieved such popularity as a performer.

Laurie Anderson was born in 1947 and grew up near Chicago. As a teenager she avidly studied violin and spent her summers at Interlochen Music Camp in Michigan. At sixteen, however, she decided that being a virtuoso took more time than she wanted to commit to any one thing. After taking art classes at the School of the Art Institute, she studied with Carl André and Sol LeWitt at the School of Visual Arts and then attended Columbia as a sculpting major, where, as she put it, "the esthetic was that sculpture should be a) heavy and b) made of steel. I didn't fit into this esthetic very well."[4] (Her sculptures were made of newspaper or fiberglass.)

In 1973 Anderson met Philip Glass and began hanging around with other artists at his mesmerizing rehearsals. Though a sculptor, she started making pieces that involved sound and performance, starting

that year with *Automotive,* a concert for automobiles. She tried her hand at small films, and since she never finished the soundtracks in time for showings, she would stand in front and perform the stories and music live: thus "performance art" was born. Her first real performance art piece was *As If* (1974), in which she told stories and played the violin while wearing ice skates whose blades had been frozen into blocks of ice, as she waited for the ice to melt. Violins became her favorite props: she sanded one, burned one, mounted a loudspeaker inside one, filled one with water, popped popcorn inside a tin one, and, in one of her most famous routines, played a violin—whose bridge had been replaced with a tape recorder head—with a bow whose hairs had been replaced with audiotape with words recorded on it. The latter trick gave her an interest in backwards speech, such as "god" being "dog" in reverse.

The turning point came in 1981. Helped by a $500 NEA grant, a small New York label had pressed 1,000 copies of a single album she made with two songs, "O Superman" on one side and "Walk the Dog" on the other. Unexpectedly, "O Superman" climbed to number two on the pop charts in England. In order to deal with the sudden demand for copies, she signed a deal with Warner Brothers Records. "I quickly found out," she wrote later,

> that in my world (the New York avant-garde) this was considered "selling out. . . ." The avant-garde in the late '70s was extremely protective of its own ideas, territory, and privilege. I myself had benefited from this attitude. I had been supported and protected by this network. It had always been a safe place to work, until I signed a contract with a "commercial" company. A couple of years later, this process was known as "crossing over" and was looked on more favorably by the avant-garde.[5]

"O Superman" was from a four-hour multimedia work that Anderson premiered in 1980, *United States I-IV.* The song was soon more permanently recorded on a full-length LP, *Big Science* (1982). Subsequent albums confirmed Anderson's status as a rock star from the avant-garde: *Mister Heartbreak* (1984), *Home of the Brave* (1986), *Strange Angels* (1989), and *Bright Red* (1994).

It would be impossible in a quick survey to even list all of the technological tricks in Anderson's performances. She sings in total darkness with a lit light bulb in her mouth so that all you can see are the shapes of her words. She projects words in light and makes them visible by swinging her bow in front of the light fast enough for the words to be seen. She dances in a body suit fitted with electronic drum-machine components, so that every time she hits her wrists or elbows against another part of her body, booms emerge. She wires her violin to a Synclavier synthesizer so that she can play birdcalls, buzzers, voices. In many performances she alternates between microphones, one of which feeds into a

hand
ne for
music
ce art
violin
of ice,
ıs: she
d one
· most
d with
d with
inter-

·ant, a
m she
ıg" on
ın the
ıd for
uickly

ı
-
-
ı
ı
-

.erson
erma-
quent
ɣarde:
1989),

· tech-
·kness
hapes
ıle by
to be
: com-
ıother
r syn-
erfor-
into a

harmonizer that turns her voice into a deep male voice that she calls "The Voice of Authority."

During the late eighties, she began to use less music in her performances and concentrate more on political commentary. With a major work, *Stories from the Nerve Bible*, though, she returned to postminimalist songs and technical effects, including a "video clone": an altered video version of herself, with mustache, to serve as her diminutive male alter ego. Meanwhile, her fame and irrepressible adventurousness have brought her dozens of unusual experiences. She experimentally went through the winter of 1972 without wearing a coat, and, in the summer of 1973, tried to hitchhike to the North Pole via mail planes; she got within 200 miles. She has had a press conference with Bishop Tutu, met the Prince of Ubud in Bali, and in 1993 she trekked the Tibetan Himalayas with twenty-seven yaks, eight sherpas, and ten hikers. No one else in American music has had a life like Laurie Anderson's.

Listening Example: "O Superman" (1980)

In 1978 Anderson was deeply affected by a recital she heard by the Black vocalist Charles Holland, whose career had been squelched for decades by racism in the classical music world. Holland sang, in the aria "O Souverain" from Massenet's *Le Cid*, "O souverain, ô jùge, ô père": "O Sovereign, O Judge, O Father." Anderson decided, in homage, to write her own version of the song, kind of a "cover," with her own translation of the words. The song begins with her voice looped on a repeating "Ha—ha—ha—ha—ha—ha." The pitch is E, and the entire song rocks back and forth between two chords: C major and E minor. The text is riddled with clichés from American life:

> O Superman. O Judge. O Mom and Dad.
> O Superman. O Judge. O Mom and Dad.
>
> Hi. I'm not home right now.
> But if you want to leave a message,
> just start talking at the sound of the tone.
>
> Hello? This is your mother. Are you there?
> Are you coming home? Hello? Is anybody home?
>
> Well you don't know me but I know you.
> And I've got a message to give to you.
> Here come the planes.
> So you better get ready, ready to go.
> You can come as you are, but pay as you go.
> Pay as you go.
>
> And I said: OK! Who is this really?
> And the voice said:

> This is the hand, the hand that takes.
> This is the hand. The hand that takes.
> Here come the planes.
> They're American planes, made in America.
> Smoking or nonsmoking? . . .
>
> 'Cause when love is gone, there's always justice,
> and when justice is gone,
> there's always force,
> and when force is gone, there's always Mom. Hi Mom!

The music slowly dies away again with bird songs and ostinatos, finally leaving only that repeating "ha," which abruptly stops. A hybrid of minimalism, rock, and performance art, "O Superman" is one of the most memorable productions of the New York avant-garde.

Rhys Chatham

More than anyone else it was Rhys Chatham who opened the floodgates that allowed rock aesthetics and practices to flow into the "classical" new-music world. The impact of his music has been exceeded in this respect by his impact as the first musical director of the Kitchen in New York; from 1971 to 1973 and again from 1977 to 1980 he was in charge of the music programming at New York's most groundbreaking space for new music. Here he scandalized the classical new-music world by programming experimental rock, and then further by appropriating the sounds of rock and writing music for electric guitars himself. Most notable are Chatham's works written for massive ensembles of 100 electric guitars: *An Angel Moves Too Fast to See* (1989), *Warehouse of Saints, Songs for Spies* (1991), and *Music for Tauromaquia* (1992–1993).

Chatham was born in Manhattan in 1952. At New York University he studied with Morton Subotnick and worked at the NYU Studio with Maryanne Amacher, Serge Tcherepnin, Charlemagne Palestine, and Ingram Marshall. Through this crowd Chatham developed an interest in minimalism, specifically a music of long durations, and he studied with La Monte Young, whose piano he tuned in return for lessons. Chatham's first works in New York were extremely quiet, mostly drone pieces for Buchla synthesizers whose overtones were subtly manipulated. In 1976, however, his dynamic level skyrocketed as he became interested in working in a hard rock format. "Essentially," he wrote later,

> my idea has always been to draw upon the vocabulary of the classical avant-garde to form a music with a rock-like veneer behind which lies a more universal, hence Western set of concerns. Even though

the music I make without a question comes out of the classical avant-garde, I felt the time dictated playing the work in a rock context.[6]

He switched to writing for ensembles of electric guitars.

The history of art-rock from 1977 to 1982 has been a controversial subject, mired in sibling rivalry. In the mid-seventies, it became an art-world fad for visual artists to start their own rock bands; musical ability wasn't much of a requisite for rock, and the effect sought after was a rough, noisy quality anyway. This was one of the original meanings of art-rock—rock made by (visual) artists. When neo-abstract expressionism took hold around 1982, the art world lost interest and moved on. Meanwhile, however, a renegade theater performer named Glenn Branca and his guitarist friend Jeffrey Lohn had formed a band called Theoretical Girls that had picked up quite a following in New York. Branca asked Chatham to play bass with Theoretical Girls, in hopes that Chatham would book the group at the Kitchen. It worked. Chatham, meanwhile, had formed his own group.

Chatham had written a *Guitar Trio* (1977), which played with overtones of a single pitch. Chatham would later claim that Branca stole the idea and got credit for it because, more connected to the rock world, he was able to get recordings out more easily. In any case, both emerged writing extended works for massed electric guitars using overtones and pure tunings, and both claiming precedence.

