UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

“New Music Ambassadors to the World”: A Biography of the California E.A.R. Unit

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
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by

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The Dissertation of Michael Kento Matsuno is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“New Music Ambassadors to the World”: A Biography of the California E.A.R. Unit

by

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Doctor of Musical Arts in Contemporary Music Performance

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Professor Anthony Burr, Co-Chair
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This dissertation is a biography of the California E.A.R. Unit (1981-2012), a contemporary music ensemble founded by graduate students at the California Institute of the Arts. Arguably one of the first of its kind in Los Angeles, the EAR Unit gained international recognition for its eclectic programming and versatility in a wide range of avant-garde styles. I examine its career in the context of expanding institutional support for contemporary music in Los Angeles throughout the 1980s, as well as increased

national focus on composition in academia. To begin, I show that CalArts made the EAR Unit's cohort the central focus of its new graduate curriculum in contemporary music, offering the students unlimited access to dozens of internationally recognized composers at the yearly Contemporary Music Festivals. My writing follows the EAR Unit through its other institutional affiliations, which included the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Monday Evening Concerts, Music in Motion, and the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater in the Walt Disney Concert Hall complex.

Combining interviews and archival research, this biography highlights strategies musicians used to navigate the growing infrastructure for contemporary classical concert music on an increasingly globalized stage. I attend to the texture of these experiences, and how this type of institutionalized creative work was both exciting and motivating. In doing so, I offer biography as a powerful tool for understanding the historical precursors to modern iterations of the contemporary music ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

It was approaching 2:00 a.m. on Monday, May 9, 1988, when the California E.A.R. Unit took the stage of small community theatre in Manhattan's Lower East Side. Strewn about the floor were clues as to how the 12-hour concert was about to end. At the front edge near the audience, fresh vegetables and potted plants surrounded a cello, like a nursery. Nearby rested a blender, coffee cans, bowling pins, and a megaphone. Barely visible behind that was a goldfish bowl on a stool, a bust of Beethoven, and a vacuum.

The tired audience waited patiently as the musicians tip-toed over and around the objects and sat down at their places. Then, after a brief silence, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick lifted a carrot from a basket and, with a quick flourish, began vigorously bowing her cello with it. Slowly, a tableau unfolded. Lorna Eder, dressed in bright blue spandex, began counting leg-lifts underneath the piano. Paper airplanes rained down from the balcony and a nasal rendition of Antonin Artaud's "Here Lies" blasted through a megaphone. Over the next 30 minutes, the audience, mostly other musicians and composers, watched incredulously as the EAR Unit performed a precisely choreographed sequence of actions, all done in trance-like concentration. They whisked eggs, read newspapers, suctioned plungers to instruments, wrapped a piano in rope, blasted each other with a blow dryer, sawed a cabbage in half with an electric meat saw, lit matches, and gave the audience the bird. Rather than sleeping, the group spent the rest of the morning celebrating its performance.

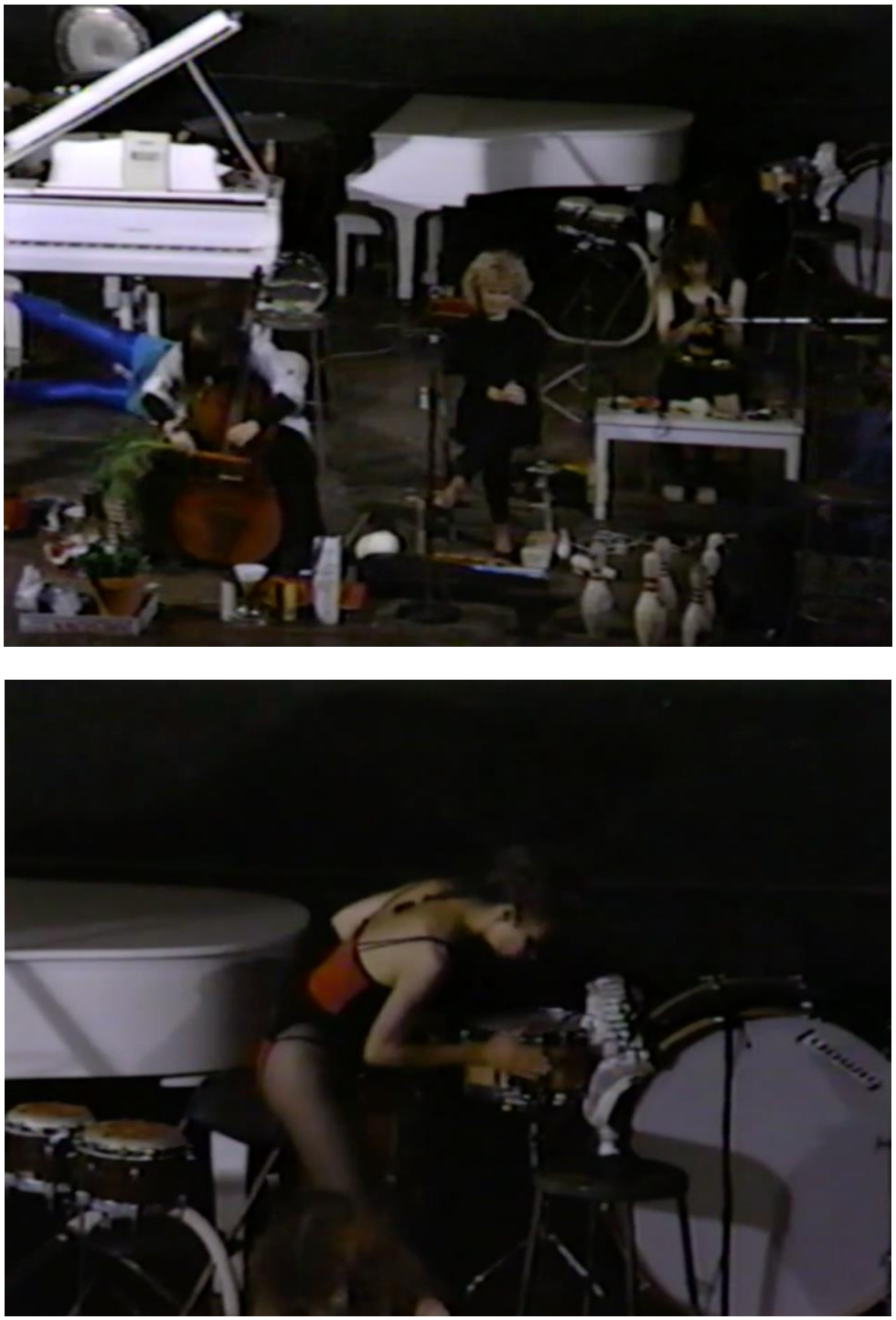

Figure 0.1: Screenshots from the Bang on a Can Festival Marathon, May 8, 1988. (Bang on a Can, "Explore the Archives," accessed February 9, 2024, https://canland.org)

The work here was John Cage's *Theater Piece* (1960), and the event was the second ever Bang on a Can Marathon concert.[1] Cage was not in the audience, but other luminaries of avant-garde music were, including other West Coast musicians like Steven Schick and Pauline Oliveros. But the Los Angeles based EAR Unit was one of only a few contemporary music ensembles to give performances that day. Its appearance on the Bang on a Can Marathon, at the inception of a growing New York scene, is a testament to the group's broad influence.[2] Especially in its heyday in the late 1980s, the EAR Unit was known for its dedication to all kinds of contemporary music, from the technical to the experimental. Cage's *Theater Piece* threaded both ends of this spectrum, requiring precise execution in drawing attention to the totality of actions and sounds.

This dissertation is a biography of that group, the California E.A.R. Unit, a contemporary music ensemble founded in 1981 by graduate students at the California Institute of the Arts. As one of Los Angeles's first stand-alone contemporary music ensembles, its career marks a significant contribution to the Los Angeles' musical life. The story of the EAR Unit provides a window into the unparalleled creative atmosphere at CalArts in its formative years, as well as some of the city's dramatic institutional changes in the 1980s, described below. For example, the EAR Unit musicians were among a cohort of students who had nearly unlimited access to a panoply of internationally recognized composers at the CalArts Contemporary Music Festivals. Unrivaled in Los Angeles for several years, the EAR Unit was one of the first

[1] Bang on a Can, "The Bang on a Can Archives," accessed January 23, 2024, https://canland.org/#archives.
[2] For a history of Bang on a Can and analysis on its impact on contemporary classical concert music, see William Robin, *Industry: Bang on a Can and New Music in the Marketplace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).

instrumental groups to hold performance positions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Monday Evening Concerts, and the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater.

In addition to examining its relationship to several key institutions and organizations, this biography focuses on the ensemble's most meaningful creative work. Their intimate relationship to Cage's music, for example, developed over many years performing for and even with the composer on his visits to Los Angeles. These were galvanizing experiences that pushed the musicians to develop an artistic point of view on works like *Theater Piece*. In retrospect, the New York performance was significant not only because they were guests on at the inception of the Bang on a Can series, but because it represented the culmination of years of hard work perfecting an approach to experimental interpretation. This dissertation looks closely at this body of work, and the collective transformations that carried the ensemble through each successive period of its career.

0.1 The contemporary music ensemble in the United States

The following study of the EAR Unit responds to a limited but growing discourse on groups like it in the United States. Like the string quartet or the symphony orchestra, the contemporary music ensemble is now a widely recognized formation in Western classical music. These mixed instrumental chamber groups are characterized by their focus on new and recent music, often specializing in unconventional performance techniques and compositional styles. Examples of active ensembles include Alarm Will Sound, eighth blackbird, Ensemble Dal Niente, the International Contemporary

Ensemble, and Wild Up. Similar groups-are not only found in the public domain but are also now common in conservatories and college music departments across the country, buttressing academic curricula in both performance and composition. Students graduating from these institutions frequently go on to form their own self-sustaining ensembles that aim to thrive independently.[3]

Scholarship on today's contemporary music ensembles in the US examines the conditions of economic precarity produced by their fiercely entrepreneurial mindset.[4] Andrea Moore, for example, has explored institutionalized notions of "radical self-sufficiency," promoted by music schools as a set of tools needed to compete simultaneously within academia and an open market of concert music.[5] Meanwhile, William Robin has argued that institutions even play a role in assisting composers and ensembles generate their own branding strategies, particularly those used to promote post-genre market appeal.[6]

But what led to the contemporary music ensemble becoming such a popular formation? Robin draws connections to major institutional restructuring in the post-Cold War era, but only briefly mentions the ensembles that were instrumental in driving these changes. Indeed, limited attention has been given to the collaborative models that served

[3] See Emily Wozniak and Paul Judy, "Alternative ensembles: A study of emerging musical arts organizations," *Polyphonic Archive Online* (2013). For perspectives on musician collectives that are less affiliated with institutions, see Jennie Gottschalk, *experimental music since 1970* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
[4] See for example, Marianna Ritchey, *Composing capital: Classical music in the neoliberal era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 2019) and John Pippen, "The boundaries of 'boundarylessness': Revelry, struggle, and labour in three American new music ensembles," *Twentieth-Century Music* 16, no. 3 (2019): 424-444.
[5] Andrea Moore, "Neoliberalism and the musical entrepreneur," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 10, no. 1 (2016): 33-53.
[6] William Robin, "Balance problems: Neoliberalism and new music in the American university and ensemble," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 71, no. 3 (2018): 749-793.

as historical antecedents to today's ensembles. By focusing on the EAR Unit, a group whose career spanned three decades from 1981 and 2012, this dissertation provides some continuity between past and present iterations of such groups.

The most prominent historical examples of contemporary music ensembles in the US were formed in New York City amidst the musical revolutions of the 1960s. The Contemporary Chamber Ensemble (1960-1983) was founded by bassoonist-conductor Arthur Weisberg along with 13 of the city's top classical freelancers, and is considered to be one of the first ensembles in the country to focus exclusively on 20th century music.[7] Two years later, flutist Harvey Sollberger and composer Charles Wuorinen, classmates at Columbia University, founded the Group for Contemporary Music (1962-1992), which advocated for the academic compositional approaches of the so-called "uptown" composers like Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter and Mario Davidovsky. The Group was soon followed by a new generation of ensembles in the 1970s that included the Da Capo Chamber Players (fd. 1970), Speculum Musicae (fd. 1970), Parnassus (fd. 1973), the New Music Consort (fd. 1975), and the New York New Music Ensemble (fd. 1976).[8]

Instrumental in making the contemporary music ensemble a national trend in other parts of the country were the significant transformations in both higher education and state-sponsorship of the arts during the Cold War. Analyzing the institutional affiliations of 125 composers who received NEA grants between 1965 to 1985, Jann Pasler looks comprehensively at the broad establishment in this period of the university as an authoritative patron of the composer in the US, and the composer as a focal point

[7] Diane Taublieb, "Arthur Weisberg's Contemporary Chamber Ensemble, 1960-1983: A documentary study" (DMA diss., The City University of New York, 2005).
[8] For more on the relationships between these groups, see Susan Deaver, "The Group for Contemporary Music" (DMA diss., Manhattan School of Music, 1993).

amidst emerging creative performance environments.[9] With its progressive orientation towards research, the newly-formed institutional scaffolding around composition resulted in the establishment of many resident performing ensembles.[10] In writing for the first annual conference for the American Society of University Composers in 1966, Wuorinen names about a dozen of these groups, characterizing their emergence as a "recent flowering of contemporary music performance activity in the university."[11]

The California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), the omnipresent backdrop of this dissertation, was itself the product of national focus on higher education and the arts. The school accepted its first class of students in 1970, and in 1978, formed its own new music ensemble, the CalArts Twentieth Century Players, "dedicated to the performance of chamber music of the 20th century with a concentration on very recent literature."[12] As discussed in Chapter 1, the Twentieth Century Players served as a vehicle for composers throughout the year, and was featured as the department's prized centerpiece at the school's annual Festival of Contemporary Music.

Outside of institutions, contemporary music ensembles flourished. Like their New York counterparts, these groups fashioned a new image of the self-sustaining contemporary music ensemble, one that flexibly navigated the developing academic

[9] Jann Pasler, "The Political Economy of Composition in the American University, 1965-1985," in *Writing Through Music: Essays on Music, Culture, and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 318-362.
[10] Institutional contemporary music ensembles founded in the 1960s include: the University of Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players, the Creative Associates at the Center of Creative and Performing Arts at SUNY Buffalo, Musica Nova at the Eastman School of Music, the Center for New Music at the University of Iowa, the University of Southern California Thornton Edge, and the San Francisco Conservatory New Music Ensemble; groups founded in the 1970s include: UC San Diego SONOR Ensemble, and the CalArts Twentieth Century Players.
[11] Charles Wuorinen, "Performance of New Music in American Universities," in *Processedings of the American Society of University Composers 1*, 1966, 20.
[12] Program booklet for the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival '79 (April 27-May 6, 1979), California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives, Unprocessed Collection, Contemporary Music Festivals 1978-1987.

infrastructure. The most enduring of these include the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players (1971-present), Dinosaur Annex Music Ensemble (1975-present), Pittsburgh New Music Ensemble (1976-present), Relâche (1979-present), the California E.A.R. Unit (1981-2012), Xtet (1986-2011), the Paul Dresher Ensemble (1987-present), and the Callithumpian Consort (1989-present). The extent to which these ensembles collectively represent a national trend has not yet come into question. Nevertheless, their close relationships to institutions predicate current incarnations of the contemporary music ensemble, groups that have been shown to operate within an avant-garde increasingly rooted in academia.

This dissertation therefore addresses a gap in the literature by examining one of these ensembles in close detail. The biographical perspective of this work offers critical resources for understanding why such collective models became popular in the first place. What made this type of collaboration exciting to performers coming out of CalArts and who helped them succeed? By following the complete lifecycle of the EAR Unit, this research views the historical, institutional developments in Los Angeles through a narrative lens. In doing so, this work seeks to contribute to scholarship on today's ensembles by refocusing attention onto the very experience of building self-sufficient careers in contemporary music performance.

0.2 Histories of contemporary music in Los Angeles

While the EAR Unit, and past ensembles like it, have largely evaded scholarship, contemporary music in Los Angeles has been the subject of historical writing. Here, its

discourse has focused primarily on the city's major institutions as well as the musicians, composers and patrons working within them. A review of existing literature points specifically to the 1980s as a transformative period for contemporary music in Los Angeles, marked by the addition of several new organizations and institutional players. These developments coincided precisely with the formation of the EAR Unit and were influential on the ensemble's creative work and career.

The primary institutional backdrop for this dissertation was first established during the mid-century. Among the major historical accounts of contemporary music in Los Angeles is Dorothy Lamb Crawford's *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California* (2009), following 16 German musicians who settled in the area during the 1930s and 1940s. Crawford documents the influence of composers and conductors like Ingolf Dahl, Hanns Eisler, Otto Klemperer, Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky on the Los Angeles Philharmonic, college and university music programs, and the rising Hollywood music industry. Among them, the film composer Franz Waxman produced the Los Angeles International Music Festival (1947-1966), which championed the music of living composers like Arthur Honegger and Stravinsky.[13]

In other writing, Crawford details the establishment in this period of the Monday Evening Concerts (MEC), formerly Concerts on the Roof. Now the city's longest running new music series, MEC was founded in 1939 by Peter Yates and the concert pianist Frances Mullen as rooftop concerts at their home in Silverlake, designed by the Austrian architect Rudolph M. Schindler.[14] Yates and Mullen cultivated an audience for new

[13] Dorothy Crawford, *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[14] Schindler moved to Los Angeles in 1914, where he challenged traditional Californian architecture with his open plan designs and minimalist use of raw materials. Ongoing archival research by the MAK Center,

music and maintained communications with composers across the country and in Europe.[15] Crawford follows the series through its next executive director, Lawrence Morton, who aspired to use MEC as a vehicle to expand the city's sphere of influence by bringing in major figures of the European avant-garde. Morton was personally close to Stravinsky, then a Los Angeles resident, and helped him receive over a dozen premieres on the series.[16] Under Morton, composers like Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Luigi Nono, and Karlheinz Stockhausen also received premieres at MEC concerts. Crawford's history ends with Morton's retirement in 1971, and only briefly mentions its next executive director, Dorrance Stalvey, who ran the series until 2005.

The sweeping changes in institutionalized contemporary music that occurred in the following decades were part of broader patterns of urban reform. Examining these histories in Southern California, Kevin Starr and Mike Davis have documented the influx of arts capital into massive cultural projects in the post-war decades.[17] In *City of Quartz* (2006), Davis suggests that through sweeping redevelopments, city elites aimed to consolidate and redistribute cultural wealth into both the downtown and Westside centers, "two overweening arts acropolises."[18] The 1959 Bunker Hill Urban Renewal Project, for example, in which the government seized and demolished the entirety of the nearly 100 year old downtown neighborhood, paved the way for the inauguration of the Music

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in collaboration with architects Frank Escher and Ravi GuneWardena, reveal Rudolph and Pauline Schindlers' intimate correspondences with the musical intelligentsia, including Igor Stravinsky, Arnold Schoenberg, William Grant Still, Henry Cowell, John Cage and others. See *Pauline: An Opera*, makcenter.org.

[15] Dorothy Crawford, *Evenings On and Off the Roof: Pioneering Concerts in Los Angeles, 1939-1971* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[16] See Lawrence Morton, "Stravinsky at Home," in *Confronting Stravinsky: Man, Musician, and Modernist*, ed. Jann Pasler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 322-348.

[17] See Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (Oxford University Press: 2009); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (New York: Verso, 2006).

[18] Davis, *City of Quartz,* 74.

Center complex, the Museum of Contemporary Art and other prominent institutions along Grand Ave. According to Davis, Los Angeles revitalization culminated in the 1980s as city elites promulgated an image of the city as a wealthy global capital and a multicultural hub for the arts, recapitulating the city's early 20th century boosterism.[19] The sprawling 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, which featured an entire series devoted to contemporary music, served to showcase the city's recently expanded institutional arts matrix on a global stage.[20]

The concentration of financial and cultural power in downtown during this period gave rise to the reshaping of the Los Angeles Philharmonic as a progressive institution that embraced contemporary composition. Hired in 1969 to be the organization's executive director and to help settle the orchestra into its new home at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Ernest Fleischmann earned a reputation as the "impresario of Los Angeles" for his strong-arm approach to making artistic and structural decisions.[21] During his tenure from 1969-1998, Fleischmann took many steps to establish the LA Phil as the city's leading classical performing ensemble in part by making new music one of its primary initiatives.[22] In 1981, he created the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, appointing the orchestra's percussionist and composer-in-residence William Kraft to be its director. Fleischmann personally sought out other promising resident composers

[19] Davis, *City of Quartz*, 22.
[20] For more on the relationship between the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival and larger city-wide development, see Jason Lopata, "L.A. Urbanized: The several 'revitalizations' of downtown Los Angeles," in *Urbanize Los Angeles*, accessed January 20, 2024, https://la.urbanize.city/post/la-urbanized-several-revitalizations-downtown-los-angeles.
[21] Bruce Weber, "E. Fleischmann, Impresario of Los Angeles, Dies at 85," *The New York Times*, June 16, 2010.
[22] For a general history of the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Fleischmann, see Hilary Slade Jansen, "The American Symphony Orchestra today: Problems in community, diversity, and representation," (PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2021).

like John Harbison and Steven Stucky, and in 1992 officially installed the young Finnish composer-conductor Essa-Pekka Salonen as music director. The creation of the LA Phil Green Umbrella series in 1989 gave the orchestra's expanding contemporary music program a permanent home.

In the same year that the Philharmonic created the New Music Group to bring modern composition to large audiences, the arts patron Betty Freeman began her musical soirées—"Il Salotto Musicale": 1981-1994—to foster intellectual engagement with contemporary music. Assisted by music critic Alan Rich, Freeman hosted her intimate Music Room events at her Beverly Hills home, inviting prominent composers and musicians to present and discuss their music.[23] Recent writing by Jake Johnson positions Freeman's salons in an intermediary space between public and private spheres. Indeed, Freeman modeled her soirées after Yates and Mullen's domestic gatherings of the early Evenings on the Roof concerts. The featured composers ranged from European modernists like Pierre Boulez and Luciana Berio, to others like Conlon Nancarrow, Harold Budd and Pauline Oliveros.[24] According to Johnson, Freeman and Rich felt a sense of duty to promote the careers of promising composers, believing the city to be "entering into a vital transformative stage in global perception."[25]

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[23] Jake Johnson, "The Music Room: Betty Freeman's Musical Soirées," *Twentieth Century Music* 14, no. 3 (2017): 391-409

[24] Citing Carol Oja's work on salon culture in 1920's New York City, Johnson points out that Freeman's music rooms fit into a lineage of female patronage and organizational support of contemporary music. However, close inspection of Johnson's work shows that, like Gertrude Whitney's International Composers Guild, or Alma Morgenthau Wertheim's League of Composers, Freeman's salons rarely featured women themselves; See Carol Oja, "Women Patrons and Activists," In *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (Oxford University Press on Demand: 2000); Johnson, "Performing the Patron: Betty Freeman and the avant-garde," *Tempo* 68, no. 269 (2014): 42-49.

[25] Quoted in Johnson, "The Music Room," 402.

Freeman's Music Room and the Philharmonic's Green Umbrella initiatives brought new attention to contemporary music in public salon and concert halls spaces in the 1980s. Likewise, Dorrance Stalvey responded to institutional changes in his directorship of the Monday Evening Concerts. In a letter to Crawford for her MEC biography, Stalvey writes, "As the eighties approached it became clear to me that musical life in Los Angeles was changing … Our audiences are now privileged to experience contemporary-music practices world-wide, without leaving Los Angeles, and at world-class performance levels."[26] As noted above, Stalvey's predecessors, such as Morton, were instrumental in creating such an environment for contemporary music. Instead of focusing on its international legitimacy however, Stalvey promoted the young musicians who claimed to specialize exclusively in contemporary music performance, that is, the new practitioners emerging from southern California's institutions. Most notably, Stalvey created two ensemble residency positions: for the EAR Unit and for Xtet, a group formed by a cohort of USC performers.[27]

The concert pianist Leonard Stein was also responsible for promoting the work of a new generation of musicians in Los Angeles. Stein had already accumulated a reputation for his interest in the avant-garde when he was asked to serve on the inaugural faculty at CalArts in 1970. The pianist began as a page-turner for Yates on the first Evenings on the Roof season, but soon thereafter became a regular performer on the series.[28] Stein went on to work as an assistant to Schoenberg in 1939 after studying composition with him at UCLA, and later served as the director of the Schoenberg

[26] Crawford, *Evenings On and Off the Roof*, 291-292.
[27] See Chapter 2.
[28] Crawford, *Evenings On and Off the Roof*, 38.

Institute, then located at USC, from 1975 to 1991.[29] During his tenure there, Stein made efforts to maximize the public use of its resources, including hosting a concert series of new music, conferences and a scholarly journal. In 1994, Stein collaborated with four of his former students at USC to establish the Piano Spheres concert series dedicated to presenting contemporary piano music. Less remembered is Stein's Encounters series, presented at the Pasadena Art Museum in the 1960s and the California Institute of Technology in the 1970s. Encounters was conceived as an informal "face to face" meeting between audiences and composers. According to *Los Angeles Times* writer Mark Swed, among the composers who traveled to Los Angeles to present their music were Pierre Boulez, Olivier Messiaen, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and John Cage.[30]

0.3 The California Institute of the Arts

The opening of CalArts in 1970 introduced young musicians and composers to the growing network of institutions supporting contemporary music in Los Angeles. Scholarship, however, has focused almost exclusively on CalArts' now famous first decade and the radical pedagogical experiments of the early years, led by many of the leaders of the fluxus art movement.[31] Within that discourse, writers have used archival

[29] Piano Spheres, "About Founder Leonard Stein," accessed January 20, 2024, https://pianospheres.org/about-founder-leonard-stein/.
[30] Mark Swed, "Leonard Stein, 87; Schoenberg Institute Chief, Pianist, Teacher," *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 2004.
[31] For example, see Mark Prince, "Where Art Might Happen: The Early Years of CalArts," *Art Monthly* 430 (2019): 29-30; and Paul Brach, "Independent Art Schools: Traditions and Departures: CalArts: The Early Years," *Art Journal* 42 (1982): 27-29.

materials to construct detailed histories of its art department[32] and Feminist Art Program (1971-1976).[33]

In an interview from 1987, the composer and electronic music pioneer Morton Subotnick describes CalArts in its early years as a place where faculty remained active in their careers, enabling musicians and composers to work alongside their students.[34] This perspective aligns with Walt Disney's original vision of an idyllic "community of the arts," in which artists of various disciplines worked together in a seamlessly integrated creative community, made accessible for public viewing.[35] However, Walt's unexpected death in 1966 during the planning stages left the board of trustees scrambling to translate and realize his original vision, leading to the serendipitous hiring of Robert Corrigan and Herbert Blau as President and Provost respectively. Their influence briefly transformed CalArts into a haven for the avant-garde and experimentalism. Among the faculty they hired to design the various programs were the composer Mel Powell as Dean and Subotnick as Associate Dean.

Judith Adler's *Artists in Offices* provides additional context for understanding this chaotic period. Published in 1979, *Artists in Offices* is an ethnographic case study of the culture at CalArts during its first two years (1970-1972) based on the author's fieldwork

[32] For example, see Jacquelyn Ardam, "On Not Teaching Art: Baldessari, Pedagogy, and Conceptualism," *ASAP/Journal* 3, no. 1 (2018): 143-171; and Janet Sarbanes, "Teaching (that is not teaching) art (that is not art): The radical pedagogies of early CalArts," in *Where Art Might Happen* (New York: Prestel Publishing: 2021).
[33] For example, see Faith Wilding, "The Feminist Art Programs at Freson and CalArts, 1970-1975," in *Power of feminist art: the American movement of the 1970s, history and impact*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.: 1994); Géraldine Gourbe and Lucy Lippard, "The Pedagogy of Art as Agency: Or the Influence of a West Coast Feminist Art Program on an East Coast Pioneering Reflection on Performance Art," *Shifter Magazing* (2015); and Jane Gerhard, "Judy Chicago and the practice of 1970s feminism," *Feminist Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 591-618.
[34] Curtis Roads and Morton Subotnick, "Interview with Morton Subotnick," *Computer Music Journal* 12, no. 1 (1988): 9-18.
[35] CalArts, "History," accessed January 20, 2024, https://calarts.edu/about/institute/history.

observing and interviewing students, faculty, deans, administrators, and trustees. Adler frames her research as contributing to scholarship on the consolidation of power and resources in academia, and the attendant cultural shifts as art scenes became increasingly centralized in the social-economic worlds of universities. Broadly, Adler finds that CalArts existed as a paradox for the early cohort who saw themselves as radical artists working for an institution with ties to mass culture and conservatism.[36] These conflicting identities were complicated by the competing visions held by the various deans in charge of imagining their own forward-thinking curricula. Adler even suggests that the deans regarded their respective schools as personal "works of art."[37]

Part of CalArts' overall recruitment strategy involved adopting a mythologized image of the school as a western, New World frontier where any idea could be explored.[38] CalArts drew additionally upon globalist metaphors of Los Angeles as an international center of the arts. This approach foreshadowed the globalist rhetoric used to justify the expanding arts infrastructure in Los Angeles. Adler writes,

> To establish a school which would meet their own standards and carry prestige in the national professional orbits in which they moved, they needed to lure artists from the East by presenting Los Angeles as a creative capital capable of rivaling New York—in the jargon of the art world, as an emerging "message center."[39]

By 1980, the radical early years at CalArts had receded, and the institution overall began to emphasize more conventional training. The School of Music in this period, however, was undergoing a new transformation of its own, as its founders worked to

[36] Judith Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New York: Routledge, 1979), 66.
[37] Adler, *Artists in Offices*, 69.
[38] Adler, *Artists in Offices*, 26.
[39] Adler, *Artists in Offices*, 66.

create a multifaceted curriculum in composition, electronic music, contemporary music performance, and World Music. I explore this history, which remains mostly unaccounted for in the literature, in the introduction to Chapter 1 of this dissertation. I show that this curriculum not only had a profound effect on the EAR Unit and its cohort, but the institution overall emerged as a major contributor to growing interest in contemporary classical concert music throughout the city.

0.4 Methods and sources

This dissertation takes the form of a group biography, concentrating on how the California E.A.R. Unit navigated Los Angeles's growing infrastructure for contemporary classical music at the end of the 20th century. Group biography is distinguished from other biographical forms by its focus on the relationships among individuals from an identifiable social, political or cultural group who share common experiences.[40] Writing about advances in modern historical research, Barbara Caine has noted that group biography is useful for drawing connections between life stories and larger historical patterns.[41] This approach affords an opportunity to understand how ideas and attitudes about contemporary music arise through dynamic interpersonal exchanges, and in particular, the negotiations of collaborating as an ensemble. Caine points out that biography is especially equipped to highlight the overlapping conditions that inform

[40] Krista Cowman, "Collective Biography," in *Research Methods for History* (Edinburgh University Press: 2016).
[41] Barbara Caine, *Biography and History (Theory and History)* (Palgrave Macmillan: 2010): 58-62.

attitudes and perspectives. As the "archetypical 'contingent narrative,'" biography illustrates how a particular set of circumstances and experiences relate to historical change.[42]

Such narratives about contemporary music ensembles, particularly those that construe them as natural outgrowths of the university, have received relatively little biographical attention.[43] For this dissertation, the historical backdrop of CalArts and new music in Los Angeles provides one important set of contingencies that shaped the EAR Unit's collective story. Others considered in this writing include their clashing artistic sensibilities, social dynamics, gender, division of labor, and relationships to composers and other musicians.

As a biography, the central task of this dissertation is to represent accurately the collective story of the EAR Unit and to highlight the collaborative experiences of its members. In doing so, this work takes their everyday life as an integral component, if not the primary focus, of larger historical narratives. For example, in our interviews, the ensemble's cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick often replayed memories of completing grant applications while on tour. One such instance found her frantically refilling a quarter-operated typewriter in the Aspen Public Library (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022). Episodes such as these might point to any number of emergent themes: grant-writing before the advent of digital computing, distribution of clerical work by the ensemble, or the gendered

[42] Caine, *Biography and History*, 1.
[43] George Lewis's group biography of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, in *A Power Stronger than Itself* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), is one important counter example. Lewis shows cross collaboration between members of the Chicago-based African American musicians' collective and the expanding university-based network for contemporary music in Chicago, as well as patterns of exclusion and historical erasure from within those histories. Also relevant is Renée Levine Packer's biography of the Creative Associate at the State University of New York at Buffalo, *This Life of Sounds: Evenings for New Music in Buffalo* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

fulfillment of such tasks by the women leading the group. While I summarize and analyze themes at the end of each chapter, the primary mode of engagement in my dissertation is storytelling. The biographical tradition, an analytical form in its own right, further preserves not just the substance of narrative accounts, but their intention as descriptive artifacts. For this reason, I have retained as many anecdotes as possible to convey the texture of their experiences in their original form, whether it be hosting beach-themed poetry slams or searching high and low through London sex shops for bullwhips.

Biographical questions and methods demand interpretive choices by the author in weaving together a whole composed of many disparate parts. In this capacity, my work borrows from Hermoine Lee's interpretation of the biographer's project as a process of "making up" or "making over," described in her book *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography*. Lee argues that the author constitutes and transforms the subject's likeness, brought to life through careful attention to source materials. The biographer's hand is again necessary in shaping and making over the subject's image, "so that we speak of Edel's James or Ellmann's Joyce."[44] Here, with the help and diverse perspectives of those members of the EAR Unit who granted me interviews and access to their archives, I aim to faithfully recreate the collective story of the ensemble's performance career and the perspectives derived from them.

Consistent with biographical methods, I consulted a range of primary source material, including programs, documents, reviews, and photographs. The bulk of these were generously provided by Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick from her personal archive.

[44] Hermoine Lee, *Virginia Woolf's Nose: Essays on Biography* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 37.

Additional materials related to the EAR Unit's activities were supplied by other ensemble members, upon request. I have drawn equally from the archival collections at CalArts, which includes programs from all the Contemporary Music Festivals, concerts by the Twentieth Century Players, and faculty and student recitals. When physical copies of reviews were not available, I located them in online archives of the *Los Angeles Times*, *LA Weekly*, and the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*. Additionally, Jonathan Hepfer, the current director of the Monday Evening Concerts, provided an unpublished digital archive containing programs dating back to the inception of the series.

My work also draws from interviews I conducted with all living members of the EAR Unit, as well as many of their peers and mentors.[45] Additionally, I also consulted interviews conducted by the Yale Oral History of American Music project, as well as Carl Stone's composer talks in "Imaginary Landscape" produced by KPFK, and conversations on "Border Patrol," hosted by Amy Knoles, Martin Herman, and Glenn Zucman for American Public Media. Peter Otto also provided a recording of an unpublished live broadcast on KUSC of the EAR Unit's performance of Stockhausen's *Sternklang* at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival.

My use of interviews has been informed by the social constructionist position that asserts that knowledge and culture are in a constant state of performance and revision by its actors.[46] This framework views the communication of events, identities, and overall biographical meaning in interviews as itself a performance, one that can change over time and take on different meanings.[47] In the case of the EAR Unit musicians, it was important

[45] Two EAR Unit members declined to participate.
[46] See Vivian Burr, *Social Constructionism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 9.
[47] See Caine, *Biography and History*, 93-98.

to attend to their descriptions as narrative accounts mediated by professional and interpersonal forces. Interviews, and the intersecting stories told in them, were therefore critically balanced against information provided by other primary and secondary sources.

Constructing a single account of the group was further complicated by the fact that the events they recalled occurred, in many cases, up to 40 years ago. I provided the EAR Unit members with additional resources, such as programs and concert reviews, to jog their memories. I interviewed a handful of members several times to ensure that they had ample opportunities to reflect on their memories, and to construct an overall account that satisfied them presently.

Four key musicians close to the EAR Unit are no longer alive at the time of this writing: Art Jarvinen, Michael McCandless, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, and Dorothy Stone. Each played a different but significant role in the ensemble and for various lengths of time. In interviews, I prompted people close to them to speak about their life and work as it related to the EAR Unit. However, due to limited source material, I did not attempt to represent their experiences here in the same way that I have for other musicians. Indeed, I allowed this limitation to remain unresolved. My aim is to provide a summary of their work and contributions to the EAR Unit, imbued with reflections of them by their peers. I leave it to other interested researchers to provide more in-depth biographical sketches of these musicians as individuals.

0.5 Chapters

Each of the following chapters deals with one of the ensemble's four primary institutional affiliations, starting with its graduate and post-graduate work at CalArts. Then, from 1984 through 2005, the EAR Unit sustained a close relationship to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), where it held their own concert series and performed yearly on the Monday Evening Concerts (MEC). Following that, the EAR Unit gave regular concerts at the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater (REDCAT), located in Walt Disney Concert Hall, until finally retiring in 2012. Collectively, its engagements at CalArts, LACMA and REDCAT form an uninterrupted timeline of the ensemble's performance career in Los Angeles. I add to this the EAR Unit's four residencies organized by the Music in Motion initiative, held at various host sites across the country. I include this work, which took place outside of Los Angeles, because it generated a collection of important collaborations that were then featured on the group's series at LACMA.

Chapter 1 follows the EAR Unit from its inception at CalArts in 1981 through its professional engagements at the school after graduation. Here, I discuss the various components of CalArts' graduate curriculum for contemporary music performance that influenced the ensemble's formation, including two summer trips abroad made by possible by the school. The cohort's most formative experiences were with the Twentieth Century Players, a student ensemble led by Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, through which the graduate cohort was introduced to many famous composers attending the school's yearly Contemporary Music Festivals. I show that the School of Music played a substantial role in the EAR Unit's professionalization by encouraging collaborations between students,

faculty and visiting composers, and involving them in high profile work at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival and other major events. Taken collectively, this was an unparalleled time in the ensemble's career, from which they drew not only their commitment to performing together as a group, but also their deeply held appreciation for a broad range of compositional styles. This chapter also introduces the city's coming-of-age narrative, in which Los Angeles was viewed as an emerging cultural capital. Large-scale contemporary music events played into these attitudes and framed the EAR Unit as representatives of a new generation of specialized performers.

The EAR Unit's stylistic versatility was most noticeably on display in their concerts at LACMA, the focus of Chapter 2. Here, I trace the complete history of the ensemble's performances at the museum and examine the arc of their eclectic approach to programming, which combined various strains of avant-garde music with theater and improvisation. I start by recounting some their first appearances on the historic MEC series, including the events surrounding the premiere of Frank Zappa's *While You Were Art,* which brought them notoriety. I capture a representative sample of the ensemble's concert programs for its Ensemble Residency series at LACMA and describe its practice of holding yearly programming meetings in which members were given equal say in planning. In addition to exploring the ensemble's artistic dynamics, this chapter highlights the curatorial practices of the museum's music programs director, Dorrance Stalvey, who granted the EAR Unit complete artistic freedom. I show that this made LACMA an indispensable laboratory for the group's creative work and positioned the EAR Unit as important stakeholders in the identity of the MEC series.

Chapter 3 leaves Los Angeles to focus on six new works developed in partnership with Music in Motion over the course of four years. Music in Motion was a commissioning program that paired composers with five different ensembles, hosted by institutions across the country. Created by Joseph Franklin and managed by the Relâche Ensemble out of Philadelphia, Music in Motion aimed to develop new audiences for contemporary music by engaging the participating ensembles and composers in public outreach initiatives over the course of three week-long residencies. The EAR Unit's participation included collaborations with Eve Beglarian and Bernardo Feldman at Arizona State University (1994), Paul Dresher and Annea Lockwood at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota (1995), Jack Vees at the Painted Bride Art Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (1996), and Rand Steiger at the Jack Straw Cultural Center in Seattle, Washington (1998).

The products of Music in Motion all turned out to be interdisciplinary works, each involving some element of co-authorship by the EAR Unit musicians. This made pieces like Eve Beglarian's *typOpera* (1994), co-created with Art Jarvinen and Jim Rohrig, unique reflections of the ensemble and its artistic perspective. By analyzing these works and their processes of creation, this chapter offers a closer look at the ensemble's creative practice and combined skillsets. I show that the EAR Unit's maintained a multifaceted profile, combing composition, new technology, improvisation, world music, theater, and poetry, sometimes all within the same performance. In my brief comparison to other emerging ensemble, I suggest that the EAR Unit was influential in establishing a new collaborative model, one that expanded previously held expectations placed on contemporary music ensembles.

Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on the EAR Unit's concerts at REDCAT, which replaced the group's residency at LACMA. The move to the new downtown venue, operated by CalArts, signaled a return to the ensemble's institutional roots. More importantly, this chapter examines the structural and artistic changes that occurred in the EAR Unit's last decade, culminating in its final incarnation as a violin, piano, and percussion trio. Overall, I show that this period was marked by themes of loss and disintegration, as core members of the group left to pursue other careers. The unexpected deaths of flutist Dorothy Stone and her husband, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, also contributed to changes in the group's dynamics and artistic profile. In their absence, the EAR Unit lacked the clashing aesthetics and individual preoccupations that characterized the group's earlier work. Finally, I show that in this period the EAR Unit began to intersect with more groups and performance organizations, competing for space and resources in Los Angeles. This account calls into question how emerging ensembles sustained their careers in the absence of opportunities like the CalArts Festivals and Ensemble Residencies at LACMA.

One limitation of this chapter organization is that it limits discussion of the group's recordings or other residencies outside of Los Angeles. However, by focusing on this particular set of organizations, I am able to render a comprehensive portrait of the EAR Unit in all of its various stages. This continuity provides a narrative structure that traces the progression of the group's identity from an eager, up-and-coming cohort of graduates to a veteran ensemble. In doing so, I attend to the evolutions in both its creative output and group dynamics, influenced by its different institutional contexts as well as personnel changes. Furthermore, this chapter organization reflects the same narrative arc

described by many of the EAR Unit members themselves, who viewed these residencies as marking discrete periods in their collective career. It is my ultimate goal to provide a historically informed narrative that weaves together the ensemble's collective memories of living and performing in Los Angeles.

CHAPTER 1

Ensemble Formation and Professional Engagements at CalArts (1980-1987)

This chapter follows the California E.A.R. Unit from its formation in 1981 by a group of students at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) through its professional engagements at the school in the five years after their graduation (1982-1987). I examine the close relationship shared between the ensemble and the institution, focusing on the development in the 1980s of a curriculum at CalArts for contemporary music performance. The centerpiece of this program was the Twentieth Century Players, a student ensemble created by the co-founding Dean of the School of Music, Morton Subotnick. The ensemble's conductor, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, also mentored the young musicians and facilitated introductions to major figures of the avant-garde at the school's annual Contemporary Music Festival, which brought internationally celebrated composers and performers to campus for two weeks in the spring. I discuss additional opportunities created by CalArts for the EAR Unit, including summer residencies at the American Dance Festival and the Holland Festival, as well as performances on other major festivals for contemporary music held in Los Angeles in the 1980s.

