

# AMERICAN MUSIC REVIEW

The H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York

Volume XLVII, Issue 1

Fall 2017

## Legacies of Pauline Oliveros at Brooklyn College

David Grubbs, Brooklyn College



Almost exactly one year after her passing, musicians, scholars, artists, and writers of all stripes—a multitude of modes on this occasion often entwined within a single individual—came together to pay tribute to Pauline Oliveros in a two-day symposium hosted by Brooklyn College. Douglas Geers, lead organizer of the event, remarked that it was fundamental that Oliveros’s legacy be rendered as the plural “legacies,” and one could imagine that if such a gathering were a person’s first encounter with her work that the breadth of practices and the range of individuals touched—shaped—by Oliveros’s example could be thrillingly vast. Indeed, even people who were close to Pauline—she really was a first-name kind of soul: *Hi, I’m Pauline!*—or conversant with her work were bound to have encountered some facet with which they were unfamiliar.

The presentations included a trio of papers from Jules Gimbrone, Kristin Norderval, and Mairead Case discussing Oliveros as a trailblazing queer artist (Case’s talk had to do with Pauline’s lifelong veneration for Buck Rogers’ sidekick Wilma Deering); Miya Masaoka on the vagina as the third ear; Mike Bullock on Pauline as a teacher; Ethan Hayden and Viv Corringham on approaches to performing *Heart of Tones*; and the contributions by Sarah Weaver and Adam Tinkle that are included in the present issue of the *American Music Review*.

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## Legacies of Pauline Oliveros (cont.)

Nicholas DeMaison, IONE, Ross Karre, and Monica Duncan detailed the process of staging IONE's and Oliveros's opera *The Nubian Word for Flowers*, which premiered less than a month after the symposium, and a panel including IONE, composers Tania León and Morton Subotnick, and Tony Martin—former Visual Director of the San Francisco Tape Music Center—provided the occasion for spontaneous reflections from kindred artists who had been witness to the growth and changes in Oliveros's practice over a span of decades.

Perhaps the most surprising of presentations was Leaf Miller's and Sherrie Tucker's workshop that described Oliveros's role in developing the AUMI music system for helping the severely disabled to play music. In their recounting, not only did Oliveros take a lead role creatively in helping to design interactive musical instruments for people who otherwise would not be able to play music, but she also, true to form, convened a multi-city reading group in disabilities studies via Skype, for which she often volunteered to take minutes. Their presen-

tation concluded with a lengthy improvisation that was open to all, and in many ways crystallized the generosity and exploratory spirit common to nearly all of Pauline's endeavors.



*Sherrie Tucker and Leaf Miller lead a workshop on AUMI (Adaptive Use Musical Instruments) at Brooklyn College*

Musical performances spread over two evenings bookended the event. Among the most revelatory were Kristin Norderval's *Listening for Pauline* for voice and electronics, Seth Cluett's mysterious performance of Oliveros's *The Witness* (as a duo for an imagined partner), actual duo performances by Fred Lonberg-Holm and Tomeka Reid and by Monique Buzzarté and Sarah Cahill, and longtime Oliveros collaborator Anne Bourne's pairing of cello and voice on *Horse Sings from Cloud*. The second concert was capped by a processional performance of *Bonn Feier* led by Douglas Cohen.

One theme that was echoed in conversations throughout these two days was that Pauline Oliveros's legacies seem uniquely living. In contrast to numerous other composers, her passing appears less inflected by the problems of preserving her work than it is by reflection on the ways in which her efforts are generatively embodied by those whose lives intersected with hers.



*Tania León and Morton Subotnick during a panel discussion at the Brooklyn College Symposium*

## Institute News

Brooklyn's Gowanus neighborhood, so named because it grew up around the famously murky Gowanus Canal, has traditionally been home to warehouses and coffin manufacturers. In the last decade, however, the area has seen the opening of trendy restaurants (including a popular rib joint), special event halls, and performance spaces. One of those venues, ShapeShifter Lab, has now partnered with Brooklyn College's Conservatory of Music and the Hitchcock Institute for a concert series in the fall and spring. The series, curated by Hitchcock Institute Research Associate **Arturo O'Farrill**, had its launch this term. The inaugural concert of the series on 11 September featured several Brooklyn College faculty and ensembles, including O'Farrill, **Prof. David Grubbs** on guitar, and **Prof. Marianne Gythfeldt** on clarinet. Other concerts in what became dubbed the BroCo MaSS series ("Brooklyn College Mondays at Shape Shifter") included presentations by students in the Sonic Arts and Media Scoring programs, the Composer's Collective, the conTEMPO new music ensemble, the College's jazz ensembles, and a variety of other Conservatory artists. The goal of bringing BC's talented students to new audiences, as well as fostering a sense of community among the many branches of the Conservatory of Music's programs, was an unqualified success. We look forward to more exciting events in the spring term.

In addition to our symposium **Legacies of Pauline Oliveros**, presented in collaboration with the Computer Music Center (see David Grubb's article in this issue), HISAM featured three presentations that celebrated a wide range of music in the Americas. On 18 October, celebrated ethnomusicologist **Mark Slobin** investigated "Music in My Detroit: 1940s–1960s." **Kendall Williams**'s "The Power and Glory of Steel Pan" on 25 October focused on the pan virtuoso's experiences as arranger and composer working in a variety of musical idioms here in New York. And helping us live up to



*David Grubbs performs at ShapeShifter Lab during the September BroCo MaSS opening concert*

our name as an institute for the study of *American* music, **Tamar Barzel**'s fascinating presentation on the Mexico City-based improvisation collective *Atrás del Cosmos* (13 November) gave a reminder of the artistic gifts of the US's southern neighbor, and how imperative it is to celebrate this lively culture, rather than walling ourselves off from it.

This fall The Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music was notified of final State approval for our Masters in Global and Contemporary Jazz, and our first group of students are now enrolling. An idea hatched by Arturo O'Farrill (see his piece in our Fall 2016 issue), and planned around the table in the Institute's office with Senior Research Associate **Ray Allen** and HISAM Director **Jeffrey Taylor**, the development of the program also enjoyed the support of Conservatory Director **Stephanie Jensen-Moulton**, Dean of Visual, Media and Performing Arts **Maria Conelli**, and many fellow colleagues. As a result our college now boasts a program of study unlike any in the country and is already attracting national and international attention. Stay tuned for further progress reports on this exciting new development.

## Institute News (cont.)

Institute Director **Jeffrey Taylor**, along with HISAM Special Advisor **Randall Horton**, is working with the Brooklyn College TV and Radio department to create a program for CUNY TV (and some PBS affiliates) devoted to **Cornel West**'s visit and performance this past May. Taylor continues his research on jazz in Brooklyn, as well as a variety of other topics. Senior Research Advisor **Ray Allen** spent the fall as a Fellow at the Advanced Research Center (ARC) of the CUNY Graduate Center, where he participated in an interdisciplinary seminar on immigration and globalization and completed a draft of his manuscript on Caribbean Carnival music in New York City. College Assistant **Whitney George** has received an Elebash Award from the CUNY Graduate Center for dissertation work on Miriam Gideon's *Fortunato*, which is scheduled for a world premiere performance in Fall of 2018. She also conducted New Camerata Opera's production of Menotti's *The Medium* at Brooklyn's innovative House of Yes, and received a number of commissions for which we will be sure to provide updates.

—*J. T.*

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American Music Review  
Volume XLVII, Issue 1

ISSN 1943-9385  
Fall 2017

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AMR is published in the Fall and Spring. Copyright 2017 by the H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 2900 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11210.