Guitar Trio is minimalism with a rock beat: as the drummer plays a hard-rock 4/4, the three guitarists strum the same syncopated rhythm over and over, gradually bringing out different overtones of the drone note. *Drastic Classicism* (1981) is a faster, noisier work for four guitars and drums along the same lines, but with the guitars tuned at half-step intervals for maximum dissonance. The D guitar is tuned D, A, D, D♯, E, D, and the others are similarly based on C♯, D♯, and E. Tuning of each guitar is according to the twelfth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth harmonics of the fundamental—the same tuning as Young's *Second Dream of the High-Tension Line Stepdown Transformer. Drastic* alternates between a dense chord of shimmering overtones and textures of rhythmic riffs and single-string overtones.

After exploring electric guitar ensembles for five years (and losing much of his hearing in the process), Chatham became interested in brass instruments. He learned to play trumpet from Ben Neill (for whom see chapter 13) and wrote pieces like *Waterloo No. 2* (1986) for brass ensemble, keyboard, and percussion. The work runs traditional military drum patterns such as double paradiddles and eleven-strike rolls through minimalist additive processes, while the brass melodies refer to the history of marching bands with relentless 4/4 cadential patterns, ending with a quotation of Terry Riley's *A Rainbow in Curved Air.* In *Manifeste* (1987), Chatham used solo trumpet with computerized live electronics to

explore the same qualities of the overtone series that he had started with in *Guitar Trio.*

In 1987 Chatham moved to Paris. His most outrageous gesture came afterward, in *An Angel Moves Too Fast to See,* scored for 100 guitars. Because it would be quixotic to try to find 100 guitarists who all read music, the work's ensemble is divided into two tiers, one larger group who need not read music extensively, the other a smaller, virtuoso group who perform the more complex rhythms. Since guitarists who can't read music can at least count, he set up structures in which a group of guitars would repeat the same chord or pattern after so many beats. In example 11.1 from the fifth movement, for example, one group of guitarists strums a B and E every seven beats, another group E and G♯ every eight beats, and so on. The collective melody that results is given in example 11.2. The work has been performed to great excitement in fourteen cities so far since its 1989 premiere in Lille, France.
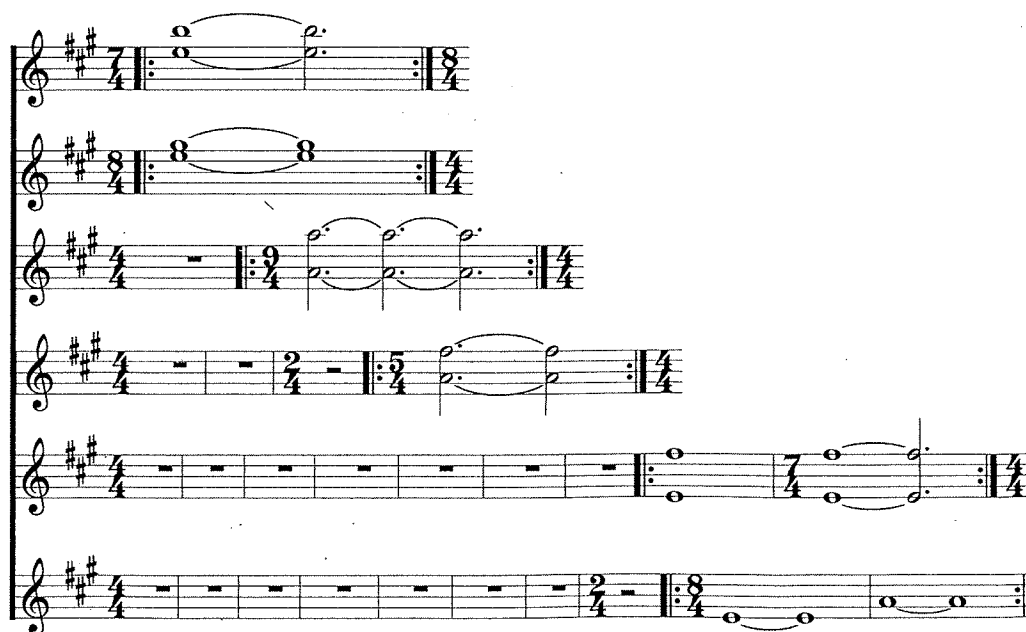
EXAMPLE 11.1 Rhys Chatham, *An Angel Moves Too Fast to See* (1989), fifth movement.

EXAMPLE 11.2 Rhys Chatham, *An Angel Moves Too Fast to See,* composite melody, fifth movement.

G

Like La
not only
ular roc
only did
guitar e
years be
all, thou
somethi
glacial h
them (so
    Lil
Born in
for Bro
ignored
Kinks a
self com
forty-fiv
he mov
plotless
and bro
    M
Jeffrey
Girls, w

    Je
    th
    rec
    pl
    ne
    tei
    of
    en
    ofl

In the a
became
    B
guitaris
Branca
compo
up hug
The de
plex th
sum an

Glenn Branca

Like La Monte Young, Branca is spoken of with reverence in rock circles, not only for his own ambitious works, but for having influenced the popular rock group Sonic Youth as Young did the Velvet Underground. Not only did one of the trio's guitarists—Lee Ranaldo—start out in Branca's guitar ensemble, but Branca produced the group's records in the early years before their new, minimalist-influenced idiom caught on. Most of all, though, heavy metal fans and classical aficionados alike have found something like religious ecstasy basking in the massive volume and glacial harmonic movement of Branca's symphonies, eight out of ten of them (so far) scored for multiple electric guitars.

Like Laurie Anderson, Branca didn't come from the music world. Born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1949, he nourished an enthusiasm for Broadway musicals, especially those of Steven Sondheim, and ignored rock until attracted to the repetitiveness of certain songs by the Kinks and Paul Revere and the Raiders. He claims to have taught himself composition by listening to guitar feedback at point-blank range for forty-five minutes at a time. Seeing himself, however, as a theater person, he moved to Boston and founded the Bastard Theater. His plays were plotless and abstract, and he provided his own music with pots, pans, and broken-down musical instruments.

Moving to New York in 1976, he and a composer-theater friend, Jeffrey Lohn (born 1947 in Chicago), formed a rock band, Theoretical Girls, which lasted from 1977 to 1979.

> Jeff and I got into an incredible competition as to who could make the most outrageous, completely ridiculous piece. I plugged a recording of white noise into the p.a.—a *wall* of white noise. Then we played a jagged version of "You Really Got Me" by the Kinks underneath it. In one piece I wrote, each musician played at a different tempo. I played a fast Chuck Berry thing. The bass player did a sort of reggae pattern, at not only a different tempo, but a different feel entirely. The drummer was instructed to play something completely off with everything he heard. It sounded fabulous.[7]

In the anti-art atmosphere punk had pioneered, such emblems of chaos became hip, and the age of the "art-band" began.

Branca's epiphany came in 1979, when he brought together six guitarists to play a work he called simply *Instrumental*. At the time, Branca's favorite composer had become Krzysztof Penderecki, the Polish composer (b. 1933) whose most characteristic device was strings building up huge cluster chords note by note. Branca tried imitating such effects. The deafening din of six guitars playing cluster chords was more complex than he had imagined, and he became fascinated by the resulting sum and difference tones and clashing harmonics.

Glenn Branca. *Photo by James Welling.*

In early multiple-guitar pieces such as *Dissonance* and *The Spectacular Commodity* (both 1979), Branca would simply mis-tune the instruments randomly. To understand the mathematical relations between frequencies needed to reinforce the effects he wanted, however, he began studying acoustics, becoming interested in the mystical philosophy of Dane Rudhyar and the diagrams of Hans Kayser (1891–1964), an obscure German theoretician who devoted his life to exploring properties of the whole number series and its ramifications for acoustics. As the pieces grew longer, Branca began calling them symphonies and numbering them—a controversially pretentious move, many thought, but justifiable insofar as a symphony is basically a large-scale harmonic movement from one place to another. (Branca's four-fold repetitions, articulating a harmonic progression, invite comparison with Bruckner.)

All of Branca's symphonies to date are scored for multiple electric guitars with drum set except for Nos. 7 and 9, which are for orchestra;

in addition, No. 1 also incorporates trumpets, saxophone, and French horn. With Symphony No. 3, "Gloria" (1983), Branca ventured into just intonation, employing all 127 harmonics of the first seven octaves of the overtone series. After Symphonies No. 4 (1983) and 5 (1984), he abandoned pure tuning as too difficult to work with for conventional instruments, although Nos. 6, "Devil Choirs at the Gates of Heaven" (1987–1988) and 7 (1989) do approximate overtones with pitch-bending. In Symphony No. 9 (1993), "L'eve Future" for conventional orchestra with voices, Branca achieved a long-sought-after goal of creating a seamless musical surface in which the texture slowly modulates from within according to mathematical algorithms.