The EAR Unit's graduate and post-graduate years at CalArts are taken collectively as an important narrative focus in their founding and early career. I trace several themes within this period related to their ensemble origins. These include conflicting attitudes towards the school and its performance program as well as the effects of being immersed in a milieu of famous 20th century composers. Additionally, a handful of key collaborations and performances recounted here are essential to the EAR Unit's history. These episodes offer a detailed look into how such encounters shaped

their individual and shared musical aspirations. They further demonstrate strategies used by the EAR Unit to leverage resources and access to well-known composers to co-construct an ensemble career legitimized in part by an academicized avant-garde

Finally, I demonstrate ways in which the ensemble's career was contextualized by discourse promoting Los Angeles as an international arts capital. Such rhetoric was most strikingly on display in the new music portion of the massive 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, which showcased the EAR Unit among a handful of the city's prominent performing groups. In the years following Olympic Arts, other large-scale contemporary music festivals, all with direct ties to CalArts, employed similar strategies by positioning Los Angeles as an emerging center for new music and the EAR Unit as one of its leading new music proponents.

1.1 Graduate student years

The California E.A.R. Unit met in 1980 as graduate students at CalArts, a private arts institution in the suburb of Valencia some 30 miles north of Los Angeles. The campus, which opened a decade earlier, sits atop a hill in the western Santa Clarita Valley and is surrounded by the Tehachapi and San Gabriel Mountains in plain view. Although many graduates have spoken unfavorably about the coldness of its brutalist facilities, the wide sloping hillside provided a sun-bathed backdrop for some of the school's most provocative art happenings throughout its storied formative years.[48] In

[48] For example, the artist James Welling writes the following about the environment at CalArts: "The new building was a challenge and I never overcame the feeling that it was a terrible piece of architecture. It was

1980, the surrounding region was primarily residential and was still rather undeveloped. Interviewees for this dissertation recall that at the time there was only one hotel for out-of-town guests. Yet despite its relative isolation, CalArts offered its young students the promise of unlimited artistic freedom within a community of artists and progressive thinkers. This environment, at once bleak and idyllic, was the setting in which the EAR Unit became friends and made music together for the first time. Like many similar educational experiences, it would later be marked for them as a place of beginnings and of deep personal memory.

While many of the original members of the EAR Unit came to CalArts in the late 1970s, their first true semester together was the Fall of 1980 when Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick (cello), Daniel Kennedy (percussion), Robin Lorentz (violin), Rand Steiger (percussion-composer), and Dorothy Stone (flute) started their MFA degrees. They joined Lorna Eder (piano), Art Jarvinen (percussion), Michael McCandless (piano), Gaylord Mowrey (piano), Jim Rohrig (clarinet) and Jacqueline Suzuki (violin) who were already pursuing graduate degrees. Percussionist Amy Knoles completed her BFA in 1982 with the rest of the EAR Unit. Meanwhile, Duke-Kirkpatrick graduated with her BFA in 1978 and spent the interim two years as assistant principal cellist of the Mexico City Philharmonic before returning to CalArts in 1980.

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a cinderblock tomb, the opposite of what I imagined Villa Cabrini must have been. But the land around CalArts was free for everyone to use. The first weekend of the semester I made a cairn of concrete rubble to equal my body weight. In a country club down the hill from campus, the composer Max Neuhaus created an audio work in a swimming pool. You hear it underwater! An African "village," created by the Department of Music, sprang up on the southern edge of the school, with thatched huts and African drumming. On a level piece of ground away from the building, Alison Knowles constructed her *House of Dust*, an igloo-like structure in which she projected Super-8 films. A few months later, as part of his thesis show, Jack Goldstein, had his friends bury him in a coffin on a bluff overlooking the freeway." James Welling, "CalArts in the early 1970s," in *Where Art Might Happen: The Early Years of CalArts*, edited by Philipp Kaiser and Christina Vegh (Hanover, Germany: Prestel, 2020), 292-293.

The future EAR Unit musicians began their education in the School of Music at a decisive moment in the department's history. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw the vision of its original planners come into fruition, with the school offering serious training in classical performance, composition, electronic music, and world music practices. The focal point of the emerging contemporary music program was the Twentieth Century Players, a graduate student ensemble created and directed by Morton Subotnick in 1977.[49] As a founding Associate Dean of the School of Music at CalArts, he and composer Mel Powell were responsible for designing the school's first curriculum.[50] When he resigned from the position in 1973 to become head of the composition department, Subotnick used his more narrow role to advocate for greater resources for contemporary music at CalArts, such as creating a new media program that emphasized interactive technology (Subotnick, 2020). In this position, Subotnick established the Twentieth Century Players as a vehicle for student and faculty composers to workshop new pieces and to provide valuable performance opportunities for graduate musicians.[51]

The EAR Unit members were among the first students to receive a scholarship designed specifically to attract students to play in the ensemble. Subtonick explains,

> I wanted to establish a new music group that could play the music of the composers, but we had no money to hire people at that point. So, I got some scholarship money and created a fund to bring in young performers who would have a scholarship specifically to play new music. … I think the very first group of people were Erika [Duke-Kirkpatrick] and Amy

[49] Subotnick was known, among other things, for co-commissioning Don Buchla's first analogue synthesizer and composing ground-breaking works on them, such as his 1967 album-cum-composition, "Silver Apples of the Moon." The composer came to CalArts with prior institutional experience, having co-founded the San Francisco Tape Music Center and overseen its early success at Mills College. See Curtis Roads, "Interview with Morton Subotnick," *Computer Music Journal* Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 1988), 9-18.
[50] See Judith Adler, *Artists in Offices: An Ethnography of an Academic Art Scene* (New York: Routledge, 1979).
[51] As discussed in the Introduction, student contemporary music ensembles became popular in the 1970s amidst broad expansions to university infrastructure in the US.

> [Knoles]. They stayed together and became the EAR Unit when they graduated. That's how the EAR Unit got started. (Subotnick, 2020)

While Subotnick made decisions, such as these, that shaped the early direction of School of Music, the composer has suggested that he never saw his position at CalArts as permanent.[52] He utilized a yearly leave-of-absence to continue his work as a composer while handing over teaching to esteemed guests, such as Earle Brown or Morton Feldman, who would stay in residence for as long as two weeks or a whole semester. In addition to teaching composition and workshopping their music with the Twentieth Century Players, visiting composers rubbed shoulders with graduate students and became integrated into campus life. For EAR Unit cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick, Subotnick's guests factored significantly into her musical training at CalArts.

> The way I learned is that Mort [Subotnick] would go on sabbatical and somebody else would come to town and I would learn from them while they were there. In the case of [Iannis] Xenakis, it was only a few days for that concert. But for instance, for Earle Brown, it was a whole semester of hanging out with him. For Morton Feldman, it was a whole semester of hanging out with him, getting to know what he wanted and having the time to learn it. (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022)

This was not the case for clarinetist-composer David Ocker, one of the EAR Unit's peers who studied composition with visiting composers Earle Brown and Paul Chihara during Subotnick's semesters abroad. Ocker found the pedagogical environment at CalArts to be overly prescriptive and not focused enough on teaching practical skills. He recalls, "The philosophy of CalArts, in large part, was that they were going to hire famous avant-garde artists to come in and hang out with students, and students somehow learned by watching these artists do art. And maybe that worked for a few people, but it wasn't the most educational way of provoking art" (Ocker, 2020).

[52] Roads, "Interview with Morton Subotnick," 14.

Nonetheless, the School of Music was not at a loss for full-time faculty who could provide consistent mentorship for students and who came with distinct musical specialization. The Twentieth Century Players itself had two principal conductors, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko and Daniel Shulman. Before coming to CalArts, Mosko had studied conducting with Antonia Brico and later composition with Mel Powell at Yale University. Mosko followed Powell to CalArts, where he received an MFA in composition among the first graduating class in 1972 and was immediately hired to be part of the composition faculty. Mosko's musical concerns were far-reaching. In 1974, for example, the composer-conductor received a Fulbright scholarship to study the traditional vocal music of Iceland. Indeed, Mosko's music and teachings were inflected by influences from a variety of musical traditions, many of which were studied at CalArts in its world music program.[53] Mosko was equally respected for his conducting skills, once receiving praise from John Cage in a personal letter of recommendation: "If you are searching for a conductor, he is the one you will find."[54]

Although little has been published about Shulman's life and accomplishments, EAR Unit members remember his role as handling more of the traditional works on Twentieth Century Players programs, particularly those aligned with academic serialist composition. Shulman's noteworthy experience in this area made him an especially

[53] On Mosko's eclecticism, Art Jarvinen writes, "With post-Webern European art music as a point of departure, Mosko's musical journey has taken him around the world by a circuitous route. He listens voraciously, with an open ear and mind, absorbing the influence of Sufi ceremonial music, Chinese opera, Rumanian gypsy tunes, and Icelandic epic song (he is one of the world's only authorities on the latter). But he is not a mere borrower, simply mimicking superficial characteristics of the music of others in an attempt to sound exotic. Rather, the subtler aspects of his listening experiences become conceptual models, i.e. ways of thinking about his own music. And not only musical ideas imbed his works." Art Jarvinen, "Stephen L. Mosko (1947-2005): Music, Mind, and Personality," accessed August 21, 2023, Luxstar.org/biography.html.

[54] John Cage, quoted in Rand Steiger, "Obituary: Stephen 'Lucky' Mosko," *NewMusicBox*, December 9, 2005, accessed August 23, 2023, https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/obituary-stephen-lucky-mosko/.

appealing mentor to the EAR Unit composer Rand Steiger, who had interests in such music. “He was kind of a hero of mine, just like Harvey Sollberger was in my New York days” (Steiger, 2020f). Before coming to CalArts to head the conducting program, Shulman had been a freelance conductor in New York City. In 1971, he founded and directed the Light Fantastic Players, a 30-piece chamber orchestra specializing in contemporary music, and made regular appearances leading other New York based ensembles, including the Group for Contemporary Music, Speculum Musicae, the Ensemble of New York, and the Da Capo Chamber Players.[55] Shulman was recruited by Mosko to join the faculty at CalArts in 1978.

1.1.1 The Twentieth Century Players

The Twentieth Century Players was typical for a large chamber ensemble specializing in contemporary music, with around a dozen or more players. Theresa Otto, a clarinetist in the EAR Unit’s graduate cohort, described the student group as a “normal chamber orchestra but much more collaborative” (Otto, T., 2020). Others similarly recall the group being made up of strong players who shared an enthusiasm for learning contemporary music. Violinist Mary Terranova, remembers being impressed as an undergraduate by their commitment, and stayed at the school to pursue an MFA specifically to play with the Twentieth Century Players.[56]

[55] See Susan Deaver, “The Group for Contemporary Music: 1962-1992,” DMA dissertation (Manhattan School of Music, 1993).
[56] “Being in the Twentieth Century Players was one of the main reasons I decided to do my graduate work there as well because only graduate students were allowed to play in that ensemble. And I remember

The first performance by the entire original EAR Unit cohort was with the Twentieth Century Players on October 30, 1980 in the Roy O. Disney Music Hall. The concert kicked off one of Earle Brown's many residencies with the composer himself conducting his violin concerto, *Centering* (1973), featuring future EAR Unit violinist Robin Lorentz as soloist. Mosko also conducted the ensemble's flutist Dorothy Stone performing Subotnick's *Parallel Lines* (1979) for Solo Piccolo with "ghost box" electronics and nine players.[57] Both concerti by Brown and Subotnick placed significant demands on the soloists' technical capabilities and musical imagination. In *Centering,* for instance, three cadenzas, two for the violinist and one for the conductor, require virtuosic improvisation on a variety of musical materials provided in the score. The concerto is typical of Brown's "open form" technique, in which the conductor and soloist arrange and transform the score's mobile, musical cells in performance.[58] Thus, the programmatic drama of the concerto lies in its unfolding under the soloists' intense concentration. Brown describes the act as one of "mental and physical 'centering' in the sense of balancing and the gathering and focusing of one's resources as necessary to "perform well" in any life situation."[59]

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hearing them as an undergrad and thinking, 'Wow, I'd really like to do that!' You know, to play current music and to explore my instrument in different ways. So, I did. And I just remember that there were so many passionate people who were really serious about their craft and wanted to play music that was being written today" (Terranova, 2022).

[57] Subotnick's "ghost box" was an early technology for live manipulation of acoustic sound, which the composer revisited in works like *The Double Life of Amphibians,* premiered by the EAR Unit in 1984. For a complete analysis of the composer's "Ghost Scores," see Jeffrey Hanson, "Morton Subotnick's Ghost Scores: Interaction and Performance with Music Technology," MA Thesis (San Jose State University, 2010).

[58] For more on Brown's "open form" technique, see Stephen Drury, "Then and Now: Changing Perspectives on Performing Earle Brown's Open Form Scores," in *Beyond Notation: The Music of Earle Brown* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 231-248.

[59] Earle Brown, Program Note to *Centering,* Edition Peters, 1973.

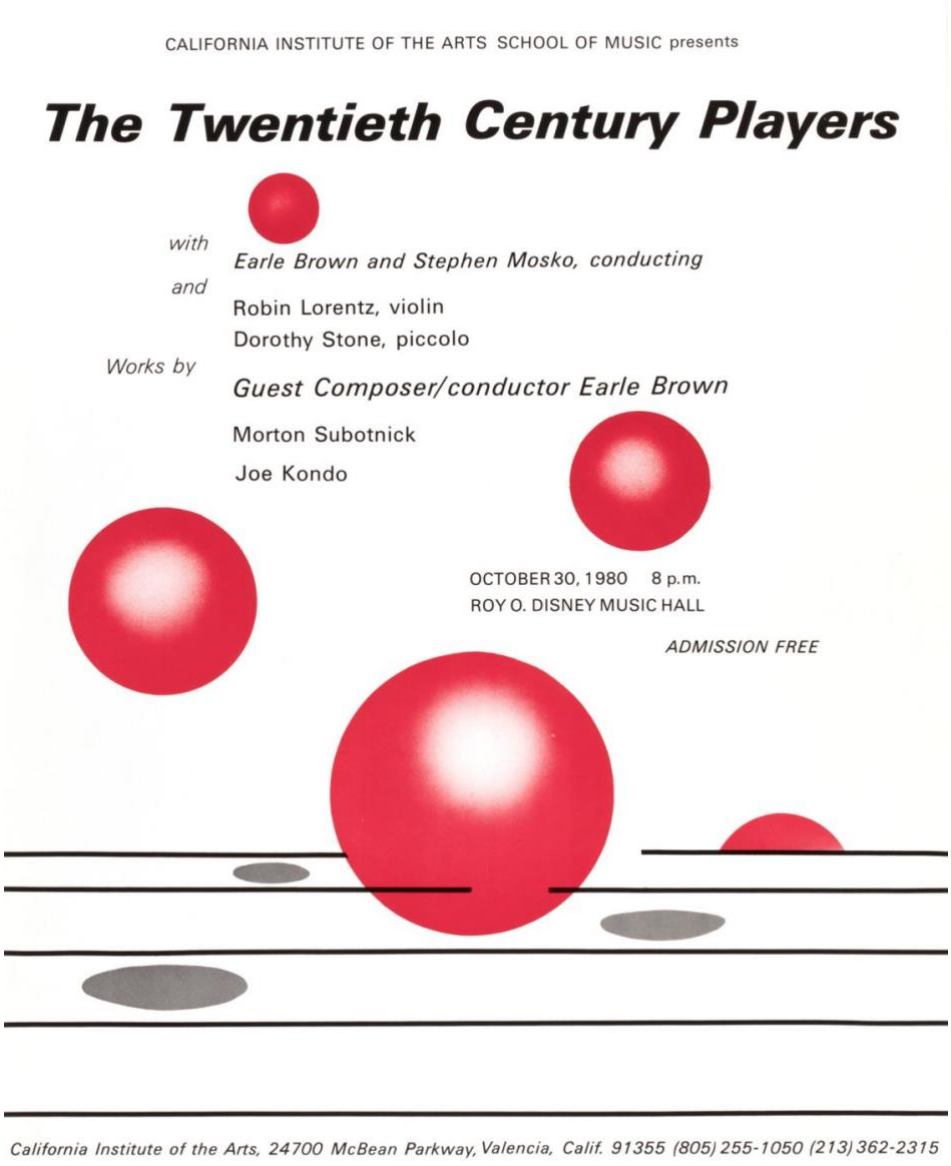

Figure 1.1: Poster for the Twentieth Century Players concert featuring guest composer Earle Brown, October 30, 1980. (CalArts Poster Archive, posters.calarts.edu)

Lorentz recalls being challenged by the piece while also at home in its improvisatory language. She was selected to perform the concerto because of her prior background in swing jazz and fiddling. In coachings, Brown offered an alternative understanding of the piece as replicating the centering of clay on a pottery wheel, encouraging the violinist to think about the sound emerging from her hands. She

explains, “It was very circular. … He felt that the shape of it was also inspired by the actual centering of a pottery wheel and the way that when someone throws clay, it becomes circular within the hands on the wheel. That image really helped me get a sonic resolution when I would play it.” The violinist also remembers Brown’s conducting as fluid and dance-like, placing great emphasis on dynamics. Despite the exposed nature of the piece, Lorentz says the performance was “exhilarating” due to the many possibilities entrusted in her as a soloist (Lorentz, 2022).

Throughout the course of their studies, other future EAR Unit members would be featured as soloists with the Twentieth Century Players. This was likely an intentional strategy on the part of the ensemble’s directors to showcase the selected talents of its contemporary music emphasis. The young musicians were happy to be given such attention and used the opportunities to develop their own individual areas of specialization in 20th century music. In the concert following *Centering*, Gaylord Mowrey performed the piano solo part to Olivier Messiaen’s *Oiseaux Exotiques*, a compact concerto for piano and small orchestra. In their final year, on February 12, 1982, the Twentieth Century Players devoted almost an entire program to concerti. Pianist Michael McCandless performed the Concerto Arabesque (1930) for piano and 12 instruments by the early 20th century American composer, John J. Becker. Finishing the first half, Duke-Kirkpatrick also performed Hindemith’s Kammermusik No. 3 for cello and 10 instruments (1924). Mowrey also gave his first performance of John Cage’s Concerto for Prepared Piano and Orchestra (1950), which he would reprise that summer with the Twentieth Century Players in residence at the Holland Festival.[60]

[60] Concert programs for the Twentieth Century Players and other School of Music events (1973-2005) are housed at the CalArts Library in an unprocessed collection.

Other Twentieth Century Players programs were similarly eclectic and tended to lean towards works of technical virtuosity. On the program with Messiaen's *Oiseaux Exotiques,* for example, the student ensemble played Jacob Druckman's *Incenters* and György Ligeti's Chamber Concerto for 13 instrumentalists, both challenging works that treat each musician in the ensemble as soloist. In other programs, contemporary concert works were juxtaposed with postmodern experiments in music theatre. On a concert by the Twentieth Century Players in April 1981, performances of Steiger's *Quintessence* (1981) and Betsy Jolas's JDE (1966) bookended excerpts from Vinko Globokar's experimental meta-work *Laboratorium,* an expanding collection of solos and chamber works, which the composer has described as having no end.[61] In the fall of the following year, a concert of electronic music included a performance by Mowrey and Mosko of Dieter Schnebel's *Visible Music I* for conductor and instrumentalist, a graphic score in a series of works exploring the relationship between performers and audience.

Although students in the Twentieth Century Players gained high level performance experience with a broad range of 20th century music, the EAR Unit musicians did not always agree with how it was run and held contradictory feelings about its usefulness. According to Steiger, flutist Stone held strong convictions about the artistic direction of the Twentieth Century Players and felt that its musicians were being overworked with obligations to perform for student composers (Steiger, 2022a). People close to Stone said that she even made plans to leave the program and move back to New York and not return for her second year. Although she was convinced to stay, Stone's disagreements with CalArts appeared to others to have amplified her dream of starting a

[61] A complete performance of *Laboratorium* was later given at the 1986 CalArts Festival of Contemporary Music during the composer's residency.

contemporary chamber ensemble of her own. Steiger suggests that “her desire to have an independent programming vehicle is also part of what drove the EAR Unit. When we were in the Twentieth Century Players, that music was all being chosen by ‘Lucky" [Mosko] and influenced by Mort [Subotnick]. Whereas, if we had had our own group, we could have decided what we wanted to play” (Steiger, 2022a). Even though Rohrig and Steiger would later initiate the ensemble formation, EAR Unit members have all described Stone’s passionate vision for leading an independent ensemble, fueled early on by conflicts with programming by the Twentieth Century Players.

The Fall semester after Stone’s return, the musicians faced another major issue with the Twentieth Century Players. EAR Unit members recall that CalArts tried to force cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick out of the ensemble to make room for an incoming graduate student. Steiger described what ensued as a revolt (Steiger, 2020f). After threatening to quit, the students convinced the school to keep both cellists in the ensemble. Duke-Krikpatrick believes that the loyalty shown by her peers was a key factor in deciding to start the EAR Unit, one of the group’s many origin stories. She remembers, “The idea was that she was going to take my place. I was going to be booted out. It was Jim [Rohrig] and Rand [Steiger] who said, ‘Well, we’ll just start our own little group!’ So, in a way, it was their kindness, their friendship, their loyalty. That’s kind of how the EAR Unit started” (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022).

Figure 1.2: The CalArts Twentieth Century Players (ca. 1981). Back row (L-R): Jim Rohrig, unknown, Amy Knoles, Daniel Shulman, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, unknown, Scott Vidger, Michael McCandless, Daniel Kennedy, unknown. Front row (L-R): Gaylord Mowrey, Robin Lorentz, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Stone. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

1.1.2 CalArts Contemporary Music Festivals

> When it seems that a wave of intense energy and activity grips a large number of musically involved people at the University of California at San Diego and CalArts; when the phone calls, the messages, the people shuttling back and forth at all hours, posters, news articles with unusual sounding names begin to emerge; when clusters of composition students appear, hunting for places to stay near Valencia … it's a sure sign that the annual Contemporary Music Festival is about to burst forth in Southern California.[62]

One of the core responsibilities of the Twentieth Century Players was performing on the school's annual Contemporary Music Festivals (1978-1992), sometimes referred

[62] Renée Levine Packer, "Welcome to Festival Visitors," in the 1981 Contemporary Music Festival Program Booklet, California Institute of the Arts Institute Library, Unprocessed Collection, Contemporary Music Festivals 1978-1987.

to as the CalArts Festivals or the Spring Festivals for their timing in March or April. As described above by Renée Levine Packer, the career arts administrator who served as its director from 1980 to 1982, the festivals were busy affairs that required significant resources from its partner institutions. These large-scale gatherings took place over two weeks in the spring, during which the school hosted an array of internationally recognized composers of contemporary music and sometimes jazz, participating alongside students and faculty in workshops, concerts, and talks. They began as joint ventures between CalArts, UC San Diego, and the University of Nevada Las Vegas. For unknown reasons, UNLV ended their participation after three years, leaving just CalArts and UC San Diego to co-produce the events in 1981 and 1982, and CalArts alone from 1983 on.

Its unique focus on the musical avant-garde made UC San Diego a desirable co-producer of the Contemporary Music Festivals. In 1969, only a year prior to the opening of CalArts, the public research university established its Center for Music Experiment, led in part by Subotnick's former Bay Area colleagues Pauline Oliveros and Roger Reynolds. Many of the department's leading figures in composition and contemporary music performance appeared regularly on the festivals at CalArts. Among its most common guests from UC San Diego were the faculty ensembles SONOR and [THE] (Ed Harkins and Philip Larson), composers Robert Erickson, Kenneth Gaburo, Bernard Rands, and Roger Reynolds; as well as performers Jean-Charles Francois (percussion), János Négyesy (violin), Carol Plantamura (voice), and Bertram Turetzky (contrabass).[63]

[63] Program booklets for the CalArts Contemporary Music Festivals, California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives, Unprocessed Collection, Contemporary Music Festivals 1978-1987.

The EAR Unit musicians recall that the events transformed the campus and its surroundings into a lively social environment, energized by the presence of many esteemed guests. Such an atmosphere was the explicit goal of the festival organizers. According to Subotnick, the School of Music had an unwritten policy that it would only program works by composers who could be present at the festival. In my interview, he explains that this was intended to give students access to an aging generation of well-known composers.

> We really wanted a scene. … We were conscious of the fact that the major avant-garde at that point—the John Cage's, the Milton Babbitt's and Morty Feldman's—they were 10 to 12 years older than we were. And now we were in our 30's and 40's. They were starting to look old and weren't going to be around forever. So, we wanted to really take that seriously and give them their due and give everybody a chance to share what they could do. (Subotnick, 2020)

Subtonick's comments suggest a threefold generational divide between the lauded midcentury composers, the CalArts faculty, and their students. Indeed, in the same interview he characterizes himself as a "father figure" to the EAR Unit.[64] This paternal attitude further recasts the festivals as a kind of family-like gathering, in which students and faculty were granted privileged access to an elite circle of composers and musicians.

Like playing under Brown during his fall residency, most of the EAR Unit's introductions to composers at the festival were made through performances with the Twentieth Century Players. Under Mosko's leadership, the student ensemble performed one or two concerts of music by visiting composers, and occasionally new works by students attending the composition seminars. The 1981 Contemporary Music Festival, the

[64] Mel Powell similarly remarked in a 1996 interview, "Every one of the group, I feel, is one of my children." Stuart Cohn, "An E.A.R. for New Music: A group of former CalArts students finds the sweet sound of success as one of the nation's leading eclectic ensembles," *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1996.

first the EAR Unit experienced together as a cohort, featured Morton Feldman, Vinko Globokar, Lou Harrison, Frederic Rzewski, Toru Takemitsu, and Joan Tower as the honorary guests. The Twentieth Century Players performed Tower's *Black Topaz* with Virko Baley as piano soloist, and Rzewski's *Coming Together* with Marvin Hayes reciting the text. The CalArts students shared this program with UC San Diego's SONOR Ensemble performing Alfred Schnittke's *Dialog* for cello and seven instruments.[65]

The EAR Unit was transformed by the experience of preparing this music with the Twentieth Century Players under Mosko. Indeed, the young musicians found his teaching to be inspiring and often more memorable than the interactions with famous composers themselves. Mosko encouraged his students to immerse themselves in the process of rehearsing and learning about the composers, who, in most cases, were unfamiliar to the students. Such an approach not only reinforced the aspirations of the festival's founders to create a scene, but ultimately served to intensify the long-lasting impact they had on the young musicians he mentored. In an interview, the EAR Unit percussionist Amy Knoles explains that Mosko's teaching formed the basis of the group's commitment to playing contemporary music.

> [Mosko] was the one behind bringing all these folks from all over the map— [Charles] Wuorinen, [Mauricio] Kagel, [Louis] Andriessen. And he wouldn't just bring them. They'd come and stay for several weeks, and we'd get to know them. Before they came, he would tell us about them and their music. And then we'd get to know them as humans. And that's where that whole love came from, the need to do it well because we just cared so much about them as people and what they were writing, but we got to do it on a human level. We were just so fortunate that we had such great introductions from Lucky. (Knoles, 2020)

[65] California Institute of the Arts Library, School of Music Concert Program (1973-2005), unprocessed collection.

In this capacity, Mosko is also remembered for his intense work ethic. The oboist Libby van Cleve, one of the EAR Unit's peers in the Twentieth Century Players, remembers Mosko approach to leading rehearsals. "Lucky was just tireless. I mean, the amount of energy this man had, and the amount of intelligence and spirit he brought to everything he did was extraordinary" (Van Cleve, 2020).

Amplified by the pressures of performing for many respected musicians and composers, the EAR Unit's workload during the CalArts Festivals forced the young musicians to spend significant time together in rehearsals. Mowrey recalls that nobody in the group had ever prepared so much music before, making it both an exciting and stressful period (Mowrey, 2022). To save practice time in the morning, Knoles explains that close friends would sleep in her truck just so they could wake up early to practice (Knoles, 2015). Lorentz adds, "We were sleeping under stairways during those CalArts Festivals because it was too much trouble to go home. That was another half an hour you needed to learn some insane piece you'd gotten the night before or three weeks before" (Lorentz, 2022).

EAR Unit members remember the 1981 CalArts Festival primarily for its opening events, a series of three concerts devoted to works by student composers. On the third program, members of the soon-to-be EAR Unit premiered Rand Steiger's *Quintessence*, a chamber concerto for clarinet, cello, piano, keyboard synthesizer and percussion. The performers were Rorhig (clarinet), Duke-Kirkpatrick (cello), McCandless (synthesizer), Mowrey (piano), and Kennedy (percussion). The work exploited the young musicians' technical strengths through a series of duo cadenzas in Steiger's virtuosic, atonal style.

Prior to coming to CalArts, Steiger had begun to sketch the piece for his friend Daniel Druckman and others in the New York New Music Ensemble (Steiger, 2020e). At CalArts, Subotnick encouraged the composer to gather a group of his peers from the Twentieth Century Players for readings. Steiger insists that Mowrey left in the middle of the first rehearsal and announced upon returning that he had gone to the restroom to vomit. In my interview with the pianist in 2022, however, Mowrey reflects fondly on the experience, calling it "the piece that brought the EAR Unit together" (Mowrey, 2022). In fact, *Quintessence* is agreed by all members to be one of the first pieces in the ensemble's repertoire, even by those who did not play in it. The EAR Unit programmed it more than 20 times within their first ten years as an active ensemble, including on the second official *Bang On A Can* Marathon in 1988.

The concert that featured Steiger's *Quintessence* was noteworthy for other reasons as well. Steiger recalls the composers' concerts being raucous events. He describes a competitive but exuberant atmosphere, like a football game, where students from CalArts and UC San Diego cheered and booed performances from their respective schools (Steiger, 2020b). The three concerts were in fact dominated by composers from the two Southern Californian institutions. Among the other composers with premieres were David Felder, then a graduate student at UC San Diego and Robert Beaser, studying at the Yale School of Music. Adding to the excitement, the tenor Charles Lane surprised the audience by appearing on stage in a couture-inspired black and yellow ball gown, handmade from plastic by the dancer Roz Eisner.[66] Lane was then a graduate student at

[66] "I said to Roz, I said, 'you know, these Contemporary Music Festival scenes are always so serious.' As a performer you were only allowed to wear concert black. That was all anybody ever wore at these events. And I said to her, I said, 'I want to do something dramatic.' Anyway, I was looking through a Vogue magazine or something and I saw this gown with stripes and polka dots and stuff. Yellow and black stripes.

CalArts with the EAR Unit and had worked all semester with the composer Randall Packer on a new song cycle. Lane did not tell Packer nor Mowrey accompanying him about the plan to appear in drag. According to Lane, the outfit was widely discussed the following day, and was affectionately called "the bee costume" by CalArts students and EAR Unit members. He credits the permissive environment at CalArts for empowering him to take such a risk. "For some reason, I just felt completely free and uninhibited to do anything I wanted at CalArts. There was this wonderful combination of seriousness on the one hand, and total unseriousness on the other" (Lane, 2023).

The following year, the Twentieth Century Players took part again in the 1982 CalArts Festival. The student ensemble shared a program with Don Cherry, Charlie Haden and Ed Blackwell playing their own music and works by Ornette Coleman. Members of the EAR Unit performed excerpts from Cornelius Cardew's *The Great Learning* (1971), James Tenney's *Three Indigenous Songs* (1979), and the US premiere of Subotnick's *Ascent Into Air* (1982) from the composer's developing work, *The Double Life of Amphibians* (1984). For the CalArts performance of *Ascent Into Air*, Steiger

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And I asked her, 'Can we recreate something like this?' As it turned out, she had this bolt of yellow plastic. And we took that yellow plastic and painted dots and stripes on it to give it a pattern, and then she kind of wrapped me in it like a long ball gown. Then she took this gold aluminum foil, and she made a kind of halo around it, and created this amazing costume. We decided not to tell anybody so that nobody could discourage us from doing it.

"Gaylord Mowrey, who was a brilliant pianist and specializes in Messiaen's music, very serious guy, he was my accompanist for this concert. I didn't tell him. I didn't tell Randall. We didn't tell anybody. So, Roz and I got dressed in this little room behind Roy O. Disney Concert Hall. And she wrapped me in this thing. Meanwhile, the theater was filled, standing room only. And when I came out, you could hear gasps out the room. And then I sang this very serious piece, it took about 30 minutes. And afterwards, Gaylord said to me, 'I'll never work with you again!' He was so humiliated because of my costume and the whole thing. It was shocking. And it was so funny because the next day everybody was talking about, you know, this outfit that I had worn for this concert" (Lane, 2023).

performed one of the percussion parts and helped Subotnick program the Buchla 300 to replicate the live, spatialized sounds produced at IRCAM in Paris.[67]

The 1982 festival also provided the EAR Unit with their first encounter with the American experimentalist, John Cage. Following a concert by SONOR, Cage gave a late evening reading in the CalArts Cafeteria of his text piece, *James Joyce, Marcel Duchamp, Erik Satie: An Alphabet*. The next day, UC San Diego violinist János Négyesy gave the first west coast performance of Cage's *Freeman Etudes*, of which Négyesy was a committed practitioner. Cage also joined a panel on improvisation that included Milton Babbitt, Nicholas England, Cecil Lytle, Charlie Haden, Mel Powell, and Michael Steinberg. On the final afternoon of the festival, students from CalArts, UC San Diego and USC performed the 12 spoken parts to Cage's *Lecture on the Weather* (1976). This work is traditionally realized using prerecorded materials, including Cage's reading of a preface, field recordings by Maryanne Amacher, and a film by Luis Frangella. For the 1981 CalArts performance, Cage read the preface live while James Tenney oversaw technical production with live sound mixing by John Payne.[68]

[67] "Everything else was done with the Buchla, and I got it all sounding great and working better than the IRCAM version. I would work alone for hours (I didn't sleep much), and occasionally, Mort would come in and listen and make some adjustments. One night when we were working together in the middle of the night, somewhat delirious, working furiously, smoke started coming out of the Buchla system! This was likely caused by a wire coming loose inside and short circuiting causing something to overload. We powered down immediately and went home. Mort wrote in the studio log 'Buchla blew up!'" (Steiger, 2020c)

[68] Program booklet for the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival 1982 (March 5-7, 1982), California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives, Unprocessed Collection, Contemporary Music Festivals 1978-1987.

1.1.3 The American Dance Festival

In addition to keeping graduate performers busy during the academic year, CalArts provided the EAR Unit's cohort with performance opportunities each summer. In July 1981, Kennedy, Stone. Rohrig, and Duke-Kirkpatrick were selected to participate as the ensemble-in-residence at the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina. The American Dance Festival is a training program for contemporary dance, co-founded in 1934 by the dancer Martha Graham. The festival had recently relocated from Bennington College in Vermont to Duke University and was in the process of expanding its educational programs.[69] That summer, Earle Brown served as composer in residence for their new composers and choreographers training workshops called the Music and Dance ("M.A.D. Jr") Program. Having spent the previous Fall semester at CalArts, Brown recruited from among the students he worked with in the Twentieth Century Players (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020).

The month-long residency at the American Dance Festival proved to be a significant bonding experience for the CalArts musicians. They connected especially well with the composers Robert Xavier Rodríguez, Anna Rubin and Judith Shatin. Rubin had been a graduate student at CalArts in the same class as the EAR Unit musicians, studying with Mel Powell and Earle Brown. The other two held faculty positions at other institutions, Rodríguez at the University of Texas Dallas, and Shatin at the University of Virginia Charlottesville, where she later founded the Virginia Center for Computer Music.

[69] American Dance Festival, "ADF History," accessed August 17, 2022, https://americandancefestival.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ADF-History.pdf.

The percussionist Kennedy remembers witnessing many of the festival's diverse events, including a Djembe drum carving in the school plaza every weekend (Kennedy, 2022). Cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick meanwhile described the summer in more dramatic terms, having been affected by the severe heat and lack of air-conditioning on campus. Both Duke-Kirkpatrick and Stone had driven together from Los Angeles to Durham, taking Stone's cat to live with them in their shared Duke University dorm room (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022). An unsigned postcard to Mosko, dated July 4 and likely written by Stone, reflects the young musicians' somewhat coarse humor at the time. In it, they feign unbearable suffering at the hands of Earle Brown while recreating Samuel Melville's letter from the Attica Prison, set to music in Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together*. The postcard demonstrates not only the group's familiarity and even affection for Brown, but also their developing closeness to Mosko.

> It's six days now, and I can tell you truthfully few periods in my life have passed so slowly. I am in lousy physical and emotional health. There are mindless musical surprises ahead, but I feel secure and ready? As dancers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis, so I am dealing with Earle Brown. In the indifferent stupidity (See Earle, above), the incessant humidity, the experimental chemistry of quiche (see Astroturf quiche), the ravings of lost, hysterical choreographers, I can drink with clarity and meaning.[70]

When they returned to CalArts in the fall, Duke-Kirkpatrick, Kennedy, Rohrig, and Stone performed a concert in the CalArts Main Gallery of their favorite commissioned works from the American Dance Festival. These included Rodríguez's *Chronies* for bass clarinet and percussion, Shatin's *Sursum Corda* for solo cello, and Rubin's *Marguerite's Dance* for flute, cello and percussion. In the program, they called

[70] Unsigned Postcard to Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, July 4, 1981, Personal archive of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick.

themselves the “Survivors.” Parodying the unvarnished testimony of a true crime TV show, a program note explains: “On June 28, 1981, a group of CalArts musicians were flown to Durham, North Carolina. On July 24, 1981, four of them returned. This is their concert.”

1.1.4 Cafeteria meetings and becoming a unit

The American Dance Festival is remembered by the original EAR Unit members as one of several pivotal moments in the ensemble’s early development. Indeed, by the beginning of their second year, the cohort had several motivations for wanting to start their own independent group. For Steiger, however, the true turning point came when he was asked by the soprano Joan La Barbara to represent her at a mandatory meeting hosted by the California Arts Council for its touring grant recipients. The state agency, which was founded in 1976, allocates financial support to arts organizations across California. Steiger remembers finding the touring grant program, which matched funds for any presentations given within the state, as highly attractive and easily attainable by his peers.[71]

Steiger brought this idea to his classmate Jim Rohrig, and the two decided to gather their friends in the CalArts cafeteria to consult them about forming an ensemble of their own. Rohrig remembers wanting to base the group’s instrumentation off Arnold

[71] “So, I walk into this room with all these people who had received these grants, and I thought to myself, ‘Why not us?’ They’re giving all this money to all these people. We’re on the cutting edge of what’s going on right now. We can get one of these grants” (Steiger, 2020a).

Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912) for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, and piano (Rohrig, 2020a). To this configuration, they added an additional pianist to retain the core group needed to perform Steiger's *Quintessence*. Those present for the first round of talks were Duke-Kirkpatrick, Kennedy, McCandless, Mowrey, Rohrig, Steiger, Stone, and Suzuki. Percussionist Amy Knoles was not included in the first cafeteria meetings but was asked to join the ensemble at its inception. The meetings that ensued are now considered an essential part of EAR Unit lore and collectively form a decisive moment in their origins.

All were in unanimous agreement that they should create an ensemble devoted exclusively to contemporary music. However, choosing a name turned out to be a tedious process. Eventually, someone proposed calling themselves a "Unit" as a nod to the Repercussion Unit, a percussion ensemble originally led by John Bergamo and his students at CalArts.[72] This idea resonated strongly with those present, particularly what it implied about their identity as a group of unexpected friends. The idea of a "Unit" also carried aesthetic connotations based on the eclectic approach of the Repercussion Unit. Indeed, the percussion group's own influences were far-reaching, drawing from their combined background in world music traditions and playing with Frank Zappa.[73] The Repercussion Unit treated their work together as a non-hierarchical collaboration in which co-composed original musical pieces emerged through improvisation.[74] Bergamo explains that, like the "junkyard assortment" of instruments they played, their name drew

[72] The original lineup included Paul Anceau, Jimmy Hildebrandt, Gregg Johnson, Ed Mann, Stephen "Lucky" Mosko and Larry Stein. See Michael Williams, "PAS Hall of Fame: John Bergamo," *Percusssive Arts Society*.
[73] For more on the Repercussion's influences, see Scott Robinson, "John Bergamo: Percussion World View," *Percussive Notes* 39, no. 1 (2001), accessed August 2, 2022, http://www.nscottrobinson.com/bergamo.php.
[74] Antonio Gennaro, "The Artistry of John Bergamo," MFA thesis, (Mills College, 2019), p 57.

from the concept of combining an array of ingredients.[75] "Everything was being called a unit, like, "Let's have two units of this and, you know, a unit of this.' So, we became the Repercussion Unit."[76]

After deciding to call themselves a "Unit" after their peers in the Repercussion Unit, Steiger remembers suggesting adding 'California' to highlight their west coast roots. Finally, someone threw out the initials E.A.R., causing them to have to search for a meaning. Violinist Suzuki recommended they adopt "Electronic and Recent," which became their official title (Suzuki, 2022). The meaning of the acronym, however, was rarely shared publicly, and they quickly became tired of explaining its significance. By 1990, the EAR Unit had dropped the periods from publicity altogether.[77] Uncertainty by a few core members regarding precisely what the acronym meant, combined with explicit feelings of indifference, indicate that words were less important than what was generally evoked overall by the title, the California E.A.R. Unit. After firmly establishing their group name, the EAR Unit took a handful of publicity photos to use in programming applications, seen in Figure 1.3 and 1.4.

[75] Larry Harnisch, " One Man's Junk Is Another's Music: Repercussion Unit Trashes Tradition in Effort to Educate and Entertain," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1989.
[76] Omradiocom, "BergamoProject- The Reperucssion Unit – Tribute to John Bergamo," YouTube Video, accessed July 18, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JYaYI8TJkSE.
[77] Adding to their desire to drop the acronym, the ensemble later discovered when filing for non-profit status that the state of California had already registered an "E.A.R. Unit," the East Area Rapist Unit. This was a collection of state agencies tracking the infamous serial murderer Joseph James DeAngelo Jr. (Rohrig, 2020c).

Figure 1.3: The California E.A.R. Unit's first photoshoot (1981), outdoors (L-R): Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Rand Steiger, Dorothy Stone, Daniel Kennedy, Amy Knoles, Jim Rohrig, Jacqueline Suzuki, Gaylord Mowrey, Art Jarvinen. (Personal collection of Rand Steiger)

Figure 1.4: The California E.A.R. Unit's first photoshoot (1981), CalArts electronic music studio. Back (L-R): Gaylord Mowrey, Rand Steiger, Daniel Kennedy, Amy Knoles, Michael McCandless. Front (L-R): Jim Rohrig, Jacqueline Suzuki, Dorothy Stone, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

The concept of a "Unit" came to have profound meaning for the group over the course of their 30-year career, its connotation shifting variously with each of the EAR Unit's successive iterations. In the very beginning however, the title was more aspirational than descriptive. Mowrey claims that the ensemble grew into the role of a "Unit" as they became more skilled at playing together.