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## Roots for Deep Listening in Oliveros's *Bye Bye Butterfly*

Sarah Weaver, Stony Brook University

Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) is a luminary in American music. She was a pioneer in a number of fields, including composition, improvisation, tape and electronic music, and accordion performance. Oliveros was also the founder of Deep Listening, a practice that is “based upon principles of improvisation, electronic music, ritual, teaching and meditation,” and that is “designed to inspire both trained and untrained musicians to practice the art of listening and responding to environmental conditions in solo and ensemble situations.”<sup>1</sup> While Deep Listening permeated Oliveros's output since the establishment of The Deep Listening Band in 1988, the first Deep Listening Retreat in 1991, and the Deep Listening programs that continue through present time, the literature surrounding Oliveros's work tends to portray an historical gap between Deep Listening and her earlier works, such as her acclaimed tape composition *Bye Bye Butterfly*, a two-channel, eight-minute tape composition made at the San Francisco Tape Music Center in 1965. A main reason for this gap is an over-emphasis on Oliveros's status as a female composer, rather than a direct engagement with the musical elements of her work. This has caused *Bye Bye Butterfly* to be interpreted prominently as a feminist work, even though, according to Oliveros herself, the work was not intended this way in the first place.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, historical significance tends to be placed on this piece, and on its relationship with Oliveros as a female composer, instead of portraying her work and significance based on her music alone. Connecting Deep Listening and *Bye Bye Butterfly* illuminates a continuum of her musical processes, depicting her music more completely. This query explores cultural factors contributing to this historical gap in accounts of Oliveros's music, locating the roots of Deep Listening in *Bye Bye Butterfly* and offering a refined pathway for portrayal of Oliveros's music.



*Pauline Oliveros at the San Francisco Tape Music Center, c. 1964*

Pauline Oliveros's innovations in a variety of musics have spurred historical associations with disparate figures from LaMonte Young to Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage to Cecil Taylor, Laurie Anderson to Annea Lockwood, and across artistic disciplines from IONE to Linda Montano. Amidst the historical multiplicity and polarizations in portrayals of her work, the consistent underlying feature is that she is a woman. This has prompted an over-emphasis on her gender, an excessive characterization of her work as feminist, and a gap in representation of musical ties between her early and later works.

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“Pauline Oliveros is an internationally known American composer, in the forefront of music since the late 1950s.”

- Heidi Von Gunden, University of Illinois Composition Faculty<sup>3</sup>

“Pauline Oliveros is a disconcerting figure to a great many people.”

- Ben Johnston, University of Illinois Composition Faculty<sup>4</sup>

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

The overemphasis on Pauline Oliveros's status as a female composer is evidenced consistently across many texts. In Alex Ross's *The Rest is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (2007), Oliveros is cited within a section on classical music spreading internationally beyond Europe. Male composers Peter Sculthorpe and R. Murray Schafer are listed in acknowledgement of their musical contributions, while composers Franghiz Ali-Zadeh, Chen Yi, Unsuk Chin, Sofia Gubaidulina, Kaija Saariaho, and Pauline Oliveros are grouped together in recognition that they are female. In Paul Griffith's book *Modern Music and After* (1995), Oliveros is brought up in a discussion of musical trends of individuality and inclusion in the 1970s. Again, the musical attributes of male composers such as Benjamin Britten and Gerald Barry are discussed, while the female composers are grouped together. In this case, each female composer is given a male comparison. Judith Weir is paired with Franco Donatoni, Gubaidulina with Schnittke, and Oliveros with Terry Riley. *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (2000) by Howard Brick addresses Oliveros in a paragraph about the San Francisco Tape Music Center in the context of an electronic music scene largely dominated by Milton Babbitt's serialists. Male composers Ramon Sender, Morton Subotnick, Elliott Carter, Leonard Bernstein, Ned Rorem, Charles Wuorinen, John Cage, and Arnold Schoenberg are all presented according to their musical work. The comments on Oliveros are prefaced by stating she is "one of the few well-known women working in new music."<sup>5</sup> In Kyle Gann's *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (1997), the main discussion of Oliveros is in relation to John Cage: "If Cage could be said to have a female counterpart, it would have to be Pauline Oliveros."<sup>6</sup>

Even in books that are about women in music, Oliveros is prone to be characterized primarily in terms of gender. While publications such as *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States: Crossing the Line* (2006) by Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, and the *Norton/Grove Dictionary of Women Composers* (1994) display Oliveros's work on its own terms after being grouped with women in the book titles, another study, *Women and Music: A History* (2001) edited by Karin Anna Pendle, goes

further to emphasize Oliveros as female. This book displays a typical example of the format, beginning with Oliveros's musical work and extending the portrayal to bring attention to her gender:

Oliveros has won a respectful following, among composers and audiences, as an experimenter and a forerunner in the now widely accepted field of electronic music. Through her many residences at colleges and universities she has spread to a younger generation of composers her ideas about creating a music based on listening. Her concern with meditation and Eastern philosophies recalls the ideas of John Cage, though her music does not. Most poetically stated, Pauline Oliveros is, in her commitment to feminist principles and her exploration of new language of sounds, a musical Gertrude Stein.<sup>7</sup>

This format is congruent with the broad pattern of consistently categorizing Oliveros's music as female within the disparate historical groupings of her work, rather than emphasizing the connection of her musical elements on their own terms.

Historically this factor can also be attributed to the cultural context of Oliveros's compositional career. Her career has taken place in a field with few women in it, and a cultural era in which feminists have fought for the rights of women. Another component is the masculinist musicological narrative cited by scholars such as Martha Mockus. The discrimination against women in the eras leading up to and including the lifetime of Oliveros led to masculine viewpoints in studying and historically interpreting her music, resulting in an overemphasis on feminism regarding Oliveros. Although Mockus's interpretations, written from a female viewpoint, continue to cast *Bye Bye Butterfly* as a feminist piece and furthermore as a lesbian piece, her work nonetheless offers an alternative to the masculine narrative. She views Oliveros's work "as lesbian musicality—a musical enactment of mid- and late-century lesbian subjectivity, critique, and transformation on several levels."<sup>8</sup> She highlights aspects, such as commitment to pleasure, recogni-

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

tion of the body, importance of group interaction, and the relationship of romantic longing to music-making. Regarding *Bye Bye Butterfly*, she views this as an “eerie and forceful feminist critique of the opera” and she argues that the work “calls attention to the opera’s distorted representations of gender and race.”<sup>9</sup> This scholarly work was a step in broadening interpretation and contextualization of the earlier and later works of Oliveros in musicology through a female perspective. However, Mockus’s interpretation emphasizes the subject matter more than the innovations in electronic music present in the piece, which offer links to Oliveros’s later works.