Because of the expense of producing his increasingly ambitious schemes, Branca nearly disappeared from the American scene during the eighties, producing his commissioned symphonies in Graz, Linz, Seville, and other European cities. Branca's influence, though, has created a tradition of electric guitar ensembles in New York, some of them headed by guitarists from his group, including John Myers's Blastula, the Wharton Tiers Ensemble, and Phil Kline's Orchestra of the Lower East Side.

Listening Example: Symphony No. 10, 2nd movement, "The Horror" (1994)

The first movement of Branca's Symphony No. 10 is called "The Final Problem," the second "The Horror." The sonic material is unusual even by Branca's standards. Each guitarist tunes all six strings of his or her guitar to almost the same pitch and its octave, though within each trio of strings, one is tuned 120 cents below the main pitch, another 20 cents below. Each melodic line is to be played on a trio of three strings all at once.

"The Horror" opens, like so many Branca movements, with a loud unison, spreading out quickly into dissonance. After a dramatic fermata, the piece gets going rhythmically with the passage in example 11.3 (at 2:10 on the Atavistic recording—the drums are not notated), at a stately tempo of about quarter-note = 72. With the score reduced here to combine three guitars on each stave, it is easy to see that basically the same phrase is played in all three staves, but guitars 7, 8, and 9 play it in 14 beats, guitars 4, 5, and 6 in 16, and guitars 1, 2, and 3 in 24 beats. The result is a quasi-tempo canon at ratios of 7:8:12, although unlike Nancarrow, Branca employs durations that only approximate the tempo relationships.

After 14 measures this canon gives way to a polyrhythmic section in which guitars 7 through 9 play quarter-notes and half-notes in a 3/4 pattern, guitars 1 through 3 play a 5/8 pattern divided 2+3, and the middle guitars play an irregular pattern. Similar textures continue throughout the movement, interspersed with passages of cluster chords moving in parallel, crescendoing (if possible) to a triumphant cadence that dies away in a long, feedback-laced decay. Branca can be said to be

EXAMPLE 11.3 Glenn Branca, Symphony No. 10, second movement quasi-tempo canon, mm. 34–57.

the only symphonist whose music does not come in any way from European tradition.

Diamanda Galàs

No other presence in new music is so dramatic, so frightening, so controversial as Diamanda Galàs. Her voice is the most phenomenal in new music: she has a range of three and a half octaves, tremendous vocal

power, and
singing Moz
performs he
schizophren
the only nev
been targete
demned her

That text is r
(1821–1867)
ventions, the
whom societ
    Outwa
work. Born
formed a M
studied bioc
Experiment:
mind-altered
and schizopl
She started
works of the
une Autre an
she turned t
ing works f
Knives (1981

    Galàs's
psychology
extent her v
from the Bl
stem from t
and Dieter S
tronics (pro
layering it
Panoptikon, s
Laurie And
become inte

    In 198
of the Red
became clea
she would p
religious litt
terattack ag

power, and consummate control. She could have easily had a career singing Mozart or Wagner. Instead, covered with bizarre makeup, she performs her own intense, harrowing works on themes of death, torture, schizophrenia, powerlessness, and the AIDS epidemic. She is perhaps the only new-music composer with a subversive enough impact to have been targeted by the Christian Right; Reel to Real Ministries has condemned her *Litanies of Satan* for its sacrilegious text:
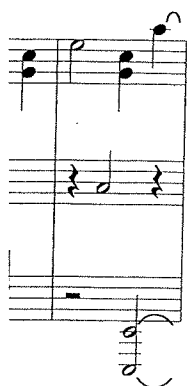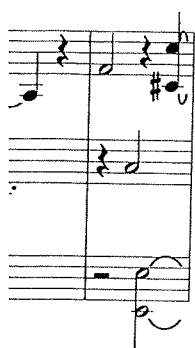
> To thee o Satan, glory be, and praise.
> Grant that my soul, one day, beneath the Tree
> Of Knowledge may rest near thee.

That text is not her own, however, but was written by Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). As much as Galàs's works fly in the face of accepted conventions, they always operate in the service of a compassion for those whom society has cast aside.

Outwardly, Galàs's origins give little hint of her subsequent life's work. Born in 1955 in San Diego, she was a concert pianist who performed a Mozart concerto with the local orchestra at fifteen, and she studied biochemistry and psychology as well as music at UC San Diego. Experiments as a medical student involved investigation of bizarre mind-altered states; these led to an understanding of psychopathology and schizophrenia that have contributed to major themes in her music. She started her performing career using her amazing voice control in works of the European avant-garde, singing Globokar's *Un Jour Comme une Autre* and Xenakis's *N'Shima* in the early eighties. Quickly, however, she turned to using her own voice as an instrument for her own amazing works for voice and electronics, including *Wild Women with Steak Knives* (1981–1983) and *Litanies of Satan* (1982).

Galàs's works explore a dialectic of power and powerlessness, the psychology of the torture victim and his omnipotent tormentor. To an extent her vocal techniques in *Tragouthia apo to Aima Exoun Fonos* ("Song from the Blood of Those Murdered," 1981) and *Panoptikon* (1982–1983) stem from the European avant-garde vocal tradition of Berio, Xenakis, and Dieter Schnebel. She babbles, screeches, wails, shouts, while the electronics (provided by Richard Zvonar) allow her to overdub her voice, layering it over a background of slowly transforming noises. In *Panoptikon*, she uses two microphones, one of which lowers her voice à la Laurie Anderson, but with more sinister effect: the two Diamandas become interrogator and prisoner.

In 1984 Galàs began a trilogy based on Edgar Allen Poe's "Masque of the Red Death," intending it as an allegory about AIDS. Soon it became clear that mere allegory was too indirect for the crisis at hand; she would provide her own text dotted with passages from the Bible and religious liturgy, and make the work a direct assault on bigotry, a counterattack against religion for its condemnation of homosexual AIDS vic-

tims. The 1986 death from AIDS of Galàs's brother Philip, a playwright and performance artist, added fuel to the fire. Galàs's *The Masque of the Red Death* (dates given: from 1984 to "the end of the epidemic") is one of the most powerful music theater pieces of the 1980s. It is divided in three parts—*The Divine Punishment, Saint of the Pit,* and *You Must Be Certain of the Devil*—and portions are rearranged for a related work, *Plague Mass.*

The Divine Punishment is mostly based on Biblical passages from the books of *Leviticus, Psalms,* and *Lamentations.* In the opening number, "This is the law of the Plague," Galàs croaks laws from *Leviticus* over a darkly repetitive background of groans and slow drumbeats:

> And if any man's seed of copulation go out from him,
> he is unclean.
> Every garment, every skin whereon is the seed, is unclean.
> And the woman with whom this man shall lie will be unclean.
> And whosoever toucheth her will be unclean.
> This is the law of the plague:
> To teach when it is clean and when it is unclean.

In the last number, "Sono l''Antichristo," she wails her own text in Italian:

> I am the scourge.
> I am the Holy Fool.
> I am the shit of God.
> I am the sign.
> I am the plague.
> I am the Antichrist.

In an interview Galàs explained the significance of her identification with the Antichrist as an acceptance of that which society has cast out and demonized:

> When a witch is about to be burned on a ladder in flames, who can
> she call upon! I call that person "Satan. . . ." It's that subversive
> voice that can keep you alive in the face of adversity. I have this
> text, "You call me the shit of God? I am the shit of God! You call
> me the Antichrist? I am the Antichrist!" So you say, "Yes, I am the
> Antichrist. I am all these things you are afraid of."[8]

The Masque of the Red Death climaxes in *You Must Be Certain of the Devil,* more heavily based in musical vernacular than the other sections, and scathingly satirical. She begins with a version of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" so tortuously stretched out in time and pitch-space as to be almost unrecognizable. The second number, "Double-Barrel Prayer,"

weaves her angry poetry around a blankly chanted text from the Catholic mass: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. We praise thee; we bless thee; we adore thee; we glorify thee. . . ." Galàs plays the piano and sings parodies of country, blues, and pop idioms, that, savage as they are, do not obscure the sincerity of her poetry:

> In Kentucky Harry buys a round of beer
> to celebrate the death of Billy Smith, the queer,
> whose mother still must hide her face in fear.
>
> Let's not chat about despair.

The Masque of the Red Death remains Galàs's major work to date. More recent pieces have retreated somewhat from the direct expression of her protest in words. In *Insekta* (1993), she enacted the part of a mental patient trapped in a large cage suspended over the stage. In *Schrei X* (1996) she fell back on solo voice, unaccompanied by electronics, in an almost wordless tone poem of fear and despair. Despite the opacity of these performed enigmas, their psychological impact cannot be denied. Galàs's themes of death, sickness, and satanism have much in common with heavy metal, and her social protest, directed against religious self-righteousness and bigotry, has gained her something of the status of a rock star. She is Meredith Monk's evil twin, an operatic Queen of the Nightmare.