> The idea of a "Unit" was not really a philosophical thing for us, I don't think, until later, when we realized that we really worked as a unit. We knew how to play with each other. And having spent so much time doing that, there's this thing that happens with musicians, as often happens with actors and other temporal arts, where you learn to be somehow intuitive and tuned to the moment with your fellow performers. It's not just playing the notes on the page and doing things correctly in rehearsal. It's also responding to each other and listening to each other, feeling what the other person is doing. That only happens when you have the luxury of spending so much time being together and rehearsing. (Mowrey, 2022)

Their first official performance using the name, The California E.A.R. Unit, was in their next and final semester on February 4, 1982, on a concert in the Roy O. Disney Concert Hall at CalArts titled, "The Music of Robert Xavier Rodríguez and Friends." It included six works by Rodríguez in addition to the two works by Rubin and Shatin premiered at the American Dance Festival.[78] In the program, they describe themselves as "a newly formed ensemble of nine instrumentalists, dedicated to the performance of ensemble music for acoustic and electronic instruments." Their roster includes Stone (flute), Rohrig (clarinet), Suzuki (violin), Duke-Kirkpatrick (cello), McCandless (piano), Mowrey (piano), Kennedy (percussion), Knoles (percussion), and Steiger (percussion). They also announce two upcoming concerts, one at the Schoenberg Institute and another

[78] Rubin's bio in the concert's program notes exemplifies an irreverence shared by her peers at CalArts. "Anna Rubin was released from CalArts with an MFA in composition (Mosko (w) without tears; Powell will not comment)." The California E.A.R. Unit, Personal archive of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick.

on the Independent Composers Association (ICA) series.[79] The concert at CalArts was reviewed by Colin Gardner in the Los Angeles Times, who praises them for their "sensitive and committed performances."[80]

In the months following their debut at CalArts in Spring 1982, the EAR Unit produced a small season of concerts in the city of Los Angeles. They performed Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with soprano Judith Betina at CalArts and then again at the Schoenberg Institute at USC. Throughout April, they also performed some of their early standards, including Steiger's *Quintessence* and Bergamo's *Foreign Objects*, first on the ICA series in Santa Monica, and then on a program shared with UC San Diego faculty at the Sherwood Auditorium in the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art. They also gave two more performances of *Pierrot Lunaire* at CalArts and the College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita, this time with UC San Diego soprano faculty, Carol Plantamura. Mark Swed's review of the EAR Unit's ICA concert is favorable of the music and performances. Unlike Gardner, however, Swed clearly notes the significance of the EAR Unit's new presence in Los Angeles. He writes,

> A year ago at this time, Los Angeles had no permanent ensemble devoted to performing new music. Now, however, there are three. The Los Angeles Philharmonic has assembled one. Another, New Music Settings, is an independent group oriented toward theatrical presentations. And a third, the newly formed California E.A.R. Unit, made its bid for recognition Tuesday night in the second concert of the Independent Composers Association spring series at The House in Santa Monica.[81]

[79] The EAR Unit had several friends in the ICA, including its co-founders David Ocker and Anna Rubin. For more on the ICA, see Fzpomd, "The David Ocker Internet Interview: e-interview performed 1994 and 1995 via email and the FZ online newsgroup (alt.fan.frank-zappa)," accessed August 18, 2022, http://fzpomd.net/mitb/ocker.
[80] Colin Gardner, "E.A.R. Unit Plays Rodriguez Works," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1982.
[81] Mark Swed, "A Promising Beginning for the E.A.R. Unit," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, April 8, 1982.

1.1.5 The Holland Festival

After graduation, the EAR Unit musicians were poised to continue their work as an ensemble of young professionals in Los Angeles. Any reservations about staying together were dispelled after spending their second summer together touring Europe. [82] Their travel was made possible by a month-long residency with the CalArts Twentieth Century Players at the Holland Festival in 1982, co-sponsored that year by the Netherlands America Bicentennial Committee, the Eduard van Beinum Foundation, and CalArts.[83] The 1982 Holland Festival featured an individual series curated by the American pianist Yvar Mikhashoff, a new music specialist and professor at SUNY Buffalo.[84] Throughout nine concerts, the series titled, "Revolution & Revelation," explored the history of American art music over the course of the 20th century.[85] His program introduction articulates popular notions of the composer-genius that serve as the series' main framing device:

> We produced our first native genius barely a century ago — Charles Ives. … I note that America is fortunate to have had a remarkable dynasty of composers who have been articulate chronicler-journalists—Ives, Copland, Cage and Carter among them—men who have talked about the

[82] "We all went to Holland for the Holland Festival with the Twentieth Century Players and played 25 times, like five concerts in five different cities or something like that. It was insane. And then we went, 'Hold it! We should stay together, right?'" (Knoles, 2020)
[83] The Holland Festival began in 1947 as a post-war initiative to reinvigorate the national climate through the arts. Although the festival continues to feature an array of visual and performing arts, it has gained a reputation for its avant-garde music and opera. See Holland Festival, "Our History," accessed August 25, 2023, Hollandfestival.nl/en/history.
[84] Holland Festival, "Revolution & Revelation," Program booklet to the 1982 Holland Festival, CalArts Library, Concert Programs (1973-2005), California Institute for the Arts Institute Archives, Unprocessed Collection.
[85] Mikhashoff's curation appears to be based on his own personal interests rather than actual anthropological perspectives of American music.

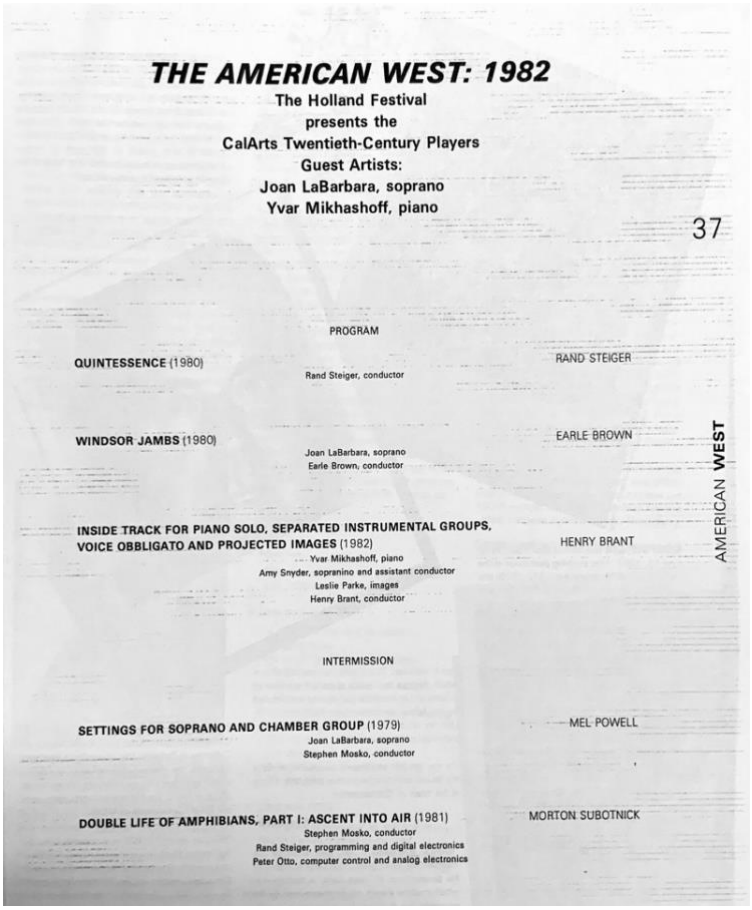
> ways of hearing not only their own music but the music and sound around them.[86]

This rhetoric, coupled with the programs themselves, positioned CalArts composition faculty and its students as the vanguard of west coast contemporary music, framing the institution on a global scale both physically and temporally. The Holland Festival's "American" programming thus provides additional counterpoint to the globalist attitudes promoted throughout the decade by Los Angeles city elites and contemporary music programmers alike.[87]

The Twentieth Century Players were invited to perform three separate programs, spanning contemporary music from 1920 to 1982. In the program titled, "The American Inventors," Shulman and Mosko led the ensemble in performing Milton Babbitt's Composition for 12 Instruments (1948), Aaron Copland's Sextet (1937), Lukas Foss's Oboe Concerto (1947/1948), and Lou Harrison's Suite for violin, piano and small orchestra (1951). CalArts graduates Stuart Horn (oboe), Mary Terranova (violin), and Gaylord Mowrey (piano) performed the concerto solos. Mowrey also performed the solo part to Cage's Concerto for prepared piano. For this performance of Cage's Concerto, the Holland Festival sent Mowrey three wooden plastic bridges, built by both Cage and his father, to be used as harmonic stops against the piano strings. The Holland Festival also forwarded him a personal letter from Cage with instructions on how to apply them (Mowrey, 2022). The concert ended with Henry Brant's *Antiphony I* (1953), conducted by the composer.

[86] Yvar Mikhashoff, "Introduction to Revolution and Revelation," Program booklet to the 1982 Holland Festival. California Institute of the Arts Library, School of Music Concert Program (1973-2005), unprocessed collection.
[87] See Introduction.

CalArts contemporary music was prominently featured on the final program of the series, "The American West: 1982," (see figure 1.5) which included Earle Brown's *Windsor Jambs* (1980), Mel Powell's *Settings* (1979), Subtonick's *Ascent into Air* (1982), and Steiger's *Quintessence* (1981). Brown, Powell, and Steiger all conducted their own works. Although Brant was only recently a California resident, the program also included the world premiere of his *Inside Track* (1982), a raucous spatialized piano concerto, written for and performed by Mikhashoff and Soprano Joan La Barbara. [88]



THE AMERICAN WEST: 1982

The Holland Festival
presents the
CalArts Twentieth-Century Players
Guest Artists:
Joan LaBarbara, soprano
Yvar Mikhashoff, piano

37

PROGRAM

QUINTESSENCE (1980) — RAND STEIGER
Rand Steiger, conductor

WINDSOR JAMBS (1980) — EARLE BROWN
Joan LaBarbara, soprano
Earle Brown, conductor

INSIDE TRACK FOR PIANO SOLO, SEPARATED INSTRUMENTAL GROUPS, VOICE OBBLIGATO AND PROJECTED IMAGES (1982) — HENRY BRANT
Yvar Mikhashoff, piano
Amy Snyder, sopranino and assistant conductor
Leslie Parke, images
Henry Brant, conductor

AMERICAN WEST

INTERMISSION

SETTINGS FOR SOPRANO AND CHAMBER GROUP (1979) — MEL POWELL
Joan LaBarbara, soprano
Stephen Mosko, conductor

DOUBLE LIFE OF AMPHIBIANS, PART I: ASCENT INTO AIR (1981) — MORTON SUBOTNICK
Stephen Mosko, conductor
Rand Steiger, programming and digital electronics
Peter Otto, computer control and analog electronics

Figure 1.5: Program from the Holland Festival (1982). (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

[88] See Henry Brant, "Biography," accessed August 25, 2023, Henrybrant.com/biography.

During their residency at the Holland Festival, the CalArts students lived for more than a month at the Queekhoven estate in Breukelen, Netherlands, which was then home to the Eduard van Beinum Foundation. During their down time at the festival, the EAR Unit booked performances throughout Amsterdam, Utrecht, and the Hague. The highlight of their tour was performing at the American Center in Paris in the original building on the Boulevard Raspail. Their program consisted mostly of music from CalArts, including Bergamo's *Foreign Objects* (1975), Powell's *Immobile* (1967), Steiger's *Quintessence* (1981), and Subotnick's *Axolotl* for solo cello and live electronics (1981).[89]

The Holland Festival also occasioned a few other trips around Europe by EAR Unit members. Steiger and Duke-Kirkpatrick took an excursion to visit the composer Giacinto Scelsi at his townhouse in Rome, Italy. This encounter was made possible by way of another introduction to the composer Elliott Carter, who was visiting the Holland Festival as a guest, and provided them with Scelsi's home phone number (Steiger, 2020f). Scelsi fed the two dinner and gave them a tour of his famous rooftop workspace. At the close of the festival, Duke-Kirkpatrick, Knoles, Stone, and their friend Terri Otto crossed Germany by train, busking in the streets to pay for housing. They concluded their trip through Sweden, ending in Bergen, Norway (Knoles, 2020; Otto, T., 2020).

Upon returning from Europe that summer, the EAR Unit finalized its first official roster. Percussionist Daniel Kennedy left the group and moved to San Francisco to study Tabla at the Ali Akbar College. Michael McCandless, also an original member, exited the

[89] Duke-Kirkpatrick workshopped the piece with Subotnick as he composed it for cellist Joel Krosnick. "He needed a guinea pig to try out stuff because everything was at the end of the fingerboard, with all these trills and things. … It turned out to be one of the neatest things. That's probably what got me into new music. He wanted to make it just perfect for Joel. It turned out so exquisite. Some of the most beautiful stuff he ever wrote. It was like right up there with 'Silver Apples of the Moon' except he had a person in it" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022).

group and moved to Buffalo, NY to study piano with Mikhashoff.[90] Replacing McCandless, Gaylord Mowrey brought in Lorna Eder as a second pianist. Violinist Jacqueline Suzuki also left the group to pursue an orchestral career and was replaced by her colleague Robin Lorentz. Meanwhile, Amy Knoles was offered a position to study percussion in the Netherlands. However, she decided stay in Los Angeles to accept freelance work with the LA Philharmonic's New Music Group, which at the time relied on local performers with contemporary music experience (Knoles, 2020; Ray, 2020). Finally, the percussionist-composer Art Jarvinen formally joined the group in Fall 1983, although he had collaborated with the EAR Unit members as graduate students. According to Steiger, Jarvinen held contradictory feelings about being a member of the EAR Unit and often wished to be perceived as an outsider within the group. Steiger claims that Jarvinen would sarcastically describe himself as a "non-founding member" of the EAR Unit in his bio, an anecdote that aligns with other characterizations of Jarvinen (Steiger, 2020b).

Thus, the ensemble's first official roster consisted of: Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick (cello), Lorna Eder (piano), Art Jarvinen (percussion, composer) Amy Knoles (percussion), Robin Lorentz (violin), Gaylord Mowrey (piano), Jim Rohrig (clarinet), Rand Steiger (percussion, conductor), and Dorothy Stone (flute).

[90] McCandless would later perform a handful of times with the ensemble, including at the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival and during the EAR Unit's 1986 residency at SUNY Buffalo.

1.2 Post-graduation work at CalArts

The EAR Unit faced little competition when they moved to Los Angeles in 1982. Nonetheless, they worked hard to shape their career as a professional ensemble and gladly accepted performance opportunities in a broad range of contexts. A few times a year, they put on concerts at the Morgan-Wixson Theatre, a community venue in Santa Monica. In addition to short residencies at local state schools, they also performed as guests on the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento (1985), the New Music America Festival (1985) in Los Angeles, and the first Silicon Valley Festival of Electronic Arts (1986) at San Jose State. In these early years, they contrasted their more high-profile work with engagements at less conventional venues around town, such as the Security Pacific National Bank in downtown, the Santa Monica Place shopping mall, the Griffith Park Carousel, and the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro.[91]

During this busy time, the EAR Unit maintained a professional relationship to CalArts, which continued to offer the group exciting performance opportunities. This affiliation lasted from their graduation in 1982 up until they received their own concert series at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1987, discussed in Chapter 2. The ensemble's post-graduation work retained many of the essential ingredients from their formative student years. They continued to learn music under the tutelage of Stephen "Lucky" Mosko for the yearly Contemporary Music Festivals, making new connections with the visiting composers each spring. As an ensemble and as individuals, they also occasionally performed alongside students in the Twentieth Century Players and on

[91] Duke-Kirpatrick, Personal archive.

composer seminars. Importantly, CalArts agreed to be the EAR Unit's fiscal agent on grant applications. This meant that much of the financial support the EAR Unit received to fund their activities, mostly from the National Endowment for the Arts, was overseen by CalArts, and in some cases, provided through in-kind production support and equipment loans (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020). Their positive rapport with the institution enabled the EAR Unit to retain proximity to its resources, such as equipment and performance spaces, as well as their artistic mentors like Mosko and Subotnick who remained significant influences, even as they aspired to become an independent group in Los Angeles and abroad.

Their first professional engagement at CalArts was a joint concert with the Twentieth Century Players in Fall 1982. The EAR Unit premiered Brant's *Revenge Before Breakfast* (1982), which the composer wrote as a gift for the EAR Unit after meeting them at the Holland Festival the previous summer. Both ensembles joined forces in Rzewski's *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1960) and for the premiere of Steiger's *In Nested Symmetry* (1982), a triple concerto for three ensembles, computer and conductor. Steiger also led the EAR Unit in their first performance of Donald Martino's *Notturno* (1973), a compact but virtuosic three-movement work for flute, clarinet, violin, cello, piano and percussion. *Notturno*, which won the 1974 Pulitzer Prize in Music, was not only personally suited for the ensemble's instrumentation and technical abilities, but satisfied Duke-Kirkpatrick, Steiger and Stone's enthusiasm for dodecaphonic music. Even Jarvinen, who's aesthetic preoccupations were somewhat removed Martino's music,

worked tirelessly on the part and would later describe performing it in Buffalo as one of the most memorable experiences with the EAR Unit.[92]

A handful of EAR Unit members explored other musical interests on solo recitals given throughout the year. Cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick, for example, gave a concert with then piano faculty Leonid Hambro, performing works by J.S. Bach and L.V. Beethoven. One of several recitals given by flutist Stone included a set of Yugoslavian folk songs, followed by works by Bach, Boulez and Brian Ferneyhough. Meanwhile, Steiger's self-titled post-graduation percussion recital in December 1982 was disapprovingly dubbed "Rand Steiger's Party at Cal-Arts" by John Henken in the Los Angeles Times.[93] The concert notably featured works written by Steiger's friends in the EAR Unit, such as Duke-Kirkpatrick's *The Swan of Tijuana* for the CalArts Chamber Orchestra and Steiger as cello soloist. Stone composed *Lamb Chops* for Steiger, which involved having him throw potatoes onto timpani while flash pots exploded on the stage (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022; Steiger, 2022a).

As part of their ongoing relationship to CalArts, the EAR Unit remained a fixture at the school's Contemporary Music Festivals, which continued to grow in scale each year. The festival in 1983, for example, was the first to introduce performances in downtown Los Angeles, opening with concerts at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion by the CalArts faculty string quartet and the LA Philharmonic conducted by the Polish composer, Witold Lutosławski. For their part, the EAR Unit performed a concert of new

[92] "I don't know if I'd say it was the 'coolest,' but one of the most memorable performing experiences was when the E.A.R. Unit played at SUNY Buffalo. We played a mother-fucker of a hard piece called *Notturno*, by Donald Martino. Hard core 12 tone stuff, and I had a huge setup, every lick was hard to play, and I had about fifty mallets and sticks and was changing them almost every phrase. Most players split up the part between two percussionists, but I did it myself, as written." Art Jarvinen, "Interview by John Trubee," accessed August 20, 2022, https://www.united-mutations.com/j/art_jarvinen.htm.
[93] John Henken, "Rand Steiger's Party at Cal-Arts," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1982.

works by emerging composers attending the festival's composition seminars. One of the main festival events was a concert Steve Reich's music featuring the EAR Unit alongside students in the Twentieth Century Players, playing his *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973) and *Octet* (1979). The concert concluded with the first performance of the chamber version of *Tehellim* (1981).

Figure 1.6: Promotional poster for the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival (March 3-6, 1983). Bottom text reads, "Featuring CalArts Twentieth Century Players, California E.A.R. Unit, Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Sequoia String Quartet." (CalArts Poster Archive, posters.calarts.edu)

The Greek composer Iannis Xenakis was also in residence at the 1983 CalArts Festival. Duke-Kirkpatrick was asked to perform his cello solo, *Kottos* (1977), and string trio, *Ikhoor* (1978). For the trio, she was joined by the violist Marlow Fisher, a close friend at CalArts, and the violinist János Négyesy who taught at UC San Diego. Knowing

Xenakis for his impenetrably difficult music, Duke-Kirkpatrick remembers being frightened to play for the composer as well as burdened by the difficult Reich pieces. Unlike most other occasions, the cellist had limited time with the composer who arrived only a few days before the performance. In coachings, Xenakis insisted that she go to the absolute limit and beyond to meet the technical demands of the pieces.

> He wanted you to go to the absolute limit. That was more important than every single detail. I remember once I did burst into tears because there's a part that was like a fugue and each voice is on a different string, and they're like, a couple feet apart. At some point, he says, "I can't hear the third voice." It was this whole idea of this absolute investment in it, even to the point where you bled or broke a string. It was the attitude more than anything. The worst thing you could possible do is 'nice it out.' It would be better to go completely to the metal, as much noise as you could make, as ponticello as you can make it, as scary as you can make. And better you should miss some stuff but *invest* in the superhuman attitude. That's what I learned from him. (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022)

Despite feeling overwhelmed, the cellist felt supported by Négyesy when working with Xenakis. "János in a funny way kind of protected us. … He was so much older and knew Xenakis. We were just punks, and he was on faculty at UCSD."

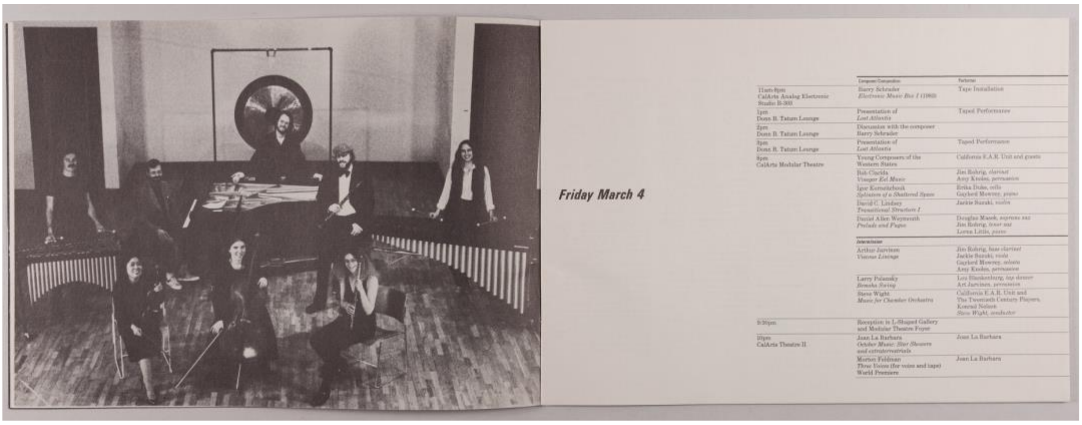


Figure 1.7: The California E.A.R. Unit, featured in the CalArts 1983 Contemporary Music Festival booklet. Back row (L-R): Art Jarvinen, Gaylord Mowrey, Rand Steiger, Jim Rohrig, Amy Knoles. Front row (L-R): Jacqueline Suzuki, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Stone. (California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives. Unprocessed Collection. School of Music. Contemporary Music Festivals 1979-1987)

1.2.1 The Olympic Arts Festival

> The American music festival is a practically unique institution. I have often felt that its major drawing-power is not music *per se*, but a combination of music and summer and all this implies.[94]

The CalArts Festivals were not alone in promoting contemporary music in Los Angeles. Indeed, festivals of new music appear to have reached a fever pitch in the 1980s, with two or even three major contemporary music festivals sometimes occurring in the city within a single year. Such events were predated by Franz Waxman's Los Angeles International Music Festivals (1947-1966), which boasted premieres by Dmitri Shostakovich, Arnold Schoenberg, and Igor Stravinsky.[95] Whereas Waxman's Festivals focused primarily on orchestral music performed by the city's elite classical ensembles, the festivals of the 1980s were unique in highlighting the emerging academic landscape for composition and a curriculum of contemporary music performance. The CalArts Festivals in which the EAR Unit participated were the first to rely on an expanding network of young new music performers in Los Angeles. Meanwhile, similar events became just as popular in other parts of the country. New Music America (1980-1990), for one, was a large-scale festival for experimental music held in a different North American city each year.[96]

Perhaps one of the largest of these affairs was the Olympic Arts Festival of 1984, the prelude to the Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games.[97] Over the course of six weeks

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[94] Franz Waxman, "Afterthoughts on Music Festivals," *Music Journal* 17, no. 6 (1959): 32.
[95] See Dorothy Crawford, "European Composers in the 'Picture Business,'" in *A Windfall of Musicians: Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 172-174.
[96] Michael Galbreth, "New Music America: an introduction," September 1, 2018, accessed August 28, 2023, https://www.michaelgalbreth.com/new-music-america.
[97] The first Olympic Arts Festival was held in Melbourne, Australia for the 1956 summer games, and was adapted from the pre-existing model of an Olympic Arts Competitions.

in June and August, presenters across the city hosted visual and performing artists from Los Angeles and around the world. CalArts President, Robert Fiztpatrick, served as the Artistic Director for the entire 1984 Olympic Arts Festival.[98] The Olympic Arts Contemporary Music Festival, co-produced by CalArts and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association, appointed Frans van Rossum as Festival Director and Stephen Mosko to be its Musical Director.[99] In total, the Olympic Arts Festival featured more than 400 performances by 61 local and international acts. Its 47 co-producers included major cultural institutions, radio stations, and a few smaller organizations. Other music programs included a chamber music festival, a jazz music festival, a separate jazz marathon, and standalone performances by the Royal Opera of Covent Garden, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and other local organizations.[100]

The existence of the Olympic Arts Contemporary Music Festival did not prevent CalArts from producing its own yearly festival only a few months prior. Honorary guests at the 1984 CalArts Festival in March included Henry Brant, Heinz Holliger, Terry Riley, Dane Rudhyar, Frederic Rzewski, R. Murray Schafer, Dieter Schnebel, and Karlheinz Stockhausen.[101] None of these composers were present for the Olympic Arts events and came to Southern California exclusively to attend the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival.

[98] For more on the development of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, see Robert Fitzpatrick, "The Making of the Festival," in *Olympic Arts Festival* souvenir booklet (Japan: Sequoia Communications, 1984), 14-19.
[99] The Olympic Arts Festival, Program Booklet for the Contemporary Music Festival, June 1 – August 12, 1984, Personal archive of Erika-Duke-Kirkpatrick.
[100] The Olympic Arts Festival, Program Booklet.
[101] See Burt Goldstein, "1984 Contemporary Music Festival at CIA," *Perpsectives of New Music* 22, No. ½, 1984, 471-477.

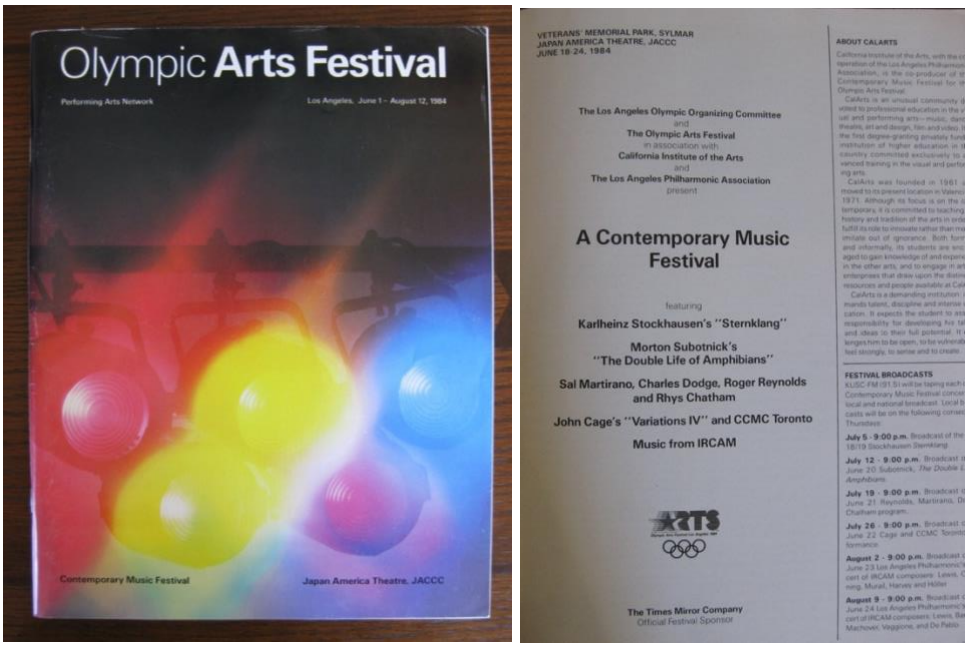

Figure 1.8: The Olympic Arts Festival, Contemporary Music Festival program booklet, June 1-August 12, 1984. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

Unlike other contemporary music festivals however, Olympic Arts provided additional framework for contextualizing new music in Southern California. Like strategies used to affirm the legacy of the Olympic Games, the arts festival broadcasted Los Angeles's artistic prestige by promoting an image of the city as a wealthy, cosmopolitan capital.[102] The scope of the 1984 arts festivals was indeed unprecedented in Olympics history and aligned with a major pivot by the IOC towards corporate sponsorship and privatization of its seasonal Olympic events.[103] The festival's official sponsor was Times Mirror, a media conglomerate and parent company of the Los

[102] Rick Gruneau and Robert Neubauer make this point precisely, arguing that the reliance on corporate sponsorship both literally and symbolically legitimized US economic policy of individualism in an increasingly globalized marketplace. Rick Gruneau and Robert Neubauer, "A Gold Medal for the Market: The 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, the Reagan Era, and the Politics of Neoliberalism," in *The Palgrave handbook of Olympic studies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 134-162.
[103] See, for example Matthew Llewellyn, John Gleaves and Wayne Wilson, "The Historical Legacy of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games," in *The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games: Assessing the 30-year legacy*, edited by Matthew Llewellyn, John Gleaves and Wayne Wilson (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1-8.

Angeles Times. Its President, Franklin Murphy, describes Los Angeles in promotional material as "the quintessential 20th century city," coming of age in the last quarter century through the "cultural explosion" of institutions like the Music Center and LACMA.[104] By featuring these organizations as co-producers, Fitzpatrick's plan replicated that of the Olympic Games, which utilized existing sports facilities to great economic effect.[105] In turn, contemporary music in Los Angeles as a genre served as one of the many such stages on which the city's musical riches were put on display. Narratives of Los Angeles's culture ascendancy at this time were echoed in the promotion of its contemporary music festival and repeated often by leading institutional proponents.[106]

The EAR Unit's extensive participation in the Olympic Arts Festival was an opportunity afforded by the group's ongoing affiliation to CalArts. The ensemble performed a major role in the US premiere of Stockhausen's *Sternklang ("Park Music for Five Groups")* (1971) produced over two evenings at Veterans Memorial Park in Sylmar, and the world premiere of Subotnick's concert-length drama, *The Double Life of Amphibians* (1984) for chamber ensemble and ghost box electronics at the Aratani Japan America Theater. Several members of the EAR Unit also performed alongside CalArts students in a concert of world premieres by Roger Reynolds, Sal Martirano, Charles

[104] The Olympic Arts Festival, Program Booklet for the Contemporary Music Festival, June 1 – August 12, 1984, Personal archive of Erika-Duke-Kirkpatrick; This image of Los Angeles was later articulated in *L.A. 2000: A City for the Future* (1988), a citizen committee report and infrastructural plan that cites the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival as a testament to the city's "cultural blooming" and its national and international prominence just over the horizon.

[105] Fitzpatrick summarizes this strategy accordingly: "Here, again, there is a significant parallel with the organization of the 1984 Games. The decision was made to draw on what Los Angeles had to offer, rather than to bemoan what the city lacked. The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee thus reached out to the city's vigorous arts community to enlist the support of its museums and galleries, its theatres and dance companies, its cultural and community centers. These organizations soon became co-producers of the Festival and have been instrumental in its planning and implementation." Robert Fitzpatrick, "The Making of the Festival," in *Olympic Arts Festival* souvenir booklet (Japan: Sequoia Communications, 1984), 15-16.

[106] See "Histories of Contemporary Music in Los Angeles," in Introduction.

Dodge and Rhys Chatham. In the fourth event, Gaylord Mowrey and Lorna Eder performed as piano soloists in Cage's *Variations IV*, in a concert organized by the Toronto-based free improvisation group, CCMC. The contemporary music series concluded with a concert by the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, performing new works by resident composers at IRCAM.[107]

Themes of Los Angeles as gateway to a global frontier permeated the 1984 arts celebration down to the level of its contemporary music series. Stockhausen's *Sternklang* ("Star Sounds"), the festival's opening event, delivers sonic messages written in the cosmos by using the constellations of the night sky as a score to be read. The performance took place over two consecutive evenings in Veterans' Memorial Park in Sylmar, in the northernmost region of the city, bordering the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. In the piece, torch-bearing "sound runners" deliver musical models, each constructed after a different star-system, to five groups of four musicians separated as far apart as possible. The spatially arranged ensembles surrounding the meandering audience sing or play a single chord, each based on a set of harmonic overtones, and all related by a common frequency of 330 Hz. One centrally positioned percussionist is also required to synchronize the timing of each of the groups. Art Jarvinen performed this part, while Stone and McCandless played synthesizers in the main groups.

Staging Stockhausen's cosmic relay required the mobilization of vast technical and creative resources. For example, CalArts contracted Robert Moog to personally provide all the core equipment used in on site, including 20 module synthesizers and

[107] The Olympic Arts Festival, Program Booklet for the Contemporary Music Festival, June 1 – August 12, 1984, Personal archive of Erika-Duke-Kirkpatrick.

other hardware.[108] The bass guitarist Jack Vees remembers using Moog's custom-built wah-pedals for the performance, which had new technology for adjusting steep frequency response curves. He describes the effect as "almost like being a Tuvan throat singer with your instrument" (Vees, 2021a). The project's Sound Designer, Peter Otto, recalls that the festival even paid for a helicopter flyover to determine mic placement for the live radiobroadcast on KUSC (Otto, P., 2020b). According to Otto, a local boy scout troop provided volunteer security for the precious equipment that remained installed in the park for several days (Otto, P., 2020a).

Meanwhile, Mosko busied himself with the interpretation of the work. From an onsite rehearsal broadcasted live on KUSC on June 19, 1984, Mosko claims that the groups had been meeting individually for months, rehearsing five to six days a week, for three to four hours at a time, on top of 12 additional meetings with the complete ensemble.[109] To accomplish this, he describes a choreographed sequence of rehearsals in which he taught a single group, comprised of members from each cluster, who in turn instructed their respective colleagues. Even Mosko's own learning process, in advance of working with the musicians, was exhaustive. He explains,

> One thing that I've learned about Stockhausen is that in a piece like this, you have to know all the rules before you can understand any of them. And I guess it was about four weeks of just reading it almost daily, and almost memorizing all the things going on in the piece so I could arrive at a scheme of teaching everyone how to think about the piece. Then, what I did was, I took one person from each group and made a model group, and we performed the piece together in rehearsals and arrived at all the questions we had. And I'd go home and think about the questions and arrive at a solution. And then each of those people went out and taught

[108] Stephen Mosko, Interview by Peter Rutenberg, Los Angeles, June 19, 1984, Originally published by KUSC, Yale Oral History of American Music: Major Figures in American Music: 359-n.
[109] Mosko, Interview by Peter Rutenberg, 1984.

> their own group. But in most of the piece, the more you do it, the more it answers its questions.[110]

According to EAR Unit members, excerpts such as this are representative of the way Mosko tended to speak. The interview further aligns with descriptions of Mosko's pedagogy, which relied on the musicians developing their own comprehensive understanding of the music and dedicated significant time and energy to rehearsals. In the interview, Mosko explains at length the many ways in which *Sternklang* can be viewed as a sacred work. Halfway through, all the players recite a prayer in unison.

> It's a prayer about God being the wholeness, and the galaxies being his arms and legs, and the people and the universe being his molecules. The feeling of the piece is really a kind of connection with a very kind of universal metaphysics. And I don't think you can hear the piece in any other way as you begin to realize the power of the harmonies and the way he set up the whole piece. … The piece is dedicated to the day that aliens arrive from outer space. It says so in the score. That's the sacred quality of the piece. The cosmic notion that there's a whole universe that's somehow connected. The piece is kind of, let's say, a prelude to the arrival of people from out space.[111]

The rest of the ensemble performed as the EAR Unit in the world premiere of Subotnick's *The Double Life of Amphibians*, a stage tone poem directed by Lee Breuer. The work is scored for 11 instruments, electronics, soprano, and two male voices. EAR Unit members Rohrig, Duke, Eder, Mowrey, Knoles, and Steiger were joined by Terri Otto (clarinet), James Conner (trombone), Daniel Flagg (trombone), and Ruth Dreier (cello). Each instrument sits directly across the stage from its family partner, while the computer functions as a double to the whole ensemble. Live electronic synthesis was produced by three Buchla 400 digital synthesizers and additional modifications were

[110] Mosko, Interview by Peter Rutenberg, 1984.
[111] Mosko, Interview by Peter Rutenberg, 1984.

made using the composer's "ghost box" electronics, a small unit that silently controls dynamic, frequency and spatial modulations.[112]

The Double Life of Amphibians dramatically represents both the amphibian metamorphosis from water to land, as well as the human transmutation from "beast-spirit" to "angel-spirit." The staged drama begins with *Axolotl,* a solo for cello and ghost electronics performed by Duke-Kirkpatrick, depicting the Mexican salamander. Part I "Amphibians" concludes with *Ascent Into Air* for ensemble and electronics, which describes the progression into the new world above water. In Part II "Beasts," the instrumentalists become the primordial backdrop for the human metamorphosis from beast to angel. The Beast Man, performed by Marvin Hayes, believes that if he were to die in his sleep, he would become trapped in an unending dream. He envisions a beautiful woman, the Beast Woman, who falls in love with him. In the final aria, "The Last Dream of the Beast," the Beast Man is sung to sleep by the Beast Woman, performed by Joan La Barbara, in a lullaby meant to represent his infinite dream. Part III: "Angels" depicts the final transformation of the Beast figures into heavenly spirits.

Mosko again conducted the ensemble for *The Double Life of Amphibians*. Like the *Sternklang* musicians, the EAR Unit was expected to devote significant time and energy into the performance. Duke-Kirkpatrick recalls,

> We spent weeks and weeks in the Modular Theater because Mort had that kind of pull. He could just use it every night, working on the very prehistoric electronics of the PCs and those Buchlas. Every so often, one of them would actually catch on fire and smoke. He would yell at Rand, and yell at Peter. And then he would call Don, and Don would have to fly down to fix it. It was hilarious. (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022)

[112] Morton Subotnick, Program note to The Double Life of Amphibians, The Olympic Arts Festival, Program Booklet for the Contemporary Music Festival, June 1 – August 12, 1984, Personal archive of Erika-Duke-Kirkpatrick.

1.2.2 More Los Angeles contemporary music festivals

The Olympic Arts Festival seemed to have established a competitive atmosphere for the new music festivals that followed. In this context, the California E.A.R. Unit was once again highlighted as one of city's leading performing groups, on par with Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group, representing an expanding organizational network for new music.[113] For example, the 1985 New Music America festival, hosted that year in Los Angeles, featured the largest budget ever in the touring event's history. The EAR Unit was included on the subseries curated by the Monday Evening Concerts, which paired them with a concert by the Repercussion Unit, and the world premiere of Feldman's Piano and String Quartet by Aki Takahashi and the Kronos Quartet. Also part of New Music America 1985, the EAR Unit performed again at the Japan America Aratani Theatre in Subotnick's *The Key to Songs* (1985) for chamber orchestra and electronics.

In the summer of 1986, the EAR Unit made the first of three appearances at the Ojai Music Festival, directed that year by Kent Nagano and Stephen "Lucky" Mosko.[114] They were, again, highlighted as one of the festival's main events, alongside the Kronos Quartet, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and piano soloist, Ursula Oppens. A caption in the promotional poster reads,

> Thrill to more scintillating new sounds as music director Kent Nagano introduces the E.A.R. Unit, an explosive, internationally praised ensemble dedicated to the creation, performance and promotion of today's music.

[113] See "Histories of Contemporary Music in Los Angeles," in Introduction.
[114] Nagano conducted the EAR Unit in a concert featuring Boulez's *Explosante/Fixe* with Stone as flute soloist.

> "They play new music with the same dedication, zest and polish as the Juilliard Quartet plays Beethoven," says the *Los Angeles Times*.[115]

In 1987 alone, Los Angeles was the site of three major festivals that prominently featured contemporary music: New Music Los Angeles (March 1-15), the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival (March 5-8), and the Los Angeles Festival (September 3-27). New Music LA was the unofficial sequel to New Music America 1985, a spinoff of the nomadic series, and was coordinated by the musicologist and arts administrator Ara Guzelimian, who affectionally called it the "son of New Music America."[116] With a total of 22 co-producers, New Music LA featured one of the largest varieties yet of local new music organizations. In addition to the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Monday Evening Concerts, it included the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, the Independent Composers Association, the Pacific Composers Chamber Orchestra, ensembles from UCLA, and the USC Contemporary Music Ensemble. The yearly CalArts Festival was folded into New Music LA, functioning as literal a "festival within a festival."[117] Both John Cage and Pierre Boulez made appearances in New Music LA and the CalArts Festivals.

Six months later, Fitzpatrick directed the Los Angeles Festival, the first of several replications of the Olympic Arts Festival from 1984.[118] The contemporary music portion of the LA Festival contained a week-long celebration of John Cage's music in celebration of the composer's 75th birthday. The EAR Unit performed yet another staged Subotnick

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[115] Ojai Festival, promotional pamphlet, May 1986.
[116] See Daniel Cariaga, "'New Music' Events Set," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1987.
[117] Cariaga, "'New Music' Events Set," 1987.
[118] For more on the Los Angeles Festivals (1987-1990), see Peggy Phelan, "Here and There: The 1990 LA Festival," *TDR* 35, No. 3, 118-127. Mike Davis also discusses the LA Festivals in *City of Quartz* (New York: Verso, 2006): 80-82.

work, *Hungers* (1985), at the Aratani Japan America Theatre. Like Olympic Arts, the LA Festival couched its contemporary music series within a broad range of arts events that included over 350 performers from 11 countries.[119]

Among all these events, by far the most memorable for the EAR Unit was their performance of Cage's *Theater Piece* (1960) at the finale of the 1987 CalArts Contemporary Music Festival. *Theater Piece* is one of the composer's first works to use time brackets to structure indeterminate actions. As per the composer's instructions, the musicians did not coordinate their selected activities prior to the performance. The EAR Unit musicians recall willingly accepting the opportunity to take many risks with their choices. Wearing only lingerie and an apron, Knoles vacuumed a podium and intermittently slapped a bust of Beethoven's head. Duke-Kirkptraick played a Bach cello suite using various vegetables as bows, and then mixed them up in a blender. Meanwhile, one of the actions chosen by pianist Lorna Eder was to bind things with rope. She pulled Mowrey from the audience and used him as a prop by tying him to a chair. She explains that this decision was made spontaneously.

> It just kind of happened with Gaylord and me. I had been tying up the piano, and he was the most available and handy at the time to also tie up. I sat on the end of the stage, lit matches, and blew them out. I think I may have been trying to get Gaylord to blow them out as well. ... I was dressed in gym clothes and doing exercises around the piano, that I do remember. I'm quite sure it was against fire regulations to be lighting matches in the theatre. (Eder, 2022)

[119] The Los Angeles Festival 1987, Program Booklet, September 3 – 27, 1987, Personal archive of Erika-Duke-Kirkpatrick; see also Charles Champlin, "L.A. Festival Raises Its Curtain Tonight," *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 1987.

At the end of the performance, Cage went onstage to thank each performer individually. Knoles watched as Cage then slowly untied Mowrey, who whispered into the composer's ear, "That's not the first time you've freed me, John" (Knoles, 2015; Mowrey, 2022).

