

History and Memory

SOMETIME IN THE SPRING of 1990 I received a phone call from Larry Polansky inviting me to contribute to the premiere issue of *Leonardo Music Journal* (spun off from the venerable *Leonardo* journal of art and technology), of which he was the founding editor. Larry's timing was auspicious: ordinary life was suspended in my Bleecker Street loft as I awaited our firstborn and engaged in rewinding and fast-forwarding the tape of my life. Fearing that the blessed event would render me incapable of composing for months to come, I accepted the offer on the assumption that writing words would be somehow easier than writing music. I was wrong on both counts: the expanded family slipped into a blissful trio state, but writing turned out to be a more serious challenge than anticipated [1].

My previous writing experience had been largely confined to grant applications, concert and liner notes and the odd lecture. Larry's invitation provided an excuse to indulge in musical self-analysis on a larger, more detailed scale. So, as my son napped, I typed, slowly cobbling together an essay whose style perhaps owed more to the ghost-written sports autobiographies of my childhood than to academic journals but that nonetheless accounted reasonably well for the evolution of my recent musical activities [2].

I found the process cathartic. Over the next few years I became increasingly involved in writing and editing essays, lectures and a book, *An Incomplete Handbook of the Phenomenology of Whistling* [3]. Self-reflection gave way to broader analyses of the interaction of musical aesthetics with technological, social and economic developments. Writing became an integral part of my life.

Seven years after Larry's phone call, I found myself sitting in a sunny Berlin apartment with my new daughter in my lap, while fellow composer Jonathan Impett prodded me to apply for the now-open position of Editor-in-Chief of *LMJ*. A paternal déjà vu of my first encounter with the journal prompted me to reflect on the current state of music.

Post-Cagean composers developed approaches to technology that were experimental, analytic and, above all,

idiosyncratic. The existing tools of musicology were ill suited for analyzing music based on echolocation, CD error correction, Doppler shift or speech patterns. Criticism fell into the gap between journals serving academic composers and musicologists and magazines dedicated to more popular styles. As a result, we were left with a body of work—conveyed largely in oral tradition, unlabeled circuits and forgotten computers—whose details, and sometimes very existence, were unknown outside a small circle.

The desire to chip away at this ignorance fueled my modest activities as a writer and editor. *LMJ* had given me my first opportunity to make a statement about my own work, so it seemed appropriate that I offer others a boost onto the same soapbox.

Since 1997 I have organized each annual volume around a rubric that I hoped would be specific enough to provide focus but broad enough to attract a diversity of contributors and contributions: *Southern Cones: Music Out of Africa and South America*, *Pleasure* and *The Politics of Sound Art*, among others [4]. My initial three-year contract was extended to five, after which I seemed to have acquired squatter's rights to the position of Editor-in-Chief. Some months back I realized I was coming up on 20 years, 20 volumes, some 500 papers and authors. Both children are out of college; a generation has passed. It is time for a change of leadership, but also for reflection; hence this meandering preface and the theme for my final volume: *History and Memory*.

In this issue, writers take the prompt both literally and metaphorically: memory embedded in neurons, silicon and architectural spaces; history as archive and as distant experience. Several contributors look at the metaphor of faulty memory embodied in recorded media, often in "obsolete" formats such as cassette, DAT and MiniDisc (Michael Bullock; Mat Dalglish; Joseph Kramer), but also through encoding for the Web (Justin Gagen and Amanda Wilson). Others have addressed the intersection of location with memory, through sonification and focused listening (Richard Graham; Mikael Fernström and Sean

Taylor; Edmund Mooney; Verónica Soria-Martínez), site-specific installations (Lukas Ligeti) and oral histories (Úna Monaghan). Laura Cameron and Matthew Rogalsky retrace one of the World Soundscape Project’s earliest soundwalks; Lawrence English revisits Luc Ferrari’s landmark *Presque Rien No.1*; Charles Eppley discusses the problems of preserving one of the very first works of public sound art, Max Neuhaus’s *Times Square*; while Chrysi Nanou and Rob Hamilton write about issues in the archiving and recreation of contemporary piano repertoire, and Jim Murphy and Trimpin transcode Conlon Nancarrow’s *Player Piano Studies* for modern MIDI-equipped acoustic pianos.