Jazz Meets Classical

The relationship between classical music and jazz has always been complex; indeed, the two have never really been independent of each other since jazz was born. Charles Ives worked ragtime into his piano music in the 1890s; Scott Joplin wrote an opera, *Treemonisha*, in 1911. But for all those decades that Copland and Milhaud were sneaking jazz phraseology into their orchestral music, and "Duke" Ellington was keeping a close ear on Debussy's and Ravel's orchestration, there was never any confusion about what the differences were: jazz was improvised along the lines of certain types of rhythmic and harmonic backgrounds, classical music was notated, not subject to an ongoing rhythmic groove, and free from harmonic constraints. In classical music the performer's relationship to the music is assumed to be transparent; his presumed purpose is to get to the essence of, say, Bach, to recreate an idealized perfect performance, not to draw attention to his own aberrations of tone color and phrasing. Jazz, on the other hand, never seems discussible without reference to the personal style of the performers, and the concept of "the work" cannot be cleanly abstracted from the specific performance.

Jazz itself, however, paved the way to an intersection. First, in the 1940s and 1950s, Black musicians grew dissatisfied with the big-band jazz of the Swing era; led by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, they introduced a higher level of harmonic and rhythmic complexity into jazz, creating the style known as bop or bebop. This process was accelerated by the pianist-composer Thelonious Monk, who—with his metric freedoms and sometimes virtually atonal chord structures that never forfeited a sense of intuitive rightness—has probably had more influence on classically identified composers than any other single jazz figure. The use of modal harmonies and melodies by Miles Davis and John Coltrane brought jazz a step closer to—and in some cases inspired—the directions the early minimalists were moving in. It is impossible to imagine the early sax playing of Young and Riley without Coltrane's example.

The crucial challenge to jazz's identity, though, came with the next generation, spearheaded by Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. By the late fifties Taylor—trained as a classical pianist—was introducing dissonances, ambiguous harmonies, and a percussive piano style that earned comparisons with Bartók and Stravinsky as often as with any earlier jazz. Coleman, meanwhile, overthrew almost all the features with which jazz had been popularly identified: harmonic framework, periodic phrasing, even the basic relationship between soloists and rhythm section. In his 1960 album *Free Jazz,* he produced a forty-minute barrage of hectic, free-for-all playing within a spare, tenuous structure that was higher energy and more avant-garde (if avant-garde means harder to sit still during and absorb) than anything any classical composer had ever perpetrated, even John Cage.

From this moment on, it became harder and harder to give jazz a definition that would stick, and if you can't define jazz, how can you prove it is different from classical music? In the late fifties and sixties, a movement was formed to fuse the two. In 1957 Gunther Schuller (born 1925 in New York) coined the term "Third Stream" to connote an in-between music, either classically notated with room left open for harmonic improvisation or approached from a jazz perspective with certain sections carefully worked out in advance. One of the clearest expressions of the Third Stream idea was his *Transformation,* which starts out pointillistically twelve-tone and gradually transforms itself into chamber jazz; Schuller also used jazz moments in his most popular orchestral work *Seven Studies on Themes of Paul Klee* (1959). Despite the contributions of both black and white musicians—William Russo, George Russell, John Lewis—Third Stream never grew to be much more than an obvious hybrid, and Schuller, in his later years, became something of a New Romantic. The impulse, however, would return with reinforcements.

More significant was the school of black composers that grew from Chicago's Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, or AACM. Founded in 1965 in Chicago by Muhal Richard Abrams, the

AACM
Music.
Jenkin
organi
up to
been a
traditi
monic
the A
introd
sticks,
their b
A
cians b
and co
disson
individ
loose,
quatel
jazz (e
meani
reject
ing in
the c
Never
large a
are m
empha

]

Thou
Abran
satisfa
his ch
spher
music
exam
music
trend
many
oppos
Soul fi
what

n the
band
they
' into
celer-
netric
:r for-
ıce on
ıe use
ltrane
:ctions
ıe the

e next
By the
disso-
:arned
er jazz.
ch jazz
rasing,
In his
ıc, free-
energy
during
:trated,

e jazz a
:an you
ixties, a
:r (born
e an in-
for har-
ı certain
ıressions
: pointil-
ber jazz;
ral work
ıtions of
ell, John
obvious
ıf a New
nents.
rew from
.cians, or
·ams, the

AACM is a loosely organized school devoted to what it terms Great Black Music. Early figures in the AACM include Anthony Braxton, Leroy Jenkins, Roscoe Mitchell, Lester Bowie, and Leo Smith, and in 1969 the organization began a school, with the older AACM musicians teaching up to fifty mostly inner-city students. Most importantly, the AACM has been associated with a free-jazz-based movement that leaves behind such traditional elements of jazz (some of them European derived) as the harmonic framework and melody-accompaniment texture. AACM groups— the Art Ensemble of Chicago foremost among them—have also introduced more Afrocentric percussion into their music, such as rainsticks, bells, gourds, mbiras, and wind chimes, and have often painted their bodies and worn African costumes to perform.

At the same time, paradoxically enough, many of the AACM musicians have turned to fully notated composition, writing string quartets and concertos usually in an atonal and complex, though rarely harshly dissonant, modernist idiom. Such works usually leave some room for individual improvisation. More often, the style of the music requires a loose, swinging style of performance that goes beyond what can be adequately captured in the notation. Much AACM music cannot be called jazz (even the free variety) without stretching the term to the point of meaninglessness, and several of the composers involved vehemently reject being called jazz musicians. The instrumental style has the growling intensity of jazz, the cultural references include African music, but the composed forms achieve a level of European abstractness. Nevertheless, most of the figures who follow here have played at least as large a role in jazz history as in new music, and at this stage of criticism are more often written about by jazz critics than classical ones. The emphasis below will be on their identifiably nonjazz contributions.

Muhal Richard Abrams

Though less visible than some of his AACM colleagues, Muhal Richard Abrams deserves the title of father of creative black music. It was his dissatisfaction with bop that began the impulse for the AACM's music, and his charismatic nature that drew dozens of young musicians into its sphere. His stress on spirituality communicated itself both ethically and musically. A primary aim of the AACM, he proclaimed, was "to set an example of high moral standards for musicians";[9] as a result, AACM musicians tended toward moral behavior and abstinence, reversing the trend toward alcoholism and heroin addiction that had cut short so many bop careers. At the same time, Abrams stressed original work as opposed to recreating jazz standards. "We could play a tune like *Body and Soul* forever," he said, "and not express what *we* feel—only variations of what the original composer felt."[10] Accordingly, Abrams evolved a theory

of spirituality in music, tied to melody and rhythm rather than harmony, that set the pattern for the AACM's atonal, multilinear idioms.

Born in Chicago in 1930, Abrams studied at Chicago Musical College and started out as a hard bop pianist. He delved into the historical sources of jazz piano for inspiration: Scott Joplin, Art Tatum, James P. Johnson, Earl "Fatha" Hines. Increasingly dissatisfied with the limitations of bop, however, he began, in 1962, rehearsing with friends every week at a tavern on Chicago's South Side, and issued an open invitation to any musician adventurous enough to join. The group who responded—Roscoe Mitchell, Jack DeJohnette, and Joseph Jarman among them—became informally known as the Experimental Band.

Soon South Side jazz musicians began meeting to consider forming an organization that would provide gigs and a helpful network, and Abrams and Phil Cohran (trumpeter for cosmically eccentric bandleader Sun Ra) led the discussions. Out of these came a not-for-profit co-op that was chartered in 1965 as the AACM. By the mid-sixties the AACM ensembles had attracted a public following. Through the seventies, Abrams led a sextet and conducted weekly concerts with the AACM big band, as well as continuing his solo piano concerts. In 1977, though, discouraged like so many musicians at the difficulties of making an artistic living in Chicago, he moved to New York, ending by his departure an era in Chicago music.