Figure 1.9: Photo taken at the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival (ca. 1987?) Back: Dorothy Stone; Middle (L-R): Robin Lorentz, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick; Front (L-R): Morton Feldman, John Cage, Gaylord Mowrey, Amy Knoles, Art Jarvinen, Rand Steiger. Rand Steiger. (Personal collection of Rand Steiger)

To conclude a dizzying year of new music events, the Los Angeles Philharmonic debuted their Green Umbrella series on November 9, 1987. The concert, which took place at the Aratani Japan America Theatre, offered the world premiere of Rand Steiger's Double Concerto for Alan Feinberg (piano) and Daniel Druckman (percussion). For this work, the Los Angeles Philharmonic was augmented with players from the CalArts New

Twentieth Century Players, formerly the Twentieth Century Players, and the EAR Unit.[120]

1.2.3 Leaving CalArts

As discussed throughout this chapter, CalArts consistently provided exciting performance opportunities for the EAR Unit, both during and after their graduate studies. By 1987 however, the ensemble felt that it was time to move on. For one, their informal relationship to CalArts did not afford them the flexibility to self-produce original projects in the context of their own creative concert programming. Instead, the EAR Unit was beholden to the curation of both the various festival organizers and the directors of the Twentieth Century Players. Even the school's ability to mediate introductions to prominent composers became less impactful as the EAR Unit developed increasingly familiar relationships with the festival's regular attendees. As they outgrew their identity as students and earned recognition as a top-tier professional ensemble, the EAR unit began to use their influence to commission new works and collaborations with composers like Andriessen, Brown, Cage, Riley, and Rzewski.[121] Knoles further remarks that their reliance on the school's equipment and rehearsal spaces became a source of conflict with some of the other CalArts faculty (Knoles, 2022). Throughout their post-graduation

[120] See John Henken, "Green Umbrella Series Opens with Rand Steiger Concerto," *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 1987.
[121] See Chapters 2 and 3.

years, the EAR Unit thus had ample reason to look for new ways to support their work, despite continuing to receive institutional support from CalArts.

In November 1987, the EAR Unit began an ensemble residency at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, allowing them to end their work at CalArts. The terms of the residency consisted of four standalone concerts a year in the Bing Theater, often including one concert on the historic Monday Evening Concerts series. As the ensemble had not yet filed for non-profit status, the museum would temporarily serve as their new fiscal agent. Unlike CalArts however, LACMA did not impose programing requirements or curational guidance. Indeed, the museum's director, Dorrance Stalvey, was notably hands-off in his direction and gave the EAR Unit complete license to program their own concerts. Regular performances at the museum and work outside of the state outweighed reasons to continue to be active at CalArts. Further, the ensemble desired to be seen as more than just a "CalArts ensemble," but to be recognized as an exciting professional group with a unique perspective and to engage with audiences for new music in the US and abroad (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020).

Their growing independence was coupled with shifts in their personal relationships to CalArts. For one, Duke-Kirkpatrick officially joined the faculty as professor of cello in 1987, and others like Mowrey, Stone and Eder worked for the school on a contract basis. Knoles and future EAR Unit pianist Vicki Ray would also later receive faculty positions at CalArts in the early 2000s. Finally, Stone and Mosko had fallen in love and were married in 1989, further complicating their personal and professional ties. Over the years, these relationships proved more reason for wanting to put professional distance between themselves and CalArts.

In their final semester as graduate students in 1982, the EAR Unit gave a concert titled, "First Farewell Concert." Duke-Kirkpatrick explains that the title was meant to be a joke, affecting a melodramatic air of sadness when in fact the ensemble was excited to move on (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020). The name accurately suggests that there would be more Farewell Concerts. Indeed, it became a group tradition to produce a Farewell Concert at the end of each academic year, mocking their inability to fully extricate themselves from the institution. Most EAR Unit members only have vague memories of these concerts, remembering it to be a harmless joke. It is possible that the gesture contained some sincerity however, as the ensemble felt genuine gratitude for the life-changing opportunities CalArts provided. Duke-Kirkpatrick claims that the concerts reflect a hint of adolescent complacency. She compares their final departure from CalArts to "throwing a kid out of the house" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020). A program note to their Sixth Annual and Final Farewell Concert on April 14, 1987 conveys genuine appreciation for their privileged treatment by CalArts. Meanwhile, a hint of sarcasm can be read beneath their exaggerated self-seriousness.

> Tonight marks the final performance by the California E.A.R. Unit at CalArts after five years as ensemble in residence. We bid a sad farewell and thank all those here who have worked with us as these years have been fruitful. Beginning in the 1987 season the EAR Unit will present an annual series of four concerts at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Please join us as we continue to celebrate the music of our time.[122]

[122] The California E.A.R. Unit, "Sixth Annual and Final Farewell Concert," April 14, 1987, Personal archive of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick.

1.3 Conclusions

This account of the California E.A.R. Unit's early years demonstrates the pivotal role CalArts played in the ensemble's formation. Specifically, their history follows the establishment of an expansive curriculum for contemporary music performance developed by the music school's early leaders. At the center of this pedagogy was the Twentieth Century Players, a graduate ensemble dedicated to new music. Through their work in this ensemble, members of the EAR Unit gained professional experience performing contemporary works and new compositions by their peers. CalArts afforded regular opportunities for the student ensemble to work with internationally recognized figures of the avant-garde hosted by Morton Subotnick and the CalArts Festivals. These encounters were mediated by the mentorship of Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, the young and enthusiastic conductor of the Twentieth Century Players. The institution further provided professional opportunities for the EAR Unit after their graduation in 1982, including contractual work in the School of Music and high-profile features on the Olympic Arts Festival.

By offering a wide range of performance-related activities, CalArts structured clear modes of engagement in contemporary music performance. This model was made even more pronounced by the fact that CalArts obscured distinctions between student and professional activities. The CalArts Festivals, for example, were events that served the entire musical community at CalArts and its partner institutions. Students and faculty collectively engaged in performances and workshops while rubbing shoulders with their esteemed guests. The face-to-face interactions with composers at the CalArts Festivals took their education out of the abstract and placed it within the context of real-world

collaborations. This was also true of their critical involvement in the development of Subotnick's large-scale works, such as *The Double Life of Amphibians*.

The environment at CalArts in the 1980s reflected an ongoing national trend in which conservatory institutions emerged as key supporters of composition and contemporary music performance.[123] Similar transformations occurred at UC San Diego with the establishment of the Center for Music Experiment. Both institutions partnered in the late 1970s to produce the early CalArts Festivals, reflecting the research-oriented investment in avant-garde composition. This chapter provides an account of how these changes were experienced first-hand.

Evidence suggests that the pedagogical model at CalArts strongly encouraged interpersonal relationships among students, as well as between students and faculty. Specifically, the design of the Twentieth Century Players oriented learning around collaborations with major figures of the academic avant-garde. The difficult nature of this work further mandated long rehearsal hours and significant time spent together as a cohort. At the time, CalArts also made significant efforts to connect its students to outside opportunities, like the ones they provided the EAR Unit each summer and in the years after their graduation. The residency at the Holland Festival, for example, was one the ensemble's most memorable experiences travelling and playing together. It also resulted in the EAR Unit's introduction to Henry Brant and Elliott Carter, both of whom later became outspoken champions of the ensemble. Most conspicuously, CalArts afforded the introduction between Stone and Mosko, who would go on to become lifelong partners.

[123] See Chapter 1.

Narrative accounts by the living EAR Unit members point to a handful of intersecting origin stories, converging on the holistic experience of being students at CalArts in this period. Steiger and Rohrig are recognized as the two musicians who initiated the first conversations, and who ran the group in its early iteration. However, Stone is equally acknowledged for her deeply held aspirations to create an independent contemporary music ensemble. The EAR Unit also sites Mosko's immersive work with Twentieth Century Players, as well as the inspiring introductions he facilitated, as crucial motivations for wanting to establish their own ensemble. Others have argued that disagreements with the Twentieth Century Players were deciding factors for the EAR Unit founders. Finally, their professional tour of Europe during the Holland Festival served as a catalyst for their independent career. That the EAR Unit maintains so many foundational narratives suggests that the choice to become an ensemble was a personal and complex one, built on many collective experiences. The EAR Unit did not simply borrow the concept of a contemporary music ensemble whole cloth. Rather, they adapted it from many pieces of their educational experience in the hopes of sustaining the kind of artistic work it afforded.

Changes in institutionalized contemporary music came at a time of even larger transformations in a globalized cultural industry. For example, the expanded CalArts Festivals of the 1980s coincided with a surge of national festivals of contemporary music, including New Music America and the Los Angeles Festivals. Like the CalArts Festivals, these large-scale events framed Los Angeles contemporary music as a feature of local musical culture worthy of international recognition. This was most notably the case for the Olympic Arts, which promoted Los Angeles as an emerging, national hub for

the arts. Festivals contextualized the existence of the EAR Unit as one part the city's changing institutional landscape for new music and its viability for performers. That is, the notion of Los Angeles as culturally coming of age was in this period increasingly reflected in the types of opportunities available to young performers, evidence of the city as a growing center for contemporary music. The EAR Unit's LACMA residency, the first of its kind in the city, would further solidify their standing as an exemplar of this new model of an entrepreneurial, post-graduate chamber ensemble dedicated to contemporary music.

CHAPTER 2

LACMA: Monday Evening Concerts and Ensemble Residency (1984-2005)

As shown in Chapter 1, the California E.A.R. Unit came together as graduate students at the California Institute of the Arts amidst an exciting atmosphere for contemporary music in the 1980s. Here, I focus exclusively on performances they gave at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which collectively formed an important segment of their work outside of CalArts. Upon graduating in 1982, the ensemble began making yearly appearances on the historic Monday Evening Concerts series for new music, then held at LACMA's Leo S. Bing Theater. Then in 1987, the museum's Director of Music Programs, Dorrance Stalvey, created an Ensemble Residency position just for the EAR Unit, guaranteeing them four concerts a year and continued appearances on the MEC series. This residency position lasted until 2005 and served as a foundation for their performing career in Los Angeles for nearly two decades.

The following chapter documents the history of EAR Unit's LACMA performances, examining the full range of the work they showcased at the museum. I start with the now infamous world premiere of Frank Zappa's *While You Were Art,* made notorious after a *Los Angeles Times* framed the intentionally play-synched performance as a scandal. Such risks soon became a signature of the EAR Unit's LACMA performances, including their propensity to juxtapose strikingly dissimilar works on the same program. The residency also served as a forum for the group to explore interdisciplinary projects in theater and high stakes performance art. Among them, I devote significant attention to the ensemble's 1996 version of Lawrence Brose and Douglas Cohen's *imusicircus*, itself a realization of John Cage's *Circus On,* which

involved over 70 performances and film screenings all in the same evening. Finally, I detail several of the ensemble's most significant world premiere performances featured on their residency series.

I conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of their programming practices and group operations, which were significantly shaped by their relationship to LACMA. With four concerts guaranteed concerts a year, the ensemble was able to offer each one of its members the chance to program works of their choosing. These decisions were made through heated discussions at the EAR Unit's yearly programming meetings, at which every member was given an equal vote. More broadly, this section looks at how the group negotiated their artistic differences through mutual commitment to an eclectic array of projects. In this way, their early vision as a unit begins to come into focus in this chapter, seen through the programs themselves and their cooperative processes.

2.1 Monday Evening Concerts

Additional context is needed to understand the significance of LACMA as the EAR Unit's primary performance space, and how it came to become their home. When the ensemble first began performing publicly in the early 1980s, LACMA was already considered an established venue in Los Angeles for 20th century music. This was due to its affiliation with the Monday Evening Concerts (MEC), one of the world's longest-running contemporary music series, currently among the oldest enduring musical

organizations in Los Angeles.[124] Founded in 1939, the series was originally called Concerts on the Roof for its location on the rooftop music studio of Pater Yates and Frances Mullen's Rudolf Schindler-designed home in Silverlake, CA. Starting in 1942, however, MEC moved about to various concert venues throughout the city, including the Wilshire-Ebell Theater and Fiesta Hall in West Hollywood's Plummer Park. In 1965, under its second musical director, Lawrence Morton, MEC transitioned into the Leo S. Bing Theater at the newly opened LACMA campus in Hancock Park. MEC inaugurated the venue with a concert of Guillaume de Machaut's 14th century *Messe de Nostre Dame*, paired with the world premiere of Pierre Boulez's *Eclat* for 15 instruments with the composer conducting.[125]

Figure 2.1: The Bing Theater exterior. (Photograph taken by Bill Counter, 2018, Los Angeles Theatres, accessed February 9, 2024, https://losangelestheatres.blogspot.com/2017/03/bing-theatre.html)

[124] For more on the early history of the series, formerly known as Evenings on the Roof, see "Histories of Contemporary Music in Los Angeles" in Introduction.
[125] Jonathan Hepfer, Monday Evening Concerts Concert Program Archive.

Figure 2.2: The Bing Theater auditorium. (Counter, 2018)

Designed in the brutalist style by architect, William Pereira, the new LACMA complex contained both traditional and modern elements that reflected MEC's then mixed programs of early and contemporary music.[126] The three box-shaped structures were each lined with rows of thin columns and appeared to float thanks to large reflecting pools separating each unit. Concert goers walked through the Bing Theater's bare outer lobby adorned with a single chandelier and waited inside a dark, wood-paneled inner lobby. The auditorium itself seated 600 and faced crimson, Austrian style curtains that had to be raised and lowered for every performance. Writing about MEC's

[126] At the time of this writing, all three of the original LACMA buildings have been torn down. A new building designed by Peter Zumthor is currently being constructed to house the museum's permanent collection. See LACMA, "Building LACMA," accessed September 1, 2022, https://www.lacma.org/support/building-lacma.

history at LACMA, *Los Angeles Times* staff writer Richard Ginell endearingly describes the Bing Theater as "gloomy" and "acoustically undistinguished."[127]

Figure 2.3: The Bing Theater outer lobber and inner lobby. (Counter, 2018)

Soon after moving into the Bing Theater, MEC's directorship changed hands. Dorrance Stalvey, a composer and former MEC board member, took over as Executive Director in 1971 and later became Director of Music Programs at LACMA in 1981, positions he held until his passing in 2005. At first, Stalvey ran the series according to traditions set by his predecessors, including the practice of hiring from a pool of freelance musicians.[128] He renamed this group the MEC Ensemble, and retained Morton's personnel manager, Julian Spear. Throughout the 1980s, however, Stalvey withdrew early music from its programming, devoting the series exclusively to contemporary music. More controversially, he gradually eschewed the long-standing affiliated performer roster in favor of hiring outside groups,[129] a move that received

[127] Richard S. Ginell, "Los Angeles: Monday Evening Concerts Face the Future," *NewMusicBox,* November 15, 2006, Newmusicusa.org.
[128] Hepfer, MEC Archive.
[129] Heidi Lesemann is a Los Angeles based arts administrator specializing in contemporary music and worked as a consultant for MEC starting in the early 2000s. Like others, she recalls this transition under

criticism from author Dorothy Crawford in her biography of the series published in 1995.[130]

While Stalvey's approach may have appeared detached, his handling of the museum's music programs was driven by deeply held beliefs about the role of the composer in contemporary American society. In particular, he was concerned that the concert infrastructure in Los Angeles, and throughout the country, did not adequately support the young composers it was beginning to produce. In a recorded guest lecture for Steve Loza's ethnomusicology class at UCLA in 1993, Stalvey decries this lack of career expectations for composers, saying, "If nobody expects me in Los Angeles to be a damn good composer, I'm not going to be a good composer because I'm going to doubt myself."[131] On this point, his complaints were reversed from those of his detractors; where others took issue with bringing in outside groups, Stalvey was unhappy with the tendency by programmers to outsource commissions to non-US composers, especially famous European figures.[132] In an earlier interview conducted for the Yale Oral History of American Music archive, he explains that the mandate to provide performances of new works by regional composers was indeed a primary focus of MEC:

> It's important that works be played for the composer's sake so that the artist may grow. The musician [is] unique in the arts in that he can't hang his work on the wall and stand back and study and grow from that. It has to be played for the artist to grow from that experience. I think this is one

Stalvey to outside groups. "Lawrence had turned [Monday Evening Concerts] over to Dorrance Stalvey. Where Lawrence was really curating the programs, Dorrance started out doing that. And he certainly was marvelous at it. But as some point he started bringing in existing ensembles, quartets and trios and so forth, from all over the world, so that the focus was not as much on the composers" (Lesemann, 2020).

[130] See Dorothy Crawford, "Management Styles in the 'Mecca for Music-Making,'" in *Evenings On and Off the Roof: Pioneering Concerts in Los Angeles, 1939-1971* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 281-294.

[131] Documentary film, "Musical Aesthetics in Los Angeles: Dorrance Stalvey," March 11, 1993, 2002.01-208, UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology Collection 1961-, Los Angeles, CA, https://californiarevealed.org/do/8664198c-1c40-49fc-b97b-cb90c6f11e38.

[132] "Musical Aesthetics in Los Angeles," 1993.

> of the most important reasons for the existence for something like Monday Evening Concerts.[133]

Such attitudes had material consequences for the EAR Unit, which was given a major platform at LACMA, not just on MEC, but through their own ensemble-in-residence series as well. Their ties to the contemporary music scene at CalArts would have made the EAR Unit an ideal vehicle for finding and championing a new generation of emerging composers. As demonstrated throughout this chapter, Stalvey's lack of intervention in EAR Unit programs placed this initiative directly in the ensemble's hands. Thus, LACMA not only provided the EAR Unit with artistic flexibility, but a historical context that framed their work against an important segment of Los Angeles' contemporary music history.

2.1.1 Frank Zappa, *While You Were Art*

The EAR Unit made their MEC debut on October 4, 1983 performing music by the composer-trombonist Vinko Globokar, who was coming from France to serve as visiting professor of composition at CalArts.[134] They shared the program with computer

[133] Dorrance Stalvey, interview with Vincent Plush, May 3, 1983, OHV 140 a-d, Major Figures in American Music, Oral History of American Music, in the Music Library of Yale University.
[134] EAR Unit members performed several times with Globokar during his 1983 CalArts residency. For example, the ensemble's pianist Gaylord Mowrey remembers an improvisation with the faculty percussionist John Bergamo, in which the composer replaced the two performers with audience members: "We went for about 20 to 25 minutes. At one point, Globokar goes over and picks out somebody in the audience, a young person, and brings him up on stage and sits him down at John's instrument setup. Then, he gets up and finds another young person, who sits down next to me at the piano … He then comes up to me and John and asks us to walk out. So, we walked out once these other students were performing without ever really realizing what was happening. We just left the auditorium. I think they went on for another 45 minutes or an hour. … I don't know what happened after that because we went downstairs to the percussion room and drank bourbon" (Mowrey, 2022).

music by composers Jonathan Berger and David A. Jaffe. At LACMA, Globokar joined EAR Unit clarinetist Jim Rohrig, percussionist Amy Knoles and cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick in the Los Angeles premiere of his structured improvisation piece, *Correspondences* (1969). The ensemble was accustomed to performing for famous composers, having met dozens at the CalArts Contemporary Music Festivals during their student years.[135] In fact, several EAR Unit members had already made Globokar's acquaintance at the 1981 CalArts Festival. Their first MEC concert was instead important simply for the recognition they received from the series itself.[136] Individual EAR Unit musicians had performed several times on past MEC concerts in the two seasons prior, but never as an ensemble.

The EAR Unit enthusiastically greeted the opportunity to return to MEC to perform a standalone concert the following season on April 30, 1984. This time, they were given freedom to choose their own music. Their program replicated that of a concert they had recently given at the 1984 CalArts Contemporary Music Festival in March, which notably featured the West Coast premiere of *Triple Duo* (1982) by the American composer, Elliott Carter.[137] Both CalArts and MEC concerts also included Louis Andriessen's *Hoketus* (1976), Giacinto Scelsi's *To The Master* (1978), and Rand Steiger's *Quintessence* (1981). To their performance at LACMA, they added two world premieres: Nicolas Slonimsky *Quaquaversal Suite* and Frank Zappa's *While You Were*

[135] See Chapter 1.
[136] The EAR Unit was one of the first non-student ensemble devoted exclusively to contemporary music to make an appearance on the series since Steve Reich and Musicians performed at LACMA in 1973. The closest parallel to the EAR Unit was UC San Diego's faculty ensemble, SONOR, which performed on MEC frequently throughout the 1970s. Hepfer, MEC Archive.
[137] Carter attended the 1984 CalArts Festival and coached the EAR Unit on the new sextet. Rand Steiger, the ensemble's conductor, remembers leading rehearsals from the composer's unpublished manuscript, which he also used for the Los Angeles premiere at LACMA (Steiger, 2020a).

Art.[138] Stalvey had personally commissioned *Quaquaversal Suite,* a series of four absurdist miniatures built on an assortment of musical quotations, in honor of the composer's 90th birthday (Steiger, 2022d). After hearing it performed by the EAR Unit, Slonimsky went on stage to receive a cake from Stalvey, who led the audience in singing Happy Birthday.

Zappa's *While You Were Art* provided the most unexpected contrast of the evening, least of all due to the composer's status as a famous experimental jazz-rock musician and bandleader of the Mothers of Invention. The iconoclast was known for his avant-garde approach to music, blending popular styles with sharp social commentary. As such, Zappa was admired by many at CalArts and drew occasionally from its musicians for various projects. The EAR Unit's own percussionist-composer, Art Jarvinen, was working for Zappa as a music copyist when he approached him about an EAR Unit commission. According to Jarvinen, Zappa had originally intended to create and acoustic transcription of his improvised guitar solo, "While You Were Out," a track from his 1981 solo album, *Shut Up 'n Play Yer Guitar*.[139] Zappa recorded a version of the tune on his newly acquired Synclavier system, one of the first commercial digital synthesizers, hoping to make use of its auto-generating music notation software. In the recording, he imitates the speech-like idiom of his guitar improvisations on the synthesizer instrument. The title, *While You Were Art*, is a dedication to Art Jarvinen.[140]

[138] Slonimsky and Zappa were mutual admirers. Slonimsky, who resided in Los Angeles, had even performed live with Zappa at the Civic Auditorium in Santa Monica in 1981. See Nicolas Slonimsky, "Meeting Zappa," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1988, accessed November 1, 2022. https://www.afka.net/Articles/1988-04_Harpers.htm.
[139] Art Jarvinen, interview by John Trubee, "Art Jarvinen," October 2007, United-mutations.com/j/art_jarvinen.htm.
[140] Jarvinen, interview by John Trubee, 2007.

EAR Unit members note that Zappa was significantly delayed with his commission. A week before the concert, Jarvinen delivered the transcribed parts to the EAR Unit, along with a cassette tape recording of the Synclavier as a practice reference. According to all accounts, the complex notation produced by the Synclavier proved to be unidiomatic and contained many unmanageable rhythmic incongruencies (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022; Knoles, 2020; Mowrey, 2022; Steiger, 2020f). The ensemble agreed that a true interpretation would not be possible in the time allotted. Through Jarvinen, Zappa came back with the idea that the EAR Unit could instead play-sync their parts to his recording, a compromise that would transform the piece into something more akin to a conceptual work.[141]

In response to Zappa's request, the EAR Unit redoubled their efforts to learn the score with the aim of producing a convincing play-synced performance. Using the practice cassettes, the ensemble came up with various strategies to mask the sounds of their instruments while appearing to play. Knoles and Jarvinen, who stood at the front of the stage, went to great lengths to learn their parts using foam mallets to mute the sound of the marimba. Meanwhile, Duke-Kirkpatrick used a hairless bow on her cello and Stone fingered her flute without air, while Mowrey pretended to conduct. Since the Synclavier's digital samples could not actually pass as sounds produced by acoustic instruments, the ensemble ran cables from their instruments to a mixing board, behind

[141] In his autobiography, Zappa takes full credit for this decision: "'You're in luck,' I told [Jarvinen], 'because you won't even have to play it. All you have to do is learn to pretend to play it, and I'll have the Synclavier take care of the rest. Just go out there and do what all the 'Big Rock Groups' have done for years—lip-sync it and make sure you look good on stage.'" Frank Zappa, *The Real Frank Zappa Book* (New York: Touchstone, 1989), 175.

which Steiger pretended to manipulate sound (Jarvinen, 2007; Knoles, 2020; Ocker, 2020; Steiger, 2020f).

A technical mix-up on the day of the concert meant that the EAR Unit could not use Zappa's state-of-the-art digital recording, and instead had to play-sync to one of their practice cassettes played over the Bing Theater's house speakers.[142] The tape hiss and overall poor quality of the analog cassette recording was painfully evident to the musicians as well as Zappa's assistant and Synclavier programmer, David Ocker. Nonetheless, the overall effect succeeded in convincing the audience that something intentional was happening on stage. Despite the mishap, Ocker and the EAR Unit members recall with certainty that the audience, including their friends and associates, was wholly unaware of what they had done. Zappa did not attend the concert to weigh in on its success.

That the stunt went unnoticed is implicitly confirmed by the concert's two reviews, which made no mention of play-syncing. Both Donna Perlmutter of the *Los Angeles Times* and Mark Swed writing for the *Herald Examiner* lauded the EAR Unit for their technical handling of all the music. However, they also took issue with the program's unsubtle juxtaposition of pieces. Swed gave the strongest praise, describing them as a "polished, accomplished, versatile ensemble." Nonetheless, he flatly claims that the program "should not have worked." He found the common thread instead to be their engagement with the music, writing that the "the E.A.R. Unit seemed to be making

[142] Zappa had planned to take advantage of new technology that enabled digital audio to be recorded onto commercial video tape, available in either Betamax or VHS format. Since LACMA did not own the requisite decoder to read the digital tape, the EAR Unit borrowed a digital tape player from CalArts, a Sony PCM-F1, which read only Betamax format and not VHS. The VHS tape that Zappa provided on the concert day was thus incompatible with the system on hand (Ocker, 2020; Vees, 2021a).

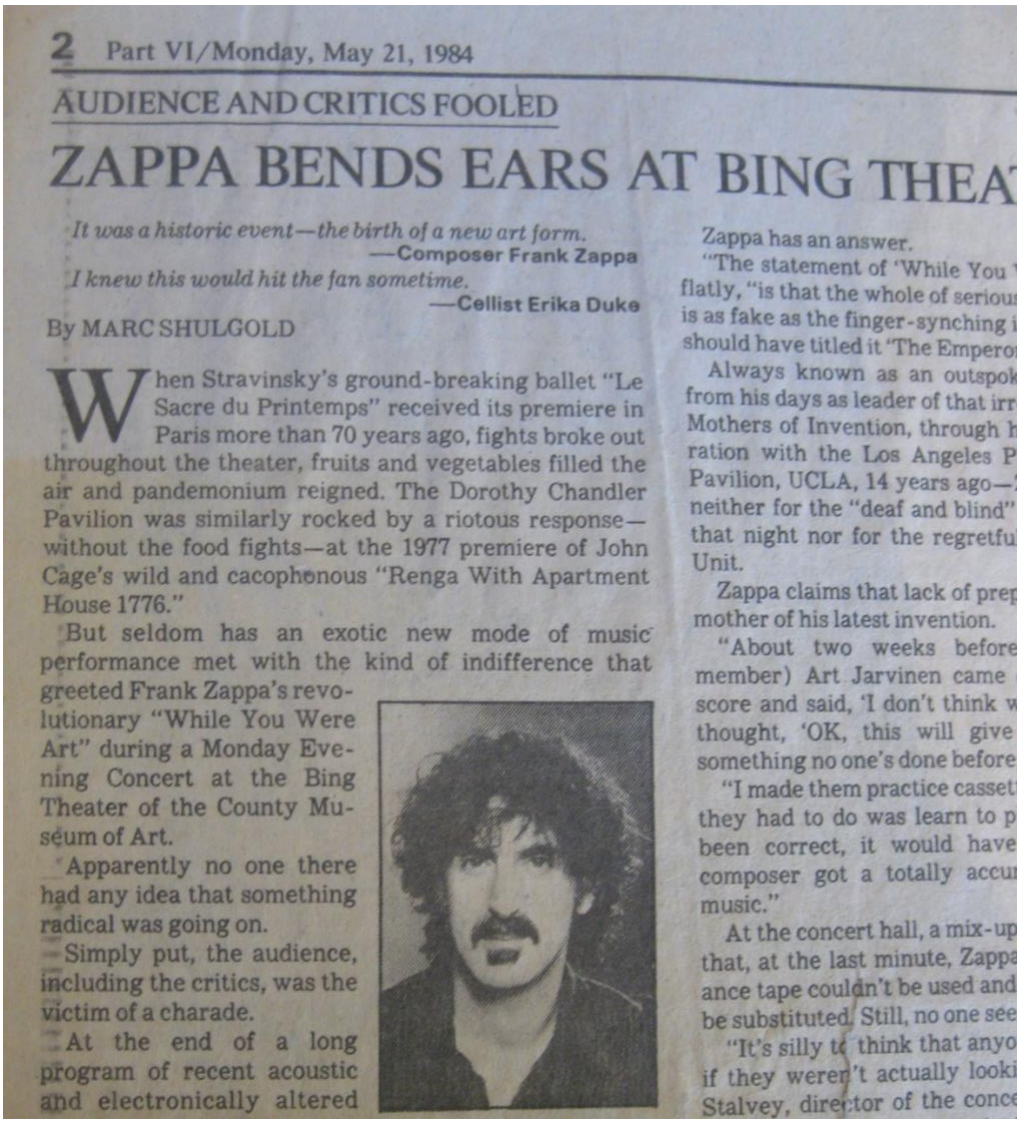
no statement about the different nature and esthetic of each work. Its members seem to play music simply because they like it, and they are remarkably effective in communicating their enthusiasms. They also play extremely well."[143] Perlmutter similarly compliments their unfaltering commitment, while also noting their "random, sloppy chic."[144]

Nearly a month after the performance, the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article by Marc Shulgold, titled, "Audience and critics fooled: Zappa bends ears at Bing Theater." In my interview with the journalist, Shulgold explains that his piece was the result of a chance encounter between Zappa and Larry Davis, the *Los Angeles Times* photographer who attended the premiere. According to Shulgold, the two happened to be seated together on a plane shortly after the concert. During the flight, Zappa divulged that the piece had been play-synced and proceeded to unload his frustrations with the neutral coverage of his piece and the new music scene in general. Davis reported this encounter, along with the fact of the EAR Unit's falsified performance, to Shulgold, who secured a follow-up phone interview with Zappa (Shulgold, 2020).

Before publishing the piece, Shulgold called CalArts to try to speak to members of the EAR Unit about their experiences. Duke-Kirkpatrick and Steiger happened to be on campus and together took the reporter's call. According to Steiger, Shulgold explained that Zappa had found the EAR Unit unfit to play his music, leading to the decision to have the ensemble "fake it" (Steiger, 2020f).[145] Duke-Kirkpatrick and Steiger

[143] Mark Swed, "E.A.R. Unit performs new music with vibrance," *Herald Examiner*, May 2, 1984.
[144] Donna Perlmutter, "E.A.R. Unit presides at Bing Theater," *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1984.
[145] Shulgold shared a similar version of the story, in which Zappa found the EAR Unit incapable of playing his music: "He wrote this music and decided that this group just really couldn't do it justice and they just couldn't play it. So he just said, 'Well, how'd it be if we just use my rehearsal tape that I made off my Synclavier, and you guys just finger-sync it, or whatever'" (Shulgold, 2020).

were shaken by the idea that the play-synced performance would be publicly revealed in the *Los Angeles Times*, and Steiger was particularly incensed by Zappa's false claims that they were not good enough. Duke-Kirkpatrick and Steiger both claim that they felt pressured into recanting and apologizing on the group's behalf, a choice they regretted ever since (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022; Steiger, 2020f).



2 Part VI/Monday, May 21, 1984

AUDIENCE AND CRITICS FOOLED

ZAPPA BENDS EARS AT BING THEA

It was a historic event—the birth of a new art form.
—Composer Frank Zappa
I knew this would hit the fan sometime.
—Cellist Erika Duke

By MARC SHULGOLD

When Stravinsky's ground-breaking ballet "Le Sacre du Printemps" received its premiere in Paris more than 70 years ago, fights broke out throughout the theater, fruits and vegetables filled the air and pandemonium reigned. The Dorothy Chandler Pavilion was similarly rocked by a riotous response—without the food fights—at the 1977 premiere of John Cage's wild and cacophonous "Renga With Apartment House 1776."

But seldom has an exotic new mode of music performance met with the kind of indifference that greeted Frank Zappa's revolutionary "While You Were Art" during a Monday Evening Concert at the Bing Theater of the County Museum of Art.

Apparently no one there had any idea that something radical was going on.

Simply put, the audience, including the critics, was the victim of a charade.

At the end of a long program of recent acoustic and electronically altered

Zappa has an answer.

"The statement of 'While You
flatly, "is that the whole of seriou
is as fake as the finger-synching i
should have titled it 'The Empero

Always known as an outspok
from his days as leader of that irr
Mothers of Invention, through h
ration with the Los Angeles P
Pavilion, UCLA, 14 years ago—
neither for the "deaf and blind"
that night nor for the regretfu
Unit.

Zappa claims that lack of prep
mother of his latest invention.

"About two weeks before
member) Art Jarvinen came
score and said, 'I don't think w
thought, 'OK, this will give
something no one's done before

"I made them practice casset
they had to do was learn to p
been correct, it would have
composer got a totally accu
music."

At the concert hall, a mix-up
that, at the last minute, Zappa
ance tape couldn't be used and
be substituted. Still, no one see

"It's silly to think that anyo
if they weren't actually looki
Stalvey, director of the conce

Figure 2.4: Marc Shulgold, "Audience and Critics Fooled," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1984. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

In the brief article, Shulgold appears to expose the EAR Unit by describing the audience and critics as having unknowingly been "the victim of a charade." He quotes Zappa explaining that the statement behind the piece "'is that the whole of serious music in Los Angeles is as fake as the finger-syncing in the piece. I probably should have titled it, 'The Emperor's New Clothes.'" But the most damaging part involved the statements made by the two EAR Unit musicians:

> Why did the highly regarded EAR Unit go along with Zappa in the deception? "We are so used to respecting the wishes of the composer that when Zappa told us to mime it we readily agreed," Steiger explained. "This whole thing has left a bad taste in my mouth." "We're cheating our audiences and ourselves. We will not do it again," Duke promised.[146]

Zappa bitterly recounted the events in his autobiography, including the EAR Unit's apology: "It produced quite a scandal in 'modern music circles.' Several members of the ensemble, mortified by all the hoo-ha, swore they would never "*do it again.*" (Do **what** again? Prove to the world that nobody really knows what the fuck is going on at a contemporary music concert?)."[147] According to Ocker, the EAR Unit saga produced the understanding by Zappa fans that he had revealed the true reality of new music concerts. Taken at face value, Zappa had demonstrated that the audience either did not notice or did not care about the work's artifice, thus exposing the shallow pretensions of MEC concertgoers (Ocker, 2020).

From the EAR Unit's perspective, Shulgold was singlehandedly responsible for introducing the notion of a scandal where none had previously existed. Indeed, the writer's characterization of the piece as a wrongful deception is only one of many

[146] Marc Shulgold, "Audience and Critics Fooled: Zappa Bends Ears at Bing Theater," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1984.
[147] Zappa, *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, 175-176.

possible subjective interpretations of the work and its impact. In our conversation, Shulgold confessed to having deep seated objections to Zappa's music and aspirations to be taken seriously as an avant-garde composer.[148] The *Los Angeles Times* write-up can therefore be understood as a unique artefact reflecting both Zappa's ongoing polemic with the new music establishment and one critic's attitudes towards Zappa and his music. Finding themselves at the center of this debate, the EAR Unit perceived their own collective ideas about Zappa's music become lost and obscured.

The attention garnered by the episode, and Zappa's writing in particular, made the events a foundational part of the ensemble's history. In the years following, the EAR Unit was routinely asked to provide their own account of what happened. The ensemble has stood resolutely behind their assertion that Zappa's Synclavier-produced parts were technically unplayable and that they made every effort to produce the most accurate play-synced rendition possible. Steiger maintains that the whole group was equally committed to all the works on the program, adding, "We were sincerely interested in Frank's music. We liked playing it and wanted to do more of it" (Steiger, 2020f). Jarvinen's retelling, on the other hand, clearly blames his peers for misrepresenting the ensemble in the interview. "Had they talked to me, history would have unfolded differently. Instead, one or two people in the group put their tails between their legs and basically apologized for the error of our ways on behalf of the group."[149]

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[148] He explains, "Zappa at that point was serious about being a composer of serious music, of orchestral music, and fancied himself as another one of the great contemporary composers, even though, as far as I'm concerned, he was just a rock-and-roller who made silly records. … I don't know that I ever heard the piece, *While You Were Art*, which was dubbed after this Art Jarvinen fellow. I don't know that I ever heard it. But I had heard enough of Zappa as a quote-unquote serious composer to know that he thought he was hot stuff. As far as I'm concerned, he really should have just stuck with the world of *Peaches on Regalia* and the Mothers of Invention stuff" (Shulgold, 2020).

[149] Jarvinen, 2007.

2.2 Ensemble Residency Series at LACMA

The embarrassment caused by the story in the *Los Angeles Times* did not damage the group's reputation nor their relationship to Monday Evening Concerts. In fact, the concert with the Zappa premiere marked the beginning of a twenty-year relationship between the California E.A.R. Unit and the music programs at LACMA. The EAR Unit's adventurous programming appealed to Stalvey, who invited them back to present concerts on the following two MEC seasons. Then, in 1987, Stalvey added an entirely new museum program specifically for the EAR Unit, which he called the Ensemble Residency Series. The arrangement guaranteed them four concerts a year at the Bing Theater, one of which was included on the MEC series. Programming for the residency concerts was left entirely up to the EAR Unit.[150]

The Ensemble Residency Series at LACMA was a pivotal development that allowed the EAR Unit to finally break away from CalArts. Since the ensemble graduated in 1982, CalArts had served as its fiscal sponsor and provided them with in-kind support in the form of concerts curated by the institution.[151] LACMA, on the other hand, made no such financial or artistic intervention. Seed money for the first three years came from the Ensemble Residency grant awarded by Chamber Music America. This grant program,

[150] "[Stalvey] was in a way the perfect benevolent benefactor because he like what we were doing. I'm sure he didn't like all the repertoire, and I'm sure he probably had some resistance to some of the silliness that we would engage in. But he never said a word to us about artistic matters, never asked us to play his music that I'm aware of, and never really pushed other people's music on us. … What I remember from that period is that we would discuss with him the programming for the one official Monday Evening Concert, but that the rest of the residency was just— they just gave us the hall and let us do whatever we wanted. The only thing we had to give him was the information so they could put it on the calendar. I don't think there was any intervention in our programming at all. And all I remember from Dorrance was complete support and enthusiasm, and never really expressing strong opinions or pressing us on any programming issues" (Steiger, 2020a).

[151] See Chapter 1.

founded in 1978, was designed to support partnerships between ensembles and presenting organizations, such as music at LACMA.[152] Stalvey matched these funds through the museum program's budget.[153]

The EAR Unit's first LACMA Ensemble Residency concert was on November 16, 1987. They programmed Bunita Marcus' *Lecture for Jo Kondo* (1985), Stephen "Lucky" Mosko's *The Road to Tiphareth* (1986), Stephen Jaffe's *The Rhythm of the Running Plough* (1985), and Steve Reich's *Sextet* (1985). The concert was reviewed in the *Los Angeles Times* by John Henken, a writer who was often disapproved of the programs' flow and artistic continuity.[154] Although Henken is complimentary of all the EAR Unit's performances that evening, he is critical of the compositions themselves, questioning the ensemble's attraction to "the mundane, the feverishly self-inflated, and yes, the boring." Henken also complains that the concert went past 10 p.m. but lauds their performance of Reich's *Sextet*: "This was an endlessly energetic, clearly directed performance of sonic variety and clean structural lines. In any context it would have been a triumph. Monday it seemed a shattering revelation."[155]

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[152] See Molly Sheridan, "Chamber Music America Announces 2001-2002 Awards Including 16 Commissions," *NewMusicBox*, October 1, 2001, https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/chamber-music-america-announces-200102-awards-including-16-commissions/..

[153] "[CalArts] really wanted us to get out and not think that we were going to burrow ourselves like a boll weevil into the CalArts fabric. That's how we got into LACMA. Dorothy and I wrote an application to Chamber Music America, and to our great shock, we got it. Dorrance was happy to match it and that was how we became ensemble-in-residence at LACMA for god knows how many years" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022).

[154] For example, reviewing the MEC program the previous season, Henken complains that Burr van Nostrand's *Fantasty Manual for Urban Survival*, at 34 minutes, ruined the climax of an otherwise "nicely paced program." John Henken, "E.A.R. Unit at County Museum of Art." *Los Angeles Times*, January 28, 1987.

[155] John Henken, "California E.A.R. Unit Begins Residency at County Art Museum," *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 1987.

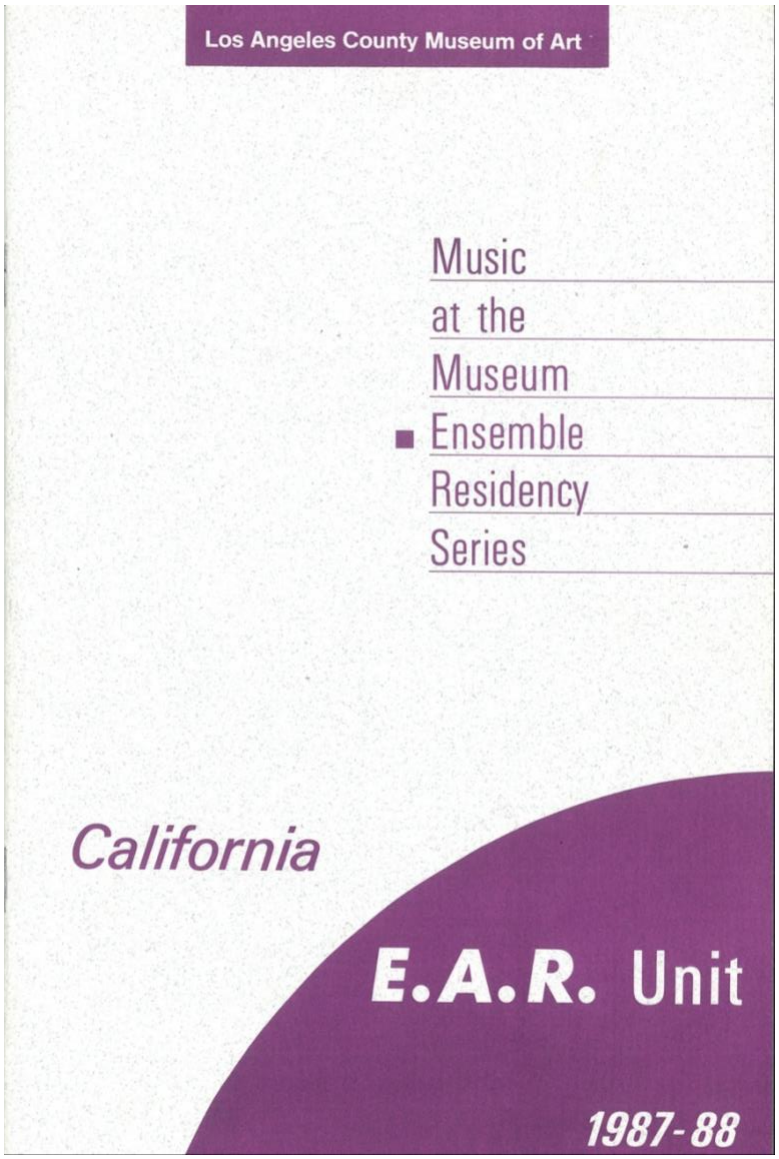

Figure 2.5: The California E.A.R. Unit, first Ensemble Residency season, program booklet cover page. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

EAR Unit concerts at LACMA continued to be stylistically integrated, mixing compositions representing various avant-garde camps to newer works by emerging composers. Their second residency concert on December 17, 1987, for example, opened with Michael Torke's *The Yellow Pages* (1984), a chamber work exemplifying the neo-romantic minimalist style coalescing around the soon-to-be Bang on a Can collective.