Oliveros herself has spoken out about women’s issues in music. Famously, in her article “And Don’t Call Them Lady Composers,” published in the *New York Times* in 1970, she cites issues such as the expectation of domesticity for women, their support of men’s needs and aspirations, and the derogatory usage of “girl” and “lady.” She writes, “No matter what her achievements might be, when the time comes, a woman is expected to knuckle under, pay attention to her feminine duties and obediently follow her husband wherever his endeavor or inclination takes him, no matter how detrimental it may be to her own.”<sup>10</sup> Regarding music, she writes, “Many critics and professors cannot refer to women who are also composers without using cute or condescending language. She is a ‘lady composer.’ Rightly, this expression is anathema to many self-respecting women composers. It effectively separates women’s efforts from the mainstream.”<sup>11</sup> Oliveros is explicitly addressing women’s issues up to this point. However, she goes further in the article to show how addressing these concerns is a gateway for healing societal issues:

It does not matter that all composers are great composers; it matters that this activity be encouraged among all the population, that we communicate with each other in nondestructive ways... Certainly the greatest problems of society will not be solved until an egalitarian atmosphere utilizing the total creative energies exists among all men and women.<sup>12</sup>

This is the broader message of the article, and in a way it is a lens through which to view aspects of



*Pauline Oliveros with conch shell, 1995*

Oliveros’s musical legacy. While her work exists in a time and place in which women’s issues need to be addressed, her compositions have transformed this concern into broad human interconnections in her practice of Deep Listening. Healing inner and outer divisions, individually and in music, extending this into society, and committing to authentic expression through listening, are all evidence of an underlying creative process in her work, beyond categorization in terms of sex or gender. To characterize Oliveros as female and her work as feminist is only a partial portrayal that diminishes her significance as a musical and human pioneer. Connecting the musical elements of her early and later works can close this gap and illuminate essences of her music in the field.

An additional cultural factor contributing to the historical gap is the dynamic between metaphysical practice and musical composition during Oliveros’s career. While the cultural dynamics between the metaphysical aspects of Oliveros’s Deep Listening practice and music composition is a broad discussion, specifically among the composers at the San

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

Francisco Tape Music Center, Oliveros is the only composer to have developed a metaphysical sound practice for her music. Experimental composers of her era have openly worked with metaphysical elements in their music, such as John Cage's use of the *I-Ching*, Anthony Braxton's use of ritual in *Trillium*, and Arvo Pärt's integration of Russian Orthodox religion in many works. Taking this further into developing a practice based on sound is unique to Oliveros among historically recognized composers in her field. This important link has not been sufficiently addressed in characterizing her work as a whole.

This lack of attention to metaphysics also feeds into the historical overemphasis on her feminism and even into the choice of *Bye Bye Butterfly* as an historical representation of her work in general. In Oliveros's book, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice*, and on her artist website, she lists *Bye Bye Butterfly*, but the piece is not presented as central to describing and defining her work. The musicological placement of *Bye Bye Butterfly* elsewhere as a work of great historical significance can be traced to both an overemphasis on feminism and a deficiency in scholarship that does not deal sufficiently with the relationship between *Deep Listening* and Oliveros's musical compositions.

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In 1969 *New York Times* music critic John Rockwell named *Bye Bye Butterfly* one of the most significant pieces of the decade.<sup>13</sup> Created at the storied San Francisco Tape Music Center along with other early notable works of Oliveros such as *I of IV*, *Bye Bye Butterfly* exemplified her early innovations in music that also pioneered the emergence of electronic music as a field. Made as a two-channel tape piece, the technology utilizes two oscillators, two-line amplifiers in cascade, two tape recorders in a delay set-up, and a turntable with a recording of Puccini's opera *Madama Butterfly* (1904). Oliveros arranged the equipment, tuned the oscillators, and created the composition in real time. The piece includes a section that processes a recording of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*. The resulting sounds, made by distorting and deconstructing the recorded music, are largely interpreted as feminist,

representing the end of discriminatory practices against women from the culture in which the piece *Madama Butterfly* was made. For example, Mockus quotes Heidi Von Gunden's analysis, which argues that the "tape-delay technique and the frequency modulation produce wavelike gestures resembling sonic good-byes to *Butterfly*."<sup>14</sup> Mockus goes further to suggest *Bye Bye Butterfly* is a reclaiming of the butterfly as a beautiful symbol of lesbian sexuality.<sup>15</sup> Howard Brick, in his book *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s*, states that Oliveros is a woman whose "irreverent *Bye Bye Butterfly*" is "a spontaneous performance on synthesizer, emitting long, weird sounds like cricket choruses, against a backdrop of a scratchy record of a Puccini aria."<sup>16</sup> This association of Oliveros's "irreverence" with her status as a female composer is compounded by his surface level description of the music.

*Bye Bye Butterfly* has a multilayered relationship with feminism. During my interview with Oliveros in October 2014, she revealed that the choice of material for the piece was a "synthesis," that is, the choice of material was intuitive and circumstantial rather than a pre-planned decision. The recording of *Madama Butterfly* happened to be in the studio where she was making the piece; she did not plan ahead of time to use this recording. Her focus was on the musical decisions within her tape music techniques and improvisational synchrony. The processing of the *Madama Butterfly* recording was only a portion of the piece. This is further confirmed by Oliveros in the book *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde* (2008), where she states that the selection was "fortuitous" and happened by "chance."<sup>17</sup> These distinctions point to the feminist element as a by-product of the piece rather than its central purpose. Furthermore, regarding the first release of the recording of the piece as part of a compilation recording in 1977 titled *New Music for Electronic and Recorded Media*, which contained works only by women composers, Mockus documents that Oliveros chose to submit *Bye Bye Butterfly*. Oliveros said the choice was based on its short length (eight minutes). In the liner notes, the picture accompanying the piece is not of Oliveros herself, but rather of a male



## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

graduate student who had taken on her daily roles that weekend as part of a performance art festival. All of the other photos in the liner notes are pictures of the female composers themselves, while the image of Oliveros's male stand-in creates a play on gender and illustrates the piece's multilayered relationship with feminism.



*Pauline Oliveros conducting a Deep Listening exercise, 2014*

However, this element is generally over-emphasized in the historical placement of *Bye Bye Butterfly* and its relationship to her later compositions. As Oliveros states, her focus was on the musical decisions within her tape music techniques and improvisational synchrony. She describes to Mockus how she mapped out the instrument as a kind of performance architecture, rather than deciding the content ahead of time.<sup>18</sup> Oliveros's tape music techniques and improvisational architecture are the central revolutionary elements of *Bye Bye Butterfly* that also continued on to be developed in her later works. The interpreted element of feminism in the content was a component but has been given too much historical emphasis in communicating the essence of the piece and of Oliveros as a composer.

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The first Deep Listening Retreat was held in 1991. The practice was formalized in *Deep Listening* (2004), where Oliveros acknowledges that her collection *Sonic Meditations* (1971) is the basis of Deep Listening. Oliveros has also practiced Deep Listening in the acclaimed Deep Listening Band since 1988, together with Stuart Dempster, the late

David Gamper, and guest musicians. Additionally, she composed *Deep Listening Pieces* (1990). Other books related to Deep Listening have been written by her collaborators IONE and Heloise Gold, compilations of Deep Listening pieces and writings by students and practitioners have been published, and the practice has permeated Oliveros's compositions. The Center for Deep Listening (formerly Deep Listening Institute) is located at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York.