Abrams divided existence into two aspects, the concrete and the abstract. Harmony he connected with emotion and therefore with the concrete; melody and rhythm were aspects of the abstract and were therefore spiritual. Besides, harmony had its sources in Europe, not Africa, and Abrams had come to see bop's obsession with harmonic changes as an aesthetic barrier with European roots. Multimelodic improvisation became his favored terrain. "You don't need much to get off the ground," he said in 1967,

> when your musicians are spontaneous enough—just rehearse and let things happen. [Multi-instrumental jazz player] Donald Garrett used to tell me that someday there wouldn't have to be written compositions—he saw it before I did. I had to write quite a bit until I had musicians who could create a part, and then I wrote less and less. Now I can take eight measures and play a concert.[11]

From the beginning, Abrams's recorded music doesn't sound like jazz, but neither does it sound in any way classical. The title cut from his early album *Levels and Degrees of Light* (1967) is particularly striking; Penelope Taylor sings a slow but burning modal melody, followed by Abrams's own high-register clarinet musings, over a luminous background of vague cymbal shimmerings and vibraphone arpeggios in rhythmless ecstasy. Even more "outside" is *Spihumonesty* (1980), which features Yousef Yancey's eerily singing Theremin over changing quiet

ıony,

ısical
.stor-
ames
mita-
ɔvery
ation
who
rman
d.
·ming
., and
ɔader
p that
ACM
ɔnties,
M big
h, dis-
artistic
ure an

nd the
ith the
d were
ɔe, not
rmonic
nelodic
ı to get

let
ed
ɔsi-
ad
ɔss.

und like
from his
striking;
owed by
us back-
·ggios in
)), which
ıng quiet

drones, veering closer to meditational minimalism à la Oliveros than to free jazz. More typical, though, is the freely contrapuntal texture of *Ancient and Future Reflections* (recorded 1981). At first the wind players squawk with raucous individuality, but they soon settle into a polyphonic texture that returns over and over to certain pitch areas and motives rather than a central tonality or harmonic framework.

While in the late sixties and seventies the AACM had had to compete with the tremendous upsurge in the popularity of rock, they next had to compete with their own history, for the eighties (a conservative decade in so many ways) introduced an "authentic practice" approach to "classic jazz." Trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, the curator of the Lincoln Center Jazz Festival with a smooth, scholarly approach to jazz history, was sanding off the sharp edges of thorny mavericks like Monk, and the brittle modernism of the AACM went out of fashion. As a result, several AACM composers turned more toward notated composition, finding that new-music performers such as Ursula Oppens and the Kronos Quartet were more receptive to them than the jazz spaces were. Abrams in particular has written many notated compositions for classical performers, including his Variations for Solo Saxophone, Flute, and Chamber Orchestra for New Music America '82 and *Folk Tales 88* (1988) for the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He still works with improvising big bands as well, and remains a primary inspiration for younger generations.

Anthony Braxton

No one holds a more ambiguous position vis-à-vis the jazz and classical worlds than Anthony Braxton. Jazzers consider him a brilliant saxophonist extending the tradition of Coltrane and Coleman, yet Braxton's own descriptions of his development refer more often to Ives, Webern, Xenakis, and especially Cage and Stockhausen than to jazz figures, and his music rarely sounds remotely like jazz. In fact, Braxton can be characterized as a kind of American Stockhausen: the same type of all-encompassing philosophical imagination, the same ability to turn out reams and reams of music from his personal systems, the same private symbolic universe not always transparent to public scrutiny. Shaman or charlatan, conceptualist genius or pseudo-intellectual, Braxton astonishes listeners with the limitlessness of his invention and confuses them with the quirky geometrical diagrams that serve as both subtitles and structural guides for his compositions. Though he first gained fame as a soloist and quartet leader, in recent years Braxton has headed in the direction of theater and opera, attempting to express his metaphysical speculations in a toweringly ambitious array of *Gesämtkunstwerk*.

Born in 1945 in Chicago, Braxton grew up listening to rock, and when he started paying attention to jazz in 1959, his father bought him

Anthony Braxton at The Kitchen, 1976. *Courtesy New York Public Library.*

an alt
steere
black
the A
and d
made
Chica
trio w
1968 l
first ir
other
impro

next f
Elettr
posers
Teitelt
the sev
mainst

C
p
o
c
"

In the
group:
Dresse
some c
acader
1985 t
given t

B
models
and gr
a comb
deliber
Axium
three a
tion lo:
his wo
with a
are acc
on whi
in exar

an alto saxophone. In 1963 he met Roscoe Mitchell (see below), who steered his enthusiasms for Dave Brubeck toward more adventurous black performers like Coltrane, Coleman, and Cecil Taylor. Playing in the Army Band between 1963 and 1966, Braxton developed his sax style and discovered Schoenberg's Op. 11 Piano Pieces, the first work that made him feel that classical music wasn't only for whites. Returning to Chicago, he found the AACM in full swing, joined in, and formed a first trio with the violinist Leroy Jenkins and the trumpeter Leo Smith. In 1968 he recorded the sax solos that would make up the disc *For Alto*. The first improv recording ever made for an unaccompanied solo instrument other than piano, it had an enormous impact on both black and white improvisers across the country.

In 1969 Braxton went to Paris with his trio and spent much of the next few years in Europe. He was enticed by Rzewski to tour with Musica Elettronica Viva; ever since, Braxton has been as likely to duet with composers from the classical avant-garde (especially electronics mavens like Teitelbaum and Rosenboom) as with free jazz figures. A return to bop in the seventies seduced jazz critics into thinking Braxton had reentered the mainstream. However, as Radano describes his unyielding ambivalence,

> Celebrated as a jazz star, Braxton retorted, "Jazz is only a very small part of what I do"; compared to Bach and Webern, Braxton insisted on the preeminence of the black aesthetic; compared to his Chicago cohorts, he branded the Art Ensemble's "Great Black Music" logo as "racist."[12]

In the eighties Braxton toured Europe with one of his most important groups, the Anthony Braxton Quartet—Marilyn Crispell on piano, Mark Dresser on bass, and Gerry Hemingway on drums; their talents graced some of his most imaginative compositions. The following years brought academic stability and honors: Braxton taught at Mills College from 1985 to 1990 and at Wesleyan University since then, and in 1994 he was given the MacArthur "Genius" Award.

Braxton is at least as much conceptualist as improviser. "I tend to put models together," he has said, "stick models together, and build greater and greater models."[13] Braxton calls his system of thought TRIAXIUM—a combination of "tri-," or three, plus "axiom" in one of Braxton's frequent deliberate misspellings. As explained in his dauntingly jargon-glutted *Tri-Axium Writings*, every aspect of his "Tri-Centric" philosophy breaks into three aspects: individual, group, synthesis; mutable, stable, and summation logics; architecture, philosophy, and ritual-ceremonial. The bulk of his works, even dramatic ones with texts, are titled simply Composition with a number, and at least as early as Composition No. 5 (1968) his titles are accompanied by diagrams with letters, lines, triangles, circles, and so on which are alleged to reveal the structure of the piece (a few are given in example 11.4). Leo Smith tells us that "any advanced student of mysti-
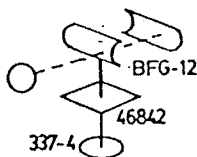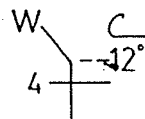
Composition 161
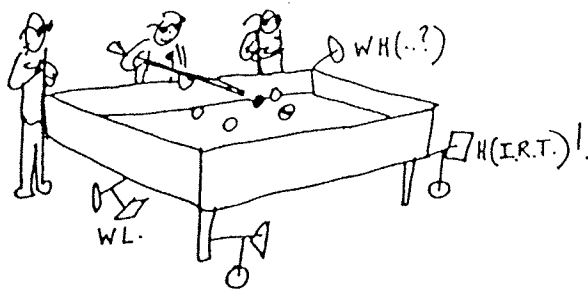
Composition 105

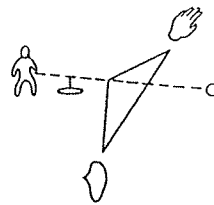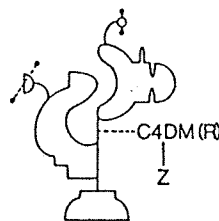Composition 98

Composition 82

for four orchestras (1978)
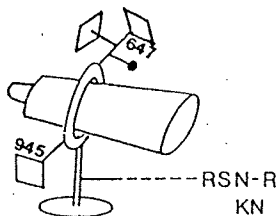
Composition 40K

Composition 5

for piano (1968)

EXAMPLE 11.4

cism or metaphysical science can readily read the code and symbolism embedded in his titles."[14] Perhaps so.

Braxton's early piano works from 1968 on pick up where the early *Klavierstücke* of Stockhausen leave off: they are filled with extreme leaps of register, extreme contrasts of dynamics, and a constant denial of linear continuity. With his trios and quartets Braxton explored "multiple logic musics" (in which, say, two performers might be reacting to each other as a duo while a third plays a solo), "collage improvisations," and "opposition improvisations." In the eighties, like Cage before him, Braxton worked with "collage form structures" which allowed for different works to be played simultaneously. His compositions range from simple, lyrical saxophone lines like Composition No. 138A (1988) to Composition No. 82, *For Four Orchestras* (1978), whose sonorities bounce among 160 musicians for two hours.

Likewise, his scores range from verbal instructions to picturesque graphics, to Earle Brown-ish open forms, to pages of modular notation in which phrases float in no particular order, to strict conventional nota-

tion, and even to bizarre attempts to suggest three-dimensionality on the page as in Composition No. 76 for trio (1977, example 11.5). Starting with Composition No. 105A (1983), Braxton began including little human figures in his title diagrams, and later landscapes, trees, and even pool tables. Composition 105A was also the first of Braxton's "pulse track structures," works integrating his pitch fields into the framework of a steady pulse in one or more instruments.