This concert also included somewhat earlier works from famous European modernists, including Luciano Berio's *Linea* (1973) for two pianos, vibraphone and marimba, as well as Stockhausen's *Dr. K* Sextet (1969) and excerpts from Sylvano Bussotti's *Sette Folgi* (1959). Their third concert paired the dense, complexist music of Brian Ferneyhough with Philip Glass's playfully simple *Modern Love Waltz* (1978).

Around this time, the EAR Unit's first professional counterpart emerged and began playing on Monday Evening Concerts in 1988. The 12-member contemporary music ensemble was called Xtet, founded in 1986 by clarinetist David Ocker and bassoonist John Steinmetz. Ocker and Steinmetz brought together a group of friends, primarily symphony orchestra musicians from Southern California, who wanted a forum to learn and play chamber music.[156] Thus, their name represented their wide range of ensemble formations used across their repertoire, with "X" standing for any number between two and twelve. Although they insisted that they were not a contemporary music ensemble, nearly all their repertoire was from the 20th century. Indeed, Xtet became known for their focus on more complex and often academic modernist works. In later years this set them apart subtly from the EAR Unit, which focused increasingly on theatrical or conceptual works (Ray, 2023).

Starting in 1988, Xtet performed one concert on every MEC season until, in 2002, Stalvey added them to Ensemble Residency series with the EAR Unit. By the 1990s, Xtet had earned a reputation as the city's alternative new music ensemble to the EAR Unit, prompting Josef Woodard of the LA Times to write:

[156] Whereas the EAR Unit at the time was exclusively tied to CalArts, Xtet's membership had more diverse affiliations. Both Ocker and Steinmetz were CalArts alumni, but others in the group taught at the University of Southern California, and played in ensembles like the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, and the Long Beach Symphony (Ocker, 2020).

> When it comes to dedicated new music groups in Los Angeles, Xtet must be counted as the "other" ensemble, after the busier California E.A.R. Unit. Both share an admirable and culturally important commitment to compositions of our day—and century—as well as monikers of cryptic significance: The unit's "E.A.R." is no more inherently meaningful than Xtet's "X."[157]

2.2.1 Experiments in music, theater, and performance art

The EAR Unit's eclectic programming at LACMA was not limited to musical composition, setting them apart from their Xtet peers. To their already varied programs the ensemble introduced additional creative work that drew equally from theater and performance art. Most of these projects were led by Jarvinen and clarinetist Jim Rohrig, who often acted as a creative duo. The two brought unique influences from each of their own artistic occupations. Jarvinen's multifaceted career as a performer-composer and polystylist might best seen through the lens of a sound-based performance approach he termed, "physical poetry": "non-narrative audio/visual compositions for the stage, incorporating sound, text, movement, lighting, and props."[158] Rohrig maintained an equally diverse professional life as a musician, composer, sound designer and film editor. Both were influenced by the richly experimental environment at CalArts, which molded their respective artmaking into multidisciplinary performance practices. As collaborators, Jarvinen and Rohrig generated a steady flow of ideas for the EAR Unit, many of which sought to break down conventions of classical new music concerts. [159]

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[157] Josef Woodard, "Xtet Marks 10th Birthday with Aplomb," *Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 1996.
[158] Arthur Jarvinen, "Arthur Jarvinen," accessed March 18, 2023, arthurjarvinen.com.
[159] Jarvinen's *Ivan, Where You Running To?* (1985), premiered on a LACMA concert, is emblematic of his theater-based composition. The work, which explores his interest in competitive breath holding, has players

Among Jarvinen and Rohrig's first collaborations at LACMA was the ensemble residency concert they curated on January 17, 1990, subtitled variously "Music and Theater" and "Metakonzert" (Rohrig, 2020a). The first half of the show featured simultaneous performances of Frederic Rzewski's *Spots* (1986), *Chains* (1986), and Mauricio Kagel's *Metapiece (Mimetics)* (1961). During the performances, they also screened *Lint*, a film by Rohrig, featuring Jarvinen and Dee McMillin. The concert fulfilled one of the optional instructions provided by Kagel for his piano solo, which calls for continual interruptions by other pieces on the program. The Rzewski pieces similarly provide open-ended instructions for a kind of meta-program; *Spots* and *Chains* are sets of miniatures that can be played in any order and distribution in the concert program. *Chains* calls for a speaker to recite news articles taken from a daily newspaper, while the minute-long fanfares in *Spots* "function like TV commercials, interrupting an otherwise continuous show."[160]

The EAR Unit came back from intermission to perform Cage's *Lecture on the Weather* with the composer himself reading the Preface live over the telephone. Rohrig and other EAR Unit members had given the first West Coast performance of *Lecture on the Weather*, also with a live reading by Cage, during the composer's residency at the 1982 CalArts Festival.[161] Thus, Rohrig and Jarvinen felt that Cage was the most appropriate choice to accompany the EAR Unit at LACMA. According to Rohrig, Jarvinen personally contacted Cage with the invitation and he acquiesced. During the

amplify their heartbeats while vigorously pounding the stage with vegetables and holding their breathes for as long as possible (Knoles, 2020).

[160] Frederic Rzewski, *Spots*, 1986, accessed February 13, 2023, https://vmirror.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/a/ac/IMSLP115700-WIMA.cd91-SPOTS.pdf.

[161] Program booklet for the CalArts Contemporary Music Festival 1982 (March 5-7, 1982), California Institute of the Arts Institute Archives, Unprocessed Collection, Contemporary Music Festivals 1978-1987.

concert, Jarvinen used a backstage phone to call the senior composer at his New York home and amplified their exchange and his performance over the house speakers.[162] The EAR Unit adapted Cage's instructions for text by Henry Thoreau to be read by 12 American men, instead having five of the seven members pre-tape video performances of the spoken parts.

Their opening concert the following season on October 10, 1990 also featured additional layers of unconventional performance and staging, this time in the form of a compact set of event scores and short films appropriately titled "Fluxus Manifestations." These were preceded on the program by three contemporary concert works performed by the EAR Unit: Charles Wuorinen's *Bearbeitungen über das Glogauer Liederbuch* (1962), Hope Lee's *I, Laika* (1989), and Steiger's *In Memoriam: Paul Fromm* (1989). For the second half, the EAR Unit produced "a flowing event from one-to-another of many different Fluxus pieces," functioning like a Fluxconcert within a concert (Knoles, 2023). Selections included some of the most iconic works from the Fluxus canon alongside many lesser-known compositions. These included nearly two dozen event scores by artists such as Yoko Ono, George Maciunas, Robert Bozzi, Harold Budd, Alison Knowles, George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Emmett Williams, Peter Frank, and Nam June Paik. In addition, they screened several films from the Fluxus Foundation Archive, including Ono's *Four* (Fluxfilm no. 16) (1966), sometimes referred to as "Bottoms" for its use of nude rear-ends of famous figures.

[162] Rohrig, email message to author, 2020a; Jarvinen describes this encounter in his interview with John Trubee: "As for the 'coolest,' to actually answer your question, it would have to be the time the EARs played John Cage's 'Lecture On the Weather,' which starts with a lengthy preamble that Cage requires be read before the piece proper. I called him from the L.A. County Museum at his home in New York and got him to read it himself live over the phone. That was very generous of him because he was in frail health at the time. The L.A. County Museum wouldn't authorize us to have an outside line for the concert, so I had to tap a backstage phone. That was cool." Jarvinen, 2007.

Violinist Lorentz remembers being deeply committed to the Fluxus concert and taking on many pieces. She and Jarvinen created an adaptation of Ono's *Cut Piece* (1964/1965) in which the performer sits alone on stage and instructs the audience to cut any amount of clothing off her using scissors. At LACMA, Jarvinen instead slowly cut off a negligee slip Lorentz was wearing (Lorentz, 2023). Percussionist Knoles requested that Lorentz also recreate the more obscure *Fluxclinic: Record of Features and Feats* (1966) by the Japanese radical art collective, Hi-Red Center. For *Fluxclinic*, Lorentz wore a nurse's outfit and approached members of the audience to take various measurements and short physical tests (Knoles, 2023).

The violinist also interpreted a handful of text scores that required unique treatment of her instrument. Bozzi's *Choice 8* (1966) provides clinical instructions for sawing the violin in half, while Brecht's *Solo for Violin, Viola, Cello or Contrabass* (1962) simply states, "polishing." Finally, for Maciunas' *Solo for Violin* (1962), Lorentz choreographed a sequence of violent actions to the instrument such that they climaxed along with the tune she simultaneously performed.[163] She recalls a similar build up while watching Knoles, Jarvinen and Stone perform *Nivea Cream Piece* (1962) by Knowles: "The way they handled it was genius because it just built up like a food fight. It started out very slow the way it's instructed. But they really got an explosive quality out of it. By the end they were just slapping it all over each other!" (Lorentz, 2023)

[163] "I did a kind of shtick build where I'd start little by doing something minor, like pulling the strings too hard. But then midway I was hitting and punting the violin. In one of the halls where it was still allowed, I put a cigarette out on the violin. … I probably didn't smoke anymore, but I had to. You basically brutalized the instrument. You didn't have to do it to a specific piece of music, but I thought it would be funnier—and it didn't have to be funny—but I thought it would be funny if there was a piece in there so that all the maltreating grew as the piece did. By the end you pretty much trashed it" (Lorentz, 2023).

Five months later, the EAR Unit recreated their Fluxconcert at the Ars Musica Festival in Brussels, performing in Studio 4 concert hall at the Flagey Building, home to the Brussels Philharmonic. This time they shared the concert with a lineup of influential musicians of the avant-garde that included Cage, Irvine Arditti, Roscoe Mitchell, Alvin Curran, Frederic Rzewski and Richard Teitelbaum. After the EAR Unit performed, Cage took the stage to read excerpts from his *Empty Words*. Some members of the ensemble recall differently that either a single audience member, or a whole rioting group, felt empowered to jump up on stage during Cage's reading and to bang on the piano and percussion instruments. This apparently so enraged Cage that he nearly walked off.

Other aspects of the Brussels performance set it apart from the one they gave at LACMA. At both shows, for instance, Knoles daringly carried out instructions in Paik's *Serenade for Alison* (1962) for removing nine colored panties one-by-one and carrying out various actions with them, including stuffing a few into the mouths of critics. Gregg Wager's review of the LACMA concert suggests that Knoles, rather than stuffing his mouth, chose to place a pair atop his head. He writes, "that act turned out to be a personal highlight of the event."[164] At the Ars Musica festival however, Knoles believes the press was given advance notice of Paik's instructions. She explains, "When I asked, 'Where's the critic?" he shouted, "I'm here!" and he opened his mouth" (Knoles, 2023). The Brussels performance was also memorable for the pianist Gloria Cheng who had begun playing with the EAR Unit around this time. Cheng nailed piano keys down in Maciunas' *Piano Piece #13* (1964). Finally, Lorentz remembers that the space at the Maison de la

[164] Gregg Wager, "E.A.R. Unit Brings Fluxus Event to County Museum," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1990.

Radio was quite reverberant, making the sound of sawing the violin in Bozzi's *Choice 8* even more horrifying.

> In Brussels the stage we were on was ambient, so the sound of the saw going through the violin and the strings, because the strings were on, was horrifying. Gaylord was kneeling, holding it. We heard this man hiss in the audience, just like a snake. And then, when it was finished, we heard another person loudly whisper, "Bravo." Right then and there, under his breath, Gaylord asked, "How'd that feel?" I was shaking. … It's a very strange thing to destroy a violin. There's all the destruction in piano pieces and stuff, but it's still a strange thing to do. It was great. It was very powerful. (Lorentz, 2023)

Figure 2.6: Backstage at Ars Musica Festival, March 17, 1991 (L-R): Rand Steiger, Robin Lorentz, Art Jarvinen, Gloria Cheng, Amy Knoles, Dorothy Stone, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Jim Rohrig. (Personal collection of Gloria Cheng)

2.2.2 World premieres

The EAR Unit used their platform at LACMA to commission many new works for the ensemble. On their first Ensemble Residency concert after returning from Brussels, on November 6, 1991, flutist Stone gave the world premiere of Milton Babbitt's only solo flute work, *None but the Lonely Flute*. Now considered a staple of late 20th century flute repertoire, *None but the Lonely Flute* is a fully-serialized composition based on fragments from Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky's romance for voice and piano, "None But The Lonely Hearts." Babbitt's solo is a dense yet expressive work that has since been analyzed for its virtuosity of both performance and composition.[165] He had worked with the EAR Unit during his residency at the 1986 CalArts Festival and maintained correspondences with Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, Stone's husband. The commission was especially important to Stone, being part of a cohort within the ensemble that included Duke-Kirkpatrick and Steiger who were particularly fond of dodecaphonic music (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022; Steiger, 2020f).

Babbitt's brief program note pays respect to Stone's dedication to the work: "I do not presume to direct the listener's awareness to other than that which least requires direction, the superb performance which the composition is about to receive."[166] In his *Los Angeles Times* review of the performance, Henken agrees with the composer's assessment of Stone's abilities, praising her interpretation as "delivered with unobtrusive

[165] See Daphne Leong & Elizabeth McNutt. "Virtuosity in Babbitt's Lonely Flute, with Reflections on Process," in *Performing Knowledge: Twentieth-Century Music in Analysis and Performance* (Oxford Unversity Press: 2019).
[166] Milton Babbitt, program note for *None but the Lonely Flute*, quoted in Alan Rich, liner notes for Dorothy Stone, *None but the Lonely Flute*, New World Records 80456.

virtuosity." Once again, however, Henken takes issue with the pacing of the EAR Unit's concert, which he describes as "a typically multifaceted, uneven program of premieres."[167] The evening also included local premieres of Charles Amirkhanian's *His Anxious Hours* and Subotnck's *All My Hummingbirds Have Alibis*, as well as the EAR Unit's first encounter with the music of Eve Belgarian, in her *Machaut in the Machine Age I.*

The ensemble's formal connection to Babbitt was contrasted with some of their more familiar and even affectionate relationships to other distinguished composers. These bore resemblance to the mentor-mentee relationships modeled by Morton Subotnick, in which their professional engagements as students blossomed into sustained friendships as the ensemble matured. For example, the composer Frederic Rzeswki first met the ensemble as students at CalArts in 1981 and remained their champion for the rest of his lifetime, attending their concerts whenever possible. His now popular work *Coming Together* (1975) was among the very first pieces the group played, and which remained in their repertoire for decades. The EAR Unit performed *Coming Together* on both the second and third official Bang On A Can Festival Marathon Concerts in 1988 and 1989 at the RAPP Center in New York.[168] Like others, pianist Mowrey remembers celebrating with the composer in their hotel room following a performance in 1989 at the North American New Music Festival at SUNY Buffalo:

> Rzewski was there when we played *Coming Together* at SUNY. We really had that piece nailed, so we just did such a remarkable job of it every time we played it. We understood it. It became very colorful and exact. Afterwards, we met Fred in a hotel room where he pulled out a bottle of

[167] John Henken, "New, Uneven Fare From E.A.R. Unit," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1991.
[168] Personal archive of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick; see also Bang on a Can, "Schedule," accessed December 25, 2023, https://bangonacan.org/events/1988/.

> whiskey. He said, "The EAR Unit plays *Coming Together* like they're playing Bach." He was really happy with it. (Mowrey, 2022)

The composer was therefore pleased to accept invitations to perform with the EAR Unit, including on their next Ensemble Residency concert on December 4, 1991, performing his own Piano Sonata (1991). He joined the group at the piano for the rest of the all-Rzewski program, which included *The Waves* (1988) and *Spots* (1986). The EAR Unit also reprised the composer's *Aerial Tarts* (1990), commissioned by the ensemble and premiered at the 1990 Dark Days Festival in Reykjavík, Iceland. The ensemble gave the US premiere of *Aerial Tarts* at LACMA the year prior on their final spring residency concert in 1990, which included a new collaboration with the performance artist Rachel Rosenthal.

Both the Rosenthal and Rzewski premieres were given lukewarm reviews by *Los Angeles Times* critic Martin Berhnheimer.[169] In his review of the 1991 all-Rzewski concert, Henken is even more unsatisfied with the piece and its performance: "Low-energy, low-imagination improvisation was also at the center of last year's *Aerial Tarts*, a 'rock-out' piece that simply doesn't."[170] He reserves the only praise for Rzewski's own energetic playing. The negative reviews did not diminish the EAR Unit's enthusiasm towards playing Rzewski's music. Some members of the ensemble remember *Aerial Tarts* as a strange but fun work to play. Nonetheless, they programmed it many times after its premiere, including at the 1990 Ojai Festival and the 1992 Festival of Contemporary Music at the Tanglewood Music Center.

[169] Martin Berhnheimer, "Rachel Rosenthal Guides E.A.R. Unit on an Amazon Safari : Diva: She remains a magnetic presence on the stage, even when her avant-garde vehicle falters," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1990.
[170] John Henken, "Rzewski Premieres Works at LACMA," *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1991.

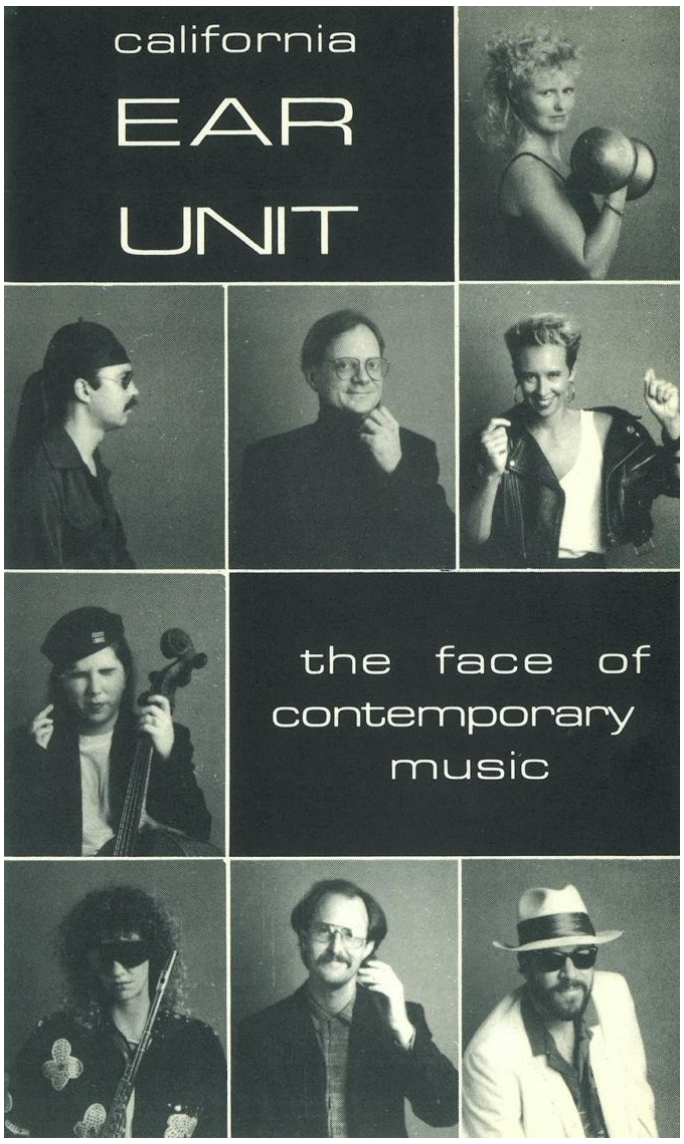

Figure 2.7: The California E.A.R. Unit, Promotional postcard for Ensemble Residency Series at LACMA, 1991-1992 season. Robin Lorentz, Art Jarvinen, Gaylord Mowrey, Amy Knoles, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, Dorothy Stone, Rand Steiger, Jim Rohrig. (Personal Collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

Terry Riley and Earle Brown, two additional composers with close ties to the EAR Unit, made appearances on their LACMA series on January 13, 1993. On this concert, the EAR Unit gave the world premiere of Riley's *Four Woelfli Portraits* (1993) for seven musicians and narrator. The four-movement work is a concert version of the composer's chamber opera, *The Saint Adolf Ring* (1992), based on the life and work of

Swiss artist Adolf Woelfli. With its imaginary musical calligraphy, Woelfli's enigmatic work had inspired other composers before Riley. Rather than attempt to transcribe the notation directly, Riley instead created interpretive impressions of the paintings based on the hours he spent contemplating the works, "absorbing their spirit and marveling at the unerring artistic soul behind them."[171] On the same concert, Brown conducted the Los Angeles premiere of his *Tracking Pierrot* (1992), a work that vacillates between traditionally notated music and his own "open-form" style first developed in the 1950s.

Riley worked closely with the ensemble's violinist on the opening of *Four Woelfli Portraits*, subtitled "Fountain March No. 49." The march is a slow processional with a 14-beat cycle that accompanies a poem by Woelfli about traveling through "endless eternity" in many fantastical vehicles, including giant fountains and electric serpents. Riley requested that the rhythmic ostinato begin each time with the cracking of a bullwhip by Lorentz and insisted that she use a full, 13 ft. bullwhip. For the premiere, Riley lent Lorentz his own bullwhip and coached her in parking lots. According to Lorentz, the effect on stage was menacing, and the audience's fearful reaction was enough to scare Lorentz herself.[172] In other performances after the premiere, Lorentz experimented with various sideways orientations, standing deep within the stage, so that the audience could see the length of it. The violinist also learned to keep several on-hand during performances as they tended to break. During the ensemble's 1997 England tour,

[171] Terry Riley, Program note for *Four Woelfli Portraits*, The California E.A.R. Unit, January 13, 1993, Los Angeles, California, Personal archive of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick.

[172] "I thought I could go out and buy a little riding crop and just snap it or get something to make that sound. He said, 'No, no, no!' He said, 'You gotta get a big one.' It had to be at least 13 ft. long. I think the shortest one I was ever allowed to use was 6 ft. He gave me his own for the very first performances, which he taught his sons to use. We went out in a parking lot and he showed me how to snap it. It was amazing …. God the sound of it. That's why he wanted it in there. I mean, the power it had in the piece was immense" (Lorentz, 2023).

Lorentz remembers rushing to a Chelsea with cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick to find a replacement. When none of the equestrian stores stocked them, they found a sex shop in town with a wide selection: "These were slightly smaller than Terry's, but they made a really good sound. It was like trying a violin. We went through about 10 of them and I bought a couple" (Lorentz, 2023).

Brown's LA premiere included a different kind of intervention. Like other compositions by Brown that the EAR Unit performed, *Tracking Pierrot* calls upon the conductor to arrange and shape musical cells in real-time. The EAR Unit was indeed used to working with Brown in this way. His artistic mentorship and father-like nature towards the EAR Unit was a cornerstone of the ensemble's origins. Brown first met members of the EAR Unit during his residency at CalArts in Fall 1980, leading the student ensemble in his Violin Concerto *Centering*.[173] Brown directed the EAR Unit several times, including at the American Center in Paris for the group's first official ensemble tour. Later, Brown invited the EAR Unit to perform his *Syntagm III* (1970) with him conducting at the Aspen Music Festival and School in 1990. The EAR Unit's LACMA performance was the last they gave with the composer.

2.2.3 Lawrence Brose and Douglas Cohen's *imusicircus*

For their final residency concert on May 22, 1996, the EAR Unit mounted a performance of Lawrence Brose and Douglas Cohen's *imusicircus (image - music -*

[173] See Chapter 1.

circus). The immersive concert installation is titled after John Cage's *Musicircus* (1967), but is in fact a threefold realization of his *Circus On* (1979), a set of instructions for using chance operations to translate a text into an audio performance. For the material of *imusicircus*, Brose and Cohen selected Stan Brakhage's *Metaphors on Vision*, Cage's *Empty Words* and Thoreau's *Journal*. The philosophical writings by Brakhage generated material for a series of simultaneous video installations, an optical variation on Cage's instructions for a "circus of sounds." Meanwhile, *Empty Words* and Thoreau's Journal were altered using Cage's mesostic technique to create a template for selecting the music to be performed live. Brose, a film artist who collaborated with Cage at the University at Buffalo, originally conceived of *imusicircus* as a kind of portrait of the composer and a translation of his musical aesthetics into the visual realm.[174]

Imusicircus was first produced at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 1993 for the "Citycircus" portion of John Cage's "Rolywholyover A Circus" installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Julie Lazar worked with Cage up until his death in 1992 on the creation of an immersive experience that transformed MOCA and other city sites, such as LACE, into domestic spaces, where chance-selected artworks from local museums were demoted to the status of everyday objects.[175]

For the LACMA version, Rohrig served as a liaison to Brose and Cohen and led the ensemble in making programming selections based on their own personal connections to the modified texts. The EAR Unit clarinetist had participated in both the 1993 performance at LACE and the additional 1995 version at Experimental Intermedia

[174]Lawrence Brose, "Lawrence Brose: A Master of Image Manipulation," accessed April 3, 2023, https://www.lawrencebrose.com/_files/ugd/213f83_dcd30a4f5ade4f799d990f11bb436a7d.pdf.
[175] Liora Belford, "The composer as curator-following John Cage's three compositions for museum," *Seismograf*, accessed April 3, 2023, https://seismograf.org/node/19362.

for the Guggenheim Museum SoHo's "Rolywholyover." Rohrig worked with Brose and Cohen to create an even larger version than the original LACE performance. In total, *imusicircus* at LACMA included over 70 performances and film screenings, set inside and around the Bing Theater. Their initial concept would have been even larger, utilizing the whole of the central plaza, all the campus walkways as well as the adjacent gallery windows. When the museum got cold feet, Rohrig modified the "walk thru" concept for the area in and around the Bing Theater (Rohrig, 2020b). A map with performance times allowed the audience to wander about the venue, where the EAR Unit and several collaborators were stationed throughout the day.

The EAR Unit brought in a handful of collaborators to help execute the intricately woven series of performances, most of which were done simultaneously. They were Susan Judy (soprano), Charles Lane (tenor), Dennis Parnell (tenor), Lynn Angebranndt (cello), and Matthew Easton (performer). Lighting design was provided by the multimedia artist Miha Vipotnik, and stage direction by artist Dee McMillin, Rohrig's wife. All the musical guests had close ties to the ensemble, going back to their student years at CalArts in the 1980s.

Lane embraced the opportunity to contribute to the event, having worked with the EAR Unit on multiple occasions, particularly in theatrical and unconventional performances. Next to the outdoor ticket booth, he performed McMillin and Cohen's *Pool Piece* (1983), in which he responded to musical themes performed by the EAR Unit with a series of gestures in a child's inflatable pool filled with water (Rohrig, 2020b). He describes the physicality of the work: "I was jumping up and down, going in and out of the pool, splashing around, all these different things that I was supposed to do anytime I

heard these musical cues. Sometimes the instrumentalists would overlap, so it got to be kind of wild and splashy" (Lane, 2023). Lane also recalls performing a work that involved sitting blindfolded at a table on which several bowls contained an assortment of objects. The tenor was amplified and asked to vocally interpret the physical texture of each object as he lifted them out and held them in his hands. "I put my hands in each bowl and would feel like, the inside of somebody's guts or something. … I think that was a Cage piece. I'm not sure" (Lane, 2023).

Among the many works performed by the EAR Unit for *imusicircus* were Cage's *Theater Piece* and Brown's *Four Systems*. The ensemble borrowed aspects of their previous interpretations of *Theatre Piece,* which they performed for the composer at the 1987 CalArts Festival and on the 1988 Bang On A Can Festival. This included Duke-Kirkpatrick performing a solo Bach cello suite using a carrot as a bow and Knoles vacuuming concrete in her underwear and intermittently slapping a bust of Beethoven. Throughout the entire evening, the ensemble programmed a player piano in the Bing Theater lobby to play Erik Satie's *Vexations,* which ostensibly asks the performer to repeat two unmetered staves of music a total of 840 times. Somehow, the piano seemed to stop playing and start again all on its own, a fact noted by *Los Angeles Times* writer Timothy Mangan: "Outside the theater at the end, 'Vexations' had fallen silent. Then it started up again. A truly Cageian moment."[176]

Rohrig describes *imusicircus* as "an extremely complicated and ambitious show to put on with the very modest resources at our disposal" (Rohrig, 2020b). Indeed, Brose and Cohen's Cage spin off is remembered by EAR Unit members as one of the largest

[176] Timothy Mangan, "'imusicircus' a Rollicking, Amusing Affair," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1996.

projects he spearheaded. The pianist Vicki Ray, who had joined the ensemble to replace Gloria Cheng in 1995, remembers being impressed by its incredible scope: "[Jim Rohrig] would come up with astonishing ideas, like the whole *imusicircis*, Cage's *imusicircus,* which we did at LACMA. It was a massive, *massive* undertaking. And that was all Jim's baby and his whole concept. It was really staggering what we pulled off—what he pulled off" (Ray, 2020).

The use of the Bing Theater for *imusicircus* to create a complex and immersive experience exemplified the freedom given to the EAR Unit to make full use of the concert space. The venue's austere interior, modeled after traditional European concert halls, lent the perfect backdrop to contrast some of the ensemble's most subversive performance routines.[177] In these instances, Stalvey looked the other way and made few comments to the ensemble about their provocations, even when they resulted in structural damage to the Bing Theater. During their performance in *imusicircus* of Cage's *Theater Piece*, for example, the EAR Unit accidentally let hot wax drip onto the theater's Steinway grand piano. Duke-Kirkpatrick recalls that Stalvey took care of the expenses to repair the instrument without involving the ensemble. She explains, "All I remember is that we did not get in trouble. He was tolerant of pretty much anything we wanted to do on that stage. And we *trashed* that stage a few times" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022).

[177] Steiger and Vees collectively recount a conceptual performance that was representative of the EAR Unit's typical hijinks at LACMA. The EAR Unit performed a concert at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena to celebrate the opening of the Olympic Arts Festival. They performed Cage's *Theatre Piece* indoors, followed by works by Reich and Bergamo performed outside on the venue steps. While the audience listened to the performances and enjoyed cake and champagn, Trubee and Vees staged a drive-by protest in Vees' purple GMC truck in which Trubee shouted, "This is not art!" over a megaphone. Steiger and Vees remember some enraged audience members getting close enough to toss champagn into their vehicle. The idea for the prank was a rare collaboration between Steiger and Jarvinen (Steiger, 2021a; Vees, 2021b).

The *Los Angeles Times* review of *imusicircus* at LACMA was positive but brief. The music critic Alan Rich, however, gave a more intimate description of the event.[178] Unlike other reviewers who were critical of the ensemble's appearance and programming, Rich appeared to understand the EAR Unit's approach as a kind of multiplicity, not simply chaos. Writing for the *LA Weekly*, Rich affectionately describes *imusicircus* in terms of its overall effect:

> I'm not sure how much sense I can get into words about the California E.A.R. Unit's final concert last week, unless you were there, but it was a wonderful event even so. … You didn't go to such events for their component parts, not even the sight of Erika Duke-Kirkptraick playing her cello with a carrot for a bow, or Dennis Parnell got up as the Abominable Snowman keening away at something or other. You went for the texture of so much going on in so little time and space: the opposite end of Cage's famous silent pieces. You missed the sound of Cage himself, reading Thoreau in his buttery, twee manner that remains inimitable. And yet at the end, when Charles Lane's onstage singing of Morton Feldman merged into the surrounding silence, you knew that something beautiful had been happening, and it didn't matter that you couldn't quite give it a name.[179]

The EAR Unit created two additional concerts at LACMA that functioned similarly as single, evening-length gestures. A year after *imusicircus*, on May 28, 1997, the ensemble produced a "Dada" concert that included 20 works performed simultaneously in seven blocks. Peppered throughout the concert were performances of various excerpts of sound poetry by the early 20th century Dadaist artist, Kurt Schwitters, including costumed interpretations again by Lane of "Doof" (1922) and "Niessscherzo" (1936/37). The EAR Unit also commissioned and performed with Don Preston, the

[178] Dubbed "the dean of American classical-music criticism" by Alex Ross, Rich was influential in Southern California music on multiple fronts. After moving to Los Angeles in 1981, the same year the EAR Unit was founded, Rich became a music critic and collaborated with the arts patron Betty Freeman to organize her famous soirées for contemporary music. Alex Ross, "For Alan Rich," from *Alex Ross: The Rest Is Noise*, April 24, 2010, https://www.therestisnoise.com/2010/04/for-alan-rich.html.
[179] Alan Rich, "Affirmation and Promise," *LA Weekly*, June 6, 1996.

founding keyboardist of Zappa's rock band, The Mothers of Invention. Preston's work for the EAR Unit, *The Bride Stripped Bare,* is titled after the glass panel painting by Marcel Duchamp and features a glass replica used as a percussion instrument. The audience heard recordings of strings snapping as Preston pretended to mutilate the piano with a crowbar. [180] The composer Eve Beglarian also made an appearance that evening, reciting her own *Landscaping for Privacy* (1995), a setting of poetry by Linda Norton.

Another concert on January 10, 2000, was described by Mark Swed in the *Los Angeles Times* as a "eclectic, fun party."[181] The event was one of several EAR Unit residency concerts co-produced by the Monday Evening Concert series. Billed as a millennium celebration, the concert featured 13 world premieres written specifically for the occasion, beginning with a festive processional by Alison Knowles, *Peeking at the Millennium* (2000). Other works came from living composers from a range of classical and jazz idioms, including Nels Cline, Vinny Golia, Robert Kyr, Wadada Leo Smith and Lindsay Vickery. Members of the ensemble performed Bergamo's *Easy Schlepp* (1999) for boomwhackers, sitting informally at the edge of the stage. The EAR Unit also commissioned MEC director, Dorrance Stalvey, for the second time. Their first and only other performance of Stalvey's music was the world premiere of his *Pound Songs* on the 1985 MEC series. Throughout the evening, audience members performed "Lucky" Mosko's *Some Variations on a Theme of Sol Bright* by handing out candy and written messages.

The New Year's concert exemplified the EAR Unit's increased focus on Cage-ian experiments in theater over repertoire by celebrated high modernists. As their

[180] Don Preston, liner notes to *Works,* Crossfire 9507-2.
[181] Mark Swed, "EAR Unit Throws and Eclectic, Fun Party," *Los Angeles Times* January 12, 2000.

CalArts heyday in the early 1980s receded, their willingness to learn challenging atonal works dwindled. The thorny, abstract compositions by composers like Elliott Carter or Pierre Boulez, which used to fill out their eclectic programs, became increasingly rare. This did not necessarily result in their LACMA programs being any less demanding of the musicians and audiences, nor less varied in their stylistic range. The group indeed made monumental works by their early mentors such as Brown, "Lucky" Mosko and Subotnick abiding staples of their repertoire for the rest of their career. More often however, concerts featured a mix of minimalist works and Dadaist experiments, with the occasional serial composition.

Their first concert the next season on October 18, 2000, contained mostly a variety of pieces of blended pop, folk and post-minimalism, starting with Philip Bimstein's offbeat *Garland Hirchi's Cows* (1992), a Reich-like concerto for chamber ensemble and recorded cow sounds. The group also performed David Lang's *Sweet Air* (1999), a gentle minimalist work about a child's experience of laughing gas, and Steven Mackey's *Micro Concerto* (1999) for percussion and five instruments with the ensemble's former percussionist, Daniel Kennedy, as guest soloist. The major contrast of the evening was a performance by Duke-Kirkpatrick and Lorentz of Jacob Druckman's *Dark Wind* (1994), a late work in the composer's expressive but abstract atonal style.

2.3 LACMA ends contemporary music programs

The EAR Unit's concerts at the Bing Theater ended abruptly in May 2005, when the museum announced that it planned to discontinue its EAR Unit and Xtet Ensemble

Residencies and the Rosalinde Gilbert Chamber Concerts. [182] They gave Monday Evening Concerts one more year of sponsorship before it would also be removed from its music programs. LACMA did not publicize any justification for the move, except for a statement in the *Los Angeles Times* by the museum's Deputy Director Bruce Robertson, claiming that "new music is less of a necessity than it was a decade ago, given the strength of contemporary programming at a number of venues in L.A. This fact is reflected in audiences which are ebbing rather than growing at LACMA."[183] Numbers had in fact dwindled over the 20 years the EAR Unit performed at the museum. Nonetheless, the decision came as a surprise to the musicians, whose ensemble career flourished and matured under such a unique spotlight. The termination of their residency and the removal of the MEC series effectively ended the EAR Unit's relationship to LACMA for good. Shortly after the announcement to cut the music programs, Dorrance Stalvey passed away at his home on July 10, 2005.

The news was not received well in classical musical circles beyond MEC and the EAR Unit. Ernest Flesichmann, then general manager of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and founder of the Philharmonic's New Music Group and Green Umbrella series, noted the setback caused by uprooting MEC. "'This is a big blow to the development of a vibrant contemporary music scene in Los Angeles … It just sets us back terribly, and it is really unfortunate that a sister arts organization should take it upon itself to make such a negative statement about music."[184]

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[182] In 2002, Stalvey created an identical position for the ensemble Xtet, a cohort of professional studio musicians, conducted by composer Donald Crockett, mostly from the Thornton School of Music at the University of Southern California.
[183] Chris Pasles, "LACMA ends residency of two new-music groups," *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 2005.
[184] Emily Quinn, "L.A. Museum Slashes Contemporary-Music Program," *Playbill*, June 6, 2005.

In a piece for *LA Weekly* titled "Silence Prevails," Alan Rich further condemns the museum for discarding a precious part of Los Angeles music culture, calling the situation "shameful." In the piece, Rich publicizes a letter from Robertson to "a well-known and distinguished arts patron," most likely Betty Freeman, justifying the decision by citing declining audiences and a disconnect between the music and visual arts programs.[185] LACMA's Deputy Director writes, "'We feel that the musical landscape of Los Angeles is changing and that what LACMA needed to do 20 years ago, when we started developing our current classical musical programs, is not what we need to do now.'" This statement less than directly refers to the EAR Unit's residency, which had been created roughly two decades prior in 1987. Rich counters by attributing the frequently small audiences to LACMA's own poor concert publicity. He defends the importance of contemporary music programming by emphasizing Los Angeles' ascendency as an international cosmopolitan center for the arts, echoing the globalist rhetoric of the 1980s.[186] For Rich, that "critics worldwide write enviously about Los Angeles' musical progress, liberally citing the LACMA concerts along the way" demonstrates the irreparable harm to the city's cultural institutions brought on by the museum's misguided decision.

The EAR Unit was able to recover quickly from the loss of both their venue and their artistic champion in Stalvey. Upon receiving news of the EAR Unit's termination, CalArts made accommodations to feature the EAR Unit at the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater (REDCAT), a multi-use blackbox theater in the Walt Disney Concert Hall complex, which had just opened in 2003. Under its new director, Justin Urcis, MEC

[185] Alan Rich, "Silence Prevails," *LA Weekly*, July 14, 2005.
[186] See Chapter 1.

also relocated temporarily to REDCAT, and then to Zipper Concert Hall at the Colburn School's new downtown campus. From then on, the EAR Unit no longer gave ensemble concerts for MEC. However, several of its longstanding members continued to be asked hired as individuals in the MEC Ensemble.

The abruptness of these changes was mitigated by gradual personnel shifts that resulted in a new artistic chemistry towards the end of the ensemble's tenure at LACMA. Steiger's 1985-1986 Rome Prize Fellowship and faculty appointment at UC San Diego in 1987 took him away from the activities of the group. By the 1990s, the composer had stopped playing percussion and served exclusively as their conductor. Around 1990, Steiger was asked to formally step down after programmers expecting to see him were disappointed by his absence, although he remained active off-and-on with the ensemble until their departure from LACMA in 2005 (Steiger, 2020b). The gradual waning of Steiger's New York "Uptown" influences on the group was balanced by Jarvinen and Rohrig's departure after their Spring season in 1999. Rohrig went on to pursue a fulltime career in television editing and was replaced by clarinetist Marty Walker. Jarvinen's conflicts with the group meanwhile were more complex as he continued to make appearances with the group at LACMA and influenced their programming from the outside. The EAR Unit did not replace Jarvinen with a second percussionist. The pianist Lorna Eder also stepped down at the beginning of their 2000 season. Late into the 1990s Eder found it difficult to balance taking care of her two children and going on tour with the EAR Unit (Eder, 2020).

2.4 Programming meetings and operations

The LACMA residency challenged the EAR Unit to develop a consistent method of generating four unique concert programs a year, a task made especially difficult by their already busy touring schedule. One of their primary strategies was simply to allow their concerts to be highly mixed. Indeed, as demonstrated in this chapter, their programs tended to feature a broad assortment of styles within contemporary music, ranging in scope from commissioned chamber pieces to large-scale installations, like *imusicircus.* In retrospect, this approach to programming reflects a collective mindset, one that sought to showcase the full range of their musical interests and individual skillsets.

To generate such an abundance of ideas, the ensemble established a practice of holding annual programming meetings. These were lengthy affairs, involving food, alcohol, and heated conversation. Over time, the ensemble learned that they required an entire day, usually in the summer, to plan a full season. Members of the ensemble took turns hosting. However, most sessions were held at cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick's house, where they ate and debated around her dining room table. The musicians all brought scores and recordings of works they were interested in performing, taking turns to make a case for their proposals. At the end of the day, the ensemble voted on each piece and preliminary programs were drawn up. The back and forth needed to arrive at these decisions were drawn out and often involved some sparring. Like others, Steiger remembers meetings being dynamic exchanges: "Even when we didn't agree on everything, it was all about exciting ideas. We'd talk about things we'd like to do. We would laugh. Somebody would propose something ironic, and everybody would love it" (Steiger, 2020b).

Key to their decision-making in these meetings was the ultimate promise of compromise, that each player would get at least one piece programmed at LACMA that satisfied their interests. This most often resulted in a kind of kaleidoscopic programming, in which the central theme was the very lack of unity, or heterogeneity.[187] Knoles describes these negations as being heated but amicable.