The name Deep Listening, according to Oliveros, combines Deep as “complex and boundaries, or edges beyond ordinary or habitual understanding” with Listening as

...learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound—encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible. Simultaneously one ought to be able to target a sound or sequence of sounds as a focus within the space/time continuum and to perceive the detail or trajectory of the sound or sequence of sounds. Such focus should always return to, or be within the whole of the space/time continuum.<sup>19</sup>

The practice of Deep Listening involves “a variety of training exercises drawn from diverse sources and pieces especially composed by Pauline Oliveros

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

and other Deep Listening practitioners. Exercises include energy work, bodywork, breath exercises, vocalizing, listening and dream work.”<sup>20</sup> In creative practice, Oliveros cites this experience:

My performances as an improvising composer are especially informed by my Deep Listening practice. I do practice what I preach. When I arrive on stage, I am listening and expanding to the whole of the space/time continuum of perceptible sound. I have no preconceived ideas. What I perceive as the continuum of sound and energy takes my attention and informs what I play. What I play is recognized consciously by me slightly (milliseconds) after I have played any sound. This altered state of consciousness in performing is exhilarating and inspiring. The music comes through as if I have nothing to do with it but allow it to emerge through my instrument and voice. It is even more exciting to practice, whether I am performing or just living out my daily life.<sup>21</sup>

The writings on Deep Listening thus far have been largely by Oliveros, her collaborators, practitioners, and students, and the role of Deep Listening in Oliveros’s music has not yet been fully integrated into the historical literature. The practice has spread internationally and Oliveros’s music work in Deep Listening is being received increasingly in artistic institutes. A key in integrating Oliveros’s work as a whole historically is connecting Deep Listening with her early works such as *Bye Bye Butterfly*.

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Connections between *Bye Bye Butterfly* and Oliveros’s later work in Deep Listening, can be found in her approach to improvisation, the choice of *Madama Butterfly* as synthesis rather than intention, tape music as a predecessor to electronic music, and drone aesthetics associated with meditation. Furthermore, Oliveros states her own connection between these entities in her book about Deep Listening:

Through the sixties I became absorbed in electronic music making. With this medium I began to find the sounds that interested me and were most similar to the sounds in my inner listening. Two of my pieces from this period—*I of IV* and *Bye Bye Butterfly* were released on recordings and have become classics of the period.<sup>22</sup>

The use of improvisation is certainly a main connecting element. Contemporaries of Oliveros in experimental music such as John Cage were not drawn to improvisation and questioned its validity. However, Cage commented on Deep Listening in this quote in 1989: “Through Pauline Oliveros and Deep Listening I finally know what harmony is. . . . It’s about the pleasure of making music.”<sup>23</sup> The quote is further evidence of the male casting of Oliveros in a feminine tone by referring to “pleasure” rather than to her tangible musical contributions. Beyond pleasure, Oliveros embraced and innovated the Free Improvisation movement in jazz that was emerging at the time of *Bye Bye Butterfly* and continued her version of this in the development of her Deep Listening work. Her Deep Listening Band performs improvisationally while engaged in Deep Listening and her *Deep Listening Pieces* utilize text parameters for improvisation. Similarly, *Bye Bye Butterfly* had a set of tape techniques and recorded material for improvisation in manifesting the piece. Oliveros’s citing of improvisational synthesis in assembling *Bye Bye Butterfly* relates to her approach in Deep Listening as well and could be considered an early form of Deep Listening. The Deep Listening practice and pieces expanded to involve multiple elements such as focal attention, global attention, body work, multidimensional listening, and dream work. Oliveros’s use of improvisation is more broadly articulated in her work with her colleagues in the Improvisation, Community and Social Practice group. Fischlin and Heble describe the process of improvisation as “the other side of nowhere,”

...a metaphor for the alternative sound-world of improvised music making, and perhaps more notably, for the new kinds of social relationships articulated in a music that, while seeming to come out of

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

nowhere, has profoundly gifted us with the capacity to edge beyond the limits of certainty, predictability, and orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup>

This is a way to frame cultural aspects of improvisation in Oliveros's early and later works without overemphasizing feminism.

The link between the tape music format of *Bye Bye Butterfly* and Oliveros's later electronic music is clear. This was a trend in music composition in addition to Oliveros's individual progression. More distinctly, her Expanded Instrument System (EIS) developed out of her way of performing *Bye Bye Butterfly*. The EIS is an interactive technology system for performance involving improvisation, sophisticated delay systems with replicas and modifications of sounds, and spatialized speakers for playing into the past, present, and future of the sounds. The performer has control of various parameters to transform their acoustic sound input, in the same way Oliveros used analog devices to process the sounds of *Bye Bye Butterfly*. EIS is a main system Oliveros utilized in performance for Deep Listening concerts.



*Oliveros in the Fort Worden Cistern, 1988*

Aesthetically Oliveros's usage of drones in *Bye Bye Butterfly* is a precedent for her Deep Listening music. The iconic recording of the Deep Listening Band in 1988 in the reverberant Fort Worden

Cistern established the ongoing drone aesthetic of the group. Oliveros's compositions *Four Meditations for Orchestra* (1997), *The Heart of Tones* for ensemble (1999), *DroniPhonia* for iPhones and multi-instrumentalists (2009), and *Tower Ring* for gong, chorus, and mixed instruments (2011) show a continuation of drones in her work.

Over time, these musical elements have been retained and expanded in Oliveros's work. The use of improvisatory elements within a composed architecture combined with Deep Listening has created such a variety of work that what is musically categorical in Oliveros's work is her process in creating music.

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Historically, Oliveros's works tend to be put into many groupings rather than a single defining movement. For example, in *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction* (2002), Eric Salzman groups Oliveros in "Non-Western Currents and New Age Music." In *Electronic and Experimental Music: Pioneers in Technology and Composition* (2002), Thomas Holmes recognizes Oliveros's role in the development of "Open and Closed Systems." Writings on the San Francisco Tape Music Center certainly focus on her breakthroughs in tape music. Others make sweeping characterizations of her music. Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, in *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States: Crossing the Line* (2006), describes Oliveros's work with the Deep Listening Band as "Combining her contemplative aesthetic with her considerable creative knowledge and abilities in the electroacoustic medium."<sup>25</sup> Fischlin and Hebel summarize her work in this way:

Since the 1960s [Oliveros] has influenced American music profoundly through her work in improvisation, meditation, electronic music, myth, and ritual. Many credit her with being the founder of present-day meditative music as well as being the founder of Deep Listening. All

## Roots for Deep Listening (cont.)

of Oliveros's work emphasizes musician-ship, attention strategies, and improvisational skills.<sup>26</sup>

Another broad statement by music critic John Rockwell appears in the *New York Times*: "On some level, music, sound consciousness and religion are all one, and she would seem to be very close to that level."<sup>27</sup> These disparate representations of significance in Oliveros's work are evidence of non-consensus. The attempts to make holistic characterizations are highly generalized, while over-specification on elements that are not central in her work are rampant.

The focus on Oliveros's musical process is not as definable in historical texts that are searching for "isms." Therefore the field looks to define specific innovations in her musical "materials," or to focus on personal characteristics such as being female, and group her with related composers. This has resulted in many different groupings and has not adequately communicated her significance. Oliveros's central, encompassing, and radical transformation is her codification of Deep Listening, which permeates all of her work and which has revolutionized music in ways the field is still finding ways to articulate. The more the field can address this and connect her work together, the more the early labels can be transcended and the essence of Oliveros's historical significance can be expressed.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "Deep Listening," Deep Listening Institute, accessed 7 November 2014, <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about>.

<sup>2</sup> Pauline Oliveros, videoconference interview with author, 21 October 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Elaine Barkin, "Four Texts," *Perspectives of New Music* 23, no. 1 (Autumn–Winter 1984): 102.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (Cornell University Press, 2000), 137.

<sup>6</sup> Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (Schirmer Books, 1997), 161.

<sup>7</sup> J. Michele Edwards, with contributions by Leslie Lassetter, "North America Since 1920," in *Women and Music: A History*, edited by Karin Anna Pendle (Indiana University Press, 2001), 342.