Despite the "maximalist" density of most of his music, Braxton has taken an interest in minimalism (his *104° Kelvin* series of works for solo sax build up phrases via additive process, and the first one, from 1971, is dedicated to Philip Glass), and his late music often shares with minimalism an intensity of focus, a determination to derive half-hours of music from narrowly limited materials. By 1996 the pulse track structures had led to what Braxton calls his Ghost Trance Musics, in which he uses unchanging long-term strategies to achieve a kind of trance state. In Composition No. 185 (1996) for sextet, for example, streams of mostly staccato notes, often running up and down scales, march by for twenty-seven minutes before suddenly dissolving into a mellow cacophony of seemingly unrelated solos.
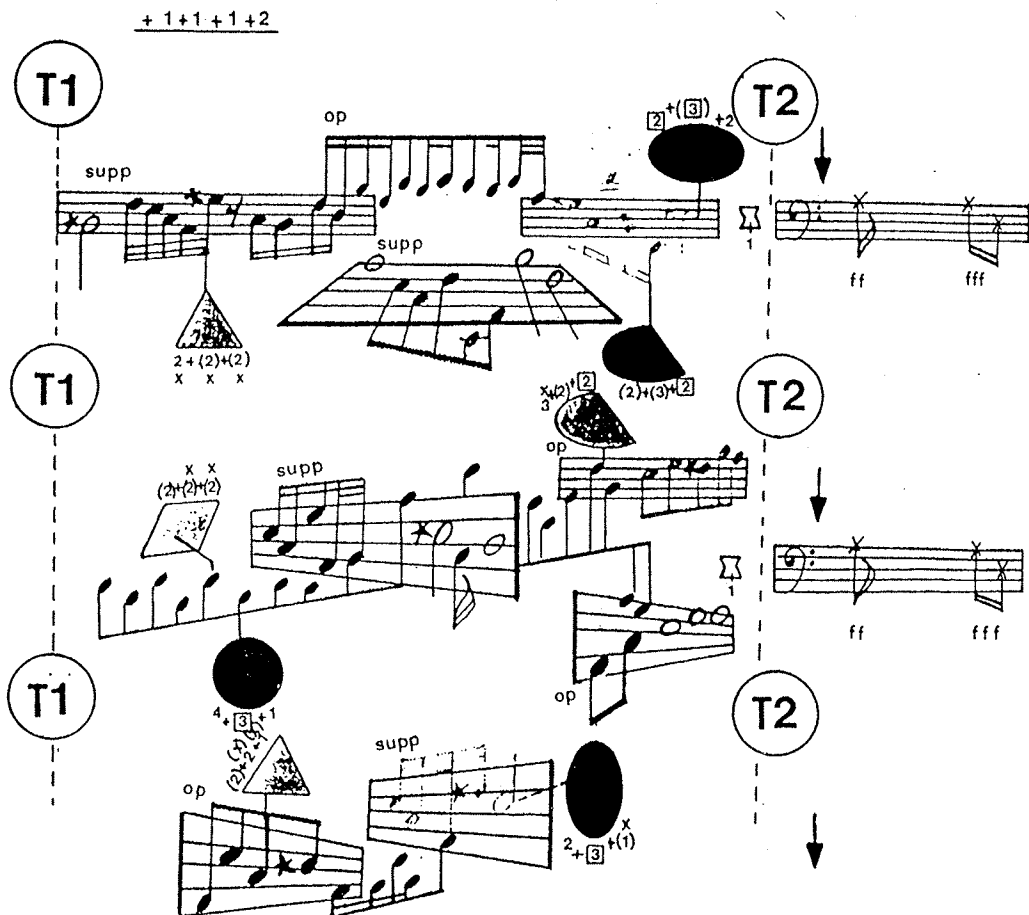
EXAMPLE 11.5 Anthony Braxton, Composition No. 76 (excerpt).

Braxton's systematic thinking modes render even his programmatic and textual works abstract, sometimes to a deliberately comic extent. The program notes to Composition No. 165, a work for eighteen musicians whose sonorities float and collide like clouds, describe two teenagers who get lost in the woods and find their way back by studying the sound map and reading the code of the music. Composition 173 (1994) is a play with music about four people united for some indeterminate business who plan sonic strategies in lines like, "What about a NNNEEEETTTT-TWWWWWCZZZZZX kind of sound that sinks in under the fireplace light—boy, I bet you two to one odds that you people would see a new attitude emerge." As abstract as Braxton's methods are, his central aim is spiritual, and that new attitude is just what he's after.

Listening Example: Composition No. 95, For Two Pianos *(1980)*

Composition No. 95, recorded by Ursula Oppens and Frederic Rzewski under the title *For Two Pianos,* is a turning point in Braxton's output, and the first of his "Ritual and Ceremonial" compositions. The abstraction and pointillism of much of the piano writing harks back to the keyboard works of the late sixties and seventies. The costumes worn by the two performers, though—monkish robes with hoods that obscure their personal, racial, and sexual characteristics—point to Braxton's upcoming theatrical phase, while the occasional passages of steady notes and ostinatos suggest a foreshadowing of his "pulse track structures" as well. Written at the dawn of Reagan's conservative eighties, Composition No. 95 was written, Braxton wrote, as

> a vehicle for understanding that the *vibrational and physical universe particulars of a given focus are changing and as such, the spirit should be made aware and prepared. . . .* This work is designed to be performed for any context that involves vibrational and/or physical universe change, as that change concerns spiritual matters—for instance, DOCUMENTATION (i.e., the rise and fall of a given culture), WARNING (of an impending change), CELEBRATION (of a given focus or postulation), ACKNOWLEDGEMENT (i.e., of the change of the season, etc.). My original intention when composing this work was that I sensed and felt that the next immediate cycle in social

EXAMPLE 11.6 Anthony Braxton, Composition No. 95, ostinatos.

reality promises to be extremely difficult—*and there is danger in the air* for all people and forces concerned about humanity and positive participation.[15]

In addition, the cone symbol in the title diagram refers to nuclear power.

The pianists enter from opposite sides of the stage, playing interlocking ostinatos on melodicas (small keyboard instruments like ocarinas). These ostinatos gradually move to the pianos, and the abstract passages that follow give examples of Braxton's "multiple" and "oppositional" logics. That is, a frequent strategy is for one pianist to play in a soloistic manner which the other plays against him or her. After about ten minutes come the strings of interlocking eighth-note patterns. Throughout the work the melodicas reappear playing arabesques that interact with the opposing piano, and at times the pianists also softly twang away on zithers. The variety of timbres in this two-piano work are reminiscent of the multi-instrumentalism of so much AACM music, but also of Stockhausen's *Mantra* for two pianos with antique cymbals and electronics. By fusing together the traditions of jazz improvisation and American experimentalism, Braxton achieved what some regard as the ultimate goal of American music.

Roscoe Mitchell, Leroy Jenkins, and Other Post-Free-Jazz Figures

If Braxton is free jazz's Stockhausen, its Cage must be Roscoe Mitchell, for, like Cage but from a very different direction, Mitchell stripped away music's conventions and rediscovered sound in a field of silence. Mitchell was born in Chicago in 1940, and, in 1961, answered Abrams's call to play with the Experimental Band, and put out the first recording of AACM music in 1966, appropriately titled *Sound,* with a sextet that included Malachi Favors on bass and Lester Bowie on trumpet. Tellingly, the disc displays no conventional instrumental sounds: only harmonics, squeaks, honks, notes in-between-the-pitches. By 1969 Mitchell's fluid sextet eventually solidified into a quartet—Mitchell and Jarman on reeds, Bowie on trumpet, Favors on bass—famous ever since as the Art Ensemble of Chicago. That year the quartet left for Europe (followed soon by Braxton's trio) and in France added to the group the percussionist Don Moye.

The Art Ensemble's performances tend towards theater and even slapstick comedy. At one concert, a player in a Lyndon Johnson mask got smacked in the face with a custard pie; at others, one member would dance with a Raggedy Ann doll, or they would dress as the Spirit of '76 with fife, drum, and bandages. In the seventies Mitchell embarked on a

series of "Nonaah" pieces, Nonaah being a fictional character he created to provide a personal atmosphere within which to improvise. Many of the "Nonaah"s are alto sax improvs, though he has written them for string quartet, orchestra, and sax quartet. In one 1976 concert in Switzerland, he began a *Nonaah* by playing the same phrase over and over sixty-six times for seven minutes to an increasingly unruly audience, gradually smearing the notes in a free-jazz kind of minimalist process. Mitchell is an expert at circular breathing and can keep one lightning-fast line of elegant arabesques in constant motion for ten minutes without a break in sound.