> We had these programming meetings that were more like wars. Erika [Duke-Kirkpatrick] really wanted to do more Carter, Wuorinen, Babbitt. Jim [Rohrig] was kind of down with that, but he insisted that we always do one theater concert a year, which was cool. We were all down with that. But that's sort of how I would get maybe a more minimalist piece into the program, that kind of thing. So, it was always kind of a negotiation. (Knoles, 2020)

The ensemble's willingness to provide equal opportunities was partly based on a desire to learn from one another, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable personal differences. Duke-Kirkpatrick reflects on how her relationship to Jarvinen was bridged by mutual respect. "We were people who might not have been. Art and I would never have hung out were we not in a group together. I adored him. But there's no way— I mean, my aesthetic and his aesthetic are so different. And the way of living one's life. And yet, he taught me *everything* I know about rhythm, absolutely everything" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022). Others note that each member seemed to have hidden talents. Lorentz explains that their combined skills enabled them to program works for voice or unconventional instruments, like Stockhausen's *Stimmung* or Kagel's *Exotica*. "You'd find out that they could cover a singing part really well, and in a way that was in new music fashion and

[187] Violinist Lorentz compared the ensemble's programming to choosing dishes on a menu: "People like Art Jarvinen and Rand and Jim all had really specific composers and projects in mind that really worked. What would happen is they'd bring them to the table, and we'd sift through them like a menu and say, 'Well, we've got a bunch of this. It's like your meat and potatoes. And over here, you need your vegetables.' I mean, it was really fun. We really worked hard on balancing certain programs like menus" (Lorentz, 2022).

approach. Or they had an entirely different instrument hiding in the closet that they could play well enough to negotiate some of these things" (Lorentz, 2022). Coming from a professional cohort at USC, Ray felt "liberated" to work with musicians less bound to their instrument, and who all pursued improvisation and composition (Ray, 2020).

The EAR Unit's versatility led them to representing a variety of extremes. Jarvinen once suggested that the group, having played at some of the first Bang On A Can Festivals, was capable of traversing both the experimental "Downtown" New York scenes and the rigorous composition of the "Uptown" institutions.[188] This was also true of their stage presence and attire, which they allowed to function as an expression of their individuality. For Jarvinen especially, style was an integral part of his artistic approach, one that showed clear influences from the unfettered informality of CalArts percussion groups from the 1970s, such as the Repercussion Unit and the Antenna Reparimen. Jarvinen describes some of the more subversive outfits that would be common at LACMA. "Usually in L.A. Dorothy would wear things like a mini skirt with six guns on it, Amy would wear rubber skirts and cowboy boots, and I'd have on a white dinner jacket and a Fez. Some reviewers talked more about our clothes than the music." Even Steiger, who held on to a more formal vision for the group, expressed relief that neither light nor serious approach ultimately won out over the other.

> This isn't so much exactly about repertoire choice, but attitude. I wanted us to be like the kind of new music group that did meat and potatoes repertoire of all kinds, aspired to play great music, played really well, and presented in a really serious atmosphere. And then there were people in

[188] "Once I joined I had a lot to do with bringing programming ideas to the table, and I think the most interesting thing about the group is the amazing diversity of repertoire that we did, because we all had different things we were interested in. You can't show me another ensemble on the planet that covers the territory we did over the years. … Especially due to Bang On A Can we were maybe the only - certainly on a very short list of - west coast groups to play any active role in the Downtown New York scene when it was still evolving. But because we could play Carter and Babbitt and all that stuff too, we also worked Uptown." Jarvinen, 2007.

the group, each with their own take on this; Amy's irreverence, Art's radical nature and Jim's kind of sense of humor that always was pushing us in the direction of doing things that kind of put out a message that we're not so serious because we were having fun. And we want *you* to have fun, too! I think that's one of the things that people really loved about the group. So, I'm not criticizing that at all. I'm just saying that if it was my group, and I was telling people what to do, that side of the group would have never happened. That would have been lost. That kind of wacky appearance and attitude that we put across, people really loved. It was also really funny and interesting to them. Within that context, we could come out and do a kick ass performance of Elliot Carter's music. And so, there was the whole issue of seriousness versus lightness. (Steiger, 2020b)

Figure 2.8: The California E.A.R. Unit promotional photos (ca. 1994). (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

Although every member was given an equal vote in programming decisions, not all members held strong artistic opinions. Eder maintains that she always deferred to the

other pianists, Michael McCandless and Gaylord Mowrey, who she felt had more experience than her in contemporary music. Interestingly, Mowrey expressed a similar sentiment about repertoire selection, which he claims he "left up to those who actually had works they wanted to perform" (Mowrey, 2022). As pianists, learning music was extremely demanding of their time and focus. This was also true of violinist Lorentz, who looked to others in the group to make curational decisions.

> For me, I trusted their leadership in programming and the adventure in those things. I was still— we probably should have had two violinists in the group. For the longest chunk, when there was a certain type of programming going on, we had two pianists. For string players, Erika and I were it. And so often, the workload was so severe and I was so busy learning it that I would just trust whoever brought it to the group and learn from them. (Lorentz, 2022)

The EAR Unit also continued to receive input from the composer Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, who married the ensemble's flutist, Dorothy Stone in 1989. Mosko taught composition at CalArts beginning in 1972 and co-directed the graduate new music ensemble, the Twentieth Century Players. In that capacity Mosko introduced the student musicians of the EAR Unit to a range of contemporary music as well as to the composers themselves, thus serving a crucial role in the ensemble's transformative experience at CalArts.[189] After graduating, the EAR Unit remained bonded to Mosko and looked to him as their unofficial leader. Mosko made occasional appearance at programming meetings throughout the 1980s, offering to make new composer connections and providing feedback on repertoire. During the ensemble's years at LACMA, Mosko's gradually lessened his involvement in the group's inner workings, which some members attribute to his declining health beginning in the late 1990s. Mosko was also increasingly occupied

[189] See Chapter 1.

with conducting positions he accepted with the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players and the Contemporary Chamber Players at the University of Chicago. However, several of the EAR Unit's major commissions for their residency, such as Babbitt's *None but the Lonely Flute* and Riley's *Four Wölfli Portraits*, were mediated by his influence. Although Mosko never became of member of the EAR Unit, he remained artistically and personally influential to the group throughout the rest of his life, even as he began to back away from the group.

The ensemble's operations did not necessarily result in a balanced workload. Indeed, the labor involved in both the concert planning and the ensemble's operations were distributed somewhat unevenly, with certain members volunteering to take on more responsibilities. Rohrig and Steiger are credited as founders of the EAR Unit, having been the ones to initially galvanize a select group of musicians within their graduate cohort. In the early years prior to receiving the residency position at LACMA, Steiger oversaw most of the ensemble's administration while serving as their unofficial Artistic Director. The composer claims that the position was merely a formality for presenters and institutions who expected them to credit a leader (Steiger, 2020a). The group also hired Heidi Lesemann, then Assistant Director of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute and former Production Manager for the Ojai Festival for five years, to serve as their manager between 1984 and 1987. Lesemann recalled interacting primarily with Steiger and that most of her work dealt with their publicity since the ensemble handled most of their contracting for themselves.[190]

[190] "I'm not sure that I did all that much for them. I would get an occasional phone call from somebody who wanted to engage the EAR Unit, but they got most of their own gigs. I remember we needed to get photographs done. We did some crazy thing out in some forest somewhere, I think. Really, my memory of it is more connected with conversations I would have with Rand. I didn't at that time get close to the

Some of these roles shifted and expanded over the course of the ensemble's LACMA tenure. When the EAR Unit received non-profit status in 1988 for example, Stone was officially named Executive Director. Like Steiger's prior distinction as Artistic Director, Stone was given this position in part to satisfy requirements by the federal government for 501(c)(3) internal structure. The EAR Unit, meanwhile, continued to assert autonomy as a collectively run musical organization, one that gave every member and equal voice. Stone did in fact come to hold some unspoken authority as the group's main visionary, although this was still in name only and not always functionally realized. It was known that the flutist had dreamed of having her own contemporary music ensemble since her days as a student at the Manhattan School of Music (Steiger, 2020a). Several EAR Unit members, who remained among her closest friends throughout her lifetime, often characterized her as soft-spoken in everyday life, but passionate and industrious when it came to artistic leadership. Stone and Duke-Kirkpatrick eventually settled into their primary role as financial officers of the group, spending many hours at home and on tour with the ensemble writing grant applications.[191] Towards the mid-1990s, Knoles took on an increasingly significant role booking engagements and overseeing finances. By 2005, when the ensemble was removed from LACMA's programs, Knoles was single-handedly running most of the ensemble's operations.

Perhaps even more than the planning and organization, the concerts themselves brought out the ensemble's cooperative spirit. LACMA's Bing Theater did not provide

performers. … Anyway, I just can't remember all the specifically. I think I must have done some publicity for them and maybe handled some contracts or letters of agreement. I wouldn't say that my role was terrible important" (Lesemann, 2020).

[191] "I remember writing all these grants in Aspen. That was really stressful. We used a typewriter in the library. You'd put in a quarter and when your time was up it would randomly type three or four characters on top of your already messed up document" (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2020).

stagehands or sound engineers, leaving nearly all the concert production in their hands. With funds from the residency budget, the EAR Unit relied on their CalArts network to contract sound engineers, including Gregory Kuhn, Mark Waldrep and Jack Vees. The ensemble did not find hiring stagehands to be a worthwhile expense, and instead made all their setup changes themselves, a fact that was frequently noted by reviewers who balked at their shows' lengthy run times. Lorentz attributes the tedious stage changes to the varied nature of their concert programs, which could easily transition from a traditional chamber ensemble to an electroacoustic setup with theatrical staging. "We weren't just a string quartet that came out and put our music on the stand. We had calculators, light switches, gizmos, extra instruments. Those configurations, we'd have to strike ourselves during the audience's intermission and then go again" (Lorentz, 2023). The EAR Unit found such complicated setups to be difficult to convey to stagehands, instead preferring to do the work for themselves.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter has focused on performances the California E.A.R. Unit gave at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, beginning with appearances on the historic Monday Evening Concerts series in 1984 through their 18-year ensemble residency from 1987 to 2005. Together, these formed a major throughline in the ensemble's career by providing a consistent platform to present their creative work. Importantly, concerts at the Bing Theater showcased the ensemble's signature approach to programming, which featured striking juxtapositions of works spanning various styles of contemporary music. Among

them were local and world premieres by major figures of the avant-garde, including Louis Andriessen, Milton Babbitt, Eve Beglarian, Earle Brown, John Cage, Alison Knowles, Terry Riley, Frederic Rzewski and Frank Zappa among others. The EAR Unit contrasted more conventional concert music with performance art and multifaceted theater pieces, many of which served to reframe the concert experience entirely.

Stalvey's permissiveness allowed the EAR Unit to program concerts in this way. Indeed, the terms of their residency came with hardly any expectations placed on programming and virtually no consequences to pushing boundaries. This sense of freedom ultimately made the Bing Theater an important site for the ensemble to explore and constitute a collective artistic identity. As was the case since their formation, their self-image relied on an understanding of themselves as a "unit" made up of many unexpected parts. Thus, the opportunity to serve each member's individual interests, and to do so in any combination, enabled them to put this concept of a "unit" into action. Conveniently, the venue seemed to accommodate these competing aesthetic perspectives all too well. Its history with the MEC series, for example, made it a fitting place to perform new works by internationally recognized composers and to showcase their work in academic new music. At the same time, the Bing Theater's austerity and association to a historical series made it an equally useful location for more experimental agitations and performance art interventions. The sheer size of the greater LACMA campus further enhanced their ability to mount immersive, theatrical projects.

To mitigate their differences, the EAR Unit developed an organizational approach that gave each member an equal voice to present ideas and select repertoire. Although this process was equal in principle, most of the artistic decisions and group management

fell upon a core group of outspoken members within the ensemble; several musicians tended to defer to those with stronger artistic opinions while others took on more of the clerical operations. Nonetheless, every member participated in the yearly programming meetings, which frequently resulted in healthy bickering, with ideas emanating from several opposing camps. However, once programs were settled, the musicians would commit decisively to whatever music was put before them. Since LACMA did not provide stagehands or sound engineers, the ensemble was further forced to function cooperatively thanks to the do-it-yourself nature of their shows. Thus, the EAR Unit's unified identity was further reified not simply by the music they played, but by the very organizational processes that helped maintain a shared sense of responsibility.

In a broader context, the EAR Unit's LACMA concerts were noteworthy events for contemporary music in Los Angeles. They received consistent press in the *Los Angeles Times* and *Herald Examiner*, with reviewers tending to praise their technical abilities while questioning their program choices and presentation. This attention may be attributed in part to the fact that the ensemble had so few peers at a time when contemporary music performance was becoming popularized.

As I discuss in the previous chapter, large-scale festivals of new music brought attention to the surge in institutionalized programs for composition and performance, such as the curriculum developed at CalArts. In his management of the LACMA music programs, Stalvey seemed to have made some calculation about the significance of the EAR Unit as representatives of these new trends. His creation of an Ensemble Residency program just for the EAR Unit, and later Xtet, can be understood as an extension of his publicly maligned approach, which entrusted a young generation of musicians with

complete curatorial agency. By diminishing his own role, Stalvey empowered the EAR Unit and others to function more directly as stakeholders in the developing culture of contemporary classical music in Los Angeles. By the time the EAR Unit moved to REDCAT, such practices had become accepted as standard.

CHAPTER 3

Interdisciplinary Collaborations for Music in Motion (1993-1998)

Aside from their four yearly concerts at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, most of the California E.A.R. Unit's work throughout the 1990s took them outside of Los Angeles. Their touring schedule was comprised of various engagements that included student composer workshops, international festivals, and standalone concerts at major venues like the Kennedy Center in New York City or Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, England. In this decade, however, a substantial portion of their work outside of Los Angeles was dedicated to Music in Motion, a commissioning program aimed at building local audiences for new music. Unlike institutions and presenters that only produced concerts, Music in Motion was intentionally designed to support various stages of the collaborative process through public workshops and other activities. The EAR Unit participated in four of these residencies, each held at different host sites across the country, producing new works by composers Eve Beglarian (1994), Bernardo Feldman (1994), Paul Dresher (1995), Annea Lockwood (1995), Jack Vees (1996), and Rand Steiger (1998).

The EAR Unit's Music in Motion collaborations all involved some degree of co-authorship by the ensemble. As interdisciplinary projects, they also shared the implicit aim of obscuring distinctions between composition, improvisation, theater, and poetry. The following chapter therefore looks exclusively at this body of work as a means of exploring the ensemble's creative output and working process in greater detail. My analysis draws from interviews I conducted with each of the participating composers as

well as all available performance materials. I situate the pieces within each composer's aesthetic preoccupations, showing how the EAR Unit's own interests influenced both the pieces and the composers themselves. In doing so, I also trace the development of each work according to the specific contributions made by individual ensemble members and their creative practices.

More broadly, this chapter sheds light on how the EAR Unit contributed to emerging concepts of the contemporary music ensemble as a viable collaborative model. By highlighting some of their most mature work, this chapter illustrates the EAR Unit's particular interpretation of such a formation, exemplified by its broad range and versatility. The topic also affords additional space throughout the chapter for brief comparison of the EAR Unit to three of its counterparts at the time: the Relâche ensemble, the Paul Dresher Ensemble, and the San Francisco Contemporary Players. As discussed in the introduction below, Music in Motion was designed precisely with such ensembles in mind and aspired to bring them into more integrated collaborative scenarios involving musicians, composers, and audiences.

3.1 Music in Motion

Music in Motion expanded the notion of an artist residency to include multiple sites supporting a network of participants. In its initial design, five presenting organizations across the US sponsored five new music ensembles, each paired with two composers. The participating composers and ensembles met at their sites for three, week-

long residencies, spread out over the course of a year.[192] The hosting institutions partnered with Music in Motion to provide various opportunities for public outreach, including open rehearsals held in front of live audiences. The overarching aim of this model was to shift focus away from a finished product, and instead to engage the public in the process of creating new works of music.[193] The program lasted for five iterations, from 1993 to 1999, and produced collaborations with more than 30 composers.

The same five ensembles participated in Music in Motion's first three years. The groups were the Relâche ensemble (Philadelphia, PA), Present Music (Milwaukeea, WI), the California E.A.R. Unit (Los Angeles, CA), the New Performance Group (Seattle, WA), and Zeitgeist (St. Paul, MN). Each year, ensembles would be in residence at a new site from either the Cornish College of the Arts (Seattle, WA), the Walker Art Center (Minneapolis, MN), Arizona State University, West (Phoenix, AZ), the Fleisher Art Memorial (Philadelphia, PA), or the Orlando Museum of Art (Orlando, FL).[194] Neither the ensemble nor the composer would be based at the site they were assigned. This was designed to facilitate as many new audience introductions as possible.

Music in Motion was founded and managed by Relâche, a presenting organization with a chamber ensemble dedicated to contemporary music based in Philadelphia, and the only group to participate in all six years. However, the Music in Motion's true architect was the Relâche director, Joseph Franklin, a composer and arts administrator. While studying composition at Temple University in the late 1970s, Franklin sought to galvanize a cohort of like-minded musicians and composers into creating a cultural

[192] Joseph Franklin, "Music in Motion," in *Settling Scores: A Life in the Margins of American Music* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2006).
[193] Franklin, "Music in Motion," 256.
[194] Franklin, 256.

movement for contemporary music in Philadelphia. Together with trombonist Joseph Showalter in 1977, Franklin co-founded Relâche originally as a composer-performer collective.[195] Franklin later attended concerts at CalArts during the New Music America 1985 Festival, where he first met members of the EAR Unit (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023). The scope of the New Music America Festivals proved to be a good match for Franklin's lofty ambitions for the Philadelphia scene.[196] In 1987, Relâche produced the New Music America Festival in Philadelphia with Franklin as Production Director.

Even after New Music America 1987, Franklin remained convinced that more could be done to foster a deeper relationship between audiences and performers of contemporary music. In his memoir, he writes,

> I felt that all of us in the New Music community were spinning our collective wheels. For every good idea, every innovative project that was launched and every successful new work presented to the public, we seemed to be taking strides backwards in terms of building new audiences and financial support.[197]

Music in Motion aimed to address these difficulties by creating a collaborative scenario bolstered by public outreach activities. These included television and radio interviews, educational concerts at schools, and public workshops. Franklin maintains that public

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[195] "It's really important to understand what it was like for young artists in Philadelphia. There was a quest among us to become part of something and to define that for ourselves … So friends of mine who were writers, friends of mine who were visual artists, and of course many friends of mine who were musicians, actors, we sort of found each other. And there were a couple of locales that we would [run into each other], maybe after a rehearsal, after a gig. We'd walk in, and there was so-and-so just waiting to talk. So the experience of creating a performing ensemble that would look forward to new music was born amidst these relationships. The result of that was the Relâche Ensemble." Relâche, "The Relache Ensemble," *The Relache Chronicles* Podcast, January 24, 2023, https://www.relache.org/podcast.

[196] Franklin's own introduction in the Festival catalogue draws upon the same globalist rhetoric promulgated in Los Angeles' Olympic Arts Festival of 1984 (See Chapter 2) and other NMA Festivals before it: "Never before has a contemporary music event of this magnitude been presented in Philadelphia. We hope it will signal the beginning of a new awareness on the part of corporate sponsors and audiences in the city. The need to secure a place for the music this century is essential to the city's professed goal to make Philadelphia a 'world class city.'"

[197] Franklin, 253.

activities were meant for relatively small gatherings, in the hope that more intimate audience-performer interactions would foster permanent ties to the community (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023). Audiences were invited to ask questions and to provide feedback to the musicians, which could be incorporated into the piece being developed.[198]

The public initiative at the heart of Music in Motion enabled Franklin to secure substantial financial investment from major sponsors. Music in Motion's principal funder was the Pew Charitable Trusts, a Philadelphia-based non-profit focusing on civic issues. Pew had funded previous Relâche projects, and ultimately committed .5 million dollars to Music in Motion's first three years. These funds were matched by contributions by both the Lila Wallace and Rockefeller Foundations. To attain funding at this amount, Relâche partnered with the Atlantic Center for the Arts, an artist residency non-profit based in Smyrna Beach, Florida, a partnership that lasted for all five years of Music in Motion.[199]

Composers for the project were selected based on their willingness to embrace the interactive nature of the residencies. These decisions were made collaboratively between each ensemble and the Relâche artistic team. For example, Franklin recalls vetoing a request by one group to work with the American composer, George Crumb. At the time, the Relâche Ensemble had maintained a relationship with Crumb, who was then professor of composition at the University of Pennsylvania. Despite the composer's international recognition as a leading figure in avant-garde music, Franklin nonetheless felt that he would not have received audience feedback well. According to Franklin:

> Music in Motion mandated that each composer really share their inner thoughts with the audience, with the public. Say I'm a composer. I would come and I would stand before a small group of people and say, 'I'm here to create a piece of music. I want your help.' How many people would buy

[198] Franklin, 257.
[199] Franklin, 257-259.

> into that? Some would and some wouldn't. We wanted to choose those who would. (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023)

In emphasizing the collaborative process, Music in Motion did not mandate that residencies produce a final product. Instead, the creators of Music in Motion sought to enable dynamic working relationships between composers and performers, regardless of whether they resulted in a polished piece or a work-in-progress. Laurel Wyckoff, Relâche's Flutist and Education Director at the time, explains that some of the ensemble's favorite collaborations involved significant trial and error. The composer Mary Ellen Childs, for example, asked members of Relâche to bow a marimba, a technique that proved to be unsuccessful. According to Wyckoff, "She was an example of somebody who tried something that just totally failed, pivoted, and did something else." In my joint interview with both Franklin and Wyckoff in 2023, they point to their work with Kyle Gann as an example of a successful Music in Motion collaboration. Gann was unable to finish developing his 21-chroma musical system, and only completed a portion of his work by the end of the year-long residency. Gann's *The Planets* was finished a full 14 years later in 2008 and recorded by Relâche on Meyer Media.[200]

The Music in Motion founders point to their foundational experiences with Relâche at the Yellow Springs Institute in the 1970s and 1980s as important inspiration for its design. The Yellow Springs Institute for Contemporary Studies and the Arts (1975-1997) was founded in 1975 by the architect John A. Clauser in the historic Village of Chester Springs in eastern Pennsylvania. The mission of its summer residencies was to provide "an interdisciplinary laboratory for creative individuals whose work interprets

[200] Kyle Gann, "The Planets (1994-2008), accessed May 29, 2023, *KyleGann.com*.

aspects of contemporary experience, encourage creation of works that expand artistic boundaries, enlarge cultural understanding, and employ art and artists in the life of communities."[201] For the Institute's first eight years, Clauser worked jointly with Franklin, and later Relâche, to bring together lively cohorts of experimental artists and writers for workshops and performances. Notable among them were writers Robert Bly and Joseph Campbell, performance artists Angelika Wanke-Festa and Holly Hughes, and composer Morton Subotnick.[202]

Both Franklin and Wyckoff also recall modeling their vision for the Music in Motion collaborations on their experience developing a new work with the composer, Pauline Oliveros, at the Yellow Springs Institute. *The Well* (1983), written for the Relâche Ensemble and dancer Deborah Hay, is a diagrammatic set of instructions for listening and improvisation that uses five key words: *listen, merge, match, support* and *soar*. They felt that the open environment at Yellow Springs enabled them to absorb Oliveros' creative method, thereby expanding their interpretive abilities. With only a set of directions and no notated material, *The Well* demands that performers co-compose the work in real-time based on their own imaginative choices and sensitivity to one another. Franklin and Wyckoff were excited by the work's indeterminacy, which implied an interpretive process that stretched well beyond the confines of the residency. This freedom from expectations to create a polished, reproduceable work within a limited

[201] "Yellow Springs Institute Records," *The New York Public Library Archives & Manuscripts*, accessed May 29, 2023, https://archives.nypl.org/the/21747.
[202] Joseph Franklin, "The Yellow Springs Institute," *Setting Scores: A Life in the Margins of American Music* (Santa Fe, NM: Sunstone Press, 2006).

timeframe became what Wyckoff deemed “the germ” for Music in Motion (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023).

When determining the four additional ensembles for the Music in Motion projects, Relâche considered the EAR Unit among their top choices. Having seen them perform at CalArts in 1985, Franklin knew the ensemble to be skilled and open-minded (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023). Not only did Franklin consider the EAR Unit an ideal fit for the role, but he also considered them to be likeminded peers of the Relâche ensemble.[203] For years, Franklin had been in contact with the EAR Unit’s percussionist Amy Knoles to find an appropriate collaboration for their two groups. When contacted by Franklin, the EAR Unit was quick to sign on as it resembled the kind of working environment at CalArts. Franklin was open to hearing their suggestions for collaborators, and the ensemble had many composers in mind. Over the years, the EAR Unit served as a critical partner to Relâche both refining the overall design of Music in Motion and bringing its projects to life.

3.2 1993-1994: Eve Beglarian and Bernardo Feldman

For the first year of Music in Motion, the EAR Unit was paired with the composers Eve Beglarian and Bernardo Feldman. The three, week-long residencies were held on the campus of ASU West from September 1993 to April 1994. Beglarian’s

[203] “The reason Music in Motion had those five ensembles was because I knew people in each of the groups, A. And B, I thought they were doing good work. Of course, the EAR Unit and Relâche, I thought, at that point, were the oldest and had been around the longest, and really were doing the most adventurous work” (Franklin & Wyckoff, 2023).

typOpera (backseat driving with a Kurt Schwitters road map) (1994), co-composed with EAR Unit percussionist-composer Art Jarvinen and clarinetist Jim Rohrig, took shape as an assemblage of absurdist theatre, poetry and sound. *typOpera* borrows text from Kurt Schwitter's *Ursonate* (1932) as raw material for a sequence of staged scenes, each drawing upon a variety of props and noisemakers. Similarly, Feldman's *Creatures of Habit* (1994) incorporates set pieces and found objects into a visual and sonic tableau, depicting domestic life that has been frozen in time. Both pieces were developed over the course of the Music in Motion residencies and premiered at the Gammage Auditorium at ASU on April 30, 1994. A month later, on May 11, they were given their west coast premieres at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, on the EAR Unit's Ensemble Residency series.

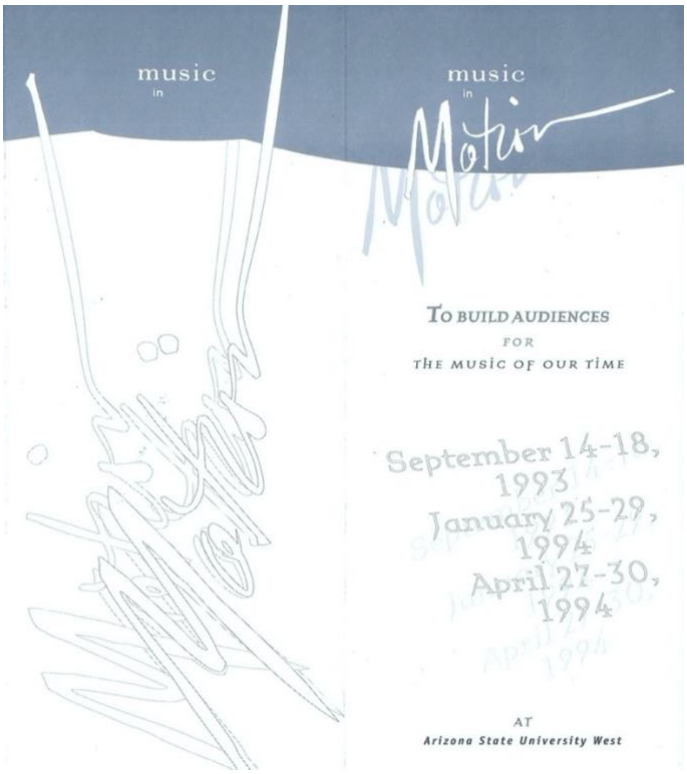

Figure 3.1: Music in Motion, Promotional pamphlet. (Personal collection Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

Both the EAR Unit and Relâche Ensemble had first encountered Beglarian and her music at a pivotal moment in her artistic development. The composer had established a multifaceted career in academic music, having studied 12-tone technique under Milton Babbitt at Princeton University and trained as a conductor under Jacques-Louis Monod during her years studying composition at Columbia University. After graduating, Beglarian worked parttime as a producer for Composers Recordings, Inc (CRI) and an arts administrator for the League of Composers. In the 1980s, however, Beglarian sought to shed aspects of her academic background in pursuit of her own, authentic compositional voice.[204] On an episode of Relâche's podcast, *The Relâche Chronicles*, Beglarian describes a feeling of liberation while writing *Fresh Air* (1983), the composer's first professional work after graduate school, written for Relâche ensemble at the Yellow Springs Institute.[205] The work merges serial processes with brand new MIDI technology, revealing early traces of her groove-based style.

Beglarian's quasi-minimalist approach was more fully developed in her first piece not to use any compositional system, *Machaut in the Machine Age I* (1986), written for Daniel Druckman (percussion) and Alan Feinberg (piano).[206] She recalls sending the score for *Machaut in the Machine Age* to many groups, including the EAR Unit, hoping to receive performances.

> I remember this vividly because back in those days that was a big job, to compile a list of 20 new music groups, print out the score and send it out. … I think I heard back from Amy saying, "Yeah, we're going to program it." And so that's how I initially got to know them, by just sending them this piece out of the blue. (Beglarian, 2020)

[204] Michael Dellaira, "Overstepping with Eve Beglarian," *Twenty-first Century Music* 9, no. 8 (August 20220): 1-7.
[205] Relâche, "Eve Beglarian," *The Relâche Chronicles* Podcast, January 25, 2023, https://www.relache.org/podcast.
[206] Dellaira, "Overstepping," 3.

The EAR Unit gave several performances of the work, including at LACMA. In 1993, Knoles commissioned Beglarian to write *Machaut in the Machine Age II* (1993) for her duo with Robert Black, Basso Bongo.

Coming from New York City, Beglarian began her residency at ASU by bringing Jarvinen and Rohrig into a recording studio to experiment with ProTools, a new recording software program she had just purchased. Unrelated to Music in Motion, Beglarian had hoped to create a solo version of Schwitters' *Ursonate* for herself and backing tracks created in ProTools (Beglarian, 2020). In their first session, Beglarian, Jarvinen and Rohrig co-composed and recorded "The Buncacan Song," a tuneful rendition of a short excerpt of the *Ursonate,* accompanied by bamboo buzzer and steel guitar.[207] Quickly, Beglarian abandoned her initial ideas for the EAR Unit and devoted the rest of their residency to developing an ensemble performance of Schwitters' text (Beglarian, 2020).

According to Beglarian, the resulting music-theatre piece turned out to be a "fantasia on the *Ursonate,*" rather than a true rendition of it. Schwitter's phonetic score uses nonsense syllables strung together in an invented syntax to recreate the structure of sonata form—complete with an exposition, development, cadenza, and recapitulation.[208] Rather than faithfully interpreting Ursonate, the co-creators of *typOpera* saw Schwitters' phonetic musical form as a point of departure, and as found material for a new musical construction. In doing so, the work abandons sonata form entirely, and is instead

[207] "The Buncacan Song" can be heard on the composer's album, *Play Nice.* Twisted tutu, *Play Nice*, January 1, 1999, https://evbvd.bandcamp.com/album/play-nice.
[208] See Nancy Perloff, "Schwitters Redesigned: A Post-war Ursonate from the Getty Archives," *Journal of Design History* 23, No. 2 (2010): 195-203.

organized around a handful of vignettes, each with a different visual and sonic story.[209] Beglarian alternatively describes the piece in this way as "a series of set pieces that flowed one to another" (Beglarian, 2020).

Although Beglarian, Jarvinen and Rohrig remained the core authors of *TypeOpera*, all members of the EAR Unit contributed to the collection of found objects and theatrical activities exploited in each scene, such as a cheerleading routine and synchronized swimming in a kiddie pool.[210] Most of the props and noisemakers used in the performance were sourced from the same local toy store in Phoenix.[211] Both Knoles and Lorentz separately recalled going to the University library with each other to watch and study VHS tapes of synchronized swimming. Lorentz emphasized the serious nature of this work. "Amy and I worked really hard on an above-water, dry land synchronized swimming routine. Stuff like that actually had real content and real intent. … Even though it was a funny routine, we took it really seriously" (Lorentz, 2022).

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[209] "I would say that it was a fantasia on the *Ursonate* in the sense that we often used some of the syllables of the *Ursonate* as the source material that we would work from, or that we would start from as we made our pieces. But in a way, the whole point of the *Ursonate* is to be a piece that strictly manifests sonata form, with a trio and a rondo and all that stuff, all those 18th and 19th century forms of classical composition done with nonsense syllables. And we, or I certainly, had zero interest in worrying about sonata form. That was not what we were doing at all. And so the structure we made ran roughshod over what, for Kurt Schwitters, was presumably central to his conception. That being, 'Isn't it cool to do a strict piece of music that follows all the rules of musical form, but with nonsense syllables?' And we were like, 'Yeah, so what? We like your nonsense syllables. We think your nonsense syllables are awesome. And we're going to use them to inspire a thing that is formally not at all like sonata form, like classical music.' It's much more like a concept album or something. It doesn't refer to standard musical forms of any kind, certainly not sonata form or minuet and trio" (Beglarian, 2020).

[210] Beglarian 2020; Lorentz reinforces Beglarian's approach to co-composing *typOpera*: "She was truly collaborative. She would bring us sections. But she, Art and Jim kind of joined forces as co-composers. In certain ways she was the spearhead, and then they'd flesh out these sections and improvise these sections and fix it, and then finalize sections and parts, but under her chief direction" (Lorentz, 2022).

[211] Beglarian describes one of these props: "I remember, for example, a battery-operated lollipop that was sort of like a kind of toothbrush, like.a Sonicare. You pressed a button and the lollipop spun around. Instead of having to suck on a lollipop and turn the lollipop as you sucked on it, it turned in your mouth. You just held it stable, pressing this button. But of course the motor of the button that turned the lollipop made a sound. So that was one of the noisemakers. We would hold these noisemakers, which were also visually interesting, up to the microphones" (Beglarian, 2020).

Figure 3.2: Photograph by unknown (L-R): Art Jarvinen, Eve Beglarian, and Jim Rohrig. (Personal collection of Eve Beglarian)

typOpera exemplified the kind of multidisciplinary projects often led by Jarvinen and Rohrig, a creative duo within the ensemble.[212] The two collaborated on several Cage-inspired experiments for the LACMA residency, including Douglas Cohen and Lawrence Brose's sprawling *imusicircus (image – music – circus)*. However, *typOpera* most closely resembles Jarvinen's own performance practice, an approach he called, Physical Poetry.[213] In an interview with Libby van Cleve, conducted for Yale University's Oral History of American Music series, Jarvinen explains how his Physical Poetry functions as a poetic arrangement of objects and sounds in space:

> It's my own kind of poetry that I do that is built out of elements other than, although sometimes including, language. So, it's every bit as much poetry as written poetry is, except the images. Instead of describing them in words and then pushing them around on the page and thereby pushing

[212] See Chapter 2.
[213] Arthur Jarvinen, "Arthur Jarvinen," accessed June 3, 2023, arthurjarvinen.com.

> them around in your mind, I create the images in real-time on stage with stuff. And I literally push the stuff around on stage.[214]

There is no record of Jarvinen explicitly describing *typOpera* as an extension of his Physical Poetry. Nonetheless, the work unmistakably appropriates all the signature elements of other Physical Poetry work, including the preparatory phase of collecting objects to be used on stage.

For her part, Beglarian claims that she was transformed by the experience of working on *typOpera.* Like her previous work with Relâche and the EAR Unit that permitted escape from the strict boundaries of academic composition, *typOpera* offered another radical shift by positioning her as a performer-composer. She explains,

> It changed my life in a million different ways. … For me personally it changed my life because all of a sudden, I was performing. And I was performing with these awesome people. I mean, they were unbelievable virtuosos. It was like the kind of "Downtown" performance stuff that was common at the time, which was not at that level of virtuosity. I learned so much from Art and Jim in particular because we were working together most closely, but also from the whole band. I mean, it was just mind-blowing. (Beglarian, 2020)

By all accounts, the process of working on *typOpera* was a dynamic one. According to Feldman, his work with the EAR Unit, on the other hand, was mediated by a more formal relationship to the ensemble. The Mexican composer was born in Mexico City, where he also studied composition at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música before coming to CalArts in 1982, the year following the EAR Unit's graduation.[215] During his studies, Feldman remembers the group having a large presence on campus year-round as ensemble-in-residence. He explains, "I attended many of their concerts, and I learned a

[214] Arthur Jarvinen, Interview by Libby van Cleve, November 12, 1997, recording, OHV, Major Figures in American Music, Oral History of American Music, in the Music Library of Yale University, File 2.
[215] "Bernardo Feldman," College of the Canyons, accessed June 4, 2023, https://www.canyons.edu/academics/music/faculty/bernardo-feldman.php.

lot in the process. To me, I came to CalArts to expose myself to the avant-garde and to contemporary music. And they were *the* group. Every concert I learned something new, and during their residency I learned a lot of stuff from them" (Feldman, 2023). Feldman also studied composition with Stephen "Lucky" Mosko, the EAR Unit's unofficial artistic leader and husband of flutist Dorothy Stone. Feldman recalls being encouraged by both Mosko and Subotnick to approach the EAR Unit and was surprised when they took interest in his music. "If you put yourself in my shoes, I would not expect a group of such caliber to be interested in this guy from Mexico. … I was thrilled, I just went with it" (Feldman, 2023).

The EAR Unit remained professionally affiliated with Feldman after he graduated. At some point in the late 1980s, Feldman became a board member for the EAR Unit when they obtained non-profit status. However, the composer remembers very little about this role except for serving as in impartial signator on official EAR Unit business. In 1992, the EAR Unit commissioned Feldman to write a piece for their Ensemble Residency at the county museum. Feldman's *Caudal de Poesia ("Wellspring of Rhymes")* (1992) is an homage to the composer's father, who passed away the previous year. Feldman 2023, who has Jewish heritage, recalls that he used the process of writing the piece as a form bereavement. By chance, the date of the premiere was exactly one year after his father's passing, on his Yahrzeit.

For Music in Motion, Feldman composed *Creatures of Habit* (1994), a semi-staged work for ensemble and electronics. The stage is set to give the appearance of "an old-fashioned living room," complete with a rug, coffee table, lamps, and a broken

grandfather clock.[216] The composer explains that the design was meant to evoke a feeling of being frozen in time and to emphasize the mundane routines of everyday life.[217] Many of these household objects were also used as sound producing objects by members of the ensemble. These included 40 white balloons, two sets of walkie talkies, marbles, empty paper towel rolls, assorted belts, and water containers.[218] The piece begins with an amplified, semi-improvised violin solo, written for the EAR Unit's Robin Lorentz. Feldman was moved by Lorentz's playing and dedicated a solo piece to her following the Music in Motion residency: "She was to me the Jimi Hendrix of the violin" (Feldman, 2023). The rest of the piece combines scored melodic fragments with improvised sections using extended vocal and instrumental techniques.

In developing *Creatures of Habit,* Feldman could not help being influenced by the working process of Beglarian and the EAR Unit happening simultaneously during the Music in Motion residencies at ASU. In my interview with the composer, Feldman claims that the elaborate staging in *typOpera* inspired him to work with sets and found objects for the first and only time. Of this theatrical approach, Feldman recalls, "That was the spirit. Those things were allowed" (Feldman, 2023). He also credits the EAR Unit's commitment as important license to work in this way. Nonetheless, Feldman recognized that the EAR Unit maintained a different working relationship with Beglarian, one that was less bound by formality.

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[216] Bernardo Feldman, *Creatures of Habit* (Newhall, CA: Ex-Machina Publications, 1994).
[217] On the work's theme, Feldman elaborates: "Outside of CalArts, I felt that we lived in a world where people were just going through the motions, that we just go through life like creatures of habit. We don't change. We repeat ourselves out of tedium, out of not having a passion for things in life. And I was going to manifest that in the music. And of course the idea was not to stay there but to prompt the audience to be curious about life and excited and passionate about being on this planet" (Feldman, 2023).
[218] Feldman 2023 remembers that Franklin suggested the use of white balloons in order to create a dramatic effect under colored lighting.

> [*typOpera*] was very intimate between the three or four people that were involved, between Eve, Jim, and Art. Almost like a mischievous thing that they did together because they knew each other so well. I will say this, too, being from a foreign country, not being really comfortable with the English language, and these being my new acquaintances and soon-to-become friends, I didn't have that sort of closeness, at least not yet. (Feldman, 2023)

In addition to a language barrier, Feldman also felt restricted by his preoccupation with being a new father. He remembers that both of his young daughters were troubled by the 1994 Northridge earthquake. In this way, the creative lifestyle fostered by the immersive Music in Motion residencies provided a stark contrast to Feldman's family life at home: "Here I am being 'the artist.' That was hard. That was very hard for me" (Feldman, 2023).

Of all the EAR Unit's Music in Motion collaborators, Beglarian and Feldman are the only two to have any detailed recollections of audience interactions. Feldman worked with cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick on techniques for achieving harmonics, which audience members were curious to understand. Although he could not remember any specific questions or feedback, he did come away with the general impression that the audience played an important role in the process. In our interview, Beglarian also had a tough time providing details about the audience participation, except for one question that was entirely unrelated to *typOpera* regarding the recent suicide of Kurt Cobain. She recalls,

> The premiere was within days of the death of Kurt Cobain. And I remember that the first question at the Q&A after *typOpera* was, 'Can you explain why Kurt Cobain would kill himself?' And the person who asked the question was this middle-aged guy who was clearly really broken up about the death of Kurt Cobain, and the fact of him committing suicide and the idea that someone who was that great of an artist would commit suicide just seemed so horrifying. I've never forgotten that because I was

> like, “I do not know the answer. We cannot tell you why that would happen.” (Beglarian, 2020)

Both composers were present in Los Angeles during the West Coast premieres of their works at LACMA on May 11, 1994. The EAR Unit paired its first two Music in Motion commissions with works by the English composer John White and saxophonist-composer Oliver Lake. Josef Woodard reviewed the concert in the Los Angeles Times, praising the ensemble’s execution of a heady mix of musical styles and performance art. He writes, “Elements of Dadaistic theater, jazz flavoring, prop/process music and varying degrees of tonality all fit neatly into the fabric of a madcap evening.” According to Woodard, this type of eclecticism was expected of the EAR Unit’s residency concerts. More importantly, Woodard points out that *typOpera* struck an appropriate balance between its comedy and its seriousness, describing their performance as being “fundamentally absurd, yet also exacting.”[219]

3.3 1994-1995: Paul Dresher and Annea Lockwood

The group’s second Music in Motion residency the following year produced new works by Paul Dresher and Annea Lockwood, both composers recommended for the project by the EAR Unit. The residency followed the same structure as the previous workshops, except this time the ensemble was stationed at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN. Like *typOpera*, the two new commissions took advantage of the EAR

[219] Josef Woodard, “EAR Unit Ends Its Season With Theatrics and a Twist,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1994.

Unit's willingness to experiment with elements of theatre and improvisation. For Dresher and Lockwood, the residency did not prove to be the same creative turning point as it was for Beglarian. It was, however, an opportunity to explore new compositional techniques over the extended period of a year.