<sup>8</sup> Martha Mockus, *Sounding Out: Pauline Oliveros and Lesbian Musicality* (Rutledge, 2008), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>10</sup> Pauline Oliveros, "And Don't Call Them Lady Composers," *New York Times*, 13 May 1970.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> John Rockwell, "Ten Best Pieces of Electronic Music of the Decade," Archives of the *New York Times* (December 1969).

<sup>14</sup> Mockus, *Sounding Out*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>16</sup> Brick, *Age of Contradiction*, 137.

<sup>17</sup> David W. Bernstein, "The San Francisco Tape Music Center: Emerging Art Forms and the American Counterculture (1961–1966)," in *The San Francisco Tape Music Center: 1960s Counterculture and the Avant-Garde*, ed. David W. Bernstein (University of California Press, 2008), 30–31.

<sup>18</sup> Mockus, *Sounding Out*, 32.

<sup>19</sup> Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (Deep Listening Publications, 2004), xxiii.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., xix.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xvi.

<sup>23</sup> "Deep Listening," <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about>.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, "The Other Side of Nowhere," in Fischlin and Heble, eds., *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue* (Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Hinkle-Turner, *Women Composers and Music Technology in the United States: Crossing the Line* (Ashgate, 2006), 23.

<sup>26</sup> Fischlin and Heble, eds., *Other Side of Nowhere*, 420.

<sup>27</sup> "Deep Listening," <http://deeplisting.org/site/content/about>.

# The SAG Representative for the West Coast: Pauline Oliveros's Resonance Aesthetics in Context, 1964–1970

Adam Tinkle, Skidmore College

In 1966, Gordon Mumma wrote in a letter to David Tudor that Pauline Oliveros was “representative for the West Coast” of the Sonic Arts Group.<sup>1</sup> The Sonic Arts Group, or SAG, was the name used briefly before finally settling on Sonic Arts Union, or SAU, by the touring group of composer-performers Robert Ashley, David Behrman, Alvin Lucier, and Gordon Mumma. Oliveros never toured as an SAU member, but as Mumma’s letter suggests, she was closely connected with the group and with Tudor, who, as a key older mentor, was also considered, early on, to be an SAG member.

Oliveros has been primarily celebrated, especially since her passing, for two rather distinct bodies of work: the music for electronic tape that she produced during her affiliation with the San Francisco Tape Music Center (late 1950s–1967), and the continuum of mindfulness- and participation-oriented work stretching from her *Sonic Meditations* (begun around 1969) through the Deep Listening practice. By contrast, little has been written about the transitional era in Oliveros’s career, between her time at the Tape Music Center and her first articulations of the text instructions that became the *Sonic Meditations*. This essay emphasizes the intersections between Oliveros and the SAU during this transitional period, illuminates their shared project in live electro-acoustic music, and asks three main questions: How did it come to pass that she became the “West Coast representative” of the SAG? Despite not becoming, in the end, a touring performer in SAU, in what ways did she participate in this artistic community? How did her musical aesthetics coincide with, differ from, or influence SAU members, and how did theirs influence hers? Towards a provisional answer to this last, thorniest question, it seeks to interpret the core aesthetic project the SAG artists all shared. This casts a fascinating light on Oliveros’ best-known work, the first of her *Sonic Meditations*, and suggests the genesis in electronic music of her movement away from electronics circa 1970.

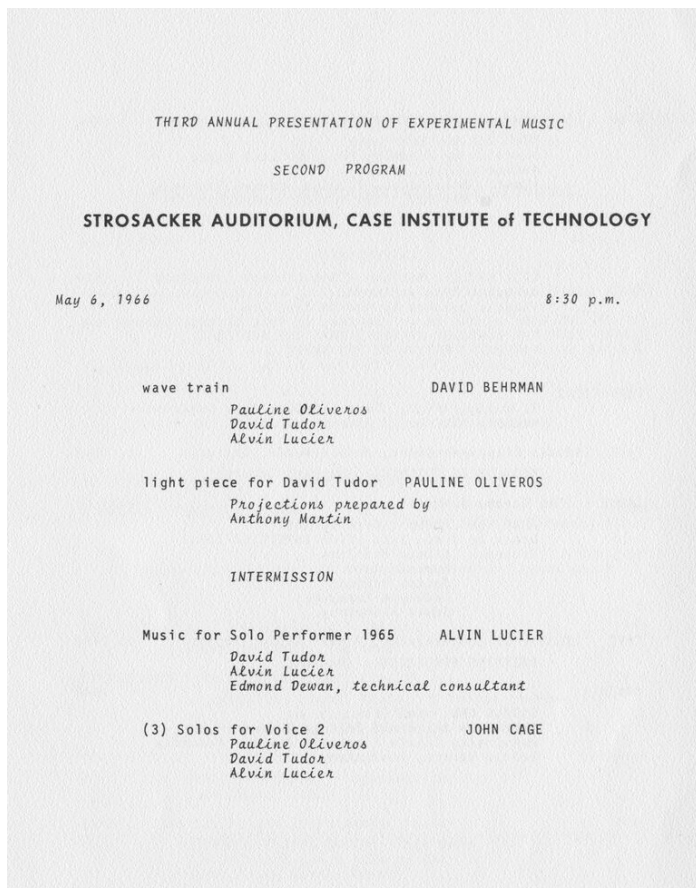
Oliveros became connected to the SAU through David Tudor. As an early-career composer some-

what geographically cut off from Cage’s New York-centric orbit, Oliveros leveraged the resources and scene she was building in the Bay Area to bring Tudor to San Francisco for a series of performances, informally dubbed Tudorfest, sponsored by the Tape Music Center and Pacifica radio station KPFA.<sup>2</sup> In addition to marking the first of several collaborations with Tudor, this concert appears to be Oliveros’ first encounter, albeit indirect, with any of the future SAU members, in the form of the music of Alvin Lucier. Tudor performed a now largely forgotten piece of Lucier’s for scored physical actions that may or may not make sound—very much in the vein of Cage’s *Water Walk* or any of the other Fluxus scores that Tudor was performing widely throughout the early 1960s. Also somewhat Fluxus-flavored was the piece Oliveros wrote for Tudor to perform with her, *Duo for Accordion and Bandoneon with Mynah Bird Obligato*: the players perform on a see-saw, accompanied by the singing of an actual bird in a cage.

This first Tudor-Oliveros collaboration quickly flowered into more; in 1965, they perform *Applebox Double* at the ONCE Festival (thus networking with future SAU members Ashley and Mumma, who ran the festival). By mid-1966, Tudor and Oliveros are performing together at Case Institute of Technology in Cleveland, having added Alvin Lucier to their unnamed troupe to perform their own works and those by Cage, as well as David Behrman’s *Wave Train*.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast with the fully notated scores and Fluxus aesthetics of the 1964 concerts, this 1966 program reflects movement towards what SAU concerts would soon become when that group began touring in 1967. Not only is the emphasis squarely on electro-acoustics, but critical too is the fact that these works are being collectively performed by a “union” or “collective” of composers. While this 1966 program still features some works where the performers are “interpreters” of the score of an absent composer, SAU appearances would eventually feature works only by the assembled composer-performers. In these years, performer Tudor and composer Cage were slowly breaking away from

## The SAG Representative for the West Coast (cont.)



Program from May 1966 concert at the Case Institute of Technology

the older, more traditional model that decouples score-writing composer from performer and realization. By contrast, the composer-performer model, which was seen as less bound to European music tradition, perhaps more democratic, and certainly more collectivist, was one in which Oliveros was steeped. She had been actively involved in musical collectivism through the Tape Music Center, and had been appearing since at least 1964 as an electronics composer-performer, in the vein that would soon become associated with the SAU.