Mitchell's most experimental side can be heard in *L-R-G* (1978, named for Leo-Roscoe-George), written for himself, Leo Smith on trumpets, and George Lewis on tuba and trombones. To write it Mitchell made a collection of favorite or most characteristic sounds of the three performers and put the sounds together like pasting photographs in a collage. To a large extent the result is parallel to Cage's works of the late fifties and early sixties such as *Atlas Eclipticalis,* with their pointillist, random-seeming textures made up of blurps of sound; riffs and flurries of activity, however, give evidence of individual personalities. By 1986, though, Mitchell wrote a completely-notated *Nonaah* for flute, bassoon, and piano: a thoughtful, totally contrapuntal work of mercurial textures closer to Wolpe than to Coltrane.

Leroy Jenkins, an important sideman for Braxton, Abrams, Carman Moore, and others, is one of the most classically trained members of the AACM. As such, he has had more success in notated music than virtually anyone except Braxton, having been commissioned by the Munich Biennale for an opera—*The Mother of Three Sons*—as well as turning out a cantata, several string quartets, and numerous other chamber works. In both jazz and classical worlds he is known as a violinist with a distinctively rough-hewn tone and agile technique. Born in 1932 in Chicago, Jenkins toured with the AACM in its heyday, working with Braxton, Abrams, Roscoe Mitchell, and Leo Smith, settling in New York in 1970. By 1980 Jenkins was close enough to the new-music crowd to play on New Music America, and soon afterward wrote his first completely notated work, a string quartet for the Kronos Quartet.

Choreographer Bill T. Jones brought Jenkins to the attention of the German composer and entrepreneur Hans Werner Henze, who arranged a commission for an opera combining Jones's choreography, a libretto by Ann T. Greene, and Jenkins's music. *The Mother of Three Sons* (1991) is drawn from an archetypal Yoruban myth about a woman who demands three sons and becomes enraged when each one is born with some crippling flaw. Vibrant and dance-driven, the work succeeded in expressing an African ethos within a European format. Jenkins is good at injecting a strong blues element into the rather Schoenbergian-Bartókian idiom so many AACM composers favor in their notated music;

reated
any of
em for
ert in
er and
/ audi-
imalist
ep one
n min-

(1978,
ι trum-
litchell
e three
hs in a
he late
st, ran-
rries of
· 1986,
assoon,
extures

brams,
l mem-
l music
l by the
ιs turn-
ιamber
: with a
932 in
ιg with
:w York
owd to
st com-

n of the
e, who
aphy, a
ree Sons
an who
rn with
eded in
is good
ergian-
l music;

a delightful example is his string quartet, *Themes & Improvisations on the Blues* (1986). In recent years his music has become overtly political, starting with an energetic cantata based in gospel traditions, *The Negros Burial Ground* (1996), about the history of a slave burial ground accidentally uncovered in Wall Street in 1991.

If there is a figure whose presence in two worlds is nearly as schizophrenic as Braxton's, it is Anthony Davis, jazz pianist and ensemble leader and composer of operas and concertos. Born in 1951 in Paterson, New Jersey, he studied at Yale and worked afterward with several of the leading AACM musicians, including George Lewis, Leo Smith, and Leroy Jenkins. Much in demand in the nineties, Davis has taught at Yale and Harvard. As a member of a younger generation, he writes less thorny, smoother music than the older AACM masters, reliant on ostinatos in irregular meters and full of harmonies that are tonally ambiguous, but never harsh. Much of Davis's most sensitive music, such as his poignantly coloristic tone poem *Undine* (1987), results from his work with his ensemble Episteme. Presumably the high point of his career to date, however, is the most celebrated opera yet to emerge from the black improvisation tradition: *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (1985).

The opera presents vignettes from Malcolm X's life, including a hectic scene in which he learns his father has been killed by white men; an effective jazz scene in which Malcolm is introduced to city life; a calm prison scene over drones and ostinatos in which Malcolm reads the *Koran,* converts, and meets Elijah; a crowd scene with Malcolm preaching the Muslim faith on the street; reporters questioning Malcolm about Kennedy's assassination and his famous reply that "the chickens have come home to roost"; Malcolm's rebuke by Elijah; Malcolm's pilgrimage to Mecca, sung with deep spirituality over a drone; reporters blaming Malcolm's "hate speech" for Harlem riots of the sixties; and the opera's abrupt end when Malcolm is shot at a meeting of the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Scenes are often separated by interludes that allow for improvisation by leading free-jazz instrumentalists such as the pianist Marilyn Crispell, the clarinetist J. D. Parran, or the saxophonist Marty Erlicht; there are as many "characters" in the orchestra as onstage. Davis has followed *X* with three more operas: *Under the Double Moon* (1989), *Tania* (1992), and *Amistad.*

Carman Moore has developed his own elegant jazz-classical interface outside the angst-ridden, modernist idioms of the AACM; he often manages to weave jazz conventions and mellow notated music together with no impression of heterogeneity. Moore was born in 1936 in Lorain, Ohio, and studied at Juilliard, where he worked with Berio, Persichetti, and Wolpe. In 1985 he renamed his ensemble Skymusic, making with it soothing yet sophisticated works tinged with various African and Middle Eastern musics, such as *Righteous Heroes: Sacred Spaces* (1987). His larger works are motivated by a deep humanitarianism, notably his mammoth

Mass for the 21st Century (1994), scored for soprano, children's and adult choruses, twenty-five dancers, and his Skymusic ensemble. This twenty-one-movement oratorio runs a range of styles from its opening fugue to gospel to Gregorian chant to hip hop, though Moore's technique is fluid enough to avoid an effect of pastiche. He puts his diagnosis of mankind's ills (his own words) in the mouths of children:

> Till everything is possible and everything is mine,
> And everything is multiplied many, many times . . .
> Till everyone is specialized and knows just what to do,
> And every law is averaged and all the people too . . .
> Progress. Progress. This is Manchild's dream.

Standing outside the usual new-music circles, Moore has garnered an enthusiastic local following in New York.

Several of the other AACM musicians have composed works that remain less well known than their jazz improvisations: Joseph Jarman, Henry Threadgill, Julius Hemphill, Oliver Lake, Douglas Ewart, all saxophonists who double on other instruments as well. Also deserving of mention in this respect is the ROVA Saxophone Quartet. Although its original members are white—Jon Raskin, Larry Ochs, Andrew Voight, Bruce Ackley—they have been strongly influenced by the AACM tradition and have turned out remarkably well-sculpted group-composed works in a style partly reminiscent of both Bartók and Thelonious Monk, and partly quite original.

John Zorn and the Free Improvisation Scene

Following the AACM's creative music movement came a far-flung, mostly white free improvisation movement, often called "New York Noise," that dominated music in New York and other large cities from about 1983 to 1990 and is still highly active. Just as the AACM's music opened up a space for the modernist impulse in Black music, the Downtown improv scene of the eighties was an aggressive resurgence of modernist complexity and noise, and a reaction against the audience-friendliness of minimalism. Echoing the earlier twelve-tone composers, the improvisers prided themselves on the difficulty and acerbity of their music. Since improvised music could often be thrown together without rehearsal, the movement was reinforced by the economics of the eighties, which had put both rehearsal space and time at a high premium.

The undisputed king of the improv scene, and its least typical member, was and is John Zorn. Zorn is the downtown postmodernist, a collage artist with a self-described short attention span, whose music cuts

nd adult
s twenty-
fugue to
e is fluid
ankind's

iered an

orks that
Jarman,
t, all sax-
erving of
iough its
Voight,
M tradi-
omposed
is Monk,

ar-flung,
ew York
ies from
l's music
usic, the
gence of
udience-
nposers,
of their
without
ie eight-
nium.
t typical
ernist, a
usic cuts

from one style to another, omnivorously quoting European avant-garde music, bluegrass, bebop, Beethoven, heavy metal, TV commercials, Indian ragas, thrash. He was born in New York in 1953 and studied briefly at Webster College in St. Louis, where, after exposure to musicians from the AACM, he started playing alto saxophone. Moving to New York in 1974, he assembled like-minded musicians and wrote game pieces partly inspired by the aleatory techniques of Earle Brown and Christian Wolff. The earliest of these, such as *Pool* and *Archery* (both 1979), tended to sound, with their statically noisy textures, like European post-serialist music, though with a theatrical element that had to do with the players cueing each other. The climactic work in the series was *Cobra* (1984), an aleatory structure open enough to act as an improvised collage, with turn-on-a-dime group changes achieved by players signaling each other like traffic cops. The work has become a permanent icon of downtown improvisation.