The composer and instrument-inventor Paul Dresher was familiar with EAR Unit since its beginnings. Dresher grew up in Los Angeles and was accepted into the first class at CalArts but turned it down to tour with a rock group (Dresher, 2021). As a graduate student at UC San Diego in the late '70s, Dresher attended the early Contemporary Music Festivals when it was a joint venture held on the campuses of CalArts, UC San Diego and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Dresher recalls first meeting members of the EAR Unit as students performing in the CalArts Twentieth Century Players, and then later as a professional ensemble: "Rand [Steiger] brought a group of musicians, I'm sure. I don't think it was called the EAR Unit. I think it was their generic ensemble from CalArts at that time, but members of the EAR Unit were core to that group. I became more aware of the EAR Unit as a separate entity in the early eighties" (Dresher, 2021). In 1993, Dresher invited Knoles to become the first percussionist with his new Electro-Acoustic Band, an offshoot of the Paul Dresher Ensemble collective based in San Francisco Bay Area.[220] Knoles later secured Dresher's participation in the Music in Motion residency at the Walker Art Center.

Dresher was a natural choice to work with the EAR Unit in this context. Dresher's work with the Paul Dresher Ensemble exemplified the kind of long-term collaboration that Franklin aspired to achieve through Music in Motion. Founded in

[220] Knoles left the group in 2000, except for touring performances of *Ravenshead*, a chamber opera by Steven Mackey (Dresher, 2021).

1984, around the same time as the EAR Unit, the Paul Dresher Ensemble is dedicated to commissioning new works that seek to break down boundaries between artistic disciplines, musical genres, and new technology.[221] In this regard, the ensemble has almost exclusively focused on developing and performing a new body of work of electro-acoustic chamber music. This set them apart somewhat from the EAR Unit, which included 20th century repertoire in their brand of eclecticism.[222] In our interview, Dresher nonetheless notes similarities in style and approach between the two groups that made them unique counterparts. Their equal dedication to long-term collaborations with composers distinguished them from the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, another notable Bay Area ensemble:

> The EAR Unit was a group of friends. The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players are mostly top-notch symphony players, so their concerts used to be primarily on Monday nights, just like Monday Evening Concerts. That was the one night off for those players. They also had an artistic director. The EAR Unit is more like a classical rock band. And we're sort of like that too. We're a group of people who like to spend time together and who share musical interests. … The Contemporary Music Players, as a whole group, are not going to spend the kind of time that we spent at Music in Motion or something like it. They're going to do two to four hours of rehearsing and then play the program. That's just not how we work. We would average 10-15 hours on a new piece. (Dresher, 2021)

Over the course of the three workshops in Minneapolis, Dresher composed *Stretch* for chamber ensemble and electronics. The notion of stretching is manifested in several features of the work, most prominently through electronic processing of the live acoustic sounds. The piece also achieves its sense of expansion in more conventional

[221] "In all of our work, the artistic goal is to expand the boundaries of a single discipline and to break down boundaries between different disciplines, between aesthetic divisions, between 'serious' and 'popular' culture, and between styles of music, opera, and theatre that may have origins in diverse cultures." (Paul Dresher, "The Paul Dresher Ensemble," *TheatreForum*, Vol. 0, Iss 15: 68).
[222] See Chapter 2.

ways, such as using string glissandi, harmonic augmentation, registral shifts, canonic forms as well as the works various musical vocabularies.[223] The compositional techniques in *Stretch* also explored ideas Dresher had previously developed in *Din of Iniquity* (1994), the composer's first piece for the Electro-Acoustic Band (Dresher, 2021). Like *Stretch* for the EAR Unit, Dresher used *Din of Iniquity* to experiment with creating a hybrid ensemble of electronic and acoustic instruments, and juxtaposing radically different musical elements.[224] The musical material in *Stretch* reaches its most extreme at the climactic finale of the piece, in which Jarvinen performed an improvised drum kit solo. Instead of drums and cymbals, the drum set he used was comprised of miscellaneous objects that the composer and percussionist had found (Dresher, 2021). *Din of Iniquity* ends on a similar note, with a high-energy improvised solo on electric guitar.[225]

Reflecting upon his work on *Stretch*, Dresher considers the most successful aspects of the piece to be the compositional techniques that were most new to him, such as the way the string glissandi created a continuously undulating texture. However, Dresher was most excited by his collaboration with the EAR Unit's pianist and newest member, Vicki Ray (Dresher, 2021). The Music in Motion residency was in fact Ray's first experience playing with the EAR Unit ensemble as an official part of the group. A faculty member at CalArts since 1991, Ray had also recently co-founded the Piano Spheres series in 1994 along with other Leonard Stein protégés, Mark Robson, Susan

[223] Paul Dresher, "Stretch," Program notes to a performance by the California E.A.R. Unit at the Walker Art Center, March 16, 1995.
[224] Jason Victor Serinus, interview with Paul Dresher, *Secrets of Home Theater and High Fidelity*, November 2004, https://hometheaterhifi.com/volume_11_4/feature-interview-paul-dresher-11-2004.html.
[225] Frank J. Oteri, "Paul Dresher: Intense Beauty, Visceral Energy, and Sonic Curiosity," *NewMusicUSA*, December 1, 2014, https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/paul-dresher-intense-beauty-visceral-energy-and-sonic-curiosity/.

Svrček and former EAR Unit pianist, Gloria Cheng. According to Dresher, Ray's cadenza in *Stretch* was inspired by the florid figurations in Frédéric Chopin's piano compositions. Dresher aimed to make use of the entire piano keyboard by assigning each register in the four-part writing its own gestural identity. Immediately following the premiere of *Stretch*, Ray commissioned Dresher to compose a solo piano work for the Piano Spheres series that expanded upon this material (Dresher, 2021). The resulting work, *Blue Diamonds* (1996), can be heard on the pianist's 1999 solo album on *Composers Recodings Inc*,

Their other collaborator, Annea Lockwood, was most likely introduced to the EAR Unit by Franklin, who had worked with her at the Yellow Springs Institute (Franklin, 2023). At the time of Music in Motion, the New Zealand-born composer was a faculty member at Vassar College in New York.[226] Lockwood was and has been recognized for her experimental work in a range of artistic fields, including concert music, performance art, and multimedia installation.[227] She is credited by writer Alan Licht as being a central figure in "the first generation of sound artists" that emerged in the 1960s—among the likes of Maryanne Amacher and Max Neuhaus—who drew upon a total environment of sounds, and sometimes even the very act of their perception, as their primary artistic medium.[228] In the 1990s, Lockwood made a radical shift by returning to more conventional instrumental music in her composition, such as the work she wrote for the EAR Unit.[229]

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[226] Annea Lockwood, "Biography," accessed June 17, 2023, Annealockwood.com.
[227] For example, see Sam Green, "Learning to Listen with Annea Lockwood: Sam Green on the friendship that inspired his films about sound," *Pioneer Works Broadcast*, November 23, 2022, https://pioneerworks.org/broadcast/sam-green-annea-lockwood.
[228] Alan Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (New York, NY: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 2007), 124.
[229] "Annea Lockwood," accessed June 17, 2023, http://www.lovely.com/bios/lockwood.html.

In *Monkey Trips*, instrumental soloists depict each of the Buddhist six realms of existence in choreographed improvisations with accompaniment. Lockwood drew inspiration from the Tibetan spiritual leader Chögyam Trungpa and his writing in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*.[230] Lockwood worked jointly with the EAR Unit to develop a written outline of the programmatic cycle through each state of being, with loose instructions for musical material, staging and transitions. Lockwood assigned instrumental solos for each realm but left instrumentation generally open for future performances. In order, the piece passes through the Realm of Heaven (Lorentz, violin), the Realm of the Jealous Gods (Jarvinen, voice & drums), the Realm of Humans (Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick, cello), the Realm of Animals (Rohrig, bass clarinet), the Realm of Gods (Stone, flute), and the Realm of Hell (Knoles, MIDI percussion). *Monkey Trips* follows this transformation through the subjective states and human characteristics described by Trungpa, which roughly consist of serenity, competitiveness, passion, resignation, deprivation and rage. The piece ends with all players bursting into laughter, as if to dispel the oppressive walls of the self-imposed anger in the Realm of Hell (Lockwood, 2021). Lockwood understood the difficulty of laughing authentically on cue and was especially impressed with the EAR Unit's ability to do it convincingly on multiple occasions.

The unconventional performance approach in *Monkey Trips* adds an additional layer of difficulty to the improvisations. Lockwood asks each soloist "to ponder his/her experience of the realm assigned and find the most expressive way of bringing forth that

[230] Annea Lockwood, "Performance Notes for *Monkey Trips*," accessed June 17, 2023, http://iresound-pubs.umbc.edu/LockwoodMonkeyTripsUpdate3D2021/.

experience in sound..”[231] The composer provides a general plan for how the work should unfold in each section but leaves the actual musical material up to the performers, only asking that their choices by guided by the inner experience of embodying each state of being (Lockwood, 2021). This improvisational technique was developed by Lockwood in collaboration with the baritone, Thomas Buckner. In *Duende* (1998), also a co-composed piece, Lockwood asks Buckner to let his voice take total control of him, “so that he no longer seeks in any way to control what his voice does.”[232] In this way, both works insist that the performers approach improvisation in a way that is counter to their training. Lockwood 2021 recalls that the process came easy to the EAR Unit, both the technical and affective aspects of the improvisation.

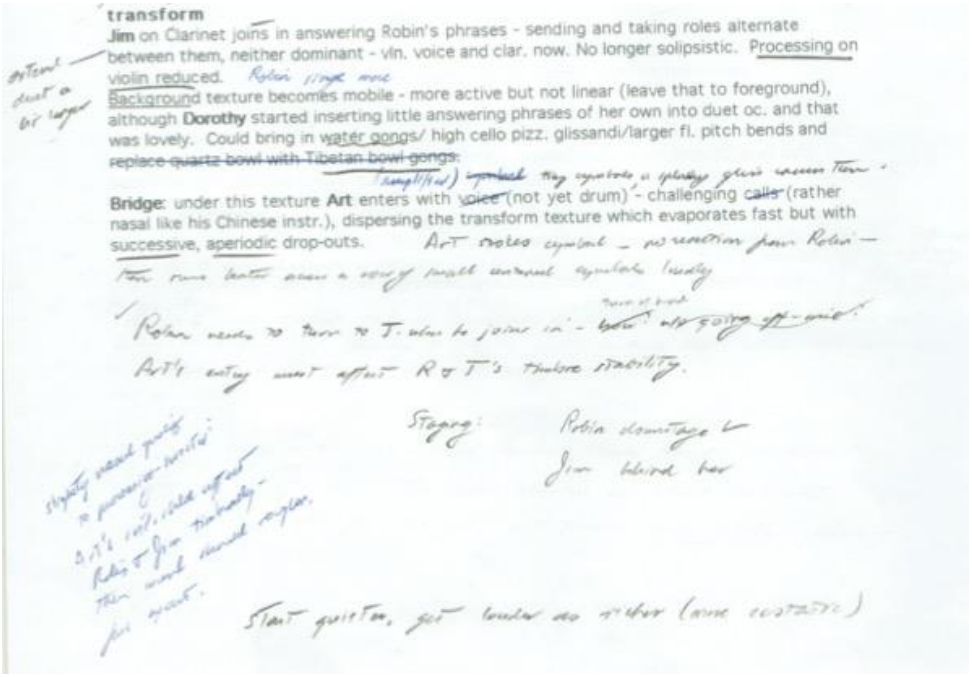

Figure 3.3: Annea Lockwood’s stage direction notes for Monkey Trips. (Personal collection of Annea Lockwood)

[231] Lockwood, Performance notes.
[232] Lockwood, Performance notes.

In my interview, the violinist Robin Lorentz compared the EAR Unit work with the two women composers, Beglarian and Lockwood. While Beglarian functioned more as a true co-author of *typOpera*, Lockwood acted more as a director, using the EAR Unit's input to shape the flow of the work. Lorentz explains:

> With Eve [Beglarian], it was entirely collaborative. We'd meet. We'd talk about concepts. We'd take sections to experiment with, and we'd go home and think about them. Then we'd come back 12 weeks later with more to do, more to try out, more fun to have, and stitch it together. Annea [Lockwood] was very similar. She would get an idea and come to us and say, "I want this section to be a series of chants. I have a few things like this to throw out there to see what happens, to see what you can do." She was definitely like a theatrical director even more than Eve. She would kind of manage it. And then she would go home and in her spare time format it. Whereas with Eve it was much more collaborative because she was formatting with Art and Jim. And then *they* would come to *us*. (Lorentz, 2022)

On the other hand, the pianist Ray viewed the collaboration with Lockwood as being explicitly about the act of co-creation. Informing this view was Ray's ongoing membership of the Ensemble Xtet, founded in 1986 by a group of Los Angeles based freelancers. Xtet's focus was narrower than that of the EAR Unit, making the experience at Music in Motion feel like a radical one. Ray remembers that within the first hours of rehearsal, Lockwood had the ensemble moving about the space and playing various ethnic woodwind instruments. She recalls, "It could not have been more different than going into a rehearsal and having someone put a piece of music down beside you and saying, 'Read it.' It was being co-created. I was so excited that I couldn't sleep that night. I thought, 'Oh my god, I've waited my whole life for this'" (Ray, 2020).

Figure 3.4: The California E.A.R. Unit on stage at the Walker Art Center (March 16, 1995): Robin Lorentz, Vicki Ray, Jim Rohrig, Dorothy Stone, Paul Dresher, Amy Knoles, Annea Lockwood, Jim Rohrig, Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick)

3.4 1995-1996: Jack Vees

For their third engagement with Music in Motion, the EAR Unit invited the bassist-composer Jack Vees to collaborate with them at the Painted Bride Art Center in Philadelphia, PA. The ensemble had maintained a personal and professional relationship to Vees going as far back as their student years at CalArts. After attending Glassboro State College in New Jersey, Vees moved across the country in the late 1970s with the percussionist MB Gordy, who was beginning graduate studies at CalArts. Not yet a student himself, Vees spent most of his time hanging out on campus and freelancing in student performances. During that time, Vees connected with the EAR Unit members and

became close to Jarvinen, who he later considered to be one of his best friends (Vees, 2021a). He formally began his MFA at CalArts in 1984, two years after the EAR Unit graduated, and completed the degree in 1986.

With his own musical practice situated between avant-garde composition and rock music, Vees found himself drawn to the percussionists at CalArts studying under John Bergamo who shared similar aesthetics. Vees was particularly influenced by Jarvinen's percussion trio, the Antenna Repairmen, co-founded in 1978 with Gordy and Robert Fernandez. Like other CalArts percussion offshoots, such as the student-led Repercussion Unit, the Antenna Repairmen celebrated a polystylistic compositional approach that incorporated world music traditions taught by Bergamo with elements of theatre, poetry, and pop music. The CalArts percussion studio also provided Vees proximity to a circle of musicians associated with Frank Zappa, which included Bergamo and student Ed Mann. In 1981, Jarvinen began work as one of Zappa's music copyists, and helped set up Vees and Gordy to audition for the bandleader.[233]

Vees also numbered among a roster of musicians who performed frequently with the ensemble as a guest, appearing with them on *Sternklang* at the Olympic Arts Festival,

[233] "Frank [Zappa] was probably talking to Art about music copying stuff but had asked him if he knew of any drummers or bass players at CalArts that might be able to do the job. Art mentioned me on bass and MB [Gordy] on drums. And the thing that I sort of regret about that experience was that MB and I had played together for many years. We were a rhythm section. And we wanted to go to Zappa together as a section. But Frank said, 'No, I've got an opening for a bass player to come in and play for me at two o'clock, and a drummer to come in and play for me at four o'clock.' He had a bunch of other people auditioning. So, I ended up playing with a drummer who I never had never met before. I don't even remember to this day who it was. And MB ended up playing on his own with a bass player who had never played with before. And Frank didn't hire either of us. In fact, he didn't hire anyone who had auditioned and basically went back into his roster of past drummers and bass players. … But I do remember someone else who auditioned was another CalArts-related person, Ed Mann. Ed and I have since played together and so we knew how each other played. And I think maybe Tommy Mars was there, but I never had any further dealings with him. Although, I have had a few dealings with Don Preston. Once every 10 years we'll do something together. But yeah, it was one of those things where Frank had a lot of interactions with people at CalArts. John Bergamo, being the percussion teacher, was a huge link into the Zappa world." (Vees, 2021a).

two early Bang On A Can Festivals (1988, 1989), and several CalArts Spring Festivals. Vees also worked as a tech engineer for hire at LACMA, including the EAR Unit's world premiere of Zappa's *While Your Were Art*. In 1989, the EAR Unit premiered his *Child Bride* at a museum residency concert, a piece for one cellist and four assistants each bowing a different string.

During their residency at Painted Bride, Vees composed *Fake ID*, a set of a pieces that required the EAR Unit to personify alternate identities during the performance. Each of the four movements of the semi-programmatic work was preceded by an un-staged fragment of text, functioning as a miniature character study. Their third residency was therefore not unlike the previous Music in Motion projects in that it exploited the group's openness to theatrical interpretation. Where Lockwood's piece demanded introspective authenticity, Vees wanted to tap into their intimacy as friends through the embodiment of phony personalities. *Fake ID* combines theater and music to depict a contemporary music ensemble working in Los Angeles. The group in real life often fielded questions about the meaning of the acronym in their name, which they originally intended to stand for Electronic And Recent. The imagined ensemble in *Fake ID* performed mostly at weddings of wealthy patrons for very little money, thus they called themselves the California E.A.R. Unit after Elegant And Reasonable. Jarvinen and violinist Robin Lorentz came up with their own characters, while the rest of the ensemble worked with Vees to create identities that satirized themselves in real life (Vees, 2021a).

A large source of inspiration for the vaudeville in *Fake ID* came from Jarvinen's Bad Poetry Soirées, yearly happenings that lasted for nearly a decade. These were lively events where the EAR Unit could relate to one another creatively, but in a completely

informal context.[234] The ensemble and friends would prepare intentionally distasteful, over-the-top poetry and the group would assign them names and identities based on their contributions. This character play was influential on Vees' work outside of his collaborations with the EAR Unit. For example, the liner notes to compositions on the composer's album *Surf Music Again*, published by CRI Records, contain fully-realized personas that accompany each of the compositions (Vees, 2021a). Vees also felt a kinship with Jarvinen's process. For Jarvinen it was not enough that they had fun, but rather the antics themselves were the source of material to be revised and approached with rigor. Vees recalls, "This is sort of where Art and I would overlap a lot, taking common ideas and kind of subverting them. Having some fun with them but spinning it out far enough so that it generated its own separate critical mass" (Vees, 2021a).

The vignettes in *Fake ID*, while somewhat crass, were partially inspired by their lived experiences. Rohrig, for example, had been entering a successful career as a film and television editor. His persona in *Fake ID* therefore was an aspiring videographer, filming a documentary about the "E.A.R. Unit" who narrated their story for camera one at a time. Ray and Knoles shared dialogue about mentally receiving radio transmissions from aliens, while Stone and Duke-Kirkpatrick gossiped about their gynecologist with four-inch-long fingernails (Vees, 2023b). Most revealing is Jarvinen's story, which narrates the percussionist-composer's true feelings of bitterness about dedicating his career to other peoples' music. Jarvinen would indeed retire from the group four years later in 2000 to pursue a more solo-oriented career. The pivotal moment referenced in

[234] Cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick remembers one year, Rohrig and Jarvinen setup a fake beach in the living room of a rental house using sand, a wading pool, and a fake palm tree (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2022).

Jarvinen's monology alludes to the play-synched performance Frank Zappa's *While You Were Art*, on April 30, 1984, for the Monday Evening Concert series at LACMA.

> I started my career as a Foley artist, i.e. doing sound effects for movie soundtracks. One time I was doing sound for a scene that had musicians in it. Not realizing the musical track wasn't yet in place, I tried to do my best, and to my surprise, found that I had natural aptitude as a xylophonist. Before I knew it, I was on a new career track in contemporary music.
>
> The more I got into this, the more challenging it became. The highlight of my career, and in a way my undoing, was when I had to "lip synch" a very difficult piece. I rose to the occasion, making myself some foam rubber mallets and learning every note just so I could fake someone else's performance.
>
> Having gone from providing the sounds for actions of others to providing actions for someone else's sounds there was simply nothing left for me to do. I retired and opened the first strip mall in the San Fernando Valley. It includes a pet store, medical offices, a karate school, and the home studio of the Psychic Friends Network. My life now revolves around this mall and the people who work there. I consider myself quite fortunate. (Vees, 2023b)

3.5 1997-1998: Rand Steiger

At the completion of Music in Motion's third year, Franklin and Relâche spent one year reassessing its model. When it returned in 1997, the program was pared down to just two ensembles, Relâche ensemble and the EAR Unit, each matched with only one composer.[235] The EAR Unit was assigned to Music in Motion's newest partner, the Jack Straw Foundation, now the Jack Straw Cultural Center, in Seattle, Washington. Founded in 1962, the Jack Straw Center is a media center that supports artists in the Pacific

[235] Franklin, 274.

Northwest working in various forms of audio art.[236] Taking advantage of the Foundation's recording studios and rehearsal spaces, the EAR Unit collaborated with Rand Steiger on a new piece for ensemble and live electronics.

Music in Motion also introduced an online component to its residencies in the form of the Virtualconcert, conceived by the composer and web designer Mark Weber as an online tool for experiencing new music and participating in its creation. Weber and Franklin's idea was for ensembles to take advantage of emerging online tools used for digital streaming and MIDI control in order "to build a new form of composition celebrating participants' logging on to the new website and exchanging musical information with the composer …"[237] The main Virtualconcert website operated as a gateway to other websites designed and operated by Music in Motion participants and ran concurrent to the live residencies. In addition to offering means for interacting with musical materials of the new pieces, the websites were updated with photos and recordings from the in-person rehearsals.

Franklin felt that Steiger's extensive background in computer music made him an ideal choice for the added technical elements of this new phase. As the EAR Unit's co-founder, Steiger had a close relationship to the group going back to their origins, discussed extensively in previous chapters. In 1981, he and clarinetist Rohrig were responsible for initially proposing the idea of forming an ensemble with their friends and graduate peers at CalArts.[238] In the group's early years, Steiger functioned as the group's conductor, composer, and informal artistic director. However, when he received a

[236] Jack Straw Cultural Center, "About Jack Straaw Cultural Center, accessed June 19, 2023, Jackstraw.org/about.
[237] Franklin, 272.
[238] See Chapter 1.

faculty position teaching composition at UC San Diego 1987, Steiger took an increasingly distant role before officially stepping down in 1990.

For his Music in Motion residency, Steiger produced *Frame(s)* for solo percussion with amplified ensemble, written for the EAR Unit's percussionist Amy Knoles. *Frame(s)* was Steger's first piece since his student years at CalArts that asked the performers to improvise. Indeed, the title is meant to suggest that the composition functions as merely a frame for improvised elements (Steiger, 2021b). The outermost sections of the work are fully scored like a typical percussion concerto, while the drum set cadenza is entirely improvised. During this section, the accompanying instrumentalists are each assigned to a different instrument in Knoles' setup. Over the course of the cadenza, the musicians are instructed to respond, as if being triggered, in various ways to an event by Knoles on their appointed percussion instrument. Their responses are most often notated as cells of music that are repeated until a new cue by the percussionist cuts them off. Steiger spent the first of the three residencies just testing this technique through various experiments, which he used to produce a draft for their second residency at Jack Straw (Steiger, 2021b).

The soloist's dual role in *Frame(s)* as both a percussionist and conductor drew from Steiger's experience performing and studying with Earle Brown (Steiger, 2021b). Specifically, Steiger adopted a similar approach to Brown's "open form" technique, which employs musical modules that can be arranged spontaneously in performance by the conductor.[239] Steiger and the EAR Unit first encountered Brown's music during their students years at CalArts, performing his violin concerto *Centering* (1973) under his

[239] See John Welsh, "Open Form and Earle Brown's Modules I and II (1967)," *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 32, No. 1.

baton.[240] The ensemble had further opportunities to perform with Brown on other "open form" works throughout their career. Although Steiger had not yet explored improvisation in his own music, he had some experience with it as a percussionist in rock bands and improv groups from his college years at the Manhattan School of Music. After the completion of the Music in Motion project, he returned to the technique of framing improvisation in pieces like *Frame(s) II* (2000) for trombonist George Lewis, *Template I* (2013) for trumpeter Peter Evans, and *Template II* (2015) for violinist Mark Menzies.

Steiger believes that the environment of the residency, specifically its length and location outside of Los Angeles, encouraged him to take risks in writing *Frame(s)*. As their founding conductor, Steiger had already composed several times for the EAR Unit, including the piece *Quintessence* which originally brought the ensemble together.[241] However, the new setting in Seattle provided a different context for their working relationship, one in which the musicians were apart from their busy lives in Los Angeles. By 1998, several members of the EAR Unit held faculty positions at CalArts and had successful performance careers outside of their work with the EAR Unit. Steiger had also formally left the EAR Unit, which may have made a collaboration at the time less feasible without the Music in Motion residency. Steiger recounts:

> Now, I had been working with the EAR Unit forever, right? But never in that way. Never where we were together for a few days away from home, and where we had longs stretches of time to try stuff out. If I really wanted to do that in Los Angeles, I probably could have gotten a few hours here or there with the band. But I think that taking us off our home turf and putting us into this situation where we were at a sponsor organization out of town, and where we had an obligation to work together on developing something that was novel and outside of what we would normally do; that encouraged taking risks. It also gave us time to develop stuff in a more patient way than we would normally be able to because when we were in

[240] See Chapter 1.
[241] See Chapter 1.

> Los Angeles, everybody was working for a living and coming and going and, you know, time together was precious. And time was money because people by then were freelancing. So having a few days in Seattle to just work together on a developing a piece away from home really allowed us, allowed me to develop some new ideas and allowed us to work together to discover new things. (Steiger 2021b)

Meanwhile, the website component of the residency fell entirely on Steiger to produce. The *Frame(s)* webpage was linked to the ensemble's website domain and featured a description of the piece as well as a small interactive component. In this section, users could select icons of Knoles' instruments to produce MIDI sounds. Like Weber's online component for the Relâche ensemble, this feature was accessible by downloading a software plugin called Beatnik, which enabled users to access MIDI files directly on their web browser.[242] Despite his best efforts, Steiger believes this may not have satisfied Franklin's expectations for the virtual component to *Frame(s)*. "I don't think they thought I succeeded. But I did what I could based on my skillset at the time" (Steiger, 2021b).

Frame(s) was premiered on March 2, 1998 at the University of Washington, Henry Art Gallery Auditorium. On November 30 of that year, the EAR Unit performed it again on the Monday Evening Concerts series at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. In addition to receiving a review in the LA Times, their performance was written about by the music critic Alan Rich in *LA Weekly*. Rich often wrote rather candidly about the EAR Unit in his reviews of their LACMA concerts.[243] In his 1998 write up, Rich introduces the group as champions "in the battle to save the world from muzak." Of their performance of *Frame(s)*, he praises both the piece and their performance:

[242] Franklin, 274-276.
[243] See Chapter 1.

> After intermission came the extended nuisance of some of Michael Torke's minimalist hootchy-kootch that I won't bother to name, and *Frame(s)*, Rand Steiger's exhilarating new work for the EAR Unit's percussion goddess Amy Knoles, knockout music including long improv passages for the players to feast upon royally, as, indeed, they did.[244]

3.6 Conclusions

This chapter has explored the California E.A.R. Unit's participation in the Music in Motion program, detailing their collaborations with six composers at four institutions in different US cities. According to combined accounts, the EAR Unit and their collaborators fully invested in the core ethos of the project, that being to experiment artistically in a context free of expectations, and to do so while engaging audiences in the process. While the musicians shared vivid memories of their experiences working on the music, little was said about the public component of the residencies. This suggests that the audience building initiative was an effective tool for attracting large-scale funding, but not an especially impactful strategy for influencing the creative process.

As shown in this analysis, each of the works they produced involved some degree of authorship by the musicians in co-constructing unique performance pieces. These contributions are explicit in improvised cadenzas in Feldman's *Creatures of Habit,* Dresher's *Stretch,* and Steiger's *Frame(s)*. The EAR Unit also encouraged composers to take advantage of dramatic staging, jointly determining the array of objects used in Feldman and Beglarian's theatrical tableaux and the assortment of percussive objects in

[244] Alan Rich, "Exercises in Devotion, *LA Weekly*, December 9, 1998, https://www.laweekly.com/exercises-in-devotion/.

Dresher's unconventional drumkit. These choices by the group were not merely superficial but were integrated into the structure of the compositions as well as the sonic material of the performances. With Vees, the ensemble went beyond offering props and staging by contributing entire quasi-autobiographical narratives that formed the basis of *Fake ID*. Such processes point out the highly personalized nature of these works and call into question their viability as reproducible compositions. Indeed, Lockwood's *Monkey Trips* is the only piece to receive subsequent performances by other ensembles. Unlike the situations created by the other works, Lockwood's extramusical demands, which involve channeling the six Buddhist realms, remained purely internal.

Beglarian, Jarvinen and Rohrig's *typOpera* most comprehensively embodies this process of co-creation. As demonstrated in this chapter, the EAR Unit influenced nearly every aspect of the work, starting with its premise as a free adaptation of Schwitters' "Ursonate," situated between polystylistic composition and Dadaist theater. Beglarian welcomed the EAR Unit's input in both designing its various theatrical scenarios and exploiting them to generate musical material, a technique closely related to Jarvinen's invented practice of Physical Poetry. Meanwhile, some individual movements within the piece were composed entirely by EAR Unit members and drew upon the classical avant-garde and world music practices they learned at CalArts. The resulting work, therefore, is less a product of a singular vision and more the result of an exchange of ideas and skills. Indeed, *typOpera* was constructed as an object of shared exploration, passed between its co-authors who took turns shaping and manipulating the work. For Beglarian, this process blurred distinctions between composition and performance, bringing them together as unified modes of engagement. This necessitated that Beglarian herself

participate more directly in its creation and share the stage with the EAR Unit to become one of its principal performers.

Collectively, this body of work demonstrates the EAR Unit's emerging profile in this period as multifaceted performing artists, not just skilled interpreters of contemporary music. This highly collaborative approach stemmed from the group's graduate and post-graduate work at CalArts, in which the composition faculty enlisted the young musicians in an assortment of professional projects.[245] Their dexterity in theater, improvisation, composition, world music, and electronics were also derived from the wide range of musical inspirations that surrounded them in the 1980s. Beglarian explains how the EAR Unit's versatility in these areas made them exemplary representatives of perceived changes in composition:

> Maybe it's because I was growing up during that time, but it was this really exciting moment when these old ways of thinking about what constitutes the avant-garde, what constitutes new music, were dying away and being replaced by a much more fluid and eclectic and playful—and world music-inflected—idea of what music can be. And for me, the EAR Unit was an embodiment of that. That's why the EAR Unit was so special because they weren't throwing away the skills that allowed them to play Elliott Carter and the like; they were using those skills, while cultivating all these other skills in addition. It wasn't either/or. It was definitely both/and. And it wasn't just both/and, it was both/*and many*. (Beglarian, 2020)

This formulation proposes that late 20th century developments in compositional thinking were reciprocally related to shifting expectations placed on new music performers; that contemporary composition responded directly to the musician's expanded palette of tools. This relationship is indeed reflected in the Music in Motion pieces, which were developed in response to the EAR Unit's input and precise set of skills.

[245] See Chapter 1.

In my interview, Dresher points out how this engaged model distinguished groups like the EAR Unit and the Paul Dresher Ensemble from more repertoire-based contemporary music ensembles, like the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Franklin's own vision for Relâche also resembles that of the EAR Unit, with its embracement of both theater and technology, combining a broad range of avant-garde approaches. In his memoir, he writes,

> The ensemble I envisioned would work as a fully integrated democratic entity with each performer having input into the overall design or arc of a given work. Most importantly, the ensemble I envisioned would not be modeled on any current of previous group then active but rather would create a new type of musical ensemble: virtuosic and unpredictable, elegant and raucous, controlled yet uncontrollable.[246]

Such aspirations for an ostensibly new type of contemporary music ensemble, articulated by both Franklin and Beglarian, likely apply in unique ways to other groups throughout the US that developed concurrently in the 1980s and 1990s. Meanwhile, programs like Music in Motion, the Yellow Springs Institute, and CalArts both fueled and responded to emerging conceptions of the new music ensemble in terms of the skills they brought and the types of work they were expected to produce.

[246] Franklin, 52.

CHAPTER 4

Final Transformations at Walt Disney Concert Hall's REDCAT (2005-2012)

This chapter follows the California E.A.R. Unit in its final decade, focusing on its activities at the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater (REDCAT) in the Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown, Los Angeles. This period in the ensemble's history was marked by continuous transformation, triggered by a sequence of personnel turnover coupled with the unexpected deaths of Stephen "Lucky" Mosko and flutist Dorothy Stone. After many years of transition, the EAR Unit settled into its final incarnation as a trio, which included the group's newest member, violinist Eric KM Clark. Here, I examine how these changes, including its new series at REDCAT, influenced the group's overall working dynamic and artistic profile. In dealing with the serious topic of death, this chapter looks exclusively at how such losses impacted their performance work and trajectory as a group.

4.1 Personal losses, new repertoire, and performances at REDCAT

REDCAT is a multipurpose visual and performing arts center located in the Walt Disney Concert Hall complex and operated by its parent organization, CalArts. It houses a 200-seat black box theater, an art gallery, and a bar-lounge. Like CalArts, it promotes artists and performers working in avant-garde and interdisciplinary practices.[247] Steven

[247] "REDCAT STORY," accessed July 27, 2023, Redcat.org/story.

D. Lavine, then president of CalArts, saw the professional venue as an overdue opportunity to expand the school's physical presence beyond its isolated Valencia campus on the city's outskirts.[248] Funds for the Disney Hall add-on were provided by The Walt Disney Company and its vice chairman, Roy E. Disney, who named the venue after his father, Roy O. Disney and wife Edna.[249] As the Institute's downtown extension, REDCAT furthered the work of Roy O. Disney who originally oversaw the management of his brother Walt Disney's vision for the institution that became CalArts.

Figure 4.1: REDCAT main entrance. (Photograph by Rob Corder. "RedCat Theater," July 21, 2009, accessed February 11, 2024, https://www.flickr.com/photos/rocor/3743790799/: CC BY-NC 2.0)

[248] Karen Wada, "Crazy Cat: Is downtown ready for its avant-garde, CalArts-backed new performance space?," *Los Angeles Magazine*, Vol 46 (12), 60-67. See also: Jörn Jacob Rohwer, *Steven D. Lavine. Failure is What It's All About: A Life Devoted to Leadership in the Arts* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2021).
[249] "REDCAT STORY."

Months after the venue opened in November of 2003, the California E.A.R. Unit performed its first concert there on February 19, 2004. The program celebrated Mel Powell's life and music, featuring works recorded by the EAR Unit on their album, *Mel Powell: Settings*, released on New World Records in 2003.[250] All the works by Powell on the tribute concert at REDCAT were written specifically for the EAR Unit, including one of his most well-known chamber works, the two-movement Sextet (1996). The EAR Unit also reprised three solos written for members of the ensemble. They were *Invocation* (1988) for cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick ("Composed for Erika and only Erika!"), the Flute Sonatine (1996) for flutist Dorothy Stone, and *AmyAbilities* (1988) for percussionist Amy Knoles.[251]

In retrospect, the EAR Unit's return to Powell's music was a fitting way to mark the beginning of their relationship to REDCAT. The composer, who had passed away in 1998, had been on faculty at CalArts for nearly 30 years and had accompanied the ensemble as graduate students to the 1982 Holland Festival, where they performed his music for the first time. As the EAR Unit's 18-year residency at LACMA was coming to an end, concerts at the new CalArts venue symbolized a return to their institutional roots. Although this was not a major departure from their concert series at the museum, which regularly included works by other past faculty mentors, the Powell tribute was the first time in its history that the EAR Unit billed a concert as a retrospective. Indeed, the concert highlighted the significant length of their working relationship to Powell and the impact he had on their career over many years. For the ensemble's longest-standing

[250] "California E.A.R. Unit- Plays Mel Powell," REDCAT, accessed July 28, 2023, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20210731220938/https:/www.redcat.org/event/california-ear-unit-6.
[251] Mel Powll, quoted in liner notes for *Mel Powell: Settings*, the California E.A.R. Unit, by Anthony Brandt, New World Records 80616-2, 2003.

members, events such as these brought up deep feelings of nostalgia that were increasingly impossible to avoid.

The reprisal of older works was further contextualized by the ensemble's reduced schedule and shifting dynamics in the early 2000s. The group saw the most noticeable change with the departure of three of their members around 2000: pianist Lorna Eder, percussionist Art Jarvinen, and clarinetist Jim Rohrig. As founding members, Jarvinen and Rohrig had together formed a major aesthetic corner of the ensemble, focusing on Dada-inspired, interdisciplinary projects in music, theater, and performance art.[252] The remaining musicians were no less committed to their own pursuits; Knoles was still the biggest advocate for minimalist works and Duke-Kirkpatrick continued to insist on programming serial compositions. However, without Jarvinen and Rohrig's perspective, the ensemble lost the factious and even combative group dynamic that resulted from their strikingly different artistic viewpoints. Instead, the EAR Unit began at this time to coalesce around a more uniform approach to programming and presentation, which combined late 20th century chamber works with newer electro-acoustic ones.

During the transition to REDCAT, the ensemble was thus reduced from its original 10 members to a sextet. The EAR Unit consisted of Dorothy Stone (flute), Marty Walker (clarinet), Robin Lorentz (violin), Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick (cello), Vicki Ray (piano), and Amy Knoles (percussion). Stone, Lorentz, Duke-Kirkpatrick, and Knoles were the only remaining founding members.

Then, on December 5, 2005, the EAR Unit received the difficult news that Stephen "Lucky" Mosko had died unexpectedly in his home. This was an indescribable

[252] See Chapters 2 and 3.

personal loss for his wife Stone, and for the ensemble musicians who had met and become friends under his tutelage at CalArts.[253] His death posed the question as to whether the ensemble could continue without its longest-serving and most beloved champion. The musicians determined that they could finish the season and then reassess the decision to stay together later (Knoles, 2020; Ray, 2023). This was possible because by the late 1990s, Mosko's involvement in the group had almost completely receded, only making occasional appearances to conduct. Pianist Ray remembers that even by the time she had joined the group in 1994, Mosko had stopped attending programming meetings. She understood his impact on the group primarily through stories told of "the brilliant 'Lucky'" by members of the ensemble (Ray, 2023). Nonetheless, Mosko, in addition to being her life partner, was Stone's primary source of inspiration. As the EAR Unit's official Artistic Director, it was largely her decision to keep the group together (Knoles, 2020).

Further complicating this choice, the EAR Unit was scheduled to perform its first set of concerts at REDCAT after having lost their 18-year LACMA Ensemble Residency series at the end of the previous spring season.[254] In response to the museum's sudden and unpopular decision, REDCAT had agreed to produce up to two EAR Unit concerts a year in the venue's black box theater. This came with several highly attractive benefits on top of the cachet associated with performing at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Whereas LACMA refused to provide an engineer or stagehands, for example, the downtown theater came equipped with updated sound and digital projections systems, flexible modular seating, and a technical crew that was

[253] See Chapter 1.
[254] See Chapter 2.

trained to operate the venue. REDCAT also provided updated digital promotion that connected the EAR Unit to broader, more relevant network of music audiences (Ray, 2023).

Thus, on February 14, 2006, the EAR Unit performed a concert at REDCAT, featuring the world premiere of Ellen Taafe Zwilich's *LUVN BLM* (2006). Commissioned by violinist Lorentz, the work is dedicated to the composer's husband and titled after their license plate (Knoles, 2021). In response to Mosko's death, the EAR Unit changed its next show on April 11, 2006, to be a celebration of the composer's life and music. Former EAR Unit members Eder and Jarvinen joined them in performances of *J* (2003) and *Indigenous Music II* (1984), both composed for the ensemble. Stone also performed her husband's flute solo *Thea's Tune* (2005), his last completed work. Mosko's *Indigenous Music II* and others had been essential to the EAR Unit's repertoire for decades. The ensemble commissioned nearly a dozen works and performed them repeatedly. The group programmed his trio *For Morton Feldman* (1988) for example, multiple times every season for over five years after its premiere.

On Mosko's compositional process, Jarvinen notes, "Composers often say they 'write what they hear.' Mosko writes what he thinks, so that he (and we) may hear it."[255] Mosko describes this process in precisely the same way in an interview at his home on December 9, 2004. The conversation between Knoles, James Tenney, Martin Herman, and Glenn Zucman was part of a series called, "Border Patrol," sponsored by American Public Media's Classical Music Initiative. Mosko explains:

> Well, I was incurable. I started when I was three and I never had a choice. Music was always the way I thought. I can't think of any other way than in

[255] Art Jarvinen, "Stephen L. Mosko: Music, Mind, and Personality," *LeisurePlanetMusic*, accessed July 28, 2023, http://www.leisureplanetmusic.com/composer/mosko/blurb.htm.

> music … You think in words and they sort of go in loops. And music goes in spirals to me. It opens things up. It makes me get to other places where I can't get within words. And what my dear friend Mr. Tenney said, my sort of extension of that is, I think there's this huge chain which makes consciousness. And people believe in things. And if we sincerely do not believe in that, we're going to break the chain and maybe we can make things better. But we can't do that by talking too much. We can do that by music because we can break the chain there and reform the universe.[256]

At the end of the 2005-2006 season, the EAR Unit decided to stay together. However, for various reasons, violinist Lorentz and clarinetist Walker left the group. Walker was briefly replaced by clarinetist-saxophonist Phil O'Connor, but the violin position remained open for several years. Prior to stepping down, Lorentz had begun to take occasional time off. Among the substitutes that filled in for her was Eric KM Clark, an MFA student in performance and composition at CalArts from 2004 to 2006. Clark explains that he came to the school with little experience in new music. Like the EAR Unit members before him, the violinist was influenced by the rich environment at CalArts, which included opportunities to play with the EAR Unit. Clark studied composition under James Tenney and played in the student-faculty ensemble, the New Century Players, formerly the Twentieth Century Players (Clark, 2020). Clark moved to New York City after graduating, but would return in 2008 to become a permanent, full-time member of the group in its final iteration.

The ensemble's REDCAT series was better suited for its reduced numbers than was the more substantial LACMA residency. Ray believes that the pressure of curating four standalone concerts a year at LACMA compromised their playing by limiting their available rehearsal time (Ray, 2023). Indeed, *Los Angeles Times* writers were often quick

[256] Amy Knoles, Herman, Martin & Zucman, Glenn, Interview with James Tenney and Stephen L. Mosko, *Border Patrol*, accessed July 28, 2023, https://glenn.zucman.com/blog/border-patrol/.

to note discrepancies in performance quality within a single concert.[257] Especially throughout the 1990s, the EAR Unit's concerts in Los Angeles were interspersed between a tight touring schedule.[258] According to Ray, the reduced workload at REDCAT enabled them to program larger pieces and to focus more energy on rehearsing.