Scholarship on Tudor depicts his becoming a composer as an outcome of the highly collaborative and co-authorial work that playing Cage's scores required him to do. But Gordon Mumma has observed that collaborating with Oliveros in 1964–66 was among "the most important motivation[s] for Tudor's flowering as a composer."<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the circumstantial evidence suggests that Oliveros was also a key influence on moving Tudor towards

performing on instruments other than the piano (as in the *Duo for Accordion and Bandoneon*), on performing in a scoreless, essentially improvisational modality (as in *Applebox Double*), and on opening his compositional voice beyond sound and music to include light and other multimedia (as in *Light Piece for David Tudor*). A few months after the Cleveland performance with Oliveros and Lucier, Tudor would make his debut as a composer with *Bandoneon (A Combine)*, which combines these features.

While Oliveros would not ultimately tour with the SAU, her activities between 1967 and 1970 were marked by the dialogue she was having with its members, and with Tudor. Many of these exchanges are oriented around interests that are already emerging in the 1966 collaborations with Tudor and Lucier, including of the exploration of the natural resonances of spaces and objects, and particularly in making these "natural" sonic features sound through feedback. Behrman's *Wave Train* is an exploration of piano resonances sounded through microphone feedback, Lucier's *Music for Solo Performer* influentially inaugurated bio-feedback music, and several of Oliveros' tape pieces that she produced during the summer of 1966 riffed on similar ideas by creating feedback and delay loops with two or more tape machines. Mumma was beginning to refer to such systems as "cybersonic," suggesting how these musical uses of audio and control feedback were inspired by cybernetics, which was becoming widely known for its use of electronic circuits to model ecosystems and organisms.

It was during these years of intense focus on feedback and other "cybersonic" concepts that the extended SAG "family" formed one of her primary communities of collaborators and interlocutors. Upon leaving San Francisco for a faculty position in the newly-formed, experimentation-focused music department at the University of California, San Diego, her archive suggests that her activities became densely interlocked with the SAU's. Some highlights:

**1967:** Lucier records Oliveros' choral composition *Sound Patterns*, as well as some of the Cage *Solos*

## The SAG Representative for the West Coast (cont.)

for *Voice* they had performed together in Cleveland, on the *Extended Voices* LP, released on the “Music of Our Time Series,” produced by Behrman. Oliveros then invites Lucier to UCSD during her first months working there, where he tries and fails to make tape recordings of the natural resonances of the ionosphere. However, while hanging out with Oliveros, Lucier buys a bunch of conch shells from a seaside shop and conceives of the piece *Chambers*. They get a bunch of Oliveros’s students to give the piece’s first performance during Lucier’s visit, blowing into the conch shells and thereby sounding their natural resonance.

**1968:** Lucier and Oliveros are reading the same book about bats and echolocation. The book inspires Lucier to write the piece *Vespers*, while Oliveros quotes the book in a 1968 essay called “Some Sound Observations.”<sup>5</sup> Also described at length in the same essay is Bob Ashley’s *The Wolfman*, a piece she would also assist her UCSD students in realizing early the same year.<sup>6</sup>

**1969:** Oliveros writes Bob Ashley to propose that they co-create a piece called *Big Mother meets the Wolfman*, a performance which would include *The Wolfman*, as well as onstage, impromptu personal conversations between the two composers. Her proposed use of conversation as a compositional element bears great resemblance to its use in Ashley’s *The Trial of Anne Opie Wehrer*, a piece that Oliveros mentions in the same letter, and which she calls “one of the most significant and satisfying works I’ve had the good fortune to experience in some time. It will certainly change my life.”<sup>7</sup>

The same month, Merce Cunningham’s dance company, whose touring musicians are David Tudor and SAU’s Gordon Mumma, commissions Oliveros to write the music to accompany the Cunningham dance work *CANFIELD*. The piece she writes, *In Memoriam Nikola Tesla, Cosmic Engineer*, has a title resembling four of Bob Ashley’s mid-1960s works, all titled “In Memoriam” for historical figures. Oliveros’ *Nikola Tesla* also derives much of its sound material, like Ashley’s *Trial*, from impromptu conversation between the performers: the score’s first section directs performers to “Begin a discus-

sion of the acoustic environment in which you are performing.” Thus, the piece yokes Ashley-esque conversation-as-musical-material to an exploration of natural resonance, the guiding preoccupation of the SAG family. In its first section, performers simply talk about the room acoustic, discussing “sound reflection, directivity, reverberation, interference, resonance,” among other “possible subject matter” for discussion suggested by the score.<sup>8</sup> However, in its second section, the performers “begin to explore the acoustic environment physically,” and “use cap pistol, bugle, or slide whistle to test the environment,” thus suggesting similarities to Lucier’s *Vespers*, another task-based work that orients attention towards the acoustics of a performance space, as performers try to echolocate around it.

**1970:** Mumma and Tudor serve as lead artists in coordinating the Pepsi Pavillion at the Osaka World’s Fair. They work with Bell Labs engineers to design a domed structure embedded with speakers and microphones, with a remarkable, reflective acoustic. They invite each of the SAU composers, as well as Oliveros and several others, to produce pieces for this purpose-built electro-acoustic musical architecture. Most of the proposed works by Oliveros, Tudor, and the SAU composers, focus on the acoustical resonance of the structure, although Pepsi pulled funding before most of the pieces are realized.

Around this time, the density of Oliveros’ direct connections with the SAU artists precipitously drops off, suggesting an end to the era when she was undoubtedly the “representative for the West Coast” of this group—although she occasionally reunited with various members of the group across the ensuing decades, most notably when Ashley included her, along with the four SAU composers, as one of the seven composers featured in his 1976 film *Music with Roots in the Aether*.

The centrality of acoustical or “natural” resonance as a key source of musical content for Tudor and Lucier is widely recognized.<sup>9</sup> Though Oliveros undoubtedly shared a variety of artistic interests with SAU members, this one musical concern seems central. The *Pavilion* catalogue from



## The SAG Representative for the West Coast (cont.)

Expo '70 gathered evidence of how persistently, almost obsessively, the SAU composers as well as Tudor and Oliveros fixated on this idea. In numerous ways, they approached a single, centering objective: to attune listeners to the acoustical characteristics of the physical spaces we inhabit, and, especially to make audible the resonant modes of acoustical volumes.<sup>10</sup> These musical uses of resonance suggest both continuities and breaks in the history of experimentalism: they align with Cage's calls for indeterminacy and composerly non-intentionality, but they tend to break with Cage's intense dedication to score-making and score-reading as the essential tools to disrupt musical habit. Instead of consulting the *I Ching*, these "resonance" composers consult the space in which they are performing to derive authentic and meaningful musical content, attempting to decouple themselves from musical history while linking their performance aesthetic to the here and now, to the ineluctable, pre-symbolic Real that underlies all sonic experience.