In 1986, Zorn's breakthrough to the public came in a recording called *The Big Gundown,* a series of arrangements of film music by Ennio Morricone. Morricone's gun-slinging stylizations, heard through the haze of Zorn's crazy intercutting and raucous Downtown side effects, caught the public imagination, and Zorn was suddenly a star. Suddenly it became hip to make "high art" music with vernacular or "low art" materials. The game pieces gave way to a technique Zorn called file-card composition, in which ideas for moments would be written on file cards, such as: "Pianist, do Renaissance kind of shape for ten seconds," and "Flute player, play as fast as you can."[16] A major influence on this kind of composing was Carl Stalling, the composer for the Warner Brothers "Bugs Bunny" cartoons, whose music juxtaposed everything from Wagner to pop songs to sound effects in split-second juxtapositions.

In this manner Zorn produced his next recorded work, *Spillane* (1986), a tribute to the detective novel: a woman screams, a jazz quartet plays, a trombone moans over recorded voices, slow atmospheric music comes in, each change as abrupt as switching radio stations. Even Zorn's notated works for classical performers are written in the file-card style. *Cat o' Nine Tails* (1988, subtitled *Tex Avery Directs the Marquis de Sade*) for string quartet consists of sixty moments, including quotations from other string quartets, improvisatory flareups, cartoon elements, tangos, waltzes, classical cadences, and noise. Zorn's primary significance for downtown music, aside from his incorporation of diverse vernaculars, was that he recognized many of the pitfalls of free improvisation—formal amorphousness, inability to make sudden changes in ensemble texture, self-indulgence—and figured out strategies for overcoming them.

The number two most visible group leader on the downtown scene in the eighties was Elliott Sharp, famed for the density and volume of his noise barrages and for his use of fractals and the Fibonacci series in the structuring of his works. Born in 1951 in Cleveland, Sharp graduated

from Bard College, where he studied with Benjamin Boretz, and worked with Lejaren Hiller at SUNY at Buffalo. He moved to New York in 1975 and formed his most important ensemble, Carbon, in 1980. A self-described "science nerd," he refers often to scientific and mathematical concepts in his music, as evident in titles such as *Iso-* (1984), *Singularity* (1986), *Sili/Contemp/Tation* (1986), *Self-Squared Dragon* (1986), and *Hammer Anvil Stirrup* (1988, for string quartet). *Larynx* (1987), Sharp's major work of the late eighties, is based on the idea of a chaotic ensemble of reeds, amplified string quartet, and percussion as a gigantic throat, with reference to the throat singing of Mongolia and Inuit Canada. The use of Fibonacci numbers in this work and others determines both structural proportions and string tunings (1:1, 3:2, 8:5, and 5:3 yielding C, G, A-flat, and A). With his propulsive drumbeats and relatively steady-state noise textures, Sharp's music may be closer to rock than jazz, but he improvises on guitar and sax in a variety of contexts.

The third in the downtown improv triumvirate is Anthony Coleman: an improviser who studied classical twelve-tone technique with Druckman and Donald Martino. Born 1955 in New York, he went to New England Conservatory and Yale before ending up back on the New York scene in 1979. As devoted to Thelonious Monk and Charles Mingus as to Webern and Feldman, Coleman derives material for his works through improvisation and uses improvisers for his performances, but he composes his intervallic structures and extremes of register with great specificity. The difference, he says, is that of

> a frame of reference. Classical improvisers look for a way of honoring the intentions of the composer. My improvisers look for a link to the other kinds of improvisation they do. Nothing in the structure of my music sounds like jazz, but the way they play it sounds like jazz.[17]

The result, in chamber ensemble pieces like *The King of Kabay* (1988) and *by the book* (1991), is a music of strikingly original textures, often marked by slowly lumbering contrapuntal lines played with a jaunty roughness. In *the hidden agenda* (1989) for piano, Coleman intercut among four different types of music with postmodern collage effect, but derived all four from exactly the same interval structure. His *Latvian Counter-Gambit* (1995) for orchestra is a textural homage, sans quotations, to Thelonious Monk, with a good dash of Varèse audible in its growling sonorities.

By the time all these people joined the New York scene, Shelley Hirsch had been performing there for years. Born in East New York in Brooklyn in 1952, she grew up fascinated by ethnic vocal traditions, and, at eighteen, went to California to study Japanese Kabuki—only to learn that women weren't allowed to perform it. She returned to New York in 1972 and started performing with Kirk Nurock (a brilliant jazz pianist who also does workshops .with experimental vocal techniques) and Jeffrey Lohn. Her seminal early work was *The Beach is Her Home* (1983),

vorked
n 1975
A self-
matical
gularity
), and
Sharp's
ensem-
throat,
la. The
1 struc-
g C, G,
ly-state
but he

nthony
:hnique
1e went
on the
Charles
for his
nances,
:er with

or-
to
of
z.[17]

88) and
marked
ighness.
our dif-
all four
r-Gambit
:lonious
ties.
Shelley
York in
ns, and,
to learn
York in
z pianist
es) and
: (1983),

an opera with percussion and electronics about a woman who lived on the beach. From the beginning Hirsch told stories in her music, often collecting them from crazy, repetitive street people. Her vocal pieces started out somewhat minimalist as a result, but evolved into a complex, improvisatory idiom of shrieks, burbles, faked foreign languages, Tibetan-style overtone singing, and other virtuoso effects. Sort of the Meredith Monk of New York Noise, she has done some of her best pieces with the electronics artist David Weinstein, including *Haiku Lingo* (1988), in which she and the taped electronics would switch styles exactly in sync in a zig-zagging roller coaster of sound.

David Weinstein, meanwhile, has become leader of one of New York's strangest ensembles: Impossible Music, a chamber orchestra of CD players. Born in Chicago in 1954, he studied with Johnston and Martirano and founded, with the improvising trombonist Jim Staley, a performance series in Chicago and later New York called Roulette, one of the country's most important spaces for new music. Weinstein spent the early eighties working on *Illuminated Man* (1981), a beautifully elaborate graphic environment—a painted floor, actually—structured according to nestings of the Fibonacci series, which were used as paradigms for rule-based improvisation. In 1990, he and Tim Spelios began exploring the possibilities of making music with CD players, cutting and looping among different tracks. The resulting music combined repetitive bits of sound effect discs, world music recordings, classical CDs, and other paraphernalia in a music whose ecumenicism fulfilled Henry Cowell's dream of a music without cultural boundaries. One of Impossible Music's signal achievements, in 1992, was the first live performance of the Beatles' tape collage from their "White Album," *Revolution No. 9.*

The fusion and confusion of rock, jazz, and new music didn't last—or at least, in the nineties the separate genres momentarily retired to their respective corners for a breather. Many of the most talented musicians on the improv scene—including the drummer Robert Previte, the pianists Marilyn Crispell and Myra Melford, the pianist-vocalist Robin Holcomb, the guitarist Wayne Horvitz, and several of the AACM composers—settled into a more definable jazz idiom after the eighties ended. Others, such as the trombonist Jim Staley, the cellist Tom Cora, the harpist Zeena Parkins, the turntable-spinner Christian Marclay, the percussionist Michael Zerang, and the trombonist and computer-improviser Don Malone (these last two in Chicago), have persisted in free improvisation. Part of the difficulty of bringing the genres together is that rock and jazz led new music in opposite directions: rock toward the narrow focus of an intensified minimalism, jazz back to modernist complexity, dissonance, and fragmentation. The dream of a "one-world music" still persists, though, and attempts to merge will undoubtedly recur in the twenty-first century until a new, more inclusive musical practice results.

Notes

1. Leonard Bernstein, *The Infinite Variety of Music*.
2. Rhys Chatham, *Composer's Notebook 1990: Toward a Musical Agenda for the Nineties*, via the Internet, http://sun.goddard.edu/students/wgdr/kalvos/chatess1.html, 1990.
3. Conversation with the author, 1981.
4. Laurie Anderson, *Stories from the Nerve Bible: A Retrospective* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994), p. 13.
5. Ibid., p. 155.
6. Liner notes, *Die Donnergötter*, Dossier Records DCD 9002, 1988.
7. Quoted in Kyle Gann, "Harps from Heaven," *Village Voice*, November 22, 1994, vol. XXXIX, No. 47, p. 49.
8. Re\Search Publications #13: Angry Women.
9. "Jazz Musicians Group in Chicago Growing," *Down Beat* (July 28, 1966), p. 11; quoted in Ronald M. Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 266.
10. Ibid.
11. Quoted in John Litweiler, "Richard Abrams, a Man with an Idea," *Down Beat* (October 5, 1967).
12. Ronald M. Radano, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 266.
13. Quoted in Graham Lock's liner notes to *Anthony Braxton, Quartet* (London) 1985, Leo Records.
14. Leo Smith, liner notes to *The Complete Braxton 1971*, Arista/Freedom 1902.
15. Anthony Braxton, *Composition Notes E* (Hanover, N.H.: Tree Frog Music, 1988), 1–24.
16. William Duckworth, *Talking Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1995), p. 454.
17. Interview with the author, January 8, 1997.