Such conveniences proved helpful for their next REDCAT concert on April 11, 2007, which featured the West Coast premiere of Julius Eastman's *Crazy N*— (1979). Although the work was nearly 30 years old, Eastman's music had been virtually inaccessible to the public prior to the release of *Julius Eastman: Unjust Malaise* in 2005, a three-CD set of the composer's music produced by Mary Jane Leach and Paul Tai on New World Records. The live recordings of Eastman's performances are considered a critical resource for interpreting the composer's mostly incomplete materials, which appear often to serve as templates for reconstruction rather than fully notated scores.[259] *Crazy N*— was originally composed and performed within a set of works that included *Evil N*— (1979) and *Gay Guerilla* (1980), all of which can be performed by any number of instruments of the same family. A recording of Eastman's introductory remarks at a concert at Northwestern University provides key explanation of his additive compositional technique, which he called "Organic Music." Eastman's justification for the titles of these works has been examined critically and understood at its most

[257] See Chapter 2.
[258] In the year 1995 alone, the EAR Unit gave performances at Minnesota State University, the Walker Art Center, the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and the Kennedy Center.
[259] See Kyle Gann, "'Damned Outrageous': The Music of Julius Eastman, Liner notes for *Julius Eastman: Unjust Malaise*, New World Records 80638-2, 2005, 3 compact discs.

fundamental level as an act of political resistance by the black and openly gay composer.[260]

As the EAR Unit members have pointed out, critical understanding of Eastman's music had yet to enter mainstream performance practice. The ensemble could only rely on the newly released archival recordings and their own correspondences with Leach for their interpretation of the work. Ray, Duke-Kirkpatrick, Knoles and Stone performed using Eastman's original instrumentation of four pianos. Duke-Kirkpatrick and Stone both were proficient on keyboard instruments, but the primary challenge was negotiating the stamina required to play Eastman's repetitive music (Knoles, 2021). Part of their solution for reaching a critical mass was to have 10 additional musicians, many of them CalArts students, planted in the audience. During the piece's final plateau, the assistants approached the stage and join them at the four instruments. Using extra players also responded to an additional layer of Eastman's scores, which often provide more pitches than are possible to play by four musicians. Ray recalls:

> We were playing all these parts, right? And then all of these extra notes get added in and have to become part of the texture. There's no other way to do it. I don't know how other groups have done it. They would have to leave notes out. It also just seems so anarchically wonderful and powerful, as if the music just demanded more and more. And finally, what it needed was other people to just come up. It was kind of thrilling. (Ray, 2023)

The ensemble's next concert at REDCAT on October 17, 2007 also called for the musicians to play instruments that were not their own. The centerpiece of the program was Louis Andriessen's *Debbelspoor* (1986) for piano, harpsichord, glockenspiel and celesta, performed by the same subset of Ray, Duke-Kirkpatrick, Knoles and Stone. The

[260] For scholarship on Eastman's life and works, see Renée Levine Packer and Mary Jane Leach, *Gay Guerrilla: Julius Eastman and His Music* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015).

EAR Unit also performed Franco Donatoni's *Arpège* (1986) and Raphaèle Biston's *.oscil* (2004), as well as Liza Lim's *Veil* (1999) with guest composer-trumpeter Daniel Rosenboom. The group was familiar with Andriessen's music, having commissioned and premiered his chamber work *Zilver* (1997), recorded by the ensemble on New Albion Records.[261] The EAR Unit was also experienced with learning new instruments. Knoles cites many of their more experimental projects from the CalArts Festivals as precedent for their flexibility with instrumentation. She explains, "It was always a challenge finding new repertoire. We adapted from working with Kagel and those guys early on, where you would have to play an instrument you had never played before. We had already gone through that challenge and had become comfortable with it" (Knoles, 2021).

Things seemed to be back on track for the EAR Unit when, in March of 2008, the group experienced yet another painful loss with the early death of Dorothy Stone at age 49. Stone's absence was difficult for everyone in the EAR Unit and posed the biggest existential question yet, leading to the resignation of clarinetist O'Connor in 2009 and cellist Duke-Kirkpatrick in 2010. As a founding member, Duke-Kirkpatrick was personally close to Stone and through many collaborations, came to be deeply intimate with the nuances of Stone's playing. Together, they co-commissioned a new work from the composer Elliott Carter. Although the resulting work, *Enchanted Preludes* (1988), is attributed to a different honoree and was premiered by members of the Da Capo Chamber Players in New York, Duke-Kirkpatrick insists that the work was originally intended for them. While short, *Enchanted Preludes* is no less thorny than the composer's other fully serialized works. Nonetheless, the cellist remembers that they became so familiar with

[261] The California E.A.R. Unit, *Zilver*, New Albion NA 094, 1997, compact disc.

the each other's playing that the piece became a staple of their backup repertoire. She explains:

> It's the sort of thing where you play with a string quartet and you learn where people like to put things in a Beethoven quartet. To know exactly where somebody was going to put things in a Carter piece feels really nice. It was so comfortable. In fact, many times, something else would blow up and, for whatever reason, we couldn't do another piece. The band would say, "Hey, just go out and do Carter." (Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2023)

Quoted in Rand's obituary for Stone, Duke-Kirkpatrick remarks on the significance of knowing someone so well through their playing. "Dorothy is in my DNA—her timing, her coloring, her breath, the way she intuitively thought about phrase and pitch and concept. Every piece I ever played with her has her permanent imprint on it."

Given the consecutive losses of Mosko and Stone, the remaining musicians realized that they needed a youthful presence if the EAR Unit had any hope of staying together. Thus, the group invited Clark to become a full-time member of the EAR Unit. Clark was humbled by the experience working professionally with the ensemble during his student years and embraced the opportunity to re-establish himself in Los Angeles. His presence in the ensemble would indeed breathe new life into the group.

Within a few days of moving back to Los Angeles in 2008, Clark had to contend with his own personal loss after the unexpected death of his friend, composer and computer engineer, Harris Wulfson at the age of 34. This immediately prompted Clark and a cohort of his peers from CalArts to start the wulf., a presenting organization for experimental music and performance. The series was named in his honor, using a dot to represent that his life had been abbreviated (Clark, 2020)· For years, the series was hosted out of a warehouse on Santa Fe St., in Los Angeles' downtown Fashion District. Its

events were free, and the organizers took an egalitarian approach towards curation.[262] According to Clark, their ethos was not only inspired by the creative work of their friend Wulfson but responded to growing need among artists in the city to have a reliable and affordable space for community-building.

> The wulf., when we were going, especially the first few years, was this kind of hub because there were all these places shutting down, and composers and performers just wanted a place to show their stuff without having money involved. People were broke then. This was right when the financial downturn was happening in 2008. It was a crazy time in LA. Housing markets sucked. Everything was bad. So, we just made a venue. No money, just people showing up. They'd email us like a few days before being like, "Hey, can I do this?" And if it fit, we said "Sure." It wasn't a long process of being like, "No, you can't do this." But we did say no to people. But if it fit, we said, "Sure, come do it." (Clark, 2020)

Clark's concern for the well-being of the experimental music scene during economically difficult times were not necessarily shared by the EAR Unit, which continued to operate exclusively within academic and institutional spheres. But the ensemble's distance from emerging groups that shared similar profiles to the EAR Unit was becoming increasingly apparent. Ambitious groups of younger musicians like the What's Next? Ensemble and Wild Up, founded in 2008 and 2010 respectively, were exploring new ways of navigating the city's economic landscape of concert music as self-sustaining organizations, made up primarily of graduate and post-graduate musicians.[263] For the first time in the EAR Unit's history, concert space was a valuable commodity shared by a growing field of contemporary music ensembles based in Los Angeles. Compared to opportunities available to other groups, the EAR Unit's sustained affiliation

[262] *the wulf.*, http://www.thewulf.org/about/, accessed July 20, 2023, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20180902195710/http:/www.thewulf.org/about/.
[263] Recent literature has begun to explore the social and economic forces that position contemporary music ensembles as competitive entrepreneurs in a limited market space. See Introduction.

with REDCAT was singular in nature and can be viewed in retrospect as a holdover from its tenure at LACMA, in which concert-producing resources were accessible to the EAR Unit all season, year after year.

4.2 The California E.A.R. Unit Trio: 2010-2012

After Duke-Kirkpatrick's departure in 2010, the EAR Unit was left with three players: Clark (violin), Ray (piano), and Knoles (percussion). This new trio formation became the face of the EAR Unit in its remaining years, serving as an arrival point after nearly 10 years of personnel restructuring. With Knoles being the only founding member, the trio carried less personal history and therefore functioned smoothly as a professional ensemble. Ray explains that although the smaller group was limited in its orchestration, it became more nimble and quicker to come to a consensus (Ray, 2023). After the tumultuous years in which they lost Mosko and Stone, the new formation offered a clean slate that propelled the group in its final stage. She remembers, "It just became a completely different creature. It had the same aesthetic priorities but in a different iteration. … It clicked. We had fun, and it wasn't stressful" (Ray, 2023).

The trio's operation was also more condensed with its smaller numbers. Knoles assumed the bulk of directorial work after Stone's passing and continued to do so throughout the trio period. The younger Clark remembers being given equal voice in programming but left management of the ensemble to Knoles. Clark viewed his colleagues, both of whom had been his teachers at CalArts, in high regard. However, the slight generational gap, compounded by Knoles and Ray's professional experience,

introduced a subtle boundary that resulted in a welcomed sense of hierarchy. Cark recalls, "It wasn't said that there was a level of seniority, but I definitely respected that these people had been in the group for a long time, and I was going to follow their lead" (Clark, 2020). Meanwhile, Knoles and Ray valued the violinist's abilities and fresh perspective, extending the same artistic license that had been granted to them during their LACMA years.

Their first concert as a trio at REDCAT on October 22, 2010 featured new works composed by each of the three members, including *exPAT* by Clark, Belgo *II* by Knoles, and *Jugg(ular)ling* by Ray. *Belgo II* was commissioned by Ray and dedicated to the EAR Unit's former percussionist, Art Jarvinen, who had died unexpectedly earlier that month.[264] It was named after Knoles' favorite Belgian restaurant in the SOHO district of London, in which the names of fictional chefs appearing in Francois Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel* are inscribed along the walls. Their names are spoken in the piece and looped electronically. Knoles' program note reads: "While composing the piece I listened to music of the late fifteenth century to put myself in a 'Rabelaisian' state of mind. I drew from that music and used some of the compositional techniques that I learned from composers like Louis Andriessen and Arthur Jarvinen."[265] Ray's *Jugg(ular)ling* also drew inspiration from the composers of minimalist and process music performed by the EAR Unit, like Rzewski and Steve Reich.

[264] CalArts, "CalArts Mourns the Loss of Composer, Performer, Artist Arthur Jarvinen," *24700*, October 4, 2010, https://blog.calarts.edu/2010/10/04/calarts-mourns-the-loss-of-composer-performer-artist-arthur-jarvinen/.
[265] Amy Knoles, "Belgo II," Program notes to a performance by the California E.A.R. Unit at Chapman University, May 5, 2011.

Figure 4.2: The California E.A.R. Unit Trio (L-R): Eric KM Clark, Vicki Ray, Amy Knoles. (The California E.A.R. Unit, "Downloads," accessed February 11, 2024, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20120411220011/http://www.earunit.org/)

Throughout their REDCAT years, the EAR Unit trio collaborated with the composer-saxophonist Ulrich Krieger. In the Fall of 2006, the ensemble flew to Germany to workshop and perform his *Before/QUAKE* for cello, percussion, and piano. The engagement was part of an artist exchange with the Villa Aurora estate, a Spanish style house in Pacific Palisades, originally owned by Lion Feuchtwanger and used as a meeting place for German artists residing in the US during World War II.[266] The EAR

[266] See "Past, Present, and Future," *Villa Aurora Thomas Mann House*, accessed July 31, 2023, https://www.vatmh.org/en/history.html

Unit trio and the Ensemble Mosaik gave a concert of the participating composers' works at the Konzerthaus Berlin, which can be heard on the album, *Villa Aurora: Berlin Meets Los Angeles*.[267] On July 9, 2007, the EAR Unit performed all of the Villa Aurora works on their REDCAT series.

In September 2007, Krieger joined the faculty at CalArts, teaching composition and experimental sound practices.[268] After arriving in Los Angeles, Krieger formed a trio with Lou Reed and Sarth Calhoun performing free improvised music, inspired by Reed's 1975 noise album *Metal Machine Music*. For Krieger working in both classical avant-garde and industrial music, the album made sense of his competing interests by combining "the richness from the world of orchestral music with the freedom and spontaneous approach of free jazz."[269] Previously, in 2002, Krieger had begun a project of transcribing the album for live performance. His fourth version was arranged for the combined forces of the California E.A.R. Unit trio and Sonic Boom, a CalArts student electroacoustic ensemble led by Krieger.[270] The adaptation was performed on the EAR Unit's REDCAT series on April 20, 2010. A concert review in *Bluefat* magazine describes the event as overwhelming and cathartic.

> One viola player was so convulsive it looked as though she was going to fall out of her chair. Styrofoam was mic'd; velvet stretched like a trampoline and assaulted with lengths of heavy chain served as percussion. The effect—what an amplified pile of writhing nightcrawlers on amphetamines might sound like—was bliss or torment, depending on the lobes, an unholy din, an avant-horror movie score, hair-raising in that

[267] Various, *Villa Aurora: Berlin Meets Los Angeles*, WERGO ARTS 8114-2, 2006, compact disc.
[268] "Ulrich Krieger," *CalArts*, accessed July 31, 2023, https://music.calarts.edu/faculty-and-staff/ulrich-krieger.
[269] Lilledeshan Bose, "Metal Machine Trio's Ulrich Krieger: 'The trio is an update of Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music* in philosophical and aesthetic sense,'" *OC Weekly*, January 27, 2012, archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20131029184707/http:/blogs.ocweekly.com/heardmentality/2012/01/metal_machine_trios_ulrich_kri.php.
[270] Ulrich Krieger, "Metal Machine Music: An 1975 album by Lou Reed," accessed July 31, 2023, http://www.ulrich-krieger.de/projects/p_mmm.htm.

> maniac-around-the-bend kind of way. And like the music in Hell's dentist's office, it was uncomfortably soothing.[271]

Most of the EAR Unit's other work as a trio involved concerts and residencies at institutions such as Chapman University, UC Berkeley, and Hamilton College in New York. During their residency at the California State University, Chico in 2011, the EAR Unit premiered faculty composer David Dvorin's *As Alice,* a multimovement work for violin, piano and electric percussion. The trio included it on their April 10, 2011 REDCAT concert, which also featured Miguel A's *On Music: Literally Speaking,* Chris Tonkin's *Widdop, Phaetons, Relic* (2001), and Shaun Naidoo's *Nothing Left to Burn*.

On March 24, 2012, the EAR Unit trio closed their final REDCAT season with a live realization of Morton Subotnick's *Silver Apples of the Moon* (1967) and *A Sky of Cloudless Sulphur* (1978). For the trio, this was one of their most exciting projects yet. *Silver Apples* was Subotnick's debut album on Nonesuch Records, and the first electronic music composition commissioned specifically for a recording. Subotnick originally performed the work on the Buchla 100, Don Buchla's first modular synthesizer design, co-commissioned by Subotnick and Ramon Sender. *A Sky of Cloudless Sulphur* was also created on an early Buchla instrument.[272] Both studio works embody Subotnick's concept of 20th century "chamber music," invoking the privacy and intimacy of traditional classical chamber music, but through the mechanical means of the record player.[273]

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[271] Skylaire Alfvegren, "Lou's Blues: Metal Machine Music (In Four Movements) California E.A.R. Unit/Sonic Boom at REDCAT April 20," *Bluefat,* accessed July 31, 2023, http://www.bluefat.com/1005/Metal_Machine_Music.htm.
[272] See Bob Gluck, "Nurturing young composers: Morton Subotnick's late-1960s studio in New York City," *Computer Music Journal* 36 (1), 2012, 65-80.
[273] See Barry Schrader, '"Silver Apples of the Moon,' Morton Subotnick (1967)," accessed July 31, 2023, https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/SilverApples.pdf.

The REDCAT performance—titled, *Silver Apples to a Sky of Cloudless Sulphur: Revisited*—was the first iteration of an ongoing project by the composer to recreate the recordings-cum-composition as staged performances. For his collaboration with the EAR Unit trio, Subotnick performed with the ensemble using a hybrid Ableton-Buchla instrument, responding in real-time with processing and material from previous work.[274] The concert sold out and received a positive review in *The Los Angeles Times* by Josef Woodard, a writer who reviewed many of the EAR Unit's early LACMA concerts. "In all, it was a thrilling evening of then and now, also inspiring reflection of the powerful influence of Subotnick's 'then' on the now."[275]

The positive atmosphere surrounding the concert prompted the trio to revisit the question of staying together. Without much deliberation, they agreed after the show that something about the moment felt right, that it was finally time to retire the EAR Unit. Knoles remembers, "It was such a great evening, and we went, 'Oh, why don't we just stop it here'" (Knoles, 2015). The timing also offered a degree of symbolism by bookending the EAR Unit's 30-year career with collaborations with Subotnick, the ensemble's first ever supporter. The good feelings also allowed the group to confront the fact that, despite their success as a trio, the EAR Unit had irreversibly shifted with the recent changes in personnel. Clark admits that the original members were essential to the ensemble's identity, asserting that "Erika was the EAR Unit. Dorothy *was* the EAR Unit" (Clark, 2020). Likewise, for Ray, the singular nature of the group's identity had finally

[274] CalArts, "Electronic Music Pioneer Morton Subotnick & California E.A.R. Unit Revisit Iconic Works," *24700*, March 22, 2012, https://blog.calarts.edu/2012/03/22/electronic-music-pioneer-morton-subotnick-california-e-a-r-unit-revisit-iconic-works/.
[275] Josef Woodard, "Morton Subotnick, California E.A.R. Unit at REDCAT," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 2012.

ceased to exist. “That initial, roguish, anything goes, we’ll-try-anything personality felt like it had evaporated” (Ray, 2023).

At that point, the EAR Unit was officially retired and has not since been revived. As a parting gesture, Knoles and Ray donated the ensemble’s piano, which had been in their possession for over a decade, to Clark and his associates to use at the wulf. (Clark, 2020). Otherwise, the longest-standing members used its retirement to move on and to seek closure from many years of collective memories, both good and bad. In the following years, Duke-Kirkpatrick, Knoles, and Ray continued to teach instrumental music at CalArts, and Steiger composition at UC San Diego. Clark went on to establish a new Los Angeles based group in 2013, called Southland Ensemble, devoted to event-based experimental performance and music.

As for the ensemble’s legacy, their archive of materials and programs have remained virtually unexamined in the dusty corners of garages and home studios. Indeed, the tumultuousness caused by the deaths of three of its core members dampened their parting spirits, preventing the EAR Unit’s storied history from circulating widely. Nevertheless, over the three decades, the EAR Unit found its way into the histories of many of persisting institutions for contemporary music—CalArts, UC San Diego, Monday Evenings Concerts, LACMA, the Ojai Festival, Bang on a Can, June in Buffalo, to name several—including those where some members are still active. Thus, future research may continue to shine light on their work, especially from the 1980s and 1990s

As shown throughout this dissertation, the EAR Unit was founded upon a shared enthusiasm for learning and exploration, all originating from their years at CalArts. Indeed, their entire aim was to extend their educational experiences into a sustained

career in contemporary music. Thus, the ensemble's ultimate legacy lies in its work as a group of educators, carrying on, still to this day, the lessons that first brought them together. Through this lens, the EAR Unit may be forever silent, but its call-to-action echoes repeatedly through concert halls, classrooms, and long-gone auditoriums.

4.3 Conclusions

This brief account of the EAR Unit's last 10 years highlights some of the major alterations to the group's identity that resulted from personnel changes. Without Jarvinen and Rohrig, for example, the group no longer produced ambitious concert-length experiments in music and theater, projects that epitomized their eclectic programming at LACMA and work during the Music in Motion residencies. Their exit, more importantly, removed the clashing aesthetics that had been a key theme of both its internal and outward identity. Instead, the group's programming become generally more conservative, and its overall profile fluctuated ambiguously before settling on the more distinct trio formation. During this transitional state, the EAR Unit did explore some new ground, such as its revival of Julius Eastman's music. However, a dominant thread in the EAR Unit's concerts looked backwards at own history, paying homage to the composers whose music had initially inspired them.

The EAR Unit trio, on the other hand, was arguably an entirely different group altogether. Its unique instrumentation of violin, piano, and percussion prevented repeat performance of past staples, but galvanized the musicians to build out a new repertoire of its own. The rapport between the two senior musicians and its youngest member was

professional and effective, a stark contrast to the family-like dynamics of past decades. Ultimately, the trio's distance from the original EAR Unit formation caused its members to let the ensemble finally come to an end.

The modernized venue at REDCAT further shaped the EAR Unit's more traditional presentation in this period. The black box theater's state-of-the art technology allowed the group, especially as a trio, to effectively mount several multimedia projects. Its advantages also included the dual institutional affiliation to both CalArts and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. However, REDCAT seemed to lack the historical context that rendered LACMA a more compelling site for performance art interventions. Even without Jarvinen and Rohrig to initiate such projects, the downtown venue aligned well with the image of a more conventional, professional contemporary music ensemble. LACMA's classical theater, on the other hand, provided an incongruency that both accentuated the group's rough presentation and fostered a sense of solidarity among members of the ensemble. LACMA therefore foregrounded the EAR Unit's identity whereas REDCAT seemed to subsume it into a broader series for avant-garde performance.

Finally, the EAR Unit's final phase intersected with the emergence of new groups and organizations in Los Angeles dedicated to contemporary and experimental music. Although this is only briefly mentioned, I show this to be a relevant topic for understanding the larger context of the ensemble's separation. What replaced the EAR Unit, and how did they leverage available concert resources? More interesting are questions about the narratives that constitute their origins, and how closely they may

parallel the lifecycle of the EAR Unit, which, for all its resistance, remained attached permanently to the lessons and relationships discovered in their student years at CalArts.

CONCLUSIONS

> dear brother,
>
> i think the combination of age & greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. it's six months now [since Sam's arrest] & i can tell you truthfully few periods in my life have passed so quickly. i am in excellent physical & emotional health. there are doubtless subtle surprises ahead but i feel secure & ready.
>
> as lovers will contrast their emotions in times of crisis so am i dealing with my environment. in the indifferent brutality, the incessant noise, the experimental chemistry of food, the ravings of lost hysterical men i can act with clarity & meaning. i am deliberate—sometimes even calculating—seldom employing histrionics except as a test of the reactions of others. i read much, exercise, talk to guards & inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life.
>
> Samuel Melville
> Letter from Attica Prison, May 16, 1971[276]

This excerpt from a letter by Samuel Melville, written months before the Attica Prison Uprising, forms the spoken part to Frederic Rzewski's *Coming Together* (1971) for any number of performers. A commentary on the injustices of incarceration in the US, *Coming Together* was by far the EAR Unit's most programmed work. It ranked among the group's most treasured pieces to play, particularly because the ensemble had many opportunities to perform it with the composer himself at the piano or narrating.[277] In the piece, the fragmented text is accompanied by a constant sixteenth note bass line in G minor pentatonic, contained within a single octave. Rzewski's instructions offer rules that

[276] Samuel Melville, *Letters From Attica* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1972), 110.
[277] EAR Unit cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick remembers that Rzewski would never dine out at nice restaurants with the ensemble after performances as it violated his politics views on inequality. Duke-Kirkpatrick, 2023.

govern how additional instrumentalists may contribute to the texture, including through improvisation, so long as players adhere to the developing bass line.[278] Musically, *Coming Together* provides a useful metaphor for reflecting on the narrative themes that bind together the ensemble's life story and creative work, shown throughout this dissertation. In the piece, spontaneous contributions build upon a single, unrelenting unity. The EAR Unit viewed themselves similarly as drawn to a common purpose, but steadfast in their individual characteristics.

Like Rzewski's swelling bass line, Melville's poetic resolve spoke to an underlying tension that held the EAR Unit together for most of its 30 years. The group saw their friendship as the inevitable product of circumstance, and their work together a way to prepare for a future unknown. They often viewed the text ironically, as in the dark-humored, melodramatic parody of the letter they concocted in the un-airconditioned Duke University dorms.[279] On the other hand, the EAR Unit also related to the work on a more intimate level as a sincere expression of personal, latent suffering. Regardless of the spirit of their interpretation, the musicians saw themselves as uniquely bonded; to them, CalArts was a penitentiary where they discovered a sense of rebellion and artistic clarity. *Coming Together* musically portrayed their story, including its darker undertones, and thus brought them great joy to play.

The previous chapters have recounted this group's history in its entirety, told through the lens of its relationships to several key institutions and organizations. In this final chapter, I discuss biographical conclusions drawn specifically about the EAR Unit

[278] For analysis of this process as a reflection of Rzewski's Marxist politics, see Christian Asplund, "Frederic Rzewski and Spontaneous Political Music," *Perspectives of New Music* 33, no. 1/2 (1995): 418-441.
[279] See Chapter 1.

and its story. I use this section to reflect on the ensemble's role in the expanding institutional landscape in Los Angeles for contemporary music at the end of the 20th century. Finally, I consider future directions this research may take, advocating for the continued use of historical biography in understanding the personal meanings of such formations.

5.1 Coming together as the California E.A.R. Unit

As shown throughout this dissertation, the unification of the EAR Unit's diverging perspectives proved to be the ensemble's most noteworthy feature. The origins of this narrative go back to the group's inception, to the moment in the CalArts cafeteria when they decided to model their "Unit" after the eclectic work of the Repercussion Unit. This concept of fragmented unity, however, can be more broadly tied to CalArts and its graduate performance curriculum in the 1980s. In this environment, the EAR Unit was introduced to contemporary music as a wheel of compositional aesthetics, intersecting with robust programs in electronic music and World Music pedagogy. The CalArts Festivals of Contemporary Music further made this project an intergenerational one and positioned the students as its new practitioners. I have demonstrated that the EAR Unit took such a paradigm of contemporary music performance, which mandated a broad set of specializations, and applied it through concert programming and multidisciplinary collaborations throughout the course of its career.[280]

[280] See Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Stephen "Lucky" Mosko played a critical role in translating and adapting CalArts' aesthetics of eclecticism into a performance practice that could be recreated by the EAR Unit and others. As seen throughout Chapter 1, he demonstrated an openness to many strains of contemporary music and modeled enthusiastic engagement that involved complete immersion in the process of studying and preparing compositions for performance.[281] In its later work, the ensemble replicated Mosko's approach by devoting extensive time and energy to each member's various projects. Their mutual dedication to a broad spectrum of styles was rooted in the expectations placed upon them at CalArts, channeled through their work with Mosko and the Twentieth Century Players.

This research suggests that the EAR Unit was one of the first ensembles of its kind to emerge out of the growing institutional focus on composition at the end of the 20th century, seen broadly in the literature.[282] CalArts, only a decade old, had just begun a major expansion of its contemporary music curriculum when the EAR Unit was formed. Indeed, its cohort was targeted specifically by the institution to be the first graduate performers to specialize explicitly in new music performance. Rather than being passive recipients of a pre-existing program, the EAR Unit was thus offered a partial, unspoken role as collaborators in the creation of such a new performance curriculum in an emerging field.

The biographical perspective provided by this dissertation is key to understanding what effects this new institutional position had on young musicians and how it influenced their creative practices. A dominant conclusion is that this experience was, by nature,

[281] See especially discussion of his direction of the contemporary music portion of the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Chapter 1.
[282] See Introduction.

highly emotionally charged. The closeness of the environment at CalArts in the 1980s encouraged creative partnerships, lifelong friendships, and even romantic relationships, all of which were permeable between students and faculty alike. The musicians also understood themselves to be in a position of privilege, having access to cutting edge technologies and a litany of famous figures who also offered them their camaraderie.[283] Thus, the EAR Unit came away with a sense of responsibility to an inherited avant-garde, a musical practice that was not made abstract merely through study, but brought to life through exciting interpersonal connections. For these musicians, contemporary music was an all-encompassing lifestyle.

To date, little has been made of these first-hand experiences in an academicized avant-garde or how they might reframe our understanding of existing trends in new music. Recent discourse has instead looked more broadly at how current ensembles draw on institutionalized strategies of entrepreneurship to compete precariously within a free marketplace of concert music.[284] Chief among these groups are today's leading contemporary music ensembles that have perfected such market operations. Musicologist Andrea Moore connects these ensembles to the EAR Unit, which she claims also functioned as an independent enterprise lacking institutional mediation. Although this dissertation only briefly touches on its economics, I have shown that the EAR Unit did in fact leverage the full extent of its institutional resources to constitute and legitimize its career. In fact, the EAR Unit relied heavily on institutional mediation, even despite the collectivist politics that influenced them.

[283] Similar narrative themes were evoked in Joseph Franklin and Laurel Wyckoff's recollection of the Yellow Springs Institute and its impact on the formation of the Relâche Ensemble.
[284] See Introduction.

Returning to biography, this dissertation adds an important layer to understanding how the EAR Unit functioned as a historical precursor to more recent groups. Specifically, the biographical perspective sheds light on why musicians coming out of music schools would potentially be motivated to forge collective careers in the first place. In the case of the EAR Unit, the experience of learning music together was so profound, it necessitated that they ensure its continuation. The musicians came away with a practice that, on the one hand, constituted a significant part of their sense of individuality, while on the other, resolved their differences through collaboration. Put it differently, their education equipped them with musical skills that additionally held together their friendships. It seems reasonable, then, to speculate that increased competition and strained resources would only put greater pressure on young musicians to discover similar meaning in their own education, and to replicate cooperative models, especially those built on intimate relationships.

5.2 Institutionalizing and globalizing contemporary music in Los Angeles

In unpacking the EAR Unit's story, a group biography also affords the opportunity to view in action some of the larger attitudes underlying an organizational expansion of contemporary classical concert music in Los Angeles at the end of the 20th century. As discussed in the Introduction to the dissertation, notable changes in this period included the creation of the Los Angeles Philharmonic's New Music Group and its Green Umbrella series, the mobilization of an elite class of arts patronage by Betty Freeman, and the foundation of the Piano Spheres series for new music. As a product of

the new curriculum at CalArts in the 1980s, the EAR Unit was central to these developments, especially through its participation in the massive CalArts Festivals. The EAR Unit's most noteworthy contribution, however, was its Ensemble Residency series at LACMA, which represented a new, curatorial emphasis on existing groups by Dorrance Stalvey, Artistic Director of the historic Monday Evening Concerts.

A pervasive theme throughout this dissertation has been the notion that the collective attention garnered through these developments signaled a broader turning point for Los Angeles as an ascending, national hub for the arts. This globalizing narrative was unavoidable in promotion for the 1984 Olympic Arts Festival, in which contemporary music was overtly showcased as a standalone feature of the city's cultural wealth. But the coming-of-age story was replicated elsewhere in rhetoric surrounding the 1985 New Music America Festival, the subsequent Los Angeles Festivals, and other major events for contemporary music in the years following Olympic Arts.[285] In all such cases, the EAR Unit can be seen featured as one of the city's leading performing acts for new music, touted as representatives of a new generation of specialized performers.

Festivals, especially large-scale festivals, dominate the narrative in this dissertation. Whether these were an aberration of the 1980s—and if so, why—is yet to be determined. Nonetheless, their emphasis on contextualizing the local to the national, and even the national to the global, played an important part in framing the EAR Unit's career as inextricably tied to Los Angeles. For the EAR Unit and its colleagues, the city's legacy was a constant concern, particularly in underscoring a dialectical counter-relationship to New York City, a place anchored in historical narratives. The EAR Unit, among a

[285] This narrative is transposed in Joseph Franklin's descriptions of the Philadelphia new music scene in the late 1970s.

handful of other collectives like the Independent Composers Association and Xtet, gave musicians and composers in Los Angeles viable protagonists in the emerging discourse surrounding the city as a new cultural frontier.[286] Festivals like New Music America that moved to a different major city each year reinforced the same place-based boundaries that were a byproduct of institutional growth.

In such an environment, it is fitting that the group's full name includes the word California, insisting on geographical location as a core piece of its identity. The EAR Unit claims that they originally chose to include the state name in their title merely on a whim. In retrospect, however, the name carried important associations to developing regional aesthetics in academic contemporary music, one whose creative inspirations had ostensibly limitless boundaries. Having virtually no ensemble peers, the EAR Unit was for decades a key access point into emerging trends on the West Coast. Later promotion by the ensemble even included the moniker, "New Music Ambassadors to the World," suggesting somewhat grandiosely that they represented Los Angeles on a global scale.

[286] These ideas came up often in my interviews, including many exchanges that did not make it into the previous chapters. One such excerpt by Carl Stone speaks to the desire held by many for Los Angeles to be taken seriously. "There was a feeling that LA deserved more of its due. The standard issues of Los Angeles: the car culture, the spread outness, the lack of a downtown, or an uptown for the matter, and the very strong tidal pull towards commercial music given the existence of Hollywood and television being based right here. LA had not an inferiority complex, but a feeling like it wasn't being treated with the seriousness that, for example, New York City was. When curators or festival directors based in Europe would want to scout new talent, they would go to New York because it was a one-stop-shop.There were a lot of people in Los Angeles doing interesting work who had maybe never *been* to New York. If those programmers had come to Los Angeles, or San Francisco even, they would have encountered the Joanna Welch's or the Anna Homler's, the ICA, the EAR Unit, all of whom didn't ever make it fully onto the national stage in the way that they could have or should have. I think the EAR Unit did a lot better than a lot of other ensembles. They took some cues from the Kronos Quartet about marketing and going to broader audiences, like the kind of folks who went to Monday Evening Concerts. But I do think, in the whole scheme of things, they probably deserve more credit than they actually ended up getting" (Stone, 2020).

Attaining national visibility, however, was not the EAR Unit's primary motivation. Through a biographical lens, I show that the ensemble simply took advantage of a large supply of opportunities made available to them, many of which did in fact contribute to promoting Los Angeles as a multicultural capital. But this access to a musical scene that stretched far beyond the confines of the city was precisely what made the texture of their experience so significant. The EAR Unit's coming together was given a national stage, one that invited participation from living classical composers and musicians from across the country and even around the globe.

5.3 Future directions

Contemporary music ensembles have been shown to be a popular outgrowth of an increasingly academicized musical avant-garde in the US. This work has shed light on one such group, the California E.A.R. Unit, which developed during a pivotal moment for institutions in Los Angeles. Historians may be interested in expanding this study to include more of the groups that propagated during this period, focusing similarly on their relationships to institutional development.

Meanwhile, biography should continue to be considered a viable method for investigating new music ensembles as a social phenomenon, especially if they are to be studied from within academia. As a musician and researcher in the field myself, I believe it is necessary to voice these narratives from a critical distance in order to better understand their influence on the present. As career musicians become further mired in

challenging economics, it will continue to be worth asking what makes these experiences meaningful and worthwhile in the first place.

Towards this end, biographical perspectives may be useful in pushing past the cloud of academic prestige that obscures many of these narratives. The EAR Unit is a valuable case study not because it received widespread recognition, but because it renders a clear picture from within academia of how institutions provide excitement and creative freedom. It is still nonetheless necessary to critically examine how musicians have navigated power-wielding institutions, and the role prestige plays in defining those stories.

POSTSCRIPT

Sounds of the high desert: A memory from Arcosanti

The following is an excerpt from my 2022 interview with cellist Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick. After spending a day helping me comb through her archive of dusty EAR Unit programs, we took a break outside of her backyard studio to enjoy lemonade in the setting sun. Suddenly reminded of an important memory, the cellist hurried back inside and returned carrying a photograph of her and flutist Dorothy Stone, her all-time time favorite picture. The image shows the two them bathed in afternoon light, rehearsing on an amphitheater stage in Arcosanti, the experimental town in central Arizona first conceptualized by Paolo Soleri in the 1970s. The EAR Unit held two residencies at there, one in 1988 with composer Lou Harrison, and the second in 1998 with composer Terry Riley. The photograph shows the two musicians rehearsing Elliott Carter's *Enchanted Preludes* during their second residency.

With the photo in hand, Duke-Kirkpatrick recounted a story told similarly by a few other members of the ensemble in which a gas station attendant taught members of the group how to roast a pig on a spit. The group spent their days in the desert rehearsing, performing, roasting pig, and relaxing at night with Riley. With this extended extract, I conclude this biography in the words of one its members, capturing a poignant and emblematic moment for all.

> ERIKA DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: My favorite picture! It makes me happy because it reminds me of this [pointing to the sky] kind of weather, and the

scorpions we had to check for under the bed every night. That year we had Terry Riley.

MICHAEL MATSUNO: There were scorpions in your tents?

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: No, we weren't in tents. You know how it is at Arcosanti? Everything's open.

MATSUNO: I haven't been.

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: Oh, you must go. So, there's this awesome amphitheater, and everything is built out of recycled materials. There's no glass, it's all just open, which make it naturally cool because it's on the edge of a gully. And there's this mesa and the wind blows, so it keeps it from getting too hot. But it's a camp, and they have little camp beds with white sheets. You had to check your sheets every morning, plus your shoes, and the shower, because there's scorpions in all of those. You had to check to make sure that you didn't get bitten. Of course, *I* never did!

There were also giant centipedes in the room where we rehearsed because, again, no closed doors or windows. A massive tarantula used to visit every night. Too many bugs for me. But it was fun. Boy, it was fun. You must go there. And this makes [pointing to the photograph]— it has a great acoustic even though it's outdoors. It's fantastic. It was all meant to be that way. It was all designed by what's his name. Soleri. Everything was according to his grand plan, his village of the future.

MATSUNO: A photo like that has so much positive memory attached to it.

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: It was very positive. It was wonderful. I just love this, yes.

MATSUNO: What made trips like this so much fun?

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: Well, in the case of Arcosanti, it was just such a beautiful place to be, nature-wise. It was very exotic. And we knew that a lot of other musicians had been there. And we were— we were partying every night, gently, and just hanging out with the composers.

MATSUNO: You also said that Ojai was also special for you too. That's a beautiful place as well.

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: It is a beautiful place. And Ojai, you know, it's a city and people live there. But there, you're just visitors at a venue. *This* felt like we basically lived there and owned the place. It was summer and not a lot of people were there. It felt like going to—

MATSUNO: A retreat?

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: Like a retreat. Like a camp. Yeah, like going camping. But you didn't have to live in a tent, you could live in these boxes. And it felt like— Oh! And Jim. What did Jim do? I think this was his idea. He got the other residents there to join him and he roasted a whole pig.

MATSUNO: Wow.

DUKE-KIRKPATRICK: All night long. He was a foodie, so his favorite things were the meals. But yeah, I remember the giant roasted pig feast. It was awful. I mean, it was great! Unless you were vegan, in which case it was awful. But yeah, things like that. Those little weird extracurricular events, or late at night when

Terry Riley would just improvise for hours and have fun at the piano while we were all having a beer or whatever at the end of the day. It was so informal and fun hanging out.

That makes me think, if I were to say one overriding thing about the EAR Unit, it's that we were so freakin' lucky. It was just hanging out with all these amazing composers, the ones in the history books, before it was cool to be in a new music. We had so much access. To all of them. They'd get us gigs. Earle Brown got us the gig in Aspen. And the composers themselves— we would be invited to places to play their music and other stuff too. They all helped us out, you know. Elliott Carter was sending us money for years. I mean, holy cow! I feel like it was just because there wasn't that much competition back then. Does that make sense? I mean, we were devoted, and we loved our work. We just loved it so much.

Figure 5.1: Dorothy Stone and Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick rehearsing at Arcosanti. (Personal collection of Erika Duke-Kirkpatrick.)

APPENDIX A

Interviews

Beglarian, Eve, 2020. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 30 November.

Beglarian, Eve, 2023. Interview with author, San Diego, 14 July.

Clark, Eric KM, 2020. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 16 February.

Dresher, Paul, 2021. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 3 February.

Drury, Stephen, 2021. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 11 December.

Duke-Kirkpatrick, Erika, 2020. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 24 January.

Duke-Kirkpatrick, Erika, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 10 August.

Duke-Kirkpatrick, Erika, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 14 January.

Eder, Lorna, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 11 February.

Eder, Lorna, 2022. Email message to author, 23 August.

Feldman, Bernardo, 2023. Interview with author, San Diego, 20 May.

Franklin, Joseph, 2023. Email message to author, 14 June.

Franklin, Joseph, and Laurel Wyckoff, 2023. Interview with author, San Diego, 14 May.

Kennedy, Daniel, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 9 August.

Knoles, Amy, 2015. Interview with author, San Diego, 21 July.

Knoles, Amy, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 21 May.

Knoles, Amy, 2021. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 21 July.

Knoles, Amy, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 28 September.

Knoles, Amy, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 19 January.

Lane, Charles, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 20 January.

Lesemann, Heidi, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 1 May.

Lockwood, Annea, 2021. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 28 January.

Lorentz, Robin, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 1 August.

Lorentz, Robin, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 22 January.

Mowrey, Gaylord, 2022. Interview with author, 17 July.

Ocker, David, 2020. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 15 February.

Otto, Peter, 2020a. Email message to author, 1 March.

Otto, Peter, 2020b. Interview with author, San Diego, 10 March.

Otto, Terri, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 30 April.

Ray, Vicki, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 31 March.

Ray, Vicki, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 17 July.

Rohrig, Jim, 2020a. Email message to author, 29 May.

Rohrig, Jim, 2020b. Email message to author, 9 November.

Rohrig, Jim, 2020c. Email message to author, 22 November.

Rohrig, Jim, 2020d. Email message to author, 11 November.

Rohrig, Jim, 2020e. Email message to author, 31 December.

Rohrig, Jim 2023. Email message to author, 15 July.

Shulgold, Marc, 2020. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 2 November.

Steiger, Rand, 2015. Interview with author, San Diego, 29 July.

Steiger, Rand, 2020a. Interview with author, San Diego, 13 February.

Steiger, Rand, 2020b. Email message to author, 13 February.

Steiger, Rand, 2020c. Email message to author, 20 April.

Steiger, Rand, 2020d. Interview with author, San Diego, 23 May.

Steiger, Rand, 2020e. Email message to author, 3 July.

Steiger, Rand, 2020f. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 11 November.

Steiger, Rand, 2020g. Email message to author, 12 November.

Steiger, Rand, 2021a. Email message to author, March 15.

Steiger, Rand, 2021b. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 2 August.

Steiger, Rand, 2022a. Interview with author, San Diego, 2 August.

Steiger, Rand, 2022b. Email message to author, 12 August.

Steiger, Rand, 2022c. Email message to author, 14 August.

Steiger, Rand, 2022d. Email message to author, 7 November.

Steiger, Rand and Jack Vees, 2021. Email messages to author, 15 March.

Stone, Carl, 2020. Interview with author, 25 April.

Subotnick, Morton, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 30 January.

Suzuki, Jacqueline, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 6 August.

Terranova, Mary, 2022. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 14 July.

Van Cleve, Libby, 2020. Interview with author, San Diego, 3 February

Vees, Jack, 2021a. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 22 January.

Vees, Jack, 2021b. Email message to author, March 15.

Vees, Jack, 2023. Interview with author, Los Angeles, 18 July.

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