Oliveros's *In Memoriam Nikola Tesla, Cosmic Engineer* moves towards figuring this insight not merely as knowledge, but as power. The work's title seems to reference a possibly mythic incident in which Tesla caused an earthquake in New York City by tuning an oscillator to the resonant frequency of the building in which he worked, thereby demonstrating the fearsome physical force that acoustical resonance can conjure. "Search for the resonant frequency of the space," the score asks, and then "Start a low-frequency flood using a minimum of two sine tone generators" of 100 hz or lower. Such instructions can be understood as Oliveros's invitation to her performers, Mumma and Tudor—who she well knew were also obsessive explorers of resonance—to meditate on and to more or less reconstruct Tesla's earthquake, imagining themselves as "cosmic engineers" capable of extending their vibrational agency from music into tactile, material building-shaking. It is tempting to view Mumma and Tudor's next major project, the Osaka

IN MEMORIUM NIKOLA TESLA, COSMIC ENGINEER  
For Merce Cunningham

Jan. 24, 1969  
By Pauline Oliveros

Sound Sources

Cap pistols

A bugle for Gordon (Play quick tattoos in resonant places)

A metal slide whistle for David (Sweep the whistle range)

Internal and external environments as follows (Amplified by air microphones):

1. The stage or dancer's area
2. Back stage (aim for dancers' off-stage comments)
3. The lobby
4. The out-of-doors
5. Other adjoining spaces

Two low-frequency Sine tone generators (2 minimum) (Ranges from .001 to 100cps)

Two stereo tape recorders

One portable tape recorder (1 minimum)

Walkie-talkie system

Wireless microphone and receiver (1 system minimum)

Four-channel sound system

Visual

The slide enclosed of Nikola Tesla should be slowly dimmed in then out slowly before the piece begins, or when Section III begins, or at the end of the piece, if possible.

- I. Begin a discussion of the acoustic environment in which you are performing. (Use Levaliers or equivalent at first so that your discussion is heard through the PA system.)

2

Hypothesize, criticize, air opinions, compare to other spaces, real or imagined. (i.e. an underwater theater, anechoic theater, a plastic theater.)

Possible subject matter:

The shape and dimensions of the space  
The way the audience is seated  
The absorptive quality of the audience  
The temperature  
The weather  
The surface materials  
Sound reflection, directivity, reverberation, Interference  
Resonance  
External noise sources  
Masking  
Sound-focusing effects  
Transmission loss  
Air borne versus structure borne sound  
The effect of open or closed doors and windows  
Other

- II Introduce an environmental sound source. All environmental sound sources should be recording. Begin to explore the acoustic environment physically. Use cap pistol, bugle or slide whistle to test the environment. Communicate your discoveries and theories via walkie-talkie, keeping the sound level audible to the audience. Intermittantly and/or constantly introduce the environmental sound sources either by returning to the control table or by switching circuitry or remote control. Examine the whole space and its contents, both internal and external. Devise simple practical experiments which prove or disprove the effect of any element of the environment upon one's hearing perception. Search for the resonant frequency of the space. Particularly interesting points should be broadcast into the PA system via wireless microphones, and recorded.
- III Start a low-frequency flood using a minimum of two sine tone generators. Do not go above 100 cps. The beginning of this section should be barely audible. No more discussion should take place. Make a long slow crescendo and gradually introduce recollections via tape recording of your discussions from Section I and II, and of the various recorded environments, and possibly of previous performances. Mix the two generators and send to all 4 channels simultaneously. Send tape channels to corresponding separate speaker channels. Stop sometime.

*Pauline Oliveros, Score for In Memoriam Nikola Tesla, Cosmic Engineer*



## The SAG Representative for the West Coast (cont.)

Pavilion—which, with its embedded speakers and microphones, could self-sense, self-actuate, and morph its own resonance—in light of Oliveros’ invitation to “cosmic engineering.”

Is anything really gained by trying to adjudicate which piece or composer inaugurated this “resonance aesthetic”? Certainly there is a good argument to be made that Oliveros’s San Francisco-era *Applebox* performances, in which a variety of implements are used to make sounds on contact-miked, loudly amplified apple crates, look forward to pieces like Tudor’s *Rainforest*, Lucier’s *Chambers*, and many other SAU pieces that involve using minimal means to lay bare the acoustical characteristics and sound the resonant frequencies, of the objects, spaces, and volumes that we find in everyday life. In her writings, however, Oliveros nominates Ashley’s *The Wolfman*, from 1964, as a key work epitomizing the aesthetics of resonance in live electronic music (and perhaps inaugurating it as well). *The Wolfman* is a piece in which the performer controls the wailing feedback of a vocal microphone that is amplified through a PA system by placing their mouth directly in front of the microphone and shifting their vocal formant, thereby employing their own vocal cavity as an audio filter on the room’s feedback. Ashley, who had worked in both acoustics and speech research at the University of Michigan, had evidently discovered the surprising equivalence of these two seemingly disparate forms of resonance, the vocal and architectural. *The Wolfman* rests upon the possibility of superimposing those resonances we can control with our bodies upon those resonances that come to us as given, fixed, and unchanging; both kinds of resonances are just preferential tendencies to oscillate with greater energy at some frequencies than all the others. The piece suggests a cybernetics or an ecology of acoustical resonance, demonstrating both the electronic sound system’s points of control and its irreducible interrelatedness and contingency. Moreover, for the performer, there is room for agency within the system: we are endlessly subjected *to* resonance, but we are also subjects *who* resonate.

In describing “a magnificent performance of Bob Ashley’s *Wolfman*” in the 1968 essay “Some Sound Observations,” Oliveros writes, “My ears changed... All the wax in my ears melted. After the performance, ordinary conversation at two feet away sounded very distant. Later, all ordinary sounds seemed heightened, much louder than usual. Today I can still feel *Wolfman* in my ears. MY EARS FEEL LIKE CAVES.”<sup>11</sup> Thus, a music built from the entanglement of the resonances of bodily and architectural cavities “opens” the ears not in the metaphorical sense of dismantled prejudices, but rather in a more literal sense of establishing the human ears *as* capacious acoustical chambers in their own right.

*The Wolfman* appears to have conveyed to Oliveros that, like apple boxes, pianos, conchs, and concert halls, *our bodies* too are chambers, and this insight soon leads her on a path that bears little resemblance to the subsequent path of Tudor or the SAU composers. Oliveros’s somatic reformulation of “resonance aesthetics” crystallizes in the first of the *Sonic Meditation* texts that Oliveros wrote in 1969, “Teach Yourself to Fly,” the key soundmaking instruction of which reads “Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally.” Thus, this piece asks its performers to activate or amplify the natural resonance of a particular acoustical volume or chamber, while its use of language like “mode” and “naturally” signals the piece’s links to the SAG family’s terminology and cosmology. But by locating such chambers within the body, the piece obviates the need for electronics: the breath provides the amplification. Thus, where the great majority of Tudor’s and SAU’s works must be performed by cybersonic tinkerers with technical know-how and access to gear, Oliveros headed in a different direction: a music of “natural” resonances in which anyone can participate.

Oliveros’ decision to filter the cybersonic attention to natural resonance back into acoustic music completes a feedback loop of another sort. If cybernetics sought to model biological life with circuit diagrams that emphasized energy flows and their feedbacks, and if the SAU composers made audible such circuits as electro-acoustic musical systems,

## The SAG Representative for the West Coast (cont.)

Oliveros's "Teach Yourself to Fly" returned the resonant outcome of this inquiry to the zone of biological life.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Gordon Mumma to David Tudor, 9 September 1966, box 57, folder 3, David Tudor Papers, Getty Research Institute. Quoted in Andrew Dewar, *Handmade Sounds: The Sonic Arts Union and American Technoculture* (Unpublished dissertation, Wesleyan University, 2009), 52.

<sup>2</sup>"Three Concerts with David Tudor," program for concert series dated 26 March through 8 April 1966, MSS 102, box 13, Pauline Oliveros Papers, Special Collections & Archives, Mandeville Special Collections, UC San Diego Library.