Luke Nickel’s compositions mine the specific musical memories of his performers, while Arto Artinian and Adam Wilson analyze the significance of memory in improvisation and David Kim-Boyle discusses memory’s role in live-coding performances. Other contributors incorporate historical material in their work (Ludwig Elblaus and Åsa and Carl Unander-Scharin; Jonathan Impett), discuss the use of sound in the design of museum exhibitions (Gerald Fiebig, Uta Piereth and Sebastian Karnatz), or build shrines to discarded pianos (Erik Griswold). Nick Collins (not the editor) describes techniques for “corposing” new electronic pieces based on a massive database of historical works. Scot Gresham-Lancaster provides a tidy history of networked computer music. Bernhard Gál traces the origin of the term “sound art,” focusing on ac-

tivities in the United States, while Katsushi Nakagawa and Tomotaro Kaneko look at the history of the genre in Japan. Giuliano Obici describes the evolution of DIY “gambio-luthiery” in Brazil, while Renzo Filinich Orozco provides a much-needed account of early electronic music in Peru.

Veniero Rizzardi curated the audio companion to this volume, a collection of music about forgetting and rediscovering.

When *Leonardo Music Journal* was founded, “music” seemed a broad enough term to cover any submission that might come its way. But in the past two decades the cultural terrain has shifted, “sound art” has emerged as a distinct genre, and the journal’s title now seems quaint, even a tad restrictive. Over the course of two decades, I’ve largely satisfied my initial urge to preserve and disseminate otherwise ephemeral work by under-recognized masters. But perhaps more importantly, this editorial position has brought me in contact with emerging artistic scenes on a global scale—a ringside seat from which to observe the rise of sound art. I will miss this work, but the journal needs a fresh pair of ears—I want to learn about what *they* are hearing.

Goodbye, thank you and stay noisy.

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References and Notes

- 1 Portions of this introduction first appeared in *Fineart Forum* 15, No. 1 (January 2001).
- 2 Nicolas Collins, “Low Brass: The Evolution of Trombone-Propelled Electronics,” *Leonardo Music Journal* 1 (1991).
- 3 Volker Straebel et al., ed., *Pfeifen im Walde: Ein unvollständiges Handbuch zur Phänomenologie des Pfeifens* ([An Incomplete Handbook of the Phenomenology of Whistling] Berlin and Cologne: Podewil/Editions Maly, 1994).
- 4 The volumes I have edited:
 - Vol. 26, 2016: Lend Me Your Ears! Sound and Reception
 - Vol. 25, 2015: The Politics of Sound Art
 - Vol. 24, 2014: <40: Emerging Voices
 - Vol. 23, 2013: Sound Art
 - Vol. 22, 2012: Acoustics
 - Vol. 21, 2011: Beyond Notation: Communicating Music
 - Vol. 20, 2010: Improvisation
 - Vol. 19, 2009: Our Crowd—Four Composers Pick Composers
 - Vol. 18, 2008: Why Live? Performance in the Age of Digital Reproduction
 - Vol. 17, 2007: My Favorite Things: The Joy of the Gizmo
 - Vol. 16, 2006: Noises Off: Sound Beyond Music
 - Vol. 15, 2005: The Word: Voice, Language and Technology
 - Vol. 14, 2004: Composers inside Electronics: Music after David Tudor
 - Vol. 13, 2003: Groove, Pit and Wave: Recording, Transmission and Music
 - Vol. 12, 2002: Pleasure
 - Vol. 11, 2001: Not Necessarily “English Music”: Britain’s Second “Golden Age”
 - Vol. 10, 2000: Southern Cones: Music Out of Africa and South America
 - Vol. 9, 1999: Power and Responsibility: Politics, Identity and Technology in Music
 - Vol. 8, 1998: Ghosts and Monsters: Technology and Personality in Contemporary Music