<sup>3</sup>"Third Annual Presentation of Experimental Music, Second Program," 6 May 1966, box 13, Oliveros Papers.

<sup>4</sup>Mumma, email correspondence with Andrew Raffo Dewar, 23 April 2006. Quoted in Dewar, *Handmade Sounds*, 87.

<sup>5</sup>Pauline Oliveros, *Software for People: Collected Writings 1963–1980* (Smith Publications, 1984), 25.

<sup>6</sup>"A Midnight Concert," 26 January 1968, box 13, Oliveros Papers.

<sup>7</sup>Pauline Oliveros to Robert Ashley, 11 January 1969, box 1, folder 16, Oliveros Papers.

<sup>8</sup>Pauline Oliveros, *In Memoriam Nikola Tesla, Cosmic Engineer*, typescript score dated 24 January 1969, box 4, folder 6, Oliveros Papers. Elsewhere, the title of Oliveros' piece is styled *In Memoriam: Nikola Tesla, Cosmic Engineer*.

<sup>9</sup>See, for example, Matthew Rogalsky, "'Nature' as an Organizing Principle: Approaches to Chance and the Natural in the Work of John Cage, David Tudor, and Alvin Lucier," *Organised Sound* 15, no. 2 (2010): 133–36; You Nakai, "Hear After: Matters of Life and Death in David Tudor's Electronic Music," *communication +1*: 3, article 10; Christoph Cox, "The Alien Voice: Alvin Lucier's North American Time Capsule 1967," in Douglas Kahn and Hannah Higgins, eds., *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts* (University of California Press, 2012).

<sup>10</sup>Billy Klüver, Julie Martin, and Barbara Rose, eds, *Pavilion* (E.P. Dutton, 1972).

<sup>11</sup>Oliveros, *Software for People*, 18–19.

## ***Bonn Feier Burns in Brooklyn***

Doug Cohen, Brooklyn College

*Bonn Feier* began on Monday, 11 September at 7pm at ShapeShifter Lab in the Gowanus section of Brooklyn in a concert featuring students and faculty of the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College. The evening opened with a performance by all in attendance of Pauline Oliveros' *Tuning Meditation* in memory of those who died on 9/11. From this moment, everything that took place from Gowanus to the Midwood section of Brooklyn, where Brooklyn College is located, was part of *Bonn Feier* until the end of the Legacies of Pauline Oliveros symposium on 4 November 2017 at 9pm.

Pauline Oliveros's *Bonn Feier* won first prize in a commission for urban music to be performed in outdoor spaces for presentation as part of Bonn, Germany's 1977 Beethoven Festival. Oliveros called her work an environmental theater piece for specialized and non-specialized performers. The complete score contains several pages of instructions about the types of specialized performances that might be staged as part of the several hours (fifteen hours minimum) to several months (up to one year) of festivities, but the opening paragraph encapsulates the entire piece:

*Bonn Feier* is intended for performance in a city, college, or university environment. All normal city or campus activity, as well as specially arranged activity, is a part of *Bonn Feier*. Anyone who enters the city or campus during the designated but unannounced time of the performance is a knowing or unknowing participant in *Bonn Feier*. Special rituals, activities, and sights, described below, are to be blended smoothly with normal city or campus activity all during the normal working day and evening. The intention of *Bonn Feier* is to gradually and subtly, subvert perception so that normal activity seems as strange or displaced as any of the special activities. Thus the whole city or campus becomes a theater, and all of its inhabitants, players.\*

In this realization of *Bonn Feier*, almost all were unknowing participants. It came to a focus on 30 October with a concert by Brooklyn College composers at ShapeShifter Lab, followed by a week of concerts and talks by musicians associated with Oliveros on the International Electroacoustic Music Festival, and culminating in the symposium, Legacies of Pauline Oliveros, on 3 and 4 November.

*Bonn Feier* was listed as the last piece on the final concert of the symposium in Studio 312 on the west side of the Brooklyn College campus. The audience was instructed to perform a fifteen-minute version of Oliveros's listening meditation, *The Poetics of Environmental Sound*, while processing due east across the campus, through the Bedford Avenue underpass where the parrots nest and hatch their young each spring, past the lily pond where the turtles live amongst the carp, arriving at the Sculpture Garden where a globe shaped Weber grill awaited with hardwood inside ready to be ignited. As the listening meditation ended, the audience circled around the grill, the fire was started, and as the flames developed the performance completed, accompanied by vegan marshmallows and s'mores.

\* Pauline Oliveros, *Bonn Feier* (Smith Publications, 1977).



Pauline Oliveros

# The H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music

and

The Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities at Brooklyn College  
in collaboration with the Conservatory of Music, the Department of Africana  
Studies, and the American Studies Program at Brooklyn College present:

Fall 2017

## Music in Polycultural America

### Music in My Detroit: 1940s–1960s

#### Mark Slobin

Mark Slobin is Professor of Music Emeritus at Wesleyan University and series editor of Oxford University Press's American Music-spheres series. He has written extensively on American ethnic and world music cultures, including such formative works as *Subcultural Sounds: Micromusics of the West*, *Tenement Songs: The Popular Music of the Jewish Immigrants*, and *Fiddler on the Move: Exploring the Klezmer World*. His current project focuses on the home-grown musicians who bucked a repressive and sometimes violent social atmosphere to create great music, from jazz to ethnic to Motown, in mid-century Detroit.

Wednesday, 18 October, 2:15pm

Tanger Auditorium, Library

### The Power and Glory of Steel Pan

#### Kendall Williams

Brooklyn-born Kendall Williams is one of New York's most respected steel pan arrangers and players. In recent years he has served as the Panorama arranger for Brooklyn's Crossfire and CASYM steel orchestras. Williams holds a Masters of Music in Theory and Composition from New York University where he studied with Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and Josh Quillen. He is currently working on a Ph.D. in composition at Princeton University. Drawing on multiple influences he writes music for steel pan and percussion ensembles. Williams will speak on his experiences as an arranger and composer, demonstrating the possibilities of steel pan in a variety of calypso, jazz, classical, and new music settings.

Wednesday, 25 October, 11:00am

Tanger Auditorium, Library

### Legacies of Pauline Oliveros: A Symposium

On the first anniversary of her passing we celebrate the life and music of one of America's most influential composers and artistic visionaries.

#### Concert I

Friday, 3 November, 8pm  
ShapeShifter Lab  
18 Whitewell Place, Brooklyn

#### Talk and Panel Discussions

Saturday, 4 November, 10am–5pm  
Tanger Auditorium, BC Library

#### Concert II

Saturday, 4 November, 7pm  
Studio 312, Roosevelt Hall, Brooklyn  
College

### Panic in Mexico City: Atrás del Cosmos (Behind the Cosmos), Free Improvisation, and Experimental Theater, 1964–1983

#### Tamar Barzel

Tamar Barzel is currently Assistant Research Scholar at New York University Division of Libraries. Her talk will concern the ensemble Atrás del Cosmos (Behind the Cosmos) which a Mexico-City based music critic described in 1977 as "the purest expression of our present moment." A pioneering free improvisation collective, Atrás del Cosmos occupies a singular place in the history of music in Mexico. Using archival photographs and rare audio recordings, this presentation will trace the story of this remarkable ensemble, which emerged during a period of political and creative upheaval in twentieth-century Mexico City.

Monday, 13 November, 2:15pm

Tanger Auditorium